Philosophy as Pathos

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Abstract

The perspective of pedagogy is the view the whole essay takes, opening with the assertion that the question concerning what to teach a child is the supreme test of philosophy. In the manner of a testimony, the essay marks one philosophical standpoint, called 'philosophy as pathos,' whose compelling character is borne out of the author's own experience of teaching. The Greek word pathos bespeaks of fundamental human passivity and facticity, its 'thrownness' (Heidegger). Philosophy is a 'how' of a singular entity's passivity-and-facticity, this entity whose being itself has the structure of the question. Philosophy as pathos is this question coming to utterance, striving toward lucidity. It is a way of carrying the burden of existence, an existence it cannot master. Philosophy as pathos is testimony to anima ('spirit'), a word that resists comprehending, for that with which it is held in 'correspondence,' namely, omnia ('everything'), undermines it. Philosophy as pathos is exposure to omnia. Standing as such, philosophy gives itself in wonder, which is its immanent source, turning the thinker into a perpetual beginner. The thinker is prodded to extend the range of things s/he can wonder at and 'delight' in contemplating, to include the unpalatable. Pathos also means, "what one has suffered." Further understood as catharsis, wonder coincides with the capacity to be altered and to suffer with.

Keywords: pathos, facticity, Dasein, anima, catharsis

Lately, an infant was born. After a few years from the time I started teaching philosophy, where, in one instance, I had only one student left in my class, and through a series of philosophy courses cancelled for lack of enrollees, until the present moment, I have long since wondered what one *should* teach a *child*. The question what to say, what to teach, and what to study in order to teach it, plunges one into what Alain Badiou calls, a "philosophical situation," one that requires an act of decision, and

the thinking of the value of the exception.[1] In my particular circumstance, this infant is my grandchild, my first. Though I know that an infant will pick up what the world presents to her anyway, I cannot bring myself to present *anything* to my grandchild. This situation confronts me with the question, "Where should I start?", with the thinking about beginning, and the thinking about where thinking should begin. But since the child is already on its way, thinking about what to teach a child becomes likewise a thinking about the end, about the ultimate.

When an infant is born, something new is brought into being. An infant is a *newcomer*. Though we expect babies, that this baby is *this* individual, in its singularity, is totally unexpected. Any of all the infinite number of individuals could have come into being, but no, it is her. Nobody was, is, or will be like her. When we encounter an infant, we encounter the unprecedented. The infant, moreover, is a *stranger.* The encounter between me and my grandchild is an encounter between two strangers. Her eyes are open, but she does not recognize me. In this encounter, one has to start at the beginning. But how does one begin? An infant is an event, a fate, and a destiny.

Philosophy could be thought of as the thinking a caring adult must go through when s/he presents her/himself to a child and when s/he conveys the first significant word to her when the encounter turns into language. In the encounter with an infant, both adult and child begin again. What then should I tell a child? This is a question as consequential as the real questions of philosophy. In the encounter with an infant and a caring adult, philosophy ceases to be a game. In this encounter, one is faced with a decision, and hence, a "philosophical situation," a situation that calls for the invention of new problems, the creation of new concepts. This situation itself is a test, the supreme test of philosophy.

When a person asks, "What should I think?," it would help him/her to ask, "What should I teach a child?"

Allow me then to draw from experience, in order to share with you one form of philosophizing which I have found, as a teacher, to appeal to the young mind.[2] This form of philosophizing is called *philosophy as pathos*.[3]

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[1] Alain Badiou, "Thinking the Event," in *Philosophy in the Present*, ed. Peter Engelmann, trans. Peter Thomas and Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 2-3 and passim.

[2] I am encouraged to follow this path by a certain conception of the proper task of the philosopher. The philosopher is not a 'sage' who possesses wisdom in order to dispense it, nor a benevolent friend to wisdom, but rather a pedagogue, an educator with respect to concept-formation. This topic will require a separate study by itself, and so I prefer not to pursue it here. See Myron A. Penner, "Normativity in Deleuze and Guattari's Concept of Philosophy," *Continental Philosophy Review* 36 (2003): 45-59. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

The thinker from whom I borrow this term arrived at this conception of philosophy by first asking, "What is the use of philosophy?", anticipating beforehand that the answer must be negative: philosophy is useless.

Standard Retort—*Ignoratio Elenchi*

Philosophy does not earn bread and butter. Consequently, it is useless. It is tempting to respond to this piece of reasoning merely with a counter-argument, a temptation to which defenders of philosophy still succumb. The opponent is accused of committing a fallacy, *ignoratio elenchi*, ignoring the issue, irrelevant conclusion. Philosophy is not meant to earn bread and butter. Therefore, it could not be declared useless merely on this basis. People are multidimensional and philosophy responds to certain needs that spring from this multidimensionality. No one would say that a mobile phone is a bad one because it does not take pictures. Mobile phones are not meant to take pictures.

It is important to point out that this retort itself ignores the problem and fails to fathom the actual nature and gravity of the objection. The charge that philosophy is useless is a real objection. It must be entertained. It is not enough to show that philosophy has a place in man's multi-dimensional being, true this may be. For what we have to confront is precisely the situation in which philosophy exists, namely, the present era, characterized precisely by functional orientation, "one-dimensionality" (Marcuse) and the crisis of the spirit. The value of philosophy must be sought and shown precisely in this context. Even if the counter-argument succeeds in staking a claim for philosophy in man's multi-dimensional being, pegging its value, and perhaps, its necessity, still, philosophers have to demonstrate this claim.

The question concerning the use of philosophy, or more broadly, its value, is not external to philosophy. Rather, it "relates to a permanent concern of philosophical thought: the effort of philosophy to justify its existence and its methods."[4] Josef Pieper remarks that the history of European philosophy might be said to begin with the vivid image of the Thracian Maid laughing at Thales of Miletus, the "first philosopher," when he fell into a cistern while looking up at the stars.[5] Describing the Thracian Maid's natural reaction, Plato narrates: "She said, that he was so eager to know what was going on in heaven, that he could not see what was before

[3] I borrow this term from Francis Gevers, my first philosophy teacher. See Francis Gevers, "The Use of Philosophy" (Baguio: University of the Philippines-Baguio, 1976, typewritten).

[4] Ibid., 4.

[5] Josef Pieper, "The Philosophical Act," in *Leisure: the Basis of Culture,* trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Random House, 1963), 76.

his feet. This is a jest which is equally applicable to all philosophers."[6] What is significant about this narrative, recounted by Plato in *Theaetetus*, is Plato's own reaction to it. We must take careful note that Plato *accepted* the laughter of the Thracian Maid, the laughter which represents the response of common sense to philosophy.

The activity of thinking itself is not automatically valuable. It must be justified, considering that life is beset by competing necessities. The typical necessities that bother people are characterized by urgency no different from emergencies which compel people to abandon leisurely activities, philosophy being among the first to be abandoned.

Agency (Power), Purpose, Usefulness

What are the circumstances or contexts in which the *criterion of usefulness* can be *meaningfully* applied? Objects or activities to which the criterion of usefulness can be meaningfully applied are those that can be subordinated to human agency, or objects and activities that can be treated as instruments. There is a logical connection between agency and power. Power in turn can be thought of as a kind of efficient cause. Plato and Aristotle already claimed that human agency is a kind of efficient cause. Agency involves the capacity to bring about a difference to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent can be simply defined as "one who exerts power or produces an effect." An object or activity is a "manipulable instrument" if it can be used to achieve a purpose, or an end, that is, a quality or outcome.

The criterion of usefulness applies only to those objects and activities that fall under the dominion of people, or to those upon which people can stamp the human form, or to those they can cultivate. "Only within the sphere of culture [is the criterion of usefulness operable]."[7] An arable piece of land is an example of something we subdue. It is useful and we can ask whether the way we cultivate it is efficient or inefficient. Think of the opposite. In circumstances when we are reduced to passivity, it does not make sense to apply the criterion of usefulness. Since we do not subdue quasars and stars it makes no sense to bother ourselves about their usefulness to us — at least, not yet. We can imagine that things may become useful to us when it would look like they are instrumental for our purposes. Instrumentality still reigns when things become useless, like a Betamax tape, or similarly, when the usefulness of things may become exhausted, when we no longer see any purpose for them. It is evident that all talks of "usefulness" must necessarily be anthropocentric.

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[6] *Theaetetus* 174, quoted in ibid.

[7] Gevers, "The Use of Philosophy," 15.

Is Philosophy as a Form of Knowledge Useful?

If my memory does not fail me, I seem to remember a book entitled, *Usable Knowledge*. Is philosophy "usable knowledge"? The question whether philosophy is useful redounds to the question whether philosophy as a form of knowledge is a handy instrument.[8] There is little doubt that scientific research aims to produce knowledge that can be harnessed to serve human purposes, and in this, it has succeeded enormously.

In the case of philosophy, the problem of its usefulness is compounded by its ambivalent status as a form of knowledge. When science poses its questions, the fundamental presumption is that they are not in principle unanswerable. They can be solved. Philosophical questions, by contrast, are perennial. They do not go away. Philosophy deepens its problems in its pursuit of them. In philosophy, thinking becomes more difficult as one thinks some more. In philosophy, the theme of thinking withdraws.

The frame of mind of the philosopher is not possession or domination of its object, but *wonder*. Philosophical inquiry differs radically from scientific inquiry because wonder is a form of not-knowing:

> To wonder is not merely not to know; it means to be inwardly aware and sure that one does not know, and that one understands oneself in not knowing.[9]

Wonder, we learn in Plato's *Theaetetus,* is the beginning of philosophy. What does the word 'beginning' really signify? Josef Pieper interprets:

> Wonder is not just the starting point of philosophy in the sense of *initium*, of a prelude or preface. Wonder is the *principium*, the lasting source, the *fons et origo*, the immanent origin of philosophy. The philosopher does not cease 'wondering' at a certain point in his philosophizing—he does not cease to wonder unless, of course, he ceases to philosophize in the true sense of the word.[10]

Wonder, as the immanent source (*pungánay*) that sustains the philosophic inquiry makes of the inquirer a perpetual beginner. Wonder is not a condition of fullness but of emptiness. Here is a story from Zen:

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[8] Ibid., 16.

[9] Pieper, "The Philosophical Act," 103.

[10] Ibid.

A Cup of Tea[11]

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. "It is overfull. No more will go in!"

"Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

In philosophy, the theme of thinking withdraws. "Philosophy never claimed to be a superior form of knowledge but, on the contrary, a form of humility, and restrained, and conscious of this restraint and humility in relation to knowledge."[12] Pieper points out that

> [t]he words philosopher and philosophy were coined, according to legend . . . by Pythagoras in explicit contrast to the words *sophia* and *sophos*: no man is wise, and no man 'knows'; God alone is wise and all-knowing.[13]

The word *philosophy* itself, which contains the word *philein*, 'friend,' is conditioned by the words *sophia* and *sophos* rather than the other way around. In contrast to science, this implies that philosophy "can only be said to 'possess' its object, to 'have' its proper object in the act of searching lovingly for it."[14] This conception of philosophy is certainly found in the Medieval Period:

> For the medievals, . . . every truth is a way toward a goal which lies at the end of that way: a goal that on the one hand exceeds the way, but which, on the other hand, manifests itself only on and along the way. The goal is initially unknown and must become clear gradually, as that which transcends the way but which is also one with the way. It can be reached only by following the way, and by no means outside that way. In other words, this goal cannot

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[11] Paul Reps (compiler), *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (New York: Penguin Books, 1957), 17.

[12] Pieper, "The Philosophical Act," 107.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 108.

> be produced by a process that is independent from it. . . . the truth is not detached from the way, even though it may exceed the way. On the contrary, reaching the goal lies in going the way.[15]

The life of philosophy resides in going the way, in the search itself, in the struggle of inquiry as it moves along the path to its object. It continually approaches its goal and may manage to come close to it, but it will never touch it or equal it. The goal of philosophical thinking is more an asymptotic goal than an achieved ultimacy.[16] And yet, since philosophy is a form of "love" (*philein*), its goal remains intimate to it even as it recedes from it. Its end is regulative (Kant), not constitutive (Hegel). The philosopher is *already* on the way, *in via*, is in-between, and the end already resides in the in-between, yet exceeds it.

For this reason, the nature of philosophy shows itself, among others, in the process of its characteristic explication and not by its results; consequently, philosophy is not best taught by teaching theses: who said what and what is said in a doctrine. Such a pedagogy mistakenly treats philosophical concepts as though they were canned food. It does not enable the student to discover thinking but instead deposits in his/her memory "canned thoughts," ready-made ideas. Philosophy is not a question of theses.[17] The theses of great philosophers contradict one another and there is not even a modest number of theses about which philosophers have reached agreement. Philosophy has no "findings," and the insights themselves that a philosopher may succeed in creating become new questions. Rather than a system or a set of theses, authentic philosophizing is a questioning and seeking of the thinker him/herself. It is a personal affair. Husserl says:

> Philosophy—wisdom (*sagesse*)—is the philosopher's quite personal affair. It must arise as *his* wisdom, as his self-acquired knowledge tending toward universality, a knowledge for which he can answer from the beginning, and at each step, by virtue of his own absolute insights.[18]

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[15] André Van De Putte, "In Memory of Professor Jos Decorte," *The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter* 10 (2001-2002): 40.

[16] William Desmond, "What's in an Ending?" *The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter* 15 (2006-2007), 6-7.

[17] William A. Luijpen, *Existential Phenomenology* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1960), 4 ff.

[18] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1977), 2.

And if one should rely on the ideas of a philosopher, one should not do "a karaoke" of them. One should rather take these ideas in such a way that one makes them as one's own—as judges of the TV show, *American Idol* would instruct.

But if one must be constantly on the way in the philosophical path, one always does so as a perpetual beginner. In the conception of philosophy adumbrated in this paper, the philosopher is a neophyte, a *tyro*, the beginner in learning, and as such only "possesses" his object in repeating his Being, in turning his Being into a question, and this question into an *event*.

Returning now to the issue of the usefulness of philosophy, we can conclude that by virtue of its non-possession of its object, philosophy is not a handy instrument to produce usefulness. It is not "usable knowledge." The results of philosophical thinking can of course be used for political ends, and in this sense, it is useful. "Nothing is too sublime to be useful," says Francis Gevers.[19] However, this would involve a certain mutilation of philosophic questioning, a dismemberment and then, a petrifaction of that portion that is put to use, uprooting the part from the questioning that alone supplies it with its breath of life. For this reason, philosophy is not primarily an argument.[20] In the same vein, Robert Nozick says that philosophy is not about knockdown arguments that put an end to all arguing, forcing the opponent down to his knees, reducing him to silence.[21]

A Handy Instrument? Philosophy as Pathos

The question whether philosophy is useful redounds to the question whether philosophy as a form of knowledge is a handy instrument, and further, whether, as all instruments are, it falls under our dominion. We can ask however, is philosophy rather like quasars and stars, far removed from the reach of human cultivation. To this, Gevers answers that philosophy overcomes us, that it is "something over which to a certain degree we have no power."[22] Gevers speaks in this connection about basic human passivity.

The sense of powerless here invoked is specific. It pertains to what lies beyond human agency in the sense of our *facticity*[23] as "thrownness"

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[19] Gevers, "The Use of Philosophy," 15.

[20] See Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 22.

[21] Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 4-8.

[22] Gevers, "The Use of Philosophy," 20.

[23] There is "a certain way of 'presence-at-hand' which is Dasein's *own*." Dasein is disclosed to its ownmost Being in the manner of a certain "factual Being-present-at-hand." "The 'factuality' of the fact [Tatsache] of one's own Dasein is at bottom quite different ontologically from the factual occurrence of some kind of mineral, for example. Whenever Dasein is, it is a Fact; and the factuality of such a Fact is what we

(*Geworfenheit*) (Heidegger).[24] This form of 'powerlessness' and 'passivity' concerns human '*existence' itself* (i.e., this entity's (Dasein's) being delivered over to its 'that it is' where its 'whence' and 'whither' is however 'veiled.'[25] Heidegger says that "the expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*."[26] That is to say that I find myself *already* existing. This fact is not something I have caused or brought about. I am not *causa sui*. My coming into being is not something I had supervision over. It does not fall under the dominion of my agency. It predates it. Facticity as "thrownness" is what I cannot possibly appropriate. My coming into being is that with relation to which I am completely passive. My own coming into being withdraws from me. My affective self-finding (*Befindlichkeit*) discloses to me the opacity and inappropriability of my own origins. (Dasein's "that-it-is" is an enigma.) My own birth escapes any appropriative engagement. I am excluded from it. I am "in-between," always already. But as such, I am the excluded middle: excluded from the two "ends" between which I am the middle. I am excluded from my come-to-be; I am excluded from my death.

Facticity means "the fact [*Factum*] in its being a fact [*Factum-sein*], that is, that behind which and back of which one cannot go."[27] Thus, "I can no more go back behind my coming into being than I can appropriate death by making it somehow actual."[28] As Heidegger puts it: "'Being-a-basis means never to have power over one's ownmost Being from the ground up."[29] My very "that-it-is" then signals an *impossibility* for my agency, its radical expropriation.

Thus is *fundamental passivity*: "thrownness," Dasein's being delivered over to its "that-it-is," the stark fact of its existence (*existentia*). This can be further unpacked. Several other "facts" come along with the "package" of our Being, all characterized by "thrownness."

First, we find ourselves already with *inquiry* as our mode of Being, says Heidegger. Heidegger extends this insight—that inquiry itself is our mode of Being—beyond the inquiry into the meaning of Being.[30] It extends

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shall call Dasein's '*facticity*'." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 82.

[24] Ibid., 174 and passim. See also Francois Raffoul and Eric Sean Nelson (eds.), *Rethinking Facticity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008).

[25] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 174.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Hans-Georg Gadamer, quoted by James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 41.

[28] Raffoul and Nelson (eds.), *Rethinking Facticity*, 8.

[29] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 330.

[30] "The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being;* and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about--namely, Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term '*Dasein*'." Ibid., 27.

to scientific inquiry.[31] Sciences are ways of Being in which Dasein comports itself towards entities. The sciences are themselves modes of behaviour of an entity whose Being is inquiring.

Now, along with the stark fact of our own Being as inquiry comes the possibility of philosophizing. Kant speaks of *metaphysica naturalis*, a natural *propensity* of the human mind to go deep and to seek an ever more fundamental insight or account.[32] Though each and every person is not automatically a philosopher, philosophy remains a possibility which an individual can choose for her/himself by virtue of her/his Being as inquiry.

Second, Heidegger says that inquiry itself has a structure. Questioning is not the mere act of questioning. Inquiry has that which is asked *about* (*sein Gefragtes*). In the conception of philosophy as pathos, we think that that which is asked about in philosophic inquiry is the facticity of *the human condition itself* in its "thrownness."[33] We want to connect facticity as "thrownness" to the human condition. That is to say that along with the "package" of our Being are given, in their stark factuality, the following: my bodily-being, earth-boundness, sociality, finitude and temporality, all having to do with my singularity and the particularity of my situation.[34] However, these are not brute facts. Facticity is not factuality. They manifest themselves *as issues*:

> Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein's Being, and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being—a relationship which itself is one of Being.[35]

The whole "package" of our Being therefore has the structure of a question. We cannot avoid this question any more than we can avoid our Being—for as long as we choose to remain existing. (And that is why suicide is an interesting problem).

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[31] "As ways in which man behaves, sciences have the manner of Being which this entity—man himself—possesses. This entity we denote by the term '*Dasein*'." Ibid., 32-33.

[32] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1933), 56.

[33] For the hermeneutics of facticity in the young Heidegger, see Francois Raffoul, "Factical Life and the Need for Philosophy," in Raffoul and Nelson (eds.), *Rethinking Facticity*. See also James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), Chapters 1 and 2. See Martin Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. John van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[34] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

[35] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32.

A "thrown" question, having to attend to the *burden* of itself, having to make sense of itself and having to come to terms with itself; the human condition striving to understand itself from within itself—this is the groundwork of philosophy.[36] Philosophy is the explication, the rendering into words, of existential questions, the quandaries of the human condition.[37] In this respect, it is closely related to literature. Literature confronts us with the human predicament: inescapable necessity and limited freedom, birth and death, caring and indifference, fate and fortune, ruthlessness and compassion, suffering and creativity, injustice and balance. Philosophy does not provide us with power to overcome these problems. Least of all should we see philosophy as a powerful instrument to produce usefulness. In meditating on the human condition, philosophy only has "a negative usefulness."[38] It does not give us power over our facticity. It is rather that kind of thinking, in our thrown existence, that confronts the frontiers of our human power. Today, it performs this function in the face of the power of technology that continually moves the frontiers of the field of human activity and the limits as well as constraints of facticity.[39]

We can demand from somebody a justification for his actions. But with regard to the "thrownness" of my Being, which predates me, *already* there *as* it is and the cosmos *as* it is, the demand for justification seems absurd. For all these are simply there. (It makes no sense, in other words, to demand from somebody, who has been thrown out of the window by strong-armed men, destroying the orchids below as a result, that he explains why he broke the orchids. There is no agency here. He was just a projectile.)

Francis Gevers says:

> Plato connects philosophy [to] "pathos," that is, with all that overcomes man without his consent, with that which enthralls him, and hence, that about which he cannot judge neither in favorable or unfavorable sense.[40]

What are the senses of the Greek word, "pathos?"

> *PATHOS:* (πάθος Greek) = 1. *anything that befalls one, an*

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[36] Ibid., Part I, Chapter 5.

[37] Is it natural for humans to philosophize? What cannot be escaped is the question that human beings *are*, existential questions. However, what people can escape, since it is, "proximally and for the most part," useless, is the difficult work of articulation. We can refuse to take on the task of explicating the quandaries of the human condition—which is philosophy proper. This articulation takes many forms.

[38] Gevers, "The Use of Philosophy," 21.

[39] Dominique Janicaud, *On the Human Condition*, trans. Eileen Brennan (London: Routledge, 2005).

[40] Gevers, "The Use of Philosophy," 22.

> *incident, an accident, Hdt.*, Soph. 2. *What one has suffered, one's experience,* Aesch.; in pl., Plat.: -- commonly in bad sense, a *suffering, misfortune, calamity;* 3. *Any passive state, a condition, state,* Plat.: in pl. *the incidents* or *changes to which* things *are liable, τά περί τόυ οὐρανόυ π.*[41]

No one knows beforehand the frontier that demarcates activity from passivity, and we are beset with the constant dilemma regarding whether the frontier already lies, now, here, on the side of action or on the side of passion still. But one thing is evident: there is a limit to what man can achieve through his own power at any given time, and that life to a great extent is passivity.[42] This is nowhere clearer than in the face of death. In death, I reach the extreme limits of my agency. There is no speech about death more eloquent than a man's own death itself. Philosophy pales in comparison to this eloquent speech about man's utter powerlessness and passivity, about an "ability to be" overcome and subdued. This speech about death is neither useful nor useless: it is simply a fact. And so is philosophy as pathos. Speech and reflection on death is so natural that Plato has called philosophy, "an exercise in dying." Under this description, dying is living, a lifelong process of dying. The *examined life*, therefore, is a certain manner of dying. We did not choose to be born; but we can at least choose the way we die. And we know that for the Socratic Plato, the *unexamined* life is not worth living, that is to say, that only the examined dying gives one a sense of the instant,[43] giving the individual *wakefulness*.[44] Death does not stand in the future. As soon as man is born, he is already old enough to die. Philosophy is a repetition of the movement of life, which, at every instant, is threatened by death. It recovers the movement of life which has the tendency of losing itself (*Abfallen*), of fleeing from itself, from the burden of itself that it finds hard to bear.[45] Philosophy as pathos is not a "thinking of" our Being but rather *a how of our Being*. These, having been said, still, death itself—or should we now say, the death of the other—is the most eloquent speech about life's passivity.

But what does the mute voice of philosophy contribute to the eloquent speech of dying? Philosophy does not solve the existential problems of life but it originates from these problems. They are the condition of philosophy's possibility. Philosophy *is* these problems finding

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[41] *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, founded upon the 7th Edition of Liddel and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, impression of 1992).

[42] Gevers, "The Use of Philosophy," 22.

[43] Alphonso Lingis, "Translator's Introduction," in Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 14. But see also Rene Descartes's *Meditation* 3.

[44] Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 12.

[45] A constant theme in Heidegger's philosophy.

utterance. Philosophy is the further development of the question, the quandary that we ourselves are. In philosophy, the human condition as a question does not become different: it becomes itself. Since philosophy as pathos is not the power over Being, it cannot systematize nor structure it. It can only serve as this Being's moment of lucidity, the deepening of its enigma, the enigma of this entity who in its Being this Being itself is at issue. This limited lucidity, philosophy as pathos, is therefore far removed from being a handy instrument that solves the enigma of existence. It is instead the explication of this being's/Dasein's relative powerlessness in face of the enigma that it *is*.

Philosophy is use-less—or better, use-free. Its "use" may not even be "inner balance," or "peace of heart," or equanimity, or "reconciliation"—words that express that one had finally made peace with life's unsettledness. No! Its fruit is not the Socratic frame of mind as it takes in the hemlock. It has no "fruit." Philosophy as pathos is what takes all—the *entire "package,"* and everything that comes with it. The true philosopher is not afraid to seek all the way, to follow wherever thinking might bring him, no matter how disturbing or disgusting the consequences might be. Philosophizing about the human condition in its passivity liberates us from naïve joy. It frees us from illusion, but compensates for this loss with a clarification of the human consciousness. Taking all, bearing all: this is to be *anima*.

Sense of Proportion

Wisdom without illusion—does this not require a drastic enlargement of our cultural horizons, infiltrated and narrowed down as it is by the culture of modernity, a culture that continues to harness all forms of knowledge, including philosophy, and science to serve anthropocentric desires and projects—wealth, pleasure, honour, prestige? Are not anthropocentric ends at bottom, parochial? If we look at the world that the "practical" mind produces, the same mind that declares philosophy "useless," we must say that the picture we see is not impressive.

What would philosophy look like if it is pursued not for its "usefulness," that is, not in order to serve purposive and instrumental rationality—again, anthropocentric—but pursued for a spiritual expansion that leaves philosophy completely free?

In striving for wisdom without illusion, we can start by taking the accusation of anthropocentrism seriously.[46] We can start contemplating that

[46] Herman de Dijn, "Comfort without Hope: The Topicality and Relevance of Spinoza," trans. Chris Emery, in *The Low Countries* 13 (Flanders, Belgium: The Flemish-Netherlands Foundation, 2005). See also Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 35-38.

> [t]he perfection of things is to be reckoned only from their own nature and power; things are not more or less perfect, according as they delight or offend human sense, or according as they are serviceable or repugnant to mankind.[47]

We can, like Spinoza,[48] get rid of the superstition that "all things in nature act as men themselves act, namely, with an end in view." We can get rid of the misconception that God himself acts like men, directing all things to a definite goal ("for it is said that God made all things for man, and man that he might worship him"). We can start thinking of ourselves as part of nature, a bit different from the rest, but not for that reason, special. We may have this little specialty of knowledge, but we can see this activity as part of a larger process of which we ourselves are but an insignificant part. By doing these, do we not gain that which Francis Gevers referred to earlier: "a clarification of human consciousness," a freedom from illusion and "naïve joy"?

One can strive for a *sense of proportion*—and this is *wisdom* too. A proportion can sometimes be expressed as a *fraction*. We know that a fraction expresses a part-whole relation. So, I can place myself in the place assigned for the *numerator,* the place assigned for *the part or the portion,* and then, imagine what could possibly occupy the space of the *denominator, the whole* of which the part is a portion. The numerator would stay and remain *one*, but the denominator would keep increasing in value. The numerator, for sure, would strive to persist in its Being, a *conatus*—for as long as it exists. But it is not a *causa sui*. Numerically, this numerator which I am, unlike its denominator, never becomes larger. It does not heap up, but on the contrary, "is already always old enough to die." Its tenure is set beforehand as its past perfect, imprinted in its Being.

So, what proportion does one see in this fraction, a finite singularity on top of a denominator that keeps piling up?

Philosophy as Pathos is the act of adding to the denominator, and so causes it to heap up. In this manner, philosophy gives a *sense* of proportion. It *gives*, that is, it *donates* (one gains lucidity); it gives a *blow* (one gains in humility: I am only this). Philosophy enlarges the denominator. It *is* this enlargement. It measures one's singularity *sub specie aeternitatis,* so that what one gains in intensity, one loses in immensity. I am at the middle, between two zeroes, determined by "ends." In this fraction, I am close to "zero," and draws closer to it, as the denominator increases. *I am "zero" deferred.*

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[47] Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 81.

[48] Ibid., Appendix to Part I.

Diak nga ibaknang dayta. This is what Ilokanos occasionally say to anybody who engages in the vain attempt to increase the numerator by adding to the denominator.

Anima

The view *sub specie aeternitatis*, one that beholds the panorama of being from the largest perspective possible, is also the view of the *anima*. *Anima est quodammodo omnia*, the spirit is in a way everything.[49] This is a vision, the same vision that inspires what Heidegger calls, "Dasein's ontico-ontological priority."[50] "Spirit is the power of embracing the totality of being." The vision declares not only that "the whole of reality" and "spirit" are reciprocal; their correspondence is complete.[51]

> The world of a spiritual being is the totality of existing things; and their correspondence is so complete that it is both essential to spirit (spirit is the power of embracing the totality of being) and equally it is essential to things themselves ("to be" means "to be in relation to spirit").[52]

The panoramic view, or what Thomas Nagel calls the "objective view," has its downside. It is dangerous. It gives rise to the problem of the *meaning of life*.[53] It institutes a clash between two perspectives which we can take toward our being, both perspectives being ours: the subjective view and the objective view.[54] Viewed from our subjective involvement, our lives appear to us as naturally meaningful and our concerns, worthy of pursuit. This subjective, parochial view clashes with the view *sub specie aeternitatis*, a perspective that can be so far removed, that it makes our cares and concerns look like trifles, children's sports. Accordingly, "from far enough outside my birth seems accidental, my life pointless, and my death insignificant, but from inside my never having been born seems nearly unimaginable, my life monstrously important, and my death catastrophic."[55] Thomas Nagel says: "In seeing ourselves from outside we find it difficult to take our lives seriously. This loss of conviction, and the attempt to regain it, is the problem of the meaning of life."[56]

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49 Aristotle, *De Anima*, 8: 431b 21 and 5: 430a 14.

50 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 34.

51 Pieper, "The Philosophical Act," 88-89.

52 Ibid., 90.

53 Thomas Nagel, *A View From Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 214 and passim.

54 Ibid., passim

55 Ibid., 209.

56 Ibid., 214.

To the extent that our Being participates in *anima*, we can choose to accept *all things, omnia.* And if we can concede that we are not special, that we are just part of everything infinitely larger, that we are just part of Nature, should this concession not itself, in Spinoza's view, cause us to stand in *awe and wonder*? Only a being who spontaneously *feels* itself to be tiny and insignificant can stand in awe and wonder, the frame of mind of the philosopher, a frame of mind which would then be *amor dei* (in the sense of Spinoza) and thereby also, *amor fati.* Thus, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche proclaims:

> My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it—all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary—but *love* it.[57]

Standing in wonder in face of all things and in face of all that makes all things possible, we may learn *not* to think of ourselves as above or outside or beyond this order.[58] We can think of ourselves as having a common fate with all things. Not that we are powerless with regard to situations we may encounter, but that rather even what power we may have springs from that of which we are ultimately just a part. In response to a question I posed concerning the "naturalism about mankind," a student of mine wrote this answer:

> There is really a similarity when we see the first buds of plants emerging during spring and witnessing a funeral... Everything else does not cease to exist when you do... Human nature is being part of nature. We belong to nature, and not the other way around.[59]

If philosophy becomes "love for that which makes *everything* possible" then we are invited to extend the range of things we can wonder at and delight in contemplating, including the *unpalatable*. Jonathan Bennett says:

> Anyone will rejoice in the outer appearance of a live butterfly, but even the innards of a dead and dissected one

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[57] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 258.

[58] de Dijn, "Comfort without Hope," 288. See also Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 35-38.

[59] Maria Ana C. De Jesus (Examination on Spinoza, University of the Philippines–Baguio, 2011).

> may engender 'wonder and delight' as one learns how the organism functions—the complex, orderly processes which constitutes the life of the butterfly.[60]

Aristotle has already noticed this peculiar human capability for "wonder and delight" over things unpalatable:

> It is natural for all to delight in works of imitation. The truth of this . . . is shown by experience: though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art, the forms for example of the lowest animals and of dead bodies.[61]

Should we not extend this line of thought to *human beings* and so astound ourselves as we find "wonder and delight" in the discovery of the intricacy and inevitability of the hidden mechanisms of human depravity: cruelty, vanity, cowardice, envy, avarice, excess?

Beyond the unpalatable, we may further extend the reach of wonder to what Richard Kearney calls, the "cathartic power" of texts, the power to "alter" us by confronting us with what is *other*, with what is *alien*—"the stranger the better"; the power of texts of "transporting us to other times and places where we can experience things *otherwise,*" enabling us to know, not only *how* or *what* (a meager classification of forms of knowledge) but *what it is like.*[62] Aristotle defined *catharsis* as "purgation by pity and fear."[63] Fear, *phobos*, according to Kearney, is the moment of detachment in *catharis* which removes us from "where the action is," from the frenzy that characterizes all involved action, thereby allowing us the privilege of distance, enabling us to contemplate the significance of events.[64] Pity, *eleos*, is the moment of involvement. By this word, the Greeks understood the ability to suffer with others (*sym-pathein*).[65] *Pathos* also means "what one has suffered."

> We might say, consequently, that catharsis affords a singular mix of pity and fear whereby we experience the suffering of other beings *as if* we were them. And it is precisely this double-take of difference and identity—experiencing oneself as another and the other as oneself—that provokes

[60] Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, 37.
[61] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b, 8-12.
[62] Richard Kearney, *On Stories* (London: Routledge, 2002), 137.
[63] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449b, 25.
[64] Kearney, *On Stories*, 137-138.
[65] Ibid., 138-139.

a reversal of our natural attitude to things and opens us to novel ways of seeing and being.[66]

And so by reading strange texts, and texts called "philosophy," we may break the confines that imprison our minds in order to fathom that there is "goodness beyond virtue and evil beyond vice" (Hannah Arendt). Drawing now upon the thought of Raimond Gaita, philosophy as pathos marks and registers the *common condition* humans share, not only with those that populate the familiar world of our natural attitude but even with the condition of those whose lives have been deprived of the meaning and the value that any ordinary person takes for granted; our common condition even with ruthless evil-doers, our common condition even with those we do not and cannot love, our common condition even with those who can never understand us and whom we can never understand.[67]

To end this discussion, let us return to the theme of humility and the fact that we are tiny. Only tiny beings find the need to philosophize. Let me repeat an earlier quotation: "no man is wise, and no man 'knows'; God alone is wise and all-knowing."[68] Let me end with a quotation, from Raimond Gaita:

> Philosophy is at its heart always a meta-activity, stepping back to think about thinking. It thinks not only about what our obligations are, but also about the concept of obligation; not only about what is just, but also about the concept of justice; not only about what is rational to do or believe, but also about the concept of the rational. This makes it difficult for some people to find their feet with philosophy, and it makes them impatient of it. To them, I repeat Wittgenstein's advise concerning how philosophers should greet one another. He said they should say, 'Take your time.'[69]

A point should be reached when one should no longer follow a philosopher or a philosophy, so that what is folded can be unfolded. Then thinking can begin again.

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[66] Ibid., 140.

[67] Raimond Gaita, *Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception*, 2d ed (London: Routledge, 2004). See also Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[68] Pieper, "The Philosophical Act," 107.

[69] Gaita, *A Common Humanity,* 16.

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