



A CRITICAL SURVEY OF CAUSALITY AND WITCHCRAFT IN IGBO TRADITIONAL THOUGHT SYSTEM

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Abstract

The problem of causality and witchcraft is a central issue in African metaphysics. The fundamental question that looms at the horizon of this piece is: what is the concept of causality in African ontology? This paper studies the dimensions of causality in African ontology and discovers, using the historical, analytic and evaluative methods of enquiry, that for the African, the world is an ordered universe in which all events are caused and potentially explicable. The African does not just speak of mechanical, chemical and psychological interactions like her western counterparts; she rather speaks of a metaphysical kind of causality, which binds the creator to the creature; the seen world to the unseen world; the spiritual to the physical. Thus, this paper shows witchcraft as a model of explanation in Igbo thought system.

Keywords: Causality, Witchcraft, Igbo, Tradition, Belief.

Introduction

Causality is a concept beset with many challenges and the source of most metaphysical controversies. The controversies range from what is an event and its cause(s) or effects, to the universality of causation, the uniformity of nature and its laws, necessary connection or sufficient condition, the priority of causes to their effects etc. It is always easy to say that **A** is the cause of **B** but in what sense is the word **cause** used here? The question of causality becomes important when we examine witchcraft, a metaphysical phenomenon whose effects are experienced physically, and also when we realize the fact that causality postulates that every effect requires an adequate efficient cause which must involve spatial interaction. Are there things like metaphysical events, causes or effects when viewed in the light of the above conception of causality?

In Igbo traditional belief system, when an individual suffers misfortunes, he or she blames witches or witchcraft as the cause. Every event or phenomenon has its own circumstances. The circumstances surrounding the event or phenomenon can only be appreciated if viewed or interpreted within the cultural context in which they exist. This is the case with



witchcraft as found in Igbo traditional belief system. In witchcraft and the causality problems associated with it, we envisage a case of taking its meaning out of the context due to a bundle of material impressions and intuitions. We must note that man has a constitutive “core” or “inner side”, a spiritual aspect, an invisible part that must be given a serious study that it deserves. This paper focuses on the study of this “inner side” of man in relation to causality and witchcraft in Igbo traditional belief system.

The paper highlights the illogicalities and certain contradictions associated with the notions of causality and witchcraft. But then, how can one reconcile these illogicalities and contradictions in a cultural belief as witchcraft and the causes associated with it? In spite of the illogicalities and contradictions, witchcraft is a model of explanation in Igbo traditional belief system. It achieves certain aims and objectives. Note that the ingenuity of the early Greek philosophers lies not in their ability to codify Greek cosmology but to show the absurdities and confusion they contain. This is exactly what the author intends to achieve in this paper, by showing the obscurities and the confusions found in causality and witchcraft in Igbo thought system. Thus this paper aims at exposing, analysing and evaluating basic problems or questions arising from causality and witchcraft in Igbo thought system, especially as it affects both the traditional (those living in the villages) and modern (those living in the cities) Igbo. The paper equally intends to expose and establish more philosophical reflections on African lived-life and show witchcraft as a model of explanation to evil in Igbo thought system. Thus, as a model of explanation, causality and witchcraft is a phenomenon that cuts across all classes, times and ages in the Igbo Society. This is so because, even in the present modern era, a typical Igbo is yet to abandon entirely his/her belief in the phenomenon of witchcraft.

Practically, this paper will not only help scholars (particularly Africans) to understand the phenomenon but also explain the subtle ways in which Westerners had tried to demean, undermine, suppress, and classify Africans and their cultures with their philosophy as sub-standard, illogical, or inauthentic. The work significantly contributes to the project of showcasing and challenging the subtle and arrogant manner Westerners tend to be driving Africans out of the membership of a civilized world order, especially when it comes to beliefs that they think are not scientific.

Who are the Igbo?

The Igbo are predominantly found in the present South-Eastern Nigeria. They form one of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. They belong to the Negro race in Africa and speak Igbo as their language with many dialects. The States that are made of Igbo in Nigeria include Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and some parts of Delta State. The population of the Igbo speaking people is estimated to be over 50 million. They are found in every



corner of the world and can be called free spirited human beings because they are not debarred by climate, religion, geography or language. The Igbo are republican by nature and this encourages individualism, egalitarianism, achievement and adaptability (Nwala, 1984). The Igbo culture is communalistic which makes the Igbo self-reliant, collectivistic and hospitable. Equally, both within Nigeria and around the world, the Igbo are well-known for their entrepreneurial activities.

Among the Igbo, family, village and clan extensions of blood ties are important units of social, political and economic organization. The closeness of the people to their natural environment especially to the soil as well as their closeness to their families and blood relations are reflected in their philosophical, political, religious ideas and organizations as well as their culture. According to Nwala (1984), “the Igbo have a powerful cultural philosophy and ideology, encapsulated in a world-view (Omenala) whose fundamental principles are truth, justice and equality and which, as the core of their national ethos, acts as a cementing force that binds the people” (p.21).

The Igbo world view is enmeshed in the practical life of the people and in the expression of this life. In the realm of existence, the Igbos believe in two orders of existence: the supernatural (Ala mmuo) and the natural world (Ala mmadu). There is no sharp line separating the two. The spirits are conceived to be involved in the day to day affairs of man. The people also believe that a deity or spirit or an ancestor might himself appear in human form or in animal form or send a visible agent to communicate and deal with human beings. The Igbo believe that there exist among the spirits, the bad as well as the good ones, and that those initiated into the cults of the spirits can use these bad spirits to harm their neighbours through manipulations which may not be to the knowledge of the victim. Hence, witchcraft is said to be, not only one of the powers in the spirit world, but also a model of explanation in Igbo thought system.

The Meaning of Causality

The word **cause** is a key term in science, philosophy as well as in law. It is used in three prominent contexts or senses to refer (1) to the voluntary action of an agent for which he could be held responsible, (2) to refer to a natural event that stands in the same relation to some other events or state of affairs, and (3) used as an explanation of events, whether or not the explanation is causal as found in the first and second senses (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1961, p.104). Here the explanation needs not be an action or event alone, but it may also be a state of affairs, a trait or character or anything such that if it were not present, the effect would not occur. Causal explanation necessarily (from the meaning of the word ‘cause’) spotlights a particular event or state of affairs and explains it in terms of temporally prior sufficient conditions. This is why the principle of causality can as well be



stated as “every effect requires an adequate efficient cause in order to explain the new reality” (Aquinas, 1947, p. 1a, 44.1 ad 1).

Thus causality can be defined as the derivativeness of an effect(s) from its cause(s). Nothing can be spoken of as a cause in its strict sense without an event and an event can be understood either as a change or absence of a change whether qualitative, rational or conceptual. Many philosophers have defined cause and effect in terms of sufficient and necessary conditions to bring about a change or necessary connection between a cause and effect. A.J. Ayer (1967, 65) for instance, defined cause and effect together: For him, a cause is either necessary or sufficient condition or both, and an effect is that set of conditions that occurred each of which was necessary and totally sufficient for the occurrence of the event in question. Markie defines cause as an event which precedes event of which it is the cause and is both necessary and sufficient condition for the latter’s occurrence (Markie, 1993, p.32).

Nature of Causality

Causality describes the necessity of relation between a thing and another. It refers to processes or events unfolding that give rise to other things, like a seed being a cause of a tree. As a principle, causality distils to the consideration of what is necessary for something to exist. However, there are certain features associated with causality – for an effect to be derived from its cause. These features include: universality - causation is universal in nature. For instance, it is generally believed that “every event has a cause” and this statement is said to be a universal application since there is really no event without a cause. It is also believed that causality occur based on the fact that nature is uniform. Hence the uniformity of nature implies that the same kind of cause produces the same kind of effects always and everywhere under the same condition. This nature of causality based on the uniformity of nature proposes that the universe is governed by natural laws. We can see this clearly in physics where we have universal laws such as that of Charles’ law and Boyle’s law, to name a few. It is from these laws of sciences derived from the natural law that theories of explanations or hypothesis are formed. A good example of such scientific law is the Charles’ law which holds that at standard pressure and temperature, water will boil at 100°C. (ScientificAmerican.com). This uniformity of nature means that because nature is uniform and universal, what is obtainable in say America is also obtainable in Nigeria and in other countries of the world.

However, not any kind of cause produces any kind of effect. Rather, only certain kinds of effects are produced by certain kinds of causes. And this is due to the fact that the universe is an orderly cosmos and not a chaotic one, where anything can just happen. It is not a universe where any cause can produce any effect. The universe is governed by laws and



things happen only according to these laws. This is the basic pre-supposition of the natural sciences and all that scientists do is to understand these laws on which to base their theories, so as to know the kind of causes that can produce certain kinds of desirable effects. But the question that arises is this, “is it the case in theoretical or metaphysical sciences”? The answer to this question would be made clearer when we discuss causality in witchcraft in Igbo traditional belief system.

In addition to the above, the concept of causality is also associated with necessary connection. It was generally believed, before the attack of David Hume, that there is a necessary connection between an event and its cause that once the cause is present, the effect will necessarily follow. If this were true, then it means that there will be no instances in which a cause occurs without a corresponding effect. For instance, it was generally believed that lightening is the cause of thunder, such that any time there is lightning, there must be a corresponding thunder. But this has been proved to be wrong and erroneous today. Hence David Hume aptly noted that we do not perceive any such necessary connection that it is part of our empirical experience.

Hume’s objection to the concept of necessary connection sparked up a question: “if we perceive causality in our empirical experience, how then do we come to form the idea in our mind”? Hume’s response to this question is that it is derived from our habit of association, that is, associating things that go together in sequence. Thus according to Hume, the uniformity of nature on which the universality of causal principle is based is an assumption which cannot be proved. Similarly, that the future will resemble the past, according to Hume, is an unproven assumption and all these assumptions are implied in the universal application of the principle of causality (Hume, 1902). The problem or question that bothers philosophers is, what is the implication of the denial of any intrinsic connection (necessary connection) between the effect and its cause as David Hume did? Of course, this will affect our idea of the laws of nature. If the laws of nature are seen or conceived to be invariable, inviolable or inexorable, then it implies that there should be a necessary connection between a cause and its effects. But if there is such denial of necessary connection, then philosophers as well as scientists have to redefine the laws of nature. This implies that the laws of nature are mere statements about the regularity and constancy with which certain things happen under similar conditions so that certain things necessarily follow others. This means that there is the possibility that things may fail to happen the way they have always been happening or happened in the past on the bases of our experience.

Hume’s attack on the principle of causality made the philosophers to abandon the idea of necessary connection and began to talk instead of necessary condition and sufficient



condition for an effect to be produced by a cause. But when the term causal connection is used, any one of the four objective relations may be actually meant, namely: objectively sufficient to, necessary to, necessitated by, contingent upon, and these four relations correspond to the four functional terms in causality which include: cause, condition, effect and resultant. So that, more explicitly, if a given particular event is regarded as having been sufficient to the occurrence of another, it is said to have been its cause. If it is regarded as having been necessary to the occurrence of another, it is said to have been a condition of it. If regarded as having been necessitated by the occurrence of another, it is said to have been its effect. And if regarded as having been contingent upon the occurrence of another, it is said to be a resultant of that other. Another aspect of the nature of causality is the fact that a cause generally precedes its effect in temporal order. But then, what of non-temporal order? There are however, certain cases in which both the cause and the effect are contemporaneous. For instance, my hand writing; it is my hand that causes the pen to write. My hand moves the pen and the pen writes outside of the fact that there are other interior causes like my thoughts and the brain working to bring the writing into fulfilment. In natural sciences, it is just the pen. But in theoretical sciences, other interior causes are taken into considerations as well. J.S. Mill (2008) maintains that causes are assumed or inferred from other causal connection that men have experienced. Man experiences events and not causes. This means that many events that men have experienced have not been experienced at all and this is why there is something like unsolved murder.

Hammering (2015) regards cause as an idea of power and considers it so obvious that he affirms that a cause cannot be thought of apart from the idea of power. He puts this forward as an important argument to prove that our ideas (sensation) cannot be caused either by matter or by other ideas, both being 'inert' or 'passive', as he puts it. According to him, man's idea must be caused by some active being or literally, an agent such as himself or God. However, it must be mentioned that with the advent of empiricism, Berkeley and his followers found themselves in difficulty since the 'idea' does not correspond to the idea of sensation or introspection or to be analysed in terms of ideas. This also made philosophers like John Locke to posit that the idea is derived from the feeling of effort or will that is involved in voluntary action. For Bertrand Russell (1961), the only thing similar to any event is that event itself and causes cannot be similar to their effects.

The Igbo Concept of Causality

According to Aja, the African sees the world as an ordered universe in which all events are caused and potentially explicable (Aja, 2001). Following the same line of thought, the Igbo concept of causality is that every event has a cause and the cause is an agent with will and purposive. Thus, unlike the western idea of things happening by chance as put forward by David Hume, the Igbo as well as the rest of Africa does not just speak of mechanical,



chemical and psychological interactions like his Western colleagues; they equally speak of a metaphysical kind of causality, which binds the creator to the creature. Ozumba (2004), while reacting to the Western concept of chance, which holds that things do happen by chance, argued that what they (the Westerners) call chance is their ignorance of the series of actions and reactions that have given rise to a given event.

In the Igbo thought system, there is belief and recognition of purely material causes of certain phenomena, although the material cause is subordinated in the final analysis, to the spiritual in their quest for ultimate explanation. Hence causality can be understood as the act of universal phenomenon that brings into reality what was not reality before the event occurred. The Igbo believes that causality is a universal phenomenon in the same sense of its being the fate of all created things or reality and also in the sense of its being an explanation (causal) to all events, be it person's situations or things. Hence, the Igbo believe that just as the parts of the whole are individually caused, the whole itself is equally caused individually. This implies that causality is real and universal to the Igbo man.

The Igbo differentiates between all effects outside the Supreme Being, who himself is never caused by another, and the effects which are caused by created things as well as situations. This is mainly because, to the effects caused by God, there is nothing one can do about them, no matter the attention given to them. This agrees with St. Thomas Aquinas' notion of God as "uncaused cause" as presented in his book *Summa Theologica 1947*. The Igbo believes that the effects, either concurrently or separately, can also be the cause of other things. In this case, they will be regarded as both cause and effect from different perspectives. It must be stressed that not all effects are caused by God.

Forms of Causes in Igbo Traditional Belief System

In Igbo traditional belief, there are two major causes that explain all (caused) reality. These include the ontological cause (efficient cause) and the functional cause. The ontological cause is the factor that explains the very beings and coming into being of the effects. This ontological cause can be mediate or immediate, primary or secondary. It is mediate if the effects are produced directly by the cause. The Igbo believes that God is the mediate ontological cause of all things that are produced by man. The immediate ontological cause is the direct producer of a given item like a potter that makes the pot.

In Igbo traditional belief system, the second major cause of all reality is the functional cause, which is the purpose for which a thing exists or its function. This is the ground that explains the reason for the operation, the purpose, function and the active involvement of the being in reality. The effects produced are grouped into three which include (a) things: which include spirits, persons, and the material things in general (b) Events: these include



occurrences, general or particular such as feasts, markets, deaths, births as well as general or particular assembly of the community and the authority (Nwala, 1985). Situations which include such effects as night and day, season, weather, etc. These entities have causes that explain them which concern their origination, operation, continuation and ends. The functional cause is further divided into three groups which include teleological, utilitarian and moral function causes. Teleological functional cause is the purpose or end for which a thing exists and functions – *Isi ngwu cha ije*. It establishes a final cause or conclusive purpose of a thing.

The utilitarian functional cause of an effect of anything is the usefulness, the utility of a thing or concrete use of that thing in existence. The moral functional cause of any effects on the other hand, relates more to the willful actions and purposeful events. It is much more involved with the intended reason for a positive action or moral order. This is always a willful, knowledgeable, intelligent actions performed either by God, gods, spirits or human beings. The moral functional cause is further subdivided into reward, punitive, and prognostic moral functional causes (Ozumba, 2004). Reward moral functional cause come from rewards for good actions. For instance, when one has gallantly, confidently and successfully performed a feat or an action such as leading a community to victory in wars, community labour or other communal contributions, the gods bless such a person with wealth, honour, long life and progeny and the reason for such opulence is due to reward moral functional causality. This explains a happy death – *Onwere onye ukwa nafu were daa*. (The bread fruit falls on seeing a particular individual).

Punitive moral functional cause occurs if the reason for the action is retributive. An individual, for instance, who intends to poison his brother or neighbor may be struck dead by a thunder or lightning. When such happens to any individual, the society explain it with such questions as these: *Obu ya nani no n'uwa?*, *O gosiri n'egbe igwe afughi onye ozo*, *O bu gini mere oji buru ya ka egbe igwe gburu?*, *Gini mere oji buru oge a k'ojiri were gbue ya*”? (Is he the only one in the world? Does it mean that the thunder did not see any other person? Why is it that he was the one killed at that particular time?).

These questions have their explanations in the invisible spiritual causes of the tragedy. This seeks to understand the specificity of the individual, time and other circumstances surrounding such a death whether materialistic or otherwise. The people are really aware that it is the thunder that accidentally killed the man but the explanation does not end in that. This presupposes that there are some other entities that explain reality in Igbo traditional belief.



The third moral functional cause is prognostic and this explains events that happen to individuals (Ozumba, 2004). Though there is a punishment, it is not for the purpose of sanction or as a punitive measure but as a preventive one. A good example can be found where one preparing for a journey and would have died on his trip but could not make the journey simply because he caught cold; the cold deterred him from making the journey of which he would have died. The Igbo would say *chi ya aju*. (His god did not sanction that he should die at that particular time and in that particular car), and this is regarded as prognostic moral functional cause.

From the above, it can be seen that the Aristotelian formal, efficient, final and material causes are quite similar with the Igbo conception of causes, yet the Igbo have their own explanatory models of explanation quite peculiar to them which were derived from their experiences. The Igbo are contented with simple explanations in natural terms, but when strange and unusual events happen, the spirits are usually linked with the events. This is because the Igbo believe that man and spirit interact with each other. The mechanical explanation goes from ultimate cause to final cause, the purpose which is to get the man atone for his offence. Causality or causation in this is conceived in both mechanical and teleological terms or primary and secondary causes. Primary causes here include traditional belief in supernatural entities as gods, spirits, witches, wizards, ghosts, etc. The secondary causes on the other hand involve direct causal connection similar to the cause and effect relation in an event. There is a great interaction between or among the forces and in the process, one force dovetails into another between positively or negatively, causatively or functionally.

Finally, causality is not a mere conceptual reality to the Igbo man; it is an existential fact that what is and whatever force we see is intrinsically involved in other forces in origin, action, perfection and end.

The Concept of Witchcraft

The concept of witchcraft and the belief in its existence have existed throughout recorded history. They have been present at various times, and in many diverse forms, among cultures and religions worldwide, and have continued to have important role in many cultures today. Witchcraft is a complex concept that varies from culture to culture and from society to society. As such, the concept is difficult to define with precision and as a result, cross-cultural assumptions about the meaning or significance of the term should be applied with caution.

Evans Pritchard defines witchcraft as an exercise of supernatural power possessed by persons in league with the devil (Pritchard, 1927). For Middleton (1927), witchcraft is a



mystical and innate power which can be used by its possessor to harm others people. According to Vinod et al. (2016, p. 98), witchcraft is also known as witchery or *spell craft and* broadly means the practice of, and belief in, magical skills and abilities that are able to be exercised individually by designated social groups, or by persons with the necessary esoteric secret knowledge. Hallen and Sodipo (1986) in their book *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft*, have shown that the Westerners generally conceive a witch as a person who is quintessentially evil, anti-social and deliberately malicious to the people. To the Igbos, witchcraft is an art of those who have the “second sight”. The second sight means being able to grasp things hidden from the ordinary man through the power of a spirit and it may be negative or positive depending on the individuals possessing such second sight and the use of it.

But then, although not all witches are quintessentially evil, in African and in particular in Igbo traditional belief system, there are two types of witches: the black witches and the white witches. The Igbo use the word *Amusu* to refer to both the black and white witches. The black witches fall within the description of witches by the Westerners as quintessentially evil, anti-social and malicious to the people. While the white witches known in Igbo societies to be benevolent. In the Igbo world-view, the white witches are believed to usually use their own vision and wisdom in different talents and in different fields to help neighbours and the community. Thus, in Igbo thought system, witchcraft is seen as an explanatory model of events, especially mystical or metaphysical events.

Belief in Witchcraft in Igbo Traditional Society

The belief in witchcraft has been regarded by some scholars as a mere fantasy that does not relate to any tangible reality. Some Western writers even posit what they call “witchcraft fallacy” (Eyo, 1970) by arguing that witchcraft is psychic and its belief is caused by neurosis arising from social, economic as well as psychological stress. However, we must note here that the Western writers indeed view witchcraft from the perspective of their western culture and as such, we may conclude that they are not really referring to witchcraft in Igbo traditional belief system. This is because just like Prof Bolaji Idowu rightly pointed out, “In Africa, it is idle to begin with the question whether witches exist or not...To Africans of every category, witchcraft is an urgent reality” (Idowu, 1962). Hence the traditional Igbo man has no doubt about the existence or belief in witchcraft. Thus, the belief in witchcraft is strong and widespread in Africa, particularly in Igbo traditional societies.

Causality and Witchcraft

G.E. Simpson, on the activities of witches in African among the Azande people in particular, has this to say:



Witches... it is believed can make women temporally infertile or permanently barren, cause overdue pregnancy, cause miscarriage, make delivery difficult, induce frightening dreams and sleeplessness, cause a person to dry up to have headache or other illness, cause blindness, make one lose his job or reduce him to painlessness, bring about madness, suck human blood or kill victim by other means, frustrate any type of human effort (Simpson, 1954).

Sogolo describes it in a different way, stating that witches are capable of turning themselves into other bodily forms, change into animals (birds, leopards, snakes, cats, etc.), fly at night in these their various incarnates, can travel great distance instantaneously, can turn themselves into disembodied spirit form (Sogolo, 1993). According to Sogolo, witches are able to kill or harm their victims while their bodies remain on the bed and that act of the witches are always associated with evil and destruction. More so, witches cause the death of people and also cause failures in all forms of human endeavours. The question that is tempted to ask is this; in what sense is the word 'cause' used here? What does it mean when we say that witches cause temporal infertility or headache? What does it mean when we say that witches incarnate into birds or snakes or cats or that witches travel in disembodied spirit form? These are the question that may confront one when the issue of witchcraft and causality is raised.

R.G. Collingwood postulates three senses in which the word 'cause' can be used. These senses include firstly, that which is 'caused' is the free and deliberate act of a conscious and responsible agent and causing him or her to do it means affording him or her a motive for doing it. In the second sense, that which is 'caused' is an event in nature which we can produce or prevent that whose 'cause' is said to be. Thirdly, we have a case in which that which is 'caused' is an event or state of things standing to it in a one-one relation of causal priority (Collingwood, 1969). One question that may arise is this: in which of the three senses can one situate 'cause' as used here in witchcraft? One thing is clear which is that witches are regarded as causal agents. One may be tempted to believe that the word 'cause' as used in witchcraft can be applied or used in the above three senses. However, in strict sense, this does not happen always and in all cases.

A 'cause' in the first sense is made up of two elements – a 'causa quod' or efficient cause and a 'causa ut' or final cause. According to Collingwood, a 'causa quod' is a situation or state of things existing while the 'causa ut' is a purpose or state of things to be brought about. He further pointed out that the 'causa quod' is not a mere situation of things; it is a situation or state of things known or believed by the agent in question to exist (Collingwood, 1969). In Igbo traditional society, the agents as well as the victims are aware



of the existence of witches and what witches can cause because they might have experienced it in one occasion or the other. But what does it mean when we say that witches travel a long distance instantaneously in disembodied spirit form? What does it mean when we say that witches can harm their victims while their bodies remain on their beds? Man is a corporate being – spiritual and material. But this does not answer the question raised above. The question is this: the two natures of man; are they far apart? Do they interact? Can one be separated from the other without any significant damage? Can they exist separately and independently too? If they can, how do they emerge to become one again? What is the bridge or point of contact and separation? The Igbo believe that witches have peculiar powers by virtue of which some persons perform actions which the ordinary man cannot normally perform. A power that acts using no physical contact, yet the effects are experienced physically by the victims. This equally raises the same question asked by Sophie Oluwole when she asked, how can one account for the fact that a man or woman deeply asleep on his or her bed is the black cat that entered to terrify them? If the witch takes the form of another creature, can one say, on sighting the cat, that this is the witch that caused the havoc or is the witch different from the black cat or the incarnate animal? (Oluwole, 1992). This poses the problem of identification of an incarnate animal in relation to the witch. When they come to the assembly, as described by Sogolo, if they all come in incarnate birds, how can one identify a particular bird as an established bird of particular witch? This also raises another question. Can incarnate bird or animal be regarded or considered as a material or spiritual substance? If it is a material substance different from a man or woman demonstrably asleep on the bed, it can be said to be characterized by the fact that independent existence is established by the help of individuation. And if it is a spiritual substance, this raises the same question previously asked.

Man's study of himself through psychology, sociology as well as philosophy and sacred science has not been able to unravel the real core of his being or his personality. This is why in professional psychology; basic personality types vary between theories. Sometimes man is defined in purely behavioral terms but personality theory in professional psychology also entertain meaning of personality that refer to the fundamental or basic core of man, to the essential person that lives at the center of man's being (Hogan, 1967). Because of man's innate properties, man's personality in this sense is usually seen as autonomous and unchanging, one's overt behavior may change or vary from situation but the real 'cause' of one's action remains constant and sometimes unidentifiable. Rene Descartes, in trying to give philosophy basis, tries to identify that of man which is the core of his being. He postulates the 'self' as the 'core' of man as well as the starting point of philosophical enquiry, the indubitable truth. According to him, one may doubt everything but not his or her own existence (Cottingham, 1996). This 'self' according to Descartes is the starting point of philosophical investigation. Descartes' the 'self' has many implications as it helps



to answer the question raised earlier, such as, can the spirit interact with the body? If they do, what is the bridge, the point of contact? The first implication is that reality is polarized or divided into two bringing in the problem of dualism in philosophy – the two opposing realms of reality which include material and spiritual realms. All realities are dualized. Man as a reality and that pursues the knowledge of reality is also dualized. Another implication of it is that it raises the issue of superiority thesis in man. The spirit of the soul is here seen to be superior to the body. If the self is the only reality one can be sure of, as contended by Descartes, it means that every other existing reality is real only on a derivative sense. It means that non ego realities which embrace the whole of human body or the human body itself and the whole material reality are metaphysically inferior to ‘the self’. This means that the spirit can interact with the body. And as a superior being to the body, it can influence or project itself on the body. This is why the Igbo, posit witchcraft, a spiritual power in man that can interact with the body without spatial contact or physical contact. As a superior being to the body, it can therefore influence or project itself on the body to wrought its harm spiritually only to manifest its effects physically. But this does not solve the problem. How can witches or spirits, a metaphysical category transcend or descend to the physical category, the body? The Igbo world view is quite in support of Descartes’ position. For the Igbo, man is metaphysical as well as physical, conceived to be of spirit and body. According to the Igbo world view, man is not alone in this world. Not only is the world conceived as swarming with spirits but that everything in the universe possesses spiritual principles (Nwala, 1985). The Igbo have a personal attitude to things and personification of abstract qualities and relations as well as material objects (Nwala, 1985). The sensory and the intellect, the empirical and the metaphysical are real.

Causality postulates universality of causation which in turn postulates uniformity of nature, the effect of which is that the universe must be governed by physical laws. It means that all aspects of man must obey the physical laws. This also implies that witchcraft must obey the physical laws and where it is found that cause and effect in witchcraft do not, then, it can be assumed not to be in existence or that such events do not occur. When we say that witchcraft, its effects and causes must obey the physical laws, it implies that there must be necessary connection between the causes and their corresponding effects in witchcraft phenomenon. This brings us to the question already raised; is witchcraft and the causes and effects associated with it just mere association of events or is it that there is a real necessary connection? Can we say that there is sufficient condition for us to conclude that witches are the real causes of all that are attributed to them? When we say that witches travel a long distance instantaneously in a disembodied spirit form, can one identify any connection between the effects and causes as wrought by the spirit? Scientifically, this cannot be proven.



Causality therefore, raises the dual but complementary enquiries: how? and why? at the occurrence of every event. The *how* question requires a clear and proper description or analysis of the event that has happened. When this is understood, the Igbo begin to probe the why. This usually includes the time, the situation and the place of the event. Hence, the question of the *why* comes after an understanding of the *How*. At this level, the Igbo transcend beyond empirical analysis and goes all- round and deeper. What is sought for here is the reason why it happened. And to understand the reason why it happened, sacred scientists are consulted to look into the spiritual world for a deeper understanding of the event. This is because, for the Igbo *ife na-akpata ife* (something is caused by something); *odighi ihe gbara aka mee*(nothing happens without a reason); *nwata no nuzo na-agba egwu, odi nwa nnunu na aguru ya egwu no 'hia* (a child who is dancing on the road, there is a bird singing for it in the bush), or (You cannot see the rabbit in the afternoon in vain). Something must have caused it.

Thus, in Igbo traditional thought system, things don't just happen by chance; they must have a cause. And the explanations of the cause or causes of events can be explained in a number of ways which include witchcraft as a model.

Critical Evaluation

Causality and witchcraft are philosophical approaches that probe fundamental beliefs in the phenomenon of witchcraft. No culture, whether traditional or modern, adopts a single model of explanation of events. The Igbo culture, likewise, adopts more than one explanatory model in the explanation of different events in different perspectives. The average Igbo man, whether traditional or modern is aware that events follow certain orders and that they can be explained in terms of natural causes, but when it comes to extra-ordinary events, he plausibly believes that physical laws cannot justify metaphysical reality as is the case of witchcraft.

However, witchcraft world view as a model of explanation tends to be reductionistic, explaining everything in terms of one cause. There are other side effects of it which include the following: living in a world believed to be full of witches is a fearful experience. This fear brings tension, suspicion, ill feeling etc. also, there is the possibility of being wrongly accused and consequently alienated from the society which is suicidal. What is more, there is the possibility of one committing heinous acts without intending to do so. There is the trauma of determining who caused each unnatural death or illness resulting in the atmosphere of suspicion as we have pointed out before and this suspicion brings back lack of trust in the society which is also very disastrous to the society. Any extra-ordinary event is always charged with supernatural significance and this negatively affects growth and development in one way or the other. Again, witchcraft world view tends to block



development in the society especially in a case where an individual who achieves or improves in his academic or occupational proficiency is ascribed as a ‘witch’. Also when sicknesses like kidney failure, diabetes, stroke, etc., are not recognized or understood as human sicknesses that can be taken care of in the hospital, instead they are ascribed some metaphysical forces behind them. This attitude has led to unnecessary deaths as sicknesses which could have been easily treated and cured through modern drugs in the hospital, are rather seen and described as having metaphysical forces. Thus, the Igbo concept of causality which arrogates causes to unquestionable spiritual forces, affects the level of development in Igbo traditional societies.

Another problem associated with the issue of witchcraft as a model of explanation is that there is mistake made in language when reference is made to witchcraft and causality. ‘Amusu’ is thought as covering the same semantic domain as the English word ‘witchcraft’; some components of meaning correspond to the English notion while others do not. The English concept for witchcraft is evil while the Igbo concept ‘Amusu’ includes both positive and negative notions. The Igbo concept ‘Amusu’ can be likened to the French word ‘socioier’, which refers to anyone who has accomplished some extra-ordinary or exceptional things (French Dictionary). This is also true of languages in other African countries. For instance, the former president of Cote D’voire is known as Socer Blac (White witch). The Ivorian Newspaper ‘Fraternite Martin’ referred to a French television producer, who has exceptional success in his carrier as “le Sorcier de L’audiovisuel” (the wizard of audio visual) (Jack, 1992). Making the mistake of referring to ‘Amusu’ to mean evil alone is perceiving the phenomenon from only one angle.

Additionally, reductionism is a problem inherent in the issue of witchcraft as an explanatory model, it however has some positive functions in the traditional Igbo society. In the traditional Igbo society, witchcraft as an explanatory model explains misfortune. The Igbo however, recognize other factors as causes of misfortune, but witchcraft explains the coincidence of two or more events happening at the same time and in space, the specificity of an individual or place or events and why the resultant effects. The natural or physical causality cannot bridge this gap or missing link. Witchcraft is cited as a central cause, the underlying cause, the cause that is socially relevant to human existence in the Igbo traditional thought system. The attribution of misfortune to witchcraft does not exclude the natural or physical causality but it is superimposed on them to give social events their moral value. Witchcraft as an explanatory model explains things in such a way that belief in elements of disorder is not affected and, here, man finds the meaning of existence. Although there are certain difficulties with the issue of witchcraft, yet as a model of explanation, it achieves certain aims in the Igbo traditional society. Though the Igbo decide how they shall live and behave on the basis of their views.



It is obvious from the foregoing, that the idea of chance has no place in the Igbo traditional thought system. This is because, in the Igbo traditional society, nothing happens for nothing; there is always a reason for whatever happens. It was for this very fact that Aja (2001) noted that even when the African speaks of *odachi*, or *Ife mberede* (an accident or the unexpected event respectively), he does not speak in terms of chance, but in terms of an event whose cause is not yet known. It is for this very reason that in the Igbo traditional society, when one dies from say malaria, it is believed that there is a supernatural force involved. When one is bitten by a snake, it is not just understood as the product of chance, it could be interpreted as sorcery or witchcraft as the cause of the situation. When one sneezes, it is believed that someone is somewhere gossiping about the person in question. Thus, things don't just happen; every effect has a cause and the Igbo find an explanatory model of cause and effect in witchcraft.

Conclusion

Metaphysical belief in witchcraft highlights another aspect of the nature of man. The reason belief in witchcraft does not make a literal meaning or sense to the ordinary man on the street is because statement about them are not practically and openly demonstrable but express the whole. For this reason, the problem of witchcraft and its causality is not to be solved by looking for empirical truth conditions nor by sanctifying a literal translation with the name of metaphor nor is it by passed by concentrating on social facts. Our only way of solving the problem is by identifying it as a metaphysical belief. And to be able to identify it as such, we have to appeal to our own criteria of rationality. The question that may be raised is this; is our own criteria or rationality based on traditional rationality? It has been affirmed that rationality is universal. This means that no particular part of the world has the criteria for rationality and therefore, no culture has a 'modus operandi' of accessing other cultures and their metaphysical beliefs such as witchcraft as found in Igbo traditional thought.

The Igbo views the world as one of extra-ordinary harmony. There is a holistic view of reality. Every institution has this sense of unity as its foundation and its sustenance. There is a constant interaction between the physical and the metaphysical. Witchcraft is a model of explanation which explains how the relative searches the absolute, the imminent and the transcendent. Just as the body is completed only in the spiritual and the human is complemented in the divine, so also witchcraft seeks to explain the facts that natural science must look for metaphysics for its wholeness, while metaphysics must return to natural science for its roots. The metaphysical and empirical are two sides of one coin of reality. Witchcraft as a model of explanation emerges when there is no other type of explanation that can fit into the explanation of such events (Sogolo, 1993). It is an explanatory model through which the traditional Igbo express their hope, existence,



identity as well as their being. Finally, this study contributes to knowledge as it showcases witchcraft as a model of explanation as well as debunks an existing knowledge passed around by Westerners that Africans are not rational and therefore, have no philosophy.

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