

Why write philosophy fast?

Author: Terence Rajivan Edward

Abstract. This paper presents two reasons for writing philosophy fast: to succeed in certain competitions; and to realize new and better ideas.

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What things will you never know

If you always proceed so slow?

Is it a good idea to write a lot of philosophy and write it fast? In the analytic tradition, at least, I think a patient approach to producing philosophy is valued. “He thinks slowly, he does not produce much writing, but what he produces is good.” But I can think of at least two reasons for writing philosophy fast.

Competition. Imagine that people in the country you live in love their sport and just about everything is organized as competitive sport, including philosophy. And in some competition you are drawn against two philosophers, two Leeds philosophers. You are not deeply committed to philosophy, let us imagine, it’s just your job as it is theirs. So you are looking for the least demanding way to beat them. They are solid reliable philosophers, mildly innovative. How are you going to beat them? You come up with a great plan! They are slower than you at producing philosophy, so you will write papers much like theirs in reliability and innovation level but more often. (Thinking about competition more carefully, perhaps a value on slow but skilled

production is a strategic move – “the excitability that one seems to notice in many other races” Broad 1950: 103. But I am sure there are plenty of phlegmatic people across the races.)

New and better ideas. Less competitively, and probably more importantly, when you write something you tend to work things out in the process of writing that you would not realize beforehand, even if you make a plan. So writing can be a way of arriving at new and better ideas. For example, you are struck by a potential inconsistency between two quotations by a philosopher, but when you start writing a more significant inconsistency occurs to you. Imagine a person with a list of things they would like to write – their ideas – but if they actually write they have better ideas! (But why have better ideas? Well, for some people at least, it is fun – that is one reason, a reason for them.)

Reference

Broad, C.D. 1950. Some common fallacies of political thinking. *Philosophy* 25: 99-113.