
REFLECTION ON JIM UNAH'S ONTOLOGY OF MAN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL IMPLICATION FOR MULTICULTURALISM

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Abstract

Phenomenology is a multifaceted critiques of fundamental assumptions of philosophy as a discipline. The central concern of this research borders on the crucial issues concerning the question about the human mind and its organization of reality. Sustaining the various perspectives regarding philosophical discourses about mind and reality is the unending underlying validity of the Kantian claim that the “cognitive faculty” of the mind is the pineal gland of the dynamics between mind and reality. In furtherance of this, Jim unah's contributions to the question, phenomenologically places the onus of the dynamics of operation between mind and reality, on the concept of the “ontology of man” in-between 'what is', 'what is not 'and the consequent imaginative creativity of the human mind. But the remarkable magnitude and significance of this conceptualization is in its multiplicity of truths, facts and realities. The implication is the heightening of multiplicity in the dynamics of the relation between mind and reality as a phenomenological contribution to a multiculturalist understanding of the predicaments of discourse concerning the relation between mind and reality.

Keywords: Phenomenology and ontology, Mind and Reality, Ontology of Man, Multiple Modernity, Multiculturalism.

Introduction

This paper is a crucial response to the question, how does the mind organize reality? It is this question that will be the quiet guide in this research. This is a question about the operative nature of the human intellect and its various metaphysical projections into reality. So the

question, how does the mind organize reality raises serious metaphysical problems. This is why the survey of some of the metaphysical theories concerning the ineluctable relationship that exists between the mind and reality is inevitable. For if the mind decides reality and reality decides how to look at it, then the problem of multiple truths and their underpinnings of theoretical formulations of reality becomes a germane one, not only for metaphysics but also for the historicity of man and the necessity of 'social hope'.

In opening up the various theories or perspectives concerning the dynamics of operation between the mind and reality, this paper engages each of the philosophers emphasized in it, in such a way that the mind, being a metaphysical concept is concretized in human beings no matter how exceptionally otherworldly it is. So, without being prejudicial; with the hope and belief that such ontologically engaging theory would open itself up within the ambit of this historical survey, the theory that takes the questioning of who man 'is', its objective will be the focus of this paper.

This questioning process that makes human being its focus would be subjected to critique. Thus, what is enunciated in this questioning of the possibilities and limitations of the concept 'ontology of man' is in its enduring capacity to undertake the task of social hope in its necessity as intercultural dialogue in the wheel of the progress of multiculturalists' plurality.

Having done this, the significance and remarkability of [Deleuze and Guattari: 1994:1-9] of the transcendental mode of questioning which takes the 'ontology of man' as its concern would be enumerated. It is

within this hypothetical consideration that such conception is taken to underpin the current shift from modernity/post-modernity into the age of multiple modernity with its multiculturalists reinforcements.

To achieve this theoretical projections, this essay is divided into three parts; the first part would be a survey of some of the various theories that have been propounded in the attempts to answer the question, how does the mind organize reality? The second part is used to expose the transcendental theory 'the ontology of man' which outlines the conceptual conditioning of being human and his/her interactions with reality. The third would be an interpretation within the limits of its possibilities and limitations of the theory that takes up the man who asks the question with a view to determining its remarkability and significance. It will be concluded that in its organization of reality human mind is grounded in multiplicity.

Mind and Reality in Philosophical Discourse.

Perhaps the most adequate way to determining how the mind organizes reality is to investigate how men of intellect, men who are known to have used their 'minds' to organize reality have done it. The two dominant patterns of how the mind organizes reality are that it is either the material world that shapes the product of the thinking being or it is the intellect that shapes the product of the thinking being. The application of these set of thinking was pioneered in the history of philosophy by Thales and Anaximenes who posited that it is the physical elements (water, air) that determine the core of the structure of the universe, while Anaximander and Parmenides among others relied on the intellect, which is the non-physical gift of man as the tool of organizing reality.[Guthrie1997:22-42] The upshot of this is that the question whether reality is one, dual or plural

is dependent on which of the threefold the mind or the intellect privileges.

Thus, to claim that being or reality is one, dual or many or that reality is material, or an idea, is to acknowledge the role of the mind or thinking in shaping reality. Yet reality or being does not appear to the mind as whole at once, it makes itself available in profile and to say this is to claim that each of the various way of determining reality that this paper is about to sketch are different profiles of reality as it appears to different minds sketching it.

Occupying the intellectual space between the Ancient and Modern, Plato was the first to show in clear terms that the mind organizes reality as 'idea' prior to the material manifestation of these ideas in reality.[Ross1971:38] Holding forth between Heraclitus' conception of reality as constantly changing, as a becoming, and Parmenides insistence that Being is, that non-being and becoming are not, Plato argues that it would be futile to hold onto the material world wherein changes do occur and everything is impermanent, urging that mind's apprehension of ideas is prior, since the material world is copy of the permanent and solid world of ideas. This conception of reality is usually referred to as the 'theory of ideas'. However, what is important in this essay is the general understanding that the Platonic world of idea is not in itself monist, it is pluralist, since all the beings in the world of form have their replica in the material world.

Nevertheless, the Platonic theory of the mind's improvisation of reality did not convince his student Aristotle as an adequate way of organizing reality. Aristotle rejects Plato's scheme and claiming that reality is divided into two; this time the world of particulars and

universals wherein the first is the nature distinguishing the individuality of a being and the latter is the general characteristics shared by an individuated being with members of the same class. [Gaarder1991:104]

From the above, it should be noted that the common thread amongst all the ancient Greek philosophers is their concern to find universal principles which would explain the whole of nature or reality. This Platonic concern with bipolarity is a demonstrable way of showing the fact that the mind actually organizes reality, but it does not answer the question how. This is so because most of the ancient philosophers did not especially concentrate on the 'man' who ask the question, how does the mind organize reality? Their attempt to make man the subject of their question was not self-conscious. However, Protagoras' dictum that man is the measure of all things' turns out, consequently, to be the determinant of the history of the question in which Immanuel Kant takes a pivotal turning point.

In taking a leap out of the numerous historical responses to the question which became self-conscious in Kant, who shows clinically that operations of the human mind and the way it grapples with reality is tied with the locus of human faculty of knowledge. Replicating the Copernicus revolution in philosophy, Kant posits that the world is what the mind makes of it as a creative force in which reality decides how to look at it. He rejected the empiricists theory of knowledge acquisition in regard to the fact that the mind is blank [in the sense of innate ideas] and that mind becomes conscious only with the phenomenal influx of ideas into it. [Kant: 2:1890]

The empiricist conception reduces mind to an inactive composition

incapable of generating ideas from itself, Kant, however, took ideas from the rationalists and fusing it with that of the empiricists, he posits a mind that consciously decides what reality ought to be. Kant systematically elucidates how the mind, in modern terms (the intellect) is structured in such a way that apriori and a posteriori knowledge are possible. They are the precursors of the analytic, synthetic distinction, which makes possible the various patterns of realities that have been created by thinking, intellect, or the human mind.

Beginning with the catalogue of Kant's provision and justification of apriori knowledge which is underived from experience with the following famous and often-quoted statement by Copleston which offers the opinion that;

all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt... But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience (Copleston 1968:217):

in this sense, 'Sensation' sets the mind to work, however, it is the cognitive faculty that supplies the apriori elements from within itself which fused with sense experience to form concepts that are apriori. The sense of this Kantian apriori and its interaction with phenomena shows that the human mind possesses independent, original apparatus or tool for organizing reality. It completes the human tussle of knowing the modern history in European philosophy. Accordingly, in its coordination of human,

faculty of understanding, the intellect, in its further operations, first organizes reality by forming notions of connectedness, universality and necessity

antecedent of experience. Secondly, the intellect, processes, analyses and synthesizes sense data from phenomena. In other words, the intellect makes its cognitive preparation from experience and the characterization of such organization of reality as posteriori (Unah, 2002:143).

In furtherance of this; Unah makes a crucial distinction between empirical universality and absolute universality. He clarifies further that the two do not work independently of each other and that this interconnectedness attest to the capacity of human mind to legislate for experience.

The upshot of this elongated clarification is that the mind is active in categorizing reality (Unah, 2002:144). Thus Unah's position that Kant recoil from 'Nothing,' which is the noumena, imposes limitations on the capacity of the human mind to explore reality from the 'nous' perspective. However, Hegel's idealism bridges the chasm created by Kant's recoil from 'noumena'. In the process of bridging the gap, he re-conceptualizes the 'noumena' as a field of 'nothing' in which Reason, is able to penetrate, cultivate and create concreteness out of nothing.

Altogether, many other attempts by the human mind to organize reality are implicated in this lack of paying attention to man in his being. For instance, Karl Marx upturned the Hegelian dialectical idealism into dialectical materialism. Wherein he holds that the universe exists without anybody behind or beyond it, and that it is fundamentally material in nature, with everything determined by the scientific laws of matter (Stevenson, 1977:500). Implying, that

Labour is the defining principle of being human.

Karl Marx rejects the 'transcendental structure' of human nature with which he penetrates the dark illuminous nothing. Thus, Marxism is not capable of answering the question, how does the mind organize reality? Since mind is not matter and it has not yet been completely reduced to the workings of scientific laws of nature.

The import of the above exposition of different views about reality is that even though they have all contributed, in their various responses to the question, how does the mind organize reality? In accordance with Jim Unah's submission, they have not cut their way through the problem of 'man in its being'. Accordingly, Husserlian phenomenology remains within the ambit of idealism and does not address the ontological question of man. Husserlian phenomenology is conceived here, as a science of essences or a descriptive analysis of immediate experience, in which

the transcendental ego becomes intelligibility, the source of truth, the source of value, and the source of meaning. In other words, the transcendental ego perceives the world or reality precisely as it is. This is how pure phenomenology becomes pure idealism; the ego becomes cut off and totally detached from the world (Unah, 2005:52)

Jim Unah's Ontology of Man in the Dynamics of Mind's Organization of Reality.

The concept 'mind', is a creation of European philosophy of man in its history. The mind-body problem, created innocuously by Rene Descartes, in order to formulate or regulate the foundation of

philosophy, became the most controversial, organizing principle in man.

However, Hume drives a wedge between the purported relationship that exists between the body and mind. Since, according to Hume, there is no deriving necessity and strict universality from empirical data into human mind and its organization of reality then it would be difficult to continue with the claim that mind organizes reality by making objects conform to its intellectual legislation. With this then, there is no organizing principle (the mind, reason) which can of necessity legislate for reality.

In order to save the mind from this onslaught, Kant formulated his famous thesis quoted by Frederick Copleston,

Hitherto, it has been that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to ascertain anything about the a priori by concepts, and thus to extend our knowledge, came to nothing on this assumption. Let us try, then, whether we may not make better progress in the tasks of metaphysics if we assume that objects must conform to our knowledge. This at all events accords better with the possibility which we are seeking, namely of a knowledge of objects a priori, which would determine something about them before they are given to us (Copleston, 1988:224)

This quotation which comes in form of a hypothesis is the Copernicus revolution which states that objects must conform to the legislation of the mind. From this moment on, the 'mind' becomes the

concept of analysis because it is more controversial than reality, since reality is factual and the mind is given. It is a concept created by the intellect. Kant rearranged the concepts of mind and its relationship with reality by claiming that the faculty of judgment; the synthetic apriori legislate for reality.

Therefore, an intellectual analysis of 'concepts' claims that the mind; the image-forming power of the transcendental imagination works in triadic ways which are invariably interwoven. The mind is always an activity which works as transcendental imagination (pure synthesis) mutually with pure intuition and pure thought. Therefore,

Pure imagination has the power to harmonize, put together or synthesize the activities of pure thought and pure intuition (Unah, 2005:100)

This triadic formulation of the process of concept creation by the mind gives thinking an open field of operation. Yet the mind cannot operate without the body, without the concrete 'man'. It is in this sense that the ontology of man and finite transcendent becomes crucial to the undertaking of this paper. Thus, the ontology of man as finitetranscendent allows being to manifest itself.

Without doubt then, it would be difficult to grasp clearly how the mind organizes reality without dealing with the ontology of man and how finite transcendence is employed to burrow into the realm of Nothing in ontology.

Generally defined, ontology is the study of being. It is the study of being in general; it is not concerned with any regional spheres; it is not concerned with any specific study of being. Ontology means the

study of being precisely as being. It also means the study of pure being. The problems about what it means to be, of what it means to be at all and the attendant nebulous meaning of pure being is in the province of phenomenology as ontology.

With the idea that Being, the one, 'is', Parmenides got the wheel of ontological reasoning moving. Since then question of being, becoming and non-being permeates the history of human ontological experience. Leibniz, a 17th century philosopher formulated the question into its interrogative form *Why is there Something rather than Nothing?* in such a way that the ontological problem began to revolve around the enigmatic concepts 'something' and 'Nothing'.

From this moment on, the ontological problem became the problem of how these two enigmatic concepts relate together? Are they mutually exclusive or mutually inclusive? Most part of the history of philosophy, from the Greeks to modern Europe and its post-modern critique had approached the question in such a way that 'Something' is emphasized and cultivated over 'Nothing'.

This over-cultivation of 'concreteness' or 'something', this complete turning back on 'Nothing'; is what Jim Unah's ontology of man' and 'finite transcendence' seeks to redress. Thus, the question 'how does the mind organize reality?' gets its ontological answer in the repository that Being and Non-being belong-together; putting it in its radical form: 'Nothing is Something'. In this process Unah uses the way of phenomenological orientation to put on the conceptual table, the ontology of man, finite transcendence and their inherent radicalizing process. Accordingly, he points out that

phenomenology is characterized by its founder, Husserl, as the science of essence. Unah posits this to be so, because the authentic meanings of the data of immediate experience can only be displayed in their essence (Unah, 2002:33). Phenomenology emerged as a method in contemporary philosophy from the Greek concept *phainomenon*:

A phenomenon or a thing means that which shows itself that which displays itself that which exhibits itself or that which leaves itself open for sighting for inspection (Unah, 2005:17)

Now, if ontology is the study of Being and phenomenon is that which shows itself then Martin Heidegger's claim that only as phenomenology is ontology possible, gives clarity to the phenomenological orientation of the ontology of man and finite transcendent which manifest itself as 'logos'. Logos as discourse, means the same thing as 'to show, to make manifest' what one is talking about. In other words, it is impossible to organize reality without discourse; for discourse or logos, is the persistence in making clear what is 'Being' through what manifest itself.

The continuous confusion in traditional metaphysics is the persistence of Platonic and Kantian two sided categorization of reality. Kant in categorizing reality cuts it into two and conceptualizes them as noumena and phenomena.

However, the ontology of man within the province of phenomenology that human life is manifest and transcendently structured such that any separation between the transcendental nature of human life and its finite concrete existence would lead to

disorientation, in the drive of man to organize reality. It is the phenomenological orientation of ontology that reclaims for man his transcendental structure and totalizes reality as an aggregate between 'Nothing and something'.

In consequence, the mind organizes reality by employing the non-physical powers of man to project into nothingness in order to create and formulate concepts with which reality is rendered meaningful or meaningless. Accordingly, it should be clear that human life is grounded in finite transcendence; for even though human life is finite, its highest point is in making possible the achievement of transcendental projections within which its ecstatic possibility is grounded. Transcendence is;

the voyage of the mind, the human mind, into the region of nothingness. It is the exploration of the wilderness of human reason. In this voyage of the mind, in this exploration of thought, there is always a movement from hither to thither, a movement from here to there (Unah, 2005:83).

The non-physical power of man is encrusted within the study of the ontology of man. The question, whether those elements of finite human reason which makes it possible for man to organize reality, is answered with the power of finite transcendence. It is the power of reaching beyond the physical, which entails forming ideas and concepts by employing certain faculties of the mind.

Using the ideas and concepts to apply to things that lie around in our world environment through linguistic practices and conventions, and generally analyzing those essential characteristics of human life that

belong to human reality in general (Unah, 2005:41)

Apart from the non-physical power, man necessarily uses linguistic practice in his transcendental voyage. Thus, the role of language which manifests as discourse cannot be neglected in mind's organization of reality. Accordingly, the non-physical power of man is idealistically formulated in such a way that its phenomenological import is not lost or disregarded. Since phenomenology directs attention to what is 'manifest'; the engagement with finite transcendence begins with the world of things as an undeniable presence which precedes reflection, aiding the human mind's organization of reality within the world of bare 'givenness' which constitutes the given.

Clarifying further, Jim Unah posits that finite transcendence has its points of departure from idealism, since it emphasizes the existential structure of man. Thus, finite transcendence, both in its linguistic importance and the employment of the non-physical power of man as a fusion of 'idealism' and 'existential structure' of man, with Kant's synthetic apriori which allows man to formulate concepts and organize reality with humane non-physical power. He submits that;

Finite transcendence is located in the incessant reproductive power of the transcendental imagination which, together with several other moods and traits in the structure of human life, brings us face to face with nothingness (Ibid, 2005:132).

In furtherance of this, Unah argues that the ontology of man rejects partly, Hegel's idealist conception of reality as transcendent; the universal idea which, sucks in, human reality. The ontology of man, relocates strength and power in human reality as the determinant of

truth, value and meaning. In this way, finite transcendence locus is in human reality, not in any transcendental mysterious universal idea.

The rejection of Husserl's idealism completes Jim Unah's triadic disclaimer of the hold that idealism has on the ontology of man:

The ontology of man agrees with Husserl that there is a need for balanced neutrality and objectivity of some sort in other to enable the truth about things to emerge. But objectivity is not to be sought in absolute idealism. No matter how transcendental, the ego is ultimately a subjective ego and truth and objectivity are to be found in intersubjectivity, that is, in subjectivities collectively affirming reality (Unah, 2005:52).

It is evident from the above quotation that the ontology of man organizes reality by affirming intersubjectivity of truths and not the elevation of objectivity to a point of neutrality given by the 'Absolute idea'. This idea of intersubjective truths is further supported in the way Reality or Being manifests itself in profiles and the facticity that man himself is a bundle of actual possibilities. In this state of actual possibilities man burrow into nothing bringing forth many truths which again affirm the multifaceted manifestation of Reality.

In the ontology of man, finite transcendence grounds itself in the existential possibilities of human being. Thus, the fact must be taken note of, that it, (ontology of man, finite transcendence) is not an analysis of the word 'man'. What gets scrutinized is human reality phenomenologically established by Heidegger as Dasein. A human designation that many philosophers agree to connote as “existence”,

“life” and concrete “presence”. It is in this sense that the ontology of man gets its legitimacy to organize reality as; the presence of Being in concrete life situations. Since finite transcendence occurs in the life world of human being within the three ecstasies of time, structurally interconnected with other existential traits, the organization of reality by the mind cannot but be historical, by historical it does not mean history as a discipline, but history as a structure of time and its ecstatic manifestations which makes itself available to the human mind in difference and identity. This is why the ontology of man could speak of 'many, many truths'.

But since we cannot master Nothing in all its mysterious multiplicity of meaning since we merely have a dim understanding of Nothing, no one is in possession of absolute truth. Whoever dies for any truth dies ultimately for Nothing (Unah, 1990:27).

Yet 'Nothing' is the given, the vacuum from which finite transcendence assembles its creations. In the next part of this essay attempt is made to show how 'the ontology of man' takes up the question 'why is there something and not Nothing?' and how the voyage of finite transcendence into Nothing brings back the idea 'many, many truths' which as it should be shown; grounds the contemporary engagement with 'multiple modernity'.

Significance and Remarkability of Jim Unah's Ontological Organization of Reality

From the foregoing, it is clear that the ontological organization of reality is grounded in multiplicity of truths, a kind of aggregation of reality into a 'cosmic totalization' that orient the ontological interpretation of man in his finite transcendence into an awareness of

the belonging-together of 'Nothing and Something'. In as much as the belonging together of 'Nothing and something' is a post-modern aggregation of the question of Being; multiplicity of truths gets its foregrounding in the ontology of man as ecstatically contrived possibilities, open to multiple experiences;

Radical ontology presents reality, the world, as one vast expanse of uncharted territory of possibilities... postmodern metaphysics or radical ontology acknowledges the equal importance and value of what is and what is not, because with the fundamental priority of the "it is" or isness even what is not, in a very special sense is (Unah, 2009).

Thus, radical ontology; the ontology of man as a finite transcendent totalizes reality by giving equal status to 'Something' and 'Nothing' in the ecstatic projections of reality by human beings.

The ontology of man, in its finite transcendental formulation is remarkable and significant not by ecstatically situating itself within post-modernity, but in the post-colonial sense; it is a grounding of multiplicity wherein multiple truths becomes the essence, the core of human existence in its contemporary formulation. Peter Wagner, in his unwitting attempt to concretize multiple modernity posits that;

It is my view, in contrast, that the historicity of modernity requires the elaboration and explication of a plurality of modes of theorizing that is adequate to the variety of modernity and to the problematiques, that the modern condition poses for social life (Wagner, 2002:8).

Multiple modernity, grounded by the cosmic totalization of reality through the aggregation or the belonging-togetherness of “Nothing and Something” is, then, the metaphysical ground of multiplicity of reality effected by the diffusion of modernity into various post-colonial experiences. So in one way or the other, humanity in its ecstatic projections is shifting from post-modernity to multiple modernity.

In essence, the finite transcendence of man' the cosmic totalization of 'Nothing' and 'Something', the historicity of their belonging together is a shift from both modernity and post-modernity into multiple modernity. This is because its ontological organization of reality is 'multiple' rather than 'singular' neither is it 'post', in the sense of bipolarity 'for' and 'against' modernity. It is the productiveness of modernity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that taking into consideration the various attempts to respond to the question how does the mind organize reality; the answer that should be given is located in the multiple experiences of humankind in their ecstatic multiplicity. The mind organizes reality not as a singular self-image, or as for and against the singular self-image, but as multiple self-image; which situate itself beyond modernity and its postmodern critique. 'Post' in itself means the critique and affirmation of modernity; so, the submission here is that the mind organizes reality in 'many, many, ways'. Here the claims of the ontology of man and finite transcendence is concerned with ecstatic multiplicity and the human being who is ecstatically oriented towards the multiplicity of experiences which today marks being as human dwelling in the world. Within this claim

that the historicity of man has already moved beyond the dichotomy between the age of modernity and the age of post-modernity into the age of multiple modernity reformulation of theories as organizing principles is germane. This age of multiple modernity is underpinned by the human being who understands that reality is organized in profiles; as “many, many truths”, not as one truth neither as dual truth, but as multiple truths, grounded by the ontology of man and finite transcendent.

The manifestation of this phase of 'Being' (of history) is grounded in multicultural experiences of multiple modernity. The idea of multiple modernity is made concrete by the controlling influence of multiculturalism.

In the book *Philosophies and Cultures*, Frederick Copleston, suggests this multiplicity of thinking and multiple ways of life as the possible dimension towards which humans need to condition their 'minds'. This need for intercultural dialogue oils the engine of multiculturalism. Its purpose is to bring diversity of aspects of reality to the attention of human beings in order to enrich the thought of all. This is important because when humans talk about the future of the world, they are presumably talking about the future of man, of human being as they manifest 'life'. Thus;

How we think about man is not a trivial matter. All effort at social engineering, all attacks on social engineering, presupposes ideas of man, even if these ideas are not made explicit. There is need, therefore, for inter-cultural dialogue, in which philosophers can and should play a part (Copleston, 1980:286).

What is desirable then, is the continuous formulation of a “world-wide multiple cultures or pluralistic society in which different cultural traditions should hold its own but not without the controlling limitations and possibilities of intersubjective truths.

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