

Critical vs Speculative Philosophy

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In this paper, I give a definition of critical philosophy that can be criticized with speculative philosophy and show that the duality between critical and speculative philosophy only can be witnessed by speculative philosophy, as predicted by Avatar Witness Theory. Despite the recursive meta-problems and undecidability, there are no actual genuine philosophical problems here.

Every now and then, some philosophers argue about what philosophy is. This is an interesting debate, because of its seemingly complex nature. Yet, at first there seems to be problems arising from the debate that are grounded in the language we choose to think about stuff and not from the actual semantical content of philosophy. One approach is to study these problems from a technical and analytic perspective, but this itself does not give satisfactory answers. Another approach is to study these problems as undecidable higher dualities that have language bias simply due to language being used to think about them, but this is a form of cheating, because if one refers to Joker Calculus to construct these higher dualities, then the question is what more work needs to be done. I think making progress on these issues is to establish the basic duality in more detail from a technical and analytic perspective with the support of insights from higher reasoning and when this work is done, let other tools like Joker Calculus take over and do the heavy lifting.

I thought about how to define philosophy in a way that summarizes its historical utility. This definition is language biased, just like how Intuitionistic Propositional Logic (IPL) and classical Propositional Logic (PL) have language bias. There is no way to overcome this language bias, because it is there by design. The reason my definition of philosophy is useful is precisely it does not hold in every context where any language is used and therefore understanding the context where it is useful is necessary. I will show that this is a philosophical property of the definition.

The definition of philosophy summarizing its historical utility is as following:

Philosophy is a metaphorical arena where people test their ideas against other ideas

The word “arena” implies that there are some rules that people agree upon to follow, such that ideas can not win based on arguments of authority, social status or violence. This is also a heavy handed critique of the many reasons why people believe things in society and what people used to believe historically before modern science.

I think philosophy in this sense is provocative and calling out cowardly behavior. This definition does not allow people to hide behind scholarship to present themselves as intellectuals, or the admiration of certain philosophers, or claiming to follow in their foot steps. The only thing that counts is whether people test their ideas against other ideas.

This definition also do not dictate what kind of quality is expected from philosophical work. I think philosophers like Zera Yacob scores very high according to this definition. Zera Yacob developed his philosophy while living in a cave in Ethiopia around year 1630. His treatise is very short, he is not well read in intellectual literature and he holds to superstitions that from a modern scientific view are not impressive. However, Zera Yacob really shakes up the intellectual ground of his time and should be credited for being one of the first thinkers that argued well for social justice and equality, except thinkers in Early Christian literature from the 2nd century that still are ignored today, due to the corruption and abuse of power under Constantine the Great in the 3rd century that shaped the landscape of later Christian thinkers to an abysmal, pitiful and narrow minded idea of history.

In this sense, this definition of philosophy reserves the title “philosopher” to people that dare to put themselves out in the arena of philosophy and test their ideas, instead of hiding cowardly behind social institutions, social status and psychological inferiority complexes. It highlights the personal struggle of philosophers to overcome limits of thinking from social stigma and their own mental problems to focusing on how knowledge relates to the philosopher’s lifestyle, not just aspiring toward, but also bringing up topics that most people do not dare talking about. Philosophers have to risk being wrong or at least contradict other philosophical positions, or else they simply do not do any philosophy. It is a provocative movement that constantly seeks out information that can reveal bias, hence improving from making errors, betting on surviving to fight another day than to win an absolute certain victory over opponents.

Yet, within this framework of thought, humanity managed to get stuck during the Middle Age, as it was precisely the intellectual idea of defending one’s position against all other positions, that produced the pile of non-sense scholars today refer to as “Aristotle Scholasticism”. It became doctrine that these ideas, that were incoherent, childish and naive from a modern lens, claimed to have been surviving criticism of centuries and thus students were encouraged to not criticize. People at the time did not know much about human cognitive biases and how it leads to groupthink. No wonder why fascists like to revive Aristotle Scholasticism in the perspective of political debates, because they do not dare to have their ideas tested in reality.

The most fundamental property of a genuine philosophical idea is that its advocates must risk the possibility that the idea is wrong in some possible world. This risk can take higher meta levels of reasoning, but it has to be there, somewhere. Just assuming an idea, is not a valid technique for supporting it. Often, ideas are too weak to be tested on their own, so the most essential part of philosophy is to test one idea against other ideas, in attempt to find a contradiction. The ideas that survive in the arena are those that both risk being wrong but also do not contradict other ideas that survive.

One reason that Aristotle Scholasticism went on for so long time, was due to its ability to contradict individual objections, but without mapping out the internal consistency among all the objections to it. Aristotle Scholasticism was fighting an opponent by strawmanning it, instead of trying to figure out the bigger picture of its opponent. Due to demands of scientific knowledge, people simply started to open new places of education outside academia, until academia was forced to integrate the new subjects under their own umbrella to survive in society. It never gave in and insisted to correct as long as it could, never risking actually being wrong. Despite claiming of being the pinnacle of philosophy, it was not philosophy at all according to my definition and this explains how Zera Yacob could make such advancements while living alone in a cave in Ethiopia compared to contemporary European thinkers. Zera Yacob did actual philosophy, not just pretending to.

Most of European intellectual history is a pile of garbage composed from oppression of thought in particular. Very few thinkers are still relevant to the modern age. Still, many of those few thinkers were not appreciated during their lives. It takes great emotional and empathic capacity to just realize how much thought has been wasted. The suffering, ignorance and illiteracy, the scale of it, poor people being kept from sources of knowledge and education by the elite that wasted their years pursuing posturing of philosophy, without actually engaging their own ideas. It is a horrifying thought, how bad it was, that people should feel ashamed of raising criticism toward intellectual activity today out of support for some charismatic charlatan seeking more power.

It is from this perspective that one can easily understand the importance of having a clear definition of philosophy that challenges people to test their ideas against other ideas. Otherwise, history shows that most people will simply waste their time and nothing of their intellectual work will be relevant for future generations. I write this in a time where people are doubting future generations, at all.

The branch of philosophy that deals with ideas being tested against other ideas, I think the term “critical philosophy” is appropriate. While being very important, I think that people also tend to overthink philosophy in this sense. Once people find one definition useful, it is easy to overlook other possibilities. For example, natural numbers as intuitive by the Peano axioms, makes people overlook closed natural numbers, where a successor has an infinitesimal chance of being zero. Closed natural numbers are much more harder to think about formally, but they are very useful when applied to cyclic cosmology where the initial state of the universe seen from a local observer’s perspective tends to be in a uniform state of low entropy. So, just because I am able to come up with some definition of philosophy that is useful and evidently stands the test of time, it does not mean that I should ignore other possibilities.

Critical philosophy was pioneered by Immanuel Kant. He was an intellectual giant, but in the later development of analytic philosophy, his works were heavily criticized for lack of rigor. Robert Paul Wolff points out that Kant’s approach to logic might have been misunderstood and was actually starting from the conclusion and working its way back to the premises. In later times, critical philosophy has become associated with analytic philosophy, bootstrapping its meaning from the historical origin. This is not surprising, because it is a common phenomena of Seshatic-Platonic language cycles. However, this also leads to the misconception of other branches of philosophy that fall under the umbrella of Continental Philosophy, as being non-critical. On the contrary, I believe that Continental Philosophy continues the tradition from Kant. For example, Hegel is responding to previous thinkers, including Kant and Plato. Kent Palmer believes that Hegel is progressing systematically in Phenomenology of Spirit using Plato’s schema of the divided line. Palmer also believes that Category Theory can be applied to Continental Philosophy and Hegel is an important thinker in this context. This idea was also pioneered by William Lawvere, a mathematical categorist. My role in this project is to provide the world with a better understanding of fundamental logic, to show the language biases inherent to logic and what makes good language design in a logical sense. I think it is important to realize that logic language design has trade-offs, like any other designs and should be carefully applied in the appropriate context, not universally.

This means, depending on whether one takes a Platonic or Seshatic perspective, critical philosophy tends to be Analytic (Platonic biased) or falling within the tradition of Continental Philosophy (Seshatic biased). The distinction between Analytic and Continental Philosophy is no longer that clear today, due to my work that opens up new ways to think about them both at the same time.

The problem is, if this distinction between Analytic and Continental Philosophy is commonly misunderstood and both fall under the same definition of philosophy as testing ideas against other ideas, but with different language bias, then is there another perspective to view philosophy?

I believe there is, in the form of speculative philosophy. The philosopher Charlie Dunbar Broad distinguished between “critical” and “speculative” philosophy. Notice that how we compose these words is using the perspective operator in Joker Calculus. One could refer to Analytic Philosophy as Platonic Philosophy since it tends to be Platonic biased. One can also refer to Continental Philosophy as Seshatic Philosophy since it tends to be Seshatic biased. However, as I argued earlier, the notion of “critical” in my opinion is orthogonal to Seshatism vs Platonism and there it is a possibility that both Analytic and Continental Philosophy can have critical and speculative approaches. Here is Broad’s definition of the distinction between critical and speculative:

Broad distinguished between critical philosophy and speculative philosophy. He described critical philosophy as analysing "unanalysed concepts in daily life and in science" and then "expos[ing] them to every objection that we can think of". While speculative philosophy's role is to "take over all aspects of human experience, to reflect upon them, and to try to think out a view of Reality as a whole which shall do justice to all of them".

Broad's definition is overlapping with my definition to a such degree that I can refer to them both as "critical philosophy" for the sake of the argument in this paper. I prefer my version as I am a firm believer that people not necessarily deal with unanalyzed concepts in critical philosophy, they just do not usually dare to test their ideas against other ideas. There is a difference between something one does not know and something that one knows at some level that it is not necessarily true, but one does not like to admit it and try to hide this knowledge from other people to gain power and status. I think that abstract corruption does happen all the time and people internalize this as tacit knowledge. I think it should be called for what it is and intellectuals should not pretend that knowledge is something that is only advanced in one direction from the unknown to the known. I believe Broad's definition is more palatable for most people and less provocative, but I think we also owe to all the people who suffered through history to not make their suffering serving an ideal.

This means, I end up with 4 versions of philosophy:

- Critical Platonic Philosophy => Analytic Philosophy
- Speculative Platonic Philosophy => Analytic Philosophy
- Critical Seshatic Philosophy => Continental Philosophy
- Speculative Seshatic Philosophy => Continental Philosophy

Now, the question is: What is speculative philosophy in the sense of my definition of testing ideas?

The solution is that in order to provide a counter-argument against critical philosophy, I need speculative philosophy to not needing opposition by testing an idea against other ideas. The thought experiment I like to use here is that of a Poi dance, where a person is swinging two or more small balls at the end of rope, often in a synchronized fashion to create two movements that together form a mathematical pattern in 3D space. When performed in the dark of night, the balls are often lighted on fire and the pattern is more clear to the audience by exploiting an optical illusion of motion blur. This means that the patterns seems to have a lasting structure, but this is an illusion produced by movement and what makes a such performance aesthetically pleasing is the fluid transition from one pattern into another pattern. This is how I think about speculative philosophy.

Speculative philosophy is more like a performance than a direct quest for knowledge. The quest for knowledge is an activity to increase the repertoire of the performer. To what degree a such philosophical performance is a success, is whether it gives the audience satisfaction or inspiration. This result depends entirely on the audience, which might have different experiences and mastery of complexity levels. Thus, I do not view speculative philosophy as taking over all aspects of human experience in the sense of Broad, although I understand his desire for a such philosophy. Realistically speaking, I believe that philosophy is merely an attempt to think about stuff under the limiting conditions that humans have, possibly with support by computers or other tools that extends the human body or through environmental interaction. I do not think that the human experience is captured by philosophy, because humans are so miserable at doing stuff in general that it would be embarrassing to call it, I even hesitate, to call it an effort to think. This is because humans are very good at creating the impression of doing philosophy, without actually doing it.

The approach I take to speculative philosophy, is that one is not limited by other people's definitions of philosophy, but that one can take ideas from both Analytic and Continental Philosophy, smash them together and create something new. It is also not necessary to aim for a universal perspective of knowledge. What I think is important, is not whether people are good at speculative philosophy or not, but whether they put themselves out there in society to make at least one other person inspired. You can suck at it all you want, but the only requirement for being a philosopher is doing philosophy. You can be the worst philosopher in history, or live in cave in Ethiopia for that matter, I do not care. I say to people: Build a galactic civilization.

Most people have seen movies with ideas related to galactic civilizations, e.g. Star Wars or Star Trek. However, these movies do not reflect what a galactic civilization actually would look like, but instead they reflect a human biased perspective that makes assumptions that are not realistic, due to making a better story for entertainment. So, people get the idea that they think they know a little about what a galactic civilization is. My point is, when I say “build a galactic civilization”, the idea is that upon realizing that we do not actually know how to build it, we have to start thinking more carefully about stuff in general first. This is the time when humanity starts to think about stuff.

Building a galactic civilization is not about spaceships, any more than city planning is about school buses. Spaceships is part of it, yes, but it is a very small part that does not remain relevant for a long time. Not from the perspective of galactic time. The time it takes for light to travel from one edge of a galaxy to another, is enough to restart civilization from invention of agriculture to the scientific age, ten times over. This means, there is more than enough time to figure out spaceship designs and rest of the problem is to figure out what is actually a galactic civilization concerned about, or why it makes certain things a priority while not prioritizing other things it could do.

All the things that a galactic civilization might do, are things that humanity today does not have much clue about how to think or approach. This is because we are so indoctrinated into thinking about problems from the perspective of short distances of space and time. Outside that context, we struggle. Yet, if you take the human body as an example, each individual cell processes information in a such way that it produces evolutionary utility for the body as a whole, at much smaller scales of space and time than the signals in the nervous system need to produce a conscious experience. Thinking properly about galactic civilizations is reflected in the problem of thinking properly about the human body. Since we do not understand galactic civilizations in that sense, we also do not actually understand the human body. The same goes with everything else of that kind of problem. It is not that we lack a large body of impressive scientific literature about the human body. Like I said before, humans are very good at pretending to do philosophy, without actually doing it.

Breaking down social activity into the philosophical perspective of nervous systems interacting across limbs and bodies, or cells copying themselves, being consumed as food, disassembled, put into new configurations and used to extract energy from new consumed cells, provides a more insightful understanding than just to think about social activity in the language of mentality.

Many people think that speculative philosophy sounds like venturing into more abstract landscapes of ideas, without actually understanding the close relationship between e.g. avatars that are used in abstract generalizations of mathematical language design and how e.g. the human body operates. They are both governed by the same kind of math, that is Avatar Extensions, which is an Outside theory of mathematics. Most mathematical theories are Inside theory. It is a philosophical distinction one makes between Inside vs Outside theory, which is important for understanding mathematics as a whole. Yet, even with this distinction in your cognitive toolbox, this is just the beginning of philosophy. There is a reason I work on Joker Calculus, because it is so extremely hard to reach far enough without the support of a tool that makes things easier to do in this context.

Speculative philosophy is a performance. However, as a performance, it can inspire people to make breakthroughs in knowledge that otherwise are very difficult to reach. It is about focusing, combining inspirations of and composing ideas in new ways. In this context, we need to move the horizon so far away that no single person or entity can reach the goal during their own lifetime. This is why I say “build a galactic civilization”. In this sense, human history becomes a trajectory where people are building upon each other’s knowledge toward a common goal and hence the pursuit of knowledge becomes taking over all aspects of human experience, precisely in the sense of Broad. I started by rejecting Broad’s definition and proceeded to build from the basic idea of speculative philosophy as a performance toward his definition, which is an infinite transcending progression.

This leads to the problem of what one can say about critical vs speculative philosophy.

In my opinion, critical philosophy is both undermined and supported by speculative philosophy at the same time. They are in opposition to each other, but they also go together. It is some kind of a paradoxical relationship: In one sense, one can not assume critical philosophy is true for every context, because it has to be tested as an idea against other ideas, just like any idea seen through the perspective of critical philosophy. However, since speculative philosophy does not need an opposition, it means speculative philosophy can also be the same as critical philosophy. In the process of doing so, speculative philosophy undermines critical philosophy, not by opposition, but from lack of opposition between the two. Again, if critical philosophy is undermined by speculative philosophy using silence, then does this not confirm critical philosophy? In the process of undermining, it ends up supporting. It is a paradoxical relationship.

Formally, one can think about critical philosophy as a proposition a and in response speculative philosophy produces a proposition $(!a)^a$. This means, if a is true, then one can prove $!a$, leading to a contradiction. Notice that I do not say a^{true} which means it holds in every context.

From this, one can actually prove formally that it is a paradox. A paradox in HOOO EP means that something is $false$ in any context. It is proven by the existence of some function of type:

$$a \ \& \ (!a)^a \rightarrow false$$

The arrow \rightarrow here is, not logical implication, but a function type that does not capture variables from the environment. This is a new operator added to IPL to get HOOO EP. HOOO EP unifies the object language with meta language of constructive logic into one single language that supports meta-theorem proving using the axioms of HOOO EP, a Negative Philosophy in sense of Schelling.

One can also write the function in exponential notation:

$$false^{(a \ \& \ (!a)^a)}$$

Both \rightarrow and $^$ are the same operators, but when parsed they have difference operator precedence.

The problem here is I have not said specifically why it is a paradox. Using Avatar Extensions, I relax the expression to two propositions a and b with an equality $a == b$ under some unknown context c . The question is what one can say about c . This is sufficient to prove $!c$:

$$a \ \& \ (!b)^b \ \& \ (a == b)^c \rightarrow !c$$

Intuitively, when we assume critical philosophy, we can not think of speculative philosophy as the same as critical philosophy. However, this does not mean that there is no context where they are the same, which is actually needed to both undermine and support in a paradoxical relationship.

If one could prove $false^c$, then there would be no context where critical and speculative philosophy are the same. They would become isolated forever. Yet, because one does not say a^{true} , but only a , it is not provable that $false^c$ follows from the premises. Another issue is that the fact that this is not provable, is not provable in HOOO EP. We can not know this knowledge constructively, hence there might also be some context where it is true. Critical philosophy can divorce itself from speculative philosophy, which was attempted by Russell, but this failed.

Critical philosophy tried to distance itself from speculative philosophy through Russell's project, but over time through the lens of modern mathematics we find ourself back into the same paradox.

I think one part of the problem was that Russell did not understand clearly the difference between critical and analytic reasoning. He studied Kant his entire life, learning from people who studied Kant their entire life and yet Russell thought about Kant's work as more or less fiction. It was not due to lack of trying. Russell just did not have the cognitive toolbox we have today.

Russell was wrong, demonstrated using analytic philosophy, due to not knowing about HOOO EP.

At first impression, it seems that critical philosophy contradicts speculative philosophy. However, this relationship is paradoxical and upon closer inspection, there are no actual philosophical problems here. When using Avatar Extensions properly to examine the problem, it vanishes.

There are recursive meta-problems in the relationship between critical and speculative philosophy and also undecidability, as one can not constructively prove the insights about this paradoxical relationship seen from speculative philosophy. Guess what? A sub-field of Avatar Extensions called "Avatar Witness Theory" predicts that, when viewing critical philosophy as a Product Witness and speculative philosophy as a Loop Witness, this duality is only witnessed from the perspective of speculative philosophy!

Not only were there no actually genuine philosophical problems here, but one can also use this to confirm a prediction in the theory of Avatar Extensions. It says precisely that one can not prove this from within critical philosophy, which is exactly what happens in HOOO EP, the most powerful constructive logic known today for meta-theorem proving. Avatar Extensions points to something beyond our current understanding. I ensure you, that nobody can explain this today. It just works, but currently there is no tool available to better understand why it is happening beyond simply stating that it does as expected, according to the theory.