

A Perspective Essay on 'Speculative Philosophy and Education'

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Abstract: One of the perennial questions in Philosophy is the question of methodology. The question seeks to provide a solution on how Philosophy is done or on how it should be done. While Philosophy does not have a watertight method as is the case with Science, Philosophy appeals to its diverse methods including but not limited to Analytic method, Phenomenological method, Descriptive method, Prescriptive method, Hermeneutics and the Speculative method. This essay explores the Speculative method and its relevance to Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Definitions

Etymology: The term "speculation" comes from the Latin words *Specere* (to reflect) and *Speculum* (mirror). *Speculum* symbolizes the notions of reflection, reflective consciousness and reflectedness. It points to certain speculative philosophies, especially the German Idealism. *Specere* means to "look at", "behold", "observe", "explore", "investigate", or "contemplate". The original philosophical sources of speculation are found in classical Greek philosophy where concepts of *idein*, *theoria* and *voein*, are etymologically related to "seeing" and "vision". They are evident in Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian Philosophy.

Operational Definition: In a more profound sense, speculation refers to the systematic and comprehensive account of human existence and the universe that encompass both natural sciences as well as the human sciences. Further, it infers the philosophical approaches and traditions that appeal to metaphysics and systematic treatments of existence, consciousness and free will. In occidental Philosophies, the "speculative" is usually associated with metaphysics, first philosophy, theology, cosmology, absolute-theory, and in general with theoretical knowledge. It is also important to note that anti-metaphysics and empirical philosophies can thus be taken as forms of speculating the true nature of philosophy.

II. HEGELIAN SPECULATION

Some of the key figures in Speculative Philosophy include Greek cosmological speculators like Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes as well as Plato, Aristotle, Proclus, Aquinas, Kant and Hegel. Special interest is herein given to Hegel. Hegel conceives Speculation as Technical and logical moment that signifies the *unifying power of positive reason*, as the highest possible achievement of philosophical inquiry. In Hegelian terms "speculative proposition or sentence cannot be approached propositionally because what is meant is first

located or determined within a subject" (Hegel, G.W.F., 1977). This meaning is elaborated and transferred to the predicate. It is then finally turned back again into the subject for a final determination of its meaning. The whole process ends in the absolute idea where there is no further process.

Categorical delineation: Hegel's philosophy is post-categorical, and beyond any possible original commentary, in that any further elaboration of his system must *prima facie* be within the system. Categorical delineation is taken just about as far as it can be in Hegel's philosophy without provoking a non-categorical philosophical response.

III. SELECTED DISCIPLINES AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SPECULATION

Some of the disciplines and areas of development in speculation include *Speculative History*, *Speculative theology*, *Speculative Realism*, *Speculative psychology*, and *Speculative materialism* (Murphy, A.E., 1996).

Speculative History: Speculative systems of history have had a long and robust history until recently. They are typically called philosophies of history. Friedrich Hegel is one of the authorities in Speculative history. He is known to have partitioned Africa into real Africa and European Africa and Asiatic Africa based on speculation. *Speculative theology* is an enduring curriculum in theological institutions. It can be loosely defined as the 'attempts to discover new insights into the truths of faith by applying human reason to divine revelation'. In this sense, speculative theology can be traced to the later medieval arguments concerning faith seeking understanding, as is propounded by St. Anselm. Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of God is the *locus classicus* for the interrelation between faith and the intellect. *Speculative Realism* is directed against what it calls "correlationism" and post-Kantian philosophy. Correlationism is the conception that human beings can only access the *correlation* between *thinking and being*. *Speculative materialism* on its part asserts that all things have objective *stati*, and that goes for things physical as well as fictional. The tendency towards universal reification now seems to connote the "speculative".

IV. GENERAL TRAITS OF SPECULATION

The speculative method is holistic, post verificational, systematic, unique, organic, synoptic, authentic, intuitional and insightful, flexible, has some relation with empirical

reality, mental, committed to existence and invokes curiosity (Broad, C.D., 1947).. First, it is *Holistic* because it is an all-encompassing approach towards the universe and the niche of the human within the general order of things. It investigates the whole, the total, the irreducible, and the non-derivable. The speculative method is a conjunctive method rather than a 'disjunctive' and dichotomized stance on investigation. Secondly, its *Post Verificational* trait is based on the fact that it is a non-verifiable narrative of the whole of reality. Thirdly, that it is *Systematic* implies that it is a systematic and formal treatise and not some sort of reflection on one particular topic. Bits of reflections and thought exercises are procedures in analytical philosophy and logic. It is not adequately represented in logical thought-determinations. Its *Uniqueness* is derived from the conviction that the discipline of philosophy is a unique undertaking. It cannot be reduced to any particular science or religion for that matter. It ought to be expressed as such if it is to be true to its basic concept. The *Organic* means that the Speculative method is 'thought from within'. The thought is considered as an organic activity, unfolding organically from within and not mechanically put together from 'without'. Fifthly *Synoptic aspect of speculation* tends towards its view of reality from all perspectives compared to synthesis, which is more limited to logical ordering.

Authentism; Speculative philosophers tend to focus on active existence. It is self-explanatory and as such self-participation is seen as leading to stronger theories. *Intuition, Insight, Imagination* require deep intuition and imagination on the part of the thinker. *Commitment to Existence and Curiosity* point to the strong sense of existence and so spends less time proving existence; rather, it focuses on the 'why' of existence. In the speculative world, *the Mind* is the powerhouse of the speculative method. It is an ontological reality. *Relationship with Empirical reality*: In some cases, speculative thought conceives empirical validity as either secondary or irrelevant. At other times, it clarifies the nature of how abstract realities can be verified or validated. Finally, *Flexibility* implies that the process of speculation is not fixed; the mind being ontological is itself not fixed.

V. SPECULATION IN EDUCATION

In Education, speculation correlates more with the process of educating than it does to educational content, hence the most logical application of the speculative method is on the teaching methods. Speculation advocates for teaching processes that reconnect the learner to his/her ontological reality. A learner is considered a genuinely existent being, and as such is governed by the intrinsic principles of potency and act. 'Act' is the principle of the actualization of being, which calls for learner-centred approaches. Three areas of significance in content delivery are therefore outlined herein in terms of learner-centred teaching strategies, methods and techniques:

Speculative based teaching encompasses heuristic or discovery strategies. It tends to discourage overly transmission strategies because its primary intent is to capture a student's curiosity, provokes them to observe, investigate, form hypothesis, and draw conclusions. It encourages High Order Cognitive skills, for instance, critical and creative thinking, decision making and social skills like communication. Independent studies and auto-didacticism. Methods of Teaching (less broad than strategies) proper to speculation include discussion, problem-solving, projects, role play, debate, homework, research, reports, and essays. In discussions, there is an expression of thought between the learner and the teacher and the learner and fellow learners. Expression of subjective thought during discussion points to the fact that the learner is by nature a speculator and a metaphysical entity. Discussions can be free group discussion, characterized by the learner to learner talk and in which learners control the discussion. They can also use class discussion in which the teacher takes charge and moderates the discussion. Other discussions include problem centred discussions, seminars in which a student presents a paper, panel discussion in which learners assume expert roles, dialogue (dialogue between two learners) and small group discussions. Teaching techniques (very specific used to achieve intended objectives): They may include Question technique (Socratic method), Buzz group technique (Plenary), brainstorming. The question-answer method bridges the gap between transmission and facilitation teaching methods. Questions are used to arouse learners interest and capture their attention, review a lesson, diagnose learner's entry behaviour, assess learners understanding of concepts, principles and problem-solving skills teacher's questions motivates to participate in theoretical lessons. Two categories of questions to be posed to learners include low order questions which demand that the learner be able to recall facts, concepts and principles, and High order questions in two subcategories; The higher order evaluative questions and higher order divergent questions.

VI. THE SPECULATION PROCESS

There are no watertight speculative processes given its inward-oriented nature. However, a rough sketch can follow the following format: Identification of a problem, determination of its background, gathering as much information as possible on attempted solutions including contradictory information, attempting personal web without necessarily excluding contradictory parts, imagining and creating sub webs from the first web and attempting a non-absolutist synthesis and synopsis. In most cases, the primary concern for speculation is on the issues that may not be easily solved by standard investigation procedures such as the fundamental questions of life like death and suffering.

VII. CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to clarify the Speculative Philosophy. It expresses the relevance of speculation in Education, especially in the instructional methods. The

speculative ways are the way of Metaphysics, and as a metaphysically inclined process, it treats the learner as a full existent and active entity. The learner's imagination, intuition and insight are crucial in speculation.

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