Title: IBUANYINDANDA (COMPLEMENTARY REFLECTION) AND SOME BASIC PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS IN AFRICA TODAY

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Reality presents itself in different ways to different people. While this in itself is not bad, it remains the main source of error, ethnocentric reduction, divisiveness, intolerance and other problematic that stem from our tendency to exalt our own unique perception of reality to an absolute instance – ignoring and downgrading the other's viewpoint. Asouzu sees this tendency to negate the other, and raise oneself to a superior stand, as the root of most problems in inter-personal relationship and in philosophical discourse. This tendency he believes, is occasioned by the basic presupposition of Ibuanyidanda philosophy – *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment) and our ambivalent laden experience of reality.

Innocent Asouzu, a super-heavy weight African philosopher – the founder of the fast spreading school of thought in philosophy, I prefer to call *Ibuanyidandaism*, in this book *Ibuanyindanda (Complementary Reflection) and some Basic Philosophical Problems in Africa Today*, attempts to highlight in his usual

eclectic style, the impact of *ihe mkpuchi anya* and our ambivalent laden experience of reality on our consciousness. He believes these constraining mechanisms or phenomena impact on the way we judge, act, will and philosophize. He seeks through his Ibuanyidanda philosophy to neutralize the effect of these constraining mechanisms on our consciousness; so that at every instance we may be able to grasp the *Ibuanyidandaness* of every reality.

In chapter one, Asouzu argues that every human being (both educated and uneducated, religious and irreligious) is subject to an ambivalent tension which is occasioned by our rationality being prised apart by our instinct of self-preservation. This means that the world present itself to us in double capacity. But because of the operation of *ihe mkuchi anya* we are blinded from seeing the world in this double capacity. We rather see the world in a unilateral mode and thereby we fall prey to irrational judgement of our experiences, interest, choices et cetera. This is why according to Asouzu, people tend to pursue only those things that interest them, concealed to the fact that those that do not interest them are also important and could impact negatively on them if not attended to. The phenomenon of concealment, would blind some politicians to loot public treasury to foster their prized interest, ignoring the ambivalent side (negative impact) of this action to themselves. These constraining mechanisms - *ihe mkpuchi anya* and our ambivalent laden experience of reality, according to Asouzu further explains why we accept most descriptive statements as true and valid. He believes that descriptive statements like *ibu anyi danda* (no task is insurmountable to danda the ant) are not always true and valid in all cases. If we take the statement ibu anyi danda to be true in all cases, Asouzu maintains, we would most likely be compelled to conclude that whatever is valid for the ant is also valid for humans as well. He calls this, “error of transposition and picture-type fallacies (15). This error is evident when we assume

that because somebody is from Yoruba, he/she must certainly be dirty. Or because somebody is from Efik he/she must certainly be sexually promiscuous. This sort of error of reasoning, Asouzu believes leads us to turn the hypothetical maxim: "the nearer the better and safer" to a categorical maxim. This for Asouzu amounts to existential fallacies, since the nearer may not always be better and safer. Seeing reality in terms of the nearer the better and safer, Asouzu argues is the root cause of ethnocentric commitment and other extremist and discriminative tendencies in our world today. It is important to mention here that in October 2011 Jonathan O. Chimakonam published one of the most incisive criticisms of Ibuanyidanda theory in a paper titled "Dissecting the Character of Danda the Ant and Neutralizing the Philosophy of Missing Links: An Egbe n'Ugo Conundrum". *Journal of Complementary Reflection: Studies in Asouzu*. Vol.1 No.1. pp.41-52. In this paper he raised some issues which Asouzu in this 2013 book appear to tackle ebulliently. One of such issue is the correspondence of danda phenomenon to human phenomenon. As shown above, Asouzu admitted that what works for danda the ant may not always work for humans. He calls this error of transposition and picture type fallacy but it was Chimakonam in his criticism that first observed this error when he asked: "is there a reasonable proof that a philosophy that works for ants can work for mankind and indeed for all beings in their world immanent variations? The answer is No!"(46). Chimakonam took time to dissect the character of Danda and the circumstance of its existence and showed why Ibuanyidanda theory might be fundamentally in error. His rhetoric question afterwards is "A man neither has the same character as danda nor shares the same circumstances, how can a philosophy that works for danda work for man?" (47). Generally, the insightful observations in that critique are to my view relevant for onward development of Ibuanyidanda theory.

Chapter two of the book x-rayed the impact of these constraining mechanisms, *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment) and our ambivalent laden experience of reality on the way ontology is being done in Africa and the world today. He accused Aristotle of letting in this tension into ontology through his dichotomous treatment of the subject of being. Aristotle separated being into substance and accident. Substance, he held, subsist independent of accident and therefore is essential and indispensable. Accident on the other hand depends on substance for their existence and are thus inessential and dispensable. Asouzu believes, this divisiveness that was set in motion by Aristotle has percolated through the length of the history of Western philosophy and has also caught up with Africans through education, indoctrination and socialization by the West. Through the working of this mindset, most stakeholders according to Asouzu are constrained to see the world in opposites – the one essential and indispensable (substance) and the other inessential and dispensable (accident). Following this divisiveness, the West perceives themselves as the essential (substance) and the rest as inessential (accidents). Tempels according to Asouzu popularized this mindset by his 'vital force theory'. In this theory, Tempels portrayed the Africans (Bantu) as not capable of separating the transcendental notion of being from its accident like the West. According to Asouzu, if the Bantu are only capable of grasping the accidental notion of being (force), then they are inferior to the west who are capable of separating the accidental from the substantial and thereby able to grasp the two. He regrets that, this debased notion of conception of reality as formulated by Tempels, that reduces African world-view to that of spirits, witchcraft, magic et cetera., is now taken by African scholars as the definitive feature of African philosophy. He quoted Momoh a leading African philosopher's assertion that "any work that claims to be an African philosophy, is not an African philosophy , if it is actually not in harmony and congruence with the spirit of Africa, which reality is primarily spiritual" (66).

Reasoning like this Asouzu argues is at the root of the formation of theories concerning African science, African philosophy, African ethics, African logic et cetera. For him, both the West and Africans have inherent moment of oscillation between transcendence and world immanence, as a dimension of the ambivalent tension to which all human experiences of reality are subjected. To claim one for Africa and the other one for the West is a function of the constraining mechanisms, *ihe mkpuchi anya* and our ambivalent laden experience of reality that beclouds are reasoning. For Asouzu, the categories – static and dynamic are not mutually exclusivist, there could be made to coexist in mutual complementation, if the method of Ibuanyidanda is imbibed. Ibuanyindanda ontology conceptualizes being as that on account of which anything that exist serves a missing link of reality (71). It seeks at reversing the divisive trend in ontology so that both the substance and accident would not be caught in a disharmonized and dichotomized relationship but as missing links existing in a harmonized framework. In this harmonized framework, substance is made to affirm the being of accident, and accident is made to affirm the being of substance. It is only with this mindset that being could be truly grasped. This mindset could however, be attained through a positive pedagogy, Asouzu calls, *'Noetic propaedeutic'. Noetic propaedeutic* as conceptualized by Asouzu is the training of the mind to conceive beings not in fragmentary modes but as existing as missing links of reality. Here again we comment that it would probably be realistic if Asouzu realizes that Aristotle's discriminating framework stems from the native Western thought system just as the non-discriminative framework he projects stems from the native African thought system. But this would speedily slide him down to chronic positions held by scholars like Chimakonam who has stated without equivocation that the discrepancy of thought system among the races of the world is an indubitable fact (see *Introducing African Science: Systematic and Philosophical Approach. Bloomington Indiana:*

Authorhouse, 2012. pp. 3-4, 13-18). Asouzu thinks such a position is hunted by the phenomenon of *ihe mkpuchi anya*. Also, Asouzu's interpretation of Momoh above is slightly incorrect. That reality in African philosophy is primarily spiritual does not suggest that it is solely spiritual. As a matter of fact, it means that there are secondary realities but that the spiritual ones are superior. Clearly, this Momoh's position does not equate with Tempels' view as Asouzu presented it in the book.

In chapter three Asouzu showed, that the impact of *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment) and our ambivalent laden experience of reality is not only limited to interpersonal relationship and issues of ontology, but also the way we do epistemology in Africa and the world at large. Asouzu believes that these constraining mechanisms concealed from us the truth, that an individual "raw primary cognitive ambience" is not sufficient to convey the highest level legitimacy in matters of knowledge and action (80). The raw cognitive ambience for Asouzu is the ambience that is real to the actor – it constitutes those things and institutions we are likely to accept as true without questioning. Asouzu believes this to be the domain where our constraining mechanisms are active – it is the domain where ethnocentric reduction and imposition reign supreme. To attain truth, Asouzu believes we need to transcend this ambience to what he calls, "a complementary cognitive ambience". This is the ambience we share with all missing links of reality – without operating at this level, Asouzu believes, all stakeholders would raise their raw primary ambience to absolute fragments – they would see the impression that comes to them through their raw cognitive ambience as the whole truth. Asouzu sees this kind of mindset as the driving force behind "the Black Athena Debate, Afrocentricism, the Philosophy of Stolen Legacy, Copy Cat Philosophy et cetera. Asouzu believes that, holding the view that Africa is the sole originator of philosophy as the philosophy of the

stolen legacy argues, would tantamount to negating the raw primary cognitive ambience of other geographical areas – this is the handiwork of *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment) and our ambivalent laden experience of reality, which make us negate the claim and idea of others as constitutive of the origin of philosophy. Asouzu holds that the question of the origin of ideas (which has also been the burden of empiricism and rationalism) could not be tied to one discrete cognitive ambience. All matters dealing with origins of ideas and thoughts are thinkable only within a complementary comprehensive context.

Asouzu dedicates chapter four and five to a discourse of the problematic inherent in logical reasoning as a result of the constraining mechanisms *ihe mkpuchi anya* and our ambivalent laden experience of reality. He believes these mechanisms make our reasoning to be in disjunctive mode. That is, we are restricted by this mechanism to, 'either this or that' kind of reasoning. Relating to the world in this arbitrary disjunctive mode according to Asouzu makes us intolerable to differences and otherness. He believes this to be the character of our logic today. Because of the influence of the constraining mechanisms, logic is being conceptualized in 'this or that' mode (that is, either African or Western logic). This kind of logic is what Asouzu calls geographical logic – which sees geographical differences as a valid reason for building arguments and drawing conclusions. Geographical logic according to Asouzu inhibits the mind, causing it to relate to the world in categories like: Western science, African science, Chinese medicine, Western logic, Eastern logic, Southern logic, African logic et cetera. For Asouzu, this logic of geographical categorization conditions the mind to act after the super maxim of the nearer the better and safer, and is vulnerable to the fallacy of over generalization, *reduction ad absurdum,* and *argumentum ad infinitum*. The logic of Ibuanyidanda, Asouzu argues seeks to grasps at all missing links beyond the limit

imposed by geographical categorization (95). This logic, Asouzu claims, seeks to instil the disposition needed to have a harmonized type of reasoning needed to embrace missing links in the comprehensiveness of their interrelatedness. He believes that for any logic to achieve the type of correctness, validity and truth expected of it, it must conceive all realities as missing links of realities (92). Conception of reality this way makes room for the coexistence of opposites. Here again, Asouzu addresses and clarifies the logical concerns which Chimakonam had raised in his criticism of Ibuanyidanda (44 - 46) making clear even some of the issues Chimakonam may have misunderstood. Ironically, the logical clarification Asouzu presented tallies with the system of the so-called African three-valued logic which Chimakonam so far has been the major architectonic builder. The very logic he recommended for Ibuanyidanda in his words "again and most importantly, he (Asouzu) should move his theory from the problematic single-valued logic to a three-valued logic of African thought system. In this I think, the theory of complementary reflection shall find a suitable interpretation (51)." Although, Asouzu did not employ the words "three-valued" and "African" to characterize the logic of his theory, the structure is almost the same with Chimakonian logic.

Asouzu in this beautifully written book has laid bare the foundation of the problems in Africa and the world at large – the problems that have kept philosophy in a tortuous movement over eons of years. This problem *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment) and our ambivalent laden experience of reality as he laboriously showed are resolvable, if all stakeholders suck up the method, principles and imperative of Ibuanyidanda philosophy. Of more importance is that he has in this book taken the theory of Ibuanyidanda further by addressing some of its loopholes. Even his most rigorous critic as far as I am concerned, J O. Chimakonam had to agree that Asouzu's theory is courageous and exceptional in his words: "I find in Asouzu's works, discussions, articulations and

conceptualizations that one seeks in vain in the works of other philosophers from this part of the world" (51).

At this point I have no choice than to say a 'big well done' to professor Innocent Asouzu for this brilliant articulation. I would say a bigger well done, if in his next publication, he elaborates more vividly on the place of God and Devil in this his missing link conceptual framework.