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The Abortion Debate: A Contribution from Ibuanyidanda Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The morality of abortion has been the subject of debate among scholars for many years. The anti-abortionists query the rationale behind the destruction of one individual (the fetus) for the survival of another individual (the mother). The pro-abortionists on the other hand point to the benefit of abortion to the mother and the society at large as a veritable reason for the support of abortion. The concern of this research is that the pro-abortionists seem to be winning the debate, as more and more countries are legalizing abortion, and in the countries where abortion is still illegal, like Nigeria, the law is being defied daily and people are committing it *en masse*. This work aims at resolving and possibly reversing this trend by attempting to proffer sufficient reasons why abortion should be discouraged. This, it is hoped, will counter the pro-abortionist view which has provided the impetus for many to undergo abortion. Ibuanyidanda philosophy provides us with a suitable framework for the articulation of a different way to conceive human relationship and abortion in particular. The fetus is a missing link of reality that must be sustained in existence to keep in balance the complementary horizon inherent in the world. Ibuanyidanda conceives all missing links as constituting a complementary horizon which must be sustained to avoid the boomerang effect. It is based on this that we developed a moral argument that counters the anti-abortionist views. Abortion is wrong because the fetus is part of the complementary horizon that binds all reality into a unified whole. Abortion puts a knife to this complementary web. This work made use of philosophical methods like speculations, evaluation, criticism and argumentation in the assessment of the problem of abortion.

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INTRODUCTION

The morality of abortion has been contested for many years now. It is a debate that has engaged the philosophers, scientists, psychologists, medical experts, ethicists, religionists and other scholars. Many have argued against abortion (anti-abortionists) and many have argued in favor (pro-abortionists) of it. The debate continues, and the pro-abortionists seem to be winning the debate, as more and more countries are legalizing abortion. The anti-abortionists are in essence not giving up, for though many countries are still considering legalizing it, many have declared it illegal.

The Pro-abortionists argue that abortion is right. Derek (1993) for instance, points at the reduction of the death rate due to abortion since the legalization of abortion in America as a

reason to support abortion. Other scholars like Harris (1985) argue that "the embryo or the fetus has no brain; hence, lacks value and should be aborted at will." Appleton (2015) supports this position and argues that a fetus could only be said to be human if it has the capacity for mental functioning or consciousness. Hence, until a fetus develops a neurological body, it is not human and can be terminated. Ikwun (2006) argues that abortion is right because it prevents overpopulation. Others reasons given for the argument against abortion include: the argument that women have the right to do whatever they want with their body; the fetus is a property of the woman and she could do whatever she wants with it; the woman's right supersedes that of the fetus, and thus in cases of danger to the mother the child should be aborted; abortion helps in the reduction of unwanted children who most often end up as street children and hoodlums.

On the other hand, those in opposition of abortion also give a lot of reasons for their stance. Noonan (1989) for instance argues that the fetus is human because it is conceived by human parents, and on the basis of its humanity need not be aborted. He argues further that at conception the fetus receive genetic code which determines its characteristics as a human being. Koop argues in support of Noonan that, "human life begins at conception and is continuous whether intra or extra-uterine until death"(1989). According to Beckwith, engaging in intercourse is an indirect statement of responsibility for a baby, and thus when it comes, it must be maintained in existence. He writes: "the fact that he engaged in an act, sexual intercourse, which he fully realized could result in the creation of another human being, although he took every precaution to avoid such a result" (1992). Abortion he holds "opposes family morality, which has as one of its central beliefs that an individual has special personal obligations to his offspring and family which he does not have to other persons." Other reasons given by anti-abortionists include: the fetus is created by God in his image and thus should not be tempered with; abortion promotes promiscuity; abortion denies the inherent right of the fetus to life; abortion is using wrong to correct the wrong; abortion is murder and is as bad as murder since the fetus is a human being, et cetera.

This work aims at supporting the anti-abortionists, who seemingly are the losing side, for many countries have legalized abortion and many more are considering doing so. Even in those countries where abortion is illegal, abortion still goes on *en masse*. This work wishes to strengthen the argument of the anti-abortionists with the hope of deterring people from committing it. It bases its argument on Ibunanyidanda philosophy.

Ibunanyidanda philosophy avers that "to be, is not to be alone but to be in a mutual complementary relationship of joyous service" (Asouzu 2004). This is because "anything that exists serves a missing link within the framework of the totality" (Asouzu 1990). This means that all beings are graspable only if they are grasped in relations to other beings, implying that everything exists in a complementary relationship that must be preserved to avert the boomerang effect. Any attempt, according to Asouzu, to negate the existence of the other missing links boomerang on the offender.

Arguments for and against Abortion

There are different arguments for and against abortion - the pro-abortionists and the anti-abortionists.

The Pro-Abortionists Argument for Abortion

There are a series of arguments that have been put forth over the years to support abortion. These include:

1. Abortion frees the mother from economic burden. This group argues that abortion is right if a child is going to be a financial burden to the parents, especially for single parents.

2. Abortion prevents health complication and death. This group argues that when the life of a woman is seriously threatened as a result of the pregnancy, the life of the mother ought to be saved through abortion of the embryo or fetus.
3. Abortion helps check overpopulation. Overpopulation according to Ozumba (2003) has been a source of great concern to many nations. Ikwun (2006) believes this is because overpopulation contributes to environmental degradation. Due to the negative effects of overpopulation, many people believe abortion is good, as it controls population growth.
4. Abortion helps the pregnant woman to avoid social stigma. Those towing this line of argument believe that the social conditions of a would-be mother is a necessary factor to be considered in deciding whether abortion is right or not. Ekennia (2003) argues that a person raped by arm-robbers or a family member could justifiably terminate the pregnancy to avoid social stigma.
5. Abortion prevents Psychological Trauma. Those who favor this argument like Anthony (1999), argue that an unwanted child could constitute a psychological trauma to the mother whenever she sees it, especially if she was raped. He believes that abortion could help overcome this trauma.
6. Abortion is the right of the women. Most feminists according to Callahan (2007) believe that abortion is an important source of liberation of women from men's domination. Abortion to them confirms that they have the right to do whatever they want with their bodies. The fetus is part of their bodies, and thus they have the right to abort it or not. Gomberg (1990) believes abortion should be seen as a refusal of the mother to nurture her baby and not murder.
7. Abortion is right because the fetus is not a human being. This is the central thesis of most pro-abortionists. They believe that the fetus is not a human being and thus could be aborted. Thompson (1971) writes in support of this: "we have only been pretending throughout that the fetus is a human being from the moment of conception ... early abortions do not comprise the subject matter for moral debate" (1971). Since a fetus is not a human being, abortion is right, she claimed.

The Anti-Abortionists Argument against Abortion

The anti-abortionists have also advanced several argument to show that abortion is not right or moral. These are:

1. The fetus is a human being, and thus abortion is murder. The anti-abortionists argue that life begins at the point of fertilization. Anderson (2015), Valman and Pearson (1980), Eboh (2005), Levitt (2015), Pahel (1987) and Ozumba (2003) all held the belief that life begins at conception, and as such abortion is murder.
2. Abortion may lead to dangerous effects. Those in support of this argument like Meechan (2015), Koop (1967) and Endres (2015) hold that abortion could lead to medical complications in the present and the future, complications like ectopic pregnancies, miscarriages, pelvic inflammatory diseases, sterility, tubal pregnancies and menstrual problems. Due to the possible complications that result from abortion, they argue that abortion is wrong.
3. Abortion is a sin against God: This is an argument that is based on Biblical teachings that condemn murder of all sorts. The argument is that God created humans in His image and the fetus too being human is created in the image of God. Destruction of it

- is tantamount to disruption of the plan of God which could bring the wrath of God on the perpetrator.
4. Abortion leads to economic waste. Abortion is believed to be a waste of a country's manpower and its resources. The resources used to undergo abortion, it is argued, could be used in solving other economic needs. For countries that have legalized abortion and use the country income to fund it, the proponent of this argument believe it is unfair to use tax payers' money to fund abortion.
  5. Legalization of Abortion will lead to promiscuity and other Vices: Ozumba (2003) and Uduigwomen (2006) believe that legalizing of abortion is like a license for promiscuity, rape, robbery and assault.
  6. The embryo is different from the mother. This argument is meant to oppose the feminist arguments that the fetus is part of the women's bodies and as such they could do with it as they want. Adherents of this view like Anderson (2015) hold that the embryo at conception is different from the mother genetically and thus cannot be said to be part of the mother's body, implying that abortion is murder of a distinct human being. Thompson (1971) adds to this argument by claiming that the right to life of the fetus outweighs the "right to life of the mother to decide what happens in and to her body ."

An Overview of Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda Philosophy

Ibuanyidanda is an Igbo aphorism which is a composite of three words, ibu (load), anyi (insurmountable for) and danda (a species of ant). These words jointly mean, "no load is insurmountable for danda the ant." This in a literal sense means that no task is insurmountable by people who work in unison. Asouzu got his inspiration from the traditional and anonymous philosophers who upon observing the activities of the ants, and how they are able to carry loads that appear bigger than them when they do a cooperative work, inferred that humans too, when they act in like manner, could overcome tasks that will not be overcome if each work individually.

Asouzu explains that the aim of his Ibuanyidanda ontology is to bring forth a better conception and understanding of the nature of being, which will bring into cognizance the comprehensive and complementary nature of reality. He criticized most discussion of beings before him as being dichotomized and built on a polarized mindset like that of Aristotle. Aristotle, according to him, makes a supremacist distinction between substance and accidents, thereby tending to make the existence of one dependent on the other - that is accidents depending on substance for their existence, while substance depending on nothing for its existence. This means that accidents cannot be thought of without substance while substance can be thought without accidents (2007a). Asouzu criticizes this view, on the ground that if a distinction is drawn as done by Aristotle between substance and accidents, then substance itself cannot be conceived of independent of accidents because accidents need to exist before substance can be thought of; there must be accident before a distinction could be made between it and substance. On the other hand, accidents can be thought of independent of accidents if there exists a distinction between the two because there must be accidents to warrant this distinction. If this is true according to Asouzu, then no substance will be needed to establish the existence of accidents. In addition, following this distinction between substance and accidents, the existence of substance could be made to appear superfluous, for it will seem as if it is substance that seems to depend on accidents for existence. For example, at least in theory accidents like beauty,

height, color, etc. can be separated for independent analysis and assessment, but substance cannot be known independent of accidents. This means that if there exists a distinction between the two, it is accidents that should be superior and not substance. Asouzu concludes that if substance and accidents are conceptualized in the manner of Aristotle, we will make the notion of substance unintelligible and unknowable, or accidents replace substance and therefore will cease to exist - for there will no longer be any accident. Thus a strict distinction between accidents and substance according to Asouzu will end up totally exterminating substance or accidents. He concludes that a proper conceptualization of being is that that holds a necessary linkage between accidents and substance. In short, substance and accidents should be seen as missing links, serving each other in a complementary related fashion.

Asouzu did not actually disagree with the distinction of substance and accidents by Aristotle per se; he only disagrees with the mode of presentation of this distinction. For instance, Aristotle puts substance over and above accidents and thus lets out a trail of venoms that has affected and influence Western philosophy up to date, and through contacts with the West this has percolated to other parts of the world, including Africa. This mode of reasoning he believes is very evident in our interpersonal relationship. The West, in the mindset of Aristotle for instance, sees itself as superior to the rest. In the same manner the rich are placed above the poor, the educated above the uneducated, the wise above the unwise, the male above the female, the master above the slave, members of the same ethnic group above those from other ethnic groups etc. Thus, according to Asouzu, being is that "which serves a missing link of reality (2007a).

To be, therefore, for Asouzu covers all that it takes for an existent reality to be depicted within the totality. Thus, for Asouzu both substance and accidents are grasped as inseparable dimensions of being - they are not conceived separately. Substance is captured by Ibunya'idanda ontology as "what is most important" and accidents as "what is important." However, the status of substance as something very important can only be true if it is grasped alongside the accidents - as something that has head and tail-end and as something that shares the same complementary framework with other beings (2007a). This is so because to be is to be in a mutual complementary relationship with other human beings. This means that what is being cannot be fully grasped, until we know the form of service it serves. This is due to the fact that we cannot fully know a thing without knowing its functions, what it is made for and why it is the way it is. Being therefore is known not in isolation but in a complementary framework. That is why Asouzu defines being as "that which the mind intuitively as substantial, but which can be grasped indirectly by way of those accidents that give it, its character" (2007a). Outside of this existential relationship being cannot be known. By conceptualizing being this way, Asouzu obliterates the problems associated with the elevation of substance above accidents, introduced by Aristotle and passed down to us through socialization, indoctrination and education. Substance and accidents in Asouzu's Ibunya'idanda ontology are not perceived as in mutual exclusive opposition but as a complementary unit. That is, substance and accident exist in the same region of being. Substance and accidents are missing links of reality, serving each other. This means (as the next subheading will show) that the fetus and its mother are missing links of reality that serve each other and must be maintained as such if the balance of the world is to be sustained.

Abortion Examined from the Ibunya'idanda Perspective

The argument of the proponents of abortion when measured against the truth and authenticity criterion of Asouzu will fall flat. The truth and authenticity criterion demands that we "never elevate a world immanent missing link to an absolute instance" (2007b). According to Asouzu the truth and authenticity of any reality refers to the extent to which the mind recognizes

the total, comprehensive and ultimate foundation, which gives meaning to their existence. It serves as "a regulative mechanism which checks against misuse and helps to minimize error of judgment in all contentions and difficult existential situations of life" (2007a). It is like a barometer that measures the extent to which a truth or knowledge claim or a judgment is justifiable. Knowledge claim or judgment is justifiable to the extent at which it conforms to the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness which are fragmentation, comprehensiveness, unity, universality, wholeness and future reference (2007a). This means that judgment as to whether or not abortion is right depends on whether the judgment takes into cognizance the fragmentation, comprehensiveness, universality, wholeness and future reference of the issue. This implies that any argument for abortion that does not take these categories into consideration is bound to err.

Any argument for abortion that is not comprehensive enough as to take the interest of the fetus, that of the mother, the society and the future generation into consideration does not meet the truth and authenticity criterion as put forward by Asouzu and thus cannot be justifiably correct. Any attempt to ignore any of these segments will tantamount to elevating a world immanent missing link to an absolute instance thereby leading to error. So far no argument for abortion has been comprehensive and holistic enough to encompass all these (the interest of the fetus, the mother, the society and the future generation). This means that no argument for abortion is capable of passing the truth and authenticity criterion test of Asouzu. The medical argument that argues that the fetus could be destroyed if the life of the mother is at stake considers only the interest and right of the mother and ignore others; the right of the fetus are here not put into consideration, the societal needs are not considered, and the possible impact of the child on the future generation (future referentiality) is not considered. The argument for population control also falls under similar error. This argument only considers the interest of the present society and ignores that of the fetus, the mother, and even the future generation. The same is true of other arguments – they elevate one segment and ignore the others, thereby falling short of the Asouzu admonition "never elevate a world immanent missing link to an absolute instance" (2007b).

This work maintains with Asouzu that no course of action is right or justified which does not take into consideration all the actors and factors that enters into the definition of its being. A true and authentic definition of the elephant is one that takes into consideration all the description given by the four blind men in the famous fairy tale of four blind men who experienced the elephant differently. The elephant is not just a tail, not just a trunk, not just the leg and not just the head, but rather all of these parts complementarily enter into the definition of an elephant that could be justifiably considered as authentic. In the same light, the interest of the fetus, that of the mother, father, society and the future generation necessarily enter complementarily into the judgment of the rightness or wrongness of abortion. Whenever any of these is left out of consideration, as most of these arguments on abortion tend to do, it renders the judgment invalid. A valid judgment is one that is so embracing that it takes all factors into equal consideration. The impact of Albert Einstein as a fetus on the society and that of the future generation need to be considered alongside the interest of Albert Einstein himself and that of the mother before a creditable decision will be reached as to whether to abort the fetus (Albert Einstein). What appears to be weak and inconsequential today may become very significant tomorrow; that is why Asouzu insist on the need to take the future referential dimension of all missing links seriously. The fetus that is to be aborted today just to satisfy the mother's interest may be worth ten times more to the society and the future generation than the mother if allowed

to live. This is why this work maintains along with Asouzu that all factors need to be put into consideration before any true and authentic decision or judgment as regards the morality and immorality of abortion can be put forth. By ignoring this fundamental condition, these theories and arguments of the pro-abortionists err culpably and thus cannot be upheld as sufficient arguments for the morality of abortion. These arguments tend to leave one or more of the essential factors that should be included in a proper consideration of the subject matter.

The fetuses are missing links that must be held in a complementary existence. They must not be viewed in isolation but in a holistic and comprehensive relationship with other missing links of reality. This is because to be is not to be alone but to be in a complementary relationship with others. Failure to see the fetus in terms of complementation with other missing links brings forth arguments for its elimination. This is because when viewed in isolation, there will be no strong reason to want to preserve it in existence, but when viewed in a totality and future referential dimension, it becomes easy to appreciate the fact that fetuses need not be terminated for whatever reason. When the mother's life is at stake, nature should be allowed to decide which of them should live and which should die.

The numerous arguments in favor of abortion could be said to have been knocked out by our arguments above for failing the truth and authenticity criterion test. One argument that still stands is the argument that denies the humanity or personhood of the fetus. If a fetus is not a person, then it could not be said to have rights and interests that must be taken into consideration before abortion is carried out. This will mean that abortion is morally okay, since it is not a human being that is aborted.

However, when this issue is looked at from the eyes of Ibuanyidanda philosophy, it will become immaterial whether or not the fetus is a human being or not. Ibuanyidanda philosophy or complementary reflection does not advocate for a complementarity of human beings alone. This is clear from the principle of missing links or integration which states: "everything that exists serves a missing link within the framework of the totality" (*Asouzu 1990*).

This implies that whatever exists in reality whether living or nonliving is a missing link within the framework of the totality. To understand fully well that Asouzu concept of missing link is not just limited to human beings or living things, it is apt to quote this passage, which sees missing links as:

Units and units of units, things and things of things, essences and essences of essences, accidents and accidents of accidents, forms and forms of forms, ideas and ideas of ideas, thoughts and thoughts of thoughts etc, as these relate to each other in time and space and with regard to other modes of this complementary relationship in quantities and qualities, in kind and in differences as these seek to build an intrinsic harmonious whole in mutual service (*2007a*).

According to Bisong & Tawor (2015) "Asouzu believes that all reality (nonliving things included) forms an all-encompassing complementary whole, where all units form a dynamic play of forces, which completes and supports one another." (emphasis mine). The fetus as a missing link therefore, exists in a complementary relation with other missing links and thus must be maintained in existence. Thus, since all missing links are important and need to be maintained in existence, the fetus as a missing link needs to be preserved jealously because of its role in completing the complementary web. This Ibuanyidanda philosophy could be extended to include the animals, plants, and even stones, rivers, minerals and other things that make up the ecosystem. They all contribute their services to make up the complementary horizon called

ecosystem. Any part of this reality that is exterminated, rubs off on the entire ecosystem. For instance, if the forest disappears, the entire ecosystem suffers, as there will be increase in global warming, acid rain, ocean acidity, flooding etc. When the animals are totally gone, it will affect the plants as most plants need animals to pollinate them and also to disseminate their seeds to far places for germination; this in turn will affect the humans as they will have limited sources of plants and animals for food. All beings in the world are therefore important and need to be preserved in existence. The fetuses too are very important as they are an important link between the past and the future. To legalize abortion the world over is to weaken the future.

This researcher believes that it is the ambivalent tension laden existential situation and the phenomenon of concealment that leads man to the belief that possession of life should be the only reason for the attribution of respect and preservations. This is akin to those who argue that rationality should be the criterion for the inclusion of a being in the moral community. Thus any being like the animals and imbeciles and infants who are short of this rationality should be excluded and seen as amoral agents that could be treated as the human (the rational) deem fitting. This work distances itself from this bifurcating criteria, and tapping inspiration from Asouzu's philosophy, asserts that the true and authentic criterion that should be used is existence. Thus any being that exists, whether alive or not, deserves respect and good treatment. Existence is a better criterion because it could pass through the truth and authenticity criterion of Asouzu as it takes all beings into consideration. Choosing rationality for instance like Kant did as a criterion for judging who and what should be included in the moral community unjustly excludes other beings that do not have this rationality. Also choosing pain as a criterion like Jeremy Bentham did, leaves out a lot of beings who are incapable of feeling pains. Taking life as a criterion leaves out the beings that do not possess it. The same is true of consciousness, sensibility and communal contribution. All these criteria postulated leave out something and thus are bound to err. This is why Asouzu claims that any "truth claim that ignores the relativity of human existential situation as to state apriori and apodictally what the case would be in all situations and fails to acknowledge the fragmentary and referential nature of all missing links of reality is bound to err" (2004). Existence is a better criterion because it takes into consideration all the beings that are in the world.

Since existence is a better criterion for the measurement of the morality of a being, it will mean the fetus is a moral agent irrespective of whether or not it is a human person or not, and since it is a moral agent, it becomes immoral to destroy it. Abortion disrespects the fetus and renders it incapable of serving other missing links in a complementary and future referential dimension. It could therefore be said to be wrong and immoral to terminate a pregnancy.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the argument above, the work concludes that abortion results from a bifurcating, polarizing and hegemonic mindset that is occasioned by the constraining mechanisms. Those who commit abortion and those who argue in support of it do so from a mindset that is so clouded that it fails to see that the fetus has interests and rights also, and these rights and interests need to be upheld for the authentic existence of the actor. This set of people still see people in terms of dispensable - indispensable, essential - inessential, superior - inferior etc and, helped by the phenomenon of concealment, chooses the mother as the indispensable, essential and superior that have a better claim to be served. The fetus is thereby negated via abortion because it is inessential, dispensable and inferior. Our work sees none of the parties as dispensable; all are indispensable and must be held in a complementary totalizing relationship.

The arguments in support of abortion are faulty because they fail the truth and authenticity criterion. These arguments fail to capture all the factors that should be taken into consideration before a creditable decision of whether or not to abort a fetus could be taken. Factors like the fetus' interests, the mother's/father's interests, the society's interest and the future generation's interest need to be captured in any true and authentic argument for abortion. This is because as Asouzu avers, an action is right only when it takes into consideration all the factors that will be affected by that action. For an argument in favor of abortion to be right, it must take into consideration all the factors that will be affected by the abortion. So far most of these theories do not. They emphasize one or two aspects and ignore the others.

The issue of the personhood of the fetus is not a necessary factor to be considered to decide whether abortion is right or not. We believe that the fetus as a missing link to the complementary whole deserves respect and preservation. All missing links (both living and non living) share the same complementary horizon and deserve to be protected to ensure a balance in the complementary web. Rationality, sensibility, consciousness and such other discriminatory criterion should not be the basis to measure who is in the moral community and who is not. In this work we put forth existence as the requisite criterion for a being to be included in the moral community because this criterion takes into consideration all beings whether living or nonliving, sentient or non-sentient, rational or non-rational, conscious or non-conscious. Thus with this it becomes easy to see that the fetus deserves to be preserved because it exists and not because it is a human. Its humanity is not so important here; its existence is what is important. This neutralizes the pro-abortionists' view that the fetus is not a human and thus could be aborted. This was also the basis of the legalization of abortion in America where the Supreme Court cites the controversy as to whether a fetus is a human or not as a yardstick for legalizing abortion.

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