

Multiverse Oriented Philosophy

(Transcending Earth- and Anthro-po-centeredness)

Ulrich de Balbian

PREFACE

The intended title was “Universe Oriented Ontology” or “Multiverse Oriented Ontology”, or “Universe or Multiverse Metaphysics”.

I mention this as it gives an idea about the meaning and intention of the title and the work as well as the titles I considered and why I moved away from them to the present one.

The sub-title provides a further hint towards the intentions of the work, namely: ” Beyond Earth- and Human-centricity’. I opted for ‘transcending’ rather than beyond, as I am still in the process of describing the process of transcending and many of the ideas I am obliged to use from our conceptual system and practices are still earth- and anthropo-centered, And, they have not yet gone to a state beyond those two -isms.

I say something about universe-centeredness, then about planet earth as point and frame of reference and anthropo-centricity.

The socio-cultural practice of philosophy and the doing of philosophy is merely one of many human, social and cultural practices. I post different no-

tions of philosophy by a number of writers, some of them philosophers. These notions are about their perceptions of what philosophy is. Few of them go into detail about the subject-matter of philosophy. No one really deal with the aims, purposes and objectives of the discipline and none deal with the nature of the doing of philosophy or philosophizing. Activities that I suggest resemble certain features of the processes of theorizing.

I specialize in meta-philosophy as head of a Research Institute.

I wish to ask a survey question -

what is your perception, idea or view of philosophy and philosophizing?

Which of the definitions given here do you agree with most?

https://www.academia.edu/43389533/How_do_diferent_philosophers_define_philosophy_100_plus_books_and_80_videos_Visual_art_on_You_Tube

The definitions (they form an Appendix to my latest book).

The book -

https://www.academia.edu/43364103/Tacitly_Loaded_Concepts_Multiverse_Prior_to_Cognition

I offer manuscripts of all my 100 books for FREE download HERE for students -

<https://independent.academia.edu/UlrichdeBalbian>

where my work is in the top 0.1% of more than 1 millions researchers.

https://www.academia.edu/43389533/How_do_different_philosophers_define_philosophy_100_plus_books_and_80_videos_Visual_art_on_You_Tube

I end with explorations of possible characteristics of original- and creative thinkers. I do this by mentioning a number of themes of meta-philosophy listed and described by Peter Suber. I make a number of comments in them and highlight aspects relevant to these type of thinkers.

One finds them of course in all disciplines and socio-cultural [racticesand disciplines be they the arts, humanities, sciences, etc. I am of course specifically concerned with original and creative thinkers in the Western tradition of philosophy.

As I am a radical and absolute sceptic, I end with an article on this theme.

It is said by everyone, for example Hume, Russell and Pascal, that such a radical position is psychologically impossible and that it cannot be lived 24/7. Pascal for example opted for believe or faith and he and a number of writers suggest that that is the only way out and the final position of radical sceptics. I disagree with him.

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Universe-Oriented Ontology

1

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2

I say something about universe-centeredness.

The Naked Universe

(prior to being conceived, perceived, made an object of consciousness, an object of sciences, arts, religions, humanities, music, literature, films, IT, living organisms, different forms of consciousness, conceptualization, cognition, investigation, etc)

The nature or non-nature of the naked universe -
 that ‘just is’ and/or ‘not is’, as the case may be -
 as all ‘that is’ just ‘the case’; no more and no less.

2.1

The naked, bare universe , that is as a subject -
 (prior to being conceived, perceived, made an object of consciousness, an object of sciences, arts, religions, humanities, music, literature, films, IT, living organisms, different forms of consciousness, conceptualization, cognition, investigation, etc).

2.2

‘What’ ‘is’ and ‘how’ ‘is’ the naked pre- and not-yet conceptualized universe?

2.3

‘What’ and ‘how’ ‘is’ the ” ‘nature’ and/or ‘non-

nature' ” of this bare, naked, prior to being conceptualized, made an object, perceived, experiences, studied, investigated, theorized about, reduced to formulas, laws, propositions, ideas, concepts, equations, numbers, sounds, notations, etc?

2.4

What, if anything can be 'said', alleged, proposed, conjectures, proposed, ascribed, poetically and aesthetically suggested about it, philosophically said, asked, questioned, about it?

2.5

What will be a meaningful and relevant 'language' or system of signs, colours, forms, sounds, movements, etc that could be employed? Those of classical music, tantric sounds and movements, Tibetan chants, sciences, mathematics, metaphysical, ontological, epistemological, ethical and moral (lols!!) speculations, statements, hypotheses, etc?

2.6

To state that the universe is hostile is mistaken, because it is to project the ability to have and the nature of human attitudes or feelings on the universe. It could perhaps be described as mostly uninhabitable by human beings.

In the latter case we again use human beings as the

norm or standard to measure, ascribe something to and make a projection on the universe. But, at least we do not project the nature of human beings on it.

2.7

Object-oriented Ontology as an approach might provide us a few starting points to describe and explore the universe while refraining from treating it in an anthropocentric manner or reducing it to something merely anthropocentric. As if it is a mere extension of human beings and existing solely or mainly for the satisfaction of this species,

2.8

To bracket the problem of thinking or thinking for and about a not-yet-conceptualized, unconceptualized, prior to conceptualized universe, one can attempt to change or escape the problem in different ways, for example -

Socratic questioning about everything and anything,
 Platonic reflections on many areas of human existence,
 Aristotle's doing science before the development of science disciplines and their intersubjectivities,
 explore metaphysical and ontological questions,
 OR, the major escape - epistemology:

investigate how human ‘consciousness’, ‘minds’, cognition works or features, aspects, levels and dimensions of the physical, biological, bio-chemical, neuroscientific, social, genetic, psychological, personality-types, phenotype and other phenomena and factors that are involved -

for example Kant, empiricists, idealists, materialists, physicalists, panpsychism, Marxists, German Critical Thinkers, pragmatists, utilitarians, etc.

3

What can meaningfully, validly and legitimately be said about the universe?

A vast entity or phenomenon,

that contains everything,

everything that exists,
that were,

that will be,

everything that ‘is the case’.

It has or is a past, a present and a future.

It contains, consists of or is many phenomena,

processes, levels, dimensions,

for example galaxies, black holes, solar systems,
stars, planets, etc.

It contains living beings,

on planet earth

and perhaps in other places.

Whatever we can perceive, conceive, experience
of, think and say about it will be from planet earth
as point of reference,

perspective,

and our restricted frame of reference

and anthropocentrism,

coloured by social, cultural and historical limits,
attitudes, biases, fallacies, objectives, intentions,
aims and purposes.

3.1

It contains living phenomena,

in certain places or areas.

Living beings developed in the universe.

The universe enabled the creation of living beings.

How did this come about or commence?

What are the factors that are involved and enabled this creation of living beings?

How did, supposedly 'dead', physical, physicalist, material, chemical, and other phenomena and processes enable the creation and development in certain places, areas and contexts of the universe of living beings?

3.2

This, life and living beings, might appear as something major to earth restricted human beings, but in the context of the universe it is irrelevant, just a minor, irrelevant, passing event occurring in one, far off spot on one, tiny planet in the universe. And a little planet that will eventually be destroyed by one or other event. Be it the dying out of its sun or other processes

3.3

All these considerations show the irrelevance of much valued human attitudes, values, objects, money, culture, art, sciences, religions, feelings,

relationships, sport, etc.

3.4

When seeing the names of theories, models, ideas and speculations about ‘consciousness’, its nature, origins, relationship to the physical, material, body etc, I am struck by the fact that -

they are all mere speculation,

anthropocentric and anthropomorphic,

philosophical thinking, reasoning and argumentation are assumed to be the -

point of reference,

the aim, purpose, reason for -

consciousness, ‘reality’, the universe,

We are shown, by arguments and reasoning, why one approach, only, is meaningful, acceptable, true and correct.

Endless splitting of concepts and ideas to devise new terms, words, notions, concepts, etc that are meant to do THE trick for the real, absolute and final explanation of ‘consciousness = matter = the physical, etc’

and as almost one and the same thing. Start with the one and eventually you will arrive at the other, naturally and automatically.

For example panpsychism's sentience in or of 'material, physical' units lead to consciousness explained,

or start with 'mental' phenomena and you arrive at conscious, embodied physicalism, embodied consciousness etc.

3.5

From one of these notions about consciousness and its anthropocentrically conceived, proposed, invented and developed point of reference we then have a philosophical system and/or theory to view the universe. As if the universe was created and exist for the purpose of the human species or more specifically its philosophical ideas and practices, the contents of its metaphysical speculations, ethical pretences, faked moralities, epistemological attempts, ontological wranglings, political manoeuvres, financial and economical exploitations, personal obsessions, needs and greed, crime, the ideas constituting its ontologies, the objective and reason for its epistemologies and let us not forget human notions of morality and ethical ideas, etc.

3.6

The universe is unaware of that what concern, that what occupy, that what please and satisfy, that what trouble human beings.

How human beings deal with these things, how they suffer because of these things, how they try to sublimate their desires and needs for these things.

How human beings perceive, think, think about thinking, their investigations of these things, their alternative theories about these things.

The universe 'is', 'was' and 'shall be', or 'is not', 'was not' and 'shall not be', or whatever the case may be, or not.

'It', has no needs, feelings, emotions, objectives, aims, purposes, plans, intentions - it just happens 'to be', or not, whatever is the case, whatever is the most appropriate 'state of being, non-being or non-non-being' on 'it'.

3.7

The concerns, sciences, needs, laws, cultures, wars, politics, monetary obsessions, politics, games, etc of earth-restricted and -originated, activities, plans, behaviour, etc are nothing more than that of a minute, irrelevant, unknown, undis-

covered, primitive, prehistoric, incestuous, inbred, self-obsessed, shipwrecked tribe on an isolated island.

3.8

Although consciousness of individuals are involved and explored, it is not seen in isolation from the social, cultural, community, group and intersubjective aspects of it.

Individuals share not only their bodily constitution with each, for example genetically and through evolution, but also ideas, concepts, phenotypes and personality-types.

When using individuals as point of reference one already assumes and employs intersubjective, interpersonal, social, cultural, evolution and other shared structures, metaphysics, ontologies, epistemologies, disciplines, socio-cultural practices, values, attitudes, instincts, needs, world views, constitutions of reality, etc

4

It can, could, may and might be said that there 'is' reality, a reality or realities - for whatever such statements are worth or mean or whatever their value, if any, might be.

4.1

View the following statement -

a human being , human beings perceive, see, hear, feel, taste, etc ‘something’,

what does the person feel when undergoing this sensation or complex of sensations by means of multiple senses working simultaneously?

what do different people feel or undergo when in that context?

One reality? One phenomenon? Many, different, the identical, same reality, phenomena?

I doubt it.

4.2

What does a person, different people do, feel, undergo ? The same, identical things with different bodies, genotypes, personality types and phenotypes?

4.3

What does on person feel, think about and do with the different feelings, sensations, etc? The identical, same thing? Many things?

4.4

Does it really only matter what someone does with, think and feel about their sensations and perceptions and not the perceptions themselves?

Biologists, physiologists, bio-chemists, physicists, sociologists, psychologists, different people, cultures, educational levels etc will look and experience and do different things with identical? sensations and perceptions.

What does a person, different people do with feelings, thoughts and reflections on feelings?

Why do they experience perceptions and sensations different with their different bodies, genotypes, phenotypes, personality types and other factors that are involved?

Why do they react and respond differently? Why do they do different things in seemingly similar situations?

Some people respond with compassion, others by hate, others by attacking or killing someone. What are the factors that are involved and that cause this?

What are the factors that are involved in present-

ing, enabling and allowing the different paths of action?

But, does the above anthropocentric concerns matter to the nature, the operation, the development and existence of the universe? Do they effect it?

No, not at all. They are mere earth-restricted, human concerns.

5

To talk about the beginning of the universe is a misnomer. What is intended is : the beginning or origin of the present structure of the present universe or the the universe we are aware of or that what we understand by the universe. That what big banged into the universe existed and did not come from nothing. The universe did not expand into no-thing or nothing, that what it expands into is the universe or part of the universe.

These ideas are not meant to be profound theories in physics, but merely a few words about the more correct, meaningful or appropriate use of words.

6

It must be remembered that all our theories, speculations, stories and narratives are earth-centered or from the point of reference of this planet.

7

Here we have a few, general ideas about the setting or physical context of our planet. Its setting or place in ‘the universe’. The past, present and possible future universe.

The latter, a universe consisting, it is suggested by some speculative ideas, that we will have its constitutive galaxies that are ever- increasing in size or space.

The ‘reason’ or ‘explanation’ for this being because its constitutive stars will drift further and further apart until there will be ‘galaxies’ that could no longer be recognized as such.

8

This is the planetary context or setting of philosophy and other socio-cultural practices, disciplines, religions, cultures, civilizations, countries, societies, communities, religions, histories, different species, including our own, genders, ‘races’, ethnic groups, socio- economic classes, individuals and their genotypes, phenotypes and personality types, the haves and have-nots of money, good and bad health, good and less good looks, attitudes, information, knowledge, wisdom, natural forces, earthquakes, disasters, the nature and changes of planet

earth, both macroscopically and microscopically,
etc, etc.

2

Planet Earth-centered

1

The origin, nature, changing atmospheric conditions, natural laws and forces, physical and natural

history of the planet will not be explored, described or summarized as it is readily available in many encyclopedias, etc on internet.

2

The same goes for other aspects, features and phenomena in many dimensions and on many levels of that what constitute this planet, for example the different living entities, fauna, flora and species.

3

Whatever occurs with or to this planet and its constituents will have little effect on or consequences for the rest of the galaxy and the universe. It will be little more than a storm in an irrelevant tea cup.

4

For certain disciplines, for example sciences, arts, humanities and religions specific features, aspects, events, etc of planet earth will form part of their specialized explorations. Phenomena that may or may not be the most important constituents of this planet, or to the existence and lives of contemporary human beings or members of other species

5

A list of phenomena that might have serious implications for and a massive effect on different species for example humans can be drawn up, for example -

universal and national economies,

weather and atmospheric conditions,

unexpected pandemics,

international and national wars and upheavals,

certain new technologies, developments and discoveries, (for example internet, computers, cell phones, medication, natural resources, food production of the lack of it, etc), mass beliefs and ideologies, etc.

5

One such ideology, idea, sets or system of ideas are those of Hegel-Marx.

Those ideas might concern certain aspects of human existence, interaction, societies, values, attitudes, economics, labour, history, beliefs, etc.

Regardless if they were correct or mere speculation, they had an immense social, cultural, psychological and personal effect and consequences for

many countries, societies, communities and individuals.

6

The immensity, the scale and the effects of those ideas are equalled by certain religious and technological ones.

These include engines and machines, IT, internet, social media, certain components of computers, cell phones and their applications and 'religious' or religion-associated ideas for example those of the different varieties of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.

But, outside the realm of influence of planet earth none of these inventions or ideas have any effect. We can modify, transform, develop and destroy aspects or all of this planet and it will have little or no major effect on the rest of the galaxy or consequences for the universe.

It will signify as little or less than the death or shooting of a minute, irrelevant star.

7

And the meaning, the function, the purpose, the effect and relevance of the Western tradition of philosophy and philosophizing in all this universe of

human irrelevance? A universe where the ideas, the values, attitudes, aspirations, speculations, inventions, hopes, fears, loves and behaviour of human beings signify nothing, less than nothing?

8

What appears like a philosophical problem, issue or question will vary from individual to individual. The reason for this is that a number of factors are involved -

these include, among others,

contexts - for example:

everyday situations,

specialized contexts for example in visual art, a particular science, religion (discussion, texts such as Divine Offices, religious texts, theologies, interpretations and pronouncements, etc), news in papers or on television, social media, films, critiques and criticism, writing a book, article, for a journal, writing about those things,

age, gender, educational background, historical period, personality-type, present philosophical position, attitudes, interests, pre-suppositions, biases, etc, etc, etc

9

A few ideas about my own present philosophical concerns.

Anything, anywhere at any time can stimulate to think in philosophical relevant ways. Statements, words in books or spoken, appearance, behaviour, attitudes, expressions by individuals, words and ideas that are employed in ambiguous, misleading and incorrect ways.

What happens?

My attention is caught and I analyse that what I notice by asking certain types of questions about it.

I am not interested in developing a system of ideas, I am not interested in asking or answering metaphysical questions (whatever that might be). I merely dissect certain aspects of that what catches my attention.

I do this automatically in a logical, step by step manner. I continue the process until the issue has been clarified to my satisfying.

The result is not a theory or a metaphysical system. At most it is a suggestion, a hypothesis. Not mere guesswork or an opinion, but a statement that

I have argued for in a simple, concise, precise manner, often by means of the exploration, analysis and clarification of concepts, conceptual connections, implications and their consequences.

Perhaps new information is produced, perhaps new knowledge is created? New or clarified insights are presented, insights that will produce new understanding - and of and when employed appropriately might assist in the realization of new features of wisdom.

What are the philosophical methods, techniques and tools being employed?

[PHILOSOPHY – Aims, Methods, Rationale](#)

In this meta-philosophical study I commence with an investigation of Wisdom. I then continue with an exploration of the institutionalization of the subject and the professionalization of those involved in it. This I contrast with original and creative philosophizing. In then sows that philosophizing resembles and attempts to do theorizing. The 9 questions, etc of the Socratic Method and details of the Philosophical Toolkit occur throughout different stages of theorizing as one level and one dimension of it. Linked books are FREE for download.

- | | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 Seeking, development and realization of wisdom | 4 | |
| 2 Institutionalization, Professionalization of 'philosophy' | 5 | |
| 3 Original and Creative Thinking Philosophizing | | 37 |
| 4 Philosophizing resembles Theorizing | | |

- (i) Socratic Method 41
- (ii) Philosophical Toolkit 145

<https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/courses/meta/topics.htm#methodology>

- Are there methods peculiar to philosophy?
- Do we need a method to discover, examine, or justify a method? Do we need a certified method to certify a method? If so, how do we escape this apparent dilemma of circularity and infinite regress?
- How does philosophy justify its methods?
- Do (should) we acquire a method before claiming knowledge, or after? Is knowledge certified by the method that discovered or established it, or is method certified by the knowledge it discovers or establishes?
- What is the relationship between method and result in philosophy?

<https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/courses/meta/topics.htm#assertion>

- Do all philosophies "take positions" or "make assertions"? If not, what have some philosophies done in place of these?
- Why couldn't Plato (or Nietzsche...) just state his assertions and argue them? If we translated Plato (or Nietzsche...) into a "handbook" of their assertions and arguments, what would be lost except for "rhetorical colour"?
- What of philosophical significance have philosophies done in addition to taking positions or making assertions?
- What are we missing if we read works of philosophy only for their assertions?
-
- What modes of assertion have philosophers used?

What are the aims, purposes and objectives?

<https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/courses/meta/topics.htm#cognitivity>

- Does philosophy lead to knowledge (is it cognitive)? Can it be true or false?
- To be cognitive in this sense is to bear any truth-value, including falsehood, as opposed to bearing none at all. Don't confuse cognitivity with truth.
-
- To bear a truth-value is not necessarily to be knowable with certainty, or by any method. Don't confuse cognitivity with knowability.
- The question is not whether anything is knowledge or cognitive e.g. science; but whether *philosophy* is (ever) knowledge.
-

- Does philosophy merely criticize or examine knowledge, without itself being (or becoming) knowledge? If so, then why should we trust it? What warrants it? Can it be objective or corrigible? How should we evaluate it?
- Can philosophy be cognitive "in some sense" and non-cognitive "in another sense"? If so, try to articulate those senses. Can we say that the "highest" or "most important" philosophy is cognitive or non-cognitive?
- If philosophy is non-cognitive, would it follow that we should read it non-immanently? (See section below on [immanent and non-immanent readings of philosophy](#).)
- If philosophy is cognitive, does the apparently permanent character of disagreement in philosophy become a sign of failure? (See the section below on [disagreement and diversity](#).)
- In natural science even "negative results" are valuable. (A negative result is the failure to confirm an hypothesis.) Is there anything comparable in philosophy? What value might "mistaken" philosophies have?

What are the functions? The rationale?

<https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/courses/meta/topics.htm#self-ref>

Self-Reference and Self-Application

- Are a given philosopher's criteria of truth (knowledge, meaning) true (knowable, meaningful) by their own terms? Must they be?
- Is self-referential inconsistency as objectionable as other kinds of inconsistency?
- Many philosophies have implications for the nature or use of argument, proof, language, method, and philosophy itself. Must philosophies always comply with their own strictures on these subjects, or can they work at a 'different level' and exempt themselves?
- Are there interesting or significant philosophical positions that cannot be expounded except with some self-referential problem or paradox? Can you think of examples?
- Compare the metaphilosophies of a few philosophers on their self-referential consistency.
- Many philosophers use reason to limit or subvert reason (see e.g. Sextus Empiricus, Hume, and Kant). If this is paradoxical at first sight, what does it show in the last analysis about the nature of reason, philosophy, and method?
- How should we judge philosophies which (as most do) instruct us how to judge?
- If we cannot 'get outside' philosophy to judge philosophies, should we regret or rejoice? What does it show about the cognitivity of philosophy?
-

- Why does a given philosopher practice philosophy and write books? Is her book consistent with this vision of the nature and function of philosophy?
- Can the doctrinal aspect of a philosophy be consistent with all its other aspects? What is the price of trying? of failing?
- See: Steven J. Bartlett and Peter Suber, *Self-Reference: Reflections on Reflexivity*, Martinus Nijhoff, 1987 (contains a large bibliography).

What is my personality-type, interests, genotypes, phenotypes, etc that cause me to be interested in doing the above?

<https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/courses/meta/topics.htm#ers>

- What is gained and what is lost by studying philosophical texts apart from the biographies of their authors? To what extent, and for what purposes, should we bring in biography?
- Compare the autobiographies of a few philosophers on their relation to their philosophies. (Try Croce, Mill, Collingwood, Jung, Quine, Rescher.)
- Why have so few philosophers written autobiographies, compared, say, to novelists or diplomats?
- To what extent is philosophy autobiographical?
 - See Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §6: "...every great philosophy so far has been...the personal confession of its author and a kind of unconscious memoir".
 - See Ernest Campbell Mossner, "Philosophy and Biography," in his *Hume*, Doubleday, 1966.
 - See de Beauvoir's many-volume autobiography where, if anywhere, she expounds her philosophical position.
- The psychological motives, economic interests, and personal animosities of a philosopher may all be sources of his/her work. How relevant are they to our evaluation of that work?
- Does the recognition of causes for belief undermine the recognition of reasons for belief?
- When we say that the life-and-times of a philosopher "illuminate" her work, or that her life situation "influenced" her work, can we make sense of these claims without reducing philosophy a complex effect of blind causation? Is there a slippery slope from influence to reduction? If not, what is the "snag" that keeps reasons from sliding to causes?
- Do non-immanent reductions of philosophy necessarily entail relativism and determinism? Must they be self-referentially inconsistent?
- What parts of a philosophy can biography most illuminate? Its truth-value? the proper interpretation of its texts? the philosopher's choice of topics, scope of coverage, emphasis? expositional style and structure? idea of the audience, hence, degree of rigour, use of technical language, political appeals?
- Steven Bartlett has written that philosophers as a group are typically individualistic and even narcissistic, more concerned to develop their own thought than

to share or understand the thought of others. How true is this?

- Does philosophy appeal only to certain personality types? If so, what non-immanent perspectives on philosophy does this suggest? Could philosophy be a neurosis?
- Which came first, psychological tendencies or philosophical positions?
- Might the latter have their own autonomy and simply attract (rather than being explained by) the former?
- Should we always explain the latter through the former instead of sometimes the former through the latter?
-
- May we legitimately call someone a philosopher who denied that she was a philosopher? (See case of Simone de Beauvoir; cf. Dostoevsky, Camus, Buber.) May we deny the name of philosopher to one who called himself a philosopher? (Analytic philosophers often deny that their non-analytic colleagues are philosophers.)
- How would we, and how should we, interpret the works of a philosopher with known moral failings? For example: Nietzsche was a vicious misogynist, Charles Peirce beat his wife, Heidegger was a Nazi. See the case of Paul de Man, an influential deconstructionist lately revealed to have been an early Nazi propagandist.
- Do these failings contaminate all the writings by that philosopher, perhaps on a theory that a philosophical position comes from the whole person?
- Can we compartmentalize, and hold a philosopher benighted on questions of gender or politics, but profound on epistemology, metaphysics, or perhaps even other topics within ethics?
- Do we deliberately ignore such failings on the ground that to let them diminish our assessment of the writings would commit the genetic fallacy?
- In answering this question, how do we factor in our belief that everyone has moral failings, including we ourselves?
-
- How would we, and how should we, change our evaluation of a philosopher's work if we learned that he killed someone in cold blood?
- See case of Louis Althusser, who murdered his wife at the height of his respect and influence as a Marx scholar.
-
- If a philosophy cannot 'be lived', what legitimately follows about its worth as a philosophy?
- See e.g. Hume.
-
- See: William Earle, "Philosophy as Autobiography," in his *Public Sorrows and Private Pleasures*, Indiana University Press, 1976, pp. 161-75; C.E.M. Joad, "Thought and Temperament," pp. 218-52 of his *Essays in Common Sense Philosophy*, George Allen & Unwin, 2d ed. 1933; Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Philosophy Through the Looking Glass*, Open Court, 1985; Albert W. Levi, "The Mental Crisis of John Stuart Mill," *Psychoanalytic Review*, V, xxxii (1945) 86-101; Fay Horton Sawyier, "Philosophy as Autobiography: John Stuart Mill's Case," *Philosophy Research Archives*, 11 (1985) 169-79; Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *The Philosophers: Their Lives and the Nature of Their Thought*, Basil Blackwell, 1980.

<https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/courses/meta/autobio.htm>

Philosophy as Autobiography

Psychologistic, Reductive, & Non-Immanent Readings of Philosophy

[Peter Suber, Philosophy Department, Earlham College](#)

- [Quotations](#)
- [Bibliography](#)
-

Quotations

In chronological order

9

The above resembles and highlights a number of features of the dimensions, levels, contexts, aims, functions, objectives and reasons of and for the processes of theorizing.

[Philosophizing is part of the Process/es of Theorizing](#)

Philosophizing is part of the Process/es of Theorizing

An illustration (by means of a number of articles, books, opinions, statements, hypotheses, theories, arguments, reasoning and comments) of doing philosophy or philosophizing and its methods, as aspects of the contexts, stages, steps and features of the process/es of theorizing.

A number of implicit assumptions and tacit pre-suppositions of this socio-cultural practice and discourse, for example as they resemble that of everyday and religious perception (MNC,) are identified and revealed.

[philosophizing, no do theorizing](#)

Much extended to included details of courses, subject-matter, methods taught in Analytic Philosophy, theorizing and Continental philosophy, for example vast appendix on 'the movement of non-philosophy' work. Much extended by details of undergraduate courses in philosophy (epistemology, arguments, metaphysics, and other aspects of 'Analytic' Philosophy, or as taught in the UK and US), as well as aspects theory-construction (the 3 approaches in the sciences) Meta-philosophical study of philosophy as it resembles the processes of theorizing. Surveying Analytical and Continental Philosophy as described by different authors to identify their subject-matter (that could be included and excluded in this discipline or shared with other disciplines as in cognitive sciences and X-Phi) and methods. AP concentrates on certain stages of theorizing (conceptual analysis, exploration and speculation about them), CP concentrates on 'the human condition', social, political and cultural fields, but lacks the clarity, meticulous details and systematic work of AP. These are some of the implicit assumptions (ideologies) underlying and determining contemporary philosophical practice and institutions.

3

Meanings of Philosophy

1

Human beings employ concepts not merely to re-constitute their worlds, realities, including their selves, minds, consciousness, lives and loves but to fabricate and constitute these things. As well as their perceptions, thinking, feelings, emotions and

reactions to, interpretations of, developing, maintaining and transforming these things.

In this way ideas and concepts enable the creation of realities, inner and external worlds and lives.

But this constitution is not absolutely unlimited or free, but restricted, determined, following norms, rules, -isms, patterns, customs, traditions, social, cultural, historical, intersubjective and many other rules, limits, aims, objectives, purposes, goals, etc.

Concepts, conceptual practices, usage and meanings are loaded and associated with pre-determined -isms, pre-suppositions, assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, restrictions, perspectives, frames of reference, and other phenomena that will determine how they are used, their effects, results, consequences, etc.

The above is earth- and anthropo-centered and restricted. The origins, nature, past, present and future is explored. This is suggested as point of reference and not the minute and irrelevant planet earth. Changes, modifications even the destruction of this planet will have little effect on and consequences for our galaxy and the universe.

Against or in this universal context the nature, the functions, aims, objectives, methods, techniques,

relevance, meaning and possibility of philosophy and philosophizing is explored.

Reductionistic humans are obsessed with and drawn to minimalist and generalized patterns or sets and systems of ideas as explanations and underlying foundations of complex realities and phenomena.

But the notion of philosophy like those of consciousness and mind can have have different and therefore misleading meanings. They are like umbrella-words that can have many meanings, all of them rather vague, although those who employ them mistakenly assume they know precisely what is meant when they use these notions in a certain context and way.

2

One reason why the words philosophy and to do philosophy or philosophizing are misleading is because they can and do form part of most contexts, areas and dimensions of human existence, perception, thinking and thinking about thinking and these things.

2.1

When I sense or perceive anything it feels as if an aspect of what I do, undergo or am is doing philo-

sophy. The short of critical aspect, the aware aspect of what I do, the conscious and self-conscious aspect of being critical, employing, undergoing or being biased, having, employing, applying and expressing attitudes, opinions and value.

We are usually unaware that we do, undergo, am or employ these things in every context and situation. But, they form part of what we might mean by the notion of having, expressing, applying and employing philosophy or my personal philosophy.

2.2

These inklings of critical and reflective awareness, thinking and thinking about what we do and are all refers to some of the meanings of philosophy, having a philosophy, being philosophical and the doing of philosophy - and that in every situation, context and moment of our existence.

These are not merely examples of the everyday, man or woman on street notions of philosophy, but they form part of and express aspects and meanings of the more technical, specialized meanings of the notions philosophy and philosophizing. And, in this way and because of this the meanings of these notions become nebulous, confusing and misleading.

Imagine there is a process of perception, becoming aware of something through the senses, emotions, feelings, memory, etc. On aspect or feature of these things appear to be philosophical or related to what we might conceive of or understand by and as philosophical. For example the operation or presence of biases, fallacies, pre-suppositions and the making of assumptions, world views, the presence of intentions and intentionality, etc.

4

We are already doing ‘active’ things at that stage or those stages and not merely passively undergoing perception, cognition, emotions, feelings, memories, etc. This active dimension of perceiving etc involves philosophically related and relevant aspects. Because of the misleading, vague, nebulous and umbrella-implications and applications of the words philosophy and doing philosophy.

5

Now what happens or can happen next with, to or by means of the contents of that what is involved in this ‘initial’ stage? For example we describe, we recount, we talk or think about them, explore them for example by asking questions about them or certain aspects of them.

When doing these things certain aspects of that what we do, that what we attempt to do, that what our aims, objectives and reasons are for doing it might appear philosophically, psychologically, sociologically (bio-chemically, neurologically, etc) related, relevant and meaningful.

Just think of the many explorations, descriptions, explanations, analyses, speculations about features of this stage by Locke, Berkeley, Kant, Husserl, Derrida, Habermas, contemporary Anglo-Saxons, in Buddhism, Hinduism and other 'metaphysical' systems and ideas.

6

I am not concerned with the details of the processes of perception, cognition, consciousness etc or to identify them, their nature, aims, objectives and purposes.

I wish to point out that there are many different contexts and situations that contain features or elements that are or might appear to be philosophical, philosophical relevant and philosophically related - correctly or not.

My reason for mentioning this is that this is one of the ways and reasons for the creation of some of the misleading meanings, uses, aims, functions and purposes of philosophy and philosophizing.

7

We can continue to those stages where the above are scientifically explored, findings classified, models and theories about them created, papers, dissertations and papers created and shared, etc.

These activities in turn will tacitly or explicitly employ and involve things such as questions, questioning, reasoning, argumentation, etc. Things that are or could be philosophically relevant and related.

With the possibility that here, again, we might find other features or aspects of what might be referred to as philosophy, philosophical, the doing of philosophy and other uses of the notion of philosophy.

8

In short, almost any human beings action or mere presence, how it is perceived or whatever is done with or to or by means of it could be said to be philosophical, contain, exhibit or imply something philosophical or philosophically relevant or related.

9

The problem with defining what philosophy and the doing of philosophy is, is that there exist no limits to these socio-cultural practices and that there is no way to describe, define, identify and draw these limits, that there can never be and that there will never be.

Everything and anything can be considered and dealt with philosophically, anything that is alive or dead, that exists or that do not exist.

Anything in or not in the universe, anything that ever was, that is and that will be or that never was and never will be can be dealt with, lead to, cause or create philosophizing.

And, that could be done from many perspectives, for many reasons, aims and purposes and by means of many different tools, employing many different pre-suppositions.

10

Then that what is transformed into philosophy or philosophically related phenomena in turn can lead to further philosophical subject-matter. As well as, of course meta-philosophically, dealing with the ways they were dealt with and the reasons why.

Any and all features of individual organisms, groups of them, their communal existence, social,

political, economical, ethical and other dimensions, verbal and other forms of interaction, their limitations, personal, social and cultural first and third person perceptions, the communication tools and media being employed, technologies, the nature of these things in a particular historical period or time and its changes over time, etc - Habermas, Foucault, Derrida and other Europeans explored some of these things - as if they are 'philosophy'.

And, they did this from their own restricted perspectives, frames of reference, biases, pre-suppositions, etc. Endless other frames of reference and perspectives are of course possible. Those are alternatives that can yield even more additions to the pot pourri or melting pot of possible philosophical questions, problems, ideas, models, theories, systems, speculations, etc.

All of them restricted by and relative to factors such as the time, social, historical, cultural, society, personal, personality-type, interests, phenotypes and other factors.

11

Perhaps the question what philosophy is, what it may be and can be could be answered by stating that:

any existing or still to be created concept or being used, with all the assumptions, pre-suppositions involved as well as all possible features of those employing them, their species, biological, bio-chemical, social, cultural, psychological, etc make-up, historical, planetary context and factors could be the subject-matter of philosophy. As well as all the tools, perspectives, frames of reference, assumptions, pre-suppositions that could be used (as seen from a meta-philosophical level) - are possible objects of philosophy?

12

So what does philosophy and the doing of philosophy consist of in its most general manner?

What will be and must be present in the doing of philosophy?

To feel the need to ask questions about something, some phenomena,

to explore the phenomenon because you have questions about it,

to ask these questions in a systematic manner,

to identify and explore many explicit and implicit features of the phenomenon, you consider to be relevant,

to develop insights about it, related to your questions,

to classify, generalize and develop your insights

usually in some form of hypotheses, models and even a theory.

13

But, everyone has and ask questions all the time about many things, so what are philosophically relevant questions?

What is their nature or what make them philosophically relevant?

Perhaps the attitude and intentions of the person asking the question? The way in which a question is used? It might not be something inherent to the individual who create the question but the intention with which or the reason why a question is asked?

I could for example read, ask and employ questions that were framed by others such as Socrates or Kant. Perhaps a certain understanding is required so as to employ a question for philosophical reasons, aims or purposes?

14

Do philosophical questions and/or their accompanying intentions contain, reveal, exhibit or have certain characteristics, traits, phenomena?

Are they of a certain types, category or class?

What, if anything makes them philosophically relevant, meaningful, useful, functional and appropriate?

15

I would suggest 'no' they do not form a certain class or category of questions. They probably fit in at one or other stage and contexts of the processes of theorizing. That type of theorizing that are relevant to philosophizing and the philosophical discourse.

16

It might assist us to identify philosophically relevant issues, problems, entities and questions about them is we involve the major domains of traditional Western philosophy?

These are of course metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, methodology, philosophical logic and other techniques and tools.

The list of such domains and their sub-domains will go on and on and on, for example philosophy of science, of particular sciences, questions concerning detailed aspects of those scientific disciplines, the different arts such as music, visual art, performance arts, films, sport, religion, politics, etc.

With this seemingly endless list of philosophy of.....some or other discipline, domain or subject and their sub-domains, we end up where we started from, namely endless possible subjects and features of philosophically relevant topics, problems, issues and questions about them.

17

In other words to try and identify every possible phenomenon that might be philosophically relevant in every philosophical domain, sub-domain or anything about which a philosophically relevant question might be asked, is impossible. Not only is the list too long and endless, but we do not know beforehand what would be included in such a list. So having an exhaustive list of universally applicable philosophical issues about which questions can be asked is obviously not how the minds of philosophers operate.

18

Perhaps it is a question of intuition? That philosophers have a sense of what is or might be philosophically relevant in any context they encounter?

But, will those things that are noticed by or stimulates the need for exploration by a Marxist, some variation of a Critical Theorist of the first or the 5th generation, a Hegelian, or Young Leftist or Rightist Hegelian, a Kantian, Sophist, Platonist, etc be the same?

I doubt it as that what is noticed by, perceived by, critically perceived by, objected to, etc by one of the above -isms most likely will be ignored by some or many followers of the other -isms.

19

The above were mostly about questions that identify a philosophically relevant issue or problem, but there are many other types of questions for example those that concern comparisons and evaluations.

What will be the questions and tools that are employed to execute comparisons of detailed issues in specific contexts?

And what will be the standards that are employed

to make evaluations in contexts concerning detailed issues for example in visual art, in one painting or installation, or between different paintings? Or to assess situations concerning ethics or an ethical issue in a particular situation? Or to assist the making of a decision between say a panpsychist or physicalist preference in a particular context and concerning a specific issue?

20

Most likely the first thing philosophy, or the philosopher, will notice will be the appropriate way something is expressed.

In the case of concepts and words, if they are used in appropriate and meaningful ways to express that what is being attempted to express in clear, logical and direct ways.

20.1

Attempts will be made to realize this by modifying the concepts being used and how they are employed, if possible. Or, to replace the usage so as to express the meanings and statements more clearly.

20.2

That what is being expressed is not merely scrutinized for linguistic correctness, but philosophical appropriateness and meaningfulness.

The latter could relate to any philosophical domain or sub-domain or philosophical statements and notions about almost anything.

By the modification of 13.1 many issues will be solved or disappear.

Issues, problems and questions about the philosophical contents are more subtle and complex. They will only be solved or dissolved by means of more complex and often very lengthy explorations or analysis.

21

The latter is what I explored as philosophizing or the doing of philosophy and that I suggested it consists of certain features, aspects and contexts of the processes of theorizing.

22

Traditional philosophical systems such as those of Leibniz, Locke, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Habermas, Derrida, et al can be employed as data so as to explore and apply my idea that the

doing of philosophy resembles and employs those features of the processes of theorizing.

22.1

In doing this or for the purpose of doing this hypotheses about these data can be formulated, explored and investigated.

This in turn can lead to the refinement of my idea as a model and a theory about:

the doing of philosophy or philosophizing resembles many aspects, features and contexts, dimensions and levels of the processes of theorizing.

4

Philosophy according to Philosophers

https://www.quora.com/How-do-different-philosophers-define-philosophy/answer/Ulrich-Balbian?__filter__=all&__nsrc__=1&__sncid__=5672379586&__snid3__=8929240148

https://www.quora.com/How-do-different-philosophers-define-philosophy/answer/Ulrich-Balbian?__filter__=all&__nsrc__=1&__sncid__=5672379586&__snid3__=8929240148

How do different philosophers define philosophy?

Ulrich Balbian

March 15, 2019

In this video we cover a brief *definition* of the field of *philosophy*, the word, its roots and its history. ...

According to Aristotle - "Philosophy is a science which discovers the real nature of supernatural elements".

According to Levison - "Philosophy is mental activity".

According to Karl Marx - "Philosophy is the interpretation of the world in order to change it".

According to Hegel - "Philosophy is that which grasps its own era in thought."

Kant Immanuel Regards philosophy as "the science and criticism of cognition."

According to Russell - "Philosophy proper deals with matters of interest to the general educated public, and loses much of its value if only a few professionals can understand it."

According to Henderson - "Philosophy is a rigorous, disciplined, guarded analysis of some of the most difficult problems which men have ever faced."

According to John Dewey - "Philosophy is not a panacea (remedy for all kinds of diseases/troubles) for the problems of men, but is that which emerges out of the methods employed by them to solve their problems."

Aristippus thinks that philosophy is "the ability to feel at ease in any society."

According to Socrates - "Philosophy is a daily activity".

According to Phenix - "Science attempts only at the discovery of facts. Philosophy is not interested in the discovery of facts. Rather, it is interested in facts insofar

as to provide an attitude towards them. It tries to organize, interpret, clarify and criticize the already discovered facts of science."

D.J. Connar defines philosophy "as an activity of criticism or clarification."

According to Plato "He who has a taste for every sort of knowledge and who is curious to learn and is never satisfied may be justly termed as a philosopher."

According to G.T.W Patreck - "Between science and philosophy the very closest relationship exists. They spring from the same root, the love of knowledge and they aspire to the same end, the knowledge of reality. While science describes the facts, philosophy interprets them."

According to Brubacher - "Science is interested in the proximate or efficient causes of the facts, while philosophy is concerned with its ultimate or final causes."

Henderson thinks that philosophy is a research for "a comprehensive view of nature, an attempt at a universal explanation of the nature of things."

Millard and Bectrocci defined philosophy as the persistent, critical and systematic attempt to discover and consistently formulate in relation to each other the basic characteristics, meanings and values of our experience in its widest perspectives."

According to Ludwig Wittgenstein - "The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory, but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The result of philosophy is not a number of 'philosophical propositions', but to make propositions clear. Philosophy should make clear and delimit sharply the thoughts which otherwise are, as it were, opaque and blurred."

According to Raymont - "Philosophy is an unceasing effort to discover the general truth that lies behind the particular fact, to discover also the realities that lies behind appearance."

According to Carlies Lamont - "philosophy is the tenacious attempts of reasoning men to think through the most fundamental issues of life, to reach reasonable conclusions on first and last things to suggest worthwhile goals that can command the loyalty of individuals and groups."

According to Kilpatric - "Philosophy is a point of view, outlook on life."

According to Dr.Radhakrishnan - "Philosophy is a view of life. It gives a direction to life, offers a design for living."

According to Existentialists - "Philosophy is not a search for truth, but a trail of truth".

According to Hiriyana - "Philosophy is a emerged as a result of reflection over the experiences and problems of everyday living."

According to Cicero, Marcus Tullius - "Philosophy is the mother of all arts and "the true medicine of the mind."

According to George Berkeley - "Philosophy, being nothing but the study of wisdom and truth..."

According to Brightman - "Philosophy may be defined as an attempt to think truly about human experience or a whole or to make out whole experience intelligible."

Kant regards philosophy as - "the science and criticism of cognition."

According to Fichte - "Philosophy is the science of knowledge."

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor defined it as the "Science of science."

According to John Armstrong - "Philosophy is the successful love of thinking."

According to Marilyn Adams - "Philosophy is thinking really hard about the most important questions and trying to bring analytic clarity both to the questions and the answers."

According to Edger S. Brightman - "Philosophy is es-

essentially a spirit or method of approaching experiential rather than a body of conclusions about the experience."

According to Richard Bradley - "Philosophy is 99 per cent about critical reflection on anything you care to be interested in."

According to Bramold - "Philosophy is a persistent effort of both ordinary and persistent people to make life as intelligible and meaningful as possible."

According to Herbert Spencer - "Philosophy is concerned with everything as a universal science."

According to Don Cupitt - "Philosophy is critical thinking: trying to become aware of how one's own thinking works, of all the things one takes for granted, of the way in which one's own thinking shapes the things one's thinking about."

According to Joseph A. Leighton - "Philosophy like science, consist of theories of insights arrived at as a result of systematic reflection."

According to Simon Blackburn - "[Philosophy is] a process of reflection on the deepest concepts, that structures of thought, that make up the way in which we think about the world. So it's concepts like reason, causation, matter, space, time, mind, consciousness, free will, all those big abstract words and they make up topics, and people have been thinking about them for two and a half thousand years and I expect they'll think about them for another two and a half thousand years if there are any of us left."

According to R.W. Sellers - "Philosophy is a persistent attempt to gain insight into the nature of the world and ourselves by systematic reflection."

According to C. J. Ducasse - "Were I limited to one line for my answer to it, I should say that philosophy is a general theory of criticism."

According to Humayun Kabir - philosophy "seeks to give knowledge of the whole."

According to Anthony Kenny - "Philosophy is thinking as clearly as possible about the most fundamental concepts that reach through all the disciplines."

Huxley, Aldous observes "Men live in accordance with their Philosophy of life."

H. Dumery defines philosophy as a "critical reflection on concrete action."

According to Plato - "Philosophy is the acquisition of knowledge."

According to Clifford Barrat - "It is not the specific content of these conclusions, but the spirit and the method by which they are reached, which entitles them to be described as philosophical..."

Curtis, George William states "During the course of centuries, the meaning attached to philosophy has undergone many changes, and even in the present day, thinkers, are not in complete agreement about the aims and subject-matter of this branch of knowledge."

According to Michael S. Russo - PHILOSOPHY = "A critical examination of reality characterized by rational inquiry that aims at the Truth for the sake of attaining wisdom."

Milton K. Munitz suggests that "philosophy is a quest for a view of the world and of man's place in it, which is arrived at and supported in a critical and logical way."

Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines philosophy as "Love of exercising one's curiosity and intelligence" rather than the love of wisdom.

The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy defines it as the study of "the most fundamental and general concepts and principles involved in thought, action and reality."

Philosophy | Definition of Philosophy by Merriam-Webster

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/philosophy>

1 : the study of the basic ideas about knowledge, right and wrong, reasoning, and the value of things. 2 : a specific set of ideas of a person or a group Greek *philosophy*.

What is Philosophy? An Omnibus of Definitions from Prominent ...

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2012/04/09/what-is-philosophy/>

Apr 9, 2012 - '*Philosophy* is 99 per cent about critical reflection on anything you care to be interested in.'

50+ Definitions of Philosophy : ~ Eduhutch

eduhutch.blogspot.com/2014/04/50-definitions-of-philosophy.html

Apr 6, 2014 - According to Aristotle - "*Philosophy* is a science which discovers the real nature of supernatural elements". According to Levison - "*Philosophy* ...

Definition | language and philosophy | Britannica.com

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/definition>

Definition, In *philosophy*, the specification of the meaning of an expression relative to a language. *Definitions* may be classified as lexical, ostensive, and ...

Definition - Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Definition>

A *definition* is a statement of the meaning of a term *Definitions* can be classified into two large This preoccupation with essence dissipated in much of modern *philosophy*. Analytic *philosophy* in particular is critical of attempts to elucidate the ...

"Definitions, Dictionaries, and Meanings", by Norman Swartz, Dept. of ...

<https://www.sfu.ca/~swartz/definitions.htm>

Students often approach *philosophy* with beliefs about *definition* which border on the magical. Students mistakenly believe that defining one's terms will usually

...

philosophy - Dictionary Definition : Vocabulary.com

<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/philosophy>

The noun *philosophy* means the study of proper behavior, and the search for wisdom.

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1. Philosophy / D. Nature of Philosophy / 3. Philosophy Defined

[attempts to define the whole subject of philosophy]

26 ideas

[7421](#)

A philosopher is one who cares about what other people care about **[Socrates, by Foucault]**

[572](#)

Philosophy has different powers from dialectic, and a different life from sophistry **[Aristotle]**

[609](#)

Philosophy is a kind of science that deals with principles **[Aristotle]**

[624](#)

Absolute thinking is the thinking of thinking **[Aristotle]**

2666

Carneades' pinnacles of philosophy are the basis of knowledge (the criterion of truth) and the end of appetite (good) **[Carneades, by Cicero]**

21394

Philosophy is knowing each logos, how they fit together, and what follows from them **[Epictetus]**

6207

What fills me with awe are the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me **[Kant]**

4171

Philosophy considers only the universal, in nature as everywhere else **[Schopenhauer]**

4186

Everyone is conscious of all philosophical truths, but philosophers bring them to conceptual awareness **[Schopenhauer]**

19456

Philosophy is distinguished from other sciences by its complete lack of presuppositions **[Feuerbach]**

5278

Philosophy is no more than abstractions concerning observations of human historical development **[Marx/Engels]**

6118

Philosophy is logical analysis, followed by synthesis **[Russell]** Russell talks about the noun philosophy and not the verb, the nature of philosophizing.

5368

Philosophy verifies that our hierarchy of instinctive beliefs is harmonious and consistent [**Russell**]

2512

Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language [**Wittgenstein**]

7085

The main problem of philosophy is what can and cannot be thought and expressed [**Wittgenstein, by Grayling**]

6870

I say (contrary to Wittgenstein) that philosophy expresses what we thought we must be silent about [**Ansell Pearson on Wittgenstein**]

5196

Philosophy is a department of logic [**Ayer**]

6707

Suicide - whether life is worth living - is the one serious philosophical problem [**Camus**]

7426

Critical philosophy is what questions domination at every level [**Foucault**]

2510

Traditionally philosophy is an a priori enquiry into general truths about reality [**Katz**]

2516

Most of philosophy begins where science leaves off [**Katz**]

12644

Who cares what 'philosophy' is? Most pre-1950 thought doesn't now count as philosophy **[Fodor]**

8217

Philosophy is a concept-creating discipline **[Deleuze/Guattari]**

9778

There is no dialogue in philosophy **[Zizek]**

9218

Maybe what distinguishes philosophy from science is its pursuit of necessary truths **[Sider]**

15357

Philosophy is the most general intellectual discipline **[Horsten]**

[Philosophy Ideas Database](#)

1. Philosophy / D. Nature of Philosophy / 3. Philosophy Defined

[attempts to define the whole subject of philosophy]

26 ideas

7421

A philosopher is one who cares about what other people care about **[Socrates, by Foucault]**

Full Idea: Socrates asks people 'Are you caring for yourself?' He is the man who cares about the care of others; this is the particular position of the philosopher.

From: report of Socrates (reports of career [c.420 BCE]) by Michel Foucault - Ethics of the Concern for Self as Freedom p.287

A reaction: Priests, politicians and psychiatrists also care quite intensely about the concerns of other people.

Someone who was intensely self-absorbed with the critical task of getting their own beliefs right would count for me as a philosopher.

572

Philosophy has different powers from dialectic, and a different life from sophistry **[Aristotle]**

Full Idea: Philosophy differs from dialectic in the manner of its powers, and from sophistry in the choice of life that it involves.

From: Aristotle (Metaphysics [c.324 BCE], 1004b)

A reaction: Note the separation of dialectic from the heart of philosophy, and the claim that philosophy is a way of life.

609

Philosophy is a kind of science that deals with principles **[Aristotle]**

Full Idea: Philosophy is a kind of science that deals with principles.

From: Aristotle (Metaphysics [c.324 BCE], 1059a)

A reaction: So is philosophy just part of science - the bit that tries to explain the abstract instead of the physical?

624

Absolute thinking is the thinking of thinking **[Aristotle]**

Full Idea: Absolute thinking is the thinking of thinking.

From: Aristotle (Metaphysics [c.324 BCE], 1074b)

A reaction: Connects to the apparently unique human ability to reflect about our own thoughts.

2666

Carneades' pinnacles of philosophy are the basis of knowledge (the criterion of truth) and the end of appetite (good) **[Carneades, by Cicero]**

Full Idea: Carneades said the two greatest things in philosophy were the criterion of truth and the end of goods, and no man could be a sage who was ignorant of the existence of either a beginning of the process of knowledge or an end of appetite.

From: report of Carneades (fragments/reports [c.174 BCE]) by M. Tullius Cicero - *Academica* II.09.29

A reaction: Nice, but I would want to emphasise the distinction between truth and its criterion. Admittedly we would have no truth without a good criterion, but the truth itself should be held in higher esteem than our miserable human means of grasping it.

21394

Philosophy is knowing each logos, how they fit together, and what follows from them **[Epictetus]**

Full Idea: [Philosophical speculation] consists in knowing the elements of 'logos', what each of them is like, how they fit together, and what follows from them.

From: Epictetus (*The Discourses* [c.56], 4.08.14), quoted by A.A. Long - *Hellenistic Philosophy* 4.1

A reaction: [Said to echo Zeno] If you substitute understanding for 'logos' (plausibly), I think this is exactly the view of philosophy I would subscribe to. We want to understand each aspect of life, and we want those understandings to cohere with one another.

6207

What fills me with awe are the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me **[Kant]**

Full Idea: Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.

From: Immanuel Kant (Critique of Practical Reason [1788], Concl)

A reaction: I am beginning to think that the two major issues of all philosophy are ontology and metaethics, and Kant is close to agreeing with me. He certainly wasn't implying that astronomy was a key aspect of philosophy.

4171

Philosophy considers only the universal, in nature as everywhere else [**Schopenhauer**]

Full Idea: Philosophy considers only the universal, in nature as everywhere else.

From: Arthur Schopenhauer (The World as Will and Idea [1819], II.27)

A reaction: I think what draws people to philosophy is an interest in whatever is timeless. Contingent reality is so frustrating and exhausting. Hence I agree.

4186

Everyone is conscious of all philosophical truths, but philosophers bring them to conceptual awareness [**Schopenhauer**]

Full Idea: Every person is conscious of all philosophical truths, but to bring them to conceptual awareness, to reflection, is the business of the philosopher.

From: Arthur Schopenhauer (The World as Will and Idea [1819], IV.68)

A reaction: I like this. All human beings are philosophical. It seems unlikely, though, that we are all pre-con-

ceptually conscious of the higher levels of philosophical logic.

19456

Philosophy is distinguished from other sciences by its complete lack of presuppositions **[Feuerbach]**

Full Idea: Philosophy does not presuppose anything. It is precisely in this fact of non-presupposition that its beginning lies - a beginning by virtue of which it is set apart from all the other sciences.

From: Ludwig Feuerbach (On 'The Beginning of Philosophy' [1841], p.135)

A reaction: Most modern philosophers seem to laugh at such an idea, because everything is theory-laden, culture-laden, language-laden etc. As an aspiration I love it, and think good philosophers get quite close to the goal (which, I admit, is not fully attainable).

5278

Philosophy is no more than abstractions concerning observations of human historical development **[Marx/Engels]**

Full Idea: When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence. At best it is a summing up of general results, abstractions which arise from observation of the historical development of man.

From: K Marx / F Engels (The German Ideology [1846], §1.A)

A reaction: This strikes me as nonsense, based on a bogus Hegelian notion that history is following some sort of pattern, and that mental reality is fixed by physical conditions. The philosophy of mathematics, for one, won't fit into this definition.

6118

Philosophy is logical analysis, followed by synthesis **[Russell]**

Full Idea: The business of philosophy, as I conceive it, is essentially that of logical analysis, followed by logical synthesis.

From: Bertrand Russell (Logical Atomism [1924], p.162)

A reaction: I am uneasy about Russell's hopes for the contribution that logic could make, but I totally agree that analysis is the route to wisdom, and I take Aristotle as my role model of an analytical philosopher, rather than the modern philosophers of logic.

5368

Philosophy verifies that our hierarchy of instinctive beliefs is harmonious and consistent **[Russell]**

Full Idea: Philosophy should show us the hierarchy of our instinctive beliefs, ..and show that they do not clash, but form a harmonious system. There is no reason to reject an instinctive belief, except that it clashes with others.

From: Bertrand Russell (Problems of Philosophy [1912], Ch. 2)

A reaction: This is open to the standard objections to the coherence theory of truth (as explained by Russell!), but I like this view of philosophy. Somewhere behind it is the rationalist dream that the final set of totally consistent beliefs will have to be true.

2512

Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language

[Wittgenstein]

Full Idea: Philosophical problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have already known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.

From: Ludwig Wittgenstein (Philosophical Investigations [1952], §109), quoted by Jerrold J. Katz - Realistic Rationalism Int.xi

A reaction: A philosophical dispute can be settled by a piece of information, which may be already known to you, but new to me. Philosophical discussion can also point to a scientific research programme - i.e. a need for new information. I like the first sentence.

7085

The main problem of philosophy is what can and cannot be thought and expressed [**Wittgenstein, by Grayling**]

Full Idea: The 'Tractatus' concerns the theory of what can be expressed by propositions (and, which comes to the same thing, can be thought), and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but can only be shown; which, I believe, is the main problem of philosophy.

From: report of Ludwig Wittgenstein (Letter to Russell [1920]) by A.C. Grayling - Wittgenstein Ch.2

A reaction: This contains what I consider the heresy of making thought depend on language, but his main question remains, of the limits of thought. It is dramatised nicely in the 'mysterian' view of the mind-body problem (e.g. Idea 2540).

6870

I say (contrary to Wittgenstein) that philosophy expresses what we thought we must be silent about [**Ansell Pearson on Wittgenstein**]

Full Idea: I recognise the incredible force of Wittgenstein's closing statement in the 'Tractatus', but I hold the

opposite view: philosophy exists to give expression to that which we think we can only remain silent about.

A reaction: A wonderful remark, with which I totally agree. Compare Idea 1596. I think it is just a fact that philosophers are able to articulate a huge number of ideas which other intelligent people find very interesting but on which they are unable to speak.

5196

Philosophy is a department of logic [**Ayer**]

Full Idea: Philosophy is a departme

A reaction: Personally I would invert that. Philosophy is concerned with human rationality, of which precise logic appears to be a rather limited subdivision. I see philosophy as the 'master' subject, not the 'servant' subject (as Locke had implied).

6707

Suicide - whether life is worth living - is the one serious philosophical problem [**Camus**]

Full Idea: There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judgine whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.

From: Albert Camus (The Myth of Sisyphus [1942], p.11)

A reaction: What a wonderful thesis for a book. In Idea 2682 there is the possibility of life being worth living, but not worth a huge amount of effort. It is better to call Camus' question the first question, rather than the only question.

7426

Critical philosophy is what questions domination at every level [**Foucault**]

Full Idea: In its critical aspect, philosophy is that which calls into question domination at every level

From: Michel Foucault (Ethics of the Concern for Self as Freedom [1984], p.300)

A reaction: A very French view of the subject. It is tempting to say that they had their adolescent outburst in 1789, and it is time to grow up. With rights come responsibilities...

2510

Traditionally philosophy is an a priori enquiry into general truths about reality **[Katz]**

Full Idea: The traditional conception of philosophy is that it is an a priori enquiry into the most general facts about reality.

From: Jerrold J. Katz (Realistic Rationalism [2000], Int.xi)

A reaction: I think this still defines philosophy, though it also highlights the weakness of the subject, which is over-confidence about asserting necessary truths. How could the most god-like areas of human thought be about anything else?

2516

Most of philosophy begins where science leaves off **[Katz]**

ilosopher must learn not to be frightened by absurdities.

From: Bertrand Russell (Problems of Philosophy [1912], Ch. 2)

A reaction: He says this jokingly, but it is obviously true. Philosophy requires extreme imagination, and it also requires taking seriously possibilities that are dismissed by others. It would be a catastrophe if we all dismissed the truth as self-evidently false.

2937

What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence **[Wittgenstein]**

Full Idea: What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silen

A reaction: This is either a boring truism, or points towards some sort of verificationism (where we can speak meaninglessly). Compare Ideas 7973 and 6870.

2626

A philosopher is outside any community of ideas **[Wittgenstein]**

Full Idea: The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas; that is what makes him a philosopher.

From: Ludwig Wittgenstein (Zettel [1950], 455)

A reaction: A bit surprising from the man who gave us 'language games' and 'private language argument'.

20435

If philosophy could be summarised it would be pointless **[Adorno]**

Full Idea: Philosophy is in essence not summarisable. Otherwise it would be superfluous; that most of it allows its to be summarised speaks against it.

A reaction: This seems contradict the Cicero quotation which I take to be the epigraph of my collection of ideas. Adorno has a very 'continental' view, placing philosophy much closer to poetry (Heidegger's later view) than to science. Not like advocacy either.

3269

If your life is to be meaningful as part of some large thing, the large thing must be meaningful **[Nagel]**

Full Idea: Those seeking to give their lives meaning usually envision a role in something larger than themselves, ...but such a role can't confer significance unless that enterprise is itself significant.

From: Thomas Nagel (The Absurd [1971], §3)

A reaction: Which correctly implies that this way of finding meaning for one's life is doomed.

3242

Philosophy is the childhood of the intellect, and a culture can't skip it [**Nagel**]

Full Idea: Philosophy is the childhood of the intellect, and a culture that tries to skip it will never grow up.

From: Thomas Nagel (The View from Nowhere [1986], Intro)

A reaction: Can he really mean that a mature culture doesn't need philosophy?

7973

There is no longer anything on which there is nothing to say [**Baudrillard**]

Full Idea: There is no longer anything on which there is nothing to say.

From: Jean Baudrillard (The Intelligence of Evil [2004], p. 17)

A reaction: Compare Ideas 2937 and 6870. I'm not sure whether Baudrillard is referring to the limits of philosophy, or merely to social taboos. I like Ansell Pearson's view: we should attempt to discuss what appears to be undiscussable.

9786

Philosophers working like teams of scientists is absurd, yet isolation is hard [**Cartwright,R**]

Full Idea: The notion that philosophy can be done cooperatively, in the manner of scientists or engineers engaged in a research project, seems to me absurd. And yet few philosophers can survive in isolation.

From: Richard Cartwright (Intro to 'Philosophical Essays' [1987], xxi)

A reaction: This why Nietzsche said that philosophers were 'rare plants'.

3695

Philosophy is a priori if it is anything [**Bonjour**]

Full Idea: My conviction is that philosophy is a priori if it is anything.

From: Laurence Bonjour (In Defence of Pure Reason [1998], Pref)

A reaction: How about knowledge of a posteriori necessities, such as the length of a metre, known by observation of the standard metre in Paris?

8220

Philosophy is in a perpetual state of digression [**Deleuze/Guattari**]

Full Idea: Philosophy can be seen as being in a perpetual state of digression.

Full Idea: What is your aim in philosophy? - To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.

From: Ludwig Wittgenstein (Philosophical Investigations [1952], §309)

A reaction: Ridiculous. Trying to think about thought is not a pointless buzzing - it is an attempt by humans to become like gods.

9810

The 'Tractatus' is a masterpiece of anti-philosophy [**Badiou on Wittgenstein**]

Full Idea: The 'Tractatus' is without doubt one of the masterpieces of anti-philosophy.

From: comment on Ludwig Wittgenstein (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus [1921], p.16) by Alain Badiou - Mathematics and Philosophy: grand and little

A reaction: French philosophers do love making wicked remarks like that. It seems that analysis is anti-philosophy, or 'little' philosophy in Badiou's parlance

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19621

Originality in philosophy is just the invention of terms [**Cioran**]

Full Idea: The philosopher's originality comes down to inventing terms.

From: E.M. Cioran (A Short History of Decay [1949], 1 'Farewell')

A reaction: Analytic philosophers are just as obsessed with inventing terms as their continental rivals. Kit Fine, for example. It can't be wrong to invent terms. Scientists do it too.

19618

I abandoned philosophy because it didn't acknowledge melancholy and human weakness **[Cioran]**

Full Idea: I turned away from philosophy when it became impossible to discover in Kant any human weakness, any authentic accent of melancholy; in Kant and in all the philosophers.

5

The Universe-for-us

1.

I attempted a depiction of a few general ideas concerning the universe for us.

2.

The aim of this is to present a very general view of the context of philosophy and the doing of philosophy or philosophizing.

3.

I did not attempt a depiction consisting of many or great details, because i am not qualified to do that, I did not wish to become involved in unnecessary speculation or the presentation of anything that is not absolutely necessary and relevant to my aim.

4.

The universe for us or the universe as perceived at present might well be only one of many of a multi verse or set of multiverses.

5.

The universe for us or the universe as perceived or dealt with at present is the one that is said to have commenced with the so-called Big Bang.

6.

The Big Bang is not the beginning of everything, as if prior to it nothing existed.

7.

It is merely said to be the beginning of our universe, the present universe or the universe for us.

8.

This universe, for us, is said to be everything there is, everything that we at present are aware of, as the universe.

9.

It is said to be expanding.

10.

How can it expand? Into what can it expand if it is everything that there is?

11.

This is not some kind of mystery, but merely the result of the misuse of words and the mistaken use of inappropriate notions.

12.

That what the universe continues to expand into or to obviously forms part of or should be included in our notion of the universe.

13.

Just as the misuse of words or the mistaken use of notions when it is said or thought that the prior to the Big Bang there was nothing.

14.

Our present universe or the present universe for us did not exist prior to the Big Bang.

15.

But this does not imply that there was nothing prior to the Big Bang of this universe for us. There did exist phenomena, for example gases and processes and natural laws prior to the Big Bang of this universe for us.

16.

As stated before, the reason for mentioning this universe and/or multiverse, is because I consider it to be the meaningful and appropriate context and the point and frame of reference for philosophy.

17.

Both for a meaningful notion of what philosophy is as well as the most appropriate idea of what the doing of philosophy or philosophizing could be.

18.

Of course what the aims, objectives, purposes and functions of this socio-cultural practice could be and are, are open to discussion.

19.

The reason for this is because it will most likely vary and change with different historical periods, greater or lesser degrees of professionalization, academic settings or notions of the discipline as executed in more original and creative ways than the restrictions and norms of academic institutions.

20.

Objections to notions of and the doing of philosophy in the context and frame of reference of planet earth and anthropo-centered settings and according to associated attitudes, values, biases, world views and other pre-suppositions and assumptions.

21.

In the chapter dealing with these things I mentioned a number of factors that are involved in and that determine, restrict and distort doing of philosophy and conceptions of philosophy, its purposes, aims, objectives and functions in the setting and

frame of reference of planet earth and from the point of reference of anthropo-centrism.

22.

I do not attempt to or wish to discard the notion and the functions of intersubjectivity.

23.

I merely object to anthropo-centered determined, associated and restricted intersubjectivities.

23.1

One variety of this type of anthropocentered intersubjectivity is that created by academic institutions and the professionalization of philosophy and the doing of philosophizing.

24.

Philosophy | Definition of Philosophy by Merriam-Webster

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/philosophy>

1 : the study of the basic ideas about knowledge, right and wrong, reasoning, and the value of things. 2 : a specific set of ideas of a person or a group Greek *philosophy*.

An illustration of the almost automatic anthropocentric thinking.

Whose basic ideas? Humans of course.

About what? Knowledge. Knowledge of human being of course. What they assume to be knowing and knowledge.

Reasoning - human cognition and thinking and more specifically reasoning.

Basic ideas about right and wrong. Right and wrong for humans. this of course depends on many factors such as civilization, society, culture and sub-culture, socio-economic class, your community, gender, age, religion, historical period, etc.

All absolutely anthropocentric, totally restricted, biased and determined by many pre-suppositions and assumptions.

25.

The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy defines it as the study of "the most fundamental and general concepts and principles involved in thought, action and reality."

Its is a study in other words a human activity, of concepts - human concepts,

human principles,
 employed by and involved in human activities such as
 thought or thinking, action and that what is real or con-
 stituted and interpreted as reality for human being.

26

Let us have a look at what Wikipedia says about this
 word and discipline.

It is a study, in other words a human activity.

A study of questions - that what counts as questions for
 human beings,

Questions about what kind of things?

Phenomena that matters to human beings such as

existence,

knowledge,

human values,

that what humans consider to be and accept as reason,

mind - whatever that might mean,

and language

Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental ques-
 tions about existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and
 language. Such questions are often posed as problems to be
 studied or resolved. The term was probably coined by Pytha-
 goras.Wikipedia.

26

What is Philosophy? The Basics of Philosophy

www.philosophybasics.com › [general_whatis](#)

1st

As used originally by the ancient Greeks, the term "**philosophy**" meant the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and comprised ALL areas of speculative thought, ...

Again, obviously totally human-centered and restricted notions of philosophy as is the following.

27

Dictionary.com [dictionary.com](#) › [browse](#) › [philosophy-Philosophy](#) definition, the rational investigation of the truths and principles of being, knowledge, or conduct. See more. **Philosophy: What and Why? | Philosophy - Brown University** www.brown.edu › [philosophy](#) › [undergraduate](#) › [philos...](#) **Philosophy** is the systematic and critical study of fundamental questions that arise both in everyday life and through the practice of other disciplines. Some of ...

28

a few more anthropocentered notions of the discipline
-PHILOSOPHY | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary dictionary.cambridge.org › [dictionary](#) › [philosophy](#)- **philosophy definition:**
 1. the use of reason in understanding such things as the nat-

ure of the *real* world and existence.... Learn more. **What is Philosophy? The Basics of Philosophy** www.philosophybasics.com › [general_whatis](#) or philo-
 sophía, *meaning* 'the love of wisdom') is the study of knowl-
 edge, ... what counts as *genuine* knowledge (epistemology);
 and what are the correct ... **Philosophy dictionary
 definition | philosophy defined** www.yourdictionary.com › [philosophy](#) **philosophy definition: *Philosophy*** is a
 set of ideals, standards or beliefs used to ... *philosophy* and
 beliefs of George Berkeley denying the existence of
 the *real* ... **Philosophy | Definition of Philoso-
 phy by Merriam-Webster**

[www.merriam-webster.com > dictionary > philosophy](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/philosophy) a particular set of ideas about knowledge, truth the nature and *meaning* of life, etc. : a set of ideas about how to do something or how to live.

28

A few words on concepts and conceptual practices. Human beings employ concepts not merely to reconstitute their worlds, realities, including their selves, minds, consciousness, lives and loves but to fabricate and constitute these things. As well as their perceptions, thinking, feelings, emotions and reactions to, interpretations of, developing, maintaining and transforming these things.

In this way ideas and concepts enable the creation of realities, inner and external worlds and lives.

But this constitution is not absolutely unlimited or free, but restricted, determined, following norms, rules, -isms, patterns, customs, traditions, social, cultural, historical, intersubjective and many other

rules, limits, aims, objectives, purposes, goals, etc.

Concepts, conceptual practices, usage and meanings are loaded and associated with pre-determined -isms, pre-suppositions, assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, restrictions, perspectives, frames of reference, and other phenomena that will determine how they are used, their effects, results, consequences, etc.

6

Humans in the Multiverse

1

Let us assume a multiverse.

Let us assume it represents at least one possible notion of ‘reality’, in the sense of that what is, that what is ‘real’.

1.1

Let us assume the universe-at-present, the universe-for-us forms part of this multiverse.

Let us assume this universe-for-us is one possible notion of ‘reality’, in the sense of that what is ‘real’.

That what ‘is’.

1.2

Let us assume that in this universe or forming part of it is planet earth.

1.3

Let us assume that human beings exist on this planet.

That they form part of this planet.

1.4

Let us assume that these embodied humans have or are senses, brains, bodies, organs, bio-chemistry, psychology, sociology, economic and culture, etc.

1,41

We have fairly good descriptions and explanations about the nature, biological, psychological, sociological, economical, political, etc by different sciences about these features, dimensions, existence and interactions of human beings - both in different, contemporary cultures, societies and countries today as well as in previous historical periods.

1.42

For those who prefer more philosophical types of explorations we have them from different religions and philosophies, for example the Western, Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist and other traditions.

1.421

If you prefer the explorations and speculations of the Western tradition of philosophy, there are many by empiricists, idealists, physicalists, materialists, panpsychists, dualists, monists, etc.

2

Then there exist the few individuals, among them the philosophically inclined, those who are unable to accept the suggestions of others about the aims, purposes, objectives and even the ways of human existence.

2.1

We find ideas by such individuals in *Being and Time*, *Being and Nothingness*, the *Tractatus*, *Philosophical Investigations*, etc.

2.11

Regardless if we agree with the questions being asked by those individuals, for example in these works, or not, these are attempts to formulate questions that express concerns that seriously and really matter (or not) to those individuals.

2.12

These individuals represent the pole of the continuum of philosophizing or philosophers that are original and creative thinkers and not those of the opposite pole that consist of the academic, scholarly, institutionalized, professional variety - who live off philosophy.

2.121

Namely those who talk about, teach, explore, write about and learn the ideas of other philosophers.

3

Who are these people?

Why do they ask these philosophical questions?

Why do they feel the need to ask such questions?

what drives them to ask such questions?

To they reveal the same characteristics? That enable us to identify them?

What are the factors that are involved in their need to ask such questions?

Can we identify any similarities in their existence, their lives, their questions, their explorations, their methods, tools and techniques?

And the answers, solutions or explanations they develop?

4

I employ the meta-philosophy themes of Suber to identify some of the characteristics, interests and concerns that might inform us about original and creative philosophers and distinguish them from paid, professionalized, institutionalized, derivative, academic thinkers -

<https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/courses/meta/topics.htm>

- [Cognitivity](#)
- [Systematicity](#)
- [Methodology](#)
- [Historicity](#)
- [Self-reference and Self-application](#)
- [Immanence and non-immanence](#)
- [Disagreement and diversity](#)
- [Primacy of the practical](#)
- [Philosophy good and bad](#)
- [Philosophy and expertise](#)
- [Ends of philosophy](#)
- [Death of philosophy](#)
- [Anti-philosophies](#)
- [Philosophy and assertion](#)
- [Philosophy and exposition](#)
- [Philosophy and style](#)
- [Philosophy as literature](#)
- [Literature as philosophy](#)
- [Philosophical beauty](#)
- [Philosophy as science](#)
- [Philosophy and related fields and activities](#)
- [Philosophy and argument](#)

- [Philosophy and wisdom](#)
- [Philosophy and metaphilosophy](#)
- [Philosophy and the folk](#)
- [Philosophy and 'primitive' life](#)
- [Philosophy and philosophers](#)
- [Philosophy and pedagogy](#)

4.1

cognitivity -

- **Does philosophy lead to knowledge (is it cognitive)? Can it be true or false?**
- **To be cognitive in this sense is to bear any truth-value, including falsehood, as opposed to bearing none at all. Don't confuse cognitivity with truth.**
-
- **What is meant by knowledge here? Information? Data? Facts? Insights? Understanding?**
-
-
- **To bear a truth-value is not necessarily to be knowable with certainty, or by any method. Don't confuse cognitivity with knowability.**
- **The question is not whether anything is knowledge or cognitive e.g. science; but whether *philosophy* is (ever) knowledge.**
-
- **Does philosophy merely criticize or examine knowledge, without itself being (or becoming) knowledge? If so, then why should we trust it? What warrants it? Can it be objective or**

corrigible? How should we evaluate it?

- Can philosophy be cognitive "in some sense" and non-cognitive "in another sense"? If so, try to articulate those senses. **Can we say that the "highest" or "most important" philosophy is cognitive or non-cognitive?**
- If philosophy is non-cognitive, would it follow that we should read it non-immanently? (See section below on [immanent and non-immanent readings of philosophy](#).)
- If philosophy is cognitive, does the apparently permanent character of disagreement in philosophy become a sign of failure? (See the section below on [disagreement and diversity](#).)
- In natural science even "negative results" are valuable. (A negative result is the failure to confirm an hypothesis.) Is there anything comparable in philosophy? What value might "mistaken" philosophies have?
- Can only non-cognitivist metaphilosophies find value in "great mistakes"?
-
- What different **ways are there to be non-cognitive** and how do we decide to favor some over others? **Here are some to consider:** Many of these appear in the work of original and creative philosophers and thinkers in all disciplines and discourses.
-
- truth not propositional; philosophy proposi-

tional only as means, or only sometime (Hegel)

- truth only within system, and system suspended or floating (Kant? Wittgenstein)
- non-cognitive point to inquiry for truth (Stoicism, pragmatism, many others)
- cognitive criteria ultimately subordinate to ethical or aesthetic criteria (Nietzsche)
- self-conscious fictionalism (Nietzsche? Vaihinger)
- centrality of regulative principles
- philosophy as "stirring the compost"
- philosophy as questions, not answers
- philosophy as search for comfort, solace, utility, beauty, ataraxia, salvation
- philosophy as literature or art
- philosophy as expression of personality
- philosophy as expression of Zeitgeist, substructure, personality, etc. (ideology)
- philosophy as sheer choice
- philosophy as cultural action
- philosophy as liberation
- philosophy as self-creation
- philosophy as preparation for death
- philosophy as meditation
- philosophy as criticism
- philosophy as prescription
- philosophy as play
- philosophy as worship, celebration
- philosophy as therapy
- philosophy as clarification of language

- philosophy as (a certain kind of) living
- philosophy as wisdom
- philosophy as "gadflight"
-
- How can we decide that some philosophy is better than others? Are non-cognitivists at a loss, or disadvantage, here?
- See John Lange, *The Cognitivity Paradox*, Princeton University Press, 1970; Jacob Loewenberg, *Reason and the Nature of Things: Reflections on the Cognitive Function of Philosophy*, Open Court, 1959; James F. Peterman, *Philosophy as Therapy: An Interpretation and Defense of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophical Project*, SUNY Press, 1992; Joseph Wayne Smith, *The Progress and Rationality of Philosophy as a Cognitive Enterprise: An Essay on Metaphilosophy*, Avebury, 1988.

4.2

Systematicity

- **Should philosophy be systematic?**
- **What is a philosophical system?**
-
- **Original and creative thinkers, for example Kant, might produce systems, but others such as Nietzsche, does not explicitly work in terms of systems. Although it is probably to identify patterns in his work that can be in-**

terpreted as systematic chains of ideas.

-
- **Supporting certain -isms?**
- **What virtues have been claimed for doing philosophy non-systematically or anti-systematically?**
- **Why is beginning a problem for systematic philosophy?**
 - **Compare a few philosophers on their actual beginnings and on their theoretical solutions to the problem of beginning.**
-
- **Can systems prove themselves without begging the question by taking the methods and standards of proof from within the system?**
- Cf. Nietzsche: "I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity." *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 1968; from *Twilight of the Idols* (original 1889), I.26 (p. 25); cf Hollingdale's comments on N's anti-systematicity in Appendix A, of this edition, pp. 188-89.
- See Everett W. Hall, *Philosophical Systems: A Categorical Analysis*, University of Chicago Press, 1960; George Lucas Jr. (ed.), *Hegel and Whitehead: Contemporary Perspectives on Systematic Philosophy*, SUNY Press, 1986; Adriaan Theodoor Peperzak, *System and History in Philosophy*, SUNY Press, 1986; Jules

Vuillemin, *What Are Philosophical Systems?*,
Cambridge University Press, 1986.

4.3

Methodology

- **Are there methods peculiar to philosophy?**
-
- **See my work on Socratic Method and Philosophical Tools.**
-
- https://www.academia.edu/35117404/PHILOSOPHY_Aims_Methods_Rationale
-
-
- **Do we need a method to discover, examine, or justify a method? Do we need a certified method to certify a method? If so, how do we escape this apparent dilemma of circularity and infinite regress?**
-
- **Perhaps meta-philosophical investigation?**
-
-
- **How does philosophy justify its methods?**
- **Do (should) we acquire a method before claiming knowledge, or after? Is knowledge certified by the method that discovered or established it, or is method certified by the knowledge it discovers or establishes?**

- **What is the relationship between method and result in philosophy?**
- What is, and what ought to be, the role of argument in philosophy?
- How rigid is the distinction between argument to convince and argument to prove? Does argument have a *bona fide* epistemic function or is it entirely social/political?
- See section on [philosophy and argument](#) below.
- **Original and creative thinkers may or may not employ arguments and/or other philosophical tools, techniques and methods.**

4.4

Historicity

- **Is a philosophy (questions, problems, tools, techniques, pre-suppositions, methods, scientific and other information and insights,) determined, or limited, by conditions in the philosopher's time and place?**
-
- **All philosophers most likely exhibit at least some traces and signs of their culture, society, community, historical period and place or phenotypes.**
-
- **Are some philosophies impossible to under-**

- **stanfrom certain other historical positions?**
- **For a given philosopher who claims eternal truth for her conclusions, how does she claim to have transcended history, and how does she explain her own historicity?**
- For a given philosopher who disclaims eternal truths and asserts that all assertions are historically situated, how does she cope with the apparent self-refutation of her position?
-
- Is the history of philosophy the history of error?
- **What is the relation between the substance of a philosophy and its 'place' in the history of philosophy?**
- **What is the relation between philosophy itself and the history of philosophy?**
- How does this relation differ from those between mathematics, chemistry, literature, or religion and their histories?
- If "philosophy is the history of philosophy" (Hegel), then are all philosophical claims historically conditioned and liable to reevaluation (including this one)?
-
- Can philosophy progress? If so, has it actually progressed?
-
- **All original and creative thinkers will touch on the current, prevailing paradigm and they will most likely touch on it, question it and develop it further and/or modify and assist in**

the replacement of it in greater or smaller degrees.

- Can philosophy regress? Can you cite any examples?
- Compare the values of writing the history of philosophy immanently and non-immanently.

4.5

Self-Reference and Self-Application

Are a given philosopher's criteria of truth (knowledge, meaning) true (knowable, meaningful) by their own terms? Must they b

Is self-referential inconsistency as objectionable as other kinds of inconsistency?

Many philosophies have implications for the nature or use of argument, proof, language, method, and philosophy itself. Must philosophies always comply with their own strictures on these subjects, or can they work at a 'different level' and exempt themselves?

Are there interesting or significant philosophical positions that cannot be expounded except with some self-referential problem or paradox? Can you think of examples?

Compare the metaphilosophies of a few philoso-

phers on their self-referential consistency.

Some scholars have distinguished philosophical reasoning from formal logical reasoning (and scientific and legal reasoning), and found that some self-referential methods are peculiar to philosophy.

-
- What uses of self-reference are peculiar to philosophical reasoning?
-
-
- Find examples of self-justification and self-refutation.
- Does the search for first principles, or presuppositions, require frequent encounters with vicious and benign self-reference?
-
- For a given work, what is the effect of doctrine (if any) on the genre of its exposition, type of discourse, or use of language? on its mode of assertion, type of confidence or certainty claimed?
- Many philosophers use reason to limit or subvert reason (see e.g. Sextus Empiricus, Hume, and Kant). If this is paradoxical at first sight, what does it show in the last analysis about the nature of reason, philosophy, and method?

4.6

Immanence and Non-Immanence

Should philosophy be **explained as the intellectual response to philosophical questions, arguments, living problems, and prior philosophers?** (These would be immanent explanations.)

- Should philosophy instead be explained as the upshot, byproduct, epiphenomenon, or side-effect of something else, such as economic or political forces, class struggle, will to power, individual psychology, cultural determinism, or linguistic confusion? (These would be non-immanent or reductive explanations; they are sometimes
-
- For a given philosopher, ask whether she wants to be examined solely on the basis of the arguments and conclusions in her book?
- Even if so, what might be useful for us, qua philosophers, to learn about the philosopher's (or philosophy's) psychological, political, economic, or historical background and circumstances?
-
- For a given philosopher, ask whether her important theses arose, or are presented as if they arose, entirely from thinking about issues and examining arguments?
- What of philosophical interest might be (in Wittgenstein's terms) displayed but not depicted by a work of philosophy?
- Is it necessary, or artificial, to distinguish the

grounds of a theory according to the author (the immanent argument) from the causes of the theory according to the reader (the non-immanent explanation)? If they are distinct, which is more essential in understanding the nature of a philosophy?

-
- What are the social and political conditions that define philosophers and philosophy? Does identifying them help solve or dissolve any philosophical problems?
- Is immanent philosophy bad faith? "Just academic"? If philosophy must address one's situation to be authentic, how far can it then address the tradition and continue the immanent dialogue of the tradition?
- Can philosophy be done non-immanently, or only viewed non-immanently?

-

4.7

Primacy of the Practical

Is 'the practical' (the ethical) primary in philosophy?

- Do we do non-ethical philosophy ultimately for the sake of ethics, and all philosophy ultimately for the sake of action or living?
- **Is philosophy essentially a kind of inquiry?**
- Is philosophy essentially a kind of action or life?

Do we do non-ethical philosophy ultimately for the sake of ethics, and all philosophy ultimately for the sake of action or living?

- Is philosophy essentially a kind of inquiry?
-
- **Inquiry is one stage and one dimension of the doing of philosophy.**
-
- Is 'the practical' (the ethical) primary in philosophy?
- Do we do non-ethical philosophy ultimately for the sake of ethics, and all **philosophy ultimately for the sake of action or living?**
- **Is philosophy essentially a kind of inquiry?**
- Is 'the practical' (the ethical) primary in philosophy?
- Do we do non-ethical philosophy ultimately for the sake of ethics, and all philosophy ultimately for the sake of action or living?
- Is philosophy essentially a kind of inquiry?
- Is philosophy essentially a kind of action or life?
- What is the relation between 'the speculative' and 'the practical' in philosophy?
- Do we hold one philosophy rather than another solely by virtue of intellectual criteria or at least partially by sheer choices?
- Explore what Fichte, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre have said on this question.
-

Philosophy good and bad

- **How do we distinguish good or great philosophy from lesser philosophy?**
- **How have philosophers done it?**
- **Do our criteria come from the philosophies we are judging to be good or great? (What are the paradoxes of saying yes, or no, here?)**
-
- Is it an objection to some non-immanent readings of philosophy that they ignore excellence and look at all works, good and bad, as equally representative of a certain underlying cause, or as symptoms of some syndrome?
- Is the *evaluation* of philosophy, as Northrop Frye says of literature, much less important than its interpretation?
- Is there a dimension of quality in philosophy beyond its truth or plausibility? Can true philosophy be badly done, or false philosophy well done? If so, what kind of quality is this and what are its criteria?
- Call this dimension of quality the "craft" dimension. Can attention to craft ever distort doctrine, or suggest paths that 'pure' epistemology, metaphysics, or ethics (etc.) would not have suggested?
- See also section on [philosophical beauty](#), below.
-

4.9

Philosophy and expertise

- **What talents or skills are required for "good" philosophizing?**
- Is familiarity with the history of philosophy required
-

4.91

Ends of philosophy

Some original and creative thinkers might intentionally be involved in this or their original insights might contribute to ending certain features of the contemporary philosophical status quo.

While the insights of others may transform this subject as it is at present in much larger and revolutionary ways.

- **Should we, do "philosophy for philosophy's sake" Do we, or should? If so, what becomes of the pursuits of truth, justice, and good life? If not, what is the purpose of philosophy. Do we, or should we, do "philosophy for philosophy's sake"?**
-
- **Yes original and creative thinkers will first of all be involved in or do philosophy, art, composing of music, science, etc for its own sake. Out of a passion and love of the discipline or**

intersubjectivity. YES

-
- What would lead a philosopher to expound a position and then at the end to abandon it, or in the metaphor of Sextus Empiricus made famous by Wittgenstein, to kick down the ladder after climbing up it?
-
- Marx protested that previously philosophers merely tried to interpret the world, but that the point is to change it. Which pre-Marxian philosophers deserve this criticism? How would some reply to Marx?
- If a philosophy makes the philosopher miserable, is it thereby failing to achieve the ends of philosophy?
- See James F. Peterman, *Philosophy as Therapy: An Interpretation and Defense of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy.*
-
-
- 4.92
-
- **Death of philosophy**
-
-
- What is philosophy such that it might well be finished? What is it such that it is clearly still alive
-
- **All original and creative thinkers in all disci-**

plines will cause the death of certain aspects, attitudes and norms of their discipline, their transformation and the creation of new ones.

-
- Are there good philosophical reasons for wanting to cease doing philosophy, or to abolish it?
-
- **Why have analytic philosophers claimed that philosophy is or ought to be finished?**
-
- 4.93
-
- **Anti-philosophies**
-
- **Are there positions or theories that, if true or justified, would make most or all philosophy nugatory?** Consider the claims of the following in this light:
 - the ancient Greek skeptics
 - Marxists on ideology
 - some existentialists on the role and absurdity of choice
 - American pragmatists
 - radical empiricists
 - naive realist
 - sound method
 - religious fundamentalists on faith
 - those believing that thinking is a disease
 - anti-intellectuals (even intellectual anti-intellectuals)

-
- How does, and how should, philosophy evaluate these claims?
-

4.94

Philosophy and assertion

All philosophies will intentionally or unintentionally make direct or indirect assertions.

- Do all philosophies "take positions" or "make assertions"? If not, what have some philosophies done in place of these?
- Why couldn't Plato (or Nietzsche...) just state his assertions and argue them? If we translated Plato (or Nietzsche...) into a "handbook" of their assertions and arguments, what would be lost except for "rhetorical color"?
- What of philosophical significance have philosophies done in addition to taking positions or making assertions?
- What are we missing if we read works of philosophy only for their assertions?
-
- **What modes of assertion have philosophers used?**
- hypothesis (Fichte's idealism? Leibniz on non-contradiction?)
- faith

- reason: proved, non-hypothetical (Kant's apodeictic certainty)
- subjunctive mood (some Kierkegaard)
- moral certainty (Kant on god, freedom, and immortality)
- non-assertion (Greek skeptics' "aphasia")
- sheer assertion, as in some aphorists and some existentialists; essentially without argument
- non-cognitive: sheer choice
- cognitive: sheer dogmatism
- presuming on readers' agreement or introspective certification (much of Locke)
- questioning, not (or more than) answering
- doubting, not (or more than) affirming
- "my view from here now"
- "view from nowhere" (Thomas Nagel)
- as reflection of Zeitgeist, personality etc.
- mischievous, misleading
- instrumental to see truth (Hegel? Wittgenstein?)
- important to be misunderstood in certain way (Kierkegaard? Nietzsche?)
- concealment of secret doctrine (Plato? Descartes?)
-
- **Skeptics challenge the right of anyone to make assertions. What is the value of a philosophy that does not meet the skeptical challenge explicitly and successfully?**
- Does assertion *per se* presuppose finality, objec-

tivity, exclusivity, or cognitivity? If not, what "logical space" is left open by assertion? If so, how can a philosopher who wishes to deny philosophy one of these things (finality, objectivity, exclusivity, objectivity) expound her position without self-referential inconsistency?

- What would be the point of making and revoking philosophical assertions in the same work?
- See Wittgenstein's proposition 6.54 in the *Tractatus* and its antecedents in Sextus Empiricus (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*) and Kierkegaard (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*).

-

- 4.95

-

- **Philosophy and exposition**

-

- **What is the relation between the substance of a doctrine and the *genre* in which it is presented** (dialogue, treatise, system, essay, aphorism, private journal, novel, poem...)

-

- Do different genres communicate in different ways such that some are inappropriate for philosophy or for particular philosophical position.

-

- 4.96

-

- Philosophy and Style

-

- **What is the relation between the substance of a doctrine and the style in which it is written?**
-
- Are style and substance inseparable? Or can every substance (doctrine, position) be expressed in other styles?
-
- Does style itself convey substance..
-
- **4.97**
-
- **Philosophy as Science**
-
- **Is philosophy a science, as so many philosophers have claimed? If so, how can we explain the wide and deep disagreements in philosophy?**
- **Compare the visions of philosophy as a science of two or more philosophers, e.g. Kant, Hegel, Husserl. What model of science was used? How appropriate was it? If inappropriate, what dimensions of philosophy did it violate or ignore?**
-
- **4.98**
-
- **Philosophy and related fields and activities**
-
- **is philosophy different from (and similar to) religion, theology, faith, literature, em-**

irical science, history, mathematics, logic, linguistics, dreaming, guessing, common sense, play?

-
- If all knowledge is a seamless web, and only artificially divided into "fields", then what is the place and function of philosophy
-
- **What are the sources of philosophical inspiration? How much philosophy could be done without the results of other disciplines? How much philosophy is stimulated by other philosophy, and how much by science or art, and how much by "life itself"?**
-
- Are there results in any of the special sciences, e.g. logic, that philosophers must accept to be good philosophers? Or are all such results open to philosophical criticism?
-
- It is often insights or principles of the different sciences and humanistic disciplines. Is this true? If so, how are these syntheses made and what is their intellectual value? To what extent is philosophy parasitic on the other disciplines?
- Must good philosophers be well-acquainted with many other fields?

-
- **What are the sources of philosophical inspiration? How much philosophy could be done without the results of other disciplines? How much philosophy is stimulated by other philosophy, and how much by science or art, and how much by "life itself"?**
- Are there results in any of the special sciences, e.g. logic, that philosophers must accept to be good philosophers? Or are all such results open to philosophical criticism.
-

4.99

Philosophy and argument

Are there forms of argument peculiar to philosophy? How is "philosophical reasoning" unlike other kinds of reasoning?

Must philosophy be argued? What is the value of philosophical works that are not argued?

What is the role of argument in philosophy? To prove? To persuade without necessarily proving? To show the linkage of ideas without necessarily persuading or proving? Something else?

If abstruse arguments are not persuasive, even when sound (Hume), then what are the chances that a sophisticated philosophy can be "lived"?

If argument is not essential to philosophy, could it still be essential to a philosophical curriculum?
 What is the value to philosophers of learning to analyze and compose arguments

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If argument is not essential to philosophy, could it still be essential to a philosophical curriculum?
 What is the value to philosophers of learning to analyze and compose arguments?
 Must different genres of philosophy use argument differently? Do systems encounter special problems in supporting themselves by argument not encountered by essays? Vice versa?

What philosophical reasons have been given in the tradition to excuse the lack of argument in a given work or for a certain assertion?

- E.g., it's a matter of faith; it's more certain than any proof; it's admittedly hypothetical; it's a sheer choice; it's presupposed by the very concept of argument, logically prior to any argument; it's a "potential contribution"
-
- In general is contemporary philosophy more rigorous in its arguments than prior philosophy? More self-conscious in making arguments? More demanding that arguments be made in works of philosophy?
- Is it the other way around? Is the importance of argument cyclical instead?
- What drives the fortunes of argument in the history of philosophy?
-

4.991

Philosophy and the folk

Does everyone "have a philosophy"?

Most likely 'yes' something in the way of an attitude towards life and living and a world and self view.

How important is it to ink about philosophical questions explicitly, e.g. by studying the books of philosophers?

What about conceptual difficulty and complexity.

Is Nicholas Rescher correct to suggest that the origin of philosophy lies in the attempt to make consistent the *endoxa* (ordinary beliefs) that we inherit from our culture

What happened to the nature of philosophy as it became a special field, an academic department, a professional, paid activity.

If we distinguish philosophical beliefs from ordinary beliefs, how do (and how should) philosophers live ordinary lives? To what extent must philosophical beliefs be put aside to take part in ordinary life (Hume, Fichte).

4.992

Philosophy and 'primitive' life

What kind of philosophy can precede an INFORMED scientific consciousness and what kinds can follow it?

- 4.993
-
- **Philosophy and philosophers**
-
- What is gained and what is lost by studying philosophical texts apart from the biographies of their authors? To what extent, and for what purposes, should we bring in biography?
- Compare the autobiographies of a few philosophers on their relation to their philosophies. (Try Croce, Mill, Collingwood, Jung, Quine, Rescher.)
- Why have so few philosophers written autobiographies, compared, say, to novelists or diplomats?
- **To what extent is philosophy autobiographical?**
- See Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §6: "...every great philosophy so far has been...the personal confession of its author and a kind of unconscious memoir".
- See Ernest Campbell Mossner, "Philosophy and Biography," in his *Hume*, Doubleday, 1966.
- See de Beauvoir's many-volume autobiography where, if anywhere, she expounds her philosophical position.
-

- **The psychological motives, economic interests, and personal animosities of a philosopher may all be sources of his/her work. How relevant are they to our evaluation of that work?**
- Does the recognition of causes for belief undermine the recognition of reasons for belief?
- **When we say that the life-and-times of a philosopher "illuminate" her work, or that her life situation "influenced" her work, can we make sense of these claims without reducing philosophy a complex effect of blind causation? Is there a slippery slope from influence to reduction? If not, what is the "snag" that keeps reasons from sliding to causes?**
- Do non-immanent reductions of philosophy necessarily entail relativism and determinism? Must they be self-referentially inconsistent?
- **What parts of a philosophy can biography most illuminate? Its truth-value? the proper interpretation of its texts? the philosopher's choice of topics, scope of coverage, emphasis? expository style and structure? idea of the audience, hence, degree of rigor, use of technical language, political appeals?**
- Steven Bartlett has written that philosophers as a group are typically individualistic and even narcissistic, more concerned to develop their own thought than to share or understand the thought of others. How true is this?

- **Does philosophy appeal only to certain personality types? If so, what non-immanent perspectives on philosophy does this suggest? Could philosophy be a neurosis?**
- **Which came first, psychological tendencies or philosophical positions?**
- **Might the latter have their own autonomy and simply attract (rather than being explained by) the former?**
- **Should we always explain the latter through the former instead of sometimes the former through the latter?**
-
-
- **If a philosophy cannot 'be lived', what legitimately follows about its worth as a philosophy?**
- **See e.g. Hume.**

5

<https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/skept.htm>

Classical Skepticism Issues and Problems

[Peter Suber, Philosophy Department, Earlham College](#)

- [Introduction](#)
-
- [The Skeptic's Rationale and Motives](#)
- [Pyrrho and Pyrrhonism](#)

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- [Details of the Way of Skepticism](#)
-
- [Academic Skepticism](#)
- [Dogmatism](#)
- [*Epoche*](#)
- [*Isosthenia*](#)
-
- [Introducing the Bass Clef Theme](#)
-
- [The Tropes](#)
- [Historical Interlude](#)
-
- [Elaborating the Bass Clef Theme](#)
-
- [Losses and Gains](#)
- [Irrefutable and Inescapable](#)
- [Wanting Truth \(Certainty\), Shunning Belief \(Certitude\)](#)
- [Skepticism as Preparation for Non-Skepticism](#)
- [Who Cares?](#)
- [Fideism and Fictionalism](#)
- [Can the Skeptic Act?](#)
- [Can the Skeptic Speak?](#)
- [Can There Actually Be A Radical Skeptic?](#)
-
- The last objection to skepticism I want to discuss here is Bertrand Russell's, that "[s]kepticism, while logically impeccable, is psychologically impossible."[\[Note 39\]](#) The claim here

is that the suspension of judgment on every non-evident matter whatsoever simply cannot be done, even if it ought to be done. This is a variation of a much older idea that we find as early as Aristotle. Pascal says that the mind naturally desires to believe, and when it cannot find truth it will attach itself to falsehood.[\[Note 40\]](#) Reason, he says, confutes the dogmatists by undermining all their beliefs, but Nature confutes the skeptics by forcing them to believe.[\[Note 41\]](#) William James says that to believe *something* is psychologically unavoidable, even if it is logically optional.[\[Note 42\]](#) F.C.S. Schiller holds that there are "vitally necessary" beliefs, very analogous to Santayana's "animal faith".[\[Note 43\]](#)

Hume is even more radical. He says that Nature "breaks the force of all skeptical arguments in time," even when the arguments are valid.[\[Note 44\]](#) Hume is persuaded by skeptics that all dogmatists are fools, but he is persuaded by Nature that skepticism cannot be taken to the limit. In a little-known remark he elects to be at least a *happy* and a *natural* fool,[\[Note 45\]](#) and to believe what his nature dictates.[\[Note 46\]](#)

For all these thinkers, belief on insufficient grounds is the inevitable result, despite the skeptic's best (and perhaps wise and justified) efforts to the contrary. There is a long tradition of dogmatic objection that charges that skepticism is simply unattainable in its most interesting or

challenging forms. But **Pascal, Hume, and James are here part of a sub-tradition that goes far beyond the claim that skepticism is unattainable, and that holds belief to be more 'natural' than unbelief**, even to the point of asserting that unbelief cannot be sustained over long stretches of time or across broad ranges of human inquiry. Others ring variations on this tradition, such as Montaigne, who holds that belief might be optional but that those who chose to believe something just to avoid believing nothing are "stupid".[\[Note 47\]](#) He says incidentally that all too often dogmatism comes down to this sort of stupidity.

It is important to point out that **some important observers and practitioners have said that even 'complete' skepticism is attainable**: Arcesilas, Cicero,[\[Note 48\]](#) and, contradicting himself, as per his plan, Montaigne.[\[Note 49\]](#) F.C.S. Schiller holds that universal doubt is possible, but that universal disbelief is not.[\[Note 50\]](#)

One problem with the unattainability objection is that it is dogmatic psychology and the skeptic can suspend judgment on it. But the fideist is right that this does not mean the objection is false. More important, the skeptic can refute it by becoming a counter-example—that is, if she can. The question is a good one to leave open to further inquiry. It is important to note that the history of ideas and the biographies of philosophers sheds no light on the question: no unambiguous cases of complete skeptics are known to us. (Discussing the

ambiguous cases would be fascinating but off the subject here.) If we turn instead to the psychology of the undertaking, we should realize that Descartes' pretention to have doubted everything whatsoever except that he doubted seems, on the surface of it, far more difficult psychologically than the Pyrrhonist's more modest activity of suspending judgment on all non-evident claims, neither doubting them nor forcing herself in advance to envelope the whole universe in her critique.

There is an intriguing similarity between the questions of the attainability of pure Pyrrhonism and the attainability of certainty. The spectacle of Pyrrhonian skeptics applying their tropes without mercy or prejudice might lead one to conclude that certainty was unattainable. If so, we must see Pyrrhonians as *tragic figures* whose purity of heart and high standards are precisely the obstacles to the achievement of their theoretical end. We would have to conclude that only the most honest inquirers will fail, and that they will always fail. And if the sediment of human nature will always hold us back from reaching the pitch of Pyrrhonism, then those who aspire to Pyrrhonism are tragic figures in a different sense. The high standards are attainable in the sense that they may be acquired and applied. But if they are unfulfillable, then the aspirant who tries to fulfill them is striving to meet standards higher than life's own. If no dogma meets the test of the tropes, and no person can suspend judgments on all dogmas, then life itself

would be second-best.

Note that if a given individual who claims to be a skeptic is caught in dogmatism, that is just her hypocrisy or inconsistency, not an objection to skepticism. To object along these lines one must show that no skeptic can avoid dogmatism.

For obvious reasons skepticism is not a doctrine or a system so much as a way of life. (Sextus calls it an *agoge*, a way or leading, I.4, I.209, I.212, I.232, I.235.) So its psychological possibility is at least as important as its logical coherence. I believe that radical or Pyrrhonian skepticism, like the feeling of complete hopelessness, is attainable at least in short bursts. But in any case I believe that, even if Pyrrhonian skepticism is psychologically impossible, or if never put into practice by anybody in the fullest and most thorough-going way, then the *myth* of the radical skeptic is as valuable as her *example* would have been. For the myth of the Pyrrhonian skeptic is the myth of the merciless inquirer who took intellectual honesty most seriously, who followed all leads with no prejudice, who had no respect for the authority or venerability of beliefs (or believers) and examined all for their evidence, grounds, and supporting arguments. It may be the blankness with which she begins that determines that she will find only blankness. But to keep the idea of such an inquirer before us in our own inquiries is a constant reminder against rashness, presumption, and dishonesty. The reminder is just as urgent whether radical skepticism is

possible or not.

More important than this reminder is her challenge to all dogmatism —philosophical, religious, scientific, political, and the ordinary dogmatism of social life and common sense. If any dogmatism is justifiable, then we are more likely to adhere to justified dogmas if we meet the threat of skepticism head on. If the threat is too much and our beliefs fall, so much the better for us that we let it happen. **The skeptic's challenge is to purge our inquiries and beliefs of bias, hasty alliances, and accidental inheritances, to overcome prejudice (literally, pre-judgment, judgment before inquiry), to examine all possibilities with sympathetic interest and critical attention, and to love truth loyally so that we may be spared the embrace of falsehood in the darkness.** Only one who fears truth as much as the skeptic fears error would evade the confrontation with skepticism just because one might lose it.

The skeptic's threat to dogmatism is real. **We with beliefs cannot say to the skeptic that her personal failure to find truth, so far, is just *her* problem. It is our problem too,** for she has seen our beliefs and has found them wanting. There are ways short of perfect certainty to keep our beliefs. But there are no honest ways without critical inquiry. To admit that we might be wrong, to hold our beliefs with humility and without presumption, and to accompany all commitment with continual inquiry and open-mindedness, are the minimal les-

sons of skepticism.

In the face of the skeptic's barren results, **the product of her extreme devotion to intellectual honesty**, we should not ask what can be said for dishonesty. Instead **we should ask what else besides honesty must we bring to inquiry in the beginning, and how we can get away with it.** And instead of trying to protect our license to believe by refuting or ignoring skepticism, that is, by resort to impossible or dishonest means, we should ask why we esteem that license so highly. For the rest — even if we hold out hope for knowable truth— we should ask **how to cope with uncertainty without completely conquering it, for this seems to be our destiny.**

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[Works Cited](#)

[Notes](#)

7

Elements in the Multiverse

1

When the individual and intersubjective collection of people realize that they are not citizens of there country or planet earth but nameless units in the multiverse they will see themselves as conscious units or combinations of elements.

2

They will be aware that they are absolutely determined like everything else in the multiverse. They will no longer suffer from the illusion of free will and be conscious of the fact that their genotypes, phenotype and personality-type constitutes and control them.

[Absolute Determinism and Lack of Free Will](#)

Determinism from the 1 st and 3 rd person perspective as well as the universal point of reference see dealt with. This is to show the absence of free

will in the last perspective and the illusion of it when seen from the first two perspectives. 'Free' choice is dealt with as well as the absence of free will and the consequences of determinism for law and court judgements are explored. So, what if any, is the place and the role of God in all this? Did s/he create determinism and the potential for or any semblance of choice and free will? Or is the existence of God, the fulfilling of prayer intentions and miracles impossible and redundant in a universe of determinism (laws of nature etc) or universal determinism?

3

They will be nihilists

4

absolute and radical sceptics

5

anarchists or at least minarchists

6

being beyond good and evil, or without the need for morals, ethics, values, attitudes, opinions, bia-

ses, beliefs, preferences, pre-suppositions, assumptions and norms

7

like all other units of elements and gases in the universes, such as stars, etc.

8

Galaxies, black holes, quasars, stars, asteroids, trees, oceans, suns, planets, etc have no beliefs, values, morals, ethics, attitudes, opinions and do not suffer from other social and cultural limitations

9

with no country, no civilization, society, culture, class, political views or opinions

10

they have little in common with and share very little with other human beings, except the fact that they are constituted of the same elements and are conscious, embodied beings or embodied consciousnesses

They 'just are' or 'are not'.

11

They have no needs,

12

no hopes

13

no fears

14

they play as persona

15

roles expected of them

16

executing required activities and performing the appropriate behaviour that are required in situations and by contexts

17

Most of the above qualities or characteristics are or appear rather negative.

If radical scepticism is combined with the attitudes and other features of this personality-type, original and creative thinking individuals find it difficult to

accept the ideas and creations of others, without first questioning them and their pre-suppositions profoundly..

17.1

This causes the extreme forms of these creative types often not to be very good passive scholars . Scholars in the sense of taking at face-value their ideas and their implications.

This also implies to studying the information required for schooling, colleges and professions.

The extreme need to question and explore these things. This frequently occurs by assimilation to their own insights, ideas and models.

18

The more positive ‘attitudes’ or values of these types are associated with and determined by their absolute scepticism.

18.1

Sincerity, honesty, integrity, extreme intellectual honesty and accepting great uncertainty are marks of their values, attitudes and behaviour.

fin

