

Critical Thinking: Towards an Entrepreneurial Freelance Writing

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Abstract: Philosophy as a discipline amongst other things provides the needed skills for rigor in critical thinking on a wide range of issues both of ancient and contemporary concerns. These it achieves using the instrumentality of logic from an ontological framework. Her unique and painstaking training opens up the students to independence in reasoning outside the box with clarity of purpose and forthrightness. In a world of information and communication technology at its best, there are enormous potentials to be explored in the area of compelling and engaging prowess in writing especially since there is a dearth of white collar jobs. Thus this work attempted to show in a lucid manner, how critical reflective thinking with the right mix, can be an entrepreneurial hub.

Keywords: Thinking, Entrepreneurship, Critical, Writing, Theory, Education, Truth.

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I. INTRODUCTION

New comers into the discipline of Philosophy as a course of study are often agitated by what they can do with the degree in the labour market. They are the more perturbed since the discipline seem not to have a clear cut description as regards its career pathway unlike the case with the first-order disciplines such as Law, Engineering, Medicine, Agriculture and Education amongst others.

Philosophy it must be noted is a second-order discipline that has a lot of application to first-order concerns that engages its practitioners and keeps their intellectual mill grinding. Though very sadly, formal and institutionalized education has made the acquisition of a degree a meal ticket; whereas education as opined by Fagothey (1976) should be seen as involving “any process of training the physical, mental and moral powers of human being to render him fit for the duties of life”.

The dearth of white collar jobs on a global scale has made entrepreneurial studies the rave of the moment as basic skills must complement formal training. This is to ensure that graduates of tertiary institutions are empowered to be their own bosses even as government must create the needed infrastructures and a comfortable environment for these to thrive.

Philosophy as a discipline is replete with a vast array of traditional branches that can engender serious entrepreneurial engagement. Some of these branches are Logic, Metaphysics (Ontology), Epistemology, Ethics and Aesthetics (Value Theory). It is a field where rational inquiry is made on a wide range of issues such as we are currently engaged in. There is a lot that philosophy as a discipline can do in practical terms as regards to *baking bread* even though that is not its ultimate concern. Nevertheless, this work will give us some insights into this claim.

II. A CURSORY LOOK AT CRITICAL THINKING

It is imperative to begin by stating categorically that man is a thinking being with a rational faculty. It was Rene Descartes’ a prominent French philosopher who popularized this truth through his systematic and practical approach culminating into his methodic doubt from whence his *cogito ergo sum* “I think therefore I am” was born.

Plato, a contemporary of Socrates was a rationalist who believes in the primacy of reason; hence he came up with his distinction between the world of the *sensible* and the world of *form*. The world of form is basically a world of idea where things are static; it is a world of thought known through forms as in the case with logic and mathematics leading to axioms or self evident truths. Critical thinking is a subset of logic; and logic is a very important traditional branch of philosophy that aims at:

Making explicit the rules by which inferences may be drawn, rather than to study the actual reasoning processes that people use, which may or may not conform to those rules...if we ask why we need to obey the rules, the most general answer is that if we do not we contradict ourselves (Blackburn 2005).

We shall see the importance of following the rules of logic in the area of good writing as we proceed. But it is important we state that the word critical is synonymous with “judging” or being “able to discern”. It is also seen as having to do with fault finding especially when not in conformity to the ideal of reason.

Criticism can be constructive or destructive, positive or negative. To be critical is to search out for contradictions; hence in doing that, there will be an admixture of conceptualizing, analysis, synthesizing, evaluation, open-mindedness, reflection, clarity, reason, interpretation, purposefulness, explanation and so on.

Critical thinking therefore is that special inherent ability to think independently, clearly and rationally. Doing this will entail understanding the connection between ideas, logic, arguments, contradictions and inconsistencies in reasoning and the place of justifying beliefs so that the hallmark of critical thinking is to bring about solution to problems by transcending appearance to the forms of things deducing consequences from the known to the unknown. All of these are made possible from the study of logic as “the science of the laws of thought and reasoning” (Copi 1986).

Uduigwomen (1998) have identified six types of thinking, and they are: Autistic thinking, (shaped by our inner feelings, motives and attitudes – imagination), Realistic thinking (directed toward achieving external goal), creative thinking (leading to new information), problem – solving (targeted at solving difficult problem), concept formation (organizing task/objects according to some general characteristic), pathological thinking (classifying disturbances in personality which hamper straight thinking).

Aristotle also enumerated what is known as the laws of thought. The laws of thought according to Ekarika (1986) are first principles or axioms that underlie all human thinking processes and discourse. These laws of thought are the law of identity, the law of contradiction, the law of excluded middle. These laws according to Uduigwomen (1998):

Concern things, relations and properties and so on in the natural world...but because they are sometimes formulated as truths about propositions, they are all tautologies. So converted, they mean respectively: if a proposition is true, then it is true; no proposition is both true and not true; every proposition is either true or false.

Critical thinking provides the rules needed for clear thinking applied to any particular issue. It accords the opportunity for independent thinking and abstraction. It is very useful when applied to research or facts finding. It is a skill that is not common with a lot of persons. It is highly ranked and highly priced. Thus White and Billings (2008) were right on point when they declared that “the freedom to think for ourselves and the freedom to present and defend our views rank among the most precious rights that we as individuals possess...”. Let us now move over to considering what writing is.

III. WRITING AND ITS TYPES

Words and ideas are usually communicated through either verbal or written channels. It is more than just scribbling down words or figures. Writing is purposeful and it involves style and creativity. It is a very powerful means of communicating our thoughts, advancing our arguments and a very strong tool of persuasion. Talking about styles, Coupland (2007) avers that:

Style refers to a way of doing something...it has social meaning. The same is true for styles in all other life-domains. Cultural resonances of time, place and people attach to styles of dress and personal appearance in general, to styles in the making of material goods, to styles of social institutional practice, perhaps even to styles of thinking.

Suffice it to say that everybody can write; but what distinguishes one writer from another is among several things, style. Style gives one a kind of identity and uniqueness that makes what is written a delight to read. Writing therefore, denotes a whole lot of mix one of which is the power and choice of words. An example suffices here by Lukhele (2009) who writes that:

If there is one phrase that captures the irony that is South Africa, it is the cliché, “black-power, white money, black poverty”. This is a quintessence of the carnivalesque, and one that bothers on the vulgar.

We can see the emotional angle of writing coupled with the force of words in the afore-quoted especially in the cliché. This is one type of writing known as persuasive writing. This is considered a biased type of writing which often takes the opinion of the writer on the issue being discussed. We also have expository writing which intends to inform, describe, explain or define what is being discussed.

Another type of writing is descriptive writing which employs a lot of visual, words or pictures to help a person see what is being written about using metaphors, similes and symbols. Another type of writing is narrative writing. This is often employed in novels, poetry and biographies. The last but not the least type of writing is creative writing. This is where ideas and imagination finds a confluence. This type of writing is always engaging, thought provoking, entertaining and interesting to read. Short stories, novels, plays and poetry

fall into this category and this is one area that is a gold mine to entrepreneurs as the target audiences are many. We shall talk some more about this angle; but in all, writing is the ability to communicate thought and ideas in written form. And as Mbat and Archibong (2012) have noted:

We cannot talk about the properties of the external world using ordinary language unless we can devise proper means of communication...in the world which we live there are a lot of complexities, paradoxes and contradictions that have to be reduced to the level of our understanding via language.

IV. ON THE LOCUS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship as a philosophy, a movement or an ideology is receiving greater global acceptance because of the reality of the times we are living in occasioned by population growth outweighing the availability of jobs especially as it is created by the state. More than ever before, the reality is dawning on us that state and institutionalized education or what we might call formal education is too lopsided. This lopsidedness is a creation of our policy framers and makers alongside our educationist. Formal education is now too formal that those who acquire it see themselves in a certain class with certain expectations so that it becomes a right for them to get jobs befitting of their status.

Most holders of degree see it as degrading to abandon their degree for something else. For instance, there was this young man that the Nigerian Television Authority discovered. He was a graduate of Electrical Engineering who couldn't find a job for years; so he decided to go into entrepreneurship by frying "bean cake". When viewer's opinions were sample, majority of the respondents commented that it was a disgrace for the young man to have abandoned his degree in Engineering to be frying "bean cake". But they forget that the man was being useful to himself as that job puts food on his table and makes him his own boss. Above all, he loved what he was doing so he despised the shame.

When Karl Marx talked about class struggle, little did we know that formal education will perpetuate it, as there is a very wide gap between those who have formal educational training and those who acquire informal education through learning of skills and trade outside the walls of a formal school; the irony however is that, a lot of entrepreneurs today are the one's employing the so call degree holders who run errands for them. This is why we cannot but agree with Ivan Illich (1972) who noted that:

The de-schooling of society implies a recognition of the two faced nature of learning. An insistence on skill drill alone could be a disaster; equal emphasis must be placed on other kinds of learning.

The emphasis on entrepreneurial education though coming late is nevertheless the right direction to take as education must be comprehensive and total. It should be able to make a total man who is armed with the right knowledge to make meaning of his existence. This is why Plato prized the guardians so highly in his division of classes above the artisans and the soldiers. The guardians are the custodian of intellectual knowledge fit to be kings and rulers because of the quality of their training. This imply that educational training should make a total and complete man who will be useful in many ways in the society; to make right decisions and choices; to help in being creative and innovative.

V. ENTREPRENEURIAL HUB IN FREELANCE WRITING

Entrepreneurial education is more often than not, a practical venture. In this domain, theory does not count much. All that is required is to show in practical terms, the workability and profitability of a particular business idea. This position though seemingly factual, is fraught with error upon a closer critical examination. The truth must be told that there has to be a balance between practice and theory. It was Albert Einstein who once said that "he who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards a ship without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast".

Every practice has an underlying theory. In fact a theory precedes practice. A theory is a formal set of ideas (abstract or generalized thinking) that is intended to explain why something happens or exists. In other words, every invention or discovery has an idea behind it and this idea forms the basis for explaining the practical aspect of that discovery. One begins to wonder how far an entrepreneur can go if the theoretical basis of her ideas are neglected. For instance, before one ventures into any business, there must be what is called stock taking. This stock taking is to ensure that the goal(s) or ultimate end of that venture succeeds. Entrepreneurship is not a haphazard venture; it requires pain staking thinking and calculation.

In matters of knowledge acquisition, we have two extreme or what we may call a paradigm. They are scientific knowledge (practical) and logical knowledge (theoretical). By virtue of their individual nature, they both complement each other. Writing along this line, Archibong (2014) opines that:

Theories then become the gateway for discovering the laws of nature thereby unraveling nature's complexities, and science is theory laden. This means that what the scientist sees is coloured by his theory.

It is important to stress this point as a lack of understanding of it is what causes disparity oftentimes, between science and technologically related disciplines, from the liberal arts. And this truth is indeed one very

vital contribution of this work. However, let us proceed to show how critical thinking can aid in building a career in freelance writing.

Firstly, a freelance writer is one who works on a self-employed basis harping on every opportunity seen to make ends meet in the area of writing. Such a one can write an autobiography, a biography, short stories, scripts for movies, poems, reviews or engage in political/social constructive criticism, and so on for a fee. Having been taught the art and science of critical thinking, the writer learns to:

Identify an argument's conclusion and the credibility of its premises... introduced to new terms such as "valid" or "sound" arguments, and... cautioned to spot and avoid invalid or fallacious inferences... understanding causal correlations, reasoning by analogy or applying standards to assess available evidence in support of a position (Fowler 2008).

Armed with the tool for critical thinking, the writer will find the following tips useful. They are:

i. *Passion for Writing:* There so many businesses that can be undertaken by an entrepreneur; the most important asset is to have an unflinching love for what one does. A person may be very good in critical thinking but his passion may not be in writing but in marketing products or rendering services. Passion for what one does is like oil that lubricates the wheel of a business.

ii. *Research Minded:* Sometimes it is not enough having a passion for something. There has to be a commensurate effort at searching and finding out new information about such a business; this is because information or knowledge is power and the more knowledge gathered concerning a particular business, the easier it becomes to break new grounds for success. This is why we often hear of a mentor and protégé in business.

iii. *Carving a Niche:* Most writers are known by their style of writing and expression. It pays in writing to keep it simple but real. Be identified by a unique way of communicating thoughts and ideas; something like a signature tune.

iv. *Being open to New Possibilities:* Here innovation becomes the watch word. A good writer, despite carving a niche should not be stereotyped. Such a one should be adventurous, breaking barriers and taking new territories. For instance, if a writer is acclaimed for writing short stories, such a one should not let an opportunity pass by when he finds an opening to write a biography. This can be done through net-working and collaboration with others.

v. *Developing the Entrepreneurial Spirit:* An entrepreneur is one who swims against the tide of setback, delay, discouragement and disappointment. Such a one understands that there are opposing forces fighting to hinder the business success. Businesses are not grown overnight; it takes a lot of determination, hard work, focus and positive mental attitude.

One very frequent complain about would-be be entrepreneurs is often that there are no capital to start up a business idea. However, one need not bother so much about funds to start up a business; what is foremost is that there is an idea; and an idea is worth so much more than capital. We have heard stories of people who put down their ideas in writing and that idea eventually met with opportunity.

A would-be entrepreneur must start where he is; from the known to the unknown. It is also important we realize that we are living in a world that is ICT driven. It doesn't cost so much to discover genuine opportunities on the internet or to create a blog or put up an advertisement; since advertisements according to Goddard (2002) are "forms of discourse which make a powerful contribution to how we construct our identities".

VI. CONCLUSION

From our discussion so far, it is glaring that there are a whole lot of mix that informs entrepreneurship especially in the area of writing. The points discussed here are not exhaustive; but it is a part that makes up the whole. It should be pointed out here that one aim of critical thinking or reasoning is the discovery of truth. Truth in this context is priceless and has value in itself and for other purposes; it also has both theoretical and practical utilities. And as Oke and Amadu (2006) will say:

...we consider truth so important in our lives that we spend a lot of time, money, energy, both individually and collectively, in our bid to possess it; we want it for practical purposes as much as we want it for the satisfaction of our curiosity and for its own sake.

The entrepreneur is seeking for truth in the area of business venture, because when the truth is found, it opens up the business and brings about lots of benefit and satisfaction. Both science and philosophy searches for

truth but from different perspective and reference frame. This is why interdisciplinary approach to research seems to be the rave of the moment in the academics.

As we conclude, it must be reiterated again that the discipline of philosophy of which, logic is a branch and critical thinking is a subset is replete with a lot of rules for clear thinking about the truth of reality. Once these rules are understood and applied, it brings about the desired result. This paper therefore, has been an attempt to show that there are enormous potentials to be tapped from the discipline of philosophy in relation to a business and its owners; hence we recommend an investment in critical thinking for already and would-be entrepreneurs by the stimulation from this work.

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