How to Escape Irrelevance: Performance Philosophy, Public Philosophy and Borderless Philosophy[*]

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Abstract

Carlo Cellucci has rightly pointed out that contemporary professional academic philosophy has a serious problem of irrelevance. Performance philosophy and public philosophy are two recent attempts to solve that problem and radically transform professional academic philosophy into what I call real philosophy. Nevertheless, performance philosophy and public philosophy have some prima facie problems. My goal in this essay is to make some headway towards solving these two prima facie problems, first, by briefly describing ways of conceptually clarifying and purposively unifying performance philosophy and public philosophy individually; second, by briefly presenting a mediating theoretical and practical framework that could solve the incoherence problem and the two solitudes problem, and also directly and reciprocally connect performance philosophy and public philosophy: a framework I call borderless philosophy; and third and finally, against the backdrop of that mediating framework, in response to a possible objection to my argument, by briefly proposing a way in which performance philosophy, via borderless philosophy, could significantly enrich public philosophy. The upshot is that borderless philosophy, together with performance philosophy and public philosophy, collectively yield a fully adequate solution to the problem of irrelevance.

Key words: metaphilosophy, professional academic philosophy, irrelevance problem, performance philosophy, public philosophy, borderless philosophy

> The present condition of philosophy is a peculiar one. On the one hand, there have never been so many professional philosophers as today, on the other hand, philosophy has never been so irrelevant. By this I mean that most of the questions considered by today's philosophers are of interest only to academics working in a little corner of philosophy, not to those working in other corners of philosophy, let alone to people working in other subjects or to cultured people at large. This is not healthy for philosophy because, although a discipline may exist for some time even with a limited audience, this will put its long-term survival at risk, at least in academic institutions. Thus philosophy is at a crossroads: either to continue on the present line, which relegates it into irrelevance, or to analyse the reasons of irrelevance and seek an escape. (Cellucci, 2018, 14)

1. Introduction

Carlo Cellucci has rightly pointed out that contemporary professional academic philosophy has a serious problem of *irrelevance*, in that "most of the questions considered by today's philosophers are of interest only to academics working in a little corner of philosophy, not to those working in other corners of philosophy, let alone to people working in other subjects or to cultured people at large."[1]

As irrelevant, contemporary professional academic philosophy is in stark contrast to what I call *real philosophy*.[2] By "real philosophy" I mean *authentic, serious* philosophy, as opposed to *inauthentic, superficial* philosophy. *Authentic* philosophy is committed, wholehearted philosophy pursued as a calling or vocation, and as a way of life; and *inauthentic* philosophy is professionalized, Scholastic, half-hearted philosophy treated as a mere job or a mere "glass bead game."[3] *Serious* philosophy is philosophy with critical, deep, and synoptic or wide-scope content; and *superficial* philosophy is philosophy with dogmatic, shallow, and narrow or trivial content.

Correspondingly, I also fully endorse this further-elaborated description of real philosophy by the pseudonymous renegade philosophers W, X, Y, and Z at *Against Professional Philosophy*:

> By real philosophy, we mean authentic, serious, synoptic, systematic reflection on the individual and collective human condition, and on the natural and social world in which human and other conscious animals live, move, and have their being. Real philosophy fully includes the knowledge yielded by the natural and

formal sciences; but, as we see it, real philosophy also goes significantly beneath and beyond the exact sciences, and non-reductively incorporates aesthetic, artistic, affective/emotional, ethical/moral, and, more generally, personal and practical insights that cannot be adequately captured or explained by the sciences. In a word, real philosophy is all about the nature, meaning, and value of individual and collective human existence in the natural cosmos, and how it is possible to know the philosophical limits of science, without also being anti-science. Finally, real philosophy is pursued by people working on individual or collective writing projects, or teaching projects, in the context of small, friendly circles of like-minded philosophers. Like-minded but not uncritical! Real philosophers read both intensively and also widely inside philosophy, and also widely outside of philosophy, critically discuss what they've read, write, mutually present and talk about their work, re-read, re-discuss, and then re-write, with the primary aim of producing work of originality and of the highest possible quality, given their own individual and collective abilities. They also seek to disseminate their work, through publication, teaching, or public conversation. (W, X, Y, and Z, 2013-present)

In order to escape irrelevance and radically transform contemporary professional academic philosophy into real philosophy, two extremely interesting and important movements have emerged simultaneously, but also almost entirely independently of one another, within the past five years: *performance philosophy* and *public philosophy*. Each movement represents an authentic, spontaneous impulse towards *liberation* from certain vitiating constraints on philosophical content, its presentational form or style, and philosophical activity more generally, that hold sway in contemporary professional academic philosophy, and are collectively at the root of the irrelevance problem. Indeed, it is not going too far to say that these constraints on philosophical content, philosophical presentational form/style, and philosophical activity are experienced by many contemporary professional academic philosophers, especially younger ones, as *theoretical and practical straitjackets*. Or to borrow a handy term from the Marxist tradition, these constraints are experienced by many contemporary professional academic philosophers, especially younger ones, as *hegemonic*. Correspondingly, this authentic, spontaneous impulse towards liberation from the hegemonic constraints of contemporary professional academic philosophy is clearly in the direction of early Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, to the effect that philosophers should

no longer (merely) *interpret the world*, but should instead (or also) *change it* (Marx, 1964, 69).

Nevertheless, even despite this authentic, spontaneous liberationist tendency *away from* the theoretical and practical straitjackets of contemporary professional academic philosophy and its irrelevance, and *towards* real philosophy, there are some prima facie problems about the two new movements.

First, neither performance philosophy nor public philosophy is either (i) conceptually well-defined or (ii) consensually unified as to its basic aims. Let's call this *the coherence problem*.

Second, performance philosophy and public philosophy, as they are currently constituted, have little or no direct contact or interaction with one another, and to some extent are even *alienated* from one another, despite their sharing essentially the same liberationist impulses. Let's call this *the two solitudes problem*.

My goal in this essay is to make some headway towards solving these two prima facie problems, first, by briefly describing ways of conceptually clarifying and purposively unifying performance philosophy and public philosophy individually; second, by briefly presenting a mediating theoretical and practical framework that could solve the incoherence problem and the two solitudes problem, and also directly and reciprocally connect performance philosophy and public philosophy: a framework I call *borderless philosophy*; and third and finally, against the backdrop of that mediating framework, in response to a possible objection to my argument, by briefly proposing a way in which performance philosophy, via borderless philosophy, could significantly enrich public philosophy.

The upshot is that borderless philosophy, together with performance philosophy and public philosophy, collectively yield a fully adequate solution to the problem of irrelevance.

2. What Are Performance Philosophy and Public Philosophy? What Are Their Basic Aims? And Why Are They So Disconnected From One Another?

What are performance philosophy and public philosophy? Here is what it says on the *Performance Philosophy Network* website:

> **About Performance Philosophy**
>
> Performance Philosophy is an international research network for the field of Performance Philosophy. The network is open to all researchers concerned with the relationship between performance & philosophy.
>
> The network was founded by 11 core conveners in the summer of 2012 and was formally launched on the 3rd September 2012. 11

new conveners were appointed in September 2017, with 2 of the founding conveners stepping down.

Aims

The core aims of Performance Philosophy are:

- To nurture and develop the emerging field of Performance Philosophy internationally;
- To facilitate the exchange of ideas and practices related to Performance Philosophy between international researchers including students, emerging scholars, established scholars and practitioners.

Activities

The core activities of Performance Philosophy are:

- To establish and maintain an international network of Performance Philosophy researchers
- To facilitate communication in the field of Performance Philosophy through a website and mailing list
- To create and maintain a high-quality peer-reviewed journal with an esteemed publisher and to use the journal as a platform to showcase the best original research in the field of Performance Philosophy, including practice-based research
- To initiate and develop a high-quality book series with an esteemed publisher and to publish monographs and edited collections that make an original and important contributions to the field of Performance Philosophy
- To host and to support network members to host high-quality research events on Performance Philosophy, such as symposia, conference, festivals, seminars, and summer schools.

Values

Performance Philosophy takes an inclusive, interdisciplinary and pluralist approach to the field. The network welcomes members concerned with any aspect of philosophy, whether from the Continental or Analytic traditions, and with any discipline or definition of performance, including but not limited to drama, theatre, dance, performance art, live art, and music. The only criteria for membership and participation is an interest in the field and an openness to the breadth and variety of different approaches to Performance Philosophy that the field encompasses.

Performance Philosophy also aims to be financially inclusive. Performance Philosophy is not a profit-making organization, and it

is free to become a member of Performance Philosophy, including access to the network website and mailing list. By the same token, Performance Philosophy cannot offer funding support to network members or research groups within the network. All Performance Philosophy events must be self-funded.

Structure
Performance Philosophy is structured as a network, made up of:
- self-organizing research groups, and
- a committee of core convenors.

The research groups within the network can either be geographic or institution based (eg. the Brown group) and/or thematic or based on the work of a particular performance philosopher (eg. the Deleuze and Performance group). Any member or group of members can apply to create a new research group via the website. The role of the convenors is to oversee the functioning of the network as a whole and to lead on the development of Performance Philosophy projects such as the website, journal, book series and events. (Performance Philosophy Network, 2012-present)

And here are "ten theses of performative philosophy," as formulated by Eva Maria Gauss and Rainer Totzke in the first issue of the journal *Performance Philosophy*:

1. Philosophy is an embodying practice. Philosophy performances capture the vitality of thinking.
2. Philosophical practice gains an epistemic surplus through both media changes (sequential use of media) and the simultaneous use of different channels of expression (simultaneous use of media).
3. Due to the process character of knowledge acquisition in philosophy performances, they render transparent the provisional nature of truth.
4. Philosophical performances explore the contextual criteria of meaningfulness for philosophical theories.
5. Philosophical performances render transparent how philosophy is done and open up new perspectives for the broadening of philosophical practice within and outside of institutions.
6. Philosophical performances show and insist that philosophy must continually reinvent itself, which means it has to find contemporary forms.
7. Philosophical performances allow the ludic and enigmatic character of philosophy to manifest itself.
8. Through philosophical performances the old battle between (the roles of) logic and rhetoric in philosophy is revived.

9. Philosophical performances stand in an intimate relation to art. They use art's ludic strategies of confusion and dislocation.
10. Philosophical performances can only be realised in interaction with the observer, the participant, the spectator. When they work, they embrace both my thoughts and the public's. (Gauss and Totske, 2015, 88)

Now what about public philosophy? Here are some relevant selections from the Executive Summary and Introduction of the founding report of the Public Philosophy Network, "Practicing Public Philosophy":

Executive Summary

What is the value of public philosophy? In what ways is philosophy, when engaged with various publics, transformative, i.e., how can or does philosophy improve public life? In what ways is philosophy transformed when engaged with various publics, i.e., how does/might public engagement inform philosophical concepts and understanding and/or alter disciplinary boundaries?

And, if public philosophy is valuable—then how might we promote and sustain its practice? How can we insure the highest quality and most ethical practices?

To discuss these and related questions, the American Philosophical Association's Committee on Public Philosophy and George Mason University's Center for Global Ethics convened a day-long meeting in conjunction with the 2010 Pacific Division meetings on "Practicing Public Philosophy." The objective of these sessions was to extend the conversations begun by the APA Committee on Public Philosophy and to lay the groundwork for development of wider-ranging projects and increased collaboration.

The specific objectives of the mini-conference were therefore twofold: 1) to create a democratized space where reflection on public philosophy could take place, that is, a space of mutual learning and support for publically engaged philosophers and those who wish to do publically engaged work in the field; and 2) to support philosophers, especially junior scholars, who do publically engaged work by providing them with the opportunity to cultivate networks of mentors of senior scholars engaged in work identifiable as public philosophy and of peers with whom to develop this work.

The meeting participants—who ranged from distinguished senior professors well-known as public philosophers to undergraduate students—worked to think about how philosophical engagement with various publics has been—and can be—valuable. Three

positions were advocated by discussants; they are not mutually exclusive:

Philosophical practice is a public good and should therefore be practiced in and with various publics.

Public philosophy is philosophy that has the explicit aim of benefiting public life

Public philosophy should be liberatory, i.e., it should assist and empower those who are most vulnerable and suffer injustice, particularly through a critical analysis of power structures.

After discussion of other related concerns, including varying definitions of "public" and the challenges to practicing public philosophy, we worked to address those challenges.

Ultimately the group both made recommendations to the APA's Committee on Public Philosophy and agreed that there was a need for a Public Philosophy Network.

Introduction: the intellectual context and rationale for the meeting

Despite the public perception that continues to share Aristophanes' view that philosophers remain "in the clouds," incapable of doing publically relevant work, at least some philosophers have remained committed to a Socratic model of philosophy that is engaged with public life. Some key philosophical traditions, notably the American Pragmatist tradition and, in Europe, the Frankfurt School, remain vibrant and have embraced a commitment to publically engaged scholarship. Admittedly many other philosophers (including some adherents to these traditions) have lost sight of this model and rarely engage the public. Yet as the discipline of philosophy has been transformed—by the concern for (and growing legitimacy of) practical and applied ethics, feminist and critical race theories, and other new sub-disciplines—a new generation of publically engaged philosophers has emerged. This is a development that has been promoted by the changing demographics of the discipline: As more women of all ethnicities and races, more men of color, and more working class persons have entered the discipline, they have insisted that philosophy be practiced in ways that address the questions salient to their experiences and their histories. Together with the allies they have cultivated, these thinkers have transformed the discipline in multiple ways to insure its relevance.

We live in a time when a growing number of philosophers are doing what may be called "public philosophy," but it is not always recognized as "legitimate" philosophy by all within the discipline

and also goes largely unnoticed by the general public. In response, the American Philosophical Association created the Committee on Public Philosophy, an initiative that mirrored initiatives of its sister academic associations in fields such as history and anthropology. While the changes in the discipline itself demand that we engage in philosophical reflection on the public value of our work, the establishment of a committee on public philosophy is particularly timely; in difficult economic times, academics are likely to face greater scrutiny as the wider public wonders why investing in the humanities is a worthwhile thing to do. They ask what the public significance of our work is, or what bearing our work has on the crises of the day. (Meagher and Feder, 2010, 4-6)

Taken from the same founding report, here are some other relevant selections from a summary of a general discussion on the nature of public philosophy:

Philosophical Discussion on the Nature of Public Philosophy
Philosophers have not had sufficient opportunity to reflect on the nature of public philosophy, and to discuss with one another what public engagement entails. For these reasons, it is important to devote time to engage this question philosophically within the profession, to ask what "public philosophy" is, and to examine ways that individual philosophers are already engaged in efforts to put philosophy to work in public. The morning discussion was devoted to these questions, asking what is the value of public philosophy?
The questions we raised for discussion were as follows:
1. What is "public philosophy"? (how should we define it? Or should we avoid defining it?) How should we define "public" as it modifies "philosophy"? Is there or are there public roles for philosophy? Is there or are there philosophical work(s) that take(s) the public realm seriously?
2. In what sense(s) do you practice public philosophy? Or, do you identify as a public philosopher?
3. How has Western philosophy developed in ways that help or hinder publically engaged philosophical work? Which traditions/figures/trends seem most supportive? Which traditions/figures/trends have undermined or deterred philosophers from public engagement?
4. [Are] applied philosophy and public philosophy the same thing?

5. Is engaging in public philosophy identical with being a public intellectual?

A consensus quickly emerged that we should not aim to define the term in ways that provided some sort of litmus test on whether someone was engaged in public philosophy or some project could claim the label. Rather, we worked to think about how philosophical engagement with various publics has been—and can be—valuable. Three key positions emerged; these views are not mutually exclusive, and many participants endorsed all three views. Others argued for one view over another. All three positions suggest further directions for investigation, analysis, and proposals for work in this reemerging area of philosophical engagement.

The value of public philosophy

Some argued that philosophy is itself a public good, and that various publics benefit when philosophers work with non-academics in public domains, introducing philosophical concepts and methodology. Examples of such public work include conducting organized philosophical discussions in bookstores, cafes and bars, or teaching philosophy in non-traditional locations such as prisons. Public philosophy in this sense entails doing philosophy in public spaces and/or engaging the public in the practices of philosophy. Historically, philosophy has played an important role in fostering inter- and multi-disciplinary problem-solving, and participants argue that it is important to maintain this role.

Some argued that public philosophy is philosophy that has the explicit aim of benefiting public life. In this sense, public philosophy is not simply any philosophy conducted outside the "ivory tower," but rather is directed toward specific improvements. In this sense public philosophy is philosophical engagement with respect to public concerns. The philosopher may be called upon as a public intellectual, a commentator on public issues. Or the philosopher may simply write in ways help makes sense of jumbled conversations. In this context, some invoked John Dewey's idea of the philosopher's task in finding meaning; others cited Hannah Arendt's metaphor of the philosopher as "pearl diver" who brings sedimented meanings to the surface.

Some argued that public philosophy is philosophy that is liberatory, i.e., it should assist and empower those who are most vulnerable and suffer injustice, particularly through a critical analysis of power structures. One participant noted that philosophical practices can

work to create publics, and that such practices can be empowering when directed toward the recognition of previously marginalized persons as members of a public. Philosophers can and should create discursive spaces where persons can become subjects/agents. Another liberatory aspect invoked was the idea of philosopher as fearless truth teller, speaking truth to power. Meeting participants who favored this view tended to define the public philosopher as a "scholar-activist."

Those who emphasized the liberatory potential of philosophers were most likely to call for a transformation of the discipline of philosophy, arguing that participatory philosophy, a philosophy that is embedded in social and public practices, must be critical and self-reflexive. In this sense, public engagement transforms the discipline of philosophy. Several participants argued that the public philosopher can and must resist the "disciplining" of philosophy, that is, the narrowing of what counts as legitimate philosophy to debates internal to the discipline and/or the academy.

The concept of "public"

Discussants noted that any discussion of "public philosophy" necessitates that we think about what we mean by "public." We agreed that the "public" is not a static form; publics are brought into being through discourse and various practices. Some participants tended to work from the Deweyan idea that publics emerge when a sufficiently large group of persons are indirectly affected by a particular social transaction and come together out of their common interest in solving the problem. Social movements (and the philosophers who work with them) often invoke this sense of "public." On the other hand, those philosophers who are more directly engaged with public policy often define "public" in terms of the institutionalization of modes of public discourse.

Obstacles to the practice of public philosophy

We worked to identify challenges to engaging in public philosophy at the level of our discipline, the academy, and within society. Many noted that philosophy is not valued in society, particularly in the United States. The language of values in Washington, DC is driven by economists. Anti-intellectualism renders philosophy suspect. Philosophy departments are being cut or eliminated. There are questions about the value or purpose of philosophy. Part of the problem is how philosophers see themselves; most do not see themselves as affected by larger social forces or as called to respond to larger social and political concerns. But another problem

is a failure to recognize areas of thought that our discipline can help to illuminate beyond its bounds. Social scientists and the policy their work informs often fail to recognize or reckon with the non-rational aspect of our lives. There also has been a confusion of precision with accuracy in these realms, as well as within the discipline. Philosophy needs to find ways to be meaningful as well as valid. Many discussants argued that there have always been some philosophical schools or traditions that bucked the tendencies toward provincialism. Nevertheless, institutional norms of evaluation of philosophical scholarship have tended to devalue work that aims to engage beyond the narrowing bounds of the discipline. (Meagher and Feder, 2010, 9-11)

What can we glean from all this? As befits their irrelevance-escaping, anti-hegemonic, liberationist motivations, both performance philosophy and public philosophy are at pains to disavow any single, comprehensive characterization of their nature or basic aims. As per the above quotations and selections I've included above, here is what I take to be the core of what performance philosophy says:

Performance Philosophy takes an inclusive, interdisciplinary and pluralist approach to the field. The network welcomes members concerned with any aspect of philosophy, whether from the Continental or Analytic traditions, and with any discipline or definition of performance….

Aims

The core aims of Performance Philosophy are:

- To nurture and develop the emerging field of Performance Philosophy internationally;
- To facilitate the exchange of ideas and practices related to Performance Philosophy between international researchers including students, emerging scholars, established scholars and practitioners.

1. Philosophy is an embodying practice. Philosophy performances capture the vitality of thinking.
2. Philosophical practice gains an epistemic surplus through both media changes (sequential use of media) and the simultaneous use of different channels of expression (simultaneous use of media).
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8. Through philosophical performances the old battle between (the roles of) logic and rhetoric in philosophy is revived.
9. Philosophical performances stand in an intimate relation to art. They use art's ludic strategies of confusion and dislocation.
10. Philosophical performances can only be realised in interaction with the observer, the participant, the spectator. When they work, they embrace both my thoughts and the public's.

And again as per the above quotations and selections, here is what I take to be the core of what public philosophy says:

A consensus quickly emerged that we should not aim to define the term ["public philosophy"] in ways that provided some sort of litmus test on whether someone was engaged in public philosophy or some project could claim the label.

Three positions [about the basic aims of public philosophy] were advocated by discussants; they are not mutually exclusive:

Philosophical practice is a public good and should therefore be practiced in and with various publics

Public philosophy is philosophy that has the explicit aim of benefiting public life

Public philosophy should be liberatory, i.e., it should assist and empower those who are most vulnerable and suffer injustice, particularly through a critical analysis of power structures.

But of course this otherwise laudable anti-dogmatism and open texture have the somewhat unhappy effect of if not causing, then at least priming, the incoherence problem. So I'll try to overcome that intellectual reticence, and make positive proposals about the core features and basic aims of performance philosophy and public alike.

To that end, here is my rational reconstruction of of the core features of performance philosophy:

(i) that the central topic of its theoretical and practical reflections is *embodied human minds engaged in all kinds of acting, feeling, and thinking*, and

(ii) that it is is trying to fuse classical and contemporary methods of philosophy with the presentational forms and styles of *the arts*— "including but not limited to drama, theatre, dance, performance art, live art, and music."

And here is my rational reconstruction of the basic aim of performance philosophy:

to *revolutionize* contemporary professional academic philosophy by making it *more theoretically and practically focused on embodied human minds engaged in all kinds of acting, feeling, and thinking*, and *more methodologically like the arts*.

This is clear from the first and ninth theses of performative philosophy:

1. Philosophy is an embodying practice. Philosophy performances capture the vitality of thinking.

9. Philosophical performances stand in an intimate relation to art. They use art's ludic strategies of confusion and dislocation.

To summarize so far, then, the core features of public philosophy are

(i) that the central topic of its theoretical and practical reflections is *human agents engaged with social institutions* (in the widest sense of the term "social institutions," applying to any group of people whatsoever, insofar as they act, feel, and think under intersubjectively shared norms), and

(ii) that it is trying to fuse classical and contemporary methods of philosophy with the presentational forms and styles of the *mass media* (including advertising, informational media, and journalism)*, social media*, and *political life* (including political organizing, political commentary, and political communication aka propaganda).

And the basic aims of public philosophy are:

to *revolutionize* professional academic philosophy by making it *more theoretically and practically focused on human agents engaged with social institutions* and *more methodologically like the mass media, social media, and political life*.

This commitment of public philosophy to revolutionary metaphilosophical humanism is clear from the opening lines of the Introduction to "Practicing Public Philosophy":

Despite the public perception that continues to share Aristophanes' view that philosophers remain "in the clouds," incapable of doing publically relevant work, at least some philosophers have remained committed to a Socratic model of philosophy that is engaged with

public life. Some key philosophical traditions, notably the American Pragmatist tradition and, in Europe, the Frankfurt School, remain vibrant and have embraced a commitment to publically engaged scholarship. Admittedly many other philosophers (including some adherents to these traditions) have lost sight of this model and rarely engage the public. Yet as the discipline of philosophy has been transformed—by the concern for (and growing legitimacy of) practical and applied ethics, feminist and critical race theories, and other new sub-disciplines—a new generation of publically engaged philosophers has emerged.

If I'm correct about this, then, for example, it becomes very easy to answer questions 4 and 5 in "Practicing Public Philosophy":

4. [Are] applied philosophy and public philosophy the same thing?
5. Is engaging in public philosophy identical with being a public intellectual?

In answer to question 4, we can say: clearly, applied philosophy and public philosophy are *not* the same thing, because it is obviously the case that philosophy, as applied philosophy, can be directly or indirectly effectively used in the real world *without* to trying to revolutionize professional academic philosophy by making it more theoretically and practically focused on human agents engaged with social institutions and more methodologically like the mass media, social media, and political life. For example, philosophers who are scientific naturalists and receive funding from, say, the NSF or the NIH, often contribute directly or indirectly to research in basic natural science or cognitive neuroscience that have real-world industrial or military applications: hence they are certainly *not* trying to revolutionize professional academic philosophy by making it more theoretically and practically focused on human agents engaged with social institutions and more methodologically like the mass media, social media, and political life. In other words, scientism is *not* revolutionary meta-philosophical humanism; and one could easily be an applied philosopher and also committed to scientism. So even if all public philosophy is applied philosophy, not all applied philosophy is public philosophy.

And in answer to question 5, we can say: clearly, engaging in public philosophy and being a public intellectual are *not* identical, because it is obviously the case that someone, as a public intellectual, can contribute significantly to public debate about matters of economic, scientific, moral, or social-political importance *without* to trying to revolutionize professional academic philosophy by making it more theoretically and practically focused on human agents engaged with social institutions and more

methodologically like the mass media, social media, and political life. Think, for example, of Sam Harris, who, for better or worse, is indeed a public intellectual, but most certainly *not* a revolutionary meta-philosophical humanist. Therefore, even if some public intellectuals are also, clearly, public philosophers (say, Richard Rorty after 1982, when, having been projected into the national limelight by his MacArthur fellowship in 1981, he became a professor of humanities at the University of Virginia), and some public philosophers are also, clearly, public intellectuals (say, Martha Nussbaum or Peter Singer), they are obviously logically independent classes.

Thus characterized as to their natures and basic aims, it is evident that performance philosophy and public philosophy have a great deal in common: namely, their collective attempt to bring about what can be variously called *a turn towards real human experience and social life*, or *an anthropocentric turn*, both in and also beyond contemporary professional academic philosophy.

Why, then, are performance philosophy and public philosophy so disconnected from one another? I think that there are two main reasons.

First, there is a more-or-less simple, contingent cultural-geographical reason: performance philosophy was originally founded by European professional academic philosophers and artists, and remains centrally located in Europe, whereas public philosophy was originally founded by American professional academic philosophers and social activists, and remains centrally located in the USA. I especially emphasize that this is only a "*more-or-less* simple, contingent cultural-geographic reason," however, since in the age of globalization and the world wide web, it is still a rather stunning fact that two such highly-educated, technologically sophisticated, broad-minded, well-travelled, sophisticated, and therefore (presumably) cosmopolitan groups of philosophically-minded people should exist in two solitudes.

Second, this rather stunning fact, in turn, points to what I think is another and deeper reason for the mutual "disconnect" between performance philosophy and public philosophy: namely, that even despite their shared anthropocentric turn, neither philosophical network has yet figured out a way to bridge or mediate between them, and overcome the prima facie differences between their central topics and methodological commitments: human embodiment together with the methods of the arts on the one hand (performance philosophy); and human engagement with social institutions together with the methods of mass/social media and political life on the other (public philosophy).

But I think that these prima facie differences are, ultimately, *merely* prima facie—that is, *superficial*—and that in fact there is a mediating

theoretical and practical framework that could, at least in principle, directly and reciprocally connect performance philosophy and public philosophy in the immediate future: namely, what I call *borderless philosophy*. So that will be my topic in the next section.

3. Il Faut Cultiver Notre Jardin: Borderless Philosophy as a Mediating Framework for Connecting Performance Philosophy and Public Philosophy

> The history of [Candide's] world-famous phrase, which serves as the book's conclusion – il faut cultiver notre jardin – is … peculiar. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it didn't come into written use in English until the early 1930s – in America through Oliver Wendell Holmes and in Britain thanks to Lytton Strachey. But a long, unrecorded history of its oral use and misuse can be deduced from Strachey's announced desire to cure the "degenerate descendants of Candide" who have taken the phrase in the sense of "Have an eye to the main chance." That a philosophical recommendation to horticultural quietism should be twisted into a justification for selfish greed would not necessarily have surprised Voltaire. (Barnes, 2011)

In Voltaire's *Candide*, the scathing critique of abstract, world-alienated, self-alienating, sanctimonious theoretical philosophy in general, and of professional academic philosophy in particular—specifically exemplified by 18th century Leibnizian/Wolffian rationalism and theodiocy, satirically represented by that iconic moralistic idiot of professional academic philosophy, Dr Pangloss—equally evocatively and provocatively concludes with the phrase "il faut cultiver notre jardin," that is, "we must cultivate our garden."

What does Voltaire's world-famous phrase mean? The novelist Julian Barnes aptly noted that a popular, vulgar misuse and twisting of it means "have an eye to the main chance," that is, a "justification for selfish greed," and then proposed that, contrariwise, its real meaning is "a philosophical recommendation to horticultural quietism." *That* reading of its real meaning seems wrong to me, however, an anachronistic interpretation over-influenced by the later Wittgenstein's idea that real philosophy should only get clear on the confusions of classical philosophy as represented by mainstream professional academic philosophy, discharge all its bad pictures, engage in liberating self-therapy, and then just "leave the world alone."

Contrariwise to Barnes's Wittgensteinian contrariwise, I think that "il faut cultiver notre jardin" is in fact Voltaire's radically enlightened 18th century philosophical recommendation to *revolutionize* philosophy, and

transform it from abstract, world-alienated, self-alienating, sanctimonious theorizing into a concrete, world-encountering, self-realizing, emancipatory, rational humanistic enterprise: in a nutshell, the real philosopher as a rational rebel for humanity. Hence what Voltaire is really saying, in the context of 18th century radical enlightenment, is essentially closer to what the early, humanistic Marx is saying in his 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and his 1845 *Theses on Feuerbach*—

> The resolution of theoretical considerations is possible only through practical means, only through the practical energy of humanity. Their resolution is by no means, therefore, the task only of understanding, but is a real task of life, a task which philosophy was unable to accomplish precisely because it saw there a purely theoretical problem. (Marx, 1964, 72)
>
> The philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point is to change it. (Marx, 1964, 69)

and to what Thoreau is saying in his 1854 *Walden*–

> There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers…. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically. (Thoreau, 1957, 9)

—than it is to what Wittgenstein is saying in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

> That being so, how do
>
> (i) the popular, vulgar, misused, and twisted meaning *versus* the real meaning of "il faut cultiver notre jardin,"
>
> (ii) Voltaire's radically enlightened critique of professional academic philosophy as abstract, world-alienated, self-alienating, sanctimonious theorizing, and
>
> (iii) his corresponding radically enlightened 18th century recommendation about real philosophy, jointly apply to *contemporary philosophy*?

First, I think it's clear that the popular, vulgar misuse and twisting of "il faut cultiver notre jardin" as "have an eye to the main chance" applies directly to the *professionalization* and *neoliberalization* of academic philosophy in late 20th and early 21st century liberal democratic states, whether in Europe, North America, or anywhere else in the world.

Second, I think it's also clear that Voltaire's radically enlightened critique of professional academic philosophy as abstract, world-alienated, self-alienating, sanctimonious theorizing applies directly to the problem of irrelevance for contemporary professional academic philosophy.

And third, I think it's even *self-evidently* clear that Voltaire's radically enlightened recommendation about real philosophy directly applies to what I'm calling *borderless philosophy*. In Voltairean terms, by means of borderless philosophy, 21st century philosophers, should "eradicate the infamy" (*écrasez l'infâme*) that is the panglossian professionalization, neoliberalization, and irrelevance of contemporary academic philosophy, and cultivate our garden instead.

But what, more precisely, do I mean by "borderless philosophy"? In order to answer that question, I'll need to define some terminology.

By *collective intelligence*[4] I mean an emergent property of human or otherwise animal mindedness, that is constituted by the cognitive capacities and cognitive activities of a group of (for example) people *as* a group, especially including group-reasoning, group brain-storming and innovation, the social production of written texts and other kinds of social media, group deliberation, and participatory decision-making. Recent work in cognitive psychology, social psychology, and organizational studies shows that *collective wisdom,* or a relatively high level of group coordination, creativity, problem-solving, and productivity (aka "constructive *Gemeinschaft*"), is determined by high levels of socially-open, non-hierarchical, free-thinking, and non-conformist, but at the same time also mutually comfortable, mutually communicative, mutually respectful/principled, relaxed, mutually sensitive, mutually supportive, and highly dialogical collaborative activities within groups,[5] and is not a function of high average IQ levels among the group's individual members.[6]

Sharply on the other hand, however, by *collective stupidity* I mean a relatively low level of social group coordination, creativity, problem-solving, and productivity, and correspondingly a relatively high level of group dysfunctionality (aka destructive *Gemeinschaft*). The same recent work in cognitive psychology, social psychology, and organizational studies that I cited earlier that demonstrates the existence, character, and etiology of collective wisdom, also, by simple inversion, demonstrates the existence, character, an etiology collective stupidity. Collective stupidity is determined by high levels of socially-closed, top-down organized, conformist, but at the same time mutually antagonistic and competitive, coercive, arrogant, non-collaborative, zero-sum, winner-takes-all, gaming-the-system-style activities within social groups, independently of high average IQ levels amongst the group's individual members. In other words, groups made up *entirely of people with very high IQs* can manifest very high levels of collective stupidity.

A more aggravated manifestation of collective stupidity is what I call *collective sociopathy*. Collective sociopathy is when collectively stupid social institutions stop asking altogether whether what they are doing is

morally right or wrong, and concentrate entirely on efficient ways of implementing group policies and on coercively imposing the policies and directives of the group's administrative and/or governing elite on people belonging to, participating in, or under the jurisdiction of those institutions, who cannot effectively push back or resist. These groups involve especially high degrees of coercion and vanishingly few opportunities for authentic collaboration. Perspective-taking and empathy become very, and sometimes even impossibly, difficult. At the same time, however, the "power elite," consisting of those individuals who administer, control, and/or directly govern sociopathic institutions, as individuals, may seem to be otherwise quite normal, sane, and socially well-adjusted: they are "good, law-abiding citizens," and they love, look after, and more generally care for their partners, their children, their extended family and friends, their dogs, and so-on, and so forth. But, in an operative sense, they are social-institutional *monsters*.

The real-life, catastrophic paradigm of this, of course, was the Nazi bureaucracy's increasingly effective, increasingly satanic "solutions" to the "Jewish question." Eichmann, at least as portrayed by Hannah Arendt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem,*[7] was the perfect "company man" or "organization man" in the modern world's most evil, murderous example of institutional sociopathy.

But in a far less satanic and more mundane, although equally important and currently urgent sense, along the lines of Czeslaw Milosz's classic critical essay on institutional sociopathy in post-War communist eastern Europe, *The Captive Mind,*[8] virtually all contemporary college and university administrations and academic departments operate on the assumption that effectively implementing various higher-administration-mandated, state-mandated, or Federally-mandated policies and directives, without any critical reflection whatsoever on the rational justifiability or moral permissibility of those policies and directives, as applied to the members of their academic communities, is their be-all and end-all. So in that sense, these contemporary professional academic communities, the intellectual arm of *the miltary-industrial-university-digital complex* that drives contemporary neoliberal democratic States and their State-like institutions, also manifest institutional sociopathy.

In turn, it is obvious enough that professional academics, taken one-by-one, and in general, are highly intelligent people, "the smartest kids in class," all the way from kindergarten to graduate school. And, judging at least by average GRE scores across all academic disciplines,[9] *physicists* and *philosophers* are the most intelligent professional academics: physicists top out the quantitative scores across all disciplines and also have relatively high analytical/verbal scores; whereas philosophers top out the

analytical/verbal scores across all disciplines and also have relatively high quantitative scores. But as Jeff Schmidt's *Disciplined Minds*[10] clearly shows, to the extent that a group is more and more "professionalized," and therefore has increasingly levels of what Schmidt calls *ideological discipline*, the more they are, collectively, stupid, and even institutionally sociopathic, endlessly contributing to a downwards spiral of destructive *Gemeinschaft*, while, at the same time, all-too-busily promoting their own professional careers, slithering up "the greasy pole" of professorial and/or administrative promotion, reward, and status. Since, as Z at *Against Professional Philosophy* has persuasively argued, professional academic philosophers are now, by virtue of their special training, methodological narrowness, and intellectual arrogance, in fact "*hyper*-disciplined minds,"[11] it follows that they are, as regards their collective intelligence, *hyper-stupid, and hyper-institutionally-sociopathic.*

The most urgent questions before us, therefore, are:

(i) how can this catastrophic trend towards professional academic philosophical collective stupidity and collective sociopathy be reversed?, and

(ii) how can contemporary philosophers move towards the kinds of collective wisdom variously imagined, for example, in the ancient Greek Cynics' radical free-thinking and what Z has called Diogenes of Sinope's "promethean philosophical failure"; [12] in Plato's Socratic dialogues; in Kant's conception of enlightenment, fully realized as the "ethical community" of his later religious writings; in Friedrich Schiller's aesthetic and artistic extension of Kant's conception of enlightenment,[13] yielding a fusion of an ideal of aesthetically and artistically creative, fully embodied, freely self-realizing, productive human activity with the ideal of an ethical community; in Marx's early humanistic writings, with their emphasis on emancipation from the mechanistic, self-interested, alienating system of capitalism and on the ideal of free social production (Marx, 1964); in Peter Kropotkin's social anarchism, grounded on voluntary association and mutual aid (Kropotkin, 1910); or in the early Russell's vision of "the world as it could be made" in *Proposed Roads to Freedom* (Russell, 1918)?

Or otherwise put:

(iii) how can contemporary philosophers move from where they are now, in a downward-spiralling condition of destructive *Gemeinschaft*, to a radically different condition in which they begin to achieve high levels of socially-open, non-hierarchical, free-thinking, and non-conformist, but at the same time also mutually comfortable, mutually communicative, mutually

respectful/principled, relaxed, mutually sensitive, mutually supportive, highly dialogical and collaborative, aesthetically and artistically creative, fully embodied, freely self-realizing, productive human philosophical activities within groups?

In answer to this question, here are three proposals. The conjunction of these three proposals is borderless philosophy.

First, we should get rid of graduate schools, MA and PhD degrees, and philosophy departments *altogether*, and replace them with a network of interlinked *borderless philosophy communities*, each one created and sustained by voluntary association, team-spirit, and a shared sense of real, serious philosophy as a full-time, lifetime calling and mission, that combine dialogue, research, writing, publishing, the creation and sharing of original works of philosophy in any presentational format whatsoever, teaching, and grassroots social activism, whose members are widely distributed spatiotemporally, in many different countries, continents, and time-zones, and who are therefore also fully *cosmopolitan* thinkers, doing real philosophy without borders.

Here, the term "cosmopolitan" should be understood in the sense of the original, core meaning of the concept of *cosmopolitanism*, as correctly and insightfully formulated by Kwame Anthony Appiah:

> Cosmopolitanism dates at least to the Cynics of the fourth century BC [and especially to Diogenes of Synope], who first coined the expression cosmopolitan, "citzen of the cosmos." The formulation was meant to be paradoxical, and reflected the general Cynic skepticism toward custom and tradition. A citizen—a *politēs*—belonged to a particular polis, a city to which he or she owed loyalty. The cosmos referred to the world, not in the sense of the earth, in the sense of the universe. Talk of cosmopolitanism originally signalled, then, a rejection of the coventional view that every civilized person belonged to a community among communities.[14]

In short, the original, core meaning of *cosmopolitanism* expresses a serious critique of existing political communities and states; a thoroughgoing rejection of fervid, divisive, exclusionary, loyalist commitments to convention, custom, identity, or tradition; and a robustly universalist outlook in morality and politics, encompassing not only the Earth but also other inhabited worlds if any, and also traveling between worlds, and, finally, the entire natural universe.

Second, we should get rid of professional academic philosophy journals, presses, and the rest of the professional academic publishing racket *altogether*, and replace them with a cosmopolitan, border-less, worldwide network of interlinked *borderless philosophy online sites and*

platforms for dialogue, research, writing, publishing, the creation and sharing of original works of philosophy in any presentational format whatsoever, teaching, and grassroots social activism, that are severally and collectively organized and run by the worldwide network of borderless philosophy communities.

Third, as a consequence of the first two proposals, philosophy should become fully cosmopolitan in the sense of the original, core meaning of the concept of *cosmopolitanism*.

Admittedly, in the face of the institutional juggernaut that is contemporary professional academic philosophy, borderless philosophy is pretty radical, and, to its most successful, high-status inhabitants, pretty scary and threatening. So is borderless philosophy really possible? In all honesty, I don't know. But I do know this:

> If and only if borderless philosophy *can be* implemented by contemporary philosophers, and precisely to the extent that borderless philosophy *actually is* implemented by contemporary philosophers, will they (and we) exit their (and our) current condition of philosophical collective stupidity and destructive *Gemeinschaft*, including institutional sociopathy, and finally begin to achieve a condition of philosophical *collective wisdom* and constructive *Gemeinschaft*, in the spirit of Diogenes, Socrates, Kant, Schiller, early Marx, Kropotkin, and early Russell.

Indeed, a prototype project in borderless philosophy, called *Philosophy Without Borders*, was launched in May 2017 and still actually exists (Reginald et al, 2017); and the first number of its journal, *Borderless Philosophy*, also actually appeared in June 2018 (Reginald et al, 2018). So let us suppose now, for the purposes of argument, that borderless philosophy is not only rationally intelligible and defensible, but also really possible. Then insofar as performance philosophy is focused on human embodiment together with the methods of the arts,it falls fully within the scope of borderless philosophy; and insofar as public philosophy is focused on human engagement with social institutions together with the methods of mass/social media and political life on the other, it also falls fully within the scope of borderless philosophy. Therefore, if one were to adopt the basic aims of borderless philosophy, with its concentration on collective wisdom and constructive *Gemeinschaft*, in the spirit of Diogenes, Socrates, Kant, Schiller, early Marx, Kropotkin, and early Russell, then performance philosophy would naturally lead to public philosophy, and public philosophy would naturally lead to performance philosophy.

It is crucial to recognize, moreover, that if one were to adopt the basic aims of borderless philosophy, then this would *also* provide a definite,

effective way of unifying the three "basic positions" on the value of public philosophy described in "Practicing Public Philosophy":

> Philosophical practice is a public good and should therefore be practiced in and with various publics.
> Public philosophy is philosophy that has the explicit aim of benefiting public life.
> Public philosophy should be liberatory, i.e., it should assist and empower those who are most vulnerable and suffer injustice, particularly through a critical analysis of power structures.

More precisely, if one were to take the *third* or "liberatory" basic position on the value of public philosophy as fundamental, and the other two positions as derivative from it, then that would also fall fully with the scope of borderless philosophy. Therefore, borderless philosophy provides a mediating framework for definitely and effectively connecting performance philosophy and public philosophy, *insofar as* one take the third or "liberatory" basic position on the value of public philosophy as fundamental, and the other two positions as derivative from it.

4. How Performance Philosophy, Via Borderless Philosophy, Could Enrich Public Philosophy

> Science does not concern itself with those properties of existence to which ridiculousness belongs. Science explains the world, but only Art can reconcile us to it. (Lem, 1992, 113)

Here is a worry that someone might have about my proposed solutions to the incoherence problem and the two solitudes problem, via borderless philosophy:

> If one's conception of the value of public philosophy *rejects* the idea that the third or liberatory basic position on the value of public philosophy is foundational for the other two positions, then the solutions to the incoherence problem and the two solitudes problem offered by borderless philosophy would fail.

For example, if one held that the value of public philosophy consisted

> EITHER (i) exclusively in effectively presenting professional academic philosophy to non-academics and non-philosophers—i.e., exclusively in good PR,
> OR (ii) exclusively in using professional academic philosophy to bring about some benefits for non-academics and non-philosophers—i.e., exclusively in "baking bread" for someone, anyone, including, e.g., scientists, the military-industrial complex, global corporate capitalists, etc.

then the solutions to the incoherence problem and two solitudes problem offered by borderless philosophy would fail.

How could the borderless philosopher reply to the public-philosophy-exclusivists' worries?

One way that seems very fruitful to me is to draw on a core element of performance philosophy—what I'll call *the expansive-ludic-and-reconciliatory character* of performance philosophy—as best expressed in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth theses of performative philosophy:

5. Philosophical performances render transparent how philosophy is done and open up new perspectives for the broadening of philosophical practice within and outside of institutions.
6. Philosophical performances show and insist that philosophy must continually reinvent itself, which means it has to find contemporary forms.
7. Philosophical performances allow the ludic and enigmatic character of philosophy to manifest itself.
8. ….
9. Philosophical performances stand in an intimate relation to art. They use art's ludic strategies of confusion and dislocation.

In other words, just as the arts *expand* our capacities for feeling, acting, and thinking, and just as the arts at their best, to use Stanislaw Lem's formulation, are *ludic* or inherently open to the absurd, humorous, ironic, and ridiculous aspects of human existence, and also *reconcile* us to our finite "human, all-too-human" existence in a thoroughly nonideal natural and social world, then performance philosophy shows us that public-philosophy-exclusivism *over-narrowly leaves out too much* that a smooth fusion of performance philosophy and public philosophy could bring to contemporary and future philosophy.

This expansive, ludic, and reconciliatory aim for philosophy, introduced by performance philosophy, in turn, would by no means *rule out* either public philosophy that is merely good PR, or public philosophy that merely bakes bread for someone: rather it would only insist that public-philosophy-exclusivism is mistaken *because it does not allow philosophy to be all that it can be*. But at the same time, the expansive, ludic, and reconciliatory aim for philosophy that is introduced by performance philosophy is fully accommodated and comprehended by borderless philosophy.

So all-in-all, it seems self-evidently clear to me that using borderless philosophy to mediate between performance philosophy and public philosophy *is not only the right way to go from here* but also *a fully adequate solution to the problem of irrelevance*.

Notes

1 Essentially the same critical worry has motivated the many critical essays and other materials published by the psuedonymous renegade philosophers at *Against Professional Philosophy* (W, X, Y, and Z, 2013-present).

2 For my own attempt to do real philosophy on a largish scale, see (Hanna, 2015, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d).

3 The allusion is to Hermann Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel*, aka *The Glass Bead Game*, first published in 1943. In the novel, the glass bead game is an all-absorbing, ultra-high-powered, intellectual pastime—as it were, a cross between Japanese *Go*, the *Enyclopedia Britannica*, and Frege's *Begriffsschrift*—created and practiced by the highly intelligent, geographically isolated, morally and socially inept, and politically irrelevant inhabitants of the fictional, futuristic land of Castalia, somewhere in Central Europe. The parallels with 19th, 20th, and 21st century professional academic philosophy are obvious.

4 See, e.g., (Wikipedia, 2018), and the information and resources stored at (MIT Center for Collective Intelligence, 2018).

5 See, e.g., (Duhigg, 2016).

6 See, e.g., (Woolley, Aggarwal, and Malone, 2015).

7 (Arendt, 1977).

8 (Milosz, 1955).

9 See, e.g., (Shields, Shields, and Shields, 2009).

10 See (Schmidt, 2000).

11 (Z, 2016).

12 See (Z, 2017).

13 See (Schiller, 2018).

14 (Appiah, 2006, p. xiv).

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