Ibuanyidanda (Complementary Reflection), Communalism and Theory Formulation in African Philosophy

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Abstract

This paper avers that most attempts at formulating viable theories in African philosophy are saddled with intrusions of ethnophilosophic and ethnocentric types: The author identifies this as the phenomenon of **"unintended ethnocentric commitment".** He uses *communalism,* a socio-political theory in African philosophy, to illustrate his point. He further argues that overreliance on the method of synthetic deduction - as is widely practised in African philosophy - can impact adversely on the universal outreach of theories and limit our knowledge of the world. The paper contends that any theory that aspires to give us a clearer picture of the world should be in a position to contain the distortions arising from the promptings of sense experience. Likewise, such a theory should show clear evidence of analytic insight into the mechanisms and phenomena on the basis of which our knowledge of the world can be broadened and our judgement thereof improved. By recourse to the method and principles of *ibuanyidanda* (complementary reflection) philosophy, a systematic methodological approach to theory formulation in African philosophy, the author shows how theories in African philosophy can be articulated more resourcefully with a view to upholding their systematic and universal relevance.

Key Words

African philosophy, Ethnophilosophy, communalism, synthetic deduction, *ibuanyidanda*

Glossary of Igbo Terms and Phrases

ihe ahụ na anya ekwe = sense experience.

ihe ndi ahụ na anya ekwe = sense impressions.

ihe mkpuchi anya = phenomenon of concealment.

ima-onwe-onye = being-in-control (awareness of the threats posed by the phenomenon of concealment. This is the highest form of self-consciousness and expression of existence in its fullest).

ibu = load.

anyi = not insurmountable for.

danda= a species of ant.

ibu anyi danda = no task is insurmountable for danda.

ibuanyidanda = the concept abstracted from the synthetic idea "ibu anyi danda" in view of overcoming the prompting of sense experience associated with this idea as it is used by traditional Igbo philosophers.

echiche = thinking.

uche = kernel of thought.

amamihe = cognition.

amumauche = intellectual intuition.

onynyouche = sensory intuition.

umunna = kindred.

amadi/ diala/ nwafọ = indigenes with full rights and privileges.

mbia ra mbia ra / ọhụhụ = strangers or settlers.

ohu = slave.

osu = outcast.

jide ka iji = keep it up i.e. hold firmly to the joy of being, always seek to retain it, now and in all future cases).

ihe di nwere isi na ọdụ / I di bu ihe nwere isi na ọdụ = being is that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality.

ka sọ mụ adina = that I may not be alone. To exist in the true sense of the word entails the capacity to affirm complementary coexistence of existent realities.

ka sọ mụ di = that I may be alone. This is the act of negation of being or negation of complementary coexistence of all existent realities.

Introduction

Attempts at developing theories based purely on illustrative statements present special difficulties in philosophy. A typical example of such illustrative statements is the expression *"ibu anyi danda"* (no task is insurmountable for *danda):*

- *ibu* = load*;*

- *anyi* = not insurmountable for;

- *danda*= a species of ants.

Traditional Igbo philosophers, of the complementary system of thought, allude with the statement *ibu anyi danda* to a form of mutual dependence observable in nature (Asouzu 2004, 132-138; 2005, 142-148) - a statement they infer from observing a colony of ants called *danda* (Asouzu 2007a*,* 11)*.* Because *danda,* in mutual dependence, have the capacity to carry loads that appear bigger and heavier than them, these traditional Igbo philosophers observe: *"ibu anyi danda"* (no task is insurmountable for *danda,* the ant). In other words, it is in mutual dependence that the feeling of intimacy found among kindred and communities can be sustained.

How to derive synthetic-analytic concepts of the kind *"ibuanyidanda"* from mere illustrative statements of the kind *"ibu anyi danda"* turns out to be one of the most difficult challenges in philosophy. This challenge is also quite evident in African philosophy. How it is addressed can go a long way in determining how philosophy progresses in any given context. A cursory look at many theories devised to investigate reality, by practitioners of African philosophy, immediately reveals that such theories are largely founded on observational statements. In other words, they are grossly synthetic in character. Again, such theories are largely maxim-driven. The need for the transformation of all ideas and statements deriving from raw data of

experience is mandatory for any philosophical undertaking seeking to erect theories aspiring for universal significance.

Just like in the observational statement *"ibu anyi danda"*, many African philosophers prefer occurrences of indicators pointing to such ideas as "intimate belongingness", "togetherness", "communal intimacy" and "closeness" to validate the claims of theories. It is in this sense that indicators pointing to such ideas as Familyhood (Nyerere) and African-brotherhood (Kenyatta, Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe etc), and drawn from observing traditional African societies, have often been used to validate the claims of most socio-political theories in Africa. Theories formulated along these lines include Negritude (Senghor), Consciencism (Nkrumah), Universal Brotherhood (Kenyatta), Authenticite (Mobutu Sese Seko), Pan-Africanism etc.

For a fruitful discussion of this matter, I shall resort to controversies surrounding a theory that has attained the status of near orthodoxy, in African philosophy, to make my point. I have taken "communalism", a socio-political theory with far-reaching implications, and the debates surrounding it, for my illustration. In this matter, I consider communalism a typical example of such theories, in African philosophy, that rely heavily on observational statements to validate their positions. To make my point still clearer, I shall discuss it from the background of *"ibuanyidanda philosophy"* (complementary reflection), an alternative approach to theory-formulation in African philosophy. Here, Ibuanyidanda philosophy lays claims to a method it calls its own and one that aids it in articulating its system.

Relying on its method and its principles, *ibuanyidanda* philosophy aspires to overcome some of the difficulties presented by experience-induced methods of philosophising in African philosophy. I do this bearing in mind that I devoted an earlier treatise to this thematic. In the work *"Ibuarụ"*, I sought to show some of the most severe implications of the phenomenon of "unintended ethno-centric commitment" for theory formulation and growth of science in general (Asouzu 2007b, 36-63). The present essay seeks to broaden the scope of my investigation and to sharpen some important edges of my critique in that treatise. Most especially Nyerere's idea of *"Ujamaa"* is considered, by many, as one of the most serious attempts at articulating a modern socialist theory deriving from observing traditional African communalistic experience (Nyerere 1974). There is absolutely nothing wrong with this procedure, but it has to be conducted in a way that should enable theories derived from such a

background to serve the purposes establishing them more creditably, and thus withstand the test of time.

Synthetic Foundation of Theories in African Philosophy

In the construction of theories, many African theoreticians proceed from the assumption that theories are constituted of synthetic observational statements designed to reproduce exactly given existential conditions. In other words, they proceed from the assumption that propositions expressed in theories can be validated only by reference to given empirical indicators sustaining them. Here, minimal effort is invested by theoreticians to rid ideas and empirical indicators around which theories are constructed of their purely synthetic pre-scientific heuristic predilections. In other words, due to their evidently empiricist fidelity, they fail to provide sufficient analytic insight into the data of experience itself. In this matter, proponents of communalism, for example, make us believe that indicators pointing to such ideas as "togetherness", "intimate belongingness", "communal intimacy" and "closeness" constitute the very materials from which a viable communalist theory can be validated. What this amounts to is that statements enshrined in theories are the exact replicas of given empirical indicators and visible existential conditions which they seek to reproduce. Hence, occurrence of indicators pointing to the idea of intimate belongingness, for example, is most likely to yield those ideals and values that constitute the matter of a communalist theory.

In this direction, with a view to constructing a socio-political theory with universal significance, Iroegbu coined what he calls the principle of "belongingness" (Iroegbu 1995, 374). This idea of "belongingness" is for Iroegbu so constitutive that he elevates it to a principle (Iroegbu 2004, 128) with very high ontological significance such that, for him, "to be is to belong" (Iroegbu 1995, 374). One of the major difficulties with coinages of this nature is their pure synthetic foundation, which is not always obvious to the theoreticians themselves. Thus, for Iroegbu, "belongingness is *umunna* [kindred] concretized" (Iroegbu 1995, 350). If "belongingness is *umunna* concretised", then the concept of "belongingness" does nothing other than to reproduce *umunna* (kindred), a social group, as we have this in everyday experience - a matter that escapes Iroegbu's attention. On his part, communalism is for Nwala validated due to the availability of indicators that enhance the "collective and communal spirit, respect for the human person, collective security owing to collective ownership and enjoyment of social wealthy, social control and discipline, honesty and dedication to common cause" (Nwala 1985, 257-258).

For communalists, therefore, theories are constituted of pure synthetic observational statements such as *ibu anyi danda* (no load is insurmountable for *danda*), which describe or seek to reproduce exactly given existential conditions. In following this straightforward route, they fail to realise that all human existential situations are ambivalent- a factor that can invalidate the claims enshrined in theories. Hence, if theories are to enjoy the kind of validity and significance expected of them, theoreticians must always bear in mind the special character of human existential conditions, which are subject to mechanisms and phenomena that can invalidate our seeming objective accounts of reality and our judgements of known facts. Hence, all matters of theory formulation, in addition to describing what the case is, must show clear evidence of penetrating the immediate data of experience and of accounting for some of the fundamental mechanisms and phenomena that have the capacity to determine the structure and dynamics of human consciousness in the process of cognition and action.

Some Special Challenges of Theory Formulation in African Philosophy

A legitimate question at this juncture is: Why this experience-induced preference by many African scholars? One of the reasons, it seems to me, can be found in the phenomenon of "unintended ethnocentric commitment" where a person, often quite unintentionally, seeks to reclaim, by all means, and at all cost, what he thinks is his own (Asouzu, *2007b, 40-47*). This can be complicated by the urge to put up alternative theories, which should compete favourably with what obtains elsewhere. Thus, in the name of offering general theories, many cling to what they think is their own, and go about describing the same most accurately even at the risk of sounding absurd. A typical example is where many proponents of communalism, in their eagerness to validate the theory of the primacy of the community over the individual, handle the categories of individuality and communality as if they are contradictory. Notwithstanding the implausibility of such a position, they go ahead, boldly, rejecting and deriding individualism, which for them is tantamount to the unwarranted incursion into the authentic communal African experience of the world. In this direction, Anyanwu observes: "What the African inherited from the West is the spirit of individualism" (Anyanwu 1981, 374). In other words, if individualism can be characterised as the way of life of the much despised Western imperialist capitalism, then commune-centricism is the dignified theory for Africa. Perplexing opinions of this kind are the sorts of things many African researchers claim "appears natural and simple to the African but totally bewildering to others" (Anyanwu 1981, 141).

Such paradoxical positions are as widespread as we have African scholars who equate theory formulation with exhuming raw data of African experience of the world. The big questions remain: Why do many theories propounded by many African philosophers exhibit such paradoxes and inconsistencies? Why do some communalists, for example, think that the categories of communality and individuality are incompatible opposites, and, worse still, contradictory or exclusivist categories? Why do they think that individualism is fundamentally a Western phenomenon and not something African also? Why must things African be different?

To begin with, there is a noticeable exclusivist type of mind-set with which many theoreticians of African affairs embrace the issues of theory formulation. Again, many African scholars seem to be under the influence of the logic of "encrypted rationality", where what it takes to understand things African is initiation (Asouzu 2007b, 119-161); hence indigeneship bestows authenticity. Over and above all, it seems to me that many African scholars operate with a narrow understanding of the concept "culture". For many, African culture denotes some pristine materials, deposited and concealed somewhere, from which all the alternative theories about Africa can be exhumed and excogitated with respect to: African Science, African Epistemology, African Ethics, African Aesthetics, African Mathematics, African Logic, African Metaphysics, African Political Philosophy etc. This procedure is quite evocative of Theophilus Okere's African hermeneutics of culture, whose glaring ethnocentric reduction remains its Achilles heel (cf. Njoku 2005, 93-111; Osuagwu 2005, 48-69).

Since this understanding of culture induces a triumphal superiority feeling in many African theoreticians, they comfortably recline on what they consider to be the authentic African experience of the world to state categorically what the case should be in matters African. Ethnocentric excesses of this nature are at the foundation of such trends and projects as "Philosophy of Stolen Legacy", Wiredu's project of "Conceptual Decolonisation", "Ethno-philosophy" in its various guises, the "Black Athena Debate", "Intercultural Philosophy", and variants of Afro-centric and Eurocentric inspired modes of theorising. In a world where the origin of ideas and values can be thought of only within the context of mutual complementary dependence of all stakeholders, it is really doubtful if any form of purely indigenising, ethnocentric-induced approach to theory formulation can be of much benefit to any culture.

For *ibuanyidanda* philosophy, culture is more than African culture, European culture, Asian culture, American culture, *Igbo* Culture, *Hausa culture*, *Yoruba* Culture, *Efik* Culture, *Bantu*

culture etc. Within an *ibuanyidanda* context, the input of all the actors and factors needed to generate the ideas and values from which culture evolves is indispensable: here, reality can only be conceptualised as **missing links,** where human beings stay to each other in a relationship of inherent necessary mutual complementary dependence in their services, privileges and responsibilities and in the generation of ideas and values.

I designate as "missing links" the diverse units that make up an entity within the framework of the whole and as they are complementarily related. They are all the imaginable, fragments, units, components, and combinations that enter into our understanding of any aspect of our world. They are also all the units and combinations necessary in the conceptualisation of an entity or of the whole. Thus missing links are, for example, thoughts and the thoughts of thoughts. They are diverse modes of manifestation of being in history. They are categories and the categories of categories. They are the units and the units of units, entities and the entities of entities, things and the things of things. They are ideas and the ideas of ideas, etc. as these can possibly be abstracted and related to each other as conditions of possibility of their perfectibility in a harmonious systemic manner (Asouzu 1990, 82-91; 2004, 277-278; 2005, 285-286).

The exclusivist type of reasoning inherent in the way many African philosophers embrace theory formulation is further reinforced by the phenomenon of **"Tempelsian Damage"** (a corruption of the minds of many African scholars due to the influence of Placid Tempels) which I regard as one of the heaviest burdens of contemporary African philosophy (Asouzu 2007b, 74). Since Placid Tempels proclaimed that for the Bantu (African) being is force and dynamic (Tempels 1959, 49-58), a declaration many African scholars seem to cherish, many make spirited efforts to reclaim a dynamic type of rationality and theory formulation for Africa without considering the full implications of this commitment. I see the "Tempelsian Damage" quite clearly whenever an African scholar, in **echoing** Placid Tempels' "vital force" theory, in some cases unintentionally, obstinately endeavours to reclaim **a dynamic,** non-transcendent, debased and superstitious type of **African rationality, ontology (metaphysics), technology, science etc,** which he or she contrasts with **a static and** transcendent **Western rationality, ontology, science, technology, etc.** (Asouzu 2007b, 74-100; 176-192). Under the spell of Placid Tempels, Jim Unah, for example, claims that "It is this dynamic conception of reality that essentially characterizes African metaphysics" (Unah 2004, 352).

Thus, caught in this exclusivist, dichotomising, ethnocentric induced mode of reasoning, many African scholars give the impression that the African theoretical framework must be different, and that therefore it is better validated with categories drawn from extra sensory perception (ESP), because, for instance, according to Momoh, for the African, "reality is primarily spiritual" (Momoh 2004, 18). Thus for many, African conceptual scheme, in its world-immanent pre-determinism, has to occupy itself exclusively with such things as magic, witchcraft, faith, prayer, incantations, soothsaying, emotion, divination, superstition, supernatural forces etc, as against a static transcendent Western paradigm that dwells on pure rational theoretical entities of the natural and humanistic scientific types. Those who reason in this dichotomising exclusivist way often forget that the terms dynamic and static, communality and individuality, spiritual and material, rational and superstitious, traditional and modern, sacred and profane, primitive and civilised, faith and reason are ontologically non-exclusivist categories, and are as such inherently constitutive of being, in the dynamism of its complementary essentiality. Besides, formal distinctions between these categories are quite widespread amongst human cultures.

In all cases, it seems to me that the construction of theories is determined more by the interests guiding knowledge; and these interests can be as varied as there are theoreticians and interest groups within given human communities. Hence, it seems to me also that seeking to understand first the mechanisms and phenomena that condition the way we perceive the world, and which have the capacity to determine motives driving theories, is more important than stating categorically that particular patterns of theory formulation - certain patterns of rationality - are most adapted for particular sets of people and geographical regions. Here, theory formulation must concentrate on exploring ways of deriving credible principles needed to reconcile conflicting interests. Therefore, to see, a priori, an inherent division between categories that can be naturally harmonised ontologically, in their mutual complementary interrelatedness, just because we wish to see differences, borders on sheer ideological oversimplification. Any form of exclusivist dichotomising approach to theory formulation is at best anachronistic and myopic, and quite detrimental to healthy human interpersonal relationship, to the growth of science generally and to African science in particular.

When researchers approach the issue of theory formulation with an unrealistic, reclusive, defensive and non-complementary mind-set, efforts at constructing theories easily degenerate into matters of desperation and satisfaction of ideological needs, to the detriment of genuine

scientific concerns. Yet African theoreticians are not entirely to blame in this matter: Many seem to be under enormous pressure from those who expect Africans to evolve completely new sets of theoretical frameworks, **made in Africa,** as a condition for being recognised as theoreticians worthy of note, and deserving admission into the renowned global scientific community. Thus, pushed into the narrow confines of a philosophy made in Africa, many end up with narratives about the worldviews of their people in the name of providing viable theories. Yet expecting any human community to produce completely new sets of theories, outside of the framework provided by the mutual complementary dependence of all existent realities within a wider global framework, is bizarre at best.

The Place of Subjective Accounts of Reality in Theory Formulation and Bridging Incidents of Broken Unity in Human Consciousness

One of the greatest difficulties presented by the experience-induced procedure practiced by many African theoreticians is how it handles the issue of the status of subjective accounts of reality. As against those who imply that what is considered the African commune-centric social order has no place for the individual, that it hampers and undermines the freedom and autonomy of the human person, Gyekye observes: "it would be more correct to describe the African social order as amphibious, for it manifests features of both communality and individuality" (Gyekye 1995, 154). He defends this proposition by reference to the Akan way of life. Here, he uses proverbs and motifs (proverb of tree cluster and motif of "siamese" crocodile) to describe accurately how the Akan social order is constituted in this direction (Gyekye 1995, 154-162; cf. 1992, 101-122). The nuances he brings into the debate notwithstanding, his position hardly differs from those of other communalists who equate general theory with describing given empirical conditions. By following this experience-induced route, his approach creates ambiguities as to whose theory we are dealing with exactly - Gyekye's or the Akan theory of communalism? Such ambiguities ensue mostly due to overconcentration on raw data of experience - over concentration on describing ones cultural patrimonies and the optimism with which many African researchers embrace the idea that theories of universal significance are synonymous with describing the general worldviews of their communities.

Generally, the apparent meekness with which many African thinkers approach the issue of theory formulation is hardly in their favour. In the name of erecting general theories, they often prefer to sneak behind the general worldviews of their communities to express their

thoughts - An approach to African philosophy which has tremendously contributed to retarding its growth and diminishing its scope. More recently, Ijiomah arrives at a conclusion that equally evokes aforementioned ambiguities. In his "excavation of a logic in African world-view" (Ijiomah 2006, 29-35), he attempts to translate some important aspects of my "complementary logical reflection" (Asouzu 2004, 348-354, 302-310; 2005 354-361, 310-318) into logical symbols. If Ijiomah thereby concludes that "Asouzu emphasizes **from African point of view** that in the context of missing link, reality's aim is integration into a system" (Ijiomah 2006, 32 – emphasis mine), he seems to underrate the universal ramifications of theories. Such avoidable ethnocentric-induced excesses invariably lead to the negation of complementation and integration, with the attendant urge to establish self-fulfilling distinctions "between our logic [African logic] and logic of the west" (Ijiomah 2006, 33). A theoretician is definitely more than the mouthpiece of his or her community. This is why good theories should strive to transcend the insinuations of our raw primary cognitive ambiences - the domain of worldviews and pre-scientific predilection. This will enable us to grasp the domain of universally correlated thoughts - our complementary cognitive ambiences (Asouzu 2007b, 111-119).

I would say that within any given context, as an aspect of the tension generated by human ambivalent experience of reality, one of the greatest challenges researchers face is that of successfully bridging the subject-object divide occasioned by excessive attachment to one's cultural patrimonies. Due to this difficulty, many African scholars tend to subsume, immediately, personal insights ensuing from their colleagues into one indivisible African worldview and patrimony. Fired by ethnocentric passion, they try to see differences, even where there should be none. In this matter, *ibuanyidanda*, as a philosophy of integration and complementation, strives to bridge incidents of broken unity in human consciousness occasioned by our tension-laden ambivalent existential situations, and one that instigates actors to be reclusive and exclusivist in their thinking. In this way, it seeks to restore and uphold the freedom and autonomy of the individual investigator who is not a finished product of his or her community: Though formed by his or her community, the researcher is in turn a re-former of his community and the world, but one who is still subject to the transformation ensuing from the interminable mutual complementary interrelatedness of all missing links of reality. Here, the researcher has personal critical responsibilities towards the world at large, his or her determination by other missing links notwithstanding. This is why philosophy, as a second order discipline, and as a critique of ideology, should always strive to go beyond

depicting or describing the case is in given instances. It is in striving to attend to this philosophical need that viable theories evolve.

The Method of *Ibuanyidanda* and Exploring The Mechanisms and Phenomena Underlying Sense Experience (*ihe ahụ na anya ekwe*)

By handling matters of experience as if they are incontrovertible matters of fact, human consciousness is exposed to all the errors ensuing from the constraints imposed by the ambivalent nature of all existential experiences. This is why, cognisant of this fact, all matters of theory formulation should strive towards a method adequate to provide keen insight into the type of relationship existing between such activities of the mind as thinking (*echiche*), kernel of thought (*uche*), cognition (*amamihe*), sense experience (*ihe ahụ na anya ekwe), intellectual intuition (amumauche), sensory intuition (onynyouche) etc.,* as these constitute the content of our consciousness. In this matter, *ibuanyidanda* philosophy insists on **reconceptualising epistemology** in keeping with a method that explores fully the dynamic character of the mind and the challenges this presents, in view of understanding more fully *the character and origin of ideas*: For *ibuanyidanda* philosophy all ideas in their origin and further development are complementarily constituted (Asouzu 2007b, 242-255). Within an *ibuanyidanda* context, this re-conceptualisation is achievable through an understanding of method that is geared towards a radical transformation of the way we perceive the world and the way we act in it.

Here, *ibuanyidanda* philosophy conceptualises method as disposition, that is, the disposition to approach sensation and reality generally with a complementary comprehensive type of mind-set beyond the impositions arising from sense experience (*ihe ahụ na anya ekwe)* (Asouzu 2007c, 140-159; 2007a, 24-55, 317-334). Within this context, method is co-intended and consummated, both formally and materially, in the process of noetic-propaedeutic (pre-education of the mind), where the human subject learns to convert the **transcendent categories of unity of consciousness** *of ibuanyidanda philosophy* into practical action (Asouzu 2007a, 323-327). Based on its method, *ibuanyidanda* seeks to show why judgements concerning given empirical conditions are not necessarily objective statements of fact as they occur in our consciousness, but judgements that can be preconditioned by mechanisms and phenomena that influence the way we perceive reality. As a theory of integration and complementation, *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy (complementary reflection) seeks therefore to inquire, in a complementary comprehensive mode, into the structure and dynamics of human

consciousness and to penetrate reality generally, as to determine the nature of the mechanisms and phenomena responsible for the subject-object divide we often sense in human consciousness; and which have the capacity to impact variously on our judgements about the world (Asouzu 2011, 38).

Such a method makes it imperative for theoreticians to search beyond mere sensations and to delve into the phenomena and mechanisms that drive theories. Akpan has further, and very creditably, shown how this scientific paradigm of *ibuanyidanda* philosophy can serve as an alternative "index of rational explanation" in science (Akpan 2011). Relying on the method of *ibuanyidanda*, we are immediately conscious of the fact that certain phenomena and mechanisms of non-rational and quasi-rational nature are integral elements of our experience of reality such that they can invalidate the apparent incontestable and seemingly rational character of raw data of experience. Over and above all, it makes us very much aware of the type of determination to which the human subject is exposed in all existential situations that are inherently ambivalent. This ambivalence has much to contribute to the differences we encounter in given social orders, in the discrepancies we encounter among theoreticians, in our perception of the world, and in our judgement of the same.

The Method of Ibuanyidanda and the Seeming Opposition between the Community and the Individual

The practical worth of the method of *ibuanyidanda* can be seen in the way it handles the difficulties many theoreticians, in African philosophy, encounter concerning the seeming opposition between the community and the individual. Such difficulties are bound to persist if our judgement of the world is based on synthetic deductions - on reference to those empirical indicators adduced to validate theories. The same is the case where statements and arguments needed to validate theories are based solely on the way reality imposes itself on our consciousness. The seeming oppositions and ambiguities many sense between the individual and the community have much to do with the general ambivalence characteristic of human experience of the world. Therefore, to account insightfully for such difficulties requires a more rigorous analysis than most communalists may be willing to concede.

The ambivalence responsible for these seeming oppositions and ambiguities is deeply connected to the activities of the primitive human instinct of self-preservation which has the capacity to impact on the way we relate to each other generally. It is such ambivalence that impels actors to pursue their interests first in the most unilateral, selfish way, and in total

disregard of the inherent mutual complementary harmony needed to forestall conflicts and safeguard all interests (Asouzu 2004, 61-69; 2005, 70-76;2007a, 56-58).

Over and above all, due to the impact of *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment), human subjects have the capacity to mismanage this ambivalence: Literally, the Igbo expression *ihe mkpuchi anya* translates to "something that impairs vision" or "something that beclouds the eyes". In other words, *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment) is an existential condition that militates against the capacity to reason soundly, judge correctly and imaginatively in matters dealing directly with our most cherished interests. This is precisely why, in given instances, actors may persist in pursuing their interests in the most selfish way, oblivious of the fact that others too have interests to protect, and are equally under the constraints of the same primitive impulse. Such forgetfulness is the type of thing that causes conflicts and irreconcilable differences, because human consciousness is thereby beclouded and entrapped by *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment). Since human communities and their members generally participate in this ambivalence and in the impact of *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment), it is thinkable that each, either as a group or as an individual, has the capacity to mismanage the processes leading to securing its most cherished interests in the event of which it, erroneously, seeks primacy and dominance in the most selfish and unilateral fashion, believing that this is the wisest thing to do. Here, African communities and their members, just like all human communities, share in this ambivalence.

In most situations of life, stakeholders actually devise means to establish, uphold and safeguard their primacy and privileges in the most exclusivists selfish way possible, believing that this is the wisest thing to do. They thereby prefer the survival maxim which states: "the nearer the better and the safer", in view of upholding a coalition of the weak or the strong, as the case may be. In other words, they are instinctively drawn only towards those nearest to them assuming, if only erroneously, that these are better and safer, and as such, are most likely to help them succeed. Due to the impact of these constraining mechanisms and phenomena, actors, most especially in asymmetrical situations of power imbalance, are easily deluded into believing that they are the epitome of wisdom, that they are better than others, and as such, they are impelled to seek primacy over them. Within such a context, what it takes to uphold the freedom and autonomy of the community may be commensurate to what is needed to restrict those of the individual and vice versa. In other words, neither the community (interest groups) nor the individual is, a priori, immune from seeking primacy and suppressing the freedom and autonomy of the other.

What this reveals is that accounting for the mechanisms and phenomena underlying pure sensation is inevitable for arriving at valid conclusions that are not only synthetically relevant but analytically expressive. This is applicable not only with regard to the theory of individual and society, but also with regard to all theories devised to investigate reality. In the case of individual and society, due to the ambivalent precariousness of the situation in which actors find themselves, upholding a harmonised relationship can easily get out of control, if we do not have normative rules adequate to equilibrate the situation. Investigating thoroughly the character of such normative rules and how they can be safeguarded, in the face of variations in opinions and conflicts of interest among contending parties and groups, constitutes one of the major tasks of viable theory formulation that is often neglected by purely synthetic, experience-based procedures.

Safeguarding the Normative Foundation of Theoretical Statements

Due to the synthetic character of their orientation, many theoreticians in African philosophy immediately assume that any positive idea or value, deriving from sense experience (*ihe ahụ na anya ekwe)* is strong enough as the normative foundation of theories. A typical case is communalism: Most of its major proponents assume that indicators that foster some sort of "intimate belongingness", "togetherness", "communal intimacy" and "closeness", automatically qualify for the normative rule or principle based on which a communalist theory can be validated creditably. This is why many consider Mbiti's widely quoted dictum: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti 1970, 141) a worthy foundation for deriving such normative rules. This dictum, they assume, expresses the sort of intimacy for which Africans are known and for this reason, suffices for the validation of the theory of the primacy of the community over the individual, and one that is both ontologically and epistemologically binding. This is why for Menkiti "this primacy is meant to apply not only ontologically, but also in regard to epistemic accessibility" (Menkiti 1984, 171). If these communalists equate indicators that foster some sort of intimacy to normative rules, the question remains: what exactly constitutes these normative rules for them and what is the normative strength of such rules? I shall attempt to answer this question by reference to two positions which I consider quite representative of the way Mbiti's dictum is widely understood in this matter.

Since it is Mbiti's dictum that inspired Iroegbu in the construction of his modern day communalist theory, I wish to start with his position. For Iroegbu, "belongingness" or

"*umunna* concretized" is such a normative rule or principle (Iroegbu 1995, 350). On his part, Anyanwu sees such a normative principle in what he refers to as "*horizontal solidarity between members of a clan*, who are interwoven by an extremely intricate web of family and other blood relationship" (Anyanwu 1981, 141). Let us hold firmly to two important ideas that constitute normative rules or general principles for Iroegbu and Anyanwu, in tune with Mbiti's dictum: For Iroegbu, *belongingness or "umunna* concretized" is such a normative rule or principle. Likewise for Anyanwu, *horizontal solidarity between members of a clan* is such a normative rule or principle.

Now, if these ideas constitute principles, it follows that, for Iroegbu and Anyanwu, we are commanded in all situations and at all times to act in keeping with "the principle of belongingness" and "the principle of horizontal solidarity" respectively. In other words, in all given situations and at all times, the efforts and experiences of those persons and communities are validated who act or think in tune with the demands of the "principles" of "belongingness" and "horizontal solidarity". One can then say that, going by this argument – which is consistent with the position of most contestants in this debate, what validates a typical African communitarian experience is conformity to the "normative rule" or "principle" of "belongingness" and "horizontal solidarity" (and by extension "principles" of "intimate belongingness", "togetherness", "communal intimacy" and "closeness").

For the sake of clarity, I have reduced the likes of Mbiti's, Menkiti's, Iroegbu's and Anyanwu's so called "normative rules", "principles" or "laws", to a common denominator - "**the idea of intimate belongingness**" - which expresses the type of intimacy, they believe, validates authentic African experience. Since most communalists emphasise the notion of intimacy in this matter, they are also likely to agree with Mbiti, Menkiti, Iroegbu and Anyanwu concerning the centrality of "the idea of intimate belongingness" as the normative guide for the African experience of the world. This being the case, they are likely, in addition, to allude to the widespread character of indicators pointing to the idea of intimate belongingness, within African communities, to buttress their claims. Indicators likely to satisfy this criterion include the use of common languages, tribal marks and commonly held unique religious beliefs and practices to show intimate belongingness. The same is valid for recourse to unifying communal sacred symbols, rites, ceremonies, values, unique codes of conduct and communal taboos etc., to express some sort of intimate belongingness.

Based on the indicators above, the communalists are likely to argue that members of given African communities are enabled to uphold a common intimate identity that strengthens their feeling of intimate belongingness as the normative guide based on which distinction can be made between those who belong and those who do not, between insiders and strangers. What this suggests is that by recourse to the idea of intimate belongingness, given human communities are in a position to make clear-cut distinctions between mine and thine. Where the idea of intimate belongingness fulfils this important function, the communalists make us believe, it then shows its true character as the normative rule or principle guiding human conduct.

Regrettably, upon closer examination, those things communalists see as normative guides and principles turn out to be mere maxims: They do not aid human communities to regulate their actions beyond the restrictions imposed by situations, circumstances, times and conditions as would normally be expected of principles, normative rules and laws. Igbos, for example, rely on the idea of *umunna* - Iroegbu's "principle of belongingness" - to uphold the divide between an inside that enjoys near exclusive rights and privileges, and an outside whose rights and privileges are grossly restricted. This is precisely why, even today, among Igbos, what is valid for *umunna* (kindred), *amadi, diala or nwafọ* (indigenes with full rights and privileges) is not always valid for *mbia ra mbia ra* or *ọhụhụ* (mere strangers or settlers). In the same way, most Igbos, within a single community, discriminate adversely between *umunna* (kindred) and *ohu* (slave), and also between *umunna* (kindred) and *osu* (outcast) - an arrangement which has virtually polarised and torn apart most Igbo communities. The same is true of the tension-ridden socio-political landscape of Nigeria and most of the other African countries today, where rights, privileges and obligations are grossly determined by indigeneship - one's clannish, tribal, ethnic, religious or group affiliations.

Maxims and the Normative Strength of Theories

Since many African theoreticians assume that empirical indicators designed to validate the African experience of reality are also necessary conditions for the validation of theories, they often fail to make the important distinction between normative guides, principles, laws and maxims. To make this point still clearer, it might be pertinent to ask the question: what principles or laws do the proponents of "the idea of intimate belongingness", as the normative guide of human experience of reality, wish to articulate and inculcate? One rewarding way of answering this question adequately is by trying to reformulate an idea or a statement into its

law-like equivalent to express its normative character. In this case, "the idea of intimate belongingness" can be reformulated to a "law" or "normative guide" of the kind: "In all matters, at all times and places, you are commanded, in the true spirit of communalism, to be drawn towards those who belong to you intimately." Injunctions and inclinations of this type are reducible to the **super-maxim of** *ibuanyidanda* philosophy which states: "The nearer the better and the safer" (Asouzu 2004, 69-74; 2005, 78-83). A super-maxim "is a law-like dictate, which is anchored on our fundamental natural instinct of self-preservation, following which clear and distinct judgement, committed unbiased action over matters becomes difficult if not impossible" (Asouzu 2010, p.xix).

Injunctions of this kind derive from our natural instinct of self-preservation, as this is under the impact of our tension-laden ambivalent existential situations and *ihe mkpuchi anya* (the phenomenon of concealment). Under such circumstances, the mind always assumes that those persons and things nearest to us are better and safer by reason of their belonging to us intimately. These are our kith and kin, members of our clan, ethnic group, tribe, race, sex, religion, local government, country, church, comrades-in-arms, like minded individuals, Iroegbu's "*umunna*" (kindred) - those who share some sort of intimacy with us (Asouzu 2007a, 317-323). Generally and naturally, we perceive and adjudge these better and safer, because they are nearer. If, out of habit, we are inclined to believe that those nearest to us are better and safer because they are nearer, for example, the decisive question in this regard is: to what extent is it rational to make such an assumption? Certainly, those nearest to us are not always better, and neither are they always safer. In other words, the rationality of such an assumption is very much limited and questionable based on the narrowness and weakness of its normative foundation.

Thus making recourse to maxims to validate theories definitely diminishes the explicative worth of such theories and weakens their normative strength. This matter is not always quite obvious to those who erect theories on maxims. We are then not surprised when theories deriving from maxims easily evoke inconsistencies and contradictions due to their highly diminished rational foundation. For this reason, they do not measure up as effective tools of exploration and social engineering. By adopting the super-maxim itself as a methodological option of social engineering, for example, the mind always assumes that the greatest dangers always arise from the outside and, as such, would be inclined to underestimate the dangers posed by an inside that can be unpredictable and at times even more threatening (Asouzu 2006, 69). Due to the weaknesses inherent in maxims, the lofty ideals proclaimed by

Nyerere's *Ujamaa* - Familyhood - (Nyerere 1994, 12), and those pursued by most commune-centric approaches in African philosophy, are more likely to be realised if their maxim-based foundation is subjected to an overhaul.

Principles and Imperative of Ibuanyidanda and Widening the Explicative Scope of Synthetic Statements

As against experience-induced methods of theorising, that consider observational statements indisputable statements of fact about the world, and thereby mistake principles for maxims, the method of *ibuanyidanda* helps refine the character of such statements and widen the scope of their applicability. Thus, sustained by the method of *ibuanyidanda*, the human subject has the capacity to make those propositions, which though deriving from sense experience (*ihe ahụ na anya ekwe),* seek to supersede the type of constraints imposed by the promptings of sense experience (*ihe ahụ na anya ekwe)*. If, for example, traditional *Igbo* philosophers, through the observational statement "I*bu anyi danda* (no task is insurmountable for *danda*)", focus on the mutual dependence and feeling of intimate belongingness observable among communities, I seek, through the concept **ibuanyidanda,** and the method of *ibuanyidanda* philosophy, to widen, more universally, the scope of applicability of what is intended in this observational statement (The difference between *ibu anyi danda* [synthetic] and *ibuanyidanda* [synthetic-analytic] has to be noted very carefully).

It is through this procedure, that *ibuanyidanda* philosophy (complementary reflection), derives **the principle of integration,** the metaphysical variant of its principles, which states: "*Anything that exists serves a missing link of reality"* (Asouzu 2004, 273-327; 2005, 281-285). In the same way, it formulates the **principle of progressive transformation**, the practical equivalent of its metaphysical principle, which claims: "*All human actions are geared towards the joy of being":* it is, thus, an injunction always to act for the joy of being or for attainment of the experience of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness with all existent realities. It is by acting in this mode that the human subject can translate the **transcendent categories of unity of consciousness of ibuanyidanda philosophy** into action (Asouzu 2007a, 323-332). To these categories belong "absoluteness", "relativity", "historicity", "fragmentation" or "world-immanent predetermination", "universality", "comprehensiveness", "unity", "totality", and "future reference". Furthermore, the **imperative of ibuanyidanda philosophy** demands: "*Allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy."* Though this imperative seeks universal applicability, it is not a

categorical command (Asouzu 2007b, 210-221). Its **truth and authenticity criterion** states: *"Never elevate a world-immanent missing link to an absolute instance."*

What is striking about the *ibuanyidanda* approach to theory formulation is its insistence that assumptions about the world can be validated adequately only in a complementary comprehensive way in relation to all missing links of reality. This is how it seeks to bridge more creditably the artificial divide arising from commitment to the maxim of intimate belongingness. Thus, in all things and at all places, *ibuanyidanda* always seeks to overcome any form of artificial divide between the universal and the particular, between the absolute and the relative, between the necessary and the contingent, the essential and the accidental, the consequential and inconsequential, between mine and dine, between the community and the individual, between indigenes and strangers, between lords and slaves etc. More still, with the demands of its imperative, "allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy", *ibuanyidanda* philosophy recognises that fragmentation is a constitutive element of relative historical existence. For this reason, all relative historical conditions are geared towards positive transformation. This is why such relative historical conditions as clan, ethnicity, race and achievement should never be reasons for conflicts and exclusivist tendencies. On the contrary, in line with the *ibuanyidanda imperative*, actors would gladly embrace such factors as necessary conditions for striving towards a higher form of constructive self-affirmation and the joy of being.

The demands of the truth and authenticity criterion of *ibuanyidanda* philosophy, and the claims of its imperative, show the non-categorical but universal significance of its imperative: with these, *ibuanyidanda* philosophy insists that the human subject attains a higher form of legitimisation, towards which it is destined, only if actors encounter missing links in their relativity, historicity and fragmentation, but thereby bear in mind their ultimate determination to absoluteness, universality, comprehensiveness, unity and totality in future reference. Therefore, genuine commitment to human relative condition or to world-immanence in general, in adherence to the truth and authenticity criterion, is a necessary condition for the attainment of the joy of being (*jide ka iji*) - the ultimate end of human action. What this implies is that commitment to what is intended with the concept *ibuanyidanda* invariably enables actors to come to full insight that in their insufficiency they are merely missing links striving towards full authentication.

As against experience-induced theories, that are not sensitive enough to the existential challenges posed by human ambivalent situations and *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment), *ibuanyidanda* philosophy seeks to sensitise the human subject about these challenges and to guide actors creditably on how to make recourse to their own innate transformational categories - **the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness** - in view of arriving at clearer insight and better judgements about the world. These categories **are not transcendental** categories: they are **transcendent** merely because they enable the subject to go beyond the impositions of the senses and the constraints ensuing from *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment) and human ambivalent existential situations. Where its method is in force, it becomes self-evident to actors that to be is the capacity to affirm insightfully that anything that exists serves a missing link of reality. This is another way of saying that to be is to be in control of the insinuations of our ambivalent existential situations and of the phenomenon of concealment (*ihe mkpuchi anya*). Within an *ibuanyidanda* context therefore, the act of being-in-control (*ima-onwe-onye*) turns out to be the highest form of self-consciousness attainable. In this act of being-in-control (*ima-onwe-onye*), the human subject experiences itself as a being that has the capacity of being in control of its ambivalent existential situations and the phenomenon of *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment). Where this form of self-consciousness is in place, acting authentically supersedes fulfilling sectional needs. On the contrary, it entails attending to the needs of all missing links of reality, such that the full affirmation of our being can only be achieved indirectly within the context of mutually dependent units, diversities in their historical antecedents and conditions notwithstanding.

Theory Formulation, *Ibuanyidanda* and the Classical Notion of Being (General Ontology)

As already indicated, adherence to the method and principles of *ibuanyidanda* philosophy makes us affirm insightfully that **being is that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality -** this translates to Igbo language as**:** ihe di nwere isi na ọdụ - or I di bu ihe nwere isi na ọdụ. This singular statement has enormous implications for the classical doctrine of being, that is, ontology. The first implication relates to that aspect of classical metaphysics where the notion of being is considered indefinable "because it does not belong to any class, any species of things" (Dougherty 1965, 36). One of the major difficulties which Ibuanyidanda philosophy sees in this matter of definition, traceable to

Aristotle's metaphysics, is the problem of bifurcation and an exclusivist handling of the notion of being (Asouzu 2011, 41-43). In spite of his various modes of understanding metaphysics, Aristotle sees metaphysics as "the science of substance" (*Metaphysica* Book B, 2). For him, being in the true sense of the word belongs to the region of substance because "if these are not substance, there is no substance and no being at all" (*Metaphysica* Book B, 5). Within this Aristotelian context, substance, and with it the idea of being, have come to be associated with that which subsists, as against mere accidents which inhere in substance. Besides, for this understanding, a substance can exist independent of its accidents. This doctrine, in its distinction between substance and accidents, suggests that the relationship between both is exclusivist and bifurcated - a relationship that should ordinarily be natural and mutually harmonised.

In other words, Aristotle's doctrine evokes the impression of an inherent moment of divisiveness in the notion of being that is ontologically secured: This is that situation where substance (essence) and accidents exist in diverse regions of being, and one that is sustained by an interminable dynamic contradictory force. Theories modelled after the exclusivist mind-set underlying the logic of Aristotle's metaphysical teaching relate to the world in an exclusivist non-complementary mode where accidents are handled as if they are inferior to substance or essence. This teaching is glaringly reflected in theories based on maxims for their validation such that they emphasize differences and otherness instead of mutual complementation. Based on the presuppositions of such theories, the human subject easily elevates accidental qualities to absolute categories based on which it seeks exclusiveness. It is in this way that we can explain, bearing in mind the impact of *ihe mkpuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment)*,* how such categories as intimate belongingness, status, language, achievements, clan, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, tribe, colour, sex, which ordinarily should be accidental qualities, can easily be elevated to those essential categories based on which the mind discriminates, bifurcates and segregates with a view to securing its most cherished interests against an outside it considers different and inconsequential.

To address the unavoidable difficulties connected with this mode of relating to reality, there is need to re-conceptualise the notion of being, with an *ibuanyidanda* mind-set, and in the most natural way, such that in spite of its diverse modes of determination it remains harmonised. In this case, the idea of being must supersede its expression in the divide existing between substance and accidents as to grasp the intrinsic mutual complementary relationship needed to harmonise both substance and accidents. *Ibuanyidanda* pursues a way

of expressing this harmonised idea of being when it claims that **"being is that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality"** - *this translates to Igbo language as: ihe di nwere isi na ọdụ* - or *I di bu ihe nwere isi na ọdụ*. With this claim, *ibuanyidanda ontology* seeks to address incidents of broken unity, about the idea of being, that might arise should we, in our bid to focus on being, as that indivisible abstract abstruse entity depicted by Aristotle's *ousia (*substance or essence), we end up bifurcating the intrinsic natural relationship existing between substance and accident, or being qua being and its attributes - a relationship that necessarily enters into our conceptualisation of world-immanent missing links, even in their essentiality (Asouzu 2007a, 149-154).

In this *ibuanyidanda mode* of understanding being, we see immediately how the mutual harmony existing between all modes of determination of being is dynamically lifted into the idea that sustains all things that exist. It is in this idea that sustains being, as that harmonised mutual complementary existential, that its definition subsists. With this, we affirm that the idea of being does not become evident in any discrete quantity or quality alone, neither does it get lost in a form of abstract abstruse transcendentalism; on the contrary, it is something given in the harmonious mutual complementary interrelatedness of all things that exist. Herein is located the type of complementary unity attainable by the mind in its bid to grasp reality. Where this mode of mutual complementation is absent, the mind immediately ends up bifurcating reality which presents itself as mere matters of experience or as pure abstract unattainable ideals. One of the major consequences of this is a relapse either into a metaphysics of pure essence, which sees substance and accidents as belonging to diverse regions of being, or into a pure world-immanent non-transcendent, pre-deterministic ontologism, where world-immanence becomes self-constituting. These are extreme modes of relating to the world that offer the groundwork for any exclusivist, intolerant, domineering absolutist types of theorising.

The second implication which *ibuanyidanda* ontology has for the classical notion of being is with regard to the classical assertion that the negation of being is **nothingness** (Van Steenberghen 1952, 23). If for *ibuanyidanda* ontology to be is to be in mutual complementary relationship with all things that exist, and if being is that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality, then, the negation of being is not to be sought in nothingness, but in the capacity to be alone ("*ka sọ mụ di*" in Igbo language, i.e. "that I may be alone"). The existential implication of this claim is that that person is to be pitied who believes that to exist or to be is the capacity to be alone (*ka sọ mụ di*). All super-maxim

inspired approaches to existence show clear signs of this negation of being, because they easily suggest that existence can unfold itself optimally within the confines of the lone boundaries of intimate belongingness (*"ka sọ mụ di"*, i.e. "that I may be alone"). This is a clear attempt at negating the intrinsic complementary dependence of all existing realities in a relationship of mutual service (*ka sọ mụ adina*, i.e. "that I may not be alone").

Conclusion

This paper has sought to resolve some of the greatest challenges facing theoreticians of African philosophy. Besides the challenges posed by ethnocentric and ethnophilosophic induced methods of theorising, many theories devised by African philosophers to investigate reality do not show clear evidence of carefully worked out systems and corresponding principles and methods needed to sustain them. In other words, most things that go under the name of theory formulation in African philosophy are, more or less, variants of empirical quantitative research activities exemplified by the method of synthetic deduction underlying Ethnophilosophy. *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy (complementary reflection) addresses these difficulties by employing a systematic methodological approach to theory formulation that it calls its own. By relying on its method, its principles and its systematic outline, and based on a thoroughgoing existential analysis, *ibuanyidanda* philosophy attempts to address the difficulties presented by exaggerated empiricism common to ethnophilosophic investigations. By so doing, *ibuanyidanda* philosophy tries to compensate for the inadequacies of pure synthetic deductions characteristic of most theory formulations in African philosophy. With this approach, it is all the more able to address reality in a comprehensive complementary mode and in keeping with the demands of the first principles.

Thus due to its close affinity to the first principles, *ibuanyidanda* philosophy, unlike purely experience-induced methods of theorising, has the capacity to reach out to all existent realities irrespective of their differences and conditions. In contrast to an experience induced method of theorising saddled with the burden of parochialism, *ibuanyidanda* philosophy enjoys unfettered universalism due to its comprehensive outreach. This is precisely why a negation of the metaphysical principle of *Ibuanyidanda,* for example, invariably leads to contradiction, to self-negation and to an ontological boomerang effect (Asouzu 2007a, 391-400). *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy thus offers a completely new approach to African philosophy which is systematically anchored.

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