Between Sartre’s *Cat And Mouse* Ontology And Asouzu’s *Ibuanyidanda*: How Not To Implore Interpersonal Relations

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**ABSTRACT**

Interpersonal relations the world over is a phenomenon replete with suspicion, mischief and reservations. These often stem from tensions that arise from class consciousness, ethnic inclination, egocentricism, and the like. This probably made Sartre and Asouzu to propound their ontologies, within their different epochs, probably to proffer solution towards the enhancement of interpersonal relations. Through a critical and evaluative approach, this paper proposes that Sartre ontology is more or less a *cat and mouse* ontology. This is because while giving man the full burden of freedom, choice and responsibility to make meaning in the world he exists with others, Sartre also holds that men because of their autonomy cannot genuinely share their experiences. On the other hand, Asouzu’s *Ibuanyidanda* founded on the principle that “anything that exists serves a missing link of reality” is here regarded as an “inclusive ontology”. This is because he sees man as the manifestation of being, and as such men are encouraged to be in mutual complementary co-existence in spite of their limitations. Our conclusion (thesis) therefore is that Asouzu’s ontology provides better categories for interpersonal relationship than Sartre’s which is quite intriguing, and at best would douse interpersonal relationship rather than encourage it.

**KEYWORDS**


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**1. Introduction**

One of the fundamental characteristics of man is that he/she is a social animal. As a social animal, man cannot live outside the society. His/her life makes meaning only in the society. No human being has ever been heard to have given birth to himself/herself, live alone in his/her own created world, communicated unto himself/herself alone, share ideas, things, love and hatred only to himself/herself, died and buried or cremated his/her corpse alone! This then is why the term society is ontologically defined as “being-with-others.” Jim Unah quoting Heidegger’s technical phrase captures it as “solitude for persons” (10). This means that our existence in the world is basically and originally an existence of interactions and relations amongst other human beings.

However, in a society inhabited by humans (beings with consciousness), there is bound to be tensions, clashes of interest and strives. Indeed, this is inevitable as far as there is that primordial urge of self-preservation and pursuit of interest. In this situation, one tends to think and promote his/her own interest at the detriment of others. This is the kind
of society that Sartre’s ontology tends to promote and propagate. It is this type of ontology that leads people to see themselves or their cultures as superior to others. In this way they tend to look down on others as inferior.

This work, contrary to the above position will posit that human beings need to live in mutual complementary relationship. This position is based on Asouzu’s ontology which holds that “anything that exists serves a missing link of reality” (The Methods and Principles 273). By implication, human beings co-exist and are in mutual service to each other. This is the type of interpersonal relation that this work advocates against individualism of Sartre’s ontology.

2. Sartre’s Notion of Being

According to Joseph Omoregbe, “Sartre’s ontology is a phenomenological ontology; for Sartre is an outstanding phenomenologist, an existential phenomenologist” (Metaphysics 203). In essence therefore, Sartre was an existential phenomenological ontologist. It is this intellectual bent that influenced his ontology which is our point of discussion. The notion of being as portrayed by the predecessors of Sartre was for him, dualistic, and he sought to assert a notion of being that does not follow after this dualistic and bifurcatee tradition. He therefore positsthat “the dualism of being and appearance is no longer entitled to any legal status within philosophy” (Being and Nothingness xxii). He asserts that being is that which is; it is not an abstract entity as the idealists conceived of. It is that which a phenomenal (visible) object is. Being for Sartre is that which is within the physical - visible world.

Sartre also notes that in being there is no distinction between appearance and essence. In his words: “we can equally well reject the dualism of appearance and essence. The appearance does not hide the essence, it reveals it; it is the essence” (xxii). This is to say that appearance and essence are the same as well as the essence and its existence. Hence, one cannot talk about the appearance of being without talking about its essence. Also, one cannot talk about essence if not within the context of its existence. It is therefore in the appearance and existence of being that its essence is defined or manifested.

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: “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 a phenomenon of being” (Being and Nothingness xxiv). He goes further to argue that “the being of phenomenon can not be reduced to the phenomenon of being” (xxv).

Sartre holds that being is of two kinds namely, the being-in-itself and the being-for-itself. The being-in-itself (L’étre-Soi) consists of the unconscious being or it is that object in the cosmos which has neither a ‘within’ nor a ‘without’. It is a being that is plenitude, compact density, and full of itself. It is that which has neither nothingness nor negation in its being. It cannot assert itself other than as it is. It is what is and fully identical with itself. It has no reason for its being. It is that which is just there. In the words of Sartre:

Being is what it is in the in-self. 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 is full of 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 indefinite and it exhausts itself in its being (viii). 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 its existence. Thus Sartre perceives being-in-itself as that which makes existence superfluous’ (John 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.

Being-for-itself is a conscious being and it is its consciousness that renders it different from other things and its relations to another being – being-for-itself. According to Olatundji Oyeshile, “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” (186). The being -for- itself is the source of universal time in the world. In the words of Sartre:

Universal time comes into the world through the for-itself ... the for-itself ... is temporality, 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 2004)

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.

This idea of Sartre on time stated above stems from Heidegger's notion of time in relation to being. Here, the being-for-itself is a being in time like the Heidegger's Dasein. It is through this temporal mode of existence that the being-for-itself strives to project its subjectivity. 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 fulfill 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, facts 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 self ness.
But it also constitutes itself in being by negating being, by separating itself from it and placing itself at a distance from it. This is why it is noted that:

There is always a gap, emptiness or nothingness in a being and this very emptiness or nothingness is the origin of its power of negation which constitutes its being. Thus, the conscious being carries within itself an emptiness which perpetually separates it from itself and everything else. (Omoregbe, Contemporary Philosophy 90)

It is in this sense that it is said that it is identified with emptiness, negativity and nothingness, which it seeks to overcome.

Sartre identifies the being-for-itself with human being. Being-for-itself which is the human being has capacity of asserting its ends and the why of its being. It is based on this that Sartre posits that: “The for-itself is such that it has the right to turn back on itself towards its own origin. The being by which the why comes into being has the right to posit its own why since it is itself an interrogation, a why” (Being and Nothingness 619-620). Hence, for Sartre the problematic region of being is that of the ‘for-itself’ (www.iep.utm.edu/sartre-ex) and this is what Sartre focuses on in his philosophizing.

3. Asouzu’s 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 a 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” (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” (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 (ihedi, nwere isi na odu)- the thing that exists has head and tail-end.

Thus when we say that the di nwere isi na odu (whatever exists has head and tail-end) we imply that anything that exists serves a missing link of reality, and as such cannot be alone. This is how the idea of Ibuanyidanda (complementarity) provides the ontological horizon within which we can articulate fully what it entails to be. (Ibuanyidanda 11)

Therefore, all things that exist do so insofar as they can be grasped within a framework of mutual free interaction without encapsulation, bifurcation and exclusiveness. To be is to have head and tail-end (ihedi, 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” (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). Asouzu captures this thus:

This is why the idea of substance within this new ontological horizon is used to designate the thing that is most important (ihe kachasi mkpa), not in the abstract abstruse exclusivist sense. Hence, what is most important is thinkable insofar as it is still an existent reality whose being can be grasped only by reference to missing links of reality. For this reason accident would translate to ihe ndi di mkpa (the things that are important). In this sense, ihe kachasi mkpa (the thing that is most important) as our notion of substance, does not stay in diametrical opposition to accidents which translates to ihe ndi di mkpa (the things that are important). (254)

Similarly, to be in Ibuanyidanda is to be in control (ima onwe onye). It is in this context that Ibuanyidanda ontology opines that to be is to be in control of the tension laden existential situation which is caused by the phenomenon of concealment. The moment one is in control, one realizes that to exist is also to give others a chance. That is why it is said in Ibuanyidanda philosophy that anything that exists serves a missing link of reality. For Ibuanyidanda philosophy:

Being in control does not mean being in charge like a boss or issuing dictates in form of an omniscient being. On the contrary, it subsists in the capacity of the mind to be aware of sharing a common complementary horizon with other units and missing links within a given framework, in the process of which authentic idea of being and human action emerges. (Asouzu, Ibuanyidanda 348)

This is in the sense of being having the awareness of others, and being able to relate properly with them as they interact as missing links to one another. It is based on this that Asouzu avers that “in all contentious ambivalent situation in life, everything revolves around the capacity of the ego to be in control, such that it can assert itself beyond the drive arising from mere primitive impulse” (332). Here, the mind shows that it is aware of the ambivalence that seeks to dislocate and lead it away from the foundation of its existence. For Asouzu, “being in control (ima onwe onye) is the only radical way in which being shows its relevance in any situation” (335).

This implies that to be in control is simply to be with Ibuanyidanda mindset from which the Ibuanyidanda method of total comprehensive unity springs. Also the search for meaning cannot be separated from such an experience of being as being with others in a complementary frame. In vitalizing 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” (Ibuanyidanda 330).

Being, for Asouzu, can also be said to be future referential. It is that which is striving towards unity (121). This implies that for being to be fully comprehended “there is need to consider the diverse units that are involved in any given context, not only with regard to their historical conditions” (Asouzu 121). This is due to the fact that being is always manifesting itself as it relates with other beings or serve as a missing link to other beings. It is in this context that “we integrate all modes of self-expression of being into one framework of mutual interrelated units” (57), “in view of which all forms of relativity get full meaning and authentication” (56). Hence, to be is to be in future referential relationship since being is dynamic and not static.
4. Sartre’s and Asouzu’s Ontologies vis-à-vis Interpersonal Relations

A critical look at the ontology of Sartre and that of Asouzu reveals that both have some implications for interpersonal relations. Their notions of being help shape human interpersonal relationship in every sphere of life. For instance, Sartre’s notion of being which bifurcates being into being-in-itself and being-for-itself can be used to explain the bifurcation of humanity into two groups. But for better understanding of how Sartre’s notion of being shapes human interpersonal relationship it will be necessary to state here that Sartre’s notion of being follows the Aristotelian bifurcating and polarizing notion of being. Hence, Sartre’s bifurcating notion of being which consists of being-for-itself and being-in-itself corresponds to Aristotle’s substance and accident. This is to say whatever inference that can be deduced from Aristotle’s substance and accident is applicable to Sartre’s being-for-itself and being-in-itself.

Thus, by analogy, Sartre’s being-for-itself corresponds to Aristotle’s substance while his being-in-itself corresponds to Aristotle’s accident. This brings one to the understanding that the being-for-itself which Sartre terms the conscious being is one that dictates for the being-in-itself which is unconscious. By implication the being-for-itself is the wise while the being-in-itself is the unwise, which only takes orders from the wise that gives order to the unwise and cannot take order from the unwise. This Sartrean notion of being also depicts that being-for-itself is the master while being-in-itself is the slave that is under the control of the master who dictates for him/her what to do and how to live.

By implication, this is typical of the relationship between the Western world and Africa. Here the Western world is likened to the being-for-itself which dictates for the Africans (the being-in-itself) what to do and how to live and what is best for him/her. The very thought that Sartre elevates being-for-itself above being-in-itself and gives it a superior place in his philosophy, points to the belief that the Westerners are superior to the non-Westerners and are to take decisions for the later. This can be inferred from Sartre’s argument that “man’s appearance in the world and society give rise to concrete situations in which we must decide what we are and what others are” (Sartre, Essays in Existentialism 52). This implies that the “we” are the Westerners and the “others” are the non-Westerners. Hence, it is the Westerners who decide who and what they are as well as who and what others are. They are the standard that others should follow and they ought not to follow others that are inferior to them.

This notion of being as postulated by Sartre was probably the underlying rationale for the French assimilation policy which was adopted in the Francophone colonized countries; for instance, Africa. Here the people and their cultures were seen as nothing and irrelevant, hence they were to be assimilated into the French citizenry and way of life before they could be regarded as human. That is to say, outside being French, these people are regarded as semi or pseudo conscious beings; and can only become conscious beings by becoming French. This, indeed, is a tendency of ethnocentrism (ethnocentric commitment). Here, the French tend to see their culture as superior to that of the Africa and therefore impose it on the African nations under their control or dominion. This truly agrees with Sartre’s assertion that “we decide for others as well” (Essays in Existentialism 63). The point made here is very significant if what Strongman and Garvey say of Sartre is true. They hold that Sartre was one of the most
celebrated and influential intellectual in France and the West in general. They also saw him as a radical humanist, who wielded serious influence through his writings (144).

Sartre’s ontology can also be seen as probably the principle underpinning the relationship between the leaders and the led especially in Nigeria. Here, the leaders by implication may be said to be the being-for-itself which are conscious. These leaders see themselves as superior and should decide for the led which are inferior and without anything to offer. They are the masters who dictate for the slaves. This is to say that in any given situation, the West, the wise, the master and the leaders tend to assume control over the non-Westerners, the unwise, the slaves and the led respectively. Here, the first group are only in control in the negative sense. They are not truly in control. In the view of Asouzu, negative form of being-in-control arises “when the mind is no longer able to equilibrate the tension arising from human existential situations, such that the mind imagines that it is absolute” (Ibuanyidanda 333). In this situation, people’s achievements in every sphere of life tend to make them think that they are better than others; and this is what increases their desire to rule and lord it over others. It makes them view others as second class citizens. In some cases, the individual’s private interest is achieved at the risk of the international community and this keeps the society permanently polarized and tension loaded.

This situation is due to what Asouzu calls the phenomenon of concealment (ihe mkpuchi anya). It is the major cause of not being in control (amagi onwe onye). The phenomenon of concealment makes it difficult for one to identify the problem. This is because one is blinded to this problem such that it appears not to exist for them. Concerning the consequences of this phenomenon, Asouzu asserts that “we can be moralizers and offenders, law makers and law breakers all at the same time. In this case we do those things we vehemently criticize and abhor, believing them to be the wisest things to do” (Ikwa Ogwe 288). It is in this way that the West, the wise, the master and the leaders live and upset the peaceful co-existence of the society.

These implications of Sartre’s ontology cannot be justified when viewed side by side with Asouzu’s Ibuanyidanda ontology. Asouzu’s ontology is one that seeks to harmonize, complement and unite or unify reality unlike Sartre’s ontology which divides and polarizes it. Ibuanyidanda ontology approaches “the issue of being from that horizon where anything that exists serves a missing link in view of the whole” (Asouzu, Ibuanyidanda 258). This points to the fact that no being can exist in isolation or be termed to be superior to the other within a whole - all beings are harmoniously and complementarily related to each other hence, it is wrong for Sartre to see being-for-itself as superior to being-in-itself, which he considers inactive and unconscious. Being-for-itself and being-in-itself must be seen to be in mutual complementary relationship to each other.

In the same vein, no human or ethnic inclination can be said to be superior in any aspect to the other. That is to say, there cannot be any uneven relationship between human beings like the ontology of Sartre, where there is an uneven relationship between being-for-itself and being-in-itself. There is no superiority of masters over slaves, wise over unwise, West over non-West, leaders over the led, especially at the ontological level. They are all in mutual service to each other. Hence, none should be elevated to an absolute instance, for they share in the same complementary whole. It is in this light that Asouzu writes that “no self-authentication can take place without the opposite-other (Effective
Leadership 82). By implication, self-authentication is possible only with regard to and in consideration of the opposite other. In other words, “it is the opposite other that provides the condition for genuine authentication of the self” (Effective Leadership 121). This is to say, the leaders, the wise, the West as well as the masters cannot be said to have actualized themselves without the led, the unwise, the Africans, and the slaves. This is because they all “form an integrated complementary whole” (Inaugural Lecture 45) and are serving as “missing links of reality” (Ikwa Ogwe 131) to each other in the whole. Hence, “authentic living includes taking others into cognizance knowing that whatever exists serves a missing link of reality” (Ogbonna 80).

Sartre’s ontology also depicts emphatically the spirit of individuality. According to Unah and Osegenwunne, he (Sartre) “considers man to be too much of an isolated being” (249). They believe that going by this conception of human nature as “an isolated being, he Sartre forgets everything about human solidarity” (247). This is borne out of human consciousness of his/her individuality that leads to subjectivity. In the words of Sartre, the “subjectivity that we have just arrived at, and which we have demonstrated is that one discovers in the cogito not only himself but others as well” (Essays in Existentialism 51). This consciousness of others that Sartre is talking about is one that the individual decides for himself/herself as well as for others in order to promote his/her well-being, not minding the well-being of others that he takes into consideration in his/her consciousness. He/she only seeks to preserve him/herself, just as John Edor remarks, “man is a being towards the preservation of the self” (Edor 87).

Such ontology as Sartre’s would naturally lead to strained interpersonal relationship since one tends to promote his/her interest at all times. This problem of strained interpersonal relations promoted and propagated by Sartre’s ontology is due to what Asouzu calls the “human ambivalent tension and the phenomenon of concealment (the mkpuchi anya)” (“Ibuanyidanda and the Philosophy of Essence 109). This is better expressed in the comment of Asouzu which reads thus:

It is the ambivalence of all situations, which is responsible for the subject-object tension and divides in all asymmetrical situations of life. This is why in optimal situations; irredeemably hegemonic mindset will stop at nothing to manipulate its way through. Certainly, such a mindset would have no qualm in exploiting both insiders and outsiders for its own personal gains and aggrandisement. Characteristic of this mindset is its lack of awareness concerning the vicissitudes arising from its ambivalent situations” (Ibuanyidanda 324).

For Sartre, according to Jim Unah, “arising from our individuality is an enormous freedom of action and a heavy burden of responsibility” (Essays in Applied Phenomenology 94). And freedom, according to Sartre is “the character of nothingness…the permanent capacity of self-determination, self-orientation and self-detachment” (John 156-157). This is to say, humans are totally free and are condemned to freedom. Humans, therefore, are free to act and take responsibility for their action independent of others and there is no value that determines human action. A person acts and invents values for himself/herself. This is what Sartre means as he asserts that

The essential consequence of our earlier remarks is that man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being. We are taking the word “responsibility” in its ordinary sense as “consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object”. (Being and Nothingness 553)
This implies that the ‘for-itself’ is the one by whom there is a world and the situation around him/her. He/she is the author of the situation which he found himself/herself. Nothing decides what the ‘for-itself’ is. He/she acts in such a way that he gains from the situation he finds himself/herself. The ‘for-itself’ sees himself/herself as being better than others. The act of choosing and taking responsibility, according to Sartre, is something that everybody must accomplish with deep sense of anguish; for in choosing we are responsible not only for ourselves but also for others, yet we cannot shift our responsibility to each other.

Sartre’s idea obviously has some serious implications for inter-subjective relationship. If everyone is sovereign in our lived-world, the implication is that there are many lived-worlds as are individuals; yet there is only one universe. This will mean an inescapable conflict among humans. Sartre moreover, feels we are like “objects” in the eyes of others as we look at them and vice versa (Being and Nothingness 364). This leads to, or smacks of perpetual suspicion among humans. For such reason, Sartre, according to Akpan, emphasizes that we cannot really share our experiences with one another because of our individual autonomy (353). If this is true, Sartre’s ontology simply portrays cat and mouse ontology; for there would be no trust whatsoever, but jealousy, suspicion and such negative mind only your business tendencies in our society. Though the human society cannot be said to be free of such tendencies, it is not as ugly as painted by Sartre’s ontology.

However, the way out of this situation is through the awareness and application of “the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness (akara obi/akara mmuo)” (“Ibuanyidanda” and the Philosophy of Essence 109) as postulated by Asouzu. These transcendent categories include: relativity, fragmentation, unity, totality, universality, comprehensiveness, wholeness, and future reference. These are categories which define the constitution and ontological uniqueness of being. The expression of being in history is seen in the fragmentation and relativity that constitute diverse missing links of reality that are found in the world. In other words, the fragmentation and diversities in all aspect of life are moments of being expressing itself in history. But in their foundation as aspects of being, they share in the transcendent categories. They also constitute the forms of the mind or soul based on which the mind performs its positive practical functions and becomes expressible in its diverse positive forms (Ibuanyidanda 327). These categories it must be noted are transcendent because they help the mind go beyond challenged existential tensions (Inaugural Lecture 327).

Given this therefore, it can be safely asserted that in its attempt to grasp other missing links of reality, the mind can only be led to have a clear and complete grasp of these missing links when it opens up itself and acts in conjunction with the dictates of the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness. When this happens, the mind would no longer have a bifurcating and beclouded perception about other missing links of reality but would rather perceive other missing links as objects of mutual complementation and harmony. In this way, the mind is led to the complete truth about other missing links. Hence, Asouzu asserts: “whenever the mind acts in full harmony with the dictates of these transcendent categories which belong naturally to it by reason of its relative anticipatory character, it can never err” (Ibuanyidanda 324).

Applying Asouzu’s ontology as presented above to Sartre’s position, which sees an individual as self-seeking and making use of all situations to
his/her personal benefit at the detriment of others, we would see that the problem is due to the bifurcating and polarizing mind-set which make individuals think that they are the only ones that ought to exist and should benefit from all relationship that they are involved in. These individuals are blind to the existence of others; they do not see others as serving a missing link of reality to them. In this way, they tend to decide the situation of others in as much as it will benefit or satisfy them. Following Asouzu, it can be argued that one should always consider others as relevant units in complementation to himself/herself. It is with this consciousness of the mind in seeing others as fragments, units, entities, categories and so on, that individuals will be fully authenticated. In other words, when existential conversion (the process where the transcendent categories are habitually assumed as active forms of the human mind) has taken place, humans will see other persons as necessary aspects of their personality. We would see ourselves as aspects of missing links of reality seeking unity and completion in a universal, total and comprehensive manner.

5. Conclusion

This work has analysed Sartre's notion of being and Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda ontology and has shown the practical implication of these ontologies in human interpersonal relations. This work does not promote any ontology that emphasizes an aspect of being against the other. It rather promotes the ontology that harmonizes and unifies being. It therefore argues that Sartre's ontology which bifurcates being into being-in-itself and being-for-itself, and elevates and emphasizes being-for-itself above being-in-itself constitutes a problem not only in metaphysics, but has negative implications in matters relating to inter-subjective or inter-personal relationship. It posits a principle that bifurcates and polarizes the human society into two groups, and lays emphasis on an aspect of the society above the other. The aspect of the society that is termed most important typifies Sartre's being-for-itself, while the unimportant in the society is likened to the being-in-itself. This leads to the belief that some individuals or group of individuals can exist independent of other individuals in the same society just as being-in-itself can exist independent of other beings; and being-for-itself which exist by negating other beings. This implies that each of this being as well as individuals can exist in isolation; for any attempt to be united will lead to artificiality. In such inter-subjective relationship, the rule of operation will be total suspicion and lack of any trust; hence, our position that Sartre's ontology smacks of cat and mouse ontology, and at best it would douse interpersonal relationship rather than encourage it. Asouzu's ontology is strongly against any bifurcation and reductionist ontology which Sartre's ontology typifies. Asouzu's ontology rather promotes holistic notion of being that harmonizes and unifies the individuals in the society as well as see all aspects of reality as important.

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)” (162-163). 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 they 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. It is in this sense that there can be a better interpersonal relations among humans; and by this we think Asouzu’s ontology is an inclusive ontology and provide inevitable categories (the transcendent categories) that encourage interpersonal relationship.

References


