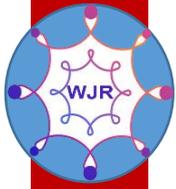


Book Review



APPRAISING ANTHONY O-ENOH'S CONCERN FOR PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING IN EDUCATION

Ikeoluwapo B. Baruwa

Department of Early Childhood and Educational Foundations

University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

ikeoluwapobaruwa@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0385-9772>

Abstract — This paper is an appraisal of an article titled *Writing Philosophically in Education*, by Anthony Owan Enoh. It rightly considers few accolades of Anthony O-Enoh and further reaches out to the epistemological realms as it concerns the study. The paper argues for serious attempts at making philosophical writings more engaging and more appealing, and also establishes that philosophical writing must be accompanied by the six-way test, CALDIS – critical, analytical, logical, dialectical, integrative, and speculative precepts posited by Enoh. Drawing on the conceptual analysis of the paper, there is a dire need to develop the skill of critical thinking in learners; for if developed, it can bring about an effective and a favourable milieu to the beings-in-the-world.

Keywords— *Philosophical Writing, Philosophy, Education, Critical Thinking*

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a quick response and an appraisal of an article in the bookshelf. The paper in view, *Writing Philosophically in Education*, by Anthony Owan Enoh has been revealed to be one of the scholarly publications written by the author. The immediate past Vice-chancellor of the Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) and immediate past President of Philosophers of Education Association in Nigeria (PEAN), Anthony O-Enoh has contributed immensely and demonstrated leadership qualities to the growth of Philosophy and Education in general. Equally, Enoh has served in various capacities, and to his name, he has books and cutting-edge publications that colleagues, researchers and others can add to their catalogue in the twinkling of an eye.

The interest of this research is not accorded within the reach of Enoh's history, but rather establishes itself on the ground of reaching out to the epistemological realms as contained in the aforementioned paper. The emphasis therefore is to examine the contents as contained in his article, and possibly do some justification, considering the established premise, analysis, language (amongst others) employed in the course of the exposition.

(I)

WRITING PHILOSOPHICALLY IN EDUCATION

Anthony Owan Enoh in the paper titled, *Writing Philosophically in Education*, gave an analysis on ways in which philosophical writings should be done. He started by introducing his readers to the general happenings of the day, where he briefly highlighted the dominance of empirical method or scientific method (as it is popularly called) in this contemporary era. He engaged his readers by drawing out the emergence of philosophical method, and how philosophy birthed the recent and dominating method, scientific method, which is seen in many fields today. For Enoh (2012):

The triumphs of science in the modern world have been so overwhelming that our entire consciousness is controlled and dominated by it. Everything around us, it is the language of science that is heard. We seem to have all agreed that being factual, specific and direct is what life is all about. Every other activity not patterned along these tenets is seen as hollow and without purpose.

Enoh (2012) further added that, when the systematic pursuit of knowledge began in what was then known as philosophy, there were no distinct disciplines as we have today. All forms of knowledge were subsumed under the umbrella of philosophy. It is so disheartening to see these days that these emanated and evolved fields of interest seem to be denying the Mother Penguin of all disciplines. For the emphasis, these disciplines no longer see themselves as descendants of philosophy, to which they remain indebted. Regrettably, Enoh (2012) remarked:

And because of their numerical advantage, the philosophic method and its adherents have increasingly become timid and inferior.

In the same vein, a philosopher, Babarinde (2012) argued that, the so called 'scientists' today once rejected to be called such, but rather accepted to be addressed as 'philosophers of nature' - how time flies, that the children no longer regard the source of their "being and belonging". Despite the preceding, it is imperative to bear in mind that this paper is not in the interest to create disparity among various disciplines that emanated from the Mother Penguin (Bamisaie, 2012), but rather to intensify and orchestrate togetherness and unity of knowledge among these fields.

In Enoh's writing, he acknowledged that philosophy deals with the normative – what ought, together with all the reasoning and speculations associated with it, while most academic disciplines seem to be concerned with the descriptive – what is. He further argued that other academic disciplines are mainly concerned with explanations and narrations and this in turn has its inherent lapses. Hence, they deprive the individual the much-needed freedom to think holistically and differently from what is almost obvious to us all. For him, it makes such writing colourless and formless.

To buttress further, Enoh (2012) agreed with Herbert Marcuse on his view towards one-dimensional philosophers (Marcuse, 1964). It is in the manner that:

Marcause was, therefore right in his reference to a one-dimensional man as he who loses the ability to think critically and negatively about the society. We will also be correct in referring to all those who describe, narrate, explain, or list and discuss facts as being one-dimensional philosophers (Enoh, 2012).

Their emphasis mainly is that, philosophy is not a straight-jacket talk or expression, rather, philosophical papers must be highly critical, and in this view, he pointed six (6) way test that should guide any philosophical writing. From its overview, philosophy is distinguished among other fields, by its critical, analytical, logical, integrative, speculative and dialectical nature, which taken together should guide all philosophical writings. For Enoh (2012), it is believed that any philosophical writing must be accompanied by the six-way test/question as contained in his paper:

- I. Is it critical?
- II. Is it analytical?
- III. Is it logical?
- IV. Does it adequately integrate all the facts, opinions or issues?
- V. Does it speculate or move beyond the given by making a projection? And lastly,
- VI. Is it dialectical?

Taken together, Enoh (2012) added that the six-way test can be understood as CALDIS – Critical, Analytical, Logical, Dialectical, Integrative and Speculative for short, each representing a test.

(II)

METHODOLOGY

Apparently, the focus of this section is not of data collection, data analysis or historical collection as it may. It is worth noting that the ideals of reasoned inquiry championed by Socrates and his descendants have long informed the view that education should foster in all, to the extent possible, the disposition to seek reasons, the ability to evaluate them cogently, and to be guided by their evaluation, in matters of belief, research, writing, action and judgment. Philosophical analysis as concerned in this section is expected to throw more light logically. In this way, educational issues have the hope of being put in clearer perspective with a view to interrogating and possibly proffering solutions to the problems.

(III)

With no subject to question or doubt, there is a need to expatiate more on the above questions, for avoidance of any rhetorical flourish, especially from researchers. To be critical (C), is to appraise, evaluate, examine, judge or comment. For Enoh (2012), he sees this as a way to see something differently from what is presented. For instance, a situation might warrant one to believe without a check on such belief, but Enoh is of the opinion that for one to be a philosopher or to put in a philosophical writing, such individual must be critical in their approach. Then a question may arise; how do you become critical? Simply, by examining and evaluating what is said to be a belief. A stance similar to this, if not the precise form is the critical ability of the author and that of the author being reviewed.

Second to the afore-explained is that of analysis (A), which puts criticism into consideration. In this, there is a consensus that there is no sharp demarcation between analysis and criticism. Thus, one only begins where the other ends, and in this order, analysis prefaces criticism. To digress a bit, philosophy as a discipline, in the ancient era, focused more on speculation; however, in recent phases, there has been greater emphasis on analysis of concepts. This recent phenomenon can be validated in Wittgenstein's parlance, where he posited that, language remains a pivotal tool in today's philosophy (Wittgenstein, 2009). Therefore, to encounter language in our reality with the world, there is the dire need for analysis. Analysis thus, remains a great tool in the hands of the philosophers, to analyse or break down concepts for the purpose of understanding. Akinpelu (1981) once stated that, philosophical analysis can help one see through conflicting arguments, so as to decide what is reasonable and justifiable, as well as support the most reasonable point of view, or to avoid any form of indoctrination or dogmatism.

Arguably, a good philosophical writing is a painstaking business that must be invested with time and deep thoughts. Philosophical writing must display the highest degree of logical presentation (L). It is in this view Enoh established that, achieving this all-important feat requires that every argument or discussion should prepare the way and connect with that which is to follow.

Integrative method (I) to Enoh involves wholeness – the combination of different elements into a single whole. In philosophy, if the analytic method enables one to understand the particular trees that stand before us, integrative method enables us to see the wood that lies ahead.

As established and conceived earlier, the business of philosophy in ancient times was basically speculative (S), however, modern philosophers still speculate. Though it may not be as core as the former, for the interest has shifted to that of conceptual and critical analysis in contemporary times. Speculation as a method in philosophy involves taking us beyond the here and now, to limits that present logic and understanding makes no connection. That seems not simplistic as bethought? Owan Enoh (2012) gave a better clarity:

Speculations in philosophy are supposed to take a leap from the known to the unknown, with no known connection in between, there must be a link between the speculated ideas and identified lapses of previous

ideas to the extent that identification of such lapses comes through criticisms of existing knowledge.

Philosophy is essentially the practice of oppositional thinking, of debunking various aspects of social reality and of thinking to transcend the contemporary state of things. Therefore, dialectics (D) is as much part of the critical element as it is of the analytic, integrative and the speculative. To bring to the fore, A. O-Enoh (2012) concluded that, the paper, *writing philosophically in education*, is both a method and a tool as it would arm us with necessary skills for writing good philosophical papers.

(IV)

Philosophy today remains one of the most exotic and obscure disciplines uncovered, considering its inquiry into what humans regard as dim-witted to adapt or follow. In-situ, Akinpelu (2012) established that philosophy is not a calling for “the maddening crowd” – the hoi-polloi, but rather for those who are willing to engage in theoretical activity. Thus, it becomes prerogative for the users to be thoroughly informed of the precepts guiding philosophical writing, as against any mere verbal ejaculation of thoughts or opinions.

Anthony O-Enoh in his paper gave a worthwhile judgement on what ought to be, with respect to the underlined rudiments that guide philosophical writing. As an appraisal that this may be, it is disheartening to see what comes out from users and philosophers in today’s era; while some writings look historical, others seem heading to a no-destination. Onwuka (2012) once lamented that, much of what goes on in the name of philosophical research is actually historical or descriptive research without the norms and rigor expected in these types of research – it could be summarised thus, as one that lacks philosophical basis.

In addition, Onwuka (2012) further identified some other flaws in today’s philosophical writings or research which include researchers operating at informational levels; stopping short of employing higher techniques of philosophical inquiry unlike its dominance in the ancient and medieval periods, dated to the time of Plato and others; compilations of ideas not extending beyond a first level interpretation; being receptive without indicating where the new contribution lies or increasing depth of understanding or adopting any new line of approach. Further, the critical methods employed in some of the studies appear to take a simple common sense approach without the rigor befitting philosophical criticism, and lastly, some research endeavours in this area appear to have been prompted more out of the desire to escape the stringent methodological requirements of other research areas.

As Enoh (2012) opined, what should distinguish a philosophical writing from others are those elements raised in the preceding section – logicity, criticality, integration, speculation, dialecticism and analysis. Though as addressed by Enoh, it is true that philosophical method is not given special recognition or adequate cognizance as expected, unlike the scientific method. This submission corroborates with one of Babarinde’s arguments, where he emphatically argued the tyranny of socio-science paradigm over philosophical research method (Babarinde, 2012).

Going with Enoh’s stance, it is expedient that this-day philosophers come informed to distinguish in writing, content and action why philosophical writing and method are of crucial importance in this contemporary age, without neglecting or underestimating the power of its contemporary, scientific method. Hence, philosophers in their analysis must be willing to vividly interrogate matters, without leaving related issues to the topics or polemics discussed untouched. In the same vein, the use of critical thinking skills must be well formed while discussing or debating issues or matters arising.

For the sake of emphasis, what is critical thinking? Or, how can one think critically? It is understood that many meanings of it have been suggested in the frame of philosophy and psychology, but in the general sense, this term has no definite meaning. However, critical thinking, from a philosophical realm, could be described as an ability beyond memorization. In a position where learners or individuals think critically, they are encouraged to think for themselves, to question or doubt information, to analyze and synthesise events at their disposal; to go a step further by developing new premises and infer against the facts obtained. Questioning is the cornerstone of critical thinking, and this ultimately, positions to be the source of knowledge formation, and as such, should be adopted by 21st century teachers and facilitators, to possible serve as a framework for a favourable and effective pedagogy. A question worthy of note at this juncture is to examine if critical thinking can be taught or developed in learners. Apparently, critical thinking is a skill that can better developed in learners, as it would be wrong to say we teach critical thinking as if we teach or pass the knowledge of “ABC” to the learners or students; although, the act of questioning can be taught, however, it can be better developed. As much as critical thinking can be developed, it can be searched and analyzed, considering its different dimensions (Baruwa, 2020).

SUMMARY

Having examined and appraised Anthony O-Enoh’s paper, a quick reminder remains tenable to all and sundry involved in philosophical writing. Philosophy or philosophical writing is not a motor-repairing activity, but a profound theoretical activity that requires the engagement of highly intelligent ones. Bringing to the fore, this paper argues for serious attempts at making philosophical writings more engaging and more appealing. It also posits that philosophical writing must be critical, analytical, integrative, dialectical, speculative and logical. Also, this paper calls for unity of both philosophical and scientific methods, considering the fact that both emanated from one source, which is philosophy. Lastly, this paper concluded on the ground of developing critical thinking in learners. As argued, the development of critical thinking in learners can bring about an effective and a favourable milieu to all beings-in-the-world.

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