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HOW TO TEACH PHILOSOPHY TO MAKE IT RELEVANT TO NIGERIAN STUDENTS

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Introduction:

In 1989 the Nigerian Universities Commission (N.U.C) made the study of “Philosophy and Logic” compulsory for all Nigerian undergraduates, irrespective of their major areas of study in Nigerian Universities. After more than a decade it is necessary for professional philosophers, teachers of the subject, to take stock and assess whether or not the teaching and learning of philosophy has significantly impacted on the intellectual, moral and political concerns in our culture and environment.

It is my view that academic philosophy in Nigeria in the last decade and a half is widely perceived to have become significantly separated from other intellectual, moral and political concerns in our culture. Academic philosophy is generally perceived as irrelevant, and held in low esteem in its isolation. The central object of this paper then, is to explore ideas about some of the factors behind that isolation, primarily with a view to understanding how such factors must be dealt with if one wishes to encourage a more substantial contribution from professional philosophers in the solution of cultural, social, political and environmental problems as well as an appreciation of the role and relevance of professional philosophy in Nigeria.

In this introductory section the evidence for my assertions that “academic philosophy in Nigeria ... is widely perceived to have become significantly separated from other intellectual and moral concerns in our culture”, and that “academic philosophy is generally perceived as irrelevant, and held in low esteem in its isolation” is briefly reviewed. I proceed to explain what “academic philosophy” involves and then argue that why academic philosophy in this country has become isolated is as a result of how some of its practitioners have practiced professionally. It is my view

that the challenge of relevance faces us as professional philosophers and that in general our isolation will not be overcome unless professionalism in philosophy and its teaching come to be reconceived and its professional standards restructured. We need to re-evaluate our role in relation to contemporary relevance.

In the final analysis I advocate the humble descension of philosophy from the “ivory tower” to the “market place”.

Oshita Oshita reports an encounter with a colleague of his. According to him,

A post graduate colleague at the University of Ibadan told me in 1986 that he was so frustrated when his Iqbo grand mother rebuffed his choice of philosophy as a course of study by cynically retorting “Philo-giny?” In Iqbo, meaning hilo what? (Oshita,2001 :13).

G.O. Ozumba similarly reports his own experience when in the 1970’s he got admitted to study philosophy. According to him,

On reaching home after the first semester my father confronted me with the question “What is this philosophy you say you are studying?” Before I could fake an answer, another question came in quick succession: “After your study of philosophy what will you do?” I was completely shattered. I looked around there was no known philosopher close by to deliver me from the discouraging questions (Ozumba, :2002:1).

Long before the experience of Oshita and Ozumba, Bertrand Russell in discussing the value of the study of philosophy wrote,

it is the more necessary to consider this question in view of the fact that many men, under the influence of science or of practical affairs, are inclined to doubt whether philosophy is anything better than innocent but useless trifling, hair-splitting distinctions, and controversies on matters concerning which knowledge is impossible (Russell, 1974:89).

In my own experience as a teacher of philosophy of over twelve years, I have been encountered by final year undergraduates of philosophy who came to ask me about job prospects and career opportunities for a philosophy graduate. As a teacher of “Philosophy and Logic” at the General studies level to non-philosophy Nigerian undergraduates of various disciplines, I have noticed that most of the students consider the course an unnecessary extra burden which has been imposed on them in addition to their major courses.

To one who is professionally occupied teaching philosophy, what is further immediately noticeable is the absence from view of academic philosophy. Books by philosophers are not readily available, even in the leading Book stores, one rarely sees philosophical articles reporting on new developments published in reputable general intellectual and cultural journals, except in strictly philosophical journals. These situations evidently justify my initial assertions. What could account for this isolation of academic philosophy? How ought professional philosophers react to the situation? These questions will be addressed subsequently, but first let us clarify the concept of “academic philosophy”.

What is Academic Philosophy?

The inability of professional philosophers to provide a univocal and generally accepted definition of their discipline has not helped matters. Answering the question, “what is philosophy?” is so perennially tasking that the uninitiated may regard this as a mark of the futility of philosophy as an academic discipline. Worse still, unlike mathematics, biology or sociology, the history of philosophy betrays the term “philosophy” as highly contested with each philosopher providing his own definition. But this is not to say that the term “philosophy” is indefinable. It only suggests that there are many definitions of philosophy. We can provide a definition of philosophy, but never *the* definition of philosophy which is able to capture all that the term philosophy means. As Kwesi Wiredu rightly observes,

Philosophy is, indeed, a well-established subject,
but its issues are so riddled with controversy
that there is hardly a single question to which
there can be said to be an established answer.
Not even on the question of what philosophy is,
is there agreement; and any definition is apt
to be personal (Wiredu, 1980 : 139).

For our purposes let us define philosophy simply as, what is taught and learnt in departments of Philosophy. This definition may be criticized as inadequate as it violates two fundamental rules of good definition: (i) A definition must state the essential attributes of the term

to be defined; (ii) A definition must not be circular (see Ucheaga, 2001: 89). However, it helps us to make the point about “academic” philosophy which we intend to make.

But if we must clarify our definition further, let us say that Philosophy is an academic subject in Universities and other tertiary institutions of learning which aims at the inculcation of ability of clear, logical and critical analysis of concepts and issues; the avoidance of emotional or parochial indoctrination or superstitious and irrational thinking and the development of the habit of seeking rationally satisfactory answers to recurring life problems.

Its traditional branches are Epistemology, which deals with questions concerning human knowledge; Logic, which teaches us to reason correctly; Moral philosophy (Ethics), which has the morality of human actions as the object of its study and Metaphysics which enquires into the nature of reality as a whole. There are other branches and more recent dimensions of academic philosophy which we shall come to see subsequently.

Philosophical inquiry in any of these branches is a quest for truth about crucial issues that are often and perennially discussed by thoughtful men. These issues are crucial not only because they are foundational, but also because they apply to more than one field of inquiry. Academic philosophy is the systematic investigation of the general principles that are the basis for all our knowledge and activity. It differs from religious training because it seeks to avoid dogma and faith; and it differs from scientific studies because it is willing to go beyond conclusively established facts.

From the foregoing, it is important to note that academic philosophy is not concerned with the acquisition or accumulation of a body of knowledge as such, but with the development of a skill and an attitude; the skill of systematic, critical, logical reflection, argumentation and documentation. Academic philosophy is thus a very valuable subject of study thus:

There is need to distinguish between “academic” philosophy and “philosophy” generally because there is a sense in which everybody is a “philosopher” of some sort. Omoregbe explains thus,

In a certain sense, that is, in a loose sense, every man is a philosopher in as much as every man at one time or another in the course of his life reflects on some of the fundamental philosophic questions about human life or about the physical universe. At funerals, for example, or at the sight of a dead body, or in the face of suffering, sickness, pain, misery, etc., men are apt to reflect on the meaning and value of human life.

(Omoregbe, 1985 : 4).

Kwesi Wiredu and P. O. Bodunrin do not accept this rather loose sense of designating a philosopher. Bodunrin insists that a “professional philosopher” must receive proper training and be able to apply the tools and methods of modern philosophizing (see Bodunrin; 1984 :2–23). It is my position then that the term “Professional philosophers” refers to my colleagues professionally occupied teaching philosophy in Universities and other tertiary institutions having been trained; and can be extended to include their students, whether “philosophy majors” or “non-philosophy majors” who are studying philosophy as an elective or at the General Studies level.

In Nigeria, the following Universities offer courses in Philosophy: The Universities of Calabar, Uyo, Ibadan, Port-Harcourt, Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Edo State University, Ekpoma; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Ogun State University, Lagos State University, amongst others. The study of philosophy in Nigeria has been on for over three decades but there has been a general absence of influence of philosophical research and writing on the larger culture as well as mass ignorance of the nature, value, relevance and significance of the discipline. In spite of the efforts of the National Universities Commission to “popularize” academic philosophy, philosophy in Nigeria remains in an alienated, marginalized state. Let us attempt to determine the factors that may have led to this alienation or isolation of academic philosophy.

The Isolation of Academic Philosophy

Generally, one may assume, groups of humans would not see themselves as relatively isolated and with little influence, and then remain aloof and not do anything about their situation. One then wonders why acknowledged leaders of the profession in Nigeria have not rebuked present-day practitioners of the profession for remaining in such an alienated state. Or is it that philosophers in general have simply been oblivious of this long developing isolation from the rest of culture? If the isolation of philosophy had been recognized by professional philosophers, is it that the recognized isolation was impossible to overcome, or were there some compensating gains from not dealing with it?

These questions would undoubtedly yield competing and largely incompatible answers among practitioners. For example, some of my colleagues argue that philosophy in Nigeria has already broken out of an earlier isolation, and cite as evidence the widely influential essay of Late Peter Bodunrin on *The Question of African Philosophy*(1984) or the no less influential effort of Innocent Onyewuenyi *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise In Afrocentrism*. (1994). They argue that Bodunrin, G. O. Sogolo, and Late Chuba Okadigbo have served the

nation in various capacities outside the confines of the academic world and performed creditably as philosophers in their various national assignments.

Others have argued that “genuine philosophy”, systematic, respectably rigorous philosophic thinking, like good mathematical or scientific thinking, has generally been and must usually be inaccessible to those not either gifted in abstract thinking and/or strenuously trained; hence the “market place” philosophy which I advocate, is “pseudo-philosophy,” weak, watered – down and over-simplified, usually supportive of some popular ideology, and its rejection by professional philosophers who insist on analytic rigour, logical coherence and systematicity needs neither explanation nor sympathy.

Others argue that it is not the behaviour of a small sect of intellectuals which is to blame, but rather broad cultural and environmental forces which discountenance not just philosophy, but all the “humanities” as irrelevant in a global age of science and technology. Yet others attribute the non-recognition or appreciation of philosophy to the high level of illiteracy and anti-intellectualism in Nigerian society.

My own view is that there is something to each of these possibilities, but that none disposes of all the issues or fails to need supplementation, at least, by the view I propose to develop. My reaction to the argument that Bodunrin’s and Onyewuenyi’s works were quite influential, is that the influence of these monumental essays was limited to professional philosophical circles. Furthermore, whatever national assignments or responsibilities Bodunrin, Sogolo or Okadigbo may have been assigned or held, they were not given such assignments as philosophers qua philosophers. Not many Nigerians realise that Chuba Okadigbo, who served as Senate President of Nigeria is a professional philosopher and has written prolifically on the subject; and whatever successes he may have recorded during his tenure as Senate President are not attributed to his professional abilities as a philosopher.

To the argument that “genuine philosophy” ought to be so systematic and rigorous as to be broadly inaccessible to majority, my response is that this conception of philosophy is what accounts for the decline in the capability of philosophy as practiced professionally to engage a larger audience and acceptability in Nigeria. Granted that given the new extension of the empirical, scientific approach to various disciplines, with the curriculum of disciplines in constant flux, and new disciplines emerging and older ones struggling to reorganize and regroup, there is a clear gain in acquiring academic autonomy or separateness and shaping a professional structure around a disciplinary base, so as to prevent the likelihood of possible disappearance or absorption.

However, in this country, professional philosophy has greatly cut itself off from “real world problems” to devote attention to technical problems of interest only to professional philosophers. Some Professional Philosophers in Nigeria have in their various ways defined a specific subject matter of philosophy and a unique method or approach, both of which allow them to develop an esoteric body of doctrine and results to be disseminated and further developed by colleagues. In teaching the subject to students such professionals make the study so mysterious, complex, complicated and confusing. Philosophy is presented as some transcendental study which has little or nothing to do with human nature and practical problems.

In the University of Calabar, at the General studies level, without adequate background the students are expected to learn symbolic logic, memorize and apply the rules of inference and the rules of replacement. Philosophy is presented as basically historical and the students, “non-philosophy majors” are expected to memorise in one session, information that is disseminated to “philosophy-majors” in three to four academic sessions. At that level the critical perspectives of academic philosophy are never introduced and the student is not able to grasp the essence of the study. On examination they are asked questions such as “.....is the father of modern philosophy” or “who said, “might is right?”, a format that does not compel any imaginative thinking. Consequently, he considers the course an unnecessary extra burden and fails to see its relevance to his major course of study or appreciate the professional role of the philosopher, his teacher

Though Wiredu (1988), a contemporary professional philosopher, acknowledges that “our societies are being rapidly changed by industrialization, and if we wish to understand this change and control its direction, we must adopt new ways of thinking, a new outlook upon man, society and nature ...” (p 61), and that “The philosopher can, and must, spear- head this endeavour”, he goes on to say that the “intellectual productions” of the philosopher are bound to be largely alien to most of his people”. Wiredu, in obvious justification of technical philosophizing, opines that the fact that “abstract and critical thinking about the foundations of human thought and practice is alien to the common man anywhere, suggests how remote the contemporary philosopher will be from their comprehension.” (p.61).

Wiredu further declares:

I would like to stress the importance of technical studies in the field of philosophy. It is only the philosopher who has attained competence in technical research and is at home in the most abstract regions of his subject who can speak with the clearest voice to the non-specialist public when the time comes. Philosophical issues have a habit of getting intertwined with one another. Thus although a devotion to

such a question as the nature of meaning or entailment may not seem immediately relevant to any human concerns, any thorough-going attempt to construct, say, a moral theory is apt sooner than later to come up against a problem of that sort (p. 62).

Wiredu then advises that "... the African philosopher need not let superficial calls for immediate relevance divert him from his studies. So long as he understands the basic practical motivation of his discipline, he is well advised to seek enlightenment in the most abstruse researches" (p. 62).

In my view Wiredu's "advice" must be taken with some circumspection. It is the attitude to professional philosophy which the likes of Wiredu advocate that justifies the interest of some of my colleagues who have presented some of their researches in recent academic journals under topics such as *The Notion of "Objects" In Wittgenstein's Tractatus*; (Uduigwomen, 2002, 95 - 102) *The Concept of Ego in J. P. Satre's Existentialism* (Ogar, 2003) or *Epistemology From the Existentialist Point of View* (Ozumba, 2002: 83 - 93) and *The Plasticity of Moral Objectivity* (Alabi, 2001). Although these essays are well researched and articulately expressed, thus satisfying the conditions for technical philosophy, they hold interest only to professional colleagues. In my view, these are "ivory tower" philosophy, opposed to the "market place" philosophy which I advocate. They fail the test of contemporary relevance. For me, Philosophy is not a flight to the abstract and the abstruse thereby obscuring and mystifying issues. Andrew Uduigwomen once warned against the danger of constituting (African) philosophy into a "closed club" that only admits of "professional philosophers" (Uduigwomen, 1996: 83). This warning still rings relevant. The strategy of insisting on technical philosophy serves to have the effect of worsening philosophy's connection with any appreciable audience for its work.

In the University of Calabar, with which curriculum of philosophical studies I am quite familiar, the content of the study is basically historical and only scratches at the critical analytic and argumentative perspectives of the study. The students study philosophy as if, like some other disciplines, what is required is to memorise facts which are to be reproduced on examination day. They do not receive adequate training in critical thinking and logical and analytic reasoning. Invariably on exams, regardless of how questions are designed, one receives comments such as "Kant said ... but Mill said ..." and "Plato claimed that..., but Aristotle believed that ..." The problem lies in getting the students to actually engage in *DOING* philosophy themselves and in doing it in such a way so as to develop a fairly sophisticated level of philosophical skill. We pointed out earlier that academic philosophy is not concerned with the acquisition or accumulation of a body

of knowledge as such, but with the development of a skill and an attitude; the skill of systematic, critical, logical reflection, argumentation and documentation.

Furthermore, in the University of Calabar, philosophical studies are essentially Western oriented; the vast area of “African Philosophy” is studied only for one semester. For four years the students are saddled right from their introductory classes with the history of Western philosophy beginning with Thales in the ancient period up to the major characters of the contemporary period of Western philosophy. In the latter years, as they study the traditional branches of Ethics, Metaphysics, Epistemology and Political Philosophy, we witness so much overlapping and repetition among the courses, and so much emphasis and attention is paid to exposition and analysis of the so-called “perennial problems” of philosophy. The curriculum remains to a great extent traditional. At the end of the studies, the student graduates having accumulated information, historical facts, knowledge that makes him perhaps knowledgeable, educated, “a graduate”, a historian, but definitely not the Philosopher the training intended him to be. Consequently, lacking adequate knowledge of the true essence of philosophical training, he is unable to apply the skills and the philosophical attitude in the “market place”. From the foregoing, it is my view that professionalism in philosophy and its teaching need to be reconceived and its professional standards restructured.

To the argument that cultural and environmental forces are to blame for the lack of respect or appreciation of not just philosophy, but all the “humanities” in a global age of science and technology, my reaction is that whereas this may be an age of science and technology, man, humanity, remains the focus and locus of all science and technology and it is the “humanities” particularly philosophy that provides the ideas that guide science and technology. Man lives and moves in a complex world, and this world must be understood, at all events in some measure, in philosophy’s characteristically fundamental ways before informed guidance can be offered. However, the humanities must rethink their role in an age of science and technology and introduce some pragmatism in their disciplines. Already theatre studies, literary studies, history, linguistics seem to be responding to this necessity by participating in the “market place” and sustaining their relevance.

Wiredu, in what seems to be some inconsistency or contradiction of his opinion on how philosophy should proceed in its contributions admits that our situation in Africa today is,

... sufficient to indicate certain important functions for the African philosopher. He must let his voice be heard on the question of what mode of social and political obligation is best suited to our conditions, and he must

take active part, indeed, he must lead, in the reappraisal of our traditional culture (1980 : p. 52).

This is a clarion call for professional philosophers to bring their skills and wares to the “market place”.

Philosophy in the “Market Place”

Technical philosophy, to my mind is “ivory tower” philosophy and is the reason for the lack of philosophical influence and appreciation in Nigerian society. “Market Place” philosophy which I advocate in Nigeria is the application of the skill in ability of clear, logical and critical reflection on the total experience of the Nigerian or African, on the way or ways, for example, he perceives reality and on his existential circumstances. In general, it explores the particular way or ways the Nigerian experiences, conceives and interprets nature, his society, religion, man, God, human conduct and so on. Philosophy is not a mysterious eruption of concepts from outer space having no connection with our empirical world even though they impinge upon it.

Philosophy in the “market place” will address concrete Nigerian existential problems. It is pragmatic and prescriptive. By raising the simple questions: why is this situation so?, or what ought to be the case?, and applying the philosophical attitude in addressing the Nigerian condition by contribution to public debate is enough to ignite the process of change. Many problems confront Nigerians: the problem of how to organize or restructure Nigerian Society, the problem of equitable and just distribution of the nations’ resources, poor leadership, the problem of corruption in governance, poverty and illiteracy of the people, the issue of national development, the problems of disease and adequate health care, youth restiveness and violence, unemployment, poor social and political culture, poor infrastructure and social services, problems of scientific and technological development, environmental pollution, problems of justice and the Nigerian legal system, materialism, religion and issues of religious intolerance, and so on are all legitimate issues of philosophical interest concerning which the Nigerian professional philosopher ought to contribute and apply his professional skills. By demystifying philosophy and participating in the “market place”, ie addressing concrete Nigerian existential problems in his research and teaching, the professional philosopher in Nigeria will gain recognition for his efforts in National development, attract a large appreciative audience for his discipline and establish his relevance. Rather than bother about the *“Concept of ego in J.P. Sartre’s Existentialism”* he should be concerned about say, *“Violence in the Niger Delta of Nigeria: Philosophical Perspectives”* or with

“Religious Fanaticism-causes, consequences and Remedies” (Iwe: 2000). The professional philosopher may also look at issues that arise from our traditional cultural practices.

The point made here is not that the professional philosopher in Nigeria should limit himself only to problems or issues generated within the Nigerian socio-cultural conditions and not be concerned about subject-matters that have universal relevance, rather the point made is that every philosophy in contemporary times ought to address a problem which has practical relevance and implications. Even though the philosophy proposed does not resolve the problems or issues at stake it would open new insights and new perspectives to the issue in question. As Bertrand Russell observes, “Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubt which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom” (Russell; 1974: 91). I have recently done two journal papers with the titles. *The concept of Globalization: A Conceptual Clarification* (2003) and *The concept of Terrorism: clarification and dimensions* (2003) which are forthcoming. These are issues of universal relevance which have practical implications and consequences for us as Nigerians. I have in another forthcoming essay made *“A case for the abolition of capital punishment in Nigeria”* (2003).

One other point must be made here. The traditional idea that “philosophy bakes no bread” is mistaken. Bertrand Russell expresses this erroneous sentiment when he writes that,

... we must first free our minds from the prejudices of what are wrongly called “practical men”. The “Practical” man, as this word is often used, is one who recognises only material needs, who realizes that men must have food for the body, but is oblivious of the necessity of providing food for the mind. If all men were well of, if poverty and disease had been reduced to their lowest possible point, there would still remain much to be done to produce a valuable society; and even in the existing world the goods of the mind are at least as important as the goods of the body (Russell, 1974: 89).

Russell then declares, “it is exclusively among the goods of the mind that the value of philosophy is to be found; and only those who are not indifferent to these goods can be persuaded that the study of philosophy is not a waste of time” (1974 : 89 – 90).

Whereas Russell could afford to pontificate about the value of “goods of the mind” in Britain of his time, the Nigerian student of these times is concerned about how his studies will lead him

to gain employment. The “market-place” philosophy explicitly recognises the need to persuade students concerned about employment that the cultural perception of philosophy’s irrelevance is mistaken. The “market-place” philosophy necessarily stresses the utilitarian aspects of the study. Consequently, I recommend that the teaching of philosophy needs to be reconceived along the lines I propose to develop.

How to Teach Philosophy for The “Market Place”

The first consideration for professional philosophers, teachers of the subject, is to find ways to “spruce up” the course to make it more relevant exciting and enjoyable for students particularly at the introductory level, while still philosophically rigorous. We must note that the overall purpose of the study of philosophy for the non-major philosophers at the General studies level and the philosophy “majors” is to try and develop in the students the actual facility and skill by engaging in philosophical argumentation, analysis and criticism.

There is need for a fundamental overhaul of the curriculum. There will still be research and teaching on basic areas like logic, epistemology, metaphysics and ethics but more attention must be paid to interdisciplinary areas like philosophy of education, law, language, history, science, mathematics, art, social sciences, religion, medicine and medical ethics, and so on and issues that have contemporary relevance in these disciplines. The teacher must exhibit dynamism and innovativeness in his choice of these issues.

We must note that an important function of philosophy is to foster inter- disciplinary perspectives. Every discipline generates some essentially philosophical questions about itself, and many questions about relations among different disciplines are also philosophical. Both in exploring the interrelations among other disciplines and in examining their methods of inquiry and their results, philosophy fulfils a unique and important role as a metadiscipline. This is why I propose a greater emphasis and focus on the interdisciplinary approach or strategy of teaching philosophy, that is, the cultivation or inculcation of the ability of the student of philosophy of clear, logical and critical analysis of concepts and issues that are generated in these other disciplines and their interrelations. This is what will make the student a “jack of all trade” and if he has cultivated the facility adequately enough, a “master of all”.

G. O. Ozumba (2002) quotes R. J. Hirst as stating that, “the more one knows about other subjects, the better one is likely to make substantial progress in philosophy” (P. 20). Ozumba adds that,

Any reasonable advance in philosophical theory necessitates all sorts of evidence drawn from several fields. The more likely we are to know, the more likely we are to get a proper and well balanced view of reality. It is because of this that philosophy students are encouraged to take elective courses

from other departments (2002 : 20).

Chris Nwamuo affirms the need in contemporary times for the interdisciplinary approach. According to Nwamuo, “today the world is emphasizing interdisciplinary research, collaborative research and research partnerships...” (Nwamuo 2002:iv) Elsewhere, Nwamuo states, “as disciplines in the humanities leap-frog conventional boundaries and inter lock, the emerging frontiers should afford lively space for stimulating debates, decision and final conclusion” (Nwamuo 2002:1).

We must note further that philosophy provides a unique and systematic approach to normative issues. It is sometimes thought that moral, social, aesthetic and other value questions do or can receive adequate treatment in the social sciences or perhaps in literature or history. These other disciplines, however, do not claim to deal with normative questions in the way philosophers do. Philosophers are generally competent to speak informatively on certain important aspects of public policy issues which have normative aspects. This is why interdisciplinarity must be emphasized.

This interdisciplinary approach must be adopted even for the non-philosophy “majors” at the General Studies level. The study of “Philosophy and Logic” must emphasize the integral connection of philosophy with other disciplines and its contribution to educational, cultural, environmental, social and political discussion. The study of Logic must go with training in critical thinking. The course known as Introduction to Logic in the University of Calabar, for instance, ought to be redesignated “Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking.” Similarly the study of “Philosophical Analysis” must be expanded to include studies in Logical argumentation. The course may then be redesignated “Application of philosophical analysis and logical Argumentation.” The exposition of Fallacies, their types, how to identify and avoid them, and Definitions, the nature, purpose, types, methods and rules of definition ought to form major aspects of the content of “Logic and Critical Thinking” as well as “Philosophical Analysis and Logical Argumentation.” These two courses are fundamental for the “market place” philosopher and should constitute core areas for philosophy major and non-philosophy major students.

The study of African Philosophy in its various branches and the history of African philosophy must also be taken more seriously and given greater attention and emphasis. C. B. Okolo (1993) defines African Philosophy simply as “critical thinking on the African experience (past or traditional and modern or contemporary” (p.13). He identifies the main branches of African Philosophy as African Logic, African Epistemology, African Ethics, African Metaphysics, African Political Philosophy and African Epistemology. Okolo also posits that the study of African philosophy must also include studies in Departmental African Philosophies (P18). In the main, these branches of Departmental African Philosophy are Philosophy of African Language, Philosophy of African Religion, Philosophy of African History, Philosophy of African Education and Philosophy of African culture. (See Okolo; 1993: P18-21). The study

of African philosophy must be spread throughout the four years of undergraduate studies in a Nigerian University and aspects must be introduced to the non-philosophy majors at the General studies level.

Some latest dimensions of philosophy need to be introduced to the students as part of the interdisciplinary re-focus which I advocate. Courses such as the Philosophy of Feminism, Philosophy of Mind, the Philosophy of Technology, Philosophy of Theatre, Philosophy of Development, Environmental Philosophy, Philosophy of Globalization or International Relations, Philosophy of Journalism, Journalistic Ethics, as well as Business Ethics need to be introduced as part of philosophical studies. The overall purpose of the study is to try and develop in the student the actual facility by engaging in philosophical argumentation, analysis and criticism by using classical (traditional) philosophical figures and theories as models to address issues of contemporary relevance.

There needs to be a de-emphasis of the history of western philosophy as currently taught. Lectures can cover a representative sample of major traditional, classical philosophical positions, theories and personalities on the one hand and still be made relevant, exciting and enjoyable for the students. Students of philosophy in Nigeria are treated to an overdose of the metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of history of Descartes, Berkeley, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Bentham, Mill and other Western philosophers.

Too much class time is occupied with questions like “What did Hegel mean by ...?” and “What was your third criticism of utilitarianism?” While such an approach may have paedetic value its relevance is nonetheless questionable. The students must be encouraged to develop independent thinking ability and form opinions of their own. Pedagogical techniques, including small group discussions, debates, films and “clever” essay examination need to be employed to illustrate the difference between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. Also practical computer and information technology (IT) training needs to be made compulsory. The students may be asked to go on a compulsory period of attachment in a computer school and show evidence of successful completion of the training before resuming their philosophical studies.

The point made here is that philosophy must be “problem focused” and attempt to be “problem solving” in socially important problems and establish its integrative function with other disciplines. By so doing philosophy will affirm its relevance, significance and value with the fresh insights and perspectives it reveals to these other disciplines. The philosopher’s skills and attitude which makes him far-sighted and extra perceptive will earn him recognition and respect. The non-philosophy major groomed in the interdisciplinary approach and who has properly cultivated the critical skills and attitude of Philosophy will bring this to bear on his major disciplines and then ultimately come to the realization that habitually and persistently he must keep an open-mind and rethink the possibilities of his discipline, he might well come to accept as legitimate some new ways of relating to other disciplines –ways which would be consistent

with and employ insights of the traditions of his major discipline but still would allow a more fruitful complementary existence.

The philosophy major properly groomed in the interdisciplinary approach to studying philosophy and having adequately cultivated the necessary skills and attitude is pragmatic, dynamic, mobile and versatile. He it is who can “bake bread”. It is to this calibre of trained philosophers that Ozumba states, “can work any where” (Ozumba;2002:3). Ozumba’s work, *A Philosophy Handbook for Beginners: Value Application and Career Opportunities for Philosophers* is a “must read” for Nigerian undergraduates of philosophy.

Conclusion

So far I have distinguished between “Ivory tower” Philosophy and “market place” Philosophy. Ivory tower Philosophy is academic Philosophy which insists that Philosophy must be done in the traditional professional manner with systematicity, analytic rigour, logical coherence, and technicality, mainly addressing problems and issues in the classical traditions of Philosophy. “Market place” Philosophy, on the other hand, though not discountenancing the need for rigorousness and systematicity, maintains that academic Philosophy can be done in the non-traditional manner and made to address concrete existential problems within our cultural circumstance which encourages the professional philosopher to participate in public debate of issues of contemporary relevance. I have also maintained that “ivory tower” philosophy is the reason for the isolation, alienation, marginalization and perceived irrelevance of academic philosophy today. I posit that professionalism in philosophy and its teaching should be reconceived and restructured. I propose that the interdisciplinary strategy for teaching philosophy should be promoted so as to establish the integrative function of philosophy and its integral connection with other disciplines and ultimately interdisciplinary integration. This approach, I maintain, should also stress the utilitarian aspects of the study of philosophy.

A possible fear that may be expressed or a criticism that may be advanced against the strategy which I recommend for professionalism in Philosophy and its teaching is that Philosophy may lose its identity or autonomy as a discipline. My response to that will be that, such fear is unfounded. Professional autonomy will be maintained by Philosophy’s unique and systematic approach to normative issues. But can we not tolerate some loss of professional autonomy if that will take Philosophy to rejoin the world, and participate in the “market place”?

This has been basically an exercise in professional self-criticism or what may be called “meta-philosophy”. The reactions of my colleagues are eagerly awaited.

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