

The primary and probably the original form of phenomenological bracketing is the suspension of “local” (“egoistic”) practical concern. A important version of this can be found, in a somewhat mystified but still insightful version, in Schopenhauer. A more immediately accessible and relevant version is found in the first chapter of Ernst Mach’s *The Analysis of Sensations*.

Mach sees that boundary between the ego and the world is merely a practical, conventional boundary. The appearance-reality distinction is likewise a merely relative and practical distinction. Mach *explicitly* transgresses the limits of the prejudices of the practical mode. He is willing to violate common sense, if that’s where the logic leads him.

Mach doesn’t discuss American pragmatism (William James) directly, but Mach’s bracketing is a kind of **anti**-pragmatism. He sees that a short-sighted selfish egoism functions like blinkers (also known as blinders) on a racehorse. Varieties of pragmatism set themselves against the *essential worldly foolishness* of theoretical philosophy. This unselfish, transpersonal, and therefore courageous curiosity, which “loses itself” in the object is what enables genuine ontology in the first place.

Dr. Stockmann in Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People* is one example of the “foolishness” of genuine science –and of “Machian bracketing.” While Stockmann is not a philosopher, he is recklessly honest, and he pays for it. The story of Socrates is correctly foundational, and we might also talk about “Socratic” bracketing.

For completeness, and as a matter of personal honesty, that this public honesty, which in some cases seeks punishment, is not perhaps fundamental. Radical self-honesty may be the essence here, and networks of trust and friendship may suffice for a radically insightful ontology that must remain reluctantly esoteric. For instance, the insights of psychoanalysis are arguably impossible to universalize. I have in mind especially what is called by some the integration of the shadow. This integration is, in my view, *intimately* related to the overcoming of the “resentment industrial complex.”

But I think it’s folly to think that profound philosophy can be popularized. There is a “waste” in such foolishness. As Schopenhauer saw, even before Darwin, our biological foundations are as greedy as they

are greasy. We cheat the Darwin's game theoretical algorithmic demiurge in our moments of transcendence, in our great philosophy and art. Such ecstasy and homecoming is paid for in agony and intense alienation. Hobbes understood: *For Science is of that nature, as none can understand it to be, but such as in a good measure have attained it.*

Rorty was rich (compared to someone working for a wage) and covered in prestige. He reduced philosophy to cultural politics. Now politics is of course obsessed with resentment, empirical identity (the local ego), and worldly (material, economic ) advantage. It is also relentlessly temporally topical, lost in the needs and fashions of the moment. I continue to admire the honesty of Rorty's **style**.

He was an advanced version of the rot, shrewd enough to cling to a basically materialistic and physicalist interpretation of "the forum" (a term I used for the world, for foundationalist reasons I go into elsewhere.) His deflation of philosophy in its grand and pure sense boiled down to a "last man" tech-bro optimism, coated with the typical sentimentality of "leftist" academics, who have proved themselves, for the most part, cowards. Well-fed cowards, who don't want to ruin a good gig. I wouldn't have "integrated the shadow" if I pretended I couldn't relate. Why *argue* with "complete" fools? "Perhaps I'll sneak through some great work, esoterically coded."

And, indeed, the world is always gray, always only the ideal like a flower that grows in shit. In Schopenhauer, the genius or true artist is only occasionally in the high state of true vision. I like to interpret Christ on the cross as the representation of the necessary entanglement of good and evil. Without contraries is no progression, no drama (Blake.) And of course we see great philosophers like Wittgenstein and Heidegger being recognized and enabled. So it's silly to pretend that the great is always neglected. Nevertheless, there was a pure foolishness in the early work of both philosophers. Like great painting or great music, it was celebrated by those with taste, including those in a position to further enable and encourage such foolishness – by funding it without steering it toward topical politics (ideology of this or that flavor.)