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THE POSITION OF THE HUMAN PERSON IN THE IDEA OF CAUSALITY – AN EXPOSITION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF COMPLEMENTARY REFLECTION

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Situating the position of human person in the idea of causality philosophically speaking, is not a simple academic task. But whence, one asks; what has African philosophy to offer the world in the age of globalization? A serious attention must be paid then to new complementary challenges of philosophy in the new world order. Answering to this question, Prof. Asouzu writes: “Hence, her many woes & troubles notwithstanding, African philosophy has much to offer the world” (Asouzu, Ibaru 308). Thus, Asouzu identified the phenomenon of globalization and the idea of Ibuanyidanda as creditable horizons within which an ontology that is universal in articulation can be expounding.

Be that as it may, the position of human person in the idea of causality is imperatively one of the main challenges of African philosophy which is located within a horizon of “complementary reflection”, a philosophical movement in contemporary African philosophy championed by Prof. Asouzu Innocent. This kind of reflection is ontologically rooted in probing into the conditions necessary for conceptualizing reality such that all missing links stay mutually harmonized in a universal comprehensive complementary way. In practical terms, Asouzu, writes: “This is a challenge to inquire into all forms of assumptions, methodologies, principles and theory formulations as to determine their adequacy towards upholding the co-existence of units in the face of their inherit tendencies towards universality, totality and comprehensiveness, in a future related perspective, their relativity notwithstanding” (309).

Perchance, this is the fulcrum on which this research work is based. That is defining and giving total position to human person within a more embracing framework as to transcend its localized settings of the ideas of causality as propounded by diverse authors.

2.0 EXPLICATION ON CONCEPTS

2.1.0 The Notion of Human Person

2.1.1 The Meaning of Person and Human Person

A person according to the classical definition given by Boethius as quoted by Omoregbe is “an individual substance of a rational nature” (Omoregbe, *Metaphysics Without Tears*, 36). This, simply put, means that a person must be a rational being or rather a rational substance. Omoregbe expatiates this further when he writes “A rational being necessarily possesses self-consciousness or, in other words, reflective consciousness. It is not enough for a person to be conscious, he must be conscious of the fact that he is conscious. In other words, he must be aware of his consciousness” (Ibid). When in his Second Meditation, Descartes became conscious of himself as a thinking being, his consciousness became, as it were, conscious of itself. This enabled him to affirm his existence- “cogito ergo sum” (I think therefore I am) (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 36) Descartes here affirmed also his personality.

Traditionally, a person according to Donceel is defined as, an individual possessing a spiritual nature. According to him “this definition contains a genus: (individual) and a specific difference “possessing a spiritual nature” (Donceel, *Philosophical Anthropology* 446).

Thus, far, it could be said then that generally, in his very nature the human person is a rational cum spiritual being and because of these qualities, he is also a moral being. And as an individual being he is one in himself and distinct from all other beings. On this, Donceel opines: “All real beings are individual; general entities exist only in the mind. But all real beings are not individualized in the same way” (Ibid). Furthermore, Donceel maintains that, we may say that purely spiritual beings are individualized through their form and purely material beings through the relation of their form to quantified matter. For Donceel, man is one in himself and distinct from all other beings through the very fullness and infinity of his being. Hypothetical pure spirits are individualized through their essence, or form, which represents in each one of them a unique, intensive degree of being. The difference between God and hypothetical pure spirits is not like a different sort of animals, but rather like the difference between an animal and a man. It is an intelligible difference; that is a difference which, if it is known at all by the human intellect, would be known without direct recourse to the senses.

Purely material beings on the other hand, are individualized, and are quite different from all other representatives of their species, not through their form but through the relation of that form to quantified matter.

Since man is both a material and a spiritual being, he must share to a certain extent, the two modes of individualization. In as much as he is material being, he differs from all other men through the relation of his form to quantified matter.

2.1.2 PERSONALITY VERSUS PERSON

The term personality does not enjoy any univocal definition. Asouzu understands this when he maintains that for the anonymous traditional African metaphysician the human personality is a very complex structure whose operation can be understood in terms of powers both material and immaterial. These interact with each other in ways that cannot be fully comprehensible” (Asouzu, *The Methods and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and beyond African Philosophy* 148).

G. W. Allport however, defines personality as “the dynamic organization within the individual, of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behaviour and thought” (*Pattern and Growth in Personality* 28).

Personality understood as an organization of system not just a sum total of traits is what Allport maintained. For him, this organization is dynamic, it changes, it acts upon the environments and is influenced by it. The systems are psycho-physical, they have a bodily and a mental aspect. This dynamic organization determines the behaviour and thought of the individual. The way in which a person behaves and thinks is determined and explained by his personality-by the way these psycho-physical systems are organized in him. The above explanation is within the empirical domain.

Human personality as a concept has got both empirical and meta-empirical explanation in African philosophy. A typical example relates to the idea of the anonymous traditional African philosophers of the complementary direction. For these philosophers intuition and introspection do not contradict matters of experience, they rather complement and reinforce themselves. Thus this Igbo metaphysician of the complementary direction identifies the human being (mmadu) as a concrete and yet abstract entity where the divide between the sexes and generational differences is perfectly bridged. (Asouzu, *The Methods and Principles*.149).

It is because of this that this philosopher of the complementary direction sees the idea of a human being as the conflux of differences and a perfect representation of synthesis. For this singular reason, he equates this concept with the ideas of beauty or goodness. Thus the Igbo concept of human being (mmadu) is composed of two words namely beauty (mma) and to be (di).

Explaining further, Asouzu writes: “Thus in his fascination about this fullness of synthesis and in anticipation of the goodness that is the unifying foundation of his being he unequivocally affirms this is goodness (mma di) and enthuses let goodness be (mma di)” (149).

Grasping the composition of the human personality this fullness of beauty, as something constituted of complementary interacting beautiful and sublime parts, is very fundamental to the whole ontology of this philosopher of the complementary system of thought. This very philosopher is nevertheless, certain that the human person is a composite of mutually interacting and material units of which one is the immaterial soul (mkpuruobi) which is something spiritual and indestructible. This is when he designates it again as mmuo (spirit) and as that part which survives death and which entitles a person for the fullness of existence in the land of spirit (ana muo) or land of living dead.

2.2 THE IDEA OF CAUSALITY

Aristotle distinguished between four kinds of causes, namely: material causes, (the stuff with which a thing is composed), the formal cause (the form or shape that a thing takes), the final cause (the end or purpose for which a thing is intended). The efficient cause (the agent responsible for bringing a thing into existence). Of all these causes, only efficient cause is commonly identified as cause. This is when many see a cause as that which brings about a certain effect. In other words a cause is that by which something (an effect) is produced. Omoregbe supports this view as he declares, “Today, the word “cause” is now restricted only to one of these four causes of Aristotle, namely, the efficient cause, that is that which is responsible for bringing something into existence”. (Omoregbe 22-23).

Certain concepts are generally associated with the concept causation. First, causation is believed to be universal. The statement “Every event has a cause”, for example is taken to be of universal application since there is no events that has no cause. Another concept associated with causation is uniformity of nature. This means that the same kinds of causes produce the same kinds of effects always and everywhere under the same conditions. This is a type of understanding of cause in the natural science. According to this scientific model, the universe is governed by laws and things happen only according to these law. This is a basic presupposition of modern science, and all that scientists do is to understand these laws so as to know how they can help us explain certain events in the sense of understanding such laws as the causes that can produce certain kinds

of desirable effects. Another important concept associated with the concepts of causation is the concept of “necessary connection”. Before David Hume it was generally believed by philosophers that there was a necessary connection between an event and its cause, or, in other words between a cause and its effect, such that once the cause is present its effect must necessarily follow. If this were true, that is, if there is a necessary connection between one event and another, between a cause and its effect, there would be no instance in which a cause occurs and the effect fails to follow. A typical example is pregnancy which many assume is caused by sexual intercourse. However, there are numerous instances where sexual inter-course occurs but pregnancy fails to follow. This shows that there is no necessary connection between sexual intercourse and pregnancy even though some assume that there is connection. David Hume, the Scottish Philosopher was the first to challenge the assumption of a necessary connection between a cause and its effect. Hume pointed out that we do not perceive any such necessary connection that it is not part of our empirical experience, how then do we come to form the idea in our minds? Hume says it is derived “from our habit of associating things that usually go together in sequence” (Hume, *Enquiring Concerning Human Understanding*, 76) Hume also points out that the uniformity of nature, on which the universality of the causal principles is based, is an assumption which cannot be proved. Similarly that the future will resemble the past is an unproven assumption and all these assumptions are implied in the universal application of the principle of causality.

In complementary reflection, the intrinsic necessary relationship between cause and effect relationships is not denied, rather “Complementary ontology recognizes the difficulties involved in such observations but considers them as those difficulties that usually arise when we overlook the fact that the human subject carries the moment of complementarity as an inherent constituent of his being”. (Asouzu, *Ibuanidanda* 285). For Asouzu, it is precisely this moment of complementarity inherent in the constitution of the human person that conveys necessity to all forms of causality. This is the point of departure of the complementary alternative. To understand this point of departure more accurately, it may be essential to outline some of the basic assumptions of complementary reflection as propounded by Prof. Asouzu.

2.2.3.1 COMPLEMENTARITY AND COMPLEMENTARY REFLECTION

“Complementarism is a philosophy that seeks to consider things in the significance of their singularity and not in the exclusiveness of their otherness in view of the joy that gives completion to all missing links of reality” (Asouzu, *The Methods and Principles*.39). This is a philosophy of

categorization, sorting, harmonization, pairing up, and complementation. In complementary reflection, world immanent realities are related to one another in the most natural, mutual, harmonious and compatible ways possible. The sole aim of this task is to allow being to assume its natural completeness as the joy that unifies all realities.

According to Prof. Asouzu complementary reflection is the sum total of the intellectual mechanisms employed to make the philosophical project of complementarity materialized. This reflection emphasizes the richness of differentiation in complementarity and does not handle exclusiveness as absolute category of world immanent realities. On the contrary Asouzu upholds that complementary reflection considers world immanence as aspects of transcendent unit of consciousness, which drives the reality of the world. He emphasizes that although complementary reflection shares some aspects of transcendental reflection, it is not transcendental in constitution or in application rather it is purely transcendent. Above all, whereas some versions of intercultural philosophy lay much emphasis on the relative position of the human person in history, complementary reflection seeks to show how the human person in history can be grasped within a more comprehensive relative-absolute bracket.

Ontologically, complementary reflection makes recourse to the principles of complementarity as a philosophical paradigm concerning the type of solution needed in our world today. It is also pertinent to know that complementary reflection reformulates this principle which it borrows from the ambience of traditional African philosophy and makes it a tool of explanation and understanding in a comprehensive, total, and universal manner. Within this stance of complementary reflection Asouzu submits: “It is a philosophy, which sees enormous advantages in the multidimensional structure of our world and seeks to explore this in the most complementary and harmonious way possible” (Asouzu, *The Methods and Principles* 11).

2.3.2 COMPLEMENTARY REFLECTION AND ITS PRINCIPLES AND THE NATURE OF MISSING LINKS

Complementary reflection as a philosophy of action has two basic principle underlining it. “These are the principles of harmonious complementation and the principle of progressive transformation”. (Asouzu, *Effective Leadership and the Ambivalence of Human Interest, The Nigeria Paradox in a Complementary Perspective*, 58). The principle of harmonious complementation or principle of integration states “Anything that exists serves a missing link of reality”. Asouzu views this principle of integration as the metaphysical variant of the principle of

complementary reflection. The second principle, as the practical variant of this principle, Asouzu calls the “principle of progressive transformation”. This principle states “all missing links are geared towards the joy of being” (Method and Principles 273). These are the principles that impel us as human beings in all we do to seek harmony and complementation.

Furthermore, Asouzu, sheds more light on the nature of the missing link, when he writes “... the phenomenon of missing link takes the forms of the irrelevant, the dissimilar, the asymmetrical, the strange etc “(Asouzu, Ikwa Ogwe 14).

Besides these principles, Asouzu formulates as the imperative of complementary reflection. “Allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy” (Asouzu, Effective Leadership 60; cf. Method and Principles 273).

What then is the Ambience of complementary reflection? Asouzu, answers this when he writes: “TO put complementary reflection on a firm foundation entails exploring the ambience of its possibility. This ambience is the sum total of all known and unknown factors, conditions and actors that enter into such reflection. Here, we are thinking of all the elements of the philosopher’s total intellectual and historical background. (Asouzu, The Methods and Principles. 95).

3.0 HUMAN PERSONALITY AND CAUSALITY

3.1 Human Personality and Causal World Immanent Pre- Deterministic Concomitancy

In complementary reflection, human person is seen as a very complex structure whose operation can be understood in terms of powers both material and immaterial. Complementary reflection is quite aware of the complexity of the human personality and there is no pretence to capture and describe it in very precise and detailed language. In this point, its major objective is to supersede and refine the ideas of traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought whose idea of the human person is saddled with difficulties arising from their world-immanent pre-deterministic thinking. Thus for traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought human ultimate destiny subsists in the continued existence of the whole human person after death in the land of spirits (ana mmuo). Thus for these traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought the “immaterial spiritual aspects of the human person are complemented by the physical and psycho-emotional dimensions both in real life and in death to uphold a distinct identity of either a living human person or a spiritual dead human person”. (The Methods and Principle 151-152). Asouzu points out that one of the major set

backs of this idea of anonymous traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought is its thorough going world immanent pre-determinism. Here, the subject object dichotomy is fused into one transcendent ego of which the human reason in history becomes its driving force. This ego is often hypostasized in the overhaul worthy speculative reason of these anonymous traditional African thinkers. For this speculative reason the real is the ideal constituting both the real and the ideal. In the same way, the material is the immaterial constituting both the material and the immaterial. For this reason, historical processes are easily projected as necessary expression of the totality that gives legitimacy to all extent realities. Likewise, world immanency easily becomes adequate explicative basis for question demanding ultimate answer” (204). In other words, bearing in mind its ambience of articulation, which is the philosophical propositions of traditional Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought, Asouzu avers that the human person cannot be conceptualized accurately except in term of complementary interacting units. This notwithstanding, Asouzu rejects the world-immanent pre-determinism inherent in the ideas of these traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought and upholds an idea of the human person that is constituted of mutually complementing units. That is to say, while recognizing the intrinsic mutual relationship that is constitutive of idea of a human person, Asouzu seeks to do away with this dimension of world-immanent predetermination. In other words, complementary reflection in its understanding of the human person sees this as something that can be situated within a future oriented comprehensive context. Stop November 4, 2007

4.1 IBUANYIDANDA BEYOND CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIP

The idea of causality vis-à-vis the position of human person is better understood and rendered intelligible when considered within the context of what Asouzu understands under Ibuanyidanda (complementarity) within the context of this complementary alternative, sets out expounding the meaning of Ibuanyidanda. For him, the term Ibuanyidanda is a composite word made of the following three parts”

Ibu	=	load or task
Anyi	=	not insurmountable for
Danda	=	danda (a specie of ants)

According to the author, the concept *Ibuanyidanda* draws its inspiration from the teachings of traditional Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought. For these philosophers, the idea of complementarity is brought about from observing a species of ants called *danda*. These ants (*danda*) have the capacity to carry loads that appear bigger and heavier than themselves. What this implies is that they can surmount every difficult task when they are mutually dependent on each other in the complementation of their effort. “Hence these traditional Igbo philosophers insist that: *Ibuanyidanda* (no task is insurmountable for *danda*). This is the idea of mutual dependence and inter-independence in complementarity” (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda New Complementary Ontology Beyond World-immanentism, Ethnocentric Reduction and impositions* 11).

The task now is to try to capture the idea of the human person as a necessary factor of causality as one of the central teachings Asouzu’s complementary reflection. Here, Asouzu avers that the concept *Ibuanyidanda* goes beyond cause and effect relationship as this is usually understood as a thing, which is an efficient cause, brings about an effect. Asouzu came to this conclusion because for him “anything that exists serves a missing link of reality”. With this he underlines the moment mutual dependence, which exists between cause and effect. With this he gives richer meaning to the type of relationship that can be established between cause and effect or when we say that a thing causes the other. In other words, he seeks to grasp the type of relationship existing between diverse modes of self expression of being beyond the idea of mere mechanistic unbending type of casualty. Within this complementary framework, we are dealing with a situation where entities are related to themselves necessarily and such they serve a missing link. For Asouzu, the human person is the very carrier of necessity such that the idea of an inherent necessary relationship between a cause and its effect can be affirmed anthropologically. In this point, Asouzu seeks to go beyond Hume’s empiricism which devalues the worth of such moment of necessity because of its obsession with metaphysics. In other words, the dimension of necessity as an aspect of causality has true worth since remove the human person as the subject and carrier of necessity, no idea of necessity would be thinkable. When now Asouzu avers that “anything that exists serves a missing link of reality” he wishes to grasp at all possible relations needed to express the type of relationship existing between cause and effect. Here, more is involved as the type of necessary linkage that connects a cause to its effect bearing in mind the position of the thinking subject whose self-consciousness is the condition of conceptualizing this type of relationship.

5.0 EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Evaluation

The position of human person in the idea of causality is nailed most often to philosophical arguments, debates and theories. Man is a spirit in matter, he is spirit and body. This strange combination produces tensions in man and explains what Mouroux calls the paradoxes of the human person.

As a body, man is subject to all the laws of matter, cause and effect, he is in time and space, he is a unified totality, his unity is not perfect but comprises many elements which are often at war with each other. As a spirit man is above space and time, presently present to himself, capable of assimilating the rest of the universe and making it one with himself.

By introducing the position of the human person as an anthropological constant in this tension-laden existential condition, Asouzu seeks to reclaim a dimension of causation which gets lost in Hume's psychologism. In other words, he claiming that the moment of necessity can only be attributed to an illusory psychological condition, Hume by implication denies the constitutive role of a self-conscious subject, whose consciousness of its existence is a necessary condition of the affirmation of cause and effect relationship. In other words, Hume denies the self which explains cause and effect relationship a substantial identity. Within the wider context of complementary reflection, a denial of such moment of necessity is a denial of other missing links that might be adjudged necessary for an effect to result from the background of its cause(s) since for Asouzu "anything that exists serves a missing link". Such a position as Hume's would lead to the denial of the existence of God, a fact that is affirmed by complementary reflection whose focus is comprehensive and future-related. Arguing similarly as Asouzu, Iroegbu making a total critique of Humean position avers: "Does physics not necessarily imply a metaphysics, is the empirical not a necessary correlative of the meta-empirical. And is the sensible not complemented in the intelligible, and the phenomenal authenticated in the noumena? Humean lopsided view of metaphysical knowledge and reality is a philosophical negativity" (Iroegbu, *Metaphysics Kpim of Philosophy* 179).

One can say that Asouzu's complementary reflection has made a significant contribution towards clearer understanding and assessment of the moment of necessity in the idea of causality. By trying to regain the centrality of the human person, he succeeds in overcoming some of the difficulties saddling this idea most especially as it has been handed down us by David

Hume. Hence, one can say that Asouzu' complementary reflection goes beyond cause and effect relationship in its handling of the idea of causality. He captures this when he writes: "When I say that anything that exists serves a missing link of reality, I wish to grasp the type of relationship existing between diverse modes of self expression of being beyond the idea of mere mechanistic unbending type of causality". (Asouzu, Ibuanyidanda 284).

Within this complementary framework, Asouzu continues; we are dealing with situation where entities are related to themselves necessarily but such that they serve a missing link. For complementary ontology, "the effect is a necessary condition to know its agent and where there is no effect, we can also not think of an agent that causes it" (288). An agent risks remaining inconceivable were it to deny the effect its inescapable role in the whole process needed for the effect to be produced. Where we negate the role which effect plays in being produced, then there is no need talking of cause and effect, since both would mean the same thing. In all these processes, the human person is the anchor of mutual complementary relationship as it plays its constitutive and necessary role. **CONCLUSION**

Within the ambit of Asouzu' complementary reflection, the human person is the carrier of complementarity and with it of necessity. Therefore, cause and effect cannot be spoken of in other mode exempt in a complementary mode. The thinking subject is the carrier of the cause and effect. Philosophically speaking, causality is only possible only under mutual complementarity. It is however due to the illusion arising from a stringent commitment to an ontology of differences that many are of the opinion that the idea of causality, as it is normally used in classical metaphysics, has to be dropped, like David Hume. Here they may be right provided this is not a ploy to reintroduced intolerance and an ontology of exclusiveness through another guise.

Epistemologically, a cause without a necessary inherent complementary linkage to its effect remains, as a matter within the domain of human self-conscious act, an illusion. In this matter, Asouzu infers that "Hume's problem of induction, as with most theories that seek to negate the moment of mutual complementary relationship between a cause and its effect, is more of an ideological than purely epistemological a matter" (293).

Thus if a person were to deny such a necessary complementary linkage between cause and effect, this person would definitely not be in a position to consummate his reflection as an act peculiar to a human being that shares the world with others. Asouzu affirms strongly here that "No

reflection is possible without a form of intrinsic linkage of the subject to a network of relations that complement themselves mutually”.

Concluding therefore, we say that, being in its most fundamental mode of expression shows always an inherent moment of mutual complementarity. In this way, it admits the moment of fragmentation or relativity, comprehensiveness, totality, wholeness, and future reference as internal moments of its dynamism. This is that basis of intimacy between the idea of causality and serves in managing the relationship between substance and accidents more excellently.

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