

# The Grammar and Logic of Morale

By Dirk Leach

Technological society dwarfs, thwarts, and demoralizes its populace in myriad ways. Nietzsche called its subversion and transformation of thought and nature “nihilism,” saying that depression was nihilism as a psychological state. Modern writers should cultivate a counter-depressive argument and I crunch mine into this blog post.

As logical as despair can seem while one is in its throes, logic and even grammar support individual authority and contradict the diffidence and regret that characterize the depressed mood. The neutral mood we call the indicative promises something “will” be and plans on it as fact, expects it. The optative and subjunctive moods employ an abundance of auxiliary constructions to qualify the desirability and likelihood of what is at stake, risked, and impossible to guarantee. Philosophy and religion both grew from the way these moods allow us to talk about what is not yet, and certain death most of all.

We mortals care about the future. If we speak English we have one word for indicative promise but a few score for the wishing, cursing, and speculating of the optative and subjunctive. Historically, the optative and subjunctive moods were future tenses as vital as the indicative “will.” (see, E. Adelaide Hahn) As factuality gained respect over hope and prayer, analytic language relegated them, as it did emotionality in general, first to grammatical mood, then, in English, to a group of “modal auxiliaries.”

Inspiration is “wishful” and despair “curses.” Elation is grateful and depression is condemnatory. The optative mood articulates both psychological health and pathology as well as religiosity and cult dread. Yoga accepts the impossible epistemological dichotomy, mind and body, but says they join in the breath. Every inhalation is a mood-option, either to curse or to wish. The optative mood, with the subjunctive (including verbs followed by gerunds and infinitives) uses modal auxiliary verbs to articulate hundreds of different perspectives on the future. (E.g. Subjunctive and optative: may, might, should, ought to, had better, be supposed to, be to, must, have to, can, could, be able to, would. Verb plus gerund: anticipate (going, etc.), consider, delay, recommend, suggest, etc. Verb plus infinitive: agree (to go, etc.), ask, care, consent, decide, demand, deserve, expect, hope, need, promise, threaten, want, etc. Also verbs that “conscript” a pronoun “into” an infinitive future, such as “allow (him to go, to stay), beg, convince, dare, need, permit, etc.”)

“Will” is the most neutral mood. THE will, according to yogic lore, is originally an eager, suckling pulse at our navel, an umbilical swallowing.. Adults

# The Grammar and Logic of Morale

By Dirk Leach

operate on a reduced trickle of this original will called “will power,” our ability to choose to think of this or that, (as well as to move).

Patanjali’s second sutra, “Thought controls *vrittis*,” that is, “whirlpools,” hence agitation, especially moody reverie, alerts the yogi to will power. Edmund Husserl based phenomenology on such a dictum – “Thought is intentional.”

These aphorisms name the two facets of will power. Together, they form the tip, the POINT of thought’s evolution. Phenomenological insight, differentiating, critical responsibility, is the dominant, cutting edge. (The etymological root of “critique” is “to cut.”) Yogic oneness withdraws from the point of existence, offering an oceanic, therapeutic mood, chosen where mind and body join, in the breath.

The phenomenological characterization of will power – that thought is intentional – surpasses the yogic – that thought is free to stop, momentarily (Samadhi). Critical responsibility precedes even perception: all possibly empirically verifiable fact, the very light of day, lags behind this critical point, a point always in the crisis of refinement, honing.

The critical point of time, all time, cosmic time, is not determined to be the same as it has been but is being steered by our will power, individually and as progressing lore.

Yoga teaches that we’re free to opt out of the condemnatory cursing of a depressed mood. “Thought controls *vrittis*” means we’re free to change our intention and even suspend thought. That thought is intentional tells the phenomenologist also that it MEANS its idea, intends it in a certain way, as a belief, or perception, or memory, or certitude. To mean in this way is to interpret, evaluate, and weigh, to judge and readjust judgement. To mean, to intend, is to grasp interpretively. When we remember something, we think it as a memory, not a fantasy. We grasp it with intention, reach for it. We don’t merely bump into it, nor does it merely impinge.

Husserl spoke of sight as a ray that bestowed a provisional exactitude upon a rippling flux of contingency, this our world. His is the attitude of pure Yi, in Taoism, that mental faculty sheathed in the spleen Ching – running from the big toe through the stomach to the tongue, experienced in the “third eye,” the sixth chakra, the bodily site of wakeful attention. Yi is critical intelligence, choice. Yi is sharp, like the big toe talon, the critical talon, giving traction and leaving a spoor.

Husserl was alarmed by the cheesy, modern “logic” that doubted self evident truth, what we intuit as certain, and set out to catalogue the irreducible and

# The Grammar and Logic of Morale

By Dirk Leach

abundant self-evident truths that make thought possible, what we know to start with, “a priori,” in his language, and “always already,” in Heidegger’s. He called them “phenomena,” self-evident ideas, meanings, which could only be described, not deduced from anything else.

What criticism gained from Husserl and what it is today engaged in, is the search for more self-confident introspection. As much as we mean it, we hardly understand what thinking is and can be.

Phenomena are basic ideas, meanings, essences. Time. Being. Nothing. Space. Grammar. All mathematical axioms. The call of conscience. Phenomena are defined, not proven. Many are denied by sophists and fools. They are the ideas of things, not this or that star or car, ideas we can manipulate, as words, with certainty. The essence is a thing’s nature, not the thing itself. It’s what we know of the thing when we call it a “tree.” The meaning of that word allows us to distinguish and understand trees. Our mental faculties are given phenomena. Memory, belief, doubt, perception, mood, understanding. In thinking, we mean, situated in multifaceted self-evidence. Original awareness isn’t simple, as ordinary consciousness, simple and dim, assumes.

The simplest name for the concern of phenomenology is “articulation,” intelligible complexity, the description of interdependent irreducibles.

Husserl knew he knew what everybody has to know to know anything, whether anybody is self-aware enough to be confident about it or not. Criticism is the name of our progress as humans, our fundamental gift to our children. Phenomenology arose as a defense of this innate critical ability, at the time when empirical fatuity began to skyrocket, outstripping the senses through quantification, backing intellectual confidence into a corner.

Yoga stalls the pant-motor of panic with breath control and this control frees us to trust language – logic, grammar, and meaning – our purpose and import as authors.