

Highlights on Ibuanyidanda or Complementary Philosophy

Innocent Izuchukwu Asouzu is a major proponent of Complementary Philosophy in contemporary African philosophy. He has devoted his life towards working out a complementary social theory for the regulation of conflicts and this has crystalized into his Ibuanyidanda Philosophy or Complementary Reflection. The seminal ideas of his theory are already contained in his early writings. On returning to Nigeria, he took a permanent teaching appointment at the University of Calabar in 1988. He has since then been teaching at this University and researching intensively into the theoretical preconditions of mutual coexistence between units within any given framework. This gave rise to his complementary theory and ibuanyidanda philosophy, in which he succeeded in articulating his idea into a system with its own principles and method of investigating reality. Variants of his complementary philosophy are trending among reputed African philosophers who draw inspiration from his ideas. His wide ranging influence in African philosophy can be seen in variants of his idea pursued by diverse scholars as **Compatibility Theory, Integrative Humanism, Consolationism, Conversational Philosophy aka Calabar School of Philosophy, variants of tree valued logic, Ezumezu Logic, Harmonious Monism, Conceptual Mandelisation** etc. Besides, his ideas have influenced a new generation of young ambitious scholar as can be attested to by the number of critical essays and works written on Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda Philosophy (Complementary Reflection) by professional national and international scholars alike. The same can be said of the numerous Ph.D. Dissertations, M.A. Theses and scientific projects that have been articulated on and around Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda Philosophy. The idea of complementarity which Asouzu espouses is so important for African philosophy that it has been designated as: "the specific contribution of African philosophy to world philosophy" ("An Amazing Piece of Comparative Philosophy". In: *Confluence: Online Journal of World Philosophies*], pp221-223, 2014. Vol 1)

Asouzu's Complementary Philosophy (Ibuanyidanda)

Asouzu designates his philosophy as **ibuanyidanda philosophy or complementary reflection**. When Asouzu talks of complementarity (the nearest English equivalent of the Igbo expression **ibuanyidanda**), he understand the inherent mutual dependence between units within any framework as they serve each other interminably as missing links of reality (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda. New Complementary Ontology*, 2007, pp. 251-284). For him, complementarity subsists in what it takes to denote that the act of existence is the capacity to affirm insightfully that *whatever exists serves a missing link of reality for the joy of being (jide ka iji* in Igbo). In other words, Asouzu identifies all existent realities as missing links that stay to each other in mutual complementary service. For him to be or the act of existence is to be in mutual complementary relationship (*ka sọ mu adina i.e. that I may not be alone*). Contrary to the classical idea that being is indefinable, Asouzu denotes being as that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality. With this, he rejects the classical idea that the negation of being is non-being. For him the negation of being is to be alone (*ka sọ mu di*). For him missing links are the diverse units that make up an entity within the framework of the whole and as they are complementarily related. They are all the imaginable fragments, units, components, and combinations that enter into our understanding of any aspect of our world. They are also all the units and combinations necessary in the conceptualisation of an entity or of the whole. Thus for him missing links are, for example, thoughts and the thoughts of thoughts. They are diverse modes of manifestation of being in history. They are categories and the categories of categories. They are the units and the units of units, entities and the entities of entities, things and the things of things. They are ideas and the ideas of ideas, etc. as these can possibly be abstracted and related to each other as conditions of possibility of their perfectibility in a harmonious systemic manner. It is this complementary ontology that spans the whole of Asouzu's thinking. What is interesting though is that this philosophy draws its inspiration from the ideas of those Asouzu identifies as the anonymous traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought; to these belong also traditional Igbo philosophers. As a universal philosophy of mutual

complementation though, the ambience of its articulation extends to all the actors and factors that determine our experience of the world. Here, Asouzu owes much to a globalised culture of ideas that influenced his thinking. Besides his African background, Asouzu is deeply indebted to the Western philosophical tradition most especially to **Aristotle** and to **Thomas Aquinas** and to **Immanuel Kant** and **G. W. F. Hegel** whose ideas resonate in Asouzu's critical disagreement with the Erlangen School of Philosophy, with the theologians Paul Tillich and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Asouzu believes that all ideas are complementary both in their genesis and further development. This is why he never ceases to emphasise that the human subject is the sum total of all the actors and factors that determine his world. This notwithstanding, he recognises the important role our primary cognitive ambience, the ambience of our individual cultural socialisation plays in the evolution of our ideas. Though, a complementary philosophy strives always to transcend the insinuation of our primary cognitive ambience, the insinuations of common sense experience and the ambience of our primary socialisation as to remind us of the mutual dependence in service of all things that seek to be genuinely human. For Asouzu, what is remarkable about our raw primary cognitive ambience is that it supplies us with the key concepts, expressions and values for our experience of reality in the way we conduct ourselves and organise ourselves in society. This is how for him traditional Igbo philosophers use the descriptive statement **ibu anyi danda** (no task is insurmountable for the ant danda) to express the idea of complementarity upon which his philosophy is erected. Some of the major practical, conceptual and epistemological difficulties this mode of expressing complementarity presents is not always obvious. This relates not only to the context of its genesis but also to the way most Igbos rely on the concept to validate human action. Asouzu sees his task in attending to these difficulties and for him **ibuanyidanda philosophy nothing other a critique of the descriptive statement ibu anyi danda** (no task is insurmountable for danda the ant). Generally, Asouzu thinks that most descriptive statements have to contend with some special types of challenges that becloud their truth content. He refers to such challenges as those arising from the mechanisms and phenomena that underlie sense experience. Besides, these phenomena and mechanisms, Asouzu identifies what he calls **ihe mkpuchi anya** (phenomenon of concealment) as another major challenge to which all descriptive statements are subjected. For him, descriptive statements of the type **ibu anyi danda** are quite widespread in African philosophy. They are used to capture and denote what many think is the distinctive communitarian experience of reality for which Africa is known. To such descriptive statements Asouzu counts such expression as *ujamaa*, *ubuntu*, African brotherhood, *Igwe bu ike*, *umunna bu ike*, *njikọka*, communalism etc. In their common usage, these expressions do not have the normative value that is ascribed to them. They owe their justification mostly to common sense experience that determines their normative and truth value. As factors of common sense experience their truth value is easily distorted. For this reason, their truth claim is in need of proper revision or transformation. Attending to this task is for Asouzu one of the major challenges of any philosophy in Africa today that seeks to transcend all modes of ethnocentric induced method of philosophising. For him, therefore, one of the major reasons for the apparent stagnation in African philosophy is the near absence of theories with clearly worked out principles and methods aimed at validating our claims about reality beyond descriptive statements. That is to say, he believes that what has been identified as stagnation in African philosophy has much to do with the inability of some of its major practitioners to go beyond the dictates of descriptive statement as they focus only on describing, presenting and defending what they identify as unique or authentic African experience of reality. For Asouzu a philosophy that is capable of transcending such ethnocentric induced reasoning has to be universal and systematic in orientation. Such a philosophy has to be in a position to offer principles and a method based on which reality can be investigated and validated universally and systematically. Asouzu devotes his major attention to this matter of developing a systematic philosophy of universal relevance based on his idea of *ibuanyidanda* (complementarity). More importantly, he provides principles and a method for step by step justification of our assertions and claims about the world generally. In this way, he adopts the concept "*ibuanyidanda*" as the synthetic analytic variant of the descriptive statement "*ibu anyi danda*" (no task is insurmountable for danda the ant) to build a system of universal philosophy of complementation. With this he addresses twofold practical and theoretical needs of any philosophy that seeks to be universal and practically relevant. His general ontology delves directly into the theoretical task: This is his general ontology in which he outlines his doctrine of being that is complementary in orientation. As against an ontology that polarises the notion of being by considering substance and accidents as exclusivist categories, Asouzu seeks to articulate an

ontology where the categories of substance and accidents are mutually harmonised; and can be grasped within a complementary framework. It is always important to remember that both his theoretical and practical approaches are two sides of the same complementary philosophy. With this, Asouzu seeks to supersede that understanding of metaphysics that goes back even to Aristotle wherein substance is handled as if it is solely constitutive of the very nature of being as being. Approaches of this kind abound even till this day. They are such that create the impression of a bifurcated notion of reality; and one that places individuals and communities against each other and where accidental qualities, such as race, colour of skin, sex, achievement, nationality, are absolutized and handled as virtually opposed and contradictory categories. Pursuing this goal, he offers the principles guiding his ideas. These are contained in his **principle of integration** as the metaphysical variant of the principles. It states that **anything that exists serves a missing link of reality**. This principle constitutes one of the major methodological statement of Asouzu's ibuanidanda philosophy. The practical variant of his principles states that **all human actions are geared towards the joy of being**. Based on both principles he formulates the imperative of complementarity, which states the condition for their realisation in the relative and fragmented moments of existence. This imperative can be stated thus: **Allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy**. In this way, Asouzu pursues an ontology that has direct relevance to life beyond an abstract abstruse understanding of being and existence. This is precisely the reason he denotes **being as that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality**: and understanding that differs with the classical abstract abstruse approach where the negation of being is non-being or nothingness. For Asouzu the negation of being is to be alone or to negate the fact that all human achievements can be thought of only within the context of mutual complementary dependence and service. What is remarkable is that Asouzu sees his principles as being founded firmly on the demands of the first principles and most especially on the demands of the principle of non-contradiction; something that is not to be taking for granted if we remember that some practitioners of African philosophy think that such a principle that is founded in a two value logic is not consistent with African way of reasoning. Asouzu's complementary philosophy seeks to address all forms of exclusivist dichotomising reasoning in human affairs. He believes that this is one of the major causes of irreconcilable conflicts in the society and in the world generally.

Transcendent complementary comprehensive existential analysis

By thematising ontology within a complementary framework, Asouzu seeks to address specifically issues dealing with coexistence of units within any given framework. In this way his ontology is very relevant for matters dealing coexistence in society, in organisations and groups. He addresses also issues dealing with exclusivist, segregationist and extremist tendencies as they are quite widespread among individuals and groups. His ontology tries to shed light into some of the major causes of such tendencies and makes very useful suggestions as how they can be grappled with. He thinks that such tendencies have much to do with fundamental constitution of reality generally. Therefore, to understand and explain them better there is need for a far-reaching existential analysis that is ontologically structured.

For this reason he pursues an existential analysis with the sole purpose of penetrating the internal workings of human consciousness as to understand better the challenges the human subject is exposed to in contentious situations of life. For him most issues dealing with irreconcilable conflicts have to do with human inability to come to terms with an existential situation that is ambivalent and for which reason actors quite unwittingly negate the complementary character of reality. Asouzu sees this difficult situation given mostly in most things that relate to the way human beings react to their most cherished interests. Actors, in such situations, tend to think, judge, will in a one sided mode forgetful of the complementary character of the world. This is why they make recourse only to those means they adjudge insightful, reasonable and convenient to secure their interests. They thereby negate the complementary character of the world with very severe consequences. It is this paradox that, for him, stays at the root of all acts aimed at negating the complementary order of the world. This paradox of self-negation in the face of our most cherished interests needs to be explained. He seeks to address it by recourse to a philosophy that strives to articulate the notion of being beyond all impositions arising from sense impressions and common sense experiences. He goes on to elaborate this important and intricate matter that stays at the center

of his philosophy. He designates it as the problem of the paradox of human ambivalent situation deriving from tyranny of human tension-laden ambivalent experience. He notes that even if human beings are rational, they are still under the constraints of our primitive instinct of self-preservation. Thus, drawn between being rational and the demands of this primitive instinct, a tension is generated in the internal working of human consciousness. This condition is further complicated by what Asouzu calls in Igbo language **ihe mkpuchi anya** (its nearest English equivalent is **phenomenon of concealment**). One of the severest consequences of this stressed existential condition is that it leads actors into acting in very baffling modes. This is how in the bid to protect their interests, they quite unwittingly negate the same. On account of the firm grip these existential conditions can have on human consciousness and the mind, Asouzu refers to it as the problem of **the phenomenon of the tyranny of our ambivalent tension laden existential situation**.

Taken together, he refers to these existential constraints as the mechanisms and phenomena that constrain our experience of reality. Due to these existential constraints, actors become forgetful or completely negligent of the multipolar character of the world in a bid to preserve their interests first at the cost of other stakeholders. Worst still is that they thereby completely forget that others too are under the constraints of the same primitive drive. Lacking circumspection in their actions, actors may therefore be most willing to pursue their interests blindly to the point of self-contradiction and self-negation.

For Asouzu, the human subject and communities are not completely to blame for their predicament since problems of this kind are ontologically founded. In other words, this ambivalent tension laden experience enters invariably into the way reality presents itself to the mind. Where difficulties of this kind abound, human subjects will hardly know peace; either within themselves or as beings in relationship with other existent realities. Seeking credible answers to difficulties of this kind enter into some of the cardinal tasks Asouzu sets for himself in his complementary philosophy. Asouzu believes that resolving complex issues of this kind supersede grappling with matters relating with mere cognitive dissonance. First and foremost, there is need for a **fundamental enlightenment** on this matter. Then, there is need to provide **tools** based on which actors can address such matters creditably. His existential analysis enters into part of his enlightenment campaign. As a transcendent complementary comprehensive existential analysis, it is an inquiry into the totality of the structure of human consciousness, in its full depth and breadth, and into the nature of reality generally. His aim is to determine the reasons the human subject often acts in very baffling ways in the face of its most cherished interests. For him such situations show instances of the ego seeking its autonomy outside the foundation provided by the complementary character of reality. He is thinking here of issues relating to the distortion of the foundation of unity between the ego and the totality of reality. In other words, he believes that his existential analysis entails an inquiry that stretches right into the nature of being itself; as to determine how being is complementarily constituted as the foundation of all existent realities. He wishes to show what can happen when a complementary ontological balance is distorted or negated. What this clearly indicates is that Asouzu's ontology and his existential analysis are intricately interwoven. Both reinforce themselves as integral parts of a system that is complementarily grounded. In other words, Asouzu wishes to show how a harmonised notion of being can lead to a harmonised experience of the reality beyond the challenges to which our individual subjectivities may be subjected to at any given time and place. For him, it is through grounding human experience on an ontology of mutual complementation that a harmony within the subject itself, a harmony between the subject and the world generally and a harmony between all existent realities can be achieved.

Tools of Asouzu's Complementary Philosophy (Ibuanyidanda) – Its Principles, Imperative and Truth and Authenticity Criterion

In pursuing this goal, Asouzu relies on what he calls **his tools of ibuanyidanda philosophy**. These are **constituted of: 1) his principles of ibuanyidanda philosophy, 2) his imperative of ibuanyidanda philosophy and 3) his truth and authenticity criterion of ibuanyidanda philosophy, 4) his method of ibuanyidanda philosophy**. Formally, he lays out two principles that are theoretical and practical but which constitute an indivisible whole within a complementary framework. The theoretical or metaphysical variant of his principles he calls *the principle of integration or principle of harmonious complementation* and it stipulates: *anything that exists serves a missing link of reality*. It is based on

this principle that he exploring his notion of being to the fullest such that for him reality expresses itself as missing links of reality. The practical equivalent of his metaphysical principle he names *the principle of progressive transformation* which states that *all human actions are geared towards the joy of being*. Whereas his principle of integration specifies the general metaphysical implications of his philosophy, the principle of progressive transformation, for him, addresses specifically the relevance of the theory to human actions. He relies on both principles to formulate **the imperative of complementarity**, which states the condition for their realisation in the relative and fragmented moments of existence. The imperative states: *Allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy*. He formulates the same thus: *Allow all world immanent realities, in their fragmentation, to be the cause of your joy*. With his imperative, Asouzu merely seeks to affirm that fragmentation is a constitutive characteristic of being in history, which must pave way for authentic existence and not hinder this. The *truth and authenticity criterion* of Asouzu's ibuanyaidanda philosophy urges: *Never elevate a world immanent missing link to an absolute instance*.

Method of Asouzu's Complementary Philosophy and Noetic Propaedeutic

Asouzu's approach to the issue of method is novel. **He understands method as disposition**. For him method is the very pre-dispositional precondition needed to restore the subject to an equilibrated complemented state in a world that presents itself as ambivalent, tension laden and beclouded by *the mkpuchi anya*. It is in method that act of complementarity is consummated. For him, in method the thinking, willing and acting subject experiences itself as a being designed to supersede the existential challenges to which it is exposed. Where method is successfully executed, this results in self-conscious experience of being as something complemented. In this case, the human subject comes to full realisation that its freedom and autonomy depends on its ability to affirm insightfully that anything that exists serves a missing link of reality. In other words, it comes to the full realisation that the highest act of self-actualisation is one that involves experiencing the world as something that is in mutual complementary service. A higher form of enlightenment of this mode does not occur per chance: For Asouzu, this is something that can be effected in the process of what he calls **noetic propaedeutic** or pre-education of the mind: something that is constitutive of method itself, since Asouzu refers to this form of propaedeutic as something "self-imposed".

In his anthropology, Asouzu recognises that even if the human subject is a victim of his tension laden ambivalent existential situations and *the mkpuchi anya*, the same human subject is fundamentally also capable of transcending such challenges and freeing itself from the tyranny of its existential constraints. By this he senses an inherent capacity for the human subject to act beyond the impositions of his tension-laden existential situation and the constraints of *the mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment). What makes this possible is the fact that the human mind is fundamentally constituted of what Asouzu calls **transcendent categories of unity of consciousness (akara obi or akara mmuḡ)**. When Asouzu uses the word transcendent in an ibuanyaidanda context, he merely does so in the sense of transcending our tension laden ambivalent existential situations and the impositions arising from *the mkpuchi anya*. It is in this mode that he refers to these transcendent categories as "**akara mbuni obi/mmuḡ**" i.e. in the sense of the innate capacity of the mind to rise beyond or transcend its difficult existential challenges. He came to his conclusions about these transcendent categories relying on a network of relations. Yet, he borrows his terms for the expressions of these transcendent categories directly from the ideas of traditional Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought. These transcendent categories in Asouzu's own words include "ozurumbaḡnu (universality), mkpochakḡta (totality, comprehensiveness), *uwaezuoke* (relativity, historicity, fragmentation or world immanent predetermination), *alusi* (absoluteness or the inviolableness) *njikḡtaḡnu* (unity), *the ukwu kpe azu* (future reference)". It is through reactivation of these innate faculties of the mind rendered inactive by existential challenges, that Asouzu was able to explain how the human subject can become a master of its destiny in a world that presents itself to him in its double capacity as ambivalent and beclouded. For Asouzu, the human subject can attain this feat on account of method itself: Where the human subject experiences method as disposition, the human subject has what it takes to accomplish what Asouzu calls "**existential conversion**" in the course of which human subjects become fully aware of the intricate and precarious character of all existential situations. Wherever awareness of this kind is in place, the human subject starts to seek and to embrace what the tools of ibuanyaidanda philosophy stipulate in view of seeking complementary unity with all existent realities. The type of awareness

needed to accomplish this task is what Asouzu designates as **ima onwe onye** in his Igbo language. He considers this the highest form of self-consciousness.

Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda as Philosophy of Rational Praxis

Asouzu lays much emphasis on the relevance of his philosophy to practical issues of life and shows this in his writings. Since he considers exclusivist divisive, absolutistic forms of conduct some of the things that threaten mutual coexistence of units within any framework, he devote much attention to exploring remedies to issues of this kind in many of his writings. His work "Method and Principles" serves as a good example where he outlines how his philosophy can be applied to concrete issues of Metaphysics, Ethics, Logic, Epistemology, Issues in Education, Environment, Social and Political Philosophy etc. His understanding of the relationship between missing links as that of mutual service in complementarity is also very beneficial in understanding his practical philosophy and especially as this relates to handling complex issues that deal with coexistence of units within any given framework: Typical examples are environmental issues, issues of social and political control, gender issues, issues of coexistence in multicultural and heterogeneous contexts, and all matters dealing with mutual dependence in complementary service. Asouzu thinks that one of the greatest causes of conflicts is the lack of interest, unwillingness and share ignorance concerning the inherent necessary connection between all existent reality and such that makes the affirmation of our being as something that can be validated only within a complementary framework inevitable. He emphasises the role played by the fragmentary relative character of existence. He believes that management of our relative historical condition is one of the most important tasks within any framework of mutual coexistence. Where we are unable to manage our relative it becomes an insurmountable problem, since the ambivalent tension to which all existent conditions are exposed instigates the ego to elevate relativity to an absolute instance. For him this is the very contradiction that stays at the base of all tension laden ambivalent situations where the ego, in its relativity, perceives itself as absolute. Perceiving itself as the fullness of being in its essentiality, it seeks, unilaterally, always to carve a niche for itself in a world that it shares believing that others are mere accidental dispensable quantities. These are those instances, where Asouzu believes that being is projected into human consciousness as exclusivist categories that cannot coexist within the same ontological plane. This is why in asymmetrical situations of power imbalance those who have the advantage of power always seek to lord it over those they perceive as dispensable and accidental and thereby negate the inherent necessary connection between substance and accidents as constituting and indivisible union. For Asouzu the negation of this inherent necessary connection between substance and accidents that can be traced to the metaphysics of Aristotle has had tremendous negative impact not only in human interpersonal relationship but in the distortion of the ontological order where the human subjects always seeks to lord it over those and those things it considers accidental and dispensable.

Now, if for Asouzu metaphysics explores the notion of being as missing links, logic for him highlights the fact that the quality and character of our reasoning very much depends on what we undertake to uphold the harmony between being and its attributes as missing links of reality. This is why a complementary or ibuanyidanda logic is beyond the logic of valuation in its diverse variants a two value, three value, four value logic etc. For Asouzu all forms of logic of valuation are constraining as they have an inherent moment of divisiveness and exclusiveness. This is why he calls for a complementary comprehensive logic beyond valuation. In this case, logic is an integral part of what is needed to mediate and equilibrate the tension inherent in the way our conjunctive and disjunctive faculties present the world to our consciousness. What this shows is that for Asouzu logic forms an integral part of general ontology and reinforces it. Since the ultimate aim of an complementary (ibuanyidanda) action is the joy of being (as *jide ka iji*), ethics naturally, for Asouzu's ibuanyidanda, does not limit itself to exploring only the nature of good and bad conducts, right and wrong conducts. Ethics, for him, should be interested also in joy and sadness of human action. As such ethical questions find their validity within a complementary framework. With regard to epistemology, Asouzu criticises all forms of ethnocentric induced theories of knowledge. He argues very strongly for complementary genesis of all ideas. For him all ideas in their genesis and further development are complementary in constitution. Worried by some of the severest implications of ethnocentric induced extremist and divisive forms of theorising, he thinks that the question of the origin of ideas can only be articulated complementarily to be credible. For him, it is a complementary based epistemology that has all it takes

to expose the weaknesses of all extreme forms theorising. Here, Asouzu is thinking specifically of such methods of inquiry which, though often unintentionally, are bent on reclaiming the corpus of human achievements and philosophical heritages as something exclusive to some regions of the world. It is within this context that Asouzu speaks of what he calls the “phenomenon of unintended ethnocentric commitment”. A coinage he uses to designate all such unconscious excesses expressed by researchers geared towards boosting their ego as they gloat in the achievements of their ancestors and race, while denigrating others. From here derives his critique of Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism in the question of the origin of philosophy and the whole question of “Stolen Legacy” and what he designates as “copycat philosophy”; contentions he considers ill-conceived because for him all ideas in their origin, excogitation and further development are complementary. Generally therefore, Asouzu call caution in the way philosophy as a culture-related enterprise is conducted. Her further seed the need for a review of some of the fundamental question of epistemology; most especially of issues concerning the origin of ideas, bearing in mind the complementarily character of all ideas in their origin and further development. He thinks that such important questions are more complex than the empiricist – rationalist dichotomy makes us believe. For him epistemology must be articulated beyond the empiricist rationalist dichotomy and beyond all divisive and exclusive tendencies with the scientific community to remain credible.

His complementary comprehensive stand in epistemology is strongly linked with his understanding of culture and the human person as a cultural being that can be grasped only within a complementary framework. Asouzu understands culture as something constituted of all the actors and factors that enter into generating those values and ideas from specific cultures are known. It is for this reason that for Asouzu the human persons is a being of heterogeneous constitution and backgrounds whose ideas are determined by the actors and factors that enter into their composition. Asouzu is thinking here of an interminable number of relations that constitute human consciousness in history. It is in this complementary comprehensive mode that Asouzu believes that philosophy can explore the world fullest in its richness; a necessary condition in guaranteeing and enhancing freedom of appropriation, freedom of expression and freedom of association. In other words, it is by way of a philosophy that cherishes mutual dependence of all existent realities in service that the human subject can free itself from those subconscious feeling of isolation and alienation that inhibit positive dealings with the world generally. The same can be said of self-imposed constraints resulting from all forms of segregative and exclusivist tendencies. Where such negative conditions abound, Asouzu sees them as remnants of human inability to deal adequately with tension laden character of the world as these derive from long years of (mis)education, indoctrination, and socialisation: Often concerning the achievements of our cultures and even of our past failures. For Asouzu these are some of the things that make a philosophy of complementation necessary and drive its therapeutic dimension. Such dangers abound the moment being is projected into human consciousness as exclusivist categories such that contraries are perceived and celebrated as contradictory incapable mutual coexistence and reconciliation. Asouzu thinks that problems of this kind persist because human beings have hardly learnt to pursue their interests as an integral part of the interest of all stakeholders. On the contrary they persist in extolling differences believing that will this will serve their interests best forgetful of the inherent necessary connection between all existent realities. Since all existent realities form an ontological block, such acts easily boomerang. This is when Asouzu talks of the **ontological boomerang effect of ibuanya philosophy** which ensues the moment stakeholders are forgetful, of the inherent necessary connection between all existent realities. In other words the ontological boomerang effect sets in immediately the moment stakeholders are incapable of affirming being as complementarily constituted and thereby negate the metaphysical principle of ibuanya philosophy that stipulates that anything that exists serves a missing link of reality. This ontological boomerang effect stipulates: Within any framework of action and interaction, what any of the units constituting the whole undertakes to hinder the realisation of the interests of other component units, makes the realisation of the interests of the offending unit difficult if not impossible. In other words, such negative actions always boomerang. It is the same insight that is captured by the Igbo aphorism **egbe bere ugo bere nke si ibe ya ebena nku kwaa ya** i.e. let the kite perch, let the eagle perch, whichever denies the other the same rights let its wings break. For Asouzu, this is another way of saying that acts of consistent self-interest are tantamount to anti-self-interest, since they boomerang (Asouzu, *Ibunya* 2007, 391-

400; Asouzu Ibuanyidanda 2013, 101-104). In the ontological boomerang effect Asouzu shows very clearly the close affinity between his metaphysical principle and the first principles whose negation is tantamount to self-negation. What this shows is that all acts of excessive selfishness hardly pay such that consistent **self-interest is anti-self-interest**. This is understandable because within such a framework that is complementarily constituted, all gains and lapses always rebound and triggers a chain reaction that resonates across board.

Asouzu's complementary philosophy (ibuanyidanda) as hermeneutics beyond worldviews

A philosophy that addresses world as missing links of reality, Asouzu's philosophy seeks to supersede the type of hermeneutical approaches in African philosophy that make African experiences and cultural values the starting point of philosophical investigation. Since his understanding of culture spans all existent realities as they are interminably related to each other, he does not see the need for African philosophy to dwell only on describing, presenting and defending African worldviews as the major task of philosophical investigation. His understanding of culture as the sum total of all the actors and factors that determine the ideas of thinker makes this approach possible. Even if his philosophy is inspired by the ideas of those he calls the anonymous traditional Africans of the complementary of thought, he very much aware that such ideas can be articulated only within a universal complementary framework to have any meaning at all. What this means is that he considers worldviews as they are provided by cultural elements as merely the very foundation upon which a systematic methodological philosophy can evolve and be erected; however not without thematising such within a wider complementary framework. This enormous hermeneutical task is something Asouzu sees lacking in most treatise in African philosophy; and he strives to explore it to its fullest by constructing a systematic methodological philosophy armed with its own tools of investigating reality generally. He relies on his principles, his method and other allied tools to construct a philosophy he calls his own; and based on which he interrogates reality generally. In this way, Asouzu arrives at notions and operational concepts, he calls his own, beyond what his cultural worldviews stipulate. In like manner, Asouzu is able to offer a philosophy which serves as his foundation of critique of reality generally; including even the statement *ibu anyi danda* on which he erects his own philosophy. Asouzu often says that ibuanyidanda philosophy is a critique of the statement *ibu anyi danda*. The same is applicable when he employs his method and principles to critiques and seek validation for the truth claim of observational statements and aphorisms quite widespread, and often taken for granted, in African philosophy and beyond. This why Asouzu would like to probe the truth claims, conditions of genesis and range of applicability of statements establishing what is accepted as normative statements in philosophy. For him most statements devised to defend our personal interests have the character of hypothetical commands but are mistaken for categorical imperatives. He reduces such statements to what he calls **super maxims** structured to defend privately motivated interests. Such super maxims are therefore hypothetical injunctions which are mistaken for categorical imperatives. For him all such maxims and aphorisms devised to defend and realise privately motivated interests are reducible to one super maxim that states: the nearer the better and the safer. What this means is that in most contentious situations of life where our most cherished interests are at stake, the mind instinctively, but erroneously, assumes that those nearest to us are better and safer always. Asouzu sees this as the assumption that underlies most acts. For Asouzu this is the character of most aphorisms and maxims devised in African philosophy to legitimise human action and construct theories of universal validity. This is the case with such expressions as *ujamaa*, communalism, *ubuntu*, *ibu anyi danda*, *njikoka*, "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" etc. as they occur in African philosophy. Since the normative strength of such expressions is very weak, they are not adequate as basis for constructing theories of universal validity and neither are they strung enough as basis for the justification of human action. For him there is need for a theory of universal validity based in a universal principle of legitimisation as is provided by the philosophy of complementarity or ibuanyidanda philosophy.

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