

A Philosophical Car For Focusers, 1999 Model

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In ancient times a philosophy also included a practice. For the first time since then here is a philosophy which again has a practice. Focusing is that practice, and we teach it.

Philosophy is a study that requires years of reading and training. But just as we drive about in cars although we don't know auto mechanics, so I want to build you a philosophical car you can use without necessarily knowing how it works.

This philosophy is a revolution in philosophy. It is worked out and written but because the practice stems from it, you know the philosophy in an IMPLICIT way without actually knowing it. Now I want to show you a little, and tell you why what you already know is a revolution in philosophy.

1) Currently philosophers recognize that formulations don't stand alone, but this fact has them stuck. Much worse -- the current understanding is that there is no truth at all, no values either, because people still think that if the attempts at a single truth contradict each other, then there isn't any truth at all.

Knowing focusing, of course you don't think that there is no truth just because there is a variety of stated truths. Rather, you know perhaps without having thought about it, that truth consists in one or more RELATIONSHIPS between what is stated, and

Our philosophy is one way of articulating some kinds of such EXPERIENTIAL RELATIONS, as I will show.

If formulations cannot stand alone, what is the OTHER thing? We call it "experiencing" but it would be better to say "experiencing, situation, the body, our interactional living "....." Still better just call it "dot dot dot."

2) WE STAND IN THE OPEN -- more finely ordered than any system and yet implying further steps. We live in our meaningful experiencing in the world with each other. THIS CANNOT BE REPRESENTED. IT CAN BE CARRIED FORWARD IN MANY WAYS BUT EVEN ONE IS HARD TO GET. Therefore truth is special and difficult to achieve. Various approaches can lead to different kinds of truth with many possibilities. DIFFERENT TRUTHS DON'T CANCEL OUT.

To us as philosophers this may seem to be discouraging, irrational and anti-intellectual without what follows:

3) You already know that to understand what someone says we pay attention to the person's experiencing, but how do we do this? We sense the steps on the way to the statement; we retain the experiential sense which the person conveyed at each step -- which we checked by saying some of it back, and we asked the person to correct us at each step. Momentarily we understood the person; moments later we are again corrected, which leads to another moment of understanding. So we TAKE the words and sentences in relation to this always developing sense of what the person is speaking-from.

Philosophy brings us to a problem with language. In one very current approach, all of culture and history can be called "language." Language has a lot to do with how we think about and experience anything. Yes, language is always IMPLICIT in any experience, in any situation, in any dot dot dot, so experience is never as it stands something neutral or reliable. We seem created and determined by one of the many cultures and languages. It seems that we understand others only if we already have common meanings. There seems to be no universal human nature, and also no language in which philosophy could go on from here.

We find instead, that listening and focusing do not stay within the common meanings -- they open out to much more, and to more intricacy, more possibilities than the COMMON LANGUAGE allows. But then, what is this NEW MODE OF LANGUAGE to which you are all already accustomed?

One kind of RELATION that is quite familiar to you is when the words you say carry the dotdot forward. So often they fail to do so. But most people speak without noticing. In the 1930s Trigan Burrow wrote: The human invention of language has great possibilities, but for the time being it has only cut people off from their experience so that they largely live in a disconnected language realm.

Of course it is true that sometimes you think or speak without really knowing what you want to say. You are exploring, playing, meandering, reading at random, or rambling. But then, when at last you see, hear, or say something that pulls you, you can recognize that now your language is doing something more. We say that it is "carrying forward" your, whatever you call the dotdot.

Or, a different example, when you have some problem or situation and you cannot find any way with it, and everything you try is wrong for it, when you are thoroughly stuck, then when at last you can say or do something that produces even a slight sense of "give" in the stuck place, you recognize this. These are two of many kinds of carrying forward.

There is a mode of language which lets new meanings emerge. This may be slightly or very definitely connected to a dotdotdot. Focusing can surprise itself in little intricate steps that have not happened before in the history of the world. Language from new steps is possible because language is implicit in the human body. From new steps THE WORDS ARRIVE ALREADY NEWLY PHRASED. This "ordinary" language is a language for philosophy where no language for it has seemed possible. Situations and bodily-implied speech and action are one system of carrying forward. This mode of

language CAN (will not always) move past the old metaphysics that attaches to all the words. It can let you find new steps to carry the context (any moment's) forward.

There are now reliable marks of carrying forward. And, we have a practice (focusing) which makes carrying forward much more likely.

4) You already know something about time and space. Philosophers think a great deal about these. You know that time changes in focusing. A full minute of touching and returning to a bodily sense can seem very, very long. One kind of time is what slows down in focusing. (This happens also in many other processes.)

And, of course you know that space changes. We begin with a sense located in the stomach or chest in the common space of the body sitting in the chair, but then a space opens that is much larger than the body -- a space in which one can "put" things in certain places, a space with many "places," a space with many more than three dimensions, a space in which one must sometimes walk from some "here" to some "there."

In this new space one's problems -- perhaps imaged as huge boulders -- can seem small in relation to a vast sky.

5) You already know a lot that you have not articulated about your "self" or "I." Many philosophers currently say that there is no way to speak of ourselves. There seem to be only old notions, now discredited. But you know how your "I" changes in focusing. On a given day we often begin feeling immersed, AS IF WE WERE this or that problem or concern, but after a while of focusing we find that we are not our problems and experiences, rather we have (or touch or sense, or relate to) them. "I" is here and our problems are there. We discover that "I" is not this, and not that; rather "I" has no content at all.

6) NOW WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH THIS BIT OF PHILOSOPHY ?

USE IT TO ARTICULATE, CREATE, THINK, AND WRITE,

AND TO TALK TO THE SOCIETY (#7 below)

TO ARTICULATE, CREATE, THINK, AND WRITE: -- WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Since we have to use the language, it can seem that thinking and writing can only repeat the old notions. But you already know that this isn't so because in focusing and listening you are familiar with the startling intricacy that arises. A whole series of distinctions come, which have never been heard before "This, which I said, I don't mean it this way, rather that way, and that - hm -- isn't this but rather that, now that gives me space (before I was crowded and oppressed) but hm, I can't really have that because I'm like this....."

There is now a way to write something which develops new uses of words by WRITING-FROM THE GREATER INTRICACY of your experiencing.... I have called this way "Theory Construction." Now we call it "TAE" or "thinking at the edge."

So yes, the philosophy can tell you what to do in our new mode of language.

Something more difficult is:

TO SENSE WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN ARTICULATING, CREATING, THINKING, AND WRITING:

What not to do, i.e., how to recognize the old conceptual traps that are implicit in our language -- this takes philosophical training and cannot just be shown. What I can do is TO show you four of the most common traps and thereby convey a little of what philosophy is.

a) Guard against unconsciously assuming that you exist "in time," usually in linear mathematical time. For example, a word like "simultaneously" assumes a certain time-system. Philosophers know that various concepts can go into how we think about time.

You know that different processes generate different kinds of time around themselves.

b) Saying something can make it seem to be a thing in the empty space of geometry. But, to be real, it need not fill this space. It might have its own different kind of space.

c) A person is obviously not like a mere thing, or a box with little experience-things in it. But our words often force such a result. Is your 'real' self a thing under there, or is it in-process in some new way you might articulate?

d) The body as we sense it from inside can lead to new concepts, not just those of a neurological machine. Our language invites the error of thinking of "mind and body" as if we were merely the combination of mental processes and the physiological machine-body.

That drops out most of what we are.

You can be aware that the same old words have different meanings in different approaches, different "models." We now have a well worked-out "Process Model" which changes what "body" and many other words mean.

7) WE TALK TO THE SOCIETY -- RECOGNIZING DIFFERENT MODELS

Philosophy talks to the society. One main message we need to tell it is that there are MANY MODELS. This doesn't mean there is no truth, rather many truths. What scientists report has its own kind of truth, but some of it comes just from their model. They say that human beings and animals are just machines, but ANYTHING THEY STUDY is understood by them as a machine.

At home the scientist looks into the eyes of the child, and the child looks back. But the scientist thinks: "Isn't it sad that you are really just a machine!" This cannot happen if one knows that our science uses a certain approach, the model in which anything studied is cut up into stable, well-defined units, and then reconstructed. They say that they have "explained" something when they can reconstruct it out of the units. This is the most successful model in history so far, but it is only one model. There are others.

We now have a successful second model, not replacing but interacting with the first. Ecology uses the opposite model: Everything is part of the whole. You cannot know any unit because it plays some part in the whole and you can never fully know the whole, so don't touch these fish. It might change everything.

We need not feel sad that our person or "I" disappears in the usual science in which we seem to be machines. This is simply an obvious characteristic of the unit model. Neither need we complain that the holistic model evaporates us into the cosmos. To include ourselves, we can add a third model next to these two. The basic terms need not be units nor the whole; the basic terms can be processes.

In our new model, a process is not cut up into dead units that remain the same. Process makes new freshly created wholes. It puts the holistic model on wheels, so to speak. Like the other models, this one can be used to study anything. New concepts for a process-physics with "retroactive time" can solve some anomalies. (Gendlin and Lemke, 1983, Gendlin 1997b, IV). Rather than reducing living bodies to the current biology, we can create a new biology to study what the other models miss in every kind of living body. (Gendlin 1997b, V, Matsuno, 1989).

WE HUMANS LIVE-FROM BODIES WHICH ARE SELF-CONSCIOUS OF SITUATIONS. Notice the "odd" phrase "self-conscious of situations." "Consciousness," "self," and "situation" are not three objects in separate locations.

The process model has its own kind of truth and precision. We can be very precise about different KINDS OF PROCESSES, how to enable them to happen, and their different effects.

TO THE SOCIETY WE NEED TO SAY FIRST:

How science renders living things is not a finding but only a result of the model. There are many approaches -- the atomistic science is only one.

Where we really stand is in the open -- in endless possibilities of much greater intricacy than any model. So it is not as if we had to choose a model or be in a relativism of models.

TO THE SOCIETY WE NEED TO SAY SECONDLY:

What different models find cannot be put on one consistent map. Therefore we dare not simply omit what doesn't fit into one model.

Now that the atomistic scientists can define our genes -- they think this is all we ARE. They have redesigned agricultural crops world-wide, in order to enable one company to corner the market. This is what has been substituted for evolution. For some years now they have been creating monsters, redesigning the animals, for example a "cow-pig" with all lean meat, but it is in constant pain and cannot stand up. Soon they will make one that can. Farmers world-wide will have to buy it.

With the atomistic model they miss the fact that LIFE-PROCESS ORGANIZES ITSELF. It has its own life-forward direction. They cannot think about this, nor about the fact that THE ANIMAL IS LOOKING AT THEM! This cannot appear within a science that explains everything in terms of inanimate units.

We are building a science of the first person -- a science to balance the atomistic one and ecology. The new science specializes in living bodies that sense themselves, and in processes in which our "I" senses itself. There is already a great deal of this kind of knowledge, but at the moment scattered and not yet speaking for itself as a science. Now let us do so.

For example: Consider Corea's work on the reproductive process with the woman's first-person experience which current medicine ignores. Next is McGuinness and Lawlor on midwifing, a reception that recognizes the "I" of the newborn looking at you. Continue it through Boukydis' work on training parents to respond to certain signs in infant behavior.

Teach first graders focusing -- at that age they ALL get it right away. (Later only some do.) In every human body there is somebody in there, struggling to lead a life. We KNOW this is true. Teach "the sanctity of each person" directly. Contact the kid's person. A kid sits there seven hours five days a week for years and years and years, and nobody says "Who are you?"

Continue in school with Stapert and all those working (see our [Children's Corner](#)) and in our Folio issue on schools. Meditation is itself an ancient knowledge, but see what Schillings adds to it. This experiential focusing approach extends across many other processes of living, all the way to special knowledge of how best to work with dying people (Grindler).

In many fields the experiential approach has brought something new. For example, there is now an architectural aesthetic which can analyze a building's space in terms of the human body moving through it (Kirschner). Another architect teaches getting the felt sense of a building the student admires; then from that felt sense the student can design a totally new building.

These are only a few examples of work along these lines. They are a smaller circle within the vastly larger circle of all those who are working to bring to the world the knowledge they already have. We want to call on this wider circle. There is a great amount of first-person process-knowledge out there, that can soon establish the added science we need.
