

A REVIEW OF METHODOLOGY: A FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY BY DR JUDE IFEANYI ONEBUNNE

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This piece published in 2018, is a work of nine chapters and 48 pages. In it, the author- Dr. Jude Ifeanyi Onebunne discusses extensively the problem of methodology in African philosophy. He began by defining what he considers the moments, and then, method itself. He considers method as definitive demand of philosophy and distinguishes the different methods evident in the historical evolution of philosophy. Shifting from universal concerns, he delves into the issue of methodology in African philosophy, beginning however, with consideration of the value of African philosophy and then, the methodological moments in African philosophy.

The author addresses the problem of methodology in African philosophy, which like the issue of trends, dates back to the period when some African thinkers began to question the perspective that traditional African beliefs and worldviews, as embedded in pre-colonial African cultures, constituted African philosophy. It is, therefore, not surprising that the classification of the developments in African philosophy by scholars as Ethno-philosophy, Universalist, Eclectic, Hermeneutic, Nationalistic trends or schools, etc., are largely based on the methodologies that were employed by their proponents. So also the denial of philosophy to Africans by some Africans and Western thinkers is also based on the issue of methodology, precisely on the belief that philosophy everywhere should have a universal methodology.

From the author's specification of methodological moments in both African and Western philosophy, he agrees with Prof. Ozumba that methodology cannot be the same because of the varied nature of opportunities among peoples. For the gift of nature varies from person to person, from locality to locality, from continent to continent. This being so, people can only use their naturally endowed gifts to meet their needs. To the extent that these gifts differ, the approach to the provision of solutions to these problems or need will differ as well. In essence, the argument is that our thoughts are fashioned along certain lines depending not only on our needs, but on our abilities. And as time goes on, depending on the path we have charted and followed, the divergence in terms of approach to meeting our needs will continue to widen.... We must not lose sight of the fact that a lot has happened in the world. Ranging from cross-cultural borrowing, wars, slavery, colonization

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involving deprivations, subjugation and necessarily the change of destinies of peoples of different localities.

Thus, the cultural differences found among human beings accounts for the differences found in their methodology, and thus, the methodological moments in African philosophy. To deny the differences in methodology is to deny the differences in worldview and culture. This is true, at least to the extent that we are not homogenous in many things that have determinant powers; thus, it would be impractical to think that we can solve our problems the same way. All philosophies, according to Afolayan, are the natural products of cultures. That is, there is no escaping the “philosophical” in a people’s experience once they begin to confront their environments. Philosophy, therefore, becomes a means of interrogating their relationship with their surroundings together with the various fundamental issues and problems they throw up for them. Not minding the differences in methodology in philosophy, there are particular elements that must be present in that which is philosophical, no matter where it is done or how it is done.

The greatness and power of a written work is attained when the writer achieves union and trust with the reader who then becomes ready to be drawn deep into an unfamiliar territory, walking in borrowed literary shoes so to speak, towards a deeper understanding of the new and revealing. In this and so many other respects, Rev. Fr. Dr. Jude Ifeanyi Onebunne’s: *Methodology: A Fundamental Problem in African Philosophy*, has succeeded marvelously as a welcome addition to the growing library of serious critical analysis of the issue of methodology in African philosophy
