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### The complementary comprehensive noetic alternative

Innocent I. Asouzu\*

(University of Calabar, Nigeria)

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#### Introduction

Power disparity, and the attendant misuse of power for personal interests are some of the major causes of the *global paradox* where those values which are the pride of modernity, like freedom and human rights, are some of the very values that the modern mind finds difficult to adhere to. Addressing issues accruing from the paradoxes and inconsistencies associated with a tension-laden situation of this nature constitutes one of the central themes of the *new complementary challenges of philosophy*. (Asouzu, The Method 44-51). Abuse of power almost always evokes fear of domination and oppression. We can then understand the call today, in many quarters, for alternatives to a universal form of totalitarian rationality in matter concerning the validation of our claims in conflict situations. This is the case with proponents of philosophy of culture who pursue a domination-neutral interaction rooted in the acknowledgment of differences and diversities among interlocutors of heterogeneous cultural backgrounds. Like many, Kimmerle considers dialogue the very *form* of such a philosophy, which he understandably sets against mere restrictive comparative analysis of cultural heritages. (Kimmerle 97-117). Likewise, the general science of culture, as worked out by Oswald Schwemmer and erected on the logical propedeutic of Wilhelm Kamlah/Paul Lorenzen, foresees the constructive method of rational arguments as a way of confronting such excesses resulting from power inequalities. Within the framework of African philosophy, Ekennia, speaks of practical rationality ((Ekennia, 215). In all, one of the greatest difficulties facing theories that seeks to mediate in situations of power imbalance remains that of outlining adequate validating conditions for our claims and assertions. Complementary reflection does not consider this an issue that has to do solely with the material and formal logical character of arguments, claims and assertions. It sees matters of truth and validation as one that has an inherently dispositional dimension that cannot be ignored. Hence, for complementary reflection the issue centres more on how human reason can be led to abide *insightfully* by its own laws such that lawmakers can also be law keepers and speak credibly over those rules, values and norms they think that they have understood well but which they insist on subverting, often against their own interests. It is an issue that revolves around the general enlightenment of human reason concerning its interests which it can subvert *in apparent insight and willingly, yet ignorantly too*. Issues relating to a paradox of this nature constitute the central problematic of the challenges of human ambivalent situation. It is therefore an inquiry into the structure of human consciousness as to determine the reasons for the subject-object divide such that the subject seeks its autonomy outside the foundation of its unity. One must admit that a form of propedeutic is essential towards addressing this issue but one that goes beyond claims about good and exact knowledge of facts or claims about mastering the rules of rational arguments with the inherent dangers of misuse of argument itself. As a broadly dispositional issue, I wish to handle this delicate and intricate matter within the context of a complementary type of reflection which explores the comprehensive dimension of truth and validation. Validation and with it all manners of ratiocination are complementary comprehensive acts that remain incomplete when disengaged from the activity of a comprehensive totalising mind. Exploring such acts from the point of view of the *mind* is *the noetic complementary comprehensive alternative*. This approach may entail a revision of some of the basic assumptions underlying our understanding of the nature of proof and assertions. Certainly, any approach founded on the unimpeded trappings of a one-dimensional absolute ideal reason would hardly suffice for this challenge. Such methods lack credibility because they share traces of some of the main difficulties inherent in the problem itself. These are the problems associated with the misuse of power

in asymmetrical situations that is characteristic of all form of one-dimensional application of an ideal absolute and hegemonic type of ratiocination.

This one-dimensional mindset is at the root of most ethnophilosophic methods of philosophical investigation that continue calling for diversities and differences in a way that ignores the inherent totalising character of the mind. It does this also without due regard for the yearnings of science for unity and comprehensiveness. One has to admit that such approaches have the capacity to expose people to alternative ways of viewing reality. However, their proponents pretend that the focus of philosophical investigation should be the general worldview of a people with the attendant documentation of such and sustained by formal dialogue between diverse segments of human enclaves. Here, they forget that such worldviews are thoughts of individuals or groups of individuals, within their given locations, which have congealed to such collective contents. These congealed contents again revert to the very foundation from which the ideas of their originators are moulded and remoulded to new forms of insight (Asouzu, *The Method* 120-129). In other words, we are dealing here with a typical instance of mutual complementary dependence between idea and its referent and with a situation of the mind seeking universal, whole, and comprehensive determination even in given locations. Understanding these worldviews entails a complementary comprehensive consideration of their ambience as the sum total of all the actors and factors that enter into their excogitation. In a globalising world, the essential structure and form of these factors and actors are, at times, so complex and endless that they can render a pure ethnocentric orientation meaningless. It hardly also occurs to the proponents of such exclusive approaches that they indirectly affirm *fully* what they are inclined to gloss over, that is the inherent tendency of the mind to seek harmony and unity and the universal, whole, comprehensive, complementary and future referential structure of inquiry. Bearing this in mind, one can say that such exclusive, restrictive, polarising methods would ever remain curious because they have an intrinsic moment of self-negation and self-delimitation and have all the potentials of unwarranted arbitrary incursion into the dynamic structure of the mind reminiscent of the excesses of a hegemonic totalitarian form of ratiocination. It is therefore not a question if adherence to a universal, complementary, unified, whole, comprehensive and future referential form of consciousness is desirable, but how to harness this innate dynamic structure of human consciousness for the benefit of all stakeholders.

What has been said applies not only to Ethnophilosophy proper, but to similar thought systems like some variants of Eurocentricism and Afrocentricism, and of recent, some brands of Islamic fundamentalism that seek to erect blocks and fan the amber of division among peoples. Therefore, the new complementary task of philosophy today is and remains, to explore means towards overcoming all types of despotic ideal reason and ideological fundamentalism both at the private, local and international levels masquerading as localised rationality.

Contrary to the pretensions of ethnophilosophic inspired methods of investigation that the essence of philosophy lies solely on documentation of differences, all philosophies resemble themselves in the point where the philosopher is a bridge between reality, in its most sublime form, and humanity, as this becomes evident even in given localities. This is why the philosopher, strictly considered, is definitely different from say, an anthropologist, a politician, a theologian, a sociologist, a physicist, a psychiatrist, a logician, a mathematician etc. (Asouzu, *The Method* 46). He can be all these and still remain a philosopher in his commitment to the demands of truth and authenticity criterion as pursued by complementary reflection (Asouzu, *The Method* 318). Hence, in all serious scientific undertakings there is always the need for clarity and credibility and this is why science will always insist on a unity of subject matter and here philosophy is not an exception. In the absence of a unified subject matter, and in the absence of credible criteria for the validation of our claims and assertions, it becomes difficult, even today, for philosophers to speak with *one mind*, as scientists, in a way that transcends geographical and ideological boundaries. Thus complementary reflection explores the conditions for the validation of our claims and assertions which it understands as being fundamentally noetic in the sense of the acquisition of a complementary, unified, emancipated and *transcendent mindset*. This is the dispositional precondition for ratiocination as it enables the philosopher to attain the full consciousness of himself or herself as a typical instance of being seeking full and comprehensive actualisation in history irrespective of local constraints. At this point, philosophy is there to overcome all forms of paradoxes occasioned by the inability of human reason to address positively the ambivalence of its existential situations and thereby negate its own laws.

The task is therefore that of evolving *the conditions under which* philosophers and peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds can speak about the daunting problems of our age with *one mind* while upholding

their individual identities. This is an enormous undertaking that centres on exploring those means most fitting for the harmonisation of differences within the framework of the whole as this is the focal point of the theory of complementary reflection. The substance of the theory rests on the insight of anonymous traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought (Asouzu, *The Method* 143). It suffices now to outline some of their ideas to prepare the ground for understanding the theory itself.

### **Complementary system of thought in traditional African philosophy**

Contrary to the insinuations that there is a unified African worldview, complementary reflection avers that traditional African societies are characterised by the dominance of diversities of thought systems of which the complementary trend is one of the most pronounced. Thus the idea that the universe is constituted of units of mutual complementary interacting forces within the framework of the whole and in a future referential dimension constitutes one of the central insights of traditional *Igbo* (a Nigerian ethnic nationality) philosophers of the complementary system of thought. The same can be said of many traditional African philosophers. These philosophers maintain that the universe, in general, is constituted of units of dynamic mutual interacting forces at all levels of determination. These units relate to themselves in an infinite complementary harmonious mode. This is the case with human experience and action in general and with regard to numerous issues of general philosophical interest as can be articulated in such equivalent concepts as: human personality, causality, freedom, necessity, truth, good and evil, space and time, ethics and morality, religion and meaning, the idea of living dead, reincarnation etc. The same is evident in their approach to rites, symbols, myths and sacrifices and in their use of wise sayings and indeed with regard to all areas of practical, theoretical and speculative activities of these thinkers (Asouzu, *The Method* 111-129; 155-208).

Thus for Kaboha, “a common characteristic of traditional African societies is that they did not separate consciously the various aspects of life and social behaviour into discrete compartments or treat them as possible areas of study or contemplation. All areas of life were seen and treated as part of an integrated whole which also include all nature. ... In a traditional African mind this does not lead to confusion, but shows how the African derives his ideas and way of life from the integration that he sees in the diversity of nature around him.” (69-70).

For Kamalu, Ancient Egyptian philosophers, as traditional African philosophers, make recourse to the principle of reciprocity as a paradigm of philosophical speculation. According to him, reality for these philosophers “is ordered in accordance with a principle of how opposites co-exist and interact” (24), such that “the organization of society and the cosmos are founded on the same principle. ... In other words, the moral agent always gets what he or she deserves; every deed, good and bad, returns to the doer.” (7)

Writing about the Igbos of Nigeria Nwala avers: “the Igbo world-view implies two basic beliefs (1) the unity of all things and (2) an ordered relationship among all beings in the universe. Consequently, there is belief in the existence of order and interaction among all beings. ... the gods and men live a symbiotic life, one of mutual and reciprocal relationship. Men fed the gods and the gods provide health, fertility of soil and reproduction” (Nwala 54, 57).

The idea of complementarity can be considered as the permeating unifying foundation or principle of those concepts that have to do with communal living among Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought and many traditional African thinkers. Here, the inclination of this philosopher to view human relationship in terms of solidarity, togetherness, and community-centeredness stems from his general and fundamental feeling of insufficiency, experience of relativity and fragmentation of all historical processes as aspects of his complementary conceptualisation of reality. For these Igbo philosophers, the idea *ibu ayi danda* or complementarity as a mode of conceptualisation of reality is more of a concretely lived experience. It is thus a concretely sung and breathed experience that is deeply characterised by a dynamic reciprocal relationship which ranges beyond pure contemplation of essences. I call a special type of experience that unifies these Igbo philosophers to the world *the experience of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness*. In this case, the faculty I call *a complementary totalising mind* (*obi/mmuo imaihe na eziokwu* or *obi/mmuo eziokwu*) is the very seat of this experience. It is the deepest experience of being as it actualises itself as *missing links* in history. Besides, it is the deepest form of communal experience as shared experience deriving from the evident insight that anything *that exists serves a missing link of reality*.

For these African philosophers therefore, reality can only be articulated and understood, *and systematically too*, if and only if it is viewed as complementarity of parts within the framework of the

whole *in a future referential manner*. Besides, for them, the subject-object tension can be taken care of, and the autonomy of the subject upheld, in the *most natural way* only complementarily since reality in its deepest and most sublime constitution evinces itself as a mutual dynamic complementation of parts. This infinite mutual relationship takes the most concrete form in the relationship of human beings to the world and most especially in interpersonal relationship were they conceptualise the human person as a being that radiates concretely attributes of the divine. This attribute becomes most evident in the act of mutual complementary services. Here, these traditional Igbo philosophers state: *mmadu bu chi ibeya* (human beings are gods to other human beings). Commenting on this view, Uchendu maintains: “human interdependence is a constant theme in the folklore of the Igbo. It is the greatest of all values for them” (14).

Within this ambience therefore, there is a striking form of complementary relationship that has a thoroughgoing ontological character. Here, complementarity is understood in the sense of dynamic complementation of services of all units in mutual dependency. This is why, for example, human beings serve the gods in the hope of their returning the same services, as Nwala noted. This mutual dependence is deeply understood in the type of the existential experience captured in the statements: *aka nni kwọọ aka ekpe aka ekpe akwọọ aka nni* (the left hand washes the right hand while the right hand washes the left) and *njiko ka* (human interdependence or togetherness is the greatest of all values as Uchendu noted). In its deepest ontological ramifications this means that all forms of human action and cognition have complementary consequences such that the meaning we attach to human actions goes far beyond their immediate expression as to touch on wider networks of relations.

One can therefore say that, within the context of this philosophy, the idea of harmonious complementarity of units within the framework of the whole belongs to the foundation of unity of being and consciousness as a precondition for the validation of our claims and assertions. It suffices now to explicate the nature of complementary relationship within the confines of this philosophy as to make it the foundation of complementary reflection as a general theory.

### **Complementary determination, - its structure and form**

Proceeding from its traditional African ambience, complementary reflection seeks to explore the concept *complementary* as something that belongs to the universal structure of being in history and to the basic constitution of human consciousness itself. Here, it views all modes of finite beings and existence as exhibiting one form of complementary relationship or the other even if these are not immediately evident and even if indications appear to be pointing to the contrary. This is the case with such states that we designate as hybrid, eclectic, symbiotic, syncretistic, static, and parallel. These instances upon closer examination reveal inherent moments of complementarity as instances of being seeking unity in differentiation. This structural constitution is characteristic of universal human experience of reality, as relative subjects, everywhere and every time. It is along this line that the mind always seeks to capture realities in complementary contraries. This is the case with our experience of the world in such categories as day and night, male and female, being and non-being, truth and falsehood, good and evil, up and down etc. This striving towards mutual complementation and reciprocity is deeply entrenched in human fundamental feeling of insufficiency and dependency. This feeling accompanies our perception of history and determines our actions, interactions and interpretation of reality. In our own time, this mode of complementary determination has not lost its attractions as can be attested to in diverse areas of our cognitive experience of the world in society, commerce, science and technology. Philosophy with a special accent on culture is an evident attempt at capturing the close complementary relationship between the diverse peoples of the world. The same thing can be said in the area of religion, where the idea of a “Theology of religions” explores the mutual complementary relationship among heterogeneous religious experiences (Asouzu, Gedanken über die religiöse Problematik). Furthermore, we speak today, in the area of applied science and technology, of hybrid and complementary technology and products. It is the same feeling of mutual dependence that carries the idea of complementary, alternative or integrative medicine and therapy (Snyder, Mariah). Most especially the use of the term in the area of medicine gives us an idea of how the term *complementary* can be misunderstood. Here *complementary medicine* is often contrasted with school, classical or conventional medicine. In this case, the idea *complementary* is often used in a pejorative sense as to denote an exotic type of medicine which can be practiced and tolerated alongside orthodox medicine. In this way, the idea *complementary* often also evokes the feeling concerning something that is fake, inauthentic, strange and alien. Again the term *complementary* is used in the sense of appendage or uneven relationship. This is the case, for example,

when we talk of complementary businesses in reference to an already well-established one. In other instances, complementary relationship is associated with a form of levelling up mentality without due regard for differences or even of inequalities. Due to biases of this nature, the idea *complementary* has, at times, come to be associated generally with a state of uneven relationship where one thing must be tolerated in relationship to the other. In this case, one of the units in a complementary relationship can be likened to a state where being has lost its essentiality or those characteristics that make it what it is. From the standpoint of traditional African complementary ontology, I seek in complementary reflection to regain the idea *complementary* insofar as it belongs to the fundamental structure of being to find full expression in history in the form of mutual interaction of units within the framework of the whole. It is in this form that being can be conceptualised in its most dynamic constitution as that which enters into the definition of all things and gives them their substance and determination. When now I say that things are complementary to each other, it is not a matter of a one sided complementation of two unequal units or a form of levelling up without due regard for differences and inequalities of units. In complementary reflection, the units uphold their individualities, differences and independence in all areas of their existence and determination and not only with regard to their essences but also with regard to their action. This notwithstanding, they are necessarily and mutually related to themselves. They can therefore be fully grasped and assessed in their differentiation and diversity but within the framework of the whole in a nonexclusive but future referential manner.

At the level of action, actors that find themselves in a complementary relationship while upholding their individualities and freedom, do nevertheless have mutual responsibilities and rights that bind them even as autonomous and free ethical and moral actors and subjects. This is why within this framework, all forms of human achievement are thinkable, can be upheld and improved upon only indirectly, that is, in mutual complementary relationship. In other words, actors are bound by series of mutual complementary rights and obligations at all level of action, existence and determination. In this way, complementary reflection seeks to supersede all forms of levelling-up mentality and to affirm a philosophy of right and obligation which emphasises mutual rights and obligations binding all finite beings and modes of existence in a complementary harmonious form. With regard to human beings, these rights and obligations take a special form as *the extended natural rights and obligations* in mutual service of each subject. These extended natural rights and obligations ensue from the fact that each individual, as an autonomous subject, always leaves behind peculiar and indelible impressions with his or her actions such that these entitle actors to mutual rights and obligations (Asouzu, *The Method* 484-490). It is for this reason that mutual indebtedness and interdependence in complementarity, in the sense of mutual service, forms a fundamental axiom of human interaction and in this sense makes such issues as who takes the credit in a production line, for example, more manageable.

In all forms of complementary relationship, we are dealing with the recognition and affirmation of unity in diversity as the essential moment of all forms of relations insofar this belongs to the fundamental structure of being in its complementary constitution and insofar insufficiency belongs necessarily to the structure of being in its complementary essentiality. What this means is that all finite beings are bound to each other complementarily in a relationship of mutual service and dependence of units within the framework of the totality of reality.

As a being among others, the fundamental insufficiency in human essence is not a disadvantage. On the contrary, it is a necessary condition for the attainment of full human autonomy in history. In all situations of life, the question would ever remain how to turn this apparent disadvantage to an advantage. In other words, complementary reflection considers the positive affirmation and acceptance of fundamental insufficiency and limitations characteristic of our being as a necessary condition for harnessing the variety and multidimensionality entrenched in nature. This again is an inescapable route to full actualisation of human potentialities.

This insight does nothing other than to restate in other words the very structure of human experience of the world itself. As historical individuals, this is the structure of our being and experience of the world and not to explore and exploit it to the full would amount to under-developing our being. Thus, complementary reflection is nothing other than the exploration of human nature, as it is, with a view to harnessing those conditions of human self-actualisation that are best attuned to human search for meaningful existence and in view of confronting all forms of tension-laden ambivalent situations that are responsible for the subject-object divide. Generally, though, complementary reflection seeks to capture the essence of the complementary structure of all forms of finite existence and give a rational justification why this is constitutive for all forms of relationship in nature. This is mostly the case with

regard to human interpersonal relationship and in human relationship to the world in general. All finite beings regain their true nature only when considered as complementary units within the framework of the whole and here, they accomplish this only through the affirmation of the fact that they are missing links of reality. For this reason, the intrinsic constitution of finite being lies in the fact of their complementary essentiality, that is to say, in their potentiality as units to stay in relationship to other beings. What this means is that anything that exists does so in view of a complementary relationship and obtains its legitimacy and determination through this relation in a future, whole and comprehensive manner.

We can now understand why within the framework of the theory of complementary reflection I assign a very preponderant place to the fact of mutual complementary dependency of all finite modes of existence as is captured by the insight that *anything that exists serves a missing link of reality*. However, due to unevenness of opportunities, achievements and power distribution, the apodictic character of complementary relationship can be put to serious doubt. Replying to such doubts, one can say that the answer to the question how is it that the different modes of existence serve and are dependent on each other necessary in a mutual complementary harmonious way, is already contained in the question itself since the structure of the question has an intrinsic moment of external reference, which in itself is a sign of complementarity. In other words, such a question proceeds from clear intuition into the very structure of missing links as beings that can be conceptualised only in complementary relationship. What this means is that whoever attempts to pose a question of this nature or to raise a doubt about its necessity, as a missing link himself within the framework of a whole, is automatically committed to complementarity by reason of the relational and anticipatory character of the answers he or she expects. In such mental activities as questioning, denying, doubting, negating, affirming etc. human reason is doing nothing other than seeking relationship to something outside of itself. Thereby it reveals that it is committed to something on which it is dependent. This relationship towards the external that becomes evident in all forms of questions, denials and affirmation has an inherent moment of complementarity. For this reason, the complementary structure of all missing links of reality ensues from the very nature of all finite beings that in their limitation and insufficiency are intimately related to each other.

What this shows is that anyone who has no access to this fundamental insight or who denies it would also not have any insight into the ontological character of the complementary mutuality of all missing links of reality. But there is hardly anyone, even under the most severe form of false pretences, who does not have such an insight that is very clear and evident to the mind. Where one insists on doubting this fact, this person would immediately find himself or herself in the way of self-contradiction because he cannot consummate his reflection except in relations and in this case with reference to one form of missing link of reality or the other. On this platform, we can state that the variants of the principle of complementary reflection enjoy the same status as the first principles in so far as they are very clear and evident to the mind. It is for this reason that their negation carries with it the full weight of self-negation. This consequence becomes obvious in the application of the variants of the principle of complementary reflection in practical situations of life where consequent self-interest is tantamount to anti-self-interest. That is to say, all acts that are directed against the interest of others invariably rebound on the actor. This is why this approach does nothing but to widen our knowledge by exploring what should ordinarily be evident to the mind since it eradicates all ambivalences that make pure knowledge of essence impossible. This is the critical end of all philosophical quests, that is, grasping of *essences* in their ultimate and most sublime constitution.

The inability of human reason to *concede fully* to the fact of a fundamental complementary constitution of reality can be considered as one of the greatest tragedies of our experiences as human beings in history and this is also one of the main reasons for many incidents of avoidable tension and paradoxes in society and in human interpersonal relationship. Wherever and whenever this incapacity for complementarity is present, human beings find themselves in artificial states of parallel and even contradictory co-existence, which they paradoxically prefer imagining that this is their destiny. This contradictory preference is grounded on an illusion because all finite beings are destined to remain in relationship of complementary reciprocity to attain full actualisation since to be is the capacity of all finite beings to seek relation. Wherever complementarity is negated, the entity concerned finds itself in an exclusive state of self-imposed delimitation and en route to self-contradiction with all the attendant consequences. In many situations of life, human beings find themselves in this form of contradiction because they prefer to define their interests outside of the legitimacy conferred by the totality, as is the case with all unilateral hegemonic acts of segregation and exclusiveness that are at the root of the global

paradox. It is the same problem in all those cases where each subject seeks its own circumscribed form of rationality disengaged from the unity provided by a totalising comprehensive mind as is characteristic of Ethno philosophic orientations. In this case, it becomes evident that *the limit my complementary capability is the limit of my world and vice versa*. The implications of this explication for the general theory of complementary reflection should now be clearer and it remains to have it fully outlined.

### **The theory of complementary reflection and harmony of differences**

One of the greatest difficulties that the complementary system of thought faces in its traditional African ambience is that of evolving credible criteria for the harmonisation of differences within the framework of the whole. It is the same issue as evolving a credible criterion for the validation of our claims and assertions. This is a universal human problem that has lots of epistemological, logical and ethical implications and how we address this issue can be decisive for our general attitude to the world. This issue is central to the challenges of human ambivalent situation whose actuality is fully reflected today in the excesses of the global paradox. In complementary reflection, I wish to address this issue through a general theory of being and through outlining some of the key preconditions for the validation of our claims and assertions. The principle of complementary reflection has two major parts that address its *metaphysical* and *practical* dimensions. In this way, I speak of *the metaphysical and the practical variants of the principle of complementary reflection*.

I call the metaphysical variant *the principle of integration* and the practical variant *the principle of progressive transformation*. Whereas the principle of integration explicates the metaphysical implications of the theory, the principle of progressive transformation takes care of the implications of the theory for human action. This division is insofar important as the theory concerns itself not only with the universal explanation and understanding of reality but seeks to offer concrete guidelines towards the resolution of conflicts in society. These are such conflicts that are occasioned through the inability of human reason to come to terms with the ambivalence of human existential situations. In such situations human reason seeks to violate its own laws through negation of the principle of non-contradiction or the *truth and authenticity criterion*. This criterion disallows the elevation of relative world immanent realities or experiences to absolute instances. Whenever this criterion is negated, human reason finds itself in the way of contradiction and paradoxes. In this sense, the truth and authenticity criterion, as an aspect of the principle of non-contradiction, is what guarantees the unity of being and consciousness in all situations of interaction and discourse.

The principle of integration as the metaphysical variant of the principle of complementary reflection can be formulated thus: *Anything that exists serves a missing link of reality within the framework of the totality* (Asouzu, Progress in Metaphysics 82-91). Similarly the practical variant of the principle, as the principle of progressive transformation, states that *all forms of human action aim towards the joy of being*. On its part, the imperative of complementary reflection can be formulated thus. *Allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy*. Here the concept *being* refers strictly to finite beings in history.

It suffices now to elucidate, for a moment, some of the key concepts of this theory. The first thing that is to be handled is the idea of *missing link of reality*. Under missing links within the framework of the totality, one refers to all conceivable modes of finite existence and relations insofar these can be grasped spatio-temporally and intuited as forming a complementary harmonious whole. Missing links within the framework of the totality are therefore finite beings and their different modes of expression in history insofar they are fragments that cannot be conceptualised except in complementary relationship to each other. In a more concrete way, one can say that missing links are finite beings in their diverse modes of expression and the categories of such beings in complementary relationship to each other. Hence, the mind can grasp and intuit as missing links units and units of units, things and things of things, ideas and ideas of ideas, thoughts and thoughts of thoughts. Similarly all spatio-temporal forms, categories, relations, quantities and qualities are missing links.

As a philosophy that reflects the ideas of traditional African philosophers of complementary direction, complementary reflection localises missing links not necessarily in abstract modes of existence and essences but more so also in those experiences that determine human existence concretely. This is why missing links encompass a wide variety of modes of being as concretely lived experiences. For our experiences today, such things fall under the category of missing links: fate, terrorism, disappointment, virtual realities, internet, trade, job, employment, unemployment, Islam, religion, Christianity, ideas of God, racism, discrimination, colonialisms, neo-colonialism, environmental

degradation, multiculturalism, skin heads, colour, sex, ethnicity, failure, success, poverty, affluence, first world, third world, drugs, development, natural catastrophes, underdevelopment, money, exploitation, multinational companies, war, peace, hatred, globalisation, acceptance, rejection etc. They are missing links insofar they are fragments that can be conceptualised only in relationship to other missing links to attain full meaning and authenticity. Thus, missing links cover a wide range of cognitive and non-cognitive relations insofar the mind can abstract their fundamental complementary relatedness to other forms and modes of being and existence. It is only in this form of complementary harmonious relationship, in a future referential, whole and universal manner, that all modes of finite beings, existence and action acquire the conditions necessary for their explanation, understanding and ultimate determination. That is to say, even if being communicates itself spatio-temporally in a fragmentary manner, as we experience it in our diverse localities, reality can only be thematised and grasped authentically in a complementary whole, unified, comprehensive and future referential way. In this case, the mind grasps missing links but in view of the whole and attains the whole only indirectly and in the experience of individual subjects and objects that constitute missing links in a complementary harmonious relationship. The implications of this is that no missing link can uphold its legitimacy solely on its own. It can do this only with reference to the whole and in complementary unity with other missing links whose legitimacy and determination are necessarily dependent on the type of union that guarantees their being. The consequences of this theory should now be clear for human interpersonal relationship and action in society as a whole.

On its part, the imperative of complementary reflection, which demands that we allow the limitations of being to be the cause of our joy, can be explicated more precisely in this way: In all cases and in all existential situations, we should allow the contingences and insufficiencies that determine our being and existence to be the cause of our joy. Since finite being in its expression in history can only be conceptualised, articulated and grasped as missing links, which are obviously characterised by limitation and insufficiency, the attainment of human happiness and contentment is necessarily dependent on the ability of the mind to embrace missing links in their limitation. This imperative therefore urges the mind to act in consciousness of the fact that human happiness is dependent on recognition of limitations, inadequacies, and multiplicity as necessary aspects of the actualisation of being in history and most especially as this characterises our experiences as dependent and vulnerable subjects. In other words, being in its most sublime and authentic form becomes intuitively and evidently accessible to the subject only as complementary missing links in differentiation, in diversity and multidimensionality. This fact takes its most concrete form in encounter most especially as this is the case by human beings in mutual services and in the experience of the world around in its insufficiency and unpredictability.

Thus, the basic ideas of complementary reflection can be systematically applied to all areas of human experience and knowledge both theoretically and practically, in metaphysics, in ethics, in epistemology, logic, in politics, in religion, in law etc as has been fully articulated in the work *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and beyond African Philosophy*. In all these areas, one is concerned with understanding being in its essentiality as something fundamentally complementary in constitution. Such understanding is the capacity of the mind to intuit missing links in complementary harmonious relationship in view of the attainment of *the joy of being*. Since all modes of finite beings and existence, in their differentiation, variety and multidimensionality, are missing links of reality, they are subject to authentication anytime and anywhere. The same is obtainable with regard to claims and statements concerning being at all levels of determination. Thus, all subjects need each other and are mutually dependent in a future oriented way.

### **The complementary comprehensive noetic alternative**

One of the greatest difficulties facing such a theory is how to make it practicably insightful. To overcome this difficulty, I wish now to probe the role which the mind plays in a complementary framework as to determine the pre-dispositional preconditions for truth and validation of our claims and assertions. It is the same thing as establishing the pre-dispositional preconditions for harmony in differentiation. I have adopted this approach cognisant of the heavy epistemological and logical burdens associated with a one-dimensional recourse either to sense impression or pure intellection as the foundation for legitimisation of our claims in ambivalent existential situations. It is due to the central place of the mind in this inquiry that I call it the *complementary comprehensive noetic approach* as to distinguish it from a one-dimensional form of ratiocination. In this sense, I have identified a complementary totalising mind



(*obi/mmuo imaihe na eziokwu or obi/mmuo eziokwu* in Igbo language) as the unifying faculty responsible for such important acts as reasoning and validation. On its part, a one-dimensional absolute ideal reason (*uche akolo* in Igbo language) while striving towards the same objective remains vulnerable to the trappings of sense impression or pure intellection, if not guided by this form of totalising mind in its capacity as the seat for the *experience of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness*. Through this experience we capture being truly, insightfully and authentically and can share or communicate the knowledge and experience of missing links in their fragmentary relational essentiality devoid of ambivalences. (Asouzu, *The Method* 411). In this case, we are dealing with the inherent capacity of the mind for dynamic knowledge or experience of missing links as true and pure *essences*. It is in this form that the mind is capable of intuiting clearly the fact that all modes of finite existence are in mutual complementary relationship as aspect of its *innate natural instinct for self-preservation*. By reason of this capacity, the mind has all it takes to address the subject-object tension and divide in full awareness of its own inherent *relativity and vulnerability*. Thus this faculty always calls to caution, in all situations of claims where an absolute ideal form of hegemonic reason leads it towards exclusiveness and polarisation. Where the complementary totalising mind is active, a negation of mutual complementary structure of missing links is perceived as a form of self-negation. This complementary totalising mind thus addresses the totality of the person and draws its attention spontaneously to the limits of its possibilities as a being, among others that are vulnerable and are in need of full authentication (Asouzu, *The Method* 99).

A very crucial question now arises: How do we secure the reality of this transcendent experience beyond all forms of arbitrariness. This again is like asking for those means through which the complementary totalising mind (*obi/mmuo imata eziokwu or obi/mmuo eziokwu*) performs its duties. Here, complementary reflection aims at grasping the subject in its comprehensiveness devoid of ambivalences and polarisation. In this case, we are thinking of the *dispositional ontological pre-condition* for rational acts as this is represented by the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness - *unity, fragmentation, totality, universality, comprehensiveness, wholeness and future reference* (Asouzu, *The Method* 298-303). On account of the actuality of these categories the mind is capable of achieving its complementary totalising function.

Although these categories belong naturally to the structure of the mind and human consciousness, they can be rendered ineffective due to the challenge of human ambivalence situations that is responsible for the subject-object divide in all asymmetrical situations of life. In such situations, our best intentions and efforts can be invalidated by a one-dimensional application of reason in pure or absolute type of ratiocination. Hence, it is within the context of a totalising comprehensive mind (*obi/mmuo eziokwu*) operating under its natural conditions that our claims can be validated. What pure hegemonic ideal reason cannot accomplish, in situations of conflict, is possible through recourse to *obi/mmuo eziokwu*. *This is the complementary comprehensive noetic alternative*. What this means is that whenever validation or ratiocination are consummated without recourse to these complementary transcendent categories, human reason is bound to remain blind and hegemonic even if it claims otherwise. This is why it can violate its own laws and still imagine that it is doing the wisest thing. In this case, a pure absolute reason can attain its objective only when it is complemented by a totalising mind. In such situations, human reason operates in full awareness of the applicability of the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness as this is an aspect of the principle of non-contradiction and the truth and authenticity criterion.

Due to the challenges of human ambivalent situation, these transcendent categories can be rendered ineffective. This is why they must be elevated to habitual methodological principles in *the process of existential conversion* which is the act of putting them into action concretely as lived complementary mutual experience. Hence all forms of validation take the form of a continuous process of *complementary reawakening, complementary revitalisation, conscientisation or re-habitualisation*. (Asouzu, *The Method* 287; *Effective Leadership* 38-42). In this process, the mind experiences all missing links as being in history in the most sublime sense and human beings in the sense of *mmadu bu chi ibeya* (human beings are gods to their fellow human beings). Through this process, the mind returns and remains true to its transcendent nature such that any infringements on its own laws, by itself, is immediately perceived as a contradiction and a transgression of the truth and authenticity criterion. It learns to do this as the most natural thing to do and *not out of duty*. Perceiving all missing links now in their fragmentation, but in a comprehensive and whole reference to the ultimate foundation of all forms

of determination, the mind seeks balance in the tension between extreme tendencies to absoluteness and relativity.

Actualising our actions imbued with a sense of these categories is the same thing as acting human and heeding to demands of the principle and imperative of complementary reflection and acting for the joy of being. Hence, we cannot negate the applicability of these categories in our actions and still communicate as human beings. One can therefore say that these transcendent categories have a legitimising function for all questions concerning the structure of logical discourse and for all forms of methods that are interested in interpersonal or intercultural encounters and dialogue. The reason for this is that they outline the minimum condition that must be observed for the adequacy of such important acts. They further outline the conditions under which laws, norm and values can be validated and the condition for the harmony of differences. Complementary reflection through recourse to these categories aims at overcoming one of the major obstacles to dialog-based methods of validation of claims and resolution of conflicts. By recourse to the complementary comprehensive noetic alternative, subject aims at being itself through the habitualisation of those categories belonging naturally to the mind such that in practical situations of life, the mind remains itself by handling and admiring missing links complementarily in their fragmentation, as necessary extension of itself. In such a state, the mind is capable of overcoming ambivalences and excessive selfishness since it now comes to see missing links of reality as *pure or necessary means* for the attainment of its own personal joy and happiness. This is how it reacts to the inherent tension between tendencies to extreme forms of absoluteness and relativity. In this case, the mind grasps at the ultimate joy founding its being but affirms it consciously as it is expressed concretely in missing links. This commitment takes very concrete shape when it urges other subjects that share the same horizon of being *jede ka iji (hold firmly to the joy of being, always seek to retain it, now and in all future cases)*. This aphorism that is taken from the Igbo language captures the moment of commitment to the ultimate joy that the subject shares mutually with missing links of reality in their relativity. One of the greatest transformation that the acquisition of this transcendent totalising mindset can induce is the revelation to the subject that *consequent self-interest is anti-self-interest*. In other words, those acts of self-interest that negate the interests of others are directed against the interest of the subject itself because of the type of intimate unity that binds missing links of reality and because units necessarily, inseparably, and intricately share the same horizon of being.

This is why complementary reflection underlines the fact that *consequent self-interest is anti-self-interest* as is evident in the statement *egbe bere ugo bere nke si ibeya ebena nku kwaa ya* (let the kite perch let the eagle perch whichever denies the other the same rights let its wings break). The same insight is captured by the assertion: *nwata si na nne na nna ya agaghi arahụ ura agaghi arahụ ura*. i.e. the restive child that cries all night long with the intent of disturbing the parents, would equally not sleep. Again: *onye ji mmadụ na ana ji onweya* (whoever, e.g. in wrestling bout, holds another person to the ground is not free himself). What this implies is that human incapacity to complementarity and the tendencies to absolutise personal interest are consequent to self-delimitation, and self-negation. Likewise any forms of impositions or restrictions of the rights of others outside of the legitimacy provided by the whole, automatically rebounds on the actor. The converse is also true: Anything undertaken to enhance the welfare of the whole invariably leads to the betterment of the units. In keeping with this ontology therefore the act always returns to the actor as is basic to Ancient traditional African Egyptian ontology as Kamalu pointed out.

Since acting and knowing have the same foundation in being, we can then understand why for complementary reflection “no missing link of reality, in its fragmentation, i.e. taken singly, can form adequate basis for authentic knowledge” or action (Asouzu, *The Method* 413). For this reason, complementary mutual dependence can only be understood as mutual service in complementation and acting ethically reasonable and human entails acting, not out of compulsion as is typical of a deontological ethical approach, but out of the *natural inclination for the joy of being*. Here missing links in their fragmentation and relativity are considered as *pure means* for the attainment of this joy and not as *pure ends*. As a historical fragmentary being, the complementary totalising mind is thus always conscious of its relativity, fragility and vulnerability along with that of other missing links that share the same fate. Hence, it learns to adhere to its own laws naturally and without compulsion since this is the only guarantor for its self-preservation, happiness and contentment.

Hence by recourse to the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness the mind fully identifies itself as a necessary aspect of the totality of relative missing links which must be taken into account should its experience of the world be complete and real. It is the same experience that makes it possible

for the mind to understand why the harmonisation of units supersedes the advantages accruing from the tendencies for exclusiveness and polarisations.

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