Twitter Thread by pete wolfendale



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My morning thought. I think what's most incompatible about the way I think and the journal article format as a means of capturing and validating thought is that I have a completely different sense of the relation between tentativeness, rigor, and informatic compression.

The characteristic Pete thought is: wait a minute, this whole area is dominated by an assumption that no one seems to be questioning, and I've got two options to express that: i) outline the logic of the issue in a quick and compressed way, ii) write a small book with references.

The discipline seems to want something in between these poles every single time, and this makes me extremely anxious because I feel (with good reason) like any partially referential engagement with the issue will get instantly torpedoed by anyone outside its referential remit.

To repeat something I've said before: I'm actually quite good at being *concise*, I just find it very hard to be *brief*, because most of the thoughts I have don't permit brevity. Consider what your (referential) reactions are to this brief piece: https://t.co/2jEbPMd1A1.

One of the main genres of publication I've actually excelled in over the years is dictionary articles, which I take a lot of joy in writing, and include some of the pieces of which I'm most proud. Consider this one on the crux of Meillassoux's project: https://t.co/cXBjWYzRtg

I take great pleasure in explaining things in an optimal way. A good explanation is like a good anecdote. A rough stone that's been polished by the waves of dialogue so many times it's become a tiny smooth pebble. These waves are the ebb and flow of decompression-recompression.

This is why I enjoy Twitter, because my impulse to squeeze as much information as possible into each tweet hits a hard limit that forces my more poetic instincts to reconsider and revise, polishing each grain in miniature rather than waiting for a complete craggy draft.

I think writing dictionary articles and giving talks has made me a better writer, and that Twitter has had a similar effect, and I hope to improve further. For now, let me point you in the direction of a few more optimally compressed pieces I'm quite proud of:

1. 'Artificial Bodies and the Promise of Abstraction' - an overview of the 'embodiment paradigm' in philosophy that is only possible because the interview format obviates referential constraints: https://t.co/fHDeXBkPbD

2. 'Ray Brassier' - my dictionary entry on Ray's philosophical project in the Meillassoux Dictionary, which I think is the most concise thing ever written on his work: https://t.co/ivUEkYXvje

3. 'What's in a Game?' - not written up, but as concise a study of the whole (Western) tradition in the philosophy of games as you'll see anywhere, with a synthetic theory to boot: https://t.co/UxNZZVsY0V

4. Essay on Transcendental Realism (ETR) - the archetypical Pete piece, too long for an article, too short for a book, too Continental for Analytics, too Analytic for Continentals, i.e., completely unpublishable: https://t.co/9QrxURHLSj

To close by compressing my point: I struggle to transform tentative thoughts (posts/threads) into journal articles, because this often seems to involve adding referential syntax while subtracting semantic content. Bureaucratic sins against the poetics of explanation.

Here's to finding a happy medium. ■