

**ASOUZU'S NOETIC PROPAEDEUTIC AND THE ISSUE OF RACISM****Egbonu, John Okwuchukwu<sup>1</sup> and Judith Gure Gwatana<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Department of Philosophy, St. Albert Institute, Fayit Fadan Kagoma, Kaduna State<sup>2</sup>Department of Philosophy, Rivers State University, Portharcourt.E-mail: <sup>1</sup>okwycare@yahoo.com**ABSTRACT**

*The Mind-set and Conception of treating and judging people based on their skin colour as a basis or condition for handling their affairs well, is a misconceived and misplaced approach in human relations. This misplaced conception explains the bias of the human mind thereby, considering some skin colour as superior, civil and more human than some. It explains the reason for racial issues and discrimination. This work titled Asouzu's Noetic Propaedeutic and the Issue of Racism, a coinage in his complementary Philosophy, critically argues that such mind-set is prejudiced. It avers that the underlying principle of human beings is Humanity and not colour or tribe. If our minds are informed and always set on humanity as the relating factor for human beings, racism would be managed. All human beings share in the same humanity, as skin colour, place of origin are merely attributes to humanity. Thus, Noetic Propaedeutic as used by Asouzu, calls for re-education of such misconceived and erroneous mind-set. Through critical reasoning and Analysis, this work holds that the re-educating of the mind serves as a constant reminder to humans that humanity is the basis for our relationship to one another.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Over time as I have lived, I have carefully observed human actions to be an outcome of their thoughts and beliefs. These thoughts build their mind-set and form consciously or unconsciously their actions that make them. No human action is devoid of his thoughts which could be influenced by his environment, culture and things around him. In line with this, it is not far-fetched to explain why racial discrimination could be counted as one of human actions that are a product of the mind-set of an individual, group of people or even a community or country at large. Thus, actions of this kind spread if not handled into very serious contagious situations, these situations now abuses and refuses to acknowledge the harm it brings to humanity, since it has systematically eaten into the mind-set of most of the people within where such an act is highly practiced. Circumstances of this kind, appeals for clear and total overhauling of thoughts upon which mind-set is built. The advocacy of an objective mind-set is achievable when we employ Noetic Propaedeutic of mind education to be able to transcend itself from that concealment of cultural bias, segregation among humans, to a situation of seeing and understanding humanity as the bases for human existence and mutual co-existence.

The advocacy of Noetic Propaedeutic, is a theory that recognises that individuals have both personal and community differences. The clear mindset of

used here points that humans ought to be aware that individuals rights should be respected as well as general mindset. By t doing this, sentiments and personal experiences can easily be differentiated from each other. Thus, to reduce racial challenge in our society, we should always have the mind that every society has its own culture and system on which they operate, these should serve as a watch word for co-existence among people in the society. Therefore forming the human mind to respect values and to at all-time treat humans as the same, is the reason for Noetic Propaedeutic, because it will help us to know our need for each other and the complementary role we all have in the society. It acknowledges our individual roles as well as our collective roles as a community. noetic propaedeutic, promotes all that exist as missing link to other realities. As such, since we all share the same humanity, in spite of our tribe, skin colour and language, this work high lights the need for an open mind to all realities of human existence, to help curb racism. Hence, upon re-education of the mind as opined in Noetic propaedeutic, the mind is made to know more that existence is fulfilling only when we co-exist without alienation and deprivation of individual rights. Thereby promoting respect and mutual understanding amongst humans becomes a right step every community should follow. This is imperative because "Education is what makes the mind what it is, it is in the mind that all activities take place" (Eric: 2019, p.349-

369). It accounts for the powerful role a well-educated mind-set can do for any society to progress and flourish as rational and tolerant beings. Aside Racism as a social vice, there are other social vices such as terrorism, kidnapping and insecurity that are caused by poor and erroneous mindset. This is because we have beclouded our thoughts with wrong ideas that have made us not to realise individual differences and collective roles as members of a society, which re-education can emancipate the mind from if objectively taught. In the absence of this objective mindset, it causes some people to see their skin colour as superior to others, their language as superior and also their tribe as more important. They fail to realise that first and foremost, every human person has common source which is Humanity, all other attributes, remain accident. These attributes that come together to make the human person, does not underplay the very basis and essence of man or woman, known as humanity. All these components enable us to have biological structures to function in our existence effectively based on where we find ourselves. Our varying characteristics such as skin colour and others, most times make us becloud our minds with superiority thoughts thereby resulting in the issue of racial discrimination. Every one begins to pick and choose; count and number those who share same quality with them before exercising whatever ought to be done generally for all humans in spite of our components.

With this prejudiced kind of mind-set, where attributes are considered superior over humanity, structures that form and rest on humanity are counted over the essence which is humanity, Asouzu states, “Most human problems arise due to the types of mindset people adopt in pursuing issues at stake. Again, most conflicts endure due to the type of mindset adopted by stakeholders to address their problems” (Asouzu: 2007, 313). This mindset steers a lot of misunderstanding among people thereby, causing chaos and disunity. It is so because the human mind is open to what it perceives and handles in his environment, thereby, optimizes her goal in building humanity and its interest from how it is developed. Thus, the mind should be in pursuit of that which does not satisfy the attributes of humans alone but for humanity itself. For Asouzu (2011) “In those extreme cases where human reason tends towards extreme directions, due to the distortions arising from this tension, these are clear indications of an internal strife within the subject

that must be addressed should mutual communication and relationship with other missing links be guaranteed adequately” (2017: 314). Hence, racism, one of the major social vices faced by humanity today, is an extreme case that has distorted the human mind. Noetic Propaedeutic of Asouzu, suggest complete pre-education of the mind in other to set it on humanity rather than attributes that make up humanity. It helps the mind to always see every human being as end in themselves and as entities that deserve all that there is to be enjoyed as humans. By so doing, social violence and abuses would be managed and treated and human reason would be made objective in making and taking decisions.

### EXAMINING ASOUZU’S NOETIC PROPAEDEUTIC

Asouzu’s Noetic Propaedeutic is a concept used in his Complementary Philosophy of *Ibuanyidanda*. He came up with this to help explain ontology in a way that Metaphysics could be made practicable with the human environment. The term *Ibuanyidanda* (complementarity), is an igbo term used to explain the notion of being. This led him to explain being as that which serves as a missing link of reality” (*Ibuanyidanda*). In explaining Asouzu’s Noetic propaedeutic, Eric says “Noetic Propaedeutic is birthed out of the necessity to overcome what Asouzu calls ‘*ihemkpuchianya*’ (Phenomenon of concealment), which prevents one from seeing reality as they actually are.” (349-369). Asouzu’s Noetic Propaedeutic explains those things that hinder and becloud the mind from openness to reality as it is. This concealment blocks or prejudices the human mind from rationalizing objectively. In Bacons case, it could be referred to as Idols, while in Edmund Husserl’s *Phenomenology*, it could be likened to those realities that should be bracketed for proper reasoning. These things that distorts our human thinking, affects the human mindset. It causes the mind to be wrongly fed as such, resulting in prejudiced thoughts toward realities at large. In order that the human could be free of these distortions, Asouzu propounded the concept of *Noetic Propaedeutic* that educate and re-educate the mind to help it overcome these disjunctives, polarizing, prejudiced and bifurcating mentality caused by the phenomenon of Concealment.

Innocent Izuchukwu Asouzu of the department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, developed this

concept in his complementary Philosophy and Ontology. He was influenced by the idea of complementarity in quantum mechanics. It was also a reaction to Aristotle's Metaphysics that polarizes and bifurcates the substance and accident in metaphysics, rather than complementing. His *Ibuanyidanda*, an aphorism from igbo coinage, is the title of the book in which Noetic Propaedeutic is considered. In his Inaugural Lecture, a subtitle called *Noetic Propaedeutic: the Pedagogical and Psycho-therapeutic dimensions of Ibuanyidanda Philosophy* (2007:46), he avers;

Fortunately, there are attempts at giving philosophy a more human face far removed from some of the excesses of a philosophy of essence. For some, this can be accomplished through the rejection of what has come to be known as dogmatic system building type of philosophy which many signifies commitment to a stringent polarising philosophical orthodoxy. This shows how averse many have become to a philosophy of essence. However, Ibuanyidanda does not see the solution in abandoning or rejecting system building altogether, since for it the problem subsists in the type of mindset with which systems are built.

Therefore, Noetic Propaedeutic helps the human person to be open minded to observing reality as well as objective in treating realities. It creates opportunity for unity among realities and to accept every part of reality as important. It does not sectionalize or segregate but complements. By doing this to the human mind, "they forget that all human existential situations are ambivalent and have the inherent dimension of *ihe mkpuchi anya* (Phenomenon of concealment). Where these challenging existential conditions are not first addressed, chances are that they have the capacity to render all pre-constructed rules ineffective" (Inaugural Lecture, 47). But when the mind is set on the right rules and free from pre-conceived prejudice, social vices like racism, xenophobia, rape and so on would be far removed from rational and sane environment.

### AN INSIGHT ON RACISM

Race according to Dovidio JF and Gaertner SL(2010:312), "Is a social construct created to classify and categorize, to create hierarchies to ensure an unequal distribution of privilege, resources, and power in favour of the dominant racial group." This hierarchy created is the distortion the mind now has thereby, abusing and

discriminating against those who do not belong to such groups. Those with this mindset, refuse to see the underlying humanity in all humans, because their minds have been conditioned based on the hierarchy they have constructed.

The term is not far-fetched from the classification and social construct that has been formed to differentiate privileges among humans. In fact, racism, is the out shoot and implementing role of race. Racism serves as the experiment of the theoretical Race.

For Williams DR and Mohammed SA(Web:2010), "Racism can be understood as an organised system based on the categorisation and ranking of racial/ethnic groups into social hierarchies whereby ethnic groups are assigned differential access power, opportunities and resources, resulting in disadvantages for some groups and advantages for others." It places some people over others not based on merits but based on tribe or skin colour that are not on a plain level for all to be assessed.

According to Fiske ST, Gilbert DT in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Racism

Is defined as the beliefs, attitudes, and actions resulting from categorizing individuals and groups according to phenotype (physical appearance), heritage, or culture. It is a pervasive force that permeates every socio-ecological sphere and exerts negative influences in the lives of people of colour. Racism creates power imbalances that can diminish social inclusion, as it leads to incomplete citizenships, undervalued rights, undervalued recognition, and undervalued participation and creates a culture of oppression. As a corrosive and destructive force, however, racism does not only affect people of colour. It affects all of us. It reduced our institutions, which were founded on the core values of justice, equity and respect for all humanity. It negatively affects our interpersonal interactions and relationships and lessens us as a people (www.doi.org).

In an objective mindset, racial difference and discrimination will not exist because the values of Justice, equity and respect for humanity remain the focal point for all. Merit becomes the measure for distribution of societal roles.

### LEVELS OF RACISM

Racism exists at levels that explain the extent it affects human existence.

Jones CP (web:2010) avers that, "racism can be expressed at structural and individual levels with

several taxonomies describing different levels of racism.” These levels according to Jones include;

**Institutional or structural racism:** It has been defined as “the structures, policies, practices and norms resulting in differential access to the goods, services and opportunities of society by race [ethnicity]” (Jones:7-22). It emphasizes the access one has or the opportunities given to someone before he or she could enjoy what ought to be generally enjoyed by all. This nature of racism restructures the society to satisfy the self interest of those involved. It denies members of the society who are not part of their structure co-existence in the society. In this kind of case, the society is made up of people who see themselves as superior to those who do not have same structural identity with them, regarding them as less humans to them.

**Personally Enacted Racism:** It deals with bias, prejudice and hates an individual carry over a particular people or membership of a group. This can result in discrimination among people and deep rooted hatred of a particular sect or people living together.

**Internalized Racism:** This “refers to the acceptance of members of stigmatized races of negative messages about their abilities and intrinsic worth” (Jones C.P:2000,1212-1215). These levels of racism disregard and abuse the self-esteem of the people who suffer it. Here, talents are abused and not promoted due to the discrimination that exists within the members of such community. it breeds low self-esteem with the human person. In some cases, this marginalization makes those suffer it to contemplate suicide. They get tired of their environment and things around them.

There are two major ways in which racism affect humanity. The **Direct** and **Indirect** ways. Talking about the direct ways in which humans face racial abuse and discrimination, it deals with the individual experiencing physical violence that may result in negative psychological and emotional unrest. At this point, the individual is deeply faced with abuses of different kinds. Societal privileges are denied him, peers or freedom among members of the same groups, are made conditional in such situations. At the indirect way, those benefits the society provides are not made available to all. Distribution or opportunities in the society are based on tribal or ethnic labels. Race is highly promoted in the indirect way in which racism affect humanity. According to James Stanley (2019: web), “Indirect pathways deals with different access to

societal resources and health determinants by race/ethnicity, as evidenced by long standing ethnic inequities in income, education etc.” In fact, societal resources are made accessible by citizen only based on cultural determinants. Thus, ethnocentrism is made a requirement for societal growth or development. All of these affect the growth of the society, many are denied some privileges hence, resulting in crises with among the people.

## EFFECTS OF RACISM

Naturally or artificially, there has never been a society where there is positive growth in human development or societal development where human rights and mutual co-existence are maligned and disregarded. It is so because, humans are inalienable beings, anything on the contrary results in chaos and loss of peaceful co-existence. The case of racism is one of the reasons societal unrest is on the increase. Thus, racism results in the abuse of human right especially in restricting the freedom of individuals to be where they want to be. This freedom is denied those they consider as inferior or less like them in colour or culture. There is often this segregation to always remind those not having same tribal or national origins as less important whereas, all human beings ought to have and share equal humanity and rights. Racism leaves the human mind with the intention to always separate and divide society.

Racism reduces the self-esteem of the racially abused. Derogatory words on youths or people often times affect the high self-esteem of an individual. It makes those abused to be looked down upon and to also feel of themselves as inferior in the society they find themselves. Racism has never accepted or encouraged all human cultures as the same. It despises some over some. As a result, a line of division is drawn creating unhealthy rivalry over who is superior. Human dignity is abused, humanity is reduced to the requirement of where one is from or the colour. Also, racism brings about riot, crisis or fight in the society. Since no human right are alienable, when it is been deprived, there is always a fight to maintain it. By doing so, the peaceful state of any society is challenged.

Finally, racism can result in death. Those whose dignities are abused maybe treated harshly or even killed. Death could be self-inflicted due to shame or perpetrated by the racist. For instance, George

Floyd, an African American was a victim of this on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 2020. He was murdered because of racial abuse since the minds of the white Americans of that kind, have been misconstrued and influenced negatively. The extent of damage caused by racism could be psychological to the person facing it hence, leading to depression. It could breed emotional dysfunction resulting to lack of trust among people living in the same area or community.

### NOETIC PROPAEDEUTIC A TOOL AGAINST RACISM

According to Asouzu (2007:313), “Most human problems arise due to the type of mindset people adopt in pursuing issues at stake. Again, most conflicts endure due to the type of mindset adopted by stakeholders to address their problems.” Therefore, even the problem of racism is as a result of the ill mindset of the people against other people who do not make up their lineage or community. It is a mindset that segregates and place importance on human body features instead of humanity. This kind of mindset does not promote harmony but discord but with Noetic propaedeutic, this kind of mindset is freed from the concealment of bias and openness to human dignity. When the mind fails to be educated, the society experiences racial challenges but when it is educated, it receives transcendental conversion. As such Asouzu (2007:313-314) opines;

The mind is that faculty in which the issue of being starts to agitate and take concrete shape. Whenever the mind is not in control, it starts to deviate from being as the foundation that sustains its existence. At the same time, it starts also to tend towards extreme poles, such that it remains in disharmonious relationship with the foundation on which its being is founded. This is the very moment when the mind easily sees substance and accidents as modes belonging to diverse regions of being...where such matters are not grounded on the mindset that shares much with the harmonising foundation of all missing links of reality, there can hardly be any form of fruitful exchange between stakeholders.

The mindset that promotes unity is a mind that has been educated to see reality from its divergent ways, attributes and qualities. At this point, the need for human coexistence is not based on tribes or race but on the basis of humans which is humanity. It helps us understand that every being

that exist serves as missing link to another. Everyone is needed and important in no little way. Interestingly too, the human mind is an essential organ that plays a sensitive position in decision making, choices and it comprehending human deeds or thoughts. The mind consequently must always be informed and bias free for objective functioning. It should be able to handle both the rational and irrational sides that make up the human person for a soothing result. If the mind must give unbiased judgements, it must free itself fully from the prejudice or things it already knew, to enable it arrive at a first-hand result based on its experience it has with such being. This is only possible if it employs Asouzu’s noetic propaedeutic.

Following the position of Noetic propaedeutic of Asouzu, it is clear that it advocates for complementarity rather than segregation or division. It is that which educates the mind and makes the mind docile instead of sentimental. As such, the human mind in this work, is argued to be the centre and focal point upon which all misconceptions and thoughts are built and developed before been acted out. If the mind is rightly developed, humanity would be promoted. In his Lecture, Asouzu avers that “Since for Ibanyidanda philosophy the problem has to do with the mind to perform its functions well...it is for this reason that Ibanyidanda philosophy insists on a noetic propaedeutic or the pre-pedagogy of the mind or human reason itself as the condition of possibility for all rational and ethical discourses and for authentic human action (48). This pre-pedagogy of the mind, educates the mind, enlighten the mind and opens the mind to reality as it ought to be. When this is done, every disjunctive or disregard for humanity is erased.

The advocacy of complementarity between and among realities builds value for the human person. Human dignity is upheld and value is placed on humanity and not colouration, tribe or sentiments. The mind is made clear on the advantage of pluralisation as part of existence and not a means of division among humans. According to Eric Besong (2019:362), “As the mind acquires a fresh insight on what reality actually is, it becomes a complementary mindset’ or what Asouzu calls in the Igbo parlance as *Obioha* (global mindset)” . With this kind of mindset, racial abuses would be considered as inappropriate in dealing with humans generally. Superiority and quest for which is better amongst human or between race, will be far

removed from humans. Humans will always think of each other as one despite their different culture of place of origin. The mindset of humans through Noetic propaedeutic is set on the truth and not fragmentation.

While racism encourages ethnocentrism and promotes separation and selection among realities, Noetic propaedeutic advocates that all that exists serves as a missing link to reality. There is no demarcation or separation among humanity. The struggle of which colour or country is superior will be no more. Instead, everyone will remember only how all reality plays a supportive role to each other in this existence. Noetic Propaedeutic breaks the barrier our mind has developed. It educates the mind and improve our human reason towards a most comprehensive and accommodating state. In essence, racism is based on the fact that our mindset is full of bifurcating tendencies, polarizing and disjunctive thoughts. It is a wrong mindset that always sees division rather than unity. All that there is to always consider is where one is from or how one looks instead of what one can do and can offer. It denies excellence on the altar of sentiments. No one sees another as fellow humans unless there are related by blood. It abuses the nature of humanity.

### CONCLUSION

Through the lens of Noetic Propaedeutic, every human mind is made to always know and act on the truth. What becomes the basis to assess any human person is merit and not body size, colour or where such the person comes from. It is noetic propaedeutic that frees the mind of the bias and division it has created for itself. The mind sees from every point of absolute objectiveness. It helps the mind to become a mechanism of harmonious thoughts and unity. Therefore, racism could be

managed and stopped if all of us see the need to purge clean those bias and prejudice our minds have made against other beings.

Interestingly too, without an open mind to reality, there is no way any action against racism can make sense. It will only be mere words or pretentious drive for equality amongst reality. This is because, any abused or prejudiced mind that has not been freed or illumined through Noetic propaedeutic, such people will not see reality and human beings as sharing the same humanity. Such a mindset lacks objectivity and could be possibly driven by and with cultural bias, environmental influence and maybe sentiments. With all these, they cannot over grow abuse or separation between two people without first of all, informing the mind and helping it overcome the tension that burdens the mind. This is only possible by Noetic propaedeutic.

Finally, the possibility of a free racial world is achievable when human minds have undergone education and re-education. From this education, the mind is oriented towards humanity and not qualities based on humanity. It gives humanity dignity as the focal requirement for dealing with people. By so doing, there will be peaceful co-existence and human dignity. All human beings will see each other as integral part of themselves and that they need others to exist. With this informed mindset, merit becomes a standard, unity makes humanity stronger in bond and development will reach its peak. If all human beings undergo Noetic Propaedeutic, "there will be peaceful co-existence and national integration and unity that transcend ethnic, religious and sex boundaries; for all will be seen as an integral part of the whole" (Besong, 366). Only at this level that racism can be defeated.

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