

Chapter 2

Philosophers and the Press in the Collaborative Task of Demystifying Philosophy Through Increasing Public Awareness

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ABSTRACT

The low level of public awareness about philosophy makes the public hold and share wrong notions about it. This study makes a case for significant collaboration between philosophers and the press in the task of increasing public awareness about philosophy, towards demystifying philosophy, righting the wrong thoughts about philosophy and philosophers, and rousing the deserving interest of the public to philosophy. Drawing from focus group discussion, observation and intuition, and secondary data, the study reveals that public awareness about philosophy is currently very low. Philosophers and the press ought to collaborate meaningfully and change the widespread wrong notions about philosophy cum philosophers. The study concludes that once philosophers and the press collaborate significantly in creating public awareness about philosophy cum philosophers, the public would change their perception, attitude, wrong thoughts, and shared falsehoods about the discipline, and also start seeing philosophers in good light.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, public awareness about philosophy and philosophers has remained low or poor. To state in brief here, this study argues that public awareness about philosophy and philosophers is currently very low. Consequently, most members of the public know little or nothing about philosophy and philosophers. They only keep assuming this and that about philosophy and philosophers. In fact, the way most

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of them conceive philosophy, as a discipline, is the way they conceive philosophers, its professionals. Being ignorant of what philosophy really entails and what philosophers do and who they really are, such members of the public hold and share negative thoughts and falsehoods about philosophy, as a field of study/human endeavor, and philosophers, as professionals. This thought is echoed by Besong and Robert (2018) too. In fact, most members of the public remain ignorant of the realities and misconceptions about the field and its professionals. The reasons for this backdrop are not farfetched. These include the evil of ignorance; the evil of mind concealment; misconceptions and wrong perception; the popularized and shared wrong notions, tales, myths and falsehoods about philosophy and philosophers; and the low public awareness about this field as well as its professionals; among others.

Given the foregoing, it is imperative to make a change in that direction. To do so, a significant collaboration between the philosophers and the press is imperative. The aim is to increase public awareness about philosophy and philosophers and get rid of all what not that are held and shared about philosophy and philosophers in error. That is the advocacy advanced by this study, with a view to calling for meaningful scholastic works, socialization and pedagogic and media contents that would breach the current gap between philosophy and the media, on one hand, and philosophy and the public, on the other. The study seeks to show how philosophers and the press can collaborate in the task of creating high level of awareness among the public in order to change their commonly held and shared wrong perception, views, thoughts, tales and myths about philosophy as well as philosophers. Considering the implications of these wrongs, this paper will call for a harmonious collaboration between philosophers and the press. It hopes that the collaboration would bring about a new world order in the fields of philosophy and media and communication as well as the society at large. In the course of the analysis, the study will prove the degree of public awareness about philosophy/philosophers in Africa– especially Nigeria, where most members of the public largely misconceive philosophy as well as philosophers as being mystical, immoral, blasphemous, too radical and confusing, and what have you.

Finally, the study will also demonstrate the extent to which the collaboration between philosophers and the press could increase the level of public awareness among non-philosopher members of the public, who continuously misconceive philosophy/philosophers and consequently dread philosophy, hate and label philosophers variously and poison the minds of others around them against philosophy and philosophers. Thus, in the long run, the study will show that the ageing failure of philosophers and the press to collaborate and take up the thankless task of duly creating high level of public awareness about philosophy and philosophers has been the bane of the widespread misconceptions, tales, myths and falsehoods about philosophy and philosophers across the ages. Thus, to change these, professionals of these two fields must unceasingly create and sustain avenues for a meaningful collaboration between the two fields as well as them, the professionals of the fields. They have to rightly key into the existential inevitable interdependence between them, which constitutes the avenue for harmonizing their existential opposites, which are their missing links (Asouzu, 2007; Ijiomah, 2014).

CONCEPTUALIZING PHILOSOPHER

Etymologically, the concept of philosopher describes ‘a lover of wisdom’. Pythagoras was the person who coined and used the word ‘philosophy’, when he called himself a lover of wisdom (Abakare & Okeke, 2016, p. 4). The philosopher is one who loves wisdom; who seeks to know this and that about the Supreme Being, the universe, substance, knowledge, humans, nonhumans and all existential phenomena.

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