

Philosophical Counseling in the Renaissance and Its Use in Shakespeare's *Othello*

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Abstract

This essay examines a tradition of philosophical counseling developed during the Renaissance. This tradition involves a language of “philosophical mysteries” and so called “speaking pictures”, where counsel employs an iconography involving myth designed to illustrate or allude to Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas. It shows how this tradition of philosophical counsel is employed by Shakespeare in the tragedy *Othello*, *Moor of Venice*, and how inattention to this tradition by most *Othello* critics has led to a failure to recognize that *Othello* is a deeply philosophical play with metaphysical, epistemological, moral, and aesthetic dimensions. Finally, this paper suggests that a new frontier for contemporary philosophical practice consists in literary criticism. Philosophical counselors are trained in detecting and understanding the philosophical problems of real individuals in the real world and hence presumably the philosophical issues and orientation of characters in works of literature as well, thus correcting the current tendency to overly psychologize literary criticism.

Keywords: *philosophical counseling, William Shakespeare, Othello, Renaissance, speaking pictures, philosophical mysteries*

Philosophical Practice as a Re-imagined Cynicism

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Abstract

Thoughtlessness, and the resulting repression of autonomous moral and political judgment, are the conditions which animate the practice for which this paper argues. It was the issue of Socrates and Diogenes of Sinope. More recently, it was the issue of Hannah Arendt and Stanley Cavell. Arendt argues that the conditions for a robust public realm necessary for a widely distributed capacity for judgment are no longer available. Cavell, to the contrary, argues that even under the repressive conditions Arendt describes, intellectuals —writers specifically— have the capacity to provoke thinking in others. Unfortunately, from the point of view of practical philosophy, Cavell's limitation of the provocation of thinking to the one-way communication of literature severely constrains the political potential of his suggestive account. A particular interpretation of the practices of Socrates and Diogenes provides the basis for a practice that corrects for the political deficiency in Cavell.

Keywords: *Emersonian Moral Perfectionism, Hannah Arendt, Stanley Cavell, Cynicism, chreia, moral friendship*

Justice and Other Illusions

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Abstract

Is the belief in a just world a fundamental delusion? If yes, should we worry about the fact that it makes us crueller, as Melvin Lerner's classical studies have shown (2013 [1980]), and sometimes, at least, more miserable? Should philosophical practitioners address cherished, even if vital yet still uncritical assumptions? If yes, how? While critically addressing views of justice may be a task best addressed by philosophical investigation, and, as such, a constitutive part of philosophers' expertise and responsibility, justice is an understudied topic in philosophical practice. This article describes the prevalence of our uncritical beliefs in a just world and attempts to find the reasons for them. It further assesses the risks of challenging our most fundamental wishes, to which we adhere even when no good evidence can be provided, yet also evaluates the benefits of doing so. Finally, it attempts to insert some views of justice within a wider category of illusion, illusion being perhaps an Aristotelian mean fitted for human truth, where truth would be too harsh to embrace and falsehood or deliberate lie too extreme a vice. The relevant question becomes, then, what should the wise person's attitude toward illusion be?¹

Keywords: *justice, illusion, emotion, religion, schadenfreude, Karma, cruelty*

Void and Fiction: A New Methodological Approach for Philosophical Counseling

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Abstract

What will be presented here are some partial conclusions of my own research about the possibility of doing philosophical counselling taking into account the concepts of “fiction” and “void”. For this, I propose the existence of dialectic: void emerges when there is a rupture of meanings. The void generates rejection in the people who seek to fill it quickly. This is how fiction emerges as a discursive structure that presents a reality from the “as-if”. This makes the uncertain become familiar, the void quickly filled. But what if these fictions generate existential conflicts? This is the question that motivates a new methodological approach which it raises six steps. In this article I will seek to show why I support the existence of the dialectic of void and fiction, how to develop these steps and also what some partial results of this approach have been from an experience on its application.

Keywords: *fiction, void, philosophical counselling, methodological approach*

Together into the Heart of Consciousness: The Practical Philosopher as a Shaman

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Abstract

As psychedelics reclaim their voice within academia and therapy, a need for guidance arises. The process of integration focuses on finding ways to anchor insights from the journey into life that follow. Processing the experience is what makes it meaningful as its initial insights have a lasting effect on one's life. The philosopher is trained exactly for that: connecting with the experience, and make a sense out of it, so it can be useful in a trustworthy way. Hence, for those who enter the journey for reasons that are not pathological, but rather to grow and further their self-understanding and life-purpose, the practical philosopher with his toolbox that include questioning, critical reflection and dialectics can serve as an excellent guide in the gentle, complex and important process of integration; furthermore, the practical philosopher approaches the psychonaut's insights and questions as subject for metaphysical, ethical and aesthetic self-inquiry.

Keywords: *Psychedelic Experience, Philosophical Guidance, Integration, Critical Reflection, Western Shamanism*

**Narrative about Death as a way of Projecting “Being Oneself” in Philosophical Practice
(Experience of the Philosophical Training "How can we talk about Death?")**

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Abstract

The basis of human existence is a temporal structure which, on the levels of consciousness and language, unfolds into a successive chain of events, manifested as a “told story”. The meaning and significance of being in the everyday “here-and-now” depends on human's perception of one's own finitude as well as on the basic experience of death and dying that one may have during one's own life. The experience of talking about death and the perception of one's own mortality is often enough to cause serious problems that requires a special approach. Some options for working with these structures in philosophical practice can be training and reflection. This paper presents the experience of the training on narrative in mortality.

Keywords: *death, mortality, being oneself, philosophical training, narrative, philosophical practice*