

WIM VAN DEN DUNGEN

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REGULÆ III

# *Regulæ III*

On Action

by

Wim van den Dungen

# *Regulæ III*

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*en hommage à René Descartes*

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If someone treads on my hand accidentally, while trying to help me, the pain may be no less acute than if he treads on it in contemptuous disregard of my existence or with a malevolent wish to injure me. But I shall generally feel in the second case a kind and degree of resentment that I shall not feel in the first.

Strawson, P. F. : *Freedom and Resentment*, in : *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1962, 3.

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## Preface

This third volume of *Regulae* deals with ethics as part of a normative system whose principles are neither metaphysical nor empirical, but transcendental, i.e., grounded in the necessary conditions of thought, feeling, and action. These principles cannot be ‘derived’ *a posteriori* by way of sensation, for they condition the very terms under which observation is to be understood. Nor, as Kant taught, are they rooted in a self-sufficient ‘ground’ outside or prior to knowledge, feeling, and action, a *hypokeimenon* invoked to ‘explain’ them and to distinguish opinion from truth and truth from falsehood. Such a ground would be a metaphysical foundation for the possibility of knowledge, feeling, and action. As it lies ‘outside’ knowledge, this ontological foundation cannot in itself be called ‘knowledge.’

Transcendental principles are discovered as *a priori* principles by uncovering the necessary conditions of thought, feeling, and action. Denying any of these brings about a performative contradiction, a self-defeat that, if upheld, undermines understanding of the possibility, advancement, and full spectrum of conceptuality, its truth, beauty, and action-worth. Knowledge (epistemology), beauty (aesthetics), and goodness (ethics) are not ‘described,’ but their bindingness is identified by reflecting on the actual practice of these activities and finding what cannot be removed to understand how they are possible : the transcendental facts of reason, feeling, and action. This normative quest critically demarcates valid and invalid, beautiful and ugly, good and evil.

In *Regulae I*, the task was to identify the conditions under which *conceptual knowledge* is possible and can be validly produced and advanced. That inquiry unfolded the *fact of reason* as the irreducible dyad of transcendental object and transcendental subject, and showed that truth depends on an ongoing, unstable but necessary interplay between factual testing and argumentative justification, an ‘armed truce’ in which realism and idealism are both kept from excess.

In *Regulae II*, the same critical architectonic was relaxed toward aesthetics. There, the *fact of feeling* disclosed the meeting of aesthetic attitude and aesthetic properties, and beauty was approached not as an objective fact but as arising in their relation, articulated in a shareable, expectant judgment of taste moving from pleasure and satisfaction toward excellence, exemplarity, and sublimity. If *Regulae I* concerned the rules of valid knowing and *Regulae II* the conditions of beautiful appearing, the present volume asks what follows when action itself becomes the site of transcendental reflection.

This volume was intentionally titled *action* rather than *the good* or *goodness* because the third part of the trilogy does not begin from a completed moral quality but from *a deed in passage*. *Goodness* may suggest a settled attribute, a moral essence, or a final predicate attached to a person or state of affairs. *Action*, by contrast, names a *transition* : something is undertaken, directed, intensified,

enacted, and only then received as an outcome. The title, therefore, signals at once that ethics, as handled here, will *not* be a static ontology of the good, but a critical inquiry into the conditions under which a deed can count as imputable, assessable, and normatively significant. The shift in title already signals a change in model.

The first two volumes share the metaphor of scales because both truth and beauty still unfold within a *dyadic field structured by object and subject*. In *Regulae I*, the two pans of the balance may be understood as the two irreducible poles of knowledge : the object of knowledge and the subject of knowledge. More concretely, at the level of scientific practice, the same image reappears as the tension between experimentation and argumentation, correspondence and consensus, the ‘real’ and the ‘ideal.’ The balance is *never finally still*. One side presses, the other answers. Theory calls for testing ; testing calls for theory. Hence, the image is not one of peace, but of an ongoing, disciplined instability. Truth belongs to an ‘armed truce’ because the two sides *need one another* even as they constantly threaten to overtake and reduce one another. The scales do not symbolize equilibrium achieved, but *equilibrium sought and repeatedly lost*.

In *Regulae II*, the scale metaphor remains, but its inner logic changes. Here, too, there are two pans : the aesthetic attitude on the side of the observer and the aesthetic properties on the side of the observed. But unlike epistemology, the relation is no longer agonistic in the same sense. Beauty does not arise from a struggle between experiment and argument, nor from a contest between rival claims to objectivity. It emerges when the two sides *meet* under favorable conditions. The scales still matter, because beauty is not merely in the object nor merely in the subject ; it arises *only in their relation*. Yet, here, the *plumb line*, not the oscillation, becomes decisive. The image is no longer that of an ‘armed truce,’ but of an ‘unarmed truce,’ a balanced encounter in which harmony, not conflict, is the governing form. Beauty is, therefore, shareable, but not factual ; expectant, but not coercive. It invites assent rather than compels it.

This clarifies why truth and beauty, though distinct, still belong to one object/subject spectrum. Truth leans toward the objective and factual. It asks whether what is claimed can be held valid *pro tem* in light of the testing and argument. Beauty leans toward subjectivity and intersubjective shareability. It asks whether what is observed under the aesthetic attitude may *rightly be expected to elicit a judgment of taste in others*. In both cases, the dyad is irreducible ; neither pole may be abolished without destroying the phenomenon in question. But the mode of normativity differs. Truth is stringent, tense, and contestatory. Beauty is relaxed, exemplary, and harmonizing. The same metaphor of scales can be retained, but only because it is internally altered from one volume to the next.

Action *radically differs* because action is *not* first of all a *balance* between two poles, but a *directed passage* from one pole toward another. The *ethical field* still presupposes an agent and an outcome, but their relation is no longer best rendered as two pans of a scale. Between the agent and the outcome are initiative, direction, intensity, execution, resistance, and landing. The act does not simply balance

subject and object ; it traverses the space between them. That is why the scale-metaphor, though fitting for truth and beauty, must yield here to the *vector*. A scale shows relative weight and possible equilibrium. A vector shows origin, aim, magnitude, and arrival. Ethics, as developed in this volume, concerns the latter. What matters is no longer how two poles stand in tension or harmony alone, but how a deed proceeds from intent toward outcome and how that passage becomes imputable.

The metaphor of scales can now be stated plainly. In epistemology, the scales never rest ; their movement is constitutive. In aesthetics, the scales seek poise ; their temporary harmony is constitutive. In ethics, however, the scales are no longer sufficient, because what is primary is not a measured relation but a trajectory. Truth is a regulated contest ; beauty, a harmonized encounter ; action, a deed under direction. The title *On Action* marks exactly this passage from the sign of the balance to that of the vector.

What remains constant in kind across the trilogy is that all three volumes are *normative* rather than merely descriptive. In each case, the question is *not* first *what happens*, but what *must* be presupposed or regulated if a given domain is to be practiced coherently. *Regulae I* asks how valid conceptual knowledge is possible and advances principles, norms, and maxims governing truth ; *Regulae II* does the same for beauty under the *fact of feeling* ; *Regulae III* does so for action under the *fact of action*. So the kind of discourse remains the same : all three books seek binding conditions, critical demarcations, and rule-governed forms of appraisal rather than empirical generalizations or metaphysical foundations.

But this sameness of kind does *not* imply sameness of degree. In epistemology, normativity is *strictest* because the stakes are tied to the very possibility of coherent conceptual thought. The *fact of reason* yields principles that cannot be denied without performative contradiction, and so the corresponding normativity is maximally stringent. Here, contradiction is fatal, and the rules governing validity, correspondence, consensus, and the distinction between science and metaphysics have the sharpest possible force. One concerns the conditions under which propositions can count as valid at all. This is why *Regulae I* presents itself in the most formal, abstract, and severe register of the trilogy.

In aesthetics, normativity remains real, but it relaxes. The *fact of feeling* still yields a transcendental dyad and still licenses rules, but these rules no longer govern truth-apt propositions or objective validity in the same sense. They govern the conditions under which beauty may be observed, judged, and expected to be shared. The bindingness here is, therefore, *not* that of categorical demonstration, but of *cultivated, exemplary, and expectant assent*. Beauty is neither a brute fact nor a merely private whim ; it is a *regulated intersubjective achievement* arising in the meeting of aesthetic attitude and aesthetic properties. Hence, the normativity is softer than in epistemology : failures appear not as strict logical contradictions but as haste, hard observation, insensitivity to form, or incapacity for the proper mode of aesthetic uptake.

Ethics introduces a further shift. Here, normativity is not weaker in the sense of becoming optional, but rather more *context-sensitive*, because action unfolds amid freedom, resistance, and contingency, and is shaped by outcomes. The ethical act does not simply present a proposition to be validated or an object to be beautifully observed ; it is undertaken in a world of friction, consequences, other persons, institutions, and limits. The *fact of action* still yields necessary conditions, and critical ethics still distinguishes principles, norms, and maxims ; but once these are translated into lived action, one must reckon with intention, duty, conscience, vocation, outcome, and the action domains within which deeds become legible and assessable, i.e., the many conditions under which action can succeed, fail, misfire, or require repair in healthy or pathological vector fields. This is why ethics is the most worldly and applied of the three normative domains. Its normativity must remain answerable to both transcendental guardrails and the complexity of actual situations.

The point, then, is not that truth is ‘more important’ than beauty or ethics, nor that ethics is somehow less normative because it is more contextual. The claim is architectonic, not honorific. Epistemology operates at the *highest pitch of formal necessity* because it polices the conditions of valid thought itself. Aesthetics remains normative, but its object calls for a more relaxed, exemplary, and *intersubjective form of bindingness*. Ethics remains normative too, yet because it concerns deeds under freedom and worldly consequence, its rules must be articulated in a way that remains critically binding without pretending that action unfolds in a vacuum. The trilogy, therefore, exhibits a single normative method across three different calibrations.

Put differently, each volume has its characteristic failure. In *Regulae I*, the danger is *incoherence* ; in *Regulae II*, *misattunement* ; in *Regulae III*, *misdirection*. The critical method remains one, but what it must regulate changes with the domain. That is why normativity remains constant in kind but not in degree : strict in epistemology, expectant in aesthetics, and context-sensitive in ethics.

Action radically differs from truth and beauty because it cannot be adequately rendered as *a relation of balanced coexistence* alone. In truth, the critical field is defined by a tension between subject and object that must be maintained without reduction ; in beauty, the same dyad seeks a meeting under the conditions of aesthetic attitude and aesthetic properties. In both cases, the metaphor of scales remains apt because what is at stake is a relation between two poles whose proper articulation depends on tension, asymmetry, or harmony. In action, however, the decisive phenomenon is not merely that two poles stand over against one another, but that something passes from one toward the other. The agent does not simply ‘face’ an outcome ; the agent initiates, directs, intensifies, and enacts a deed that will land in the world, and there become assessable. That is why the scale yields to the vector.

The concept of vector proved effective because it makes explicit that action is neither *a static property* nor *a bare event*, but a *directed passage*. In its simplest

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idiom, the action vector begins from an adopted starting position,  $I_n$ , moves under an aim-direction,  $\hat{d}$ , is propelled by a certain intensity,  $m$ , and lands in an outcome,  $O$ . This already marks a decisive shift in grammar. Truth is governed by the norms of validity ; beauty by the conditions of beautiful appearing and shareable taste ; action by *a corridor of initiation, orientation, execution, and landing*. What ethics must judge is not a timeless quality called ‘the good,’ but *a deed underway* : what was taken up, where it was aimed, how it was carried, and what it brought about. The vector grammar is useful because it prevents action from being flattened into either mere inward intention or mere external result.

The vector also clarifies why action cannot be understood as mere movement or behavior. A stone falls, a hand trembles, a body spasms : all this may involve displacement, but not yet action in the ethical sense. Action begins where movement is owned, directed, and imputable. Hence,  $I_n$  is not a physical point in space, but the adopted beginning of a deed ;  $\hat{d}$  is not merely geometric orientation, but aim ;  $m$  is not sheer force, but action intensity ; and  $O$  is not simply a terminal state, but the *worldly landing of something someone has done*. In this way, the vector grammar keeps the phenomenon tied to *agency*. It shows why ethics is concerned not with motion as such, but with *answerable passage* from willing through doing into consequence.

A further gain of the vector grammar is that it distinguishes between outcome as bare landing and outcome as socially counted. What lands in the world is one thing ; how that landing is interpreted, attributed, and judged within an action domain is another. Ethical life never encounters outcomes as pure terminals alone, but always as deeds already read under responsibility. The vector grammar is therefore not mechanical : it carries not only causal landing but also imputable landing.

The pedagogical strength of the vector becomes especially visible in the archer metaphor. This metaphor presents action as a disciplined passage from will to world. The archer stands for the agent who takes up a situation and commits to a deed ; the bow stands for the structured conditions and resistances that make action possible ; the arrow stands for the deed itself as a directed, answerable passage ; the draw of the string stands for gathered intensity ; the aim stands for direction ; and the shot’s landing stands for the outcome. What makes the image useful is that it renders action neither as a mere inner intention nor as a bare external event, but as a unified movement in which initiation, direction, force, execution, and result belong together and can therefore be judged.

The metaphor renders the abstract moments of action experientially : stance, aim, gathered force, release, and landing. It shows that action is temporally extended, that direction can drift while intensity rises, that force can increase without correcting aim, and that the world answers back after release. In this sense, the vector grammar does not ‘mathematize’ ethics ; it protects ethics from vagueness by providing a minimal formal schema for what any imputable deed must involve if it is to be judged at all.

Finally, the switch from scales to vector underlines a deeper transition in the trilogy. In epistemology, the decisive question concerns validity under the tension of object and subject. In aesthetics, it concerns beauty under the meeting of aesthetic attitude and aesthetic properties. In ethics, it concerns praxis under the conditions of freedom, resistance, direction, and consequence. Truth is contested balance ; beauty is harmonized encounter ; action is oriented passage. The vector, therefore, marks not only a new image, but a new logical regime. It names the fact that ethical judgment must follow a deed from its uptake to its landing, and that what is judged is not a static quality but an enacted trajectory whose worth depends on how it is directed, sustained, and received in the world. The scale belongs where the critical task is to hold two poles in proper relation. The vector belongs where what must be understood is a deed in passage.

The reader will soon notice that, given the vectorial grammar, this book is, at times, more difficult than a merely expository ethics. This is deliberate, though not out of affection for obscurity. The difficulty arises from the attempt to think action without reducing it to bare movement, psychological reportage, or a moralizing slogan. The vectorial grammar introduced is not a decorative import from mathematics, but a disciplined way of rendering what action minimally involves : an adopted beginning, a direction, an intensity, and an outcome that can be taken up as imputable. If the language sometimes appears technical, this is because the familiar moral vocabulary too quickly reifies what must first be distinguished.

Like the earlier volumes, this volume is architectonic : later distinctions often illuminate earlier ones, and applied analyses sometimes clarify principles more quickly than abstract exposition can. The historical chapters that follow are preparatory and contrastive ; the constructive position of the book begins only once the transcendental and theoretical treatment of action is entered.

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## Introduction

Before outlining, in this third volume of *Regulae*, the general features of this critical ethics, let us first consider philosophy in the contemporary context and ask what its characteristic landscapes are. In this way, it may become clear that normation is the ‘hard core’ of the love of wisdom. These are principles and norms *necessary* for consistently understanding truth, beauty, and action. In every case, a transcendental logic is unearthed that frames the necessities of the duality investigated. In epistemology, this calls for integrating both the object and the subject of knowledge. In aesthetics, it involves the meeting of aesthetic observation with aesthetic properties. Here, in ethics, it brings to the fore the confrontation between an agent’s intentional action and its outcome.

Each time, the normative outlook is called ‘critical’ because it avoids reducing the transcendental object to the transcendental subject, thereby inviting idealism, or conversely, reducing the transcendental subject to the transcendental object, thereby inviting realism. In each discipline, these take on other forms, and the stringency of these rules is reduced stepwise once we move from truth to beauty to action. In epistemology, we saw how ontological realism or idealism can lead to a contradiction-free treatment of the question of how conceptual knowledge, its validity, and its production are possible. In aesthetics, ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ approaches to beauty were identified, with beauty predicated on aesthetic properties or on aesthetic observation, respectively. In ethics, the reduction of the agent to the outcome (as in utilitarianism) or of the outcome of action to the agent (as in duty-based deontological morals) is to be avoided. Not only the intent, but also the result determines the axiology of an act.

### Philosophy : What is it ?

In Christian theology, philosophy (equated with Greek intellectualism, first Platonic, then Peripatetic) was considered a ‘handmaiden,’ assisting in the exegesis of sacred texts and in apologetics (the argued conversion of heathens). Given the fundamentalist ‘logic’ of theology and the irreconcilable difficulties it caused (cf. the schism between Rome and Constantinople over Christological, Trinitarian, and other issues, such as the date of Easter), *independent* philosophy was non-existent and deemed a royal road to heresy. The autonomy of reason began to break through at the end of the Middle Ages (Ockham and, to a lesser extent, Cusanus). Still, it only became decisive in modern times, heralded by the philosophy of René Descartes, but prepared by the Renaissance translators, thinkers, and bricoleurs. Then, at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century, the logical positivists reduced the role of philosophy to an exclusively *analytical function* and an *auxiliary discipline* of the empirical sciences. Stripped of what had been associated with it, philosophy *came into its own*.

The question then becomes what philosophy, in its proper sense, actually is.

*Regulae I* called to first separate the ‘logistics’ of philosophy, or ‘philologistics,’ from philosophy proper. The former comprises everything a philosopher is thought to know to support their particular type of thinking. The latter largely depends on the philosopher and/or the philosophical tradition they belong to.

Here, philosophy, the love of wisdom, is considered a critical and totalizing answer to this call rooted in our physical, informational, and sentient evolution, to realize our *full cognitive potential*, actively trying to push our limitations, producing more complex, refined, and subtle states of matter (energy, hardware), information (code, software), and consciousness (choice, userware), thus aiding creative advance (Whitehead). This answer is open, personal, dialogal, rational, critical, creative, and aware of the unconditional ; it remains conceptual, thereby setting a dam against transcendent metaphysics that moves beyond the limitations set by conceptual reason (formal and critical), or creative thought (with its totalizing hyper-conceptual structures).

Philosophy, as critically understood, has four subdivisions :

- (i) philologistics : mapping philosophy as a continuous historical and thematic pursuit (the so-called ‘encyclopedia’ of philosophy) ;
- (ii) normative philosophy : *a priori* principles and norms regarding truth (epistemology), beauty (aesthetics), and action (ethics) ;
- (iii) descriptive philosophy : speculative, immanent metaphysical activity, totalizing specific domains like the world (speculative cosmology), the human being (speculative anthropology or psychology), the satisfaction of needs (speculative economics), the Divine (speculative theology), etc. This is a metaphysical activity staying within the bounds set by normative philosophy. As transcendent metaphysics, it exceeds these limitations and thus becomes of no interest to conceptual thought (for in its core all transcendence is nondual and non-conceptual) ;
- (iv) philosophy of the practice of philosophy : the application of the normative and (immanent) metaphysical activity in practical life, finding ways to give ‘use’ to philosophy (as in the Socratic dialogue, the ‘open’ space of dialogal activity, listening and advising without preestablished ‘models’ and ‘therapeutic’ systems). How can we allow philosophers to play a role in society beyond merely ruining their interest in academia, hampering free study, and stifling creative speculation ? This practice of philosophy needs unpacking.

Take the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973). He never earned a doctorate or held a permanent university professorship, preferring to work as a drama critic and editor. He actively avoided the title of ‘professional philosopher’ to maintain his focus on a personal, ‘itinerant’ quest. He rejected the ‘desert universe’ of abstract learning, finding genuine intellectual life only after moving beyond the classroom. He criticized the professionalization of philosophy, suggesting that authentic philosophical inquiry is often absent from university

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settings dominated by academic abstraction and power struggles. While he did not strictly say philosophers *cannot* be found at universities, he argued that the spirit of abstraction and primary reflection—the hallmarks of academic and technical disciplines—often stifle the ‘authentic’ philosophical experience.<sup>9</sup> Philosophers need the *freedom to study and speculate without contingencies*, especially those defined by the media of money and power (Habermas).<sup>10</sup>

Especially after the 1999 *Bologna Declaration* standardized European higher education, what Feyerabend<sup>11</sup> diagnosed at the end of the seventies as the professionalization of incompetence has become more acute : academic philosophy has been pushed toward social marginality, while its practitioners are increasingly burdened by administrative demands. Its students too often leave with degrees that are of little market value and, more importantly, fail to provide the speculative formation philosophy required. This is particularly evident in institutions structurally dependent on student subscriptions and industry-based sponsorship, where intellectual autonomy is readily subordinated to managerial and financial imperatives. In that sense, Western philosophical education can indeed be said to be in great difficulty, enough to make its elimination appear, to some, almost reasonable. That, however, is not the position taken here ; the point is rather that restoring philosophy to its critical role in Western civilization will be extraordinarily difficult under the conditions of contemporary so-called higher education.

Philosophers committed to a life of wisdom may, like Marcel, increasingly find it necessary to secure their livelihood outside academia and its competition for tenure and promotion.<sup>12</sup> These are no longer chiefly governed by speculative excellence, but by a posteriori justifications rooted in intersubjective academic grading within the accepted scientific paradigm, thereby reinforcing a materialist orthodoxy often protected by familiar strategies of exclusion, dismissal, and containment.

The proposed fourfold division of philosophy can now be stated more precisely.

### 1. Curricular Necessities

Philologistics is the curricular and scholarly domain that maps philosophy proper as an inherited and ongoing practice : its histories, institutions, sources, and topic clusters across times and cultures. Rather than centering on biographical narrative, it follows the trajectories of problems and the architectures of thought, then systematizes them into teachable fields such as encyclopedic orientation, history of philosophy, and the historical-hermeneutical study of authors across the Greco-Roman, Medieval, Modern, and Contemporary periods.

It may also extend into adjacent or specialized literacies when a philosophical project requires them, for example, Eastern philology for the study of Ancient Egyptian sapience, musicology for the philosophy of music, psychology for special metaphysics, cosmology for speculations on the world, or economics for

inquiries into needs, goods, and services, politics for the metaphysics of power, etc. Here, scientific data are used to build a speculative worldview.

## 2. Normative Philosophy

Using the transcendental method, normative philosophy reflexively digs out the principles, norms, and maxims of thought (well-formedness – logic), conceptual propositions (truth – epistemology), feelings (beauty – aesthetics), and volition (action – ethics). Principles and norms are necessary because they are always invoked when denied. Epistemology (*Regulae I*) unearthed the *factum rationis* ; aesthetics (*Regulae II*) the *fact of feeling* ; and the present book the *fact of action*.

These are called ‘facts’ because their constituents, the transcendental object and the transcendental subject, are *necessary* if a consistent understanding of the possibility of truth, beauty, and action is not to be curtailed or limited (by contradictory answers to the fundamental questions : What can I know ? What can I expect ? What must I do ?). They are not ‘facts’ in an empirical sense, but only *absolute normative guardrails* or *frameworks* in which relative cognitive, affective, and actional outcomes may present themselves. Like the ‘facts’ of empirical science, they constitute (transcendental) inquiry, but unlike them, they are undeniable and *a priori*, not *pro tem* or provisional, as all scientific truths are. These guardrails protect against the reification of reality and ideality, unwavering hard observation, and the solidification of the goal of action.

They are the absolute frame in which the relative can appear. Note these crucial differences between these normative disciplines (or meta-sciences).

- Epistemology and ethics have an *objective* interest. The former seeks the truth or validity of propositions, be they analytical or synthetic. The latter is the outcome of action, the goal reached or not, the expected outcome realized or not.
- Aesthetics is rooted in a *subjective* appeal. Validation of empirico-formal propositions of science implies objects of inquiry. Beauty, as expressed in the expectant judgment of taste, demands a soft observation to experience the aesthetic properties that elicit feelings of beauty that can be communicated and that are expected to elicit approval from others.
- Ethics involves an *object* of some *interest* and calls for a *goal*. Action is done *for* something. Here, we will argue that this ‘something’ can be *valued* through the lenses or registers of the good, the fair, the just, and the loving.

These principles and norms, which scientists, esthetes, and people of goodwill have consistently employed, give rise, underpinned by logic, to the normative fields of epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics. A set of rules regulates each discipline, with, at its core, a subset of *a priori* principles and norms that cannot be denied without either using them or confusing a coherent picture of the rules we ought to follow. The status of these principles is transcendental, and in terms of the performative contradiction their refusal generates, as necessary as analytical statements. Because of these principles and norms, which cannot be denied

without entailing antinomies, normative philosophy has a ‘hard core’ that distinguishes it from all other intellectual pursuits. Hence, as a matter of logic, epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics, philosophy has an *irrefutable* and *irreducible* value for human civilization, pointing to what *must* be thought, felt, and done. In view of the contemporary corrosion of public discourse by falsehood, manipulation, and ideological distortion, critical thought is indeed crucial. Truth, beauty, and action depend on empirical facts, aesthetic properties/observations, and the intent/outcome of action, respectively.

Rejecting the *a priori* principles inevitably leads to absolute skepticism, irrationalism, and the justification of evil deeds through invalid, counterfactual statements, often invoking ideological and religious attitudes and excuses that contradict one’s own dogmas and bamboozling the very people who support this, leading to their own downfall, dragging others down with them.

Normative philosophy does *not* entail *scientific knowledge* or empirico-formal propositions, but allows the latter to operate consistently. Scientific knowledge is a set of empirico-formal statements of fact that most likely hold in most (replicated) experiments (regulated by *correspondence*) and for all concerned and arguing sign interpreters (regulated by the search for a *consensus omnium*). This is never in an irreversible, indubitable way, as in 100% certainty, but only *pro tem*. They are merely probable (and this to a reasonably high degree, as in quantum mechanics).

Normative philosophy points to the limitations of conceptual knowledge (formal, abstract, critical, and creative). It does so to avoid reifying basic terms and trespassing on crucial demarcations (such as those between science and metaphysics, or between immanent and transcendent metaphysics).

<b>Normative Philosophy</b>		
<b>Logic : Well-Formed (Formal) Statements</b>		
<b>Transcendental Logic</b>		
<b>OBJECT : the Known</b>	<b>‘I Think’ the <i>factum rationis</i></b>	<b>SUBJECT : the Knower</b>
no transcendental object, no conceptualization, no known	conceptual knowledge valid or invalid	no transcendental subject, no conceptual cognition, no knower

the necessity of the idea of the 'real'	<i>factum rationis</i>	the necessity of the idea of the 'ideal'
<b>Epistemology</b> : cogitations – the truth : the <i>fact of reason</i>		
transcendental object of thought	Transcendental <i>Principles</i>	transcendental subject of thought
experiments correspondence the 'real' regulates	Theoretical Epistemology <i>Norms</i>	argumentations consensus the 'ideal' regulates
research cell	Practical Epistemology <i>Maxims</i>	<i>a posteriori</i> justifications opportunistic logic
rules for the understanding and production of provisional, probable, and coherent empirico-formal knowledge we <i>can</i> hold to be valid and call 'scientific'		
<b>Aesthetics</b> : feelings – the beautiful : the <i>fact of feeling</i>		
sensate objects	Transcendental Logic	excellence and exemplarity
sensate and evocative aesthetic properties	Theoretical Norms	the aesthetic attitude
objective, social, revolutionary, and magisterial art	Practical Maxims	subjective, personal, psycho- dynamic, and total art
rules about what we expect others <i>may</i> imitate, namely, the appreciation of the beauty of excellent and exemplary states of matter		
<b>Ethics</b> : volitions – the good, just, fair, and loving : the <i>fact of action</i>		
action : coordinated movement and its consequences	Transcendental Principles	will, volition

duty – vocation	Theoretical Norms	intent – conscience
family – property – society – Spaceship Earth	Practical Maxims	health – persons – education – death
providing rules for what <i>must</i> be done judgments about the good, the just, the fair, and the loving		

### 3. Descriptive Philosophy

Descriptive, theoretical philosophy, or *immanent* metaphysics, attempts to develop a *comprehensive* picture of the world, one in which nature (physics, cosmology), life (biology), and humanity (anthropology) are integrated to understand the *organic whole* constituted by countless existents (the ‘sea of process’). It defines an ontological principle, something shared by all.

Immanent metaphysics generates *totalizing* speculative statements that have been the subject of a dialogical and argumentative process leading to consensus. It differs from transcendent metaphysics, a speculative move that tries to articulate something about the ineffable and non-conceptual. This is obviously impossible, and so the best this passage towards the transcendent can do is to point to the limitations involved when reason is transcended (negative), and/or formulate (positive) ‘philosophical’ poetry, whatever that means ...

If transcendent speculation is called for, to its ‘false doors’ (Derrida) a *superscript* asterisk is added, so that terms like ‘God’ are written as ‘God\*.’

Immanent metaphysics is a comprehensive descriptive study of the world, viewing its totality and asking what is shared by all existents (ontology). It is realized that, from the side of science, such speculative inquiries need to stay close to what is found to be valid empirico-formal propositions and cannot exceed the world’s boundaries. It then acts as a heuristic of science. However, again, it cannot transcend and then view the world from a Divine perspective, an Archimedean point *outside* reason. At best, it is a heuristic tool aiding further discovery by inspiring speculative insights. Moreover, immanent metaphysics cannot be excoriated from scientific activity, as all scientific inquiry (articulating hypotheses and organizing experiments) occurs against an inalienable metaphysical background (Popper).

Hence, critical philosophers are indispensable insofar as they redirect scientific activity by curtailing reification and dogmatic pursuits grounded in invalid a posteriori justifications and opportunistic logic. One cannot expect theoretical or experimental scientists to conduct their work and, at the same time, remain sufficiently disinterested to diagnose the presuppositions shaping it. As the sociology of science has shown, the claim to complete self-regulation is itself a

recurrent form of bias. Humility is the hallmark of criticism, and this virtue is often strained by tenure, funding pressures, and professional competition. The relative absence of critical philosophical scrutiny within research environments is, therefore, itself revealing.

#### 4. Practice of Philosophy

The philosophy of the *practice of philosophy* complements the work of writing out a theory intended to teach philosophy in the best possible way. With philosophy as *praxis*, the psychology, sociology, economics, and other disciplines of acquiring wisdom are integrated to enrich philosophy as *theoria*, thereby increasing efficiency. This practice makes a change of mind (*metanoia*) possible. Thus, it touches on salvic issues.

In the German-speaking world of the early 1980s, a small, almost stubborn renaissance occurred : philosophy stepped down from the seminar room and opened an office door. The emblematic point of departure is usually placed with Achenbach, who is widely credited with founding the first '*philosophische Praxis*' in 1981, and with shaping a movement that explicitly wanted philosophy to be understood as an action *engaged in with individuals*, rather than simply documented in written form. The subsequent 'institutional' life of the movement grew rapidly, with societies and networks aiming to cultivate a public, Socratic use of reason through accessible seminars, colloquia, and consultation.

Within that trajectory, the philosopher's role in everyday life is described less as expert diagnosis and more as a *partner in clarification*. The 'client' becomes a 'visitor' to underscore a basic stance : the person, as person, is not primarily a case but a life with concepts, commitments, loyalties, and conflicts of value that can be brought to speech and tested. The philosopher does not supply a readymade doctrine so much as a disciplined conversation in which a worldview becomes explicit, internal contradictions are allowed to emerge without coercion, and alternatives can be examined without the pressure of treatment. The definition proposed by Raabe (2001) outlines a common understanding of philosophical counseling as a process in which a trained philosopher assists individuals in *navigating conflicts between values, addressing reasoning loops*, or exploring questions regarding the *meaning of life*.

Alongside this counseling strand, another German line has stressed '*Philosophie der Lebenskunst*,' the *art of living*, in which philosophy returns as a reflective craft for shaping a life's meaning and orientation in ordinary time, not merely in exceptional crisis (Schmid, 1998/9, Götde and Zirfas, 2019).

These authors distinguish psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis in terms of aim, register, and authority. Psychiatry works within a *medical paradigm* : it diagnoses and treats disorders, sometimes pharmacologically, under clinical supervision. Psychology, in its many schools, aims to explain behavior, cognition, and affect, and often operationalizes problems as measurable constructs.

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Psychoanalysis, classically, interprets symptoms through a theory of the unconscious, transference, and developmental conflict, and has its own distinctive clinical scene.

In contrast, Achenbach (1984) and Schuster (1999) assert that philosophical practice offers a *distinct approach* that diverges from traditional psychotherapy, yet it does not present itself as an alternative form of therapy. Within this framework, clinical diagnosis and formal treatment protocols are notably absent. Nonetheless, the dialogues that occur can still yield ‘therapeutic’ effects in a more everyday sense, providing individuals with relief, guidance, and a renewed *sense of agency*. The role of the philosophical practitioner is, therefore, anchored not in the authority of diagnostics but in the *concept of responsibility towards the ideas being discussed*. This involves posing the right questions at precisely the right moments, helping visitors unravel their confusions, and emphasizing the importance of understanding a person’s narrative as a complex dilemma of meaning or value rather than reducing it to a mere collection of symptoms.

Over the last decades, the movement’s later authors and institutions have also acknowledged a porous border : some practitioners *borrow techniques*, some *collaborate with clinicians*, and some build *hybrid models*, while others defend a deliberately ‘beyond method’ openness that resists turning philosophy into a manual. Yet the central demarcation remains stable in the best statements of intent : philosophical practice works in the space of *reasons, norms, and meanings*, where the question is not only ‘what happened to the person’ but also ‘what the person takes to be true, beautiful, good, binding, and worth living for,’ and how those tacit commitments can be made answerable to reflection in public language.

The practice of philosophy naturally unfolds in the *context of action* and so is directly related to critical ethics.

So, to summarize, a professional philosopher is concerned with both normative and descriptive activities. The former regulates truth, beauty, and action, raising epistemological, aesthetic, and ethical concerns ; the ‘hard core’ of the love of wisdom. The latter, constrained by the guardrails ‘found’ by the former, speculates about what all existents share (ontology) and focuses on domains such as cosmology, physics, anthropology, psychology, and economics, which help describe a totalized view of reality and ideality. This descriptive metaphysical activity remains *immanent* and does not articulate a *katapathic* (positive) outlook on transcendence. Such a philosopher not only works in his study but also assists individuals with crucial matters of meaning, sense, and life navigation. Thus, philosophy is not a sterile and static ‘ivory tower’ activity of academia but a living ‘art of life and living.’

Clearly, academic philosophy has often failed to promote this ideal adequately ; under conditions of institutional rigidity and diminished support, philosophical formation is too easily severed from the practical conditions required for a sustained life of thought.

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## Critical Ethics

### The Three Critiques : Truth, Beauty, Action.

In *Regulae III*, which deals with critical ethics, a return to objectivity-as-outcome is explored. The question is : *What ought I do ?* An *actual aim* is at hand, and this outcome is valued for its ethical worth. Transcendental logic involves unfolding the *fact of action* and, to define ‘action,’ distinguishing the agent’s intent from the action’s result or outcome. Moral philosophy and moral science are treated in what follows as preparatory and contrastive discourses. Critical ethics is the constructive position of this volume, and the *Lead-In* begins its explicit articulation.

From that point onward, ‘ethics’ names the critical architectonic itself, while ‘moral’ is reserved for the historical, scientific, and pre-critical alternatives brought into comparison with it. Here, the Kantian tripartite division is not between truth, goodness, and beauty, but unfolds as truth, beauty, and action. It will be argued that the soft observation sought in aesthetics can widen the scope of responsible action : when what is present is met with less reification, the will is less easily narrowed by appropriation, haste, or fixation. In that sense, seeing beauty can influence the register of ethical action. While the good and the evil remain close to the reifying tendencies of the mind, love, at its highest register, names the least appropriative and most widely answerable mode of action. It does not disclose a hidden ontology, a mystical union, or a metaphysical oneness ; it marks a critical limit-concept for action under which separative closure is most fully restrained.

Terms such as *participation*, *interdependence*, *love*, and *process* are used in what follows primarily in a critical-normative sense, not as names for a self-sufficient ontology. They indicate how action is to be judged under the conditions of imputability, non-foreclosure, public answerability, and widening scope of concern. Where descriptive metaphysical parallels are later entertained, they remain heuristic or contrastive and never function as the ground of ethical validity.

Let us first contrast the formal outlines of the three critiques.

In *Regulae I*, the takeaway was that the validity or truth of empirico-formal propositions is always provisional (*pro tem*), but that the consistency of epistemology (how conceptual knowledge is possible and can be produced) is ‘saved’ by unearthing, based on the *fact of reason*, the necessary principles of conceptual knowledge, namely the transcendental object of knowledge and the transcendental subject of knowledge. These principles block any ontological grounding of the possibility of conceptual knowledge. The transcendental dyad leads to reliable norms of validity : monological, factual experimentation, regulated by the idea of the ‘real’ and correspondence, and dialogal argumentation, rooted in the idea of the ‘ideal’ and consensus. The relationship between the two was termed an ‘armed truce’ and compared to the two scales of

a balance that *never* finds equilibrium nor seeks it, for both endlessly move and try to outdo the other, and out of this conflict, the ‘light’ of provisional truth may spring. Scientific knowledge is the outcome of a battle, not a compromise. The ‘peace’ reached is fickle, and no one expects it to last forever.

The core idea of *Regulae II* is that the *fact of feeling* beauty implies the *meeting* of aesthetic observation (on the side of the transcendental subject) and aesthetic properties (on the side of the transcendental object). This togetherness brings several levels or dimensions of beauty to the fore, starting with pleasure and followed by satisfaction, exquisiteness, excellence, exemplarity, and sublimity. The judgment of taste is one of excellence and exemplarity. The former implies critical thought, the latter creative thought. Creativity uses harmonic keys to balance the two scales of the transcendental dyad, and their relationship is an ‘unarmed truce’ for *always harmonizing with each other* while the absolute equilibrium is ever-escaping. There is *no* ongoing conflict here, but a tendency to encounter, meet, and join, allowing for an *expectant* judgment of taste (contrary to the provisional *decisiveness* of empirico-formal propositions). The ‘training’ involved is bracketing hard observation, opening up to soft observation so that the initial *gasp* of this observation settles into a continuous *glow* that is called ‘flow.’ If this happens, the *afterglow* is a counterpoint of flow. It does try to pull, due to conceptual identifications, all attention to its judgment of taste, away from the immediate experience of what is the case offered by soft observation. Hence, aesthetics suggests settling the mind in flow, so that both *gasp* and *afterglow* may be present without canceling each other out.

In *Regulae III*, the *fact of action* is at hand. Here, the transcendental dyad of agent (subject) and outcome of action (object) is not represented by two scales but by an *action vector*  $\vec{a}$  defined by beginning (intent, act of will,  $I_n$ ), direction ( $\hat{d}$ ), magnitude ( $m$ ), and autotelicity ( $\alpha$ ), with  $m = m \hat{d}$ .

### The Fact of Action

Action lies at the heart of critical ethics.

The *fact of action* is the necessary, normative core condition of the possibility of action, defining a dyad between the transcendental subject of action (the agent) and the transcendental object of action (the act done as a *unit of responsibility*). This distinguished action from mere movement or behavior.

Critical ethics asks : *What must I do ?*

This query invites a *judgment of ethical value*, an axiology that objectively assesses whether what has been done satisfies certain conditions of worth defined by the agent’s activity and its outcome in a given action context or *action domain*. These conditions fall into four action lenses : good (or evil), justice (or injustice), fairness (or unfairness), and love (or hate). This is what must be done. Why ?

The transcendental principles of critical ethics are *necessary* because rejecting them entails a performative contradiction. Reject the agent of the action, and there is no responsible doer. Reject the outcome of the agent's action, and the ethical value of the action has no public face. Reduce the agent to the outcome of the action, and what has been willed *before* the deed is done has no bearing on the ethical value of what was done (utility prevails, not intent). Reduce what was done to the agent, and the value of the outcome solely depends on the intent of the doer (as in deontological morality). In all cases, both object and subject are to be considered before a *critical* judgment of ethical worth can be articulated.

The principles of ethics are 'critical' because (i) they do *not* allow the reification of doer, doing, and done, and (ii) they offer crucial demarcations. Agent, deed, and outcome are always interdependent and cannot be separated in the judgment establishing ethical value. The subjective intent to act, the medium of the actual deed, and the objective outcome, namely what is actually done, are 'perfected' by stressing that their origin always depends on factors *outside them*. The agent relies on the deed's medium and its effect on the world (the outcome). The medium of the action cannot be considered without someone intending to exercise free will and actually doing so. And finally, the outcome is never independent of this intent and the actions that manifest it and propel the deed toward its aim.

### Vectorial Model of Action

The phenomenology of action proposed here is vectorial. An elementary action is represented as a passage from an adopted starting position  $I_n$  toward an outcome  $O$  by way of an aim-direction  $\hat{d}$  and an action intensity  $m$ . The model does not treat action as mere displacement, but as *owned and answerable* doing whose vectorial form can be rendered, in its simplest idiom, as a directed transition from  $I_n$  toward  $O$ .

In its elementary form, an action vector contains four formal moments and one evaluative coefficient :  $I_n$  as adopted intent ;  $\hat{d}$  as aim-direction ;  $m$  as action intensity ;  $O$  as worldly outcome ; and  $\alpha \in [0,1]$  as the contestable coefficient of owned participation.  $\alpha$  does not select the action lens and does not measure pleasure, legality, or sincerity in isolation ; it measures the degree to which *the act is inwardly owned and outwardly sustained in lens-coherent participation*.  $O$  names the worldly landing of the act ;  $O(*)$  names that same landing as presented, interpreted, and counted within a domain of action under the filters of intent, leeway, foreseeability, coercion, capacity, uptake, and domain relevance.

Elementary action vectors  $\vec{a}_1, \vec{a}_2, \vec{a}_3 \dots \vec{a}_i$  can be coordinated into a complex episode with resultant  $\vec{a}_{total} = \Sigma \vec{a}_i$ .

Phenomenological inquiry into action uncovers four recurrent drivers, grouped into two tensions : intent with duty and conscience with vocation. These are not yet ethical valuations, but invariant sites at which action becomes intelligible as action. Intent marks the adopted beginning of the episode ; duty marks the limiting

and obligating presence of otherness ; conscience marks retrospective and revisable ownership of what has been done ; vocation marks the public horizon within which action seeks fit, inscription, and worldly place.

Action domains are normatively structured networks of co-relative action episodes within which outcomes count in determinate ways, frictions and permissions recur, and appraisal, repair, and demand become specifically legible. Domains may indeed form a ladder of increasing complexity, but that comparative ordering is secondary ; primarily, a domain is the *structured field* within which actions become *assessable as this kind of deed rather than that one*.

Health is a complex domain of action, but less complex than the domains covering the person, their family, and education, etc. In each of these networks, the action vectors are close to one another (they share similar directions and are close in vector space, indicating similar meanings). For example, in the action domain of health, all action vectors relate to the condition of the body/mind unity. Actions are judged by how good, just, fair, and loving they are in the context of physical and mental wholeness. Hence, extensive drinking and smoking are evil to the body ; stretching its endurance beyond a sensible limit may be deemed unjust ; yo-yoing between healthy and unhealthy activity is unfair ; and torturing it may be judged hateful. Likewise, in a more complex action involving a person, what is called 'mind' becomes a more intricate unity of sense-consciousnesses, volitional, affective, cognitive, and sentient activities. The higher the action domain, the more elaborated the action vector space becomes.

### The Metaphor of the Archer

As ethics is action-bound, the vectorial analysis of action offers an interesting metaphor for explaining the interdependence of agent, deed, and outcome. This is the art of archery, or *kyūdō*, 'the way of the bow,' a favorite Zen metaphor for nondual action. This path is a traditional Japanese martial art rooted in samurai culture, Zen Buddhism, and Confucianism, emphasizing mental discipline, moral development, and graceful movement over mere target hitting. It uses a 2-meter-tall, asymmetrical bamboo bow (*yumi*) to shoot at a target from 28 meters away, emphasizing truth, beauty, and goodness in every action.

Zen stories about archery have two intertwined layers that are best kept distinct. One layer is historical and institutional : *kyūdō* is a disciplined art with technical lineages and ethical ideals, and only rather late did it become widely marketed as a direct vehicle of Zen spirituality in the popular Western sense. The other layer is pedagogical and metaphorical : archery is an unusually sharp mirror for the will, because its visible simplicity makes inner noise audible. The famous European narrative that welded Zen and archery into a single spiritual technique is itself contested in scholarship, particularly regarding language barriers and the retrospective projection of Zen onto *kyūdō*.

The metaphor developed here, inspired by archery as a mirror for the will, has ten steps sketching a disciplined phenomenology of action in the archer's idiom : a passage from an *adopted starting position of intent*, through the stabilization of *aim* and the *gathering of intensity under resistance*, into *execution* and the *reception of the outcome*. They are not a universal anatomy of praxis, but a regulated script for one elementary action vector that can be iterated, nested, and corrected within an action domain consisting of a network of action vectors.

Taking bow, arrow, and socketed arrowhead as the three components of the art,  $I_n$  corresponds to the archer's taking up of the situation and the commitment to shoot rather than to merely hold.  $\hat{d}$  corresponds to aiming and maintaining aim under attention.  $m$  corresponds to draw and release energy as regulated intensity rather than strain. The bow corresponds to the domain-and-form constraint that enables stable aiming and measured intensity. The arrow, as a whole, corresponds to the elementary action vector  $\vec{a}$  : it is the unit of responsibility that goes from  $I_n$  toward O. The socketed arrowhead (a metal, point with a hollow base designed to fit over a wooden shaft) corresponds to the specification of how the act will 'count' at contact, i.e., the manner of outcome-making within the domain, which is where lenses become salient because different 'heads' enact different kinds of touch.

### *The Bow*

The bow can be read, descriptively, as the stable constraint-structure that makes an action episode writable as an action vector  $\vec{a}$  at all : it is the formed capacity that stores potential and channels it into a determinate release.

In the vector idiom, bow corresponds to the *action domain* as a field of permissible moves and resistances, together with the agent's trained form that can take up  $I_n$  without collapsing into spasm or improvisation. Metaphorically, the bow can mean the agent's cultivated posture of ownership : the capacity to hold tension without converting it into noise ; the 'shape' of a life-practice that turns raw impulse into directed doing ; the lawlike grammar of a craft that does not decide the aim, but makes aiming possible ; the internalized steadiness that keeps  $m$  from masquerading as  $\hat{d}$  ; the domain's friction and permission-pattern that bends trajectories without announcing itself ; the bindingness of a chosen discipline, not as an external chain but as a condition of precision ; and, normatively, the ethical demand that action be formed in a way that respects the freedom of others, so that the bow is not merely strong but *fit*.

### *The Arrow*

The arrow can be read, descriptively, as the elementary action vector  $\vec{a}$  itself : a directed displacement from  $I_n$  toward O under an aim-direction  $\hat{d}$  and an intensity  $m$ . Metaphorically, the arrow can mean the episode's 'one-ness' : the unit of responsibility that makes it action rather than merely behavior ; the commitment that leaves the hand and cannot be un-launched, which is why answerability

attaches ; the clarified  $\hat{d}$  that cuts through the fog of competing micro-impulses ; the alignment of the will's field so that attention is not decoration but guidance ; the temporal continuity of the act from initiation to reception, so that the agent does not split into doer and commentator ; the economy of means that refuses ornamental motion ; and, normatively, the act as something that must be ownable under an action lens, i.e., not merely effective but coherent with goodness, justice, fairness, or love, if  $\alpha$  is to be high.

### *The Socketed Arrowhead*

Socketed arrowhead can be read, descriptively, as the contact-interface between vector and world : the part designed to 'count' at impact, translating flight into a determinate effect. The socket matters because it makes the point attachable and interchangeable issue:: the same shaft can take different heads, and the difference lies not in propulsion but in the kind of outcome it produces. Metaphorically, socketed arrowhead can mean the specification of outcome-relevance : what, exactly, this act is meant to *do* at O, not in intention-talk alone but in effect ; the domain-specific 'implementation' of an aim, where a general  $\hat{d}$  becomes a concrete manner of doing ; the place where evaluative lenses bite, because a head can be sharp in efficiency yet blunt in justice ; the distinction between impact and injury, or between correction and humiliation, i.e., the fine structure of how an act touches others' freedom ; the modularity of moral discernment, where the same energy  $m$  can be fitted with different 'points' depending on whether the act is guided under fairness, love, or mere victory ; and the entry-point for  $O(*)$  : not the outcome-as-presented itself, but the reason why outcomes are so often first encountered as  $O(*)$  within an action domain, because what the head 'does' is immediately interpreted and socially counted. Normatively, a socketed arrowhead can also name the discipline of proportionality : the refusal to bring a warhead to a repair task, i.e., to scale and specify action so that the kind of contact enacted fits the kind of situation taken up by  $I_n$ .

Now consider the *Archer Metaphor*, which has ten steps :

1. Selecting a suitable bow and arrow ;
2. Preparing bow and arrow ;
3. Taking up the bow and arrow and assuming a stance ;
4. Inspecting the field and conditions of the shot ;
5. Nocking the arrow on the string ;
6. Drawing the string to full tension ;
7. Fixing aim and stabilizing breath and posture ;
8. Entering integrated release-readiness, 'becoming the arrow' ;
9. Releasing the string ;
10. Receiving the outcome : hit or miss.

If the metaphor of the archer is taken in the pedagogical sense, its strength lies in how it allows a single action vector to be seen as a continuous cycle, whose joints can be named without breaking the unity of the act. *Kyūdō* itself often describes

the shooting procedure as a sequence of stages forming a single, complete action, not a pile of separable parts, and it explicitly treats the decisive moment as something one prepares for and then allows to occur, rather than something one forcibly manufactures.

This fits the ten-step archer sequence well, because the ten steps can be treated as ten ‘hinges’ within one vectorial episode : each hinge clarifies how  $I_n$  is taken up, how  $\hat{d}$  is held, how  $m$  is steadied, and how the archer avoids mistaking strain for direction (a very common philosophical error, and not only among philosophers).

Step 1 : Selecting the proper bow and arrow is a metaphor for choosing the right constraint. The archer does not pick a bow to express an identity, but to make truth tellable : a bow too strong forces vanity, a bow too weak invites theatrics. The will begins by refusing both ;

Step 2 : Preparing the bow and arrow serves as a metaphor for cleaning the instrument of intention. The archer polishes away excuses before polishing wood and horn, because an unprepared bow is merely a lecture about archery.

Step 3 : Taking up the bow and arrow becomes a metaphor for taking up  $I_n$ . The archer’s first aim is not the target but the adoption of a starting position that can be owned without flinching : the situation as taken up by the will, not as narrated by the ego ;

Step 4: Inspecting the aim becomes a metaphor for clarifying  $\hat{d}$  rather than fantasizing it. The archer looks until the target stops being a wish and becomes a direction that can be held without bargaining ;

Step 5 : Placing the arrow on the bow becomes a metaphor for committing the episode to form. A thought can remain private fog ; nocking the arrow makes the will enter grammar ;

Step 6 : Stretching the cord serves as a metaphor for raising  $m$  without poisoning  $\hat{d}$ . The archer learns the difference between power and impatience : the string must be drawn, but not by anger disguised as strength.

Step 7 : Watching the aim becomes a metaphor for steady attention that neither grabs nor drifts. The archer holds the direction without clutching at the outcome, which is why archery is such an impolite teacher : it punishes the wish to win.

Step 8 : Becoming the arrow serves as a metaphor for non-duplication. The archer ceases to be a commentator standing beside the act ; the act becomes one. If the archer tries to watch the archer, the arrow has already acquired a second master, and the second master is always worse ;

Step 9 : Releasing the arrow is a metaphor for letting go when the conditions are met. In *kyūdō* language, this is often framed as waiting at the point of full draw until the release occurs as a natural culmination, rather than as a forced decision that interrupts the act ;

Step 10 : Hitting the target becomes a metaphor for the outcome without vanity. The archer receives what happens, but does not worship it ; a hit can be an accident, a miss can be instruction. The only bad outcome is the one used to lie about what they will just do.

The ten steps are useful precisely because each step offers a place where the archer can notice a familiar substitution : replacing direction with intensity, replacing attention with tension, replacing ownership with performance, and then blaming the target for the archer's own improvisations.

The archer schema is a viable metaphor for the *process of action* because it supplies a concrete, temporally ordered field in which intent, aim, intensity, resistance, and outcome can be tracked without immediately collapsing into abstractions. A bow is especially helpful because it makes the 'push' of action palpable as tension held and released, so the passage from intending to effectuating is not imagined as a magical leap but as a disciplined traversal through constraint. In that sense, the metaphor fits the action-vector idiom : it offers an experiential bridge between origin, direction, magnitude, and terminal, while keeping the world's resistances in the picture rather than treating them as an afterthought.

The ten steps are also, as a first cut, phenomenologically intelligible. They move from selection and preparation through uptake and aiming to the decisive conversion of stored tension into release and impact. The sequence, therefore, mirrors a basic structure of agency : first, a domain is entered (equipment, stance, situation), then a direction is stabilized (aim), then intensity is gathered (draw), then the act is executed (release), then the world answers back (hit or miss). That arc is precisely what many philosophical accounts of action struggle to render without becoming either purely psychological or purely mechanical, so the bow is a good antidote to both temptations.

A few remarks.

Where the metaphor can be refined is in the explicit separation of what the archer does, what the archer undergoes, and what the world does in return. Steps (1) through (3) largely belong to domain entry and domain fitting : the tools are chosen and adopted, and the body is aligned with the practice. Step (8), 'becoming the arrow,' is the most philosophically loaded, and that is why it is the best and the riskiest. It can become mystical rhetoric or a precise phenomenological marker. If treated precisely, it names a *shift in ownership* : deliberative chatter falls quiet, micro-corrections are no longer planned as propositions but occur as integrated doing, and the agent's intending is no longer experienced as a separate inner command but as a unified orientation of the whole posture toward the target (with soft observation, the archer is in the 'flow' – cf. *Regulae II*). In the action-vector idiom, this is where direction and intensity cease to be separately attended and are instead lived as one integrated vector. In the perception idiom, perception remains the normative placeholder of encounter, while sensation is perception ×

interpretation as appearance, and the ‘becoming’ moment can be described as a reduction of interpretative noise so that what appears is less cluttered by self-monitoring and more governed by the given constraints of the shot. The point is simple : the arrow does not alter its flight because the archer has formed a theory about it.

Steps (9) and (10) complete the corridor of irreversibility. ‘Releasing’ is the decisive cut in which the agent relinquishes further control over the trajectory, and hitting the aim is the worldly terminal. Yet the metaphor becomes even more faithful to action if it quietly admits that ‘hitting’ has two terminals : the objective outcome O and the outcome-as-presented O(\*). The shot can land in the gold while appearing to the archer as a failure, or land wide while appearing to the archer as a success because it reveals an error in stance that the archer can now correct. This distinction matters because responsibility and learning do not attach to O alone but to the relation between O and O(\*) within a domain of practice.

The chief limitation of the schema is that it can tempt a linear picture of action, as if action were always a ten-step march. In lived agency, many steps loop. Selection and preparation recur midstream when the wind changes. Inspecting the aim and watching the aim interpenetrate. Even ‘becoming the arrow’ can fail and be re-entered. So the metaphor is strongest when treated as an *elementary slice of action* that can be iterated and nested, not as the universal anatomy of all praxis. That nesting is exactly where the notion of action domains belongs : archery is a domain with its own norms, tools, feedback, and training protocols, and the ten steps can be read as the domain’s *canonical script* for moving from intent to outcome under resistance.

The metaphor also provides a natural home for the later parameters that have already been developed. Autotelicity can be tracked across the steps without forcing an ethical verdict : selecting the bow may be heterotelic, undertaken for an external purpose, while the drawn, silent attention of aiming may display a high degree of owned participation, though its ethical worth still depends on the lens through which the act is appraised.

The four action lenses can also be shown as constraints on the same act in different domains : ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ can govern whether the shot should be taken at all, ‘justice’ versus ‘injustice’ can govern rules of the range and the legitimacy of the practice, ‘fairness’ versus ‘unfairness’ can govern access, instruction, and non-discriminatory participation, and ‘love’ versus ‘hate’ can govern whether the practice is integrated into a wider horizon of responsibility rather than narrowed into violence or vanity. The bow does not collapse ethics into mechanics, but it makes visible where ethics actually bites : in the selection of targets, the regulation of force, and the *ownership* of outcomes.

As the aim is explicitly phenomenological, one further refinement helps : each step can be written not only as an external act but also as a *shift in felt agency*. The ten-step list then becomes a ladder of lived transitions, from readiness to

commitment to tension to absorption to relinquishment to worldly reply. In that form, it can be mapped cleanly onto ‘from this toward that with this push,’ while still leaving room for the irreducible strangeness that action always contains : the moment when a will acts, a body obeys, and a world answers, as if the universe briefly agreed to speak in the grammar of an arrow.

In the archer schema,  $I_n$ ,  $\hat{d}$ ,  $m$ ,  $O$ , and  $O(*)$  are not extra ingredients added from outside ; they are the *abstracted invariants* of what the ten steps already enact.

- $I_n$  is fixed chiefly in steps 1 to 3. Selecting the bow and arrow, preparing them, and taking them up in stance is where intent becomes an adopted starting position rather than a mere wish. The agent does not merely ‘want to shoot’ ; the agent enters the situation as a doing, taking up tools, posture, and readiness. In that sense, the origin of the action vector is not an inner spark but a situated uptake.
- $\hat{d}$  is formed and stabilized in steps 4 and 7. Inspecting the field and conditions establishes what ‘toward’ can realistically mean here : distance, wind, lighting, obstacles, and the target’s position determine the space of permissible directions. Fixing the aim then stabilizes one direction as the shot’s operative orientation. The two steps matter because direction is not only chosen ; it is also maintained against drift.
- $m$  is gathered and controlled in steps 6 and 7. Drawing the string to full tension is the clearest image of intensity as magnitude : the push is literally stored as a controlled force. Stabilizing breath and posture regulates that magnitude so it does not spill into tremor, collapse, or premature release. This is why the bow is such a clean phenomenological instrument : intensity is both felt and measurable, and it can be increased without changing direction, or direction can be corrected without increasing intensity.
- The elementary displacement  $\vec{a} = m \hat{d}$  is most visible across steps 5–9. Nocking the arrow commits the episode to a determinate corridor of execution. Drawing and fixing the aim yields a vectorized readiness : direction and magnitude are now integrated. Step 8, ‘becoming the arrow,’ marks the experiential unification in which direction and magnitude are no longer handled as separate tasks but as one coherent readiness-to-release, entering ‘the zone.’ Releasing is the conversion of stored magnitude along the stabilized direction into irreversible motion : at that instant, the action vector is no longer merely intended ; it is launched.
- $O$  appears in step 10 as the objective terminal, where the arrow actually lands. Yet the model gains its critical usefulness when  $O$  is immediately paired with  $O(*)$ .  $O(*)$  is outcome-as-presented : how the hit or miss shows up for the agent and the domain, including interpretation, evaluation, and the felt meaning of the result. A near miss may present as success within training because it discloses a correctable error ; a hit may present as failure if the shot violated a rule, a norm, or an intended constraint of the practice. This is precisely the point at which action domains and action lenses enter without being tacked on.

Finally, the whole ten-step sequence is one instance of an action domain script. The domain supplies the norms and constraints that shape admissible  $\hat{d}$ , appropriate ranges of  $m$ , and what counts as  $O$  and  $O(*)$  in the first place. The action lenses operate as domain-level evaluations of the same shot : ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ concerns whether the shot should be taken at all and toward what ; ‘justice’ versus ‘injustice’ concerns rule-conformity and legitimacy of the practice ; ‘fairness’ versus ‘unfairness’ concerns access, procedure, and impartiality in the conditions of training and competition ; ‘love’ versus ‘hate’ concerns the widening or narrowing of reference, namely whether the practice is integrated into responsibility or reduced to domination.

- Autotelicity  $\alpha$  can be tracked across the steps as well : preparation may be largely heterotelic, while the sustained steadiness of aim and release may be more autotelic ; but  $\alpha$  does not determine which action lens applies, only the degree to which the act realizes the worth proper to the lens in play.

In this mapping, the archer sequence becomes a disciplined phenomenology of  $\vec{a}$  :  $I_n$  is the entered situation,  $\hat{d}$  is the stabilized ‘toward,’  $m$  is the gathered ‘push,’  $O$  is the worldly landing, and  $O(*)$  is the landing as it counts. The bow does not merely illustrate the vector grammar ; it provides a lived laboratory in which the grammar can be tested, corrected, and re-entered shot after shot.

### Structure of Critical Ethics

The architectonic of critical ethics unfolds in three ordered moments. First, *transcendental logic* isolates the non-deniable conditions of ethical judgment. Second, *theoretical ethics* articulates the principal norms that follow once action is rendered intelligible as imputable passage. Third, *applied ethics* translates those norms into revisable maxims within determinate domains of action. The order matters : principles ground norms, norms orient maxims, and maxims remain answerable upward to the principles and norms they presuppose.

### Transcendental Logic

Transcendental logic reflexively unearths the *fact of action* and distinguishes the transcendental subject as agent, that is, as the one who can be held answerable, from the transcendental correlate of the deed as imputable. The outcome  $O$  is the terminal of the episode in the world, but the transcendental object of ethics is not the outcome as such ; it is the act, as a *unit of responsibility*, that makes outcomes count as *attributable*.

The term ‘transcendental object’ is not being used in the everyday sense of ‘the thing out there,’ but in the critical sense of ‘that which is constituted as the correlate of a certain kind of act of meaning.’ In epistemology, the object is what can be known ; in aesthetics, the object is what can be judged as beautiful ; in ethics, the object is *what can be imputed*. The outcome  $O$  is what happens later in the world, but it is not yet an *ethical object* until it is taken up under the form ‘this

was done,' that is, until it is *constituted as attributable to an agent taking up responsibility for the act.*

To say that the transcendental object of ethics is the act as a unit of responsibility is to say that ethics does *not* primarily deal with events as such, but with events under an *imputability-form*. A rock falls and breaks a window ; there is an outcome, but no action in the ethical sense, because there is no agent whose reasons, intentions, or ownership can be questioned. An arrow is released and breaks a window ; the physical outcome may be similar, but now the question 'who did this, why, and under what responsibility ?' becomes intelligible. The ethical object is not the glass shards ; it is the deed 'breaking the window by shooting,' constituted as a deed-for-which-someone-can-be-held-answerable.

This is why the formulation says that the act makes outcomes count as *attributable*. Without the form of action, O remains a mere state of affairs. With the form of action, O becomes 'the outcome of someone's doing,' and that shift is precisely what opens the *normative space* of praise, blame, justification, regret, repair, and obligation. Put in the action-vector idiom, O is the *terminal*, but the ethical object is the vectored passage from  $I_n$  through  $\hat{d}$  and  $m$  into that terminal as owned, because only a passage that can be owned can be judged.

The distinction also explains why  $O(*)$  matters. Outcomes are not encountered as 'pure' objects ; they are encountered as presentations *within a domain* that already carries scripts. If the 'same' O is taken up as accident, as negligence, or as malice, then different ethical objects have been constituted, because the act has been constituted differently as imputable. The ethical object is always an *acted-and-counted unit*, not a bare physical change.

In contrast to the balance-based findings of epistemology and aesthetics, critical ethics understands the transcendental duality through elementary and complex action vectors. Epistemology must entertain an 'armed truce' to operate its essential tension between the ideas 'reality' and 'ideality,' such that empirical-formal propositions of science remain valid *pro tem*, never absolutely definitive, and therefore always provisional. Aesthetics has an 'unarmed truce' to give body to its essential tension between aesthetic observation and aesthetic properties, seeking excellence and harmony while remaining expectant, because judgments of taste cannot be affirmed as cognitive facts in the manner of scientific propositions.

Ethics' fundamental contrast between agent and attributable outcome is neither an ongoing balancing act nor a constant push toward harmonization. It forms a *directed passage*. In its elementary form, a single action vector is represented as a directed displacement from an adopted starting position  $I_n$  (intent) toward an outcome O, such that  $O = I_n + \vec{a}$ .

The direction of  $\vec{a}$  expresses aim  $\hat{d}$ , the magnitude of  $\vec{a}$  expresses action intensity  $m \geq 0$ , and the elementary decomposition  $\vec{a} = m \hat{d}$  allows complex actions to be treated as coordinated packets of component vectors whose resultant is  $\vec{a}_{total} =$

$\Sigma \vec{a}_i$ . The agent does not confront the outcome directly because it arrives later and is often encountered first as outcome-as-presented  $O^*$ , that is, as how  $O$  appears and counts within an action domain. In the bow idiom, once the arrow leaves the string, the shot becomes an integrated episode : origin, direction, gathered intensity, release, and worldly reply. Before release, intent is present as uptake and readiness ; if the bow is put down, the episode aborts into preparation without the decisive vector of execution.

### *Theoretical Ethics*

• Theoretical ethics differentiates moral philosophy, moral science, and normative (critical) ethics, and then unfolds the *fact of action* into four *action drivers*, namely intent, duty, conscience, and vocation, as distinct sources that initiate, constrain, govern, and stabilize action across action episodes in action domains. These *action drivers* answer the question : what are the *phenomenological invariants* of an elementary action  $\vec{a}$  ?

### *Applied Ethics*

Applied ethics identifies a determinate sequence of action domains. These are not merely examples ; they are the *recurrent fields* in which *maxims* must be tested.

These *action domains* are :

- 1 : health, the cultivation of bodily and mental conditions ;
- 2 : persons, self-identity, and first-person orientation ;
- 3 : family, the nurturing nexus of growth and obligation ;
- 4 : property, the socio-economic field of resources and constraints ;
- 5 : education, the acquisition of skills, knowledge, values, and habits ;
- 6 : society, the order of living together under norms and institutions ;
- 7 : Spaceship Earth, the field of planetary participation and ecological duty ;
- 8 : death, the terminal horizon in which the last physical actions are taken up as a limit-condition of praxis.

In each domain, the evaluative action lenses may be applied to assess ethical worth, while autotelicity tracks how actions are owned from within ; the two are to be kept distinct even when a cultivated domain brings them into convergence. The connection between judgment and autotelicity is this : the more actions are driven by egology, the higher their heterotelicity, the more concave their orientation becomes, and the more actions within the domain operate in ethically objectionable ways.

*Mutatis mutandis*, when the convex orientation prevails, the act becomes more participatory, because the isolating streak of the ego is curtailed and the deed becomes more fully integrated into the wider field of process. Such closures preclude interdependence.

**ACTION**