

## Interrelation of God and Causality in African Metaphysics

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**Abstract:** This discourse acknowledges the philosophical altercations on the effectual conceptions of God and causality in understanding the development of man. It is about the conceptual relationship of God and the workability of causality in African traditional metaphysics. It is taken that every culture operates within a conception of being which comprises of the sort of entities or existents taken to be real within such a framework of thought, and what it means to be as such. Understanding such a conception of causality is crucial to having a grasp of the people's views regarding every aspect of life. It tries to relate the conceptual and pragmatic consideration of the belief of the personhood of God to the workability of causality in African traditional or philosophical thought. It also made assertive connection with some western thought on the relation of God and causality. At a concluding parlance, it is observed that, mostly, African traditional belief does not isolate the consideration of the belief of God from that of causality. That causality resides in the workability of the essential personhood of God, since both good and evil eschew from the supreme transcendental reality, which created or originated them. That every culture relates the cause and effect to ontological discourse of events, situation, and accidents, and African traditional philosophy cannot be said to be exclusive.

**Keywords:** God, African Philosophy, Causality, Man, Metaphysics

### Introduction: The Basic Understanding of African Metaphysics

In metaphysical discourse, many issues are considered as very important in an attempt to find meaning in them all, especially the ones that are much related to man living condition and the general natural order of things in the universe. African philosophy is one of such metaphysical avenue. That is why it can be classified as a “metaphysical culturalism.” Its cultures are positively beclouded with metaphysical coloration of relevance. African philosophical enterprise is classically domesticated within metaphysical conception and perception of reality, because of its contents, materials or objects of concern or analysis. First of all, amongst numerous conceptions and definitions of metaphysics, Echekwube(2002) posits that;

Metaphysics is properly understood as the study of being in its very essence, the study of being as being (ens in quantum ens). It is a science which considers reality whatever exists in its concrete and abstract natures, that is both in its empirical, observable and spiritual manifestations (7).

It is on this conception that African philosophy can be considered as a science, or a scientific study of realities, since the realities and events which it studies are real and factual to its claim epistemologically. Though, majority of them are metaphysically enclosed to knowledge empirically. On these epistemic and cultural assumption, Anyanwu (1983, 80) asserted that; “no knowledgeable person can defend the view that the so-called primitive people had no adequate theory or principle of causality solely because their theory was not “scientific. The truth is that theory was meaningful and relevant to their definition of reality or to their mode of perception.” It considers some contents of concerns and analysis which are beyond mere perceptual acceptability but realistic to its scientific bias. Some of them are the consideration of the doctrine of immortality, universals, personal identity, and concept of death, afterlife, and causation.

On a much detailed consideration of the philosophical preoccupation of African minds in defining their collective personality and identity, Wiredu (1995, 23) has understood the

contents of analysis and importance of human growth and development within the pivot of African philosophy, then he explicated that;

There is a large bunch of them, but let me mention only the following: Reality, Being, Existence, Thing, Object, Entity, Substance, Property, Quality, Truth, Fact, Opinion, Belief, Knowledge, Faith, Doubt, Certainty, Statement, Proposition, Sentence, Idea, Mind, Soul, Spirit, Thought, Sensation, Matter, Ego, Self, Person, Individuality, Community, Subjectivity, Objectivity, Cause, Chance, Reason, Explanation, Meaning, Freedom, Responsibility, Punishment, Democracy, Justice, God, World, Universe, Nature, Super-nature, Space, Time, Nothingness, Creation, Life, Death, Afterlife, Morality, Religion.

In African ontology and cosmology, all these are considered very important for the understanding of man, because the human person is confronted with different aspects and types of reality, even when there is diversity in the unity in them. Sometime, even all the times man is confuse about them, and rationally wonder about their origin and meaningfulness as he relates with them. Through the senses, he experience material reality very much variegated. This is the most primordial and direct contact with reality. It is a brute fact, a confrontation that is the point of departure of all other links with possession of reality (Iroegbu 1995, 19). Man is placed at the Centre of consideration in the analysis of the personhood of God and the explications of the phenomenology of causality as Echekwube (2002) will wish us to understand that; “in as much as we have learnt that life is the vital principle of living organism which itself originates from God, we can only liken it to the soul which is the vivifying principle in man who possessed body and soul.” This is responsive character of identity and personality of man in relation to the beingness of God, owing to the development of conscious and experiential principle of human acting and happening. Then, “while the soul is spiritual, simple and immortal, the body is material, composite and mortal. Man, therefore, is the component of body and soul. However, when the soul leaves the body, there occurs death and no more physical man is visible.” This component nature originated from the beingness of God, makes every action associated with the workability of nature to be attributed to God itself, even in African philosophical and developmental thoughts.

### **Understanding Causality in Human Development**

Causality comes from the word 'causal' which means 'agent' and “cause”, and it could be described as the reason or reasons for the existence of a being, an event or an effect. It has to do with the explanation for the coming about of another thing of effect which may be link together. Ebeh (2011, 22) says that the thought of event with the necessary cause presupposes the existence of a causal agent. Antecedence and consequence are implications or actions that move together, the former is the reason of the cause, while the latter is the necessary connection between the cause and effects. In Africa, no life, no causality can be inferred in man, the operational possession of vital forces of realities. Hence, for instance, death of life can be regarded as an effect of a live not lived. And both life and death are traceable to the personhood of God in African metaphysics. Live is the causality of death, and in some cases, death is the causality of life. Both of them are an effect of the other. When this is envisaged, the personhood of God is questioned.

Hence, the thrust of this paper is the operational beliefs in God in relation to the philosophy of causality in African metaphysics. Hence, when one has to look at things around him or her in order to understanding them better, that is philosophy. Men and women have at their disposal an array of resources for generating greater knowledge of truth so that their lives may be ever more human. Among these is *philosophy*, which is directly concerned with asking the questions of life's meaning and sketching answers to it. Philosophy emerges, then, as one of noblest of human tasks. Causality is inferred in most times when realities, events and situations are enumerated in attempts to emphasis for philosophical analysis, especially on metaphysical

parlances. From history, the analysis of determinism, for example, has been situated within the consideration of the effects of causality.

In all, it seems almost impossible for any adult to live in the world without the notions of cause and effect. What each culture considers as the cause of an event depends on the structure of reality within that culture. So far, we have seen the basic assumptions of African philosophy, namely, that everything that exists is a life force, that there is a hierarchy of forces, that there is no isolated force in the universe, and all forces are constantly interacting. 'All created forces preserve a bond with one another, an intimate ontological relationship' (Anyanwu 1983, 66). Hence, in describing the African concept of reality, Echekwube (1972 and 2002) states that; "our African notion of reality unifies everything in itself." Everything therein is wholistic, never dualistic, as seen in western philosophical thought and perception of reality. In African philosophical thought and development, "one does not distinguish the sacred in isolation from the profane, the spiritual from the material, the invisible from the visible." This conception of reality, both seen and unseen; is believed to be based on holding the cosmos in wholistic existence or form of its creation. Everything has vital force or forces, as Placide Tempels recognises in his book: *Bantu Philosophy*. With such operational propensity of these vital forces in nature, where everything is identified to have spirit, including the inanimate realities, then, "the profane gives evidence to the sacred, the material the spiritual and the visible to the invisible. In such a concept, reality is manifested in Beings in a transcendental manner."

In a most serious or different note, the western notion of reality is different, largely on empirical verifications of convictions. So one of the possessions of reality that is point of consideration is the concepts of cause and chance; looking at the perception of them by some thinkers in both the Western and African traditional thoughts. Though the issues have been lingering ones in philosophical environment, but one will not afford to abandon it until considerably assertions of value are made to solve problems in them. With such development, it will be positioned that, in the African world, therefore, the homogeneity or reality is emphasized and for one to better one's condition on earth, one must seek harmonious integration with nature and all it entails (Echekwube 2002). Many scholars hold that if things came out for a man as prosperously as he wishes, it must be that some gods have taken interests in him, his doings and have brought him success. On the other hand, if a man's children die, his crops fail, his fortune is ruined and sickness comes, all these are due to supernatural forces unfavorably disposed towards him. This unitary conception of life has greatly influenced the African to the extent that it is meaningless without reference to its ultimate meaning which can be found only in relation to God (Echekwube 2002). While many others do not believe to link events with supernatural forces, but associate them merely to human acts, and in greater extent, do not link causes to and effects.

### **God in Human Understanding**

Generally, the relationship between the natural and human events has been proving the conceptual and pragmatic implication of the consideration of all-powerfulness of God, in many cases, meaningless. Though, there is a sense of incompatibility of their interests and analysis of existential relevance. In some analyses, it is seen that He who is God, is not the one in charge of events, that the natural ordering has no control by any external agent, rather solely, independent of any influence. The issues of man's creativeness in manipulating things and events come in, and make humanity more relevant in many cases, rather than the divinity. The whole affairs in nature seem to be about the existence of man, and man seen to be putting efforts to control some of the negations which have been pulling weights against his comforts and happiness. Though, as O'Shea (1963) recognizes that; "the ultimate happiness of Man does not consist in external things, not bodily advantage, nor pleasure of sense- nor indeed in the exercise of the moral virtues, of prudence or of art- but in the contemplation of truth; hence the whole functioning of human life is meant to be all the service of those engaged in the contemplation of truth" (11). In the realm of human and cosmic imperfections, man's sense of

spirituality and religiosity is questioned on the domain of the Divinity which appears to be very illusive and non-verifiable to exert conviction in the face of limitedness.

For example, in Karl Marx's thought, reflecting and on the foundation of the works of Fredrick Feuerbach on the conception that man created God, not God who created man, and on which he said that; the idea of the existence of Supreme Being, God cannot be proven just because the attributes which are associated with human *beingness* are given to supreme deity, according to human judgment from the products of his rationality and intelligibility, to create the "ultimateness" and "almightiness" out of a Being that cannot be perceived or empirically ascertained. With the valuation of human earthly conditioning, the existence and attributes of God are questioned. The realm of "ultimativity" is frequently designated as the "supernatural," which is another way of speaking of infinitude. The supernatural is what is beyond the limit of the finite or natural.

Furthermore, man keeps on relying on the principles which he does not have comprehension on. Out of faith and imaginative conviction man believes that God exist, but from the philosophical stand of Feuerbach who believe that the imagery of God is in the nature of man, shows that man may be creating God out of no reason, because man can have everything he wants if he removes the fear he attributes to non-empirical God. At the endpoint is that, the religion in the past and present has been a misguided tool of social integration with the reign of conflicts that been so associated with it (Isanbor 2012). Aside African philosophy, there have been many views or conceptions of the interplays of God and causality. Though, from the determinist view of human actions, both the Western and African conceptions of determinism envisaged that the principal consequence of determinism is the entailment that all future events have already been determined and will necessarily happen. It can also be argued that both culture associate determinism with, and rely upon, the ideas of materialism and causality (Ogundare 2006).

In African philosophy, the conceptual acceptability of God in human affairs and development is related to the dominance recognition of 'force(s). There is determinism because there is a 'force'. Unifying the conceptions to that of God in African religious thought, Anyanwu (1983) explicated that;

In African philosophy (or in African religious thought) there are several principles (God, divinities, spirits, ancestors, natural forces) that help to explain experiences. In other words, the African postulates forces: God, divinities, spirits, ancestors, as the underlying principles which gives or guarantees unity in the universe. Each of the forces has its own function, and the function is not capricious but regular in its manifestation. For example, God is not merely a Great Muntu or a Power to be feared and worshipped. Rather, He is a symbol that serves to introduce unity in the world of diversity, order in the disordered world, and simplicity in t complex world. Divinities and ancestors also have their own function in the social life of the African people (78-79).

From the functional cause of events and things, the debate of human destiny and its corresponding actions of its freedom or freewill is examined. It can be examined because they are perceivable, that cause and effects are discoverable, not by reason but by experience, will be reality be admitted with regard to such objects, as we remember to have once been altogether unknown to us; since we must be conscious of the utter in ability, which we then lay under, of foretelling what would arise from them (Stumpf 1983, 267). The issue has been that one cannot separate the causes of events or things from the outcome of the causes. That, every event or thing has a corresponding cause, and there is no event or thing even from human being and him as an entity, without a cause. That every contingent being in nature has a cause is an excuse.

In most cases, man is regarded as the agent, because of his rationality and intelligibility, since causality is defined as an act of bringing into reality what not in reality, and those things that are empirically verifiable by the human senses and capacity of evaluation. But, philosophically man has observed that, from the things he caused into being, have already been cause into nature by other causal agent, and this causal agent of nature and all other things in nature will be without a cause in itself, and this is considered as the ultimate cause, the uncaused agent. This is God, the Supreme Being (Aquinas, *Summa*, Pt. 2 Art 4). This conception of God as the “uncaused cause” is pedagogically associated with Aristotelian philosophy tradition and then emphatically developed in Thomistic philosophical tradition, when explicating the *beingness* of God.

For the purpose of diversity of thoughts, it is important to examine the hinged consideration of western thought on the relation of God and causality. Western philosophical traditions are hinged on particular individual thinkers, unlike cultural or societal or communal thinking or conceptions of things or events in Africa. The western philosophical thinkers are the paragon of evaluations of conceptions. They are who have reflected on the events and situations around the working development of humanity especially. With empirical and realistic mindsets, the western thinkers believe mostly that cause and effects are evident in nature, but the relationship between them is what debatable. This condition has led to two group of thought: the soft and hard determinism. The soft determinists believe that man is both free and determined while the hard determinists believe that man is totally determined. The issues lie on the actions and responsibilities of man in the consideration of cause and effect.

#### **Principle of Causality in African Metaphysics: Knowing the Unknown**

Fundamental to the traditional African theory of causality is the conception of orderly universe in which all events or effects are caused and potentially explicable. Unlike the western world, people speak of mechanical, chemical, psychical interaction among the beings of forces. For the African, there is yet another causality namely metaphysical causality which binds the creature to the creator (Ebeh 2011, 23). The Africans see the event as being determined by the will by the spiritual being, the operation of the automatic forces and self-willed action of men and women, animal and other beings follow in the sequence. The African life is permeated by the understanding that nothing happen without a cause, and that is nothing happens by chance, irrespective of the nature. And this means that the concept of chance does not have a place in African metaphysics. Everything is traceable to the deterministic dignity of humanity, it has no option than to follow the laid down parts to make meaning from its existence in the universe.

In metaphysical discourses, many issues are considered as very important, realities exemplified, especially the ones that are very related to man's living condition and the general natural order of things in the universe. Metaphysical discourses are evidenced in every culture with its peculiarity, as Anyanwu (1983, 66) recognizes that; “it seems almost impossible for any adult to live in the world without the notion of cause and effect. What each culture considers as the cause of an event depends on the structure of reality within that culture” (p. 66). The African culture projects the evidence of forces in every life form, and that defines how every reality is perceived and reverence. So far, looking forward for proper understanding of the African humanity in relation to traditional conception of *beingness* of God, “we have seen the basis assumption of African philosophy, namely, that everything that exists is a life force, that there is a hierarchy of forces, that there is no isolated force in the universe, and that all forces are constantly interacting (p. 66).

For instance, the *Yoruba, Igbo and Esan Cultures* of Nigeria believe that human destiny is the mysterious power believed to control human events. Destiny or predestination is the belief that whatever happens or that will happen in the future has been preordained and happened

according to an earlier master plan. It is the belief that every person has his biography written before causing to the world which consequently implies that anything one does is not something done out of freewill but something done in fulfillment of preordained history. For these cultures of people, nothing happens by chance, everything has a cause, even the natural disasters are even considered to be caused by the sins of the people of the land in which such events had happened, and they are seen as punishments to that affects. This means that cause is necessarily follows by its effect(s), in most cases, the effects of events are as results of sins committed by the people especially in the names of sudden death, disasters and the likes. According to Imafidon (2014), in a like manner, causality in *Esan* community reflects the interaction between the physical and non-physical in human existence. They operate with the idea that every event has a cause but not every event has a scientifically explainable or verifiable cause.

On a particular consideration, the *Igbo culture* does not talk about causality outside the concepts of human freedom, good and evil. They believe like every other Africans that God is the chief causal agent. But they have problems with the presence of evil nature and in human affairs. That if God is believed to be the ultimate cause of human life, why is he not regarded to be equally the ultimate end of that life. With this, the *Igbo* generally does not see himself going back to God at death in a sort of union with God in beatific vision. His abide at death will be, not in the divine-world, but in the ancestral world (Iroegbu 1995, 372). Everything, despite the presence of Evil, has cause with corresponding effect, and the issues of chance are highly limited in their consideration (see, Ifemesia 1979, 56 and Adeleye 2006, 39). On a similar note, the *Igbo* recognize the events have purely naturally causes of their certain phenomenological considerations, although the latter are subordinated in the final analysis to the spiritual in their quest for ultimate explanation. In natural causes of events God cannot be excused, because it is believed that God has the power to regulate and monitor activities.

### **Inseparability of God and Causality in African Metaphysics**

This compartment of explanation is about the affirmation of the interconnectedness of God and causality in African philosophy, of its evaluative note from the beginning; that there will be always difference in philosophical concerns on every particular reality or concept, just because of variations that are accorded to the workability of human cultures, in diversity of rationality, and also as in perceptions. Nonetheless, it is true that a single term conceals a variety of meanings. Hence there need for a preliminary clarification. Driven by the desire to discover the ultimate truth of existence, human beings seek to acquire those universal elements of knowledge which enable them to understand themselves better and to advance in their own self-realization.

These fundamental elements of knowledge spring from the *wonder* awakened in them by the contemplation of creation: human beings are astonished to discover themselves as part of the world, in a relationship with others like them, all sharing a common destiny. Here begins, then, the journey which will lead them to discover ever new frontiers of knowledge. Without wonder, men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal (John Paul II 1998, no. 4). This truth within human epistemic development resides in the holistic conception of the personality of God. His personhood embraced the materialistic and spiritual regeneration component of man, as Danquah (1965) in describing the situational prescription of God among the Akan people of Ghana, writes that, "Akan knowledge of God teaches that he is the Great ancestor. He is a true high God and manlike ancestor of the first man. As such ancestor He deserves to be worshipped, man is worshipped in the community... life, human life, is one continuous blood (and)... the continuance of that blood in the continuance of the community is the greatest single factor of existence." Anyway, from the both cultures one can easily deduced that are causes of events. On the thoughts of Aristotle and Berkeley that there is cause of every event or action since there is the conception of the existence of the uncaused agent who is responsible of all other causes in

the universe. The bottom-line is that there are causes of event and thing, and in one of the proofs of the existence of God, especially that of Thomas Aquinas, there is hierarchy of perfection, which is greatly exemplified in the level of causes, and there he talked about Uncaused Cause as God, which indicates the belief in causation.

On the contrary, for David Hume there is no necessary connection between cause of event and its effect. It is about the association of events with their outcomes. By the human reasoning, that they are independent of the other. This stands the existence of God cannot be explained empirically, and many scientists hold tenaciously to this conviction. Although, Hook (1997) will posit that, “not surprisingly, the scientists who hold to this conviction invariably turn out to be the most religious of men. The God of the scientist is not the God of the prophet, priest, or moralist.” And for the purpose of Christianizing God of African traditional metaphysics in the face of science and technology, Mbukanna (2014) will substantiate that;

So, God is behind the success of scientific enterprises which can be seen in the areas of improved medical care, improved communication system and the invention of various devises for mass production of food ad drinkables. In other words the success recorded in various human endeavors is fundamentally due to God's gift of intelligence to the human person. Technology is not therefore only a gift of science. It is the result of the power of the Almighty God working in us. Animals unblest with reason cannot do science and technical work.

More straightforwardly, the existence of God has not been scientific, but out of nothing, He created the developmental intelligibility of science. We, in African, should not imitate modern atheistic Europe that has advanced in science and technology and only believe now in the providence of science and also deny the reality of God who made them what they are (Mbukanna 2014). In African philosophy, God is science in man, since realities express the *beingness* and *immanentness* of God. In African thought, every event has a corresponding cause and effect, and the two phenomena happen in union with other thing, and nothing happens by chance. The Igbo ontological tradition and culture speak of *Obi* and the Yoruba of *Emi* (heart or soul) whose departure for the body brings about death (see Adeleye 2006, 36). Unless due to the Christian influence, *Obi* and *Emi* are not regarded as definite entities that are immortal or that go to heaven or Hell after death. Rather, one may say that they dissolve into collective immortality of the living, into *Ntu*, and can be reborn. There is no individual immortality as such because there is no isolated force (Anyanwu 1983, 65). The belief in the existence of God takes a central stage in the consideration of causation in African Thoughts, and there is conception of the interference of the divine in human affairs, and due to this relationship, there is monitoring of events in nature, then they consider God is the Causal Agent of their existence. Therefore, since there is a cause of every event there no chance of every event, event rather happens ontologically or functionally, and it produces effects as mostly observed empirically.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it is deduced or understood that African philosophical thought cannot necessarily separate the conception of God from that of causality. It is a matter of relational transcendence since both realities are basically within the domain of metaphysical explication. The transcendence itself is the act of forming relations; the act of forming notions of unity, notions of universality and notions of homogeneity. With these notions created by transcendence of history and development, we are able to relate one thing to another (see, Unah 2006, 13). These notions of homogeneity are conjunction with the Aristotelian conception of God as the 'uncaused cause'. In the causality of reality, the *beingness* of God is expressed by showcasing His divinity in humanity. With this, the Africans traditionally conceivably attribute societal and humanistic propensity and workability of cosmic causality to the personality of God. The Africans cannot excuse God from the causal relation of events and situation. It will always be convenient to relate causality with God, whether positive or

negative, in order to exact the relevance of God's presence in human dealings. In summation, it is basically on the philosophical assumption and notation that the conceptual and pragmatic workability of causality on reality is succinctly linked with the personhood of the greatest ancestor, God, and the African philosophical and religious thoughts are certain that God is aware of the causal situation and events.

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