

## Human Rights Violation Conundrum: Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda Ontology As A Remedy

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### Abstract

On a daily basis one hears of killings, rapes, kidnapping and all other sorts of human right abuses from all quarters of the world. This has continued in spite of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the various attempts by different bodies and government to halt this trend. It is the believe of the researchers that if the tenets of Ibuanyidanda philosophy are applied and adhered to, human rights violations would reduce to the barest minimum. Ibuanyidanda is a term coined from Igbo language of Nigeria and literarily translates to 'no load is insurmountable for the ant'. This means that when the ants work in unison, there are capable of carrying loads that appear heavier and bigger than them. It also means that when humans work in complementarity, they would be capable of doing things that they ordinarily would not have succeeded to do. When this understanding take root in individuals, that is the moment, everybody would understand, that the other person is not an 'external other' but a 'complementary other' upon whom he ought to depend on to live meaningfully. This work urges the various government and agencies in charge of human right protection, to device ways to drum this message to all individuals. It is when everybody see the other in the eyes of complementarity (an extended part of the self), that he would be less likely to violate the rights of the other.

**Key Words:** human right, Ibuanyidanda, missing links, complementarity

### INTRODUCTION

This work acknowledges the existence of wide spread cases of human rights abuses in spite of the fact that, the Universal Declaration of Human Right has been ratified by all the countries of the world with their individual constitutions reflecting these ideals in different degrees. The euphoria that greeted the arrival of the Declaration in 1948, made everybody believe that the ideals it preaches would be imbibed and put to practice by people all over the world, but it has never been the case.

A day never passes without the occurrence of human right abuses like imprisonment or detention without trial, torture, arbitrary arrest, judicial murder, rape, oppression, forced prostitution and a host of other inhumanity ditch out to man by his fellow man.

This work also acknowledges the fact that the UN has developed different measures to ensure that the fundamental human rights of man are accorded respect by man; and that these measures are not very effective as the constant violations of human rights in the world attest to. The work therefore, attempts to point to the UN, what the researcher perceives as the best option that could provide a turnaround for good as regards human right abuses. Thus, the

work would be attempting the application of Asouzu's thoughts on missing links of realities as a solution to the biting problem of human rights violations,

### **Human Rights And Its Violations**

Like in so many subjects in the academic world, there is no generally acceptable conception of human rights. For instance Madison defines it as, "those rights that belong to people simply by virtue of the fact that they are human beings" (15). Iwe defines it as the "moral faculties of powers, deriving directly from the personal nature of man, by virtue of which powers; he may have or do, or require something from others for the development of his personality" (33). The United Nations defines it as, "those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings" (Etim 114). Harold Laski sees it as, "those conditions of social life without which no man seek, in general, to be himself at his best ... our rights are not independent of society, but inherent in it. Therefore man's rights are derived from man's membership of society" (93). The first three conceptions see human rights as derivative of human nature, while the last one sees it as derived from membership of a society. Laski conception of human rights could be said to be a reflection of how the traditional African conceives it. This is confirmed by Menkiti who claims that in traditional Africa, it is "the community that defines a person as a person, not the static quality of rationality, will and memory" (172). Olatunji also supported this view when he asserted that, "the state of being of the community determines what the lot of individuals becomes, irrespective of the values cherished by the individual" (102). Laski's conception of human rights therefore, mirrors the traditional African conception of it while Madison's, Iwe's and the United Nation's conception of it mirror the Western conception of it. This paper on its part sees human right as those rights which cannot be said to have been given to man by man but are earned by man for being a human because there are necessary for his continuous happy existence with himself, his fellow man, and for participation in the society.

The ancient era did not have the concept of universal human rights, though they had elaborate systems of duties, conceptions of justice, political legitimacy and human happiness that sought to realize human dignity and well-being entirely independent of human rights. There are several arguments that exist showcasing the origin and development of the ideas of universal rights. Our concern in this paper is however, not on these arguments. Our concern is on The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which remains the primary internationally acceptable articulation of the fundamental and inalienable rights of all humans – this was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) represents the first comprehensive agreement among nations as to the specific rights and freedoms of all human beings. essentially the entire world's countries have ratified it since then (<http://www.unac.org/rights/actguide/uder>). The Universal Declaration was originally intended as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations" but over the past fifty years, it has become a cornerstone of customary international law and all government now apply its principles. This is perhaps because, the Universal Declaration successfully encapsulates all legal, moral and philosophical beliefs held true by all peoples (<http://www.udhr.org/history/question.htm>). Thus, Prime ministers, Presidents, Legislators, Judges, Lawyers, Legal scholars, Human Right Activists and ordinary people throughout the world have accepted and endorsed the Universal Declaration as an essential legal code. For instance, dozens of legally binding international treaties are based on the principles set forth in the UDHR, and the document has been cited as justification for numerous United Nations actions, including actions of the Security Council.

The rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) include: right to life, freedom from torture, freedom from slavery, right to fair trial, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of speech. Others include right to food, clothing, housing and medical care, social security, work, equal pay for equal work, right to form trade unions and right to education.

Because these rights are considered universal and as central and integral part of our international legal structure, the Universal Declaration is widely accepted as an indispensable tool in upholding human rights for all. It is however, unfortunate that the challenges that the UDHR came up to address in 1948 are still very much in existence in our world today. There is still in existence as it were in those days gross abuse and violations of human rights by both the government and private individuals. The torturing and murdering of individuals because of their beliefs, ethnicity or their opinions have continued unabated. On the 27th of February 2002 for instance, it was reported that a Muslim crowd attacked a train filled with Hindu activists in Indian city of Godhra. The event triggered a violent spiral of religious revenge that saw the killing of 2000 Muslims and the destruction of many Mosques and other properties (<http://www.news.softedia.com>). This kind of violation of freedom of religion is very much evident in countries like Nigeria, Afghanistan, Algeria, Brazil, Burundi, Columbia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Liberia et cetera.

Apart from the freedom of religion, all other rights of human are violated incessantly on a daily basis all over the world. On a daily basis we hear of kidnappings, killings, enslavements, torturing, threatening and murdering of journalists and other varieties of inhumanities meted out to man by man. Not a day goes by without reminders of racism and the crime it spawns, intolerance and the excesses it breeds (Ghali 2). Women especially have suffered abuse, dehumanization, oppression from the male dominated society. Women are victims of rape, wife battering, genital mutilation, kidnapping, force prostitution, female infanticide, sex tourism, dowry burning, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and discrimination in legal status, health care and education. Children like their mothers have also suffered tremendously from the claws of perpetrators of crime. School children everyday face sexual harassment which leads to teenage pregnancy and exposure to sexually transmitted diseases. Girls are compelled to marry below the age of consent. Some 130 million children lack access to primary education. About 160 million children suffering from malnutrition. Many children are abandoned in orphanages, while about 250 million children are engaged in various forms of child labour (Etim 118). In 2002, the number of children found in the power of the Lord Resistance Army in northern Uganda was 20000 – these children were kidnapped and trained as soldiers.

The United Nations has created a number of channels and procedures to implement these rights. The commission on Human Rights is the primary international forum for addressing human rights violations. The commission has created a number of specialized bodies to monitor and report on human rights problems such as torture, free expression, violence against women and religious freedom. It has sub commission on the status of women and recently the UN created the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights. This establishment is aimed at making human rights even more central to the work of the UN by giving these issues the political stature and voice they need in the international arena. The UN has also established a permanent international court that will hold violators accountable and vigorously pursue justice for the individual victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Finally, the UN strives not only to protect human rights, but to promote them as well. The UN offers technical assistance to countries publishes human rights information and makes human rights counsellor and educators available at the request of government. Many of the UN specialized agencies like the UNICEF, UNESCO, the International Labour Organisation

and the UN High Commissions for Refugees are currently engaged in human rights issues as a component of their work (<http://www.udhr.org/history/question.htm>).

In spite of these intervention measures by the UN to ensure the respect of the rights of man by man, there still exist violations upon violations of human right all over the world. The persistence of this teething problems lay credence to the fact that these measures laid down by the UN to quench the fire of violence in the heart of man has not lived up to expectations and thus need to be reviewed. The researcher believes the ideas contained in Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda philosophy would be the better solution to this malady.

### **Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda Ontology**

Asouzu's conception of the world through is idea of missing links of realities has the assumption that the world would be a better place if the divisive mindset in which people operate with is bridged. He believes that human conditions present themselves in ambivalences and due to the activities of the instinct of self-preservation, man seeks to elevate himself to an absolute instance whereby his advantage would be met regardless of what happens to what he considers as the opposite other. For him the instinct of self-preservation and what he calls the phenomenon of concealment makes man to see himself as important and the other unimportant. He sees himself as substance and the other as accidents after the divisive mindset of Aristotle. This divisive and bifurcating mindset with which man is guilty of (sometimes unintentionally made possible by the instinct of self-preservation) gives rise to all the negative tendencies like violence, killings all other sort of abuses meted on man by man. Ibuanyidanda philosophy represents an attempt to redefine, refine, reconstruct and free our system of thought from all bifurcating and polarizing mindset that makes the mind tend to exalt its existence over and above that of others. it therefore, advocates for the training of the mind to overcome its ambivalence and see the world in a global and totalizing mindset and not as absolute mode of existence. Ibuanyidanda philosophy admonishes all humans to "never elevate a world immanent missing link to an absolute instance" (Ibuaru 197). Rather, being is to be captured "in a comprehensive, total and future referential and proleptic manner" (Complementary Reflection 316). Asouzu believes that when being is captured this way, the battle of the UN to have a world free of human rights abuses would end. When being is captured this way, we would have a world of our dreams, where all stakeholders seek to preserve the interest of the perceived other.

The main thrust of Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda ontology is therefore, the obliteration of all sorts of bifurcating mindsets. It is geared towards the eradication of the we-them mentality that has plagued the mind of mankind. Asouzu believes that all realities are windows to other realities; all mode of beings (both the substance and accidents) are essential; that the other person is as essential as you are, the other's idea is as important as yours, the other person has the same rights as you have; and more importantly the other person is not an opposite other but an extension of the self. This is the idea he encapsulates in his concept of "missing links of realities". It means the other person is not inconsequential but a missing part of the self without which the self cannot define its existence. He believes that " it is within the context of missing links that all human experiences of the world get their full meaning and can be expressed positively" (Ibuanyidanda 269).

However, for the heart of man to begin to capture being in terms of missing links of reality, Asouzu believes transcendent existential conversion must occur first. Transcendent existential conversion according to him is "a process through which human consciousness attains the highest level of experience or intuition of being, as that on account of which anything that

exists serves a missing link of reality” (Ibuanyidanda 329). At this point of existential consciousness he believes, the mind no longer sees reality as absolute fragments but would begin to operate in keeping with what he calls ‘transcendent categories of unity of consciousness.’ These categories include “fragmentation, unity, totality, universality, comprehensiveness, wholeness and future reference” (Ibuanyidanda 323). Thus, when existential conversion takes place in an individual according to Asouzu, the mind would no longer operate in a divisive and polarizing mindset but tend to grasp being in its fragmentation, unity, totality, universality, comprehensiveness, wholeness and future reference.

Grasping being in keeping with the dictates of the transcendent categories is aided by what Asouzu calls the ‘harmonizing faculty’. This is “a faculty that harmonizes all forces that tends toward bifurcation and exclusiveness” (Ibuanyidanda 316). It therefore means that, when the harmonizing faculty is active in a man, the tendency of the mind to be led astray to conceive of violence and abuses of his fellow man would not be there. This is because the harmonizing faculty harmonizes all differences, leaving no chance for polarization and bifurcation which are the root causes of all forms of abuses and violation of human rights.

When being is grasped in keeping with the transcendent categories through the aid of the harmonizing faculty, then the mind could be said to be operating in a global mindset. It is from operating through this global or transcendent mindset Asouzu claims, that we are capable of grasping the opposite other in its otherness and embrace this otherness as an extension of the self without discrimination. It is from operating in this mindset, that the mind could begin to perceive the other as essential as he is, possessing equal dignity and freedom as he does. It is from operating in this mindset that the mind would begin to realize that harm done to the other is indirectly done to the self; because the other is nothing but an extension of the self.

### **Asouzu Ibuanyidanda Ontology As A Remedy To Human Rights Abuses**

Asouzu is of the belief that if the mind of man can be attuned to see the others as serving a missing link and not as fragments of existence, then the world would become a better place – free from human rights abuses and violations. As no one would deliberately hurt himself/herself, he/she would also not hurt the other, if he sees himself not as an opposite other but as an extension of the self. When man begins to see reality this way that is when he would realize that hurting the other is like shooting oneself on the foot; he would realize the futility of trying to place the other person in disarray in order to advance his own existence. Destroying the other, would come to mean not destroying an enemy or removing a stumbling block but destroying an essential aspect of one’s existence and thereby rendering the self bereaved of the service this destroyed missing link would have rendered to it. The moral of these assertions is captured vividly in a traditional African story of Ananse the tortoise. The village in which Ananse lived experienced a great famine. Everybody was helplessly hungry and mourning. Thus, one day Ananse set out on a journey in search of food to quench his hunger. After a long and near futile walk, he came across a tree full of ripe fruits with hundreds of birds feasting on it. With all the strength he had left, he cried out to the birds for help. The birds filled with compassion, flew down to him and offered him a feather each so as he could fly to the tree to enjoy the fruits with them. Ananse ate to his fill and was very happy. But being a dubious character, he immediately started searching for a way to claim the tree for himself. He therefore, formulated a story and told the birds that the tree belonged to the uncle of his great grandmother and by successful bequeath now belonged to him. The birds on hearing the story were sad and disappointed but decided to honour the hereditary rights of Ananse. But before they left they collected back their feathers and Ananse who is a defender of sole rights could not resist this. Ananse was overjoyed by the success of his intrigue but his joy was short lived. He soon became thirsty. Beneath the tree flowed a stream. The problem was how to descend to

it. The birds had taken their feathers away and Ananse had no means of going down to the stream below. He had exchanged one evil for a worse – hunger for thirst. Had he not decided to be egoistic; had he allowed the birds a fair share of the fruits; had he continued to see the birds as missing links of realities both he and the birds would have lived happily outside the pale of hunger and thirst.

If Ananse had seen the birds in the light of Asouzu missing links of reality, he would have sought to preserve the interest of the birds and all of them would have lived happily in complementary mode. Also, if all human beings start seeing the other a missing link (an essential part of the self) and not as a rival and thereby seek to preserve their interests, the world would be totally free from human right abuses.

### CONCLUSION

Seeing the world in terms of missing links of realities or as complementary modes of existence as Asouzu propose is a fantastic way of ending all the violence that is ravaging the world today. Seeing the world in terms of missing links would mean there is a complementary relationship existing among all humans, such that when this link is bridged, the foundation of our existence is shaken. When Mr. A is destroyed, a link of reality is broken, thereby leaving the destroyer incomplete. The effect of the bridge of this link may not be felt directly but it would surely be felt. Production and sales of fake drugs for instance, may not affect the seller directly but it may claim the life of his child, relative or someone who is supposed to be of help to him tomorrow. Looting of the common treasury may enrich the looter but may end them in road accidents, because the roads the money was supposed to be used to repair has been carted away. It could also end them or their loved ones in violence like arm robbery attack, kidnapping etc. Citizens who are not catered for in terms of good education, health facilities and better living conditions (because the money that is supposed to be used for these, have been carted away by some individuals) are always susceptible to violence. This is the case with the recent Boko Haram pandemonium in Nigeria. Whenever we deprive the other of one right or the other, it always turn back to hurt us indirectly. This is because we are bound in a complementary relationship. If Mr. A is killed, the services he would have provided to Mr. B would be denied him, making Mr. B to be rendered incapable of providing the best of service to Mr. C and this effect would continue in a long chain to the killer.

If all human beings realize this intrinsic connectedness that exists between all beings, they would tend to shun all abuses of the right of others. If the UN would turn its effort in the education of the mind of man to see reality in this complementary mode, it would surely achieve a remarkable impact in its quest to end human rights abuses in the world.

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