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The Legitimizing Role of the Concept of Joy of Being in Asouzu's Complementary Reflection and the Social and political Philosophies of Lock and Hobbes

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Posted on the internet on August 24, 2006

INTRODUCTION

Man is a being towards the preservation of the self. In this respect all his actions and motives are to be evaluated against the scale of his atomistic egotistical motive of self-preservation.

In connection with this, Asouzu expounds, in his complementary Reflection, the concept of the Joy of Being (jide ka iji). Thomas Hobbes and John Locke in their espousal of their social contract theories systematically conceded the instinct of self-preservation as the most rudimentary. However, this paper shall show the points of departure among the positions of these three philosophers.

THOMAS HOBBS

Thomas Hobbes was born into a terrifyingly tumultuous political cauldron. The seventeenth century England went through a period of serious civil disorder (Baradat 63). Two ideological forces competed: absolutism, allied with Anglican traditionalism, versus puritan reform, in league with parliamentary assertiveness. Queen Elizabeth 1, the last monarch of England of the most popular Tudor line died in 1603.

James Stuart succeeded Elizabeth to the throne. Stuart was bookish and a dire-heart divine right absolutist. Naturally, the unabashed assertive English parliament found James 1's political style a piece uncondonable sophistry. The unhealthy relations between parliament and the Kind was not

quelled even at James' son, Charles 1, who ascended the throne of his father, was no less a politically unpopular figure than his father. The crescendo of Charles 1's unpopular political attitude was reached in his pursuance of arbitrary and dastardly policies which culminated in a civil war during his reign, from 1642 to 1649, with Charles' executive.

The execution of an English monarch; the perceived representative of God, the defender of the people, the "Fountain of Justice," the hope of the hopeless and the embodiment of the traditional heritage of the English people; is like a desecration or profanity of a Jewish temple or an Islamic mosque, a derogation from a divine injunction, weighty enough to warrant (for the Islamic world) the proclamation of a jihad. For the first time in the history of England a King was tried and executed as an oppressor (Baradat 64). It happened. It happened on the ground that the King himself had derogated from the obligations and duties he owed his subjects. From 1649 to 1660, England was ruled by Oliver Cromwell. The shifting of the English Crown from the Stuart line to Cromwell shows well how discreditable popular and parliamentary opinions were about the Stuart lineage. However, it does not seem that parliament was much impressed with Cromwell's reign for he was not much better than Charles 1 (McClelland 212). Furthermore, the publication of Marsilius of Padua's defender of Peace in England which was proscribed by the papacy in 1327 and 1378 respectively, which Cromwell had a hand in, has been described as ominous (Baradat 130). As if to show parliament's dislike for Cromwell's reign, at his death in 1660 parliament considered favourably Stuart royal restoration. Consequently, Charles II, the executed son of Charles 1, became King of England. Charles II reigned between 1660 to 1685, although he always dated his reign back to 1649 when his father was executed undermining Cromwell's regime as void (the same way the incumbent governor Peter Obi of Anambra State should date his administration back to May 29 2003 whose administration the court of Appeal declared illegal). The red fluid of the Divine Right of kings had permeated the mentality of the Stuarts to an incurable degree. One would expect the subsequent Stuart successors to the throne to learn a lesson from the fate of their forebears. This was not the case with James II who succeeded his brother Charles II in 1685. In fact, if Charles II had chastised his subjects and parliament with whips, James II was to chastise them with scorpions. He was an hyper-active chief executive, with an impeccable commitment to absolute sovereignty, who was not content to allow his ministers bargain with Parliament. Such royal ambitions, one would say, had become stale and moribund in 17th century England. But above all, the fact that James II was a Catholic sealed his fate (to barrow Baradat's phraseology).

The totality of these factors crystallized into an aversion and disdain of enormous profundity. James II could no longer be tolerated, the English people rose up against what they called “Catholic tyranny”, and James II fled to France where his brother Charles II had spent exile after their father, Charles I’s execution.

In spite of Hobbes vivacious nature, it has been alleged that Hobbes and terror were born twins, for his mother went into premature labour on hearing the guns of the Spanish Armada in 1588. It is pertinent to note Hobbes’ awful continental experiences as well. Hobbes had fled England for France after 1641. His 10 years of exile in France coincided with some part of the period of the Thirty Years War in Germany. It has been alleged that the Leviathan sometimes reads like a philosophical commentary on GrimmeLShausen’s *Simplicissimus*, the standard account of Germany’s descent into so chaotic a State, with so many sovereigns competing for mastery, that it begins to look very like the Hobbesian State of nature (McClelland 209). So it was like Hobbes ran from fear in England to fear in continental Europe. The political scenario with and into which Hobbes was born was like a tempestuous ocean, malignantly tumultuous with soaring violent and virulent waves powerful enough to seal an everlasting covenant between Hobbes and Terror for *ex nihilo nihil fit*, fear begets fear, and Hobbes espoused the anarchistic, chaotic, and terrific nature of man.

THE HOBBSIAN GEOMETRICAL POLITICAL SCHEME.

The proclivity of mathematics to philosophy cannot be underestimated. Alive to this fact Salmond writes:

Geometry and philosophy were born together at the same time, in the same place, and indeed, they had the same father. They are more like twin sisters than father and mother (1).

It should be recalled that Hobbes had been Charles II’s tutor in geometry during their exile years in France. The yearning of philosophers is to grasp that truth that can be said to be immutable and incorrigible, eternal and absolute. Right from the time of Thales, who was more auspicious for his mathematical than philosophical commitment, to the time of Plato, even before the publication of Euclid’s monumental *The Elements*, philosophers have craved that philosophical truths should approximate after the perfection (as they supposed) of geometrical truths.

Given this intellectual climate that pervaded the disposition of philosophers at the time, Hobbes was to axiomatize the nature of man, deducing vary tightly within perfect logical prescient from few axioms, a somewhat

geometrical picture of the social and political structure of a state. Hobbes establishes that:

The passions that incline men to peace are fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to obtain them (226).

But man is an incurable egotist who is constantly seeking his atomistic gains, Safety and glory. Hobbes imagines a state of nature where man lived without a common power to keep them all in awe, and no man was so much stronger than another by nature that he could not be killed by him by stealth. Man, in this state, is a sovereign to himself, and therefore homo lupus homine. Man was in a perpetual state of actual and adrenalin-pumping fear. Fear of war, fear of encroachment on the primordial right of self-preservation, fear of destruction of life.

In such condition, there is no place for industry because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force, no knowledge of the force of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual few, and the danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short (Hobbes 225).

But men, according to Hobbes, are endowed with some sort of impure rationality. They are able to know that they have an irresistible inclination towards their self-preservation, and reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace upon which men may be drawn to agreement (Hobbes 226). Consequent upon this realization men agree to relinquish their rights to "...that great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, that mortal god [for] peace and defence".

Hobbes is thus very rigorous and geometric a political thinker whose foundational axiom is his view of man as a rational egotist, and deduced therefrom his theorems of the laws of nature (i.e. liberty, justice, equality, freedom, etc), the social contract, and the creation of absolute sovereignty.

JOHN LOCKE

Locke was born in 1632 during the reign of King Charles I while Hobbes was 44 years old. Locke found his intellect agitated by the civil upheavals in England in his time. Like Hobbes, he felt that a rational lapse was responsible for the political brouhaha endemic in England. He disagreed with Hobbes, departed from the absolutist status quo, and pioneered a liberal

democratic political structure.

Locke like Hobbes agrees that man is naturally prompted to do whatever he thinks “fit for the preservation of himself” (Locke 181). But the state of nature for Locke is not as nasty and brutish as Hobbes represents. This is because even in the state of nature, man is rational and social to know what is good for him. This gave rise to the distinction between society and government. For Locke society pre-exists government. Men were rational social gregarious being able to conglomerate even before the emergence of government. The Lockean picture of man is thus not one of egregious egotistic and atomistic individuals always at war with one another. In fact Locke reiterates that man is wont to doing that which is “fit for the preservation of himself and the rest of mankind” (italics mine, 181).

So the society would have emerged spontaneously without an express contract by individuals. Locke uses the capacity for human language to buttress human inherent capacity for social living.

Natural human rights are inalienable. But because of the inconvenience in the State of nature where there were clashes of interests man opted for the formation of government, (not society), to arbitrate between persons in society in cases of disagreement. The distinction between society and government is necessary because in Leviathan if the Hobbesian mortal god is dethroned, human beings revert back to the state of nature but in the Two Treatises, if a government is rebelled against, the citizens revert back to society until the formation of a new government. Locke was thus adumbrating the principle of natural justice of *nemo iudex in causa sua* when he foretold that a man reposes only a limited right (not rights) of judgment to the state to enjoy protection of his inalienable Natural Rights (not right). The natural justice rule against bias is to avoid the partiality which man is susceptible to when he is to adjudicate a case where he has a propriety or financial interest (Ugbe 84). Locke was consequently very vehement in his emphasis that a government that desecrates the trust it holds for the people should be toppled, for its usefulness would have been outlived. Locke’s indefatigable commitment to the people’s right of rebellion runs through the entire of the Two treatises, and it has been argued that its publication (not its writing) was to justify the English Glorious Revolution in 1688 against James II (McClelland 242). To further forestall the eventual metamorphosis of government into absolute and unlimited sovereignty, Locke suggested a power-check mechanism known today as separation of powers. Locke was an advocate of limited (which does not mean weak) government, in contradistinction to the Hobbesian absolute sovereignty. Men do not need the Hobbesian Leviathan to keep them restrained for even before the emergence of gov-

ernment men knew that though the state of nature “be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of licence”.

In the essay concerning Human understanding Locke had written:

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas, how comes it to be furnished To this I answer, in one word, from experience (387).

Locke’s total commitment to his epistemological empiricism is in doubt. The state of nature which Locke intelligently built (or most appropriately conjectured), is more a rationalist conclusion than it is empirical. This is because there seem to be no historical evidence to support the existence, ever, of such a stage in human history.

Again Locke’s representation of the amicable nature of the human person makes it difficult for him to adequately account for a reason why man should wish to quit such a state. Man was shown to be so rational as not to need government at all for arbitration in violations of natural rights.

Be this as it may, the Lockean version of the state of nature, more than Hobbes’s, fitted more into the situation in England during the interregnum and after the exile of James II. Locke has been quite approved by a great many. Sabine writes:

His (Locke’s) sincerity, his profound moral conviction, his genuine belief in liberty, in human rights, and in the dignity of human nature, united with his moderation and good sense, makes him the ideal spokesman of a middle-class revolution (540).

INNOCENT I. ASOUZU

Asouzu was born in 1952 in Nigeria, the period of that monster: colonialism. Rodney asserts that:

From every viewpoint other than that of the minority class of capitalist, colonialism was a monstrous institution holding back the liberation of man (221).

Babu, A. M. very pathetically and rhetorically describes the situation as:

The harrowing account of the brutalities of slavery, of subjugation, of deprivation and humiliation, when whole civilizations were crushed in order to serve the imperialist interests of the West; when settled cities were disintegrated by force of imperialist arms so that the plantation owners of the ‘new world’ could get their uprooted, and therefore permanent labour force to build what is now the most advanced capitalist economy.... (Rodney 316).

The period of Asouzu's birth is the period of large scale continent-wide colonialism in Africa which phenomenon egregiously bruised Nigerian economy, politics, religion, and social living.

1952 was eight years away from the year of 'independence' from the British administrators. If we blamed colonialism for whatever, one would expect that after the malignant days of colonialism, Nigeria (Africa) would begin to experience peace and calm. This was not the case. In fact, Ademoyega Adewale, the only surviving soldier of the three including Nzeogwu Kaduna with Ifeajuna Emmanuel who plotted the first military coup de tat in Nigeria of 1966 in Nigeria alleges that:

Nigeria's political problems sprang from the carefree manner in which the British took over, administered, and abandoned the government and people of Nigeria (1).

Asouzu thus grew up to meet a Nigeria which, even after purported political independence, scarcely knew any peace (probably for want of philosopher-rulers).

The Nigerian-Biafran civil war started in 1967 when Asouzu was barely 15 years old. He probably would have taken part in the war. Ademoyega describes the war as "fierce, murderous, wasteful... (195). Even after the civil war in Nigeria, there have been continued agitations, incessant military interventions in politics, embezzlement of public funds, political assassinations, restiveness of youths of the Niger Delta, inter-religious violence, premature determination of perceived enemies of government from public service, elections rigging, large-scale unemployment, inability of government to provide basic social amenities, ethnicity, and a whole lot of social ills. After the pogrom of the civil war, describing the scale of ethnicity perceived in the Eastern region, Nnoli presents a pathetic picture of the area that would move even a heart of stone:

Thus, for example, between the end of the war [in January 10 1970] and July 1977, no major federal project was cited in Igboland. The area has become notorious for band roads and the issue of Igbo property abandoned during the war was resolved politically to the detriment of the Igbo and with other disregard for the basic principles of citizenship and the sensitivities of the Igbo. The overall effect of the war is the intensification of ethnicity (246).

The situation in England in the days of Hobbes and Locke is not much worst off than Asouzu's situation in Nigeria. What then has made it impossible for Nigeria to leave these social ills behind?

Asouzu develops his philosophy of complementarity whose purport is the comprehensive integration of advantages of all persons and

peoples for the comparative advantage of the society. Asouzu espouses that the instinct of self-preservation is the most fundamental of all human instincts (Method 51). Man is therefore basely wont to perpetrating those actions that tend to the preservation of his own life. Asouzu at this juncture introduces his well-conceived concept of the ambivalence of human interests. Human interest is ambivalent because it has a double capacity and as such can represent something negative and positive at the same time (Asouzu, Effective 5). Therefore when one acts without proleptically giving an adequate consideration to all possible effects of his action (i.e. unconscious of the ambivalent nature of man's action), he "indirectly and, at times, directly also negates the fundamental axiom of mutual complementarity as a precondition for meaningful action within a system of interacting units" (Asouzu, Method 82). The catastrophe of inadequate or no attention to the ambivalent nature of human interests is often the negation of what he has dubbed the joy of being. Thus there is a dialectical relationship among contrary units of a whole. Although the task of envisaging the possible consequences of an act is no mean task, Asouzu submits that the nature of the human mind is so constituted with the capacity of a proleptic anticipation that it is able to grasp the future in a transcendent unity of consciousness though in time and space (Method 171).

But as a matter of fact, the awareness of the ambivalent nature of our actions is at the pain of the realization of human limitedness. This realization seem to conclude Asouzu's scheme as it should mathematically and irresistibly leave us on the domain of complementarity where the Joy of being is attained.

While man is individualistic and atomistic in nature for the preservation of his existence, his actions are essentially so constitute that in the furtherance of his activities, a base emphasis on the self-fish benefits with only serve, in the long run, to negate that most fundamental instinct of man's life, the Joy of Being, the instinct of self-preservation. We glean, from our exposition so far, a paradoxical interplay to the effect that man's egotistical instinct for the preservation of the self dialectically metamorphoses into an irresistible and compelling need for a complementary and harmonious existence. It is like saying let man go ahead to be malignantly altruistic without any purposive efforts at seeking the benefits in the other person(s) to supplement his limitations, there shall come a time when he must, advertently or inadvertently, renounce selfishness and egocentricism in favour of a humane complementary existence. Much like the prophetic Marxian proposition that even if the whole world folded its arms and watched, there shall come a time when capitalism, as a stage in the scientific dialectic

materialistic scheme of evolution of society, must disappear giving way for socialism.

While Hobbes adopts the social contract theory as a justification for an unquestionable Leviathan, the absolute sovereign, and Locke employs the social contract as a justification for popular sovereignty, Asouzu, on the other hand, demands that the limitations of our being occasioned by our relative historic existences should be the cause of the joy of our being. This somewhat paradoxical injunction is achieved when human limitedness, rather than impose an anguish on us, gives us the bliss of taking the advantage of the potentials of others as they take advantage of ours.

There is a salient call to live up to the consciousness of the double capacity of all human actions. This uniquely Asouzu's observation is what most people including world leaders have often glossed over. The attendant consequences of such a gloss are as close to us as the mouth is to the nose. At the conception of the idea of these actions, the catastrophic and near nihilistic consequences are not often foreseen nor anticipated. But all human actions contain in them the seminal gems that will rear their (ugly or beautiful) hands in due cause. The ethical dimension in the realization of the ambivalence of human actions is in the avoidance of those actions that satisfy our short-term and proximate goods but that are themselves time-explosives that will detonate with concomitant aftermaths that are a negation of the primordial human instinct of self-preservation thereby denying man the joy of being.

CONCLUSION

In Asouzu's somewhat geometric development of his complementarism by the espousal of the instinct of self-preservation through the ambivalence of human interests to the complementation of human limitedness bringing about the joy of being (when the Igbo would proclaim *jide ki ji*) he offers a more practicable programme for human social living. The notion of complementarity may not have been alien to other scholars. This complementary perspective was adequately captured in the following passage:

We wonder through the world, from perspective to perspective, carrying our own subjective horizon with us; it is by a kind of intellectual integration of subjective views that we succeed in constructing a total view of the world, the consistent expansion of which entitles us to ever increasing claims of objectivity (Reichenbach 225).

But the credit goes to Asouzu for giving a rational scientific epistemic explication why the joy of being can only be attained in complementa-

riety perspective. The cogency of complementary reflection lies in its capacity to offer a pragmatic solution to the ubiquitous social ills that attend us, its profundity in the detailed scientific explication and its vivacity in the originality and genuineness of its conception.

So while Hobbes and Locke formulated legal justifications for absolute and limited governments respectively, Asouzu formulated an expedient and integral ethical concept for the resolution of social and political crises and inadequacies. Asouzu's conception is more appealing and sympathetic because it takes into account the fact that life is larger than legal logic and constraints. Although his option be non-legal, it is nonetheless as arresting and implementable as its execution is implied in human nature.

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