

THE IDEA OF TRUTH WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF IBUANYIDANDA

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Abstract

This piece has attempted to examine the concept of truth in Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda. Unlike the traditional theories of truth, the idea of truth within the context of Ibuanyidanda is comprehensive in nature and not one-sided. Thus, the notion that truth is conformity of objects to certain ideas or thoughts has its shortcomings within a complementary framework. Complementary reflection is a resulting attempt to expose the shortcomings of all forms of one-sided attempt at the presentation of reality. Asouzu approaches truth indirectly and introduces ontological logic to the understanding of truth.

Keywords:

Introduction

The concept of truth has changed throughout human history. At one level or another, human beings since ancient times have acknowledged that truth may vary depending on individual points of view. Since Plato's analogy of life as shadows on the wall of a cave over 3,000 years ago, scholars have grappled with the notion of truth. In philosophy, truth deals with both the meaning of the word "true" and the criteria by which we judge the truth or falsity in statements. Philosophers have attempted to answer the question "What is truth?" since the time of Plato. This paper is an attempt to examine the idea of truth within the context of Asouzu's concept of *Ibuanyidanda* and more so, to see how *Ibuanyidanda* (Complementarity) addresses the relativism of the empiricists in relation to truth.

The Concept of Truth

Right from the time of Aristotle to Aquinas and Kant to Chisholm, the common sense has been to locate truth in judgments. Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics* asserts: "To say of what is that it is not or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true" (Quoted in Omoregbe 43). This implies that truth is conformity of the mind with reality. Thomas Aquinas, in agreement with Aristotle, defines truth as "conformity of the intellect with reality" (Omoregbe 40). And even the fact of Kant's "Copernican Revolution" could not allow him to see beyond the common tendency of regarding truth as the mind's correspondence with the object. Kant also concurred to the notion of truth as the agreement of knowledge with its object. Truth, for Kant, lies in

judgment which the mind makes when it applies the categories to phenomena (things as they appear to us) (Lamprecht 365 - 366). One can see the correspondence notion of truth in Kant also. The concept of truth, for Chisholm, is principally linked with the idea of "states of affairs". In his expressions, Our answer to the question "What is truth" refers not only to the "states of affairs" but also to "states of affairs that exist", and "states of affairs that do not exist". We must say, for example, that among the entities that exist are Socrates' being mortal, there being horses, there being no unicorns; and we must say that among the entities that do not exist are Socrates' not being mortal, there being no horses and there being unicorns (104). The import of this is that truth is connected with the idea of "state of affairs" and facts. This is only a restatement of the traditional correspondence theory of truth. Truth, according to the correspondence theory of truth, consists in the agreement of our thought with reality. A belief is called "true" if it "agrees" with a fact (Randall and Buchler 146). The question that comes to mind is: How is one to understand this agreement or correspondence? Hume's empiricism has demonstrated that there could never be corresponding complex ideas of complex impressions. In this regards, a mere one-to-one agreement or correspondence between knowledge and its object cannot yield truth. Such a traditional theory of truth is a very limited one because it pretends that truth can only be demonstrated empirically. Let us proceed to examine the concept of *Ibuanyidanda*.

The Concept of *Ibuanyidanda*

According to Asouzu, the concept of *Ibuanyidanda* is drawn from the Igbo language and has as its nearest English equivalent the idea that "Complementarity", in the sense of togetherness, is greatest (*njikọ ka*), *igwe bu ike* (strength in togetherness) (*Ibuanyidanda* 11). The word *Ibuanyidanda* is a combined word made up of three parts: *Ibu* which mean "Load or task"; *Anyi* meaning not insurmountable for, and *Danda* (a species of ants). This concept *Ibuanyidanda* draws its inspiration from the teachings of traditional Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought. For the traditional Igbo "danda" (ants) can surmount the most difficult challenges if and only if they work in a harmonious complementary unified manner (Asouzu, *Method and Principles* 108). This implies the idea of mutual dependence and interdependence in Complementarity. Complementarity (*Ibuanyidanda*) is the moment of reflection between the choices of isolation and teamwork.

In the light of this, Prof. Asouzu posits that "when we say *Ibuanyidanda*, we are making recourse to such an ontological state of mutual service in

Complementarity as the horizon of our reflection” (*Ibuanyidanda* 12). Thus, the idea of truth in *Ibuanyidanda* transcends our individual experiences to our collective contemplation. Attempting to explain the methodical principle and the imperative of Complementarity, Asouzu postulates the metaphysical and practical variants of the principle. He calls the metaphysical variant of the principle “the principle of progressive transformation”. While the principle of integration indicates the general metaphysical implications of the theory, the principle of progressive transformation addresses specifically the relevance of the theory to human actions. He went further to point out that the principle of integration holds that “anything that exists serves a missing link in reality”, whereas, the principle of progressive transformation maintains that “all human actions are geared towards the joy of being”. For Asouzu both principles allow us to formulate the imperative of Complementarity which can be stated thus: “allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy” (*Ibuanyidanda* 306). Let us at this juncture examine the notion of truth within the context of *Ibuanyidanda* (Complementarity).

Truth and Authenticity Criterion

The three major traditional theories of truth have proposed to answer the question “What is Truth?” These theories are the correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories of truth. The correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories of truth claim to offer what are in some sense criteria of truth. They claim respectively that the criteria of truth are correspondence with fact, coherence with other propositions of judgments, and success in practice, that is, the leading to successful results, which may take the form of successful predictions or be of a more obviously practical kind (Hamlyn 117). A belief is called “true”, according to the correspondence theory, if it “corresponds” with fact. To the coherence theory of truth, the notion of correspondence with fact is replaced by that of “consistency”, consistency being a logical property concerning the associations of ideas with one another. While, to the pragmatic theory of truth, it is what works in practice.

Truth and authenticity criterion, according to Asouzu, is: The measure by which we can state if a thing confirms to the demands of the principle, method and imperative of Complementarity as far as these are founded on the principle of non-contradiction (*Method and Principle* 310). The import of this is that truth and authenticity mirror the state of the mind in search for comprehensiveness and universality. Put differently, truth has to do with universality. Consequently, within Asouzu’s complementary reflection, truth and authenticity go beyond the

realm of mere epistemology and logic to relate to the universal and comprehensive unity of being and consciousness in all areas of existence. It goes beyond all known areas of our experiences as an ontological issue and is comprehensive at the same time.

In complementary reflection, there is a complicated relationship between ontological truth and truth as lived experience. Here, one can see an element of correspondence theory of truth. But, for something to be true, it has to supersede the mere claim concerning the harmonization of our perception of it with the actual state of the thing in question. This means that it is based on such a criterion that the mind experiences complete harmony in all its operations such that the epistemological, logical, ethical, aesthetic, psychological, and metaphysical among others cohere with one another in a harmonious complementary manner. It is obvious that Asouzu's complementary reflection went a step forward than the correspondence theory of truth, in that it makes a distinction between truth as conformity of the mind with a state of affair and truth as the ability of the mind to relate to reality in the most comprehensive and universal manner. The latter, for him, takes advantage over the former and defines its mode of its expression. Hence, to Asouzu, the question is not if something is true but in what sense something is true. The lesson from this is that the issue of truth and objectivity is difficult to understand in relation with the question of meaning. To this end, Asouzu declares that: To understand or explain what a thing represents entails understanding or explaining it within a wider network of complementary missing links in view of the whole that gives them their legitimacy (*Method and Principle* 312).

The import of this is that all issues of truth and authenticity have some human elements necessarily associated with them. In recognition of this fact, Asouzu went ahead to contend that: We cannot wish these elements away just because we wish to be logical or scientific. We must accept them and learn to manage them as integral aspects of any explanation model that seek to do justice to our humanity.... They are missing links of reality; and the way we manage these missing links determine the level of truth and authenticity we are capable of attaining (313 - 314). What this means is that within a Complementarity framework, the correspondence theory of truth has its limitations. The question of truth and authenticity moves beyond mere statement of facts to include what things mean in a comprehensive sense. Thus, the truth and authenticity criterion "is the link between the relative and absolute in a way that upholds the character

of each in a complementary harmonious manner”, opines Asouzu (*Method and Principle* 319).

Communicability of Truth through Complementary Logic

Truth, within the framework of complementary notion of truth, is essentially related with the harmony ensuring from the logic of human interest and the ontological logic (*Ibuanidanda* 72). Thus, all matters dealing with truth can be articulated within the context of these two logics, which offer the foundation for authentic existence. Both logics, according to Asouzu, complement each other in view of upholding their relevance. Hence, without the logic of human interest, the ontological logic becomes ineffective and vice versa (*Ibuanidanda* 72). In view of this, the challenge in all matter of truth would be how to reunite and merge the logic of human interest with the ontological logic. This reconciliation is one of the major tasks that new complementary ontology, of Asouzu, places before itself.

On the word of Asouzu, this task has often eluded many, because of the false belief that all truths are equal and all truths are allowable. This is the dogma of relativism (*Ibuanidanda* 74). In this regard, empiricism as the doctrine that our senses are sufficient basis for knowing truth remains problematic in its relativism. The inductive method of arriving at truth, as a type of logic of human interest can never be complete when taken alone. To this end, Asouzu submits: This is why matters of truth and validation are better handled within a more comprehensive framework, should we be in a position to liberate the mind from all forms of impositions, complication and compulsion (*Ibuanidanda* 76). The import of this is that the problems of logic, and those of truth, have much to do with ontological for as long that it can be understood by the mind differently and remain complete and harmonized.

Conclusion

In this paper, attempt has been made to examine the concept of truth in Asouzu’s *Ibuanidanda*. Unlike the traditional theories of truth, the idea of truth within the context of *Ibuanidanda* is comprehensive in nature and not one-sided. Thus, the notion that truth is conformity of objects to certain ideas or thoughts has its shortcomings within a complementary framework. Complementary reflection is a resulting attempt to expose the shortcomings of all forms of one-sided attempt at the presentation of reality. Asouzu approaches truth indirectly and introduces ontological logic to the understanding of truth. In this regard, the question of

truth goes beyond mere statement of facts or “states of affairs” to include what things mean in a complementary comprehensive sense that is universal and holistic in nature.

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