PHRONESIS AS POETIC: MORAL CREATIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY ARISTOTELIANISM

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In Book 6 of his Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle distinguishes phronesis or "practical wisdom" from poiesis or "art," "production." Neither deals with the universals of pure science or theoretical wisdom but rather with "things which admit of being other than they are," the realm of coming-to-be. But phronesis "is itself an end," namely "acting well" (eupraxia), whereas poiesis "has an end other than itself" (heteron to telos), namely a work of art or a product. Phronesis is realized insofar as it is practiced well in itself, and it involves right deliberation about goods internal to human action such as courage and justice. Poiesis is realized insofar as it produces something good beyond itself, in the making of noninternal goods such as crafts or goods imitative of action such as stories. Aristotle is here modifying Plato's limitation of the role of the poets in his moral republic, but in a milder form that does not see the poets as actively distorting morality but rather performing a different kind of activity. Practical wisdom and poetics are both teleological practices—that is, practices aimed at some end—but the first finds its end within the practice itself, the second finally beyond it.

Such a distinction between ethics and poetics has had an enormous influence over Western moral thought. Augustine's Confessions condemns rhetoric and public amusements as morally corrupting to the soul. Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae repeats Aristotle's distinction almost word for word. Immanuel Kant's second and third critiques draw a sharp line between the objectivity of the moral law and the subjectivity of aesthetic taste. The Romantics and Friedrich Nietzsche turn the opposition on its head, contrasting the stultifying laws of morality with a more authentic inner creativity beyond good.

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Euclidean, whose universe which mathematicians and physicists, through their experiments, theories, and mathematical models—such as the atom model and the theory of relativity—have developed, the concept of the universe and its structure. In the 20th century, with the advent of quantum mechanics and the discovery of the atom, the concept of the universe was revolutionized. The universe is no longer a fixed, static structure, but a dynamic, ever-changing system.

Thus, even more complex interpretations of the universe are needed to reconcile the observations of the universe with the predictions of the theory. The concept of the universe is not static, but a dynamic, ever-changing system. The universe is not a fixed, static structure, but a dynamic, ever-changing system. The universe is not a fixed, static structure, but a dynamic, ever-changing system.
Our investigation can be pressed still one step further by bringing into play the concept of phonetic culture. For, according to the introduction to the current volume of Leopold's German Art, the concepts of cultural forms (Sprachformen) are more than mere...231

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radically open-ended responsibility toward the other, the other not just as different from oneself (as in Nussbaum) but also in its absolute moral irreducibility, alterity, nonsubstitutability. Ricoeur uses the concept of critical phronesis to incorporate the widely used French post-modern category of "the other" into a partly Aristotelian practical ethical framework. Practical wisdom becomes poetic in the sense that it destabilizes and decenters the self's moral will and hence demands its ongoing self-transformation.

This dynamic and transformative function of critical phronesis is explained by Ricoeur as a cycle of moral capabilities that includes both an Aristotelian good and a Kantian right. The Aristotelian moment of this cycle involves, somewhat as in MacIntyre, "the desire to live well with and for others in just institutions." Ricoeur sees here what he calls a "naive phronesis," a preliminary phronesis, of forming one's existing social contexts into one's own "narrative unity of life." This capability should not overshadow, however, a further capability for deontological respect for others in their "genuine otherness" as also capable of moral self-narration. Somewhat like Emmanuel Levinas, Ricoeur views the ethics of the other as a negative interdiction against the moral violence that is inherent in all efforts by selves to narrate others. Unlike in Levinas, however, this obligation to others does not exhaust moral responsibility but is rather a destabilizing moment within the self's larger realization of practical wisdom. According to Ricoeur, "if there is anything to deconstruct in 'moral phi-


"23 Ibid., 290. This phrase "narrative unity of life" Ricoeur borrows explicitly from MacIntyre, but he gives it a somewhat different meaning.


"25 Ricoeur, Oneself as Another, 203.

"26 Critical phronesis is the human capability for negotiating this unstable cycle or tension between self-narration and responsibility toward others. What Ricoeur calls "judgment in situation" involves re-narrating one's own teleological practices in new ways that are ever more radically nonviolent toward others. This activity is poetic in the sense that it involves "inventing conduct that will best satisfy the exception required by solicitude... the exception on behalf of others." Others ultimately demand not just negation of the self but the self's responsive self-transformation. Critical phronesis does not resolve the alterity of self and other, for this would be impossible. Rather, it risks the act of reforging or reinventing the self's own narrative in ever more other-inclusive ways. Ricoeur describes this unstable tensional possibility in the phenomenological language of "ethical intentionality": moral narration is not just an expression of the self's inner subjectivity but an intentionally or outwardly directed movement toward what is other.

"27 The reason why critical phronesis is an element of the "poetics of the will" is most sharply illustrated in Ricoeur, somewhat as in Nussbaum, in the unique moral wisdom produced by tragedy. Aristotle himself, according to Ricoeur, presupposes an unacknowledged "tragic source" for his conception of phronesis in a Homeric and Sophoclean "wisdom of limits." Sophocles' Antigone, for example, reveals the inherent disproportionality and violence contained in all efforts to live well with one another in common, no matter how well-intentioned. Antigone is fully justified from her own narrative point of view in burying her dead brother Polynices, but so also is the king Creon in banning the burial, since Polynices died fighting as a traitor to the city. According to Ricoeur, "the source of the conflict..."
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"In this life, every moment is a chance to dance."

-John Will
The women's experience is understood through the lens of their own narratives, their stories are not just fragments of a larger whole, but are integral to the construction of a new understanding. The process of writing and reading these stories is an act of resistance, a way to reclaim the narratives that have been lost or silenced. The women's voices are crucial in understanding the experiences of those who have been marginalized, and their stories offer a window into the past and a way to envision a future where such experiences are no longer necessary.

In the context of the feminist movement, these stories represent a form of collective memory, a way to preserve the experiences of those who have been overlooked. They are also a form of protest, a way to challenge the dominant narratives that have shaped our understanding of history. The women's narratives offer a counterpoint to the prevailing narratives, a way to see the world from a different perspective.

The women's stories are not just about individual experiences, but about collective experiences. They are a testament to the power of resilience and the determination of those who have been oppressed. The women's stories are a reminder that change is possible, that progress can be made, and that the fight for equality is ongoing.

The women's narratives are a call to action, a way to inspire others to join in the struggle for justice. They are a call to listen, to understand, and to act. The women's stories are a source of hope and inspiration, a way to envision a world where everyone is valued and respected.

In conclusion, the women's narratives are a powerful force for change. They offer a way to understand the past, to envision the future, and to make the world a better place for all.
more rewarding and more humane
an exercise for those who value their integrity and
time to dwell on the value of their work.

The nature of metaphor and metaphor is
to replace whole, to replace the whole with
the familiar, to replace the general with the
clear, to replace the abstract with the
concrete. It is a way to understand the
world, to see the world, to see the
world through metaphor. It is a way to
see the world, to understand
the world, to understand
the world through metaphor.