A CRITIQUE OF SARTRE'S NOTION OF BEING AND NOTHINGNESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF IBUANYIDANDA PHILOSOPHY

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1. Introduction

This work, *A Critique of Sartre's Notion of Being and Nothingness from the Perspective of Ibuanyidanda Philosophy*, is an analysis and evaluation of Sartre's ontology using *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy. The work holds that any bifurcative and polarizing concept of being is problematic. In critically examining Sartre's idea of being the work discovers that it is bifurcating and polarizing in nature. It reveals that Sartre whose original intention was to overcome the bifurcating and polarizing notion of being that was predominant in Western philosophy in turn fell into the same problem as he notes that being is of two kinds namely, being-in-itself and being-for-itself. He afterwards focused all of his philosophizing on being-for-itself (Human being), which he terms as conscious being and is believed by him to be the source of nothingness. And through this nothingness, being-for-itself negates the existence of other beings. After a critical study of Asouzu's ontology as based on the concept of *Ibuanyidanda*, undergirded by the principle that "anything that exists serves as missing link of reality" we discover that Asouzu's idea is antithetical to Sartre's. Asouzu's ontology posits mutual complementary relationship among all fragments of realities rather than segmentation.

This work uses the philosophical approach of criticism, evaluation, analysis and reasoned prescription to assess both Sartre's and Asouzu's works in conjuction with the library method where relevant literatures or works are interpreted and synthesised for our purpose. The thesis advanced in conclusion that from the

framework of Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy there is no need for bifurcation and polarization of being and that all aspects and kinds of being cannot exist outside a mutual complementary relationship since they are serving as missing links to each other. The benefit of such a conception of being is that it ensures harmony, mutual relations and integration of all aspects of being, and this in turn could improve interpersonal relations in our society.

The notion of 'Being' is unarguably, the most important theme in metaphysics. Hence, metaphysics simply defined is the "philosophy of being" (Daugherty 5), or "the science of being in common" (Daugherty 10). This 'Being' that metaphysics studies, is the being of being distinct from the being of particular things. Daugherty quotes Aristotle as holding that metaphysics is "a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature…it is of being as that we also must grasp the first causes" (11). Hence, for Aristotle, metaphysics is the science of being as being. This pursuit of metaphysics is most expressed in one of its major branch called ontology. Ontology is derived from two Greek words namely "onto" – meaning being and "logos" – meaning study. Ontology is simply the study of being. It is "the study of the meaning, nature, and principles of whatever is and in as much as it is or exists" (Wallace 85). Briefly put, it is the science of being.

Being signifies a concept that has the widest extension and the least comprehension (Wallace 86). Being as a subject-matter of ontology is very complex and has been discussed by most philosophers of various era. This is because it poses a lot of problems to philosophers. These philosophers tend to probe into being, its nature and manifestations. In so doing, they encounter more and more problems. There are those who see being as an abstract entity. There are also those who are of the view that being

is solely concrete. There are furthermore, those who see being as consisting of both abstract and concrete nature.

Also among philosophers, there exists the tendency to bifurcate being and elevate an aspect of being over and against the other. The problem of being further extends to the notion of being and nothingness. The underlying question begging for answer and which appears to pose a perennial problem is the question: what really is the nature of being and how is it related to nothingness.

It is against this problem of being and nothingness that Jean-Paul Sartre developed his metaphysics or ontology. In his notion of being and nothingness, Sartre was able to show that being is not distinct from its phenomenon, it is simply "what is". Therefore, for him, objects of phenomenon are beings, they do not participate in, nor represent being, they are themselves beings.

Notwithstanding Sartre's great effort to refute the bifurcation of being common to (Western) philosophy, he also fell into the same problem as he asserts that "there are two kinds of entity in existence; Beings-in-themselves, and Being-for-themselves" (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* ix). He goes ahead to lay emphasis on being-for-themselves, and identifies them with human beings, and that it is the source of nothingness over against the view of other Western philosophers, that nothingness is the opposite of being and it is negation. He asserts that it is through consciousness of being-for –itself that nothingness came into being.

The notion of being held by Sartre involves the bifurcation of being and it emphasizes an aspect of being (being-for-itself) over against the other (being-in-itself). This position of Sartre leads to ethnocentricism, individualism and superiority/inferiority complex. This work seeks to overcome this dualism and bifurcation of being in Sartre's notion of being and nothingness, using *Ibuanyidanda* ontology, which according to Asouzu, "attempts to penetrate and grasp being, and with its ultimate reality

through mediation or via the instrumentality of mutual relations" (*Inaugural Lecture* 4). Instead of polarizing being, complementarity seeks to harmonize, complement and unify the same. In this mutual relationship "being is that on the account of which anything that exists serves as missing link of reality" (Asouzu, *Inaugural Lecture* 41). It is on this "principle of integration" of Asouzu that the being and nothingness of Sartre will be assessed. Here, it will be argued that no being can exist alone and that when one is able to live in a mutual complementary relationship with one another within a whole and contributes efficiently for effective functioning of the whole then he or she is said to be in existence.

2. An Exposition of the Notion of Being and Nothingness in Sartre's Ontology

This section treats Sartre's notion of being as well as his notion of nothingness.

Sartre's Notion of Being

The notion of being as portrayed by the predecessors of Sartre, were for him, is dualistic and bifurcating and he sought to overcome it as he posits that:

> the dualism of being and appearance is no longer entitled to any legal status within philosophy. The appearance refers to the total series of appearance and not to a hidden reality which would draw to itself all the being of the existent . . . being will be disclosed to us by some kind of immediate access-boredom, nausea, etc., and ontology will be the description of the phenomenon of being as it manifests itself; that is, without intermediary (*Being and Nothingness* xxi,xxiv).

By implication, being is no longer whatever is in a transitory state, but that which is; it is not an abstract entity as the idealists conceived of being. It is that which is a phenomenal object. This

also implies that in being there is no distinction between appearance and essence as well as the essence and its existence.

In the same vein, Sartre notes that there is the being of phenomenon and the phenomenon of being and attaches being to the phenomenon of being as he argues that "the phenomenon is what manifest itself, and being manifests itself to all in some way, since we can speak of it and since we have certain comprehension of it. Thus there must be for it a *phenomenon of being.*…" (xxiv). He goes further to argue that the phenomenon of being is not the being of phenomenon. "The phenomenon of being requires the transphenomenality of being. That does not mean being is hidden behind phenomena…, nor that the phenomenon is an appearance which refers to a distinct being… (xxv, xxvi)". This is to say being of the phenomenon though coextensive with, is not restricted to, the phenomenon as revealed but it is being that goes beyond what is revealed. The being of Sartre is a being that is distinct from Georg Berkeley's notion of being of which he (Berkeley) notes that to be is to be perceived. For Sartre, the existence of being does not depend on its being perceived although it is the being of a certain mode of being.

Sartre holds that being is of two kinds namely, the being in itself and the being - for - itself. The being – in – itself (*L'etren – Soi*) consists of the unconscious being or it is that object in the cosmos which has neither a 'within' nor a 'without':

Being is what it is in the in–itself. There is no particle of being which is not within itself, with not distance . . . The density of being of in–self is infinite . . . It is fullness . . . . It is not true that the in–itself has any need of a synthetic unification of its being . . . the in–itself full or itself. (26)

In other words, the being – in – itself has nothing secret, it is solid (*Massif*). In a sense we can designate it as a synthesis. But is the

most indissoluble of all: the synthesis of itself with itself. It is itself indefinitely and it exhausts itself in it being (*Being and Nothingness* Vlii). It simply exists solidly, massively as what it is, like a chair, a stone or a tree.

The being – in –itself ; is a being that is devoid of potency and without any reason for it existence. Thus Sartre perceives being – in –itself as that which makes existence superfluous' (John, *Jean – Sartre*: *The Popularize of Existentialism* 152). It is in this way that Sartre rejected Aristotle's notion of act and potency, holding that being is that which is act without potency. He also rejected Immanuel Kant's thing –in- itself in that concrete phenomena could be assigned any ontological status, by saying that "there is no longer an exterior for the existent if one means by that a superficial covering which hides from sight the true nature of the object" (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* xxi). That is to say, nothing exists beyond phenomena, in line with Husserl's position but goes beyond Husserl to asserting that being is more than the phenomenal appearances, it is the phenomena itself. It is the being – in – itself.

The being - in – itself possesses essence since they exist independently of any observer. The in-itself (unconscious being) is not adapted to temporality because it is what it is. The being – in – itself is a passive active object around man, which debars him from actualizing his abilities. All you can say of it is that, it is; it has no meaning except in and through man. It is just there. That is to say, "to exist is simply to be there" (*Nausea* 188).

"Sartre identifies the being – for – itself with being of consciousness. The chief characteristic of being – for – itself is its activity. It is incapable of being acted on from without, and it consists in and is exhausted by its own intentional, meaning conferral acts'' (Oyishile 186). The being -for- itself is the source of universal time in the world. In the word of Sartre:

Universal time comes into the world through the for – itself . . . the for – itself . . . is temporarily, but itself not consciousness of temporality except when it appears itself in the relation "reflective reflected on". In the unreflective mode the for-itself discovers temporality on being that is, outside. Universal temporality is objective. (*Being and Nothingness* 204)

By implication, without the presence of the being – for – itself, there could have been no idea of time and temporality. Hence, time and temporality is strictly attached to being – for – itself, which is the conscious being.

The being-for-itself has the capacity to relate other being and is termed being-for-others. The "for-itself" - apprehends other being than itself. It has the quality of self-transcending and is always separated from itself by nothingness which is bestowed upon it by its being and which it attempts to overcome in order to fulfil or recognize itself (Oyeshile 187).

This being-for-itself of Sartre is not only a conscious being but also being that is free, autonomous and responsible. Sartre's for-itself is the being of subject, not of object, facings or ideas. It characterizes man as acting and conscious, as distinct from the beings of the unconscious objects, the for-itself is characteristically active, self-regarding, and self-affirming of its being'' (Iroegbu, *Metaphysics* 252). Hence, as a conscious being the being-for-itself is aware of its selfness. It also constitutes itself as being by negating being, by separating itself from it and placing itself at a distance from it. Sartre identifies the being – for – itself with human being. Being – for – itself which is the human being has the capacity of asserting its ends and the why of its being. Hence, for Sartre the problematic region of being is that of the for-itself (IEP. Web. N. P) and this is what Sartre focuses on in his philosophizing.

Sartre's Notion of Nothingness

The most original contributions of Sartre's metaphysics lies in his analysis of the notion of nothingness and the claim that it plays a central role at the heart of being (www.iep.utm.edu/sartre-ex). This is because for Sartre, the relationship between Being and non-Being is thus not a mere logical one; Being is in a sense already 'in' non-Being, and through the negating capacity of consciousness Being introduces a hole within Being-in-itself and thereby, as it were, instantiates or particularizes not-Being (Web. N. P). He sees nothingness as identical with being i.e., being- for – itself (human being). Sartre puts this thus, "human reality is being in so far as within its being and for its being is the unique foundation of nothingness at the heart" (*Being and Nothingness* 78,79). For Sartre, "nothingness enters the world through human existence. Nothingness depends on being for its existence" (Sahakian 354). This nothingness, for him, does not exist outside a conscious being. "That which generates its own nothingness is human consciousness …human consciousness creates a hole in the being-in-itself and subsequently, the horizon that surrounds this focus of negation becomes a world" (Olafson 293). According to Warnack, Sartre introduces two senses of nothingness:

In the first sense, nothingness was a kind of a gap or separation which lay between a man and the world, or rather between a man's consciousness and the world of objects which he was conscious. The second sense of nothingness was that almost of futility, and the vanishing and evaporating of objects in the world. (Warnack 93)

From the first sense, nothingness which is based on consciousness is the gap or space, the emptiness which divides being-for-itself from being-in-itself. Human as a conscious being (being for itself) is distinguished from unconscious being (being-in-itself) by nothingness.

Based on the second sense, nothingness is considered as internal to the being-for-itself. Human strives to fill this emptiness or nothingness within himself through his action. This nothingness according to Sartre, is the origin and foundation of negation and is rooted in negation and it is through constant negation that human reality exists. Sartre illustrates his idea of nothingness as rooted in negation by saying that if one enters a café to meet Pierre and discovering his absence from his usual place, Sartre talks of this absence as haunting the café. And since Pierre is not there in the café, the person therefore negates the presence of others that are present at that time in the café. He or she believes not to see anyone present in the café since he/she has not seen Pierre, that is, the object of his/her interest (*Being and Nothingness* 9-10). In this way, Sartre regards others present who are not objects of his interest as nothing. This implies that an essential feature of consciousness (being-for-itself) is its negative power, by which we can experience "nothingness" (www.iep.utm.edu/sartre-ex). Hence, for Sartre, "nothingness…derive(s) its origin from negative judgment" (*Being and Nothingness* 6). Hence, if one gives a negative answer to a question the person is inferring nothingness with respect to the question.

3. An Analysis of Being and Nothingness in Ibuanyidanda Philosophy

This section focuses on the notion of being and nothingness in *Ibuanyidanda* (complementary) philosophy.

The Notion of Being

Ibuanyidanda is an approach to ontology which wishes to bridge the artificial chasm, and overcome all forms of bifurcating barriers, which the mind imposes on the relationship between substance and its accident (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda* 253). It also "explores a method and principles for coalescing the real and the ideal, the essential and the accidental into system of mutual complementing units" (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda and the Philosophy of Essence* 101).

This is to say "*Ibuanyidanda* ontology attempts to penetrate and grasp being, and with it ultimate reality through mediation or via the instrumentality of mutual relations" (*Ibuanyidanda and the Philosophy of Essence* 102). In line with this complementary system of thought Asouzu defines being as "*that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality*" (*Ibuanyidanda and the Philosophy of Essence* 103). Within this context, to be is to be in mutual relationship with other existents. To be is not to be alone (*ka so mu adina*).

Thus, being is located within the context of mutual complementarity of all possible relations in the sense of an existent reality having head and tail end (*ihe di, nwere isi na odu*)- the thing that exists has head and tail end. To be is to have head and tail- end (*ihe di, nwere isi na odu*)

To be in *Ibuanyidanda* ontology is to serve a missing link of reality. To say that something has being according to Asouzu, "entails all the processes that enter into grasping the thing in question meaningfully within a complementary framework" (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda* 253). Hence, "what we understand as substance in its relation to accident can be grasped not in the mode of the relationship of an abstract isolated concept to a concrete one" (*Ibuanyidanda* 254). In this ontology, both accident and substance are viewed as inseparable dimensions of being, where substance is used to describe the thing that is most important (*ihe kachasi mkpa*), and accident, the thing that is important (*ihe di mkpa*).

Similarly, to be in *Ibuanyidanda* is to be in control (ima onwe onye). Invitalizing the value of *ima onwe onye* (being in control), Asouzu says "in all life situations, all attempts at upholding an authentic existence can be seen as a continuous process of complementary reawakening, conscientious or re-habitualizaton" (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda* 330).

The Idea of Nothingness

We live in a world of contraries, of opposites and so forth. When we talk of being (*ihe di*), our critical minds quickly reflect on what is not (*ihe na adighi*). Hence, the idea of being connotes the opposite idea of non being or nothingness. Once we affirm that there is something (*onwere ihe di*), we on the other hand are confronted with the possibility of nonexistence (*ihe na adighi*).

From the *Ibuanyidanda* ontology so far understood, "any type of ontology begins with identifying contraries as missing links that are in mutual complementary, comprehensive, future-oriented relationship to each other" (*Ibuanyidanda* 262). According to Asouzu, we go beyond saying that "something is" (*odi*) to "underline the fact that it has a head" (*onwere isi*). When this is done, we grasp being as something that has meaning (*onwere isi*) and thus state unequivocally that "it is".

The above approach, for Asouzu, is applicable when we wish to emphasize that it (existence) is meaningless and as such has no being or existence. We do this by positing that it has no head and tail-end (*onwegi isi, onwegi odu*). That is, we affirm existence by upholding that it has head and tail-end (*onwere isi na odu*). Asouzu argues thus:

Ihe di, nwere isi na odu (thing that exists has head and tail). Hence, to be is to have head and tail-end (*ihe di, nwere isi na odu*) as to have full meaning. To exist is virtually the capacity to have head and tail-end (*ihe di, nwere isi na odu*). (*Ibuanyidanda* 254)

By implication, where it has no head and tail-end (*onwegi isi na odu*), it has no meaning and therefore does not exist-it is nothing. Hence, for Asouzu, something exists if it has meaning in so far as it serves a missing link. Thus Asouzu notes "*within this context, being is understood as that because of which anything that exists serve a missing link of reality*" (*Ibuanyidanda* 251). Therefore it

follows, if existence is negated through meaninglessness (onwegi isi) then there is non-existence or nothingness in so far as no missing link is served.

Another way to understand nothingness from *Ibuanyidanda* perspective is to look at existence from its relevance to "other perceiving subjects" (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda* 254). First, we designate the thing that is most important (*ihe kachasi mkpa*), not in the abstract, abstruse, exclusivist sense but one existent reality whose being can be grasp in relation to all missing links in reality. *Ihe di kachasi mkpa* (substance) do not stand in "isolation" otherwise it runs the risk of not being known even if it does exist. That is, it cannot be perceived by other subjects. Complementarity demands that a being according to Asouzu "must be perceived by any of the units with which it constitutes a complementary whole relationship" (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda* 254), otherwise this brings it to the status of non-being (ka so mu di). On the surface, this approach is like the Berkelian claim of "*esse est percipi*" (Omoregbe, *Epistemology* 88) because non existence or nothingness arises when something is not in any perceptible mode as to be in mutual relationship with other beings.

Nothingness can likewise be inferred from the idea of being articulated within the context of "relations" (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda* 259) as we apply the methodological approach. For Asouzu, being loses its significance as that which is outside of this relationship disposition. *Ihe nwere isi na odu* (what has head and tail-end) in its existential mode of being serves a missing link where they are mutually inclusive (related). Thus, Asouzu opines "to be is to be in mutual complementary relation (*ka so mu adina*) and its negation is to be alone (*ka so mu di*) and nothing" (*Inaugural Lecture* 42). Being is as such dynamic and in mutual service to each other. Outside this essential rational mode, it has no head and tail-end (*onwegi isi na odu*) because it does not serve a missing link. It follows that such a being does not exist.

Nothingness can moreso connote not being in control. According to Asouzu:

Wherever and whenever the ego has lost the capacity to be self-conscious and assert itself positively in this manner, it has also lost grips of being; it can even be said to have lost sense of its own existence, even if the subject imagines that the contrary could be the case. This loss ensues from the fact negating any missing link in the process of its own self-affirmation entails negating what has head and tail-end (*ihe inwe isi na odu*) in this case, the ego is negating meaning, and in negating meaning, it is directly also negating being, the foundation of its own existence. (*Ibuanyidanda* 332)

Furthermore, nothingness can be inferred from Asouzu's attempt in his complementary reflection to rehabilitate the idea of being in a way to salvage it from Aristotle's bifurcation. According to Asouzu, "the complementary ontology wishes to bridge the artificial chasms, and overcome all forms of barrier which the mind imposes on the relationship between substance and accident" (*Ibuanyidanda* 252). From the above quotation, it is clear that substance and accidents are viewed as inseparable constituents of being, where substance is used to designate the thing that is most important (*ihe kachasi mkpa*), and accident, the things that are important (*ihe di mkpa*). Both substance and accidents do not exist independent of each other, they exist side by side. Hence for them to exist independently implies non-being or nothingness.

4. A Critique of Sartre's Notion of Being and Nothingness from the Perspective of Ibuanyidanda

This section is concerned with comparing Sartre's ontology and Complementary Ontology, and the idea of nothingness: Sartre versus Asouzu.

The Notion Being: Comparing Sartre and Asouzu

The notion of being which constitutes a metaphysical problem in philosophy is believed to be bifurcating and polarizing in nature. It is this problem that Sartre desired to overcome as he argues that:

The dualism of being and appearance is no longer entitled to any legal status within philosophy. The appearance refers to the total series of appearance and not to a hidden reality which would draw to itself the existent… being will be disclosed to us by some kind of immediate access-boredom, nausea, etc., and ontology will be the description of the phenomenon of being as it manifests itself; that is, without intermediary. (*Being and Nothingness* xxi, xxiv)

By this Sartre is saying that there is no distinction between being and its appearance and no demarcation between being and its manifestation. This is to say the objects of phenomenon are beings and do not point to or represent being.

Notwithstanding this good move of Sartre to present a notion of being devoid of bifurcation and polarization, he falls into the same problem by asserting that being is purely that which manifest itself, that is, he restricts being to the physical aspect of being devoid of any spiritual aspect. This is like Aristotle's bifurcation of being into substance and accident and identifying being with substance devoid of accident. But the distinction between Sartre and Aristotle is that while Aristotle identities being with substance which is an abstract entity, Sartre identified being with concrete entity without anything abstract. This notion of being as already stated is bifurcating and polarising since it elevates an aspect of being (concrete) over the other (abstract).This, for Asouzu, cannot be true connotation of being. For Asouzu, being is located within the context of mutual complementarity of all possible relation in the sense of an existent reality having head and tail-end (*ihe di nwere isi na odu*). Hence, to be is to have a head and a tail-end. Just like Asouzu criticized and reconstructed Aristotles' bifurcating and polarising notion of being by positing that "what

we understand as substance in its relation to accidents can be grasped not in the mode of the relationship of an abstract isolated concept to a concrete one" (*Ibuanyidanda* 254).Therefore, in this ontology, both substance and accident are viewed as inseparable dimensions of being, where substance is used to describe the thing that is most important (*ihe kachasi mkpa*), and accident, the thing that is important(*ihe di mkpa*).This can likewise be used to critic and reconstruct Sartre's notion of being wherein the concrete aspect of being is what is more important (substance-*ihe kachasi mkpa*) devoid of the abstract aspect of being-what is important (accident-*ihe di mkpa*). In the opinion of Asouzu, this is not true since being is that which consists of substance and accident which are in mutual complementary relationship to each other, it follows that being is that which is composed of abstract and concrete dimensions of being that is in mutual complementary relationship. Thus, just as Asouzu holds that being consist of head(*isi*) and tail-end,(*odu*),wherein the head may be Sartre's concrete aspect of being and the tail-end may be his abstract aspect of being, there is no how that one can talk about the concrete aspect of being without conceiving the abstract aspect of being. This can also be explained using Asouzu's principle of integration which reads thus: "anything that exists serves a missing link of reality" (*Ibuaru* 221). This two dimensions of being are not just in mutual complementary relationship but are complementing each other in order to be meaningful just as Asouzu posits that a thing is only meaningful when it has head and tail-end (*onwere isi onwere odu*). Hence, in the reconstructing of Sartre's notion of being using Asouzu's thought it can be said that being is that which comprises of essence (*isi*) and appearance (*odu*).

Sartre also bifurcates being into two parts as he notes that being is of two kinds, namely, being-in-itself and being for itself. Not only did he bifurcate being, he also elevates an aspect of being (being - for –itself) above the other aspect (being-in-itself), by saying that being-in-itself is massif, full, unconscious and inactive whereas

being -for –itself is conscious and active. Hence, he articulates all his philosophical, metaphysical and ontological thought on being-for-itself. It is worthy of note that according to Sartre, being-in-itself is complete and therefore do not need being-for-itself for it to be complete. This implies that it does not serve a missing link of reality and does not exist in mutual complementary relationship with being-for-itself. This, in the view of Asouzu is not true, for if anything is in isolation, it stands a risk of not being known or not having any meaning (i.e., it becomes meaningless). Hence, following Asouzu's notion of being of which to be is to be in mutual complementary relationship, for being-in-itself to exists or be in existence it must be in mutual complementary relationship with being-for-itself. This is the only time when being-in-itself can be said to be meaningful.

Furthermore, Sartre's elevation of being–for-itself above being-in-itself contradicts Asouzu's truth and authenticity criterion which states that "never elevates any world immanent missing link to an absolute instance" (*Ibuaru* 197; *Ikwa Ogwe* 219). What Sartre has done is that he has elevated being –for-itself to an absolute instance and therefore sees it as what is more important (*ihe kachasi mkpa*).This cannot be, for Asouzu, since one cannot conceive what is most important (*ihe kachasi mkpa*) in a vacuum, it must be conceived in relation to what is important (*ihe di mkpa*). Hence, being-for-itself must be conceived in relation to being-in-itself in terms of mutual dependence.

5. Nothingness: Sartre versus Asouzu

Following traditional ontology, when one talks about being what comes next into mind is non-being or nothingness. This is probably due to the fact that we live in the world of contraries, opposites etc. Being is believed by traditional ontologists to be opposed by nothingness. This is to say being and nothingness are contrary and opposed to each other. This position of traditional ontology leaves a question of whether nothingness is found outside

or inside of being? Many ontologists hold that nothingness is outside of being since it is the negation of being. But both Sartre and Asouzu hold a very different position that nothingness is not found outside of being; it is inherent in being. Nothingness cannot be seen as the negation of being but involves the negation of being.

For Sartre, nothingness is identical with being i.e., being-for-itself (human being). It is the human being. It is what differentiates human being…human being is not the same as the rest of being but is distinguished from it by a separating nothingness (Barnes, Sartre's ontology – Cambridge. Org/extrac%3fid%3Dcc…). This nothingness, for Sartre, does not exist outside a conscious being. Hence, he notes, "human reality is being in so far as within its being and for its being is the unique foundation of nothingness at its heart "(Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 78,79). By this Sartre is saying that nothingness is a reality that exists within an isolated being.

The above position of Sartre on nothingness is on the surface closely related to Asouzu's notion of nothingness. It is glaring that for Sartre nothingness is at the heart of the isolated being-for-itself; it is found within it. But for Asouzu, who defines being as "to be is to be in mutual complementary relationship (ka so mu adina) and its negation is to be alone (ka so mudi)" (*Inaugural Lecture* 43). Nothingness or "non-being will mean to be alone" (Ozumba, *Integrative Humanism and Complementary Reflection* 151). This is to say, for Asouzu, to be alone (*ka so mu di*) is not to be in mutual complementary relationship. Following Asouzu's remark closely, being, "the act of existing (*Idi*) (is) misunderstood as the capacity to be alone (*ka so mu di*)" (*Ibuanyidanda and the Philosophy of Essence* 95), for Sartre. In other words, isolated being-for-itself, which Sartre argues that exist through negating the existence of other being or reality, cannot exist. This is because no being can exist outside the context of "relations" (Asuozu, *Ibuanyidanda* 259).

Thus, Asouzu further remarks that "being is that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality" ("*Ibuanyidanda*" *and Philosophy of Essence* 103). If anything does not serve a missing link it cannot be being. For, it cannot be meaningful since it is outside the context of serving a missing link of reality. This is what Sartre's being-for-itelf, which carries nothingness within it depicts. Sartre's being-for-itself is a being that does not serve a missing link of reality; such a being is meaningless according to Asouzu, it is nothingness or non-existence in so far as no missing link is served by being-for-itself. Also, such a being cannot be known since it is in isolation, even if it does exist. This is because for Asouzu, being "must be perceived by any of the units with which it constitutes a complementary whole relationship" (*Ibuanyidanda* 254). This lack of being-for-itself being perceived by other being due to it negating power brings it to the status of non-being (*Ka so mu di*). This is to say non existence or nothingness arises when something is not in any perceptible mode as to be in mutual relationship with each other.

Going by Asouzu's notion of nothingness which is built on the negation of his definitions of being such as: "being in mutual complementary relationship", "serving a missing link of reality" "having meaning within a context of mutual relations" and "being perceived by other being in existence", Sartre's being-for-itself cannot exist talk-less of being the source of nothingness in the world. For according to Gorgias of Leontini, nothing comes from nothing. And being cannot arise from nothingness or non-being as posited by Parmenides.

6. Conclusion

It is pertinent to state here that for Asouzu, every discrete existent being is incomplete and insufficient in itself and for itself but is in need of complementation of others in the same whole. It is in this context that it is apparent that no individual can exist alone just as no isolated being can. This view of Azouzu is better captured in the words of Ozumba which reads thus "it seems that the

individual thing – (ka so mu di) to be alone, does not constitute being but only individual in complementary relationship with other individual can constitute being (ka so mu adina). This brings one to the understanding that no one or individual can be considered to be absolute. This is truly what is expressed in Asouzu's truth and authenticity criterion which states that "never elevate any world immanent missing link to an absolute instance" ("*Ibuanyidanda*" *and the Philosophy* of *Essence* 105). In this way, one can say that just as being-for-itself should not be elevated to an absolute instance since it is serving a missing link to being-in-itself and vice versa, no individual or group should be elevated as such for there are all serving missing links and are in mutual service to one another. Likewise, all human beings exist in mutual dependence and interdependence. For outside of this nothing exists.

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