Synthetic Philosophy: A Manifesto

Neven Sesardic introduces a revolutionary new way to gain philosophical insight.

I hereby announce the launch of a revolutionary project: synthetic philosophy!

The idea of synthetic philosophy is to combine classic statements from different great philosophers to produce illuminating new insights. If you think about it, the promise of synthetic philosophy is undeniable. Isn't it obvious that combining the deepest thoughts of the finest philosophers will only lead us to even more profound and earth-shaking truths? As you will see, this is a potentially unlimited source of breathtaking philosophical discoveries.

Here is philosopher of science David Stamos's example that started me thinking about synthetic philosophy:

Sartre: Hell is other people.
Wittgenstein: Logic is hell.
Therefore: Logic is other people.

And here are the results of my own initial research in synthetic philosophy:

Nietzsche: God is dead.
Spinoza: God is nature.
Therefore: Nature is dead.

Berkeley: To be is to be perceived.
Quine: To be is to be the value of a bound variable.
Therefore: To be perceived is to be the value of a bound variable.

Aquinas: Religion is a virtue.
Marx: Religion is the opium of the people.
Therefore: The opium of the people is a virtue.

Voltaire: If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him.
Dostoevsky: If God did not exist, everything would be permitted.
Aristotle: God is an unmoved mover.
Einstein: God is subtle but not malicious.
Therefore: If it is unnecessary to invent God or if something is not permitted, a non-malicious mover exists.

William James: True means useful.
Tarski: The sentence 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white.
Therefore: Snow is white if and only if the sentence 'Snow is white' is useful.

Aristotle: All people by nature desire knowledge.
Plato: Knowledge is justified true belief.
Gettier: Knowledge is not justified true belief.
Therefore: All people by nature desire a contradiction.

Pascal: Man is a reed that thinks.
Alan Turing: To think means to pass the Turing Test.
Therefore: Man is a reed that passed the Turing Test.

Aristotle: There are ten categories.
Kant: There are twelve categories.
Therefore: The best bet is that there are eleven categories.

Heidegger: Nothing nothings.
Hegel: Being and nothing are the same.
Therefore: Being nothings.

Zeno: Motion is an impossibility.
Saul Kripke: Heat is necessarily molecular motion.
Therefore: Heat is necessarily a molecular impossibility.

These examples demonstrate that philosophy is really a cumulative enterprise. Our knowledge will grow beyond all limits if we have the courage to look for new wisdom by putting together the intellectual contributions of the greatest thinkers of the past. The philosophers have hitherto only interpreted philosophical doctrines in various ways; the point is to combine them.

Obviously it is time to say good-bye to analytic philosophy. Go synthetic!

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