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Essays on Complementary Reflection

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Complementary reflection as a philosophy of integration and social progress aims at relating all world immanent realities in a profound, comprehensive, universal, harmonious and authentic way possible in order to overcome the existential constraints the ambivalence of human interest places on the human mind. It is a philosophy which seeks to integrate the unity of being into the most mutual, compatible and harmonious way. It is also a philosophy after the rehabilitation of African psyche in which we must see our historical moments as fragments which could only yield total comprehension of reality. This philosophy seeks for changes in our individual and group disposition towards seeing fragments as totality or absolute which at times leads to extreme exclusiveness in which we tend to reserve or keep to ourselves those things we feel are only desirable for us. It is a philosophy of integration after a new world order which is a model of a system which seeks to view and comprehend totality by categorically stating that all missing links have a part in reality. We cannot comprehend or make the world work if we view reality from its parts only. The parts are parts of the whole, while the whole is an integration of the parts.

While others were interested in the transcendence of subjectivity (constructivism) and searching for a value-free condition for human co-existence (Max Weber) the author of complementary reflection focuses on calling attention to the double capacity of human interest i.e. its ambivalent nature. As something ambivalent, our interest has a double capacity which could represent something positive and negative at the same time. He seeks ways on how to overcome the existential situation the ambivalence of human interest imposes on our mind; how to relate our fragmented historical moments into the joy of being. The author equally relates our ideas, interests and ambience in the most comprehensive and universal manner.

Complementary reflection is thus a philosophy of social progress which looks and exposes the dreadful role the ambivalence of human interest plays in social institutions. This ambivalence could be overcome by our upholding the common good as the basis of all our actions. The common good should supersede all our interests because it is there that the unity of being and consciousness is found. Our interests should tend towards transcendence where unity of consciousness is found which is proleptic or future referential. Once we transcend the bounds of common interest, we adopt a future referential paradigm in which all actions would be channeled towards the common good. Complementary Reflection emphasizes the fact that consequent self-interest is anti-self-interest. It is only when we understand that consequent self-interest is anti-self-interest that we transcend the constraints placed on us by the ambivalence of our existential situation..

Complementary reflection as a philosophy of integration and social progress has its antecedents in traditional African philosophy in which the anonymous traditional African philosophers sought to reflect and interpret reality from their ambience. And this systematic philosophizing is channeled towards the common good with a mindset that transcend self-interest into recognizing the need for the command to stand above all interests.

Complementary reflection as a philosophy of integration and social change offers a new way of thinking and doing philosophy in which the philosopher must stand with his head erect above all presuppositions, pre-assumptions, preconceptions, misconceptions and prejudice in viewing reality in its most

comprehensive and universal form. The philosopher would not allow his ambience to influence or impair his philosophical mind in its total comprehension of reality. Complementary reflection also seeks to offer a solution to the global paradox in which the very ideals on which modernity is built is the very ideal in which it tends to destroy itself. Thus the world cannot be seen or understood in fragments in which one person, group or country as a whole imposes its ideologies on others. In this paradox, the very help which a person seeks to get is immersed in self-interest. An example is where the IMP which seeks to help nations places on them unbearable conditions which make the help at the end of the day to be inauthentic. Complementary reflection aims at solving the ambivalence of human existential situation by categorically stating that missing links cannot serve as a whole in which case, this would usher in problems like racism, tribalism, nepotism. In complementary reflections, missing links are an integral part of the whole, while the whole bears the parts, the parts equally bear the whole.

The Limits of exclusive pre-deterministic anthropology

Complementary Reflection exposes the limits of all forms of exclusive pre-deterministic anthropology. This form of Anthropology fails to account or see historical moments or fragments as categories of the transcendental unity of consciousness. In his book “The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection” Asouzu pointed out that Prof. Beck’s portioned the world into three anthropological main blocks or regions, Asiatic, African and European. In Beck’s understanding, based on climatic and other geographical constraints, the Asiatic and African man is irrational and tends to be more emotional, sentimental etc. But the European man is a compendium of knowledge. Though the tendency to sound right or superior in the midst of contradictions is inherent in man because every person would like to present to the world those things he feels would be of interest to him, but to talk about an European man as being a compendium of rationality without any tincture of emotion and impulsiveness could only lead to exclusiveness in which we would like to claim things for ourselves.

The danger of disjunctive exclusive reasoning can only achieve one thing: It seeks to view man from its parts and gives the parts meaning of the totality. In some situations, we tend to judge human beings from the angle of the sizes of their heads, to the height of their noses, from the colour of their hair, to the colour of their skin. At times this kind of claims lead to obsession and constant hammering on such pseudo truths may turn out to be accepted as absolute truths. This is one of the danger of pre-deterministic anthropology. At times such claims are elevated as a paradigm in anthropology in which some cultures may even imagine that the half-heads in their country will qualify as full-heads in other countries. Such exclusive pre-deterministic anthropology tends to bend man’s mind into accepting historical moments of fragmentation as absolute. Man qua man has psychic energy, intuition, insight, cognitive ability to fathom reality as a fundamental characteristic.

The danger of pre-deterministic anthropology could also be seen in Hitler’s adoption of Hegel’s philosophy of the absolute which influenced him to embark on a radical political change with a determined mind-set that the German nation is more rational and at the peak of civilization. As civilized as the world has become, an uncultured German mind may still cling tenaciously to such claims which will impair his mind in comprehending human nature which is the same everywhere.

The limits of pre-deterministic anthropology is that it leads to exclusiveness in which we negate that our historical moments of fragmentation give authenticity and legitimacy to the unity of being.

The dangers of exclusive pre-deterministic anthropology can only be overcome if we relate all world immanent realities to one another in a most profound, mutual, authentic, comprehensive manner possible in which we must bear in mind that the whole bears the parts and the parts equally bear the whole. It is only when we comprehend humanity this way that we would say that we have had a complementary attitudinal change.

The Law of self-preservation

The law of self-preservation is the most basic of all human laws. This law has it that human beings must do anything to preserve themselves from anything that will lead to their extinction. This law is not only applicable to animals but also to human beings, because man is characterized as a rational animal. But in

spite of this categorization, it is not all the acts of men that are rational. That is why when man seeks to accumulate all that he needs to preserve himself he can do this at the detriment of others.

In relating the law of self-preservation to the notion of self-interest we discover that human actions have interest guiding them. And this interest is of a double capacity which could represent something positive and negative at the same time. This double capacity or ambivalence is often concealed. This is why the good we seek and the evil we abhor are the very thing we embrace which could lead to our destruction.

Although man is a rational animal does not imply that all his actions are rational. Often man consciously acts irrationally in order to preserve those things he feels are exclusively for him alone. And such tendencies are what breed mutual distrust, tribalism, nepotism etc.

Self-interest with the phenomenon of concealment spurs individuals into seeking for the preservation of themselves as against the common good.

Complementary reflection offers a model of approach to self-preservation and the notion of self-interest since the law of self-preservation is a basic human law and the ability of the individual to desire all those things that will not lead to his extinction is also inherent in man. In general we have to bear in mind essentially that in order to rise above the double capacity of self-interest, in order to achieve authentic existence, we must rise above the constraints of the ambivalence of human existential situation by abiding to the idea that the common good or goal is paramount.

Exclusiveness of self-preservation will only lead to mutual suspicion and in such a system nothing is bound to work out well.

Our interests must be integrated in the transcendent unity of consciousness in which we experience that everything that exists serves a missing link of reality; also in giving life a meaning. We must also bear in mind that transcendent unity of consciousness is proleptic i.e. it is future referential and this will help us in curtailing the double capacity of our interests and help us to walk towards the common good. This idea is alluded to also in the concept of heaven though it is in the future, it is worked towards accomplishment by here and now.

Complementary Attitudinal Change

The experience connected with complementary attitudinal change is that of the transcendent unity of consciousness which is future referential. Complementary attitudinal change is a change geared towards the changing of our mind-set in order to cope with the constraints placed on our mind by the ambivalence of human existential situation of life.

Here complementary philosophy seeks a total rehabilitation of the African psyche. It is a philosophy which seeks to reconstruct the mind-set of people into relating their ideas, interests and ambience into a clearly defined and comprehensive cohesion.

This attitudinal change sets to establish an independent mind-set which does not rely on preconception, presupposition, misassumption and prejudice in viewing reality. Rather, a mind-set which will rise above the constraints of the ambivalence of human existential situation into realizing that the common good or goal cannot be achieved in fragments but in the totality. Complementary attitudinal change seeks also to influence the mind-set of people into relating, appreciating and working towards what they have and what they cannot do. For example, in regarding what Nigerians call "Belgium Products" as the genuine goods even if this is tested and proven to be outdated and detrimental to human health. This "Belgium mentality" has played on the psyche of the people that they derive joy in using obsolete and dangerous goods imported from other countries thereby turning the country into a dumping ground of foreign used products. Whereas such things or goods are some of what we could produce better than imported ones. This mentality has a rigid mind-set which alienates the possibilities of self-utilisation of natural resources or acquisition of skills. This is the change that complementary attitudinal change has set out to accomplish. Which is a change that will alter our notion of foreign investment, the idea of good, evil, bribery and corruption etc. With this change, the things we have accepted as norms which are shocking, bewildering and unimaginable in world-record standard will come to an end. Corruption for instance whether institutionalized or pocket corruption will cease to be.

This mind set could also be likened to the idea of independence achieved by many African countries. The idea of independence entails that a country is free from imperialism, colonialism, discrimination segregation etc. The type of independence which complementary attitudinal change seeks to accomplish is more paramount because it involves a revolutionary revision of our values as these have been twisted by preconceptions, prejudices etc which the ambivalence of our existential situation has placed on our minds. Complementary attitudinal change finds its expression in the experience of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness as the actualization of the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness in day to day interaction. Here the mind tends towards the common goal or good in a future referential manner. Complementary attitudinal change also aims at collectivity in which individuals must contribute meaningfully to the development of the society with a mind-set that all that comes first is the common good. With this kind of attitude, communalism, Ubuntu, authenticity, as expressed in diverse forms of African socio-political philosophy find firm theoretical foundation in the assumptions of complementary reflection. Therefore since we are the makers of our environment, we can equally change it by adopting complementary attitudinal change which is a change that will transcend existential situations into valuing collective efforts and collective will in order to make life meaningful and worth living.