1C. A First Blueprint for a Critical Format:
Ways and Means for Critiquing All Forms of Philosophical Positioning?

The Pursuit of Philosophy as a Discipline

Volume III

The Prescience of Philosophy as a Discipline:

Beyond Criticism:

How Should Philosophy
Progressively Perfect an Ongoing Critique of its Discipline,
And,
Through Such Constructive Insight,
Perceptively Appreciate the Nature of the Human Condition??
A Critique of Theory *versus* A Theory of Critique:

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1C. A First Blueprint for a Critical Format: Ways and Means for Critiquing Malformed Philosophical Positions*

0. Pre-Introduction

As philosophers, as practitioners of criticism and purveyors of progressive forms of insightful constructiveness, we could take a leaf from the rhetorical style of a philosopher like St Augustine or apply the relentless, crushing dialectics of a thorough philosopher like Nagarjuna. Or, instead, but not recommended, we could imitate the superficial artfulness of any well-honed debater and promote the reperceived merits of any position, however comical or inane, or, adopt a position set in concrete and with an ideological flourish set about converting those around you… those of you who do not possess the good sense to realize that walking a middle path, between extreme views, is ever the better direction to take. In lived-reality, extremes are impossible to either encounter, recognize or engage! In contrast, the adept critic, both skilled in rhetoric and replete with integrity, would clearly state their philosophical objectives, poke fun at any opposition who would want to argue otherwise, mercilessly deconstruct any foolish person whose positioning was not in an alignment with their own and endlessly shame the opposition for being so wayward in their philosophical thinking. At the hands of such a skillful operator, even your own words would be used against you… turning philosophical criticism, as an art form, almost into a blood sport… Emulating the methods of the best, let us purposefully engage those whose thinking stands in need of rectification and renormalization. With attuned insightfulness, let the critical philosopher systematically pursue defective forms of reasoning whilst also dialectically seeking the same ongoing process of reformation, or more correctly, self-reformation. Seeking to be effective, efficient and efficacious in our existential engagement with others… albeit ever as a work in progress…. (0)

1. Introduction

Criticism is a two-edged sword! The critical cuts both ways – demolishing what is not in deep-alignment with our thoughtful appreciation of lived-experience and advancing what provisionally appears to be in an alignment with our appreciation of lived-experience. Hopefully, either inducing a partial retreat or tentatively promoting some small instance of progress? Critically demoting both positive and negative formats, and, critically promoting both positive and negative formats. Like denying the factual existence of ‘a bowl with apples’ and ‘a bowl without apples’, or, affirming the factual existence of ‘a bowl with apples’ and ‘a bowl without apples’… but treating this metaphor as an analogy, and as a rhetorical device, but not running with it, or any other, beyond the level of its empirical or literal or practical employment. Indeed, as well, by not knowingly transgressing beyond the limits of all forms of theoretical deployment or critical redeployment… whilst ever alert to moments of creative-insightfulness whenever they should occur…. (1)

* For latest version of this text: www.homestead.com/noelshomepage/noels homepage5.html

The following first format is a blueprint for conducting a critically enacted critique of both your opponent and your own current thinking. (2)

To begin, I will discuss what is needed in a critical approach, in the formation of a critical philosophy. (3)

Then, I will apply such an approach by looking at the phenomenological and descriptive limits of metaphorical thinking as a critical tool. (4)

Doing likewise, in a rhetorical vein, by pointing out our need to note the prescriptive limits of hermeneutical considerations. (5)

Following suit by invoke proscriptive, existential forms of criticism by exposing the consequences of such malformed positioning. Of course, giving praise when it is due, but, equally, either ridiculing with humour or castigating with satire the demonstrated defects of your opponent's pretense at philosophical positioning. (6)

Last, as a provisional conclusion, let me articulate the bare bones of a 'relatively systematic, critically oriented approach' by essentially outlining just what is required for the well-disciplined exercise of a wide-ranging philosophical critique. Albeit as a work in progress, but, also as a thorough format for the application of such a critique..! (7)

2. Defining the Contours of a Critical Philosophy

Now, some philosophers would argue that it is best not to have a position of your own, in any shape or form. But, that is just a metaphorical guideline. Positions are unavoidable but should be able to be entertained in a sensible fashion, albeit provisionally! We may safely hold that 'the ultimate is beyond argument' and desist from the overcommitment of being an absolutist, and, just as consistently, resist being a relativist in whose negative nihilism you would hypocritically treat all things as equal by never observing this lack of commitment. As pointless as arguing that 'I met someone yesterday on the stairs who just was not there, and, who I found not to be there again today'. Avoiding such extremes, we may reason that 'our representations of the world are ever a work in progress'. By evidentially supported facts, good arguments, and arriving at sound conclusions the world, hopefully, is made more amenable to our interrogation of our understanding of it ineluctable sense of presence, but, that our answers are already partially answered through the very formulation of our questions point towards the possibilities of such resolutions. Making progress, if achieved, small increment by small increment. In the process avoiding so-called First Philosophies and Last Philosophies whose entrails are better processed by theologians paid to inspect such auguries. Not completely discounting the worth of such edifices but relegating them to either mystical, metaphorical or mythical domains outside the purview of a critical philosopher. So, let us begin. By what recipe can a sound, working philosophy be critically constructed that is also able, at the same time, to demolish the inane ramblings dangerously disseminated by less worthwhile adversaries..?? (8)

Ideas have a power, a sense of purpose that can either help us prosper or hinder our passage through this world at large, this world-of-life, because only through our collective cooperation with(-)others can we find our true freedom to be with(-)others..![1] (9)

Thence this need to be respectful of your opponent despite your wielding the metaphorical sharpness of your critical tools of trade… (10)

3. What are the Essentials that Make for a Well-Constructed Critical Philosophy?

As noted, the critical cuts both ways, either demoting or advancing. In our wanderings through the world we have the relative surety of a correlative form of insurance and assurance. Yes, we do make mistakes, but, we can always retrace our missteps to a point of relative cultural assurance where from there we can then begin again. Retracing our missteps to a point found to be less controversial in tenor and consensus. E.g., an historian might tentatively proffer a certain date for the occurrence of a certain event, and, over the course of their research, narrow that date down to possibly ascertaining the exact day in question. Just as no reputable historian would publicly question whether Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon as his signaling 'the start of a civil war'. At the end of the day, through progressive forms of historically arrived at consensus in any reputable discipline certain relative foundations exist in the expedition of that reputable discipline. Hence the insurance of retracing our steps back to a point of greater assurance, when necessary, even if all propositional constructions and its statements must ever remain as a provisional work in progress… despite the 'successful appearance' of taking on a definitive sense of positioning should that be seen to occur… (11)

That all positioning is arrived at through re(-)positioning (hence my concept of alignment through re(-)alignment). Collectively, we meet, first, redefined descriptions through re-de-mis-positioning as a form of phenomenological error correction; the mere represcription of repositioning through hermeneutic conformity with genres, narratives in play, etc; and, relatively radical re-positioning through proscriptive existential forms of re-alignment in line with the lived-consequences of lived-experience… (12)

A critically constructed enterprise should be ever left open to critical processes of assessment, meta-assessment and self-assessment. Moreover, in my opinion, a discipline should be constructed in such a manner that it is ever left open to both self-correction and self-corroboration. Moreover, consequentially, it should be able to exhibit a comparative improvement in our overall existential advancement with(-)others through an ongoing promotion of arbitrated forms of agreements as to how we are to better cooperate with

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[1] The formula '(-)' denotes either a triple reading of 're-de-mis-iteration (textually), conformal reiteration (meta-textually), and the relatively radical and potentially existential re-reading (non-textually) that results from processes of chaotically oriented re-iteration in direction, hopefully, with a positive existential complexion', or, 'the relatively non-existential 'x related to y' [as 'x y'] and the relatively existential x-related-to-y ['x-y']'. A determination of context should decide which reading is implied.

each other in this world at large since we can only find our freedom through(-)others as they, in turn, will find their freedom through(-)us… (13)

Furthermore, given that all identifications are correlatively engineered it follows that by following through on such dialectically manufactured linkages we should be able to consistently establish the semantic truth of those claims that can be accordingly reinforced through such positive forms of correlation. As noted, correlations can be found everywhere. In an empirical object, like that possessed by a non-virtual apple, I find a phenomenal-phenomenological[2] co-association of an apple-like roundness, an apple-like smell, an apple like colorations, an apple-like taste, and so on. Enough correlations to allow a dream apple to appear like a non-virtual apple, and, yet also differentiate the greater utility of the latter given that only a non-virtual apple will satiate pangs of physiological hunger. Just as the mere memory of an apple eaten in the past will also not satiate such a desire in the present even if that memory of satiation were to be imaginatively revisited. (14)

Correlations take an infinite number of correlative forms, and, can always be found there to hand to either confirm or dis-affirm our tentative positioning through critical processes of re(-)positioning. (15)

Hence our empirical explorations of the world and its formalization in the many fields of science. (16)

As philosophers we can do something similar by noting the economic correlativities engineered through intentionality and judgment (which I have argued is appreciated in trans-intentional terms of reference). Moreover, from a trans-intentional perspective (of judgmental appreciation) I have also argued that the distinctive world of values, hypothetically, comes in only six ordered flavours,[3] although, realistically, such facets enter into a variety of parallel permutations and combinations, and, where, on a deep level of transcendental entertainment, all judgment, ultimately, has but one truthful taste despite its expression through positive and negative formats of affirmation and negation. (17)

Judgment is a trans-conceptual appreciation of concepts. As a metaphor, ‘the transcendental machinery’ is economically engendered between the unobtainable polarities of phenomenal-phenomenological forms of gestalt focus and its concerns with the deposition of texts; hermeneutically oriented background fields operating with meta-textual

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[2] The expression ‘phenomenal-phenomenological’ in our phenomenological explorations includes the ‘phenomenal’ aspect in our interaction with representative phenomena because there is an irreducibility of objectivity of the intentional object because all correlativities cannot coincide perfectly implying the world cannot be perfectly appropriated, etc. Hence this aspect of the object that cannot be fully appreciated, etc. Moreover, this fact of our limited phenomenological life as lived within the overall life-world (and its plethora of life-worlds) must also be extended to both transcendental situatedness and subjectivity. Hence the limitations of a negative dialectic (entertained through phenomenological reductions to phenomenological reception of essential types of experience, and our not being able to proceed any further).

[3] Namely our need to note the distinctiveness of and accommodation between, atomic essentials; molecular essentials/aesthetic e/valuations; deontological e/valuations; pragmatical e/valuations; hermeneutical possibility; and ontical facticity. Hence the importance of an ordered philosophy here only touched on.

genres, narratives, etc; and, non-textual, existentially oriented simulations invoking co-associated forms of transcendental subjectivity. (18)

The model for this tripolar correlativity can be found in the Husserlian noetic-noematic correlativity between intentional processes and their intentional content in the form of an intentional object(ive). But, in effect, multiplied by three. Not only do we have the Husserlian correlativity between the phenomenological production of intentional content and the hermeneutic nature of intentional processes and their relative conformity to the meta-textual confines of genres, narratives, etc., but also the correlativites between the phenomenological and the existential, and the existential and the hermeneutical. (19)

One important implication of this correlative understanding is to recognize that intentional processes and intentional content cannot be preferenced in any form over the other. Neither retrospectively prioritized, nor currently privileged nor prospectively promoted! How could you drink from a cup of tea if, on one hand, there were no cup to drink from, and, on the other, there were no tea in that cup to drink. Or, again, a bit like breaking one end off a stick in the hope of finding a stick with just one end. Think about it – could you even imagine such a thought?! Therefore, all so-called 'realistic' nonsense about the externally 'perceived' objectivity of the intentional object pre-existing its intentional reception is as impossible to grasp as is our preferencing a process without content in the senseless presentation of such a nonsensical vision of the so-called 'idealistic' vision of an 'internal world'. Please, just put aside all such impossible ideas and deal with something that is sensibly conceivable! All extreme positioning can be neither encountered phenomenologically nor recognized hermeneutically nor engaged existentially. (20)

Similarly, a world reduced merely to texts is also impossible to countenance because then we would have no way of appreciating what was non-textual or not-textual in orientation, the textual content of that text, and so on. And, without such a contrast, even texts *qua* texts could not be read. Without meta-textually knowing what type of text we have to hand, again, it could not be read. But, texts can be read, and, therefore, texts are not just read as texts *qua* texts, etc![4] (21)

Through this envisaged correlativity between the phenomenal-phenomenological, the hermeneutical and the existential we can interrogate a certain phenomenal presentation or situation and find through iterations of self-correction and self-corroboration whether we are on the right track or not, so to speak. (22)

But, in critiquing the philosophical positioning of a certain philosopher, we need not overtly import such an understanding, but, instead, in a relatively systematic manner set about criticizing those propositions representing that position through metaphorical, rhetorical and existential lenses. In effect, by default, importing this tripolar economic understanding in a relatively covert, *de facto* manner. I.e., doing as such by noting where that text is internally self-contradictory metaphorically, is contextually non-coherent rhe-

[4] Further implicating a non-textual dimension of textual simulation when we forget we are dealing with a text. How else could a novel, e.g., come metaphorically 'to life' without this additional non-textual dimension of simulation, etc?

torically and hermeneutically, and, existentially has consequences that just should not be desired by all decent, respectable and thoughtfully caring people… as you must trust your opponent to be, and, to be appealed to as such at the very least… (23)

By such means, noting the descriptive limits of metaphorical devices being utilized; noting the conformity or otherwise to the rhetorical rules and gestures being prescriptively utilized in all genres being invoked and expressed through those co-associated narratives as found presented, and, existentially pointing out, in an apposite manner, the proscriptive shortfalls to be found implied in such misrepresentative positioning. (24)

Hypothetically, let me demonstrate this three-pronged approach to 'impaling' your philosophical opponent, hopefully without the advent of any form of disrespect, rudeness, violence, or worse. (25)

If someone were to claim truth (or, forgive me, their so-called 'Truth') is to be found 'out there' or 'in here' by asking where exactly 'out there' is or where 'in here' is?? If they were to retreat and claim that they were being merely metaphorical then probe further these proclamations of such high-minded probity? Analyze once again positing and re(-)positioning… (26)

Investigate the prescriptive configurations of their genres and co-associated narratives. Are they again in conformity with their pronouncements on such matters? (27)

Then, relish the moment when you expose the adverse existential consequences of their positioning and re(-)positioning. Can they live with themselves when such unwanted ramifications are to be found from their holding such tenable or untenable positions? (28)

In conjunction, with such a critique analyze the presuppositional nature of their evidential support for claims to be made from the positioning they claim to hold from those perspectives that deconstruct such insurances and assurances being claimed in the relative foundations of their arguments. (29)

Then, closely critique their arguments as sequentially presented from those perspectives that deconstruct such insurances and assurances being claimed in the relative foundations of their arguments. (30)

When, the conclusions are critiqued again do so from those perspectives that deconstruct such insurances and assurances being claimed in the relative foundations of their arguments. (31)

Then, in summing up, expose the defective nature of your opponent's argumentation and reiterate the consequences that would naturally follow from holding such 'perverse' ideas… (32)

The more *ad hoc* a text is the more easily it should be able to be deconstructed. Hopefully, you will find the skill-in-means to expedite such an important task. (33)

4. Provisional Conclusion: The Proposal of a First Critical Format

As a series of notes let me propose the following structure:

i. Initially reconnoiter the philosophical terrain in question…

ia. Note insurances and assurances in the structualization of a certain position.
ib. Then map the positional nature of the arguments entailed.
ic. Note an initial coherence or incoherence of such mapping.

ii. Either conduct a parallel (correlative) comparison between...

iia. Phenomenal-phenomenological, hermeneutical and existential perspectives.
iib. Textual descriptions, meta-textual prescriptions and non-textual proscriptions.
iic. And/or metaphorical, rhetorical and existential perspectives.

iii. Note correlative features that self-correct and/or self-corroborate your readings.

iv. Then, in summary, highlight (humorously or in a droll manner) all such exposed defects; be they found to be impossible to realize, or, defective in a philosophical, logical, semantic, phenomenological, hermeneutical, existential, moral frame of reference, etc., etc.

v. Hopefully, being honest enough to recognize a clarity of ideas, when present, that may well merit the honour of being re-appropriated by yourself (in a form, of course, that avoids plagiarism, and, gives due credit when duly deserved). (34)

Hence this short text on the philosophical artform of being critical. (35)

Noël Tointon, Wentworth Falls, 12.2.21.

5. Postscript: On the Critical Implications of Correlations as Correlatives

As stated, we have correlatives everywhere, indeed, all correlations of identity are all correlatives! Because all forms of identification are correlatively introduced economically. The critical implications of this understanding are profound. For a start we have this re-configured requirement for a critical philosophy to be both self-correcting and self-corroborating. E.g., I mentioned a(n ongoing) need for ‘assessment, meta-assessment, and self-assessment’. Here we need to note that assessment is to be conducted phenomenal-phenomenologically, meta-assessment is to be conducted hermeneutically, and, self-assessment coincides with existential considerations. Such assessments being basically correlative, as already argued, hence a correlative equivalence must also exist between metaphor, rhetoric and existential forms of relational consideration. On the other hand, we should also note that such equivalences can never be completely coincident given the experienced, unique irreducibility of the object(ive), subjective, inter-objective and inter-subjective, etc. But, this demands another paper, another day… Noël.