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The Poetic of Reason

Introducing Rational Poetic Experimentalism

By

Stefán Snævarr



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Preface

I am just a humble worker in the vineyard of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. Behold here the grapes of my harvest, probably sour, but at least they are mine. And they are grapes of joy, not of wrath.

The main aim of this book is to show that there should be a place for experimentalism in philosophy and that we good reasons to think that reason has poetic sides. Hence, there is a poetic of reason.

This book is a sequel to my book *Metaphors, Narratives, Emotions* (Snævarr 2010). In that book, I was, as it were, looking for literary aspects of phenomena that do not necessarily seem literary on the surface. However, I was not fully conscious of that endeavor; in this book, I label this search “*Rational Poetic Experimentalism*” (RPE). Looking for these literary aspects is the poetic side of the RPE, wanting to do philosophical experiments in a rational fashion is the rational and experimental side. The RPE is the main theme of Part A of this book.

Because of the experimental and somewhat skeptical nature of the RPE, I often use the locution “*it makes sense to say*” when talking about a theory that seems reasonably good instead of saying that it is true. I also sometimes use the locution “*it is more likely than not*” for the same purpose or even that “*it is a viable option.*” Inspired by Robert Nozick, I often rank theories instead of believing in them or rejecting them.

In Section I of Part A, the main ideas of the RPE take center stage. The proponent of the RPE wishes to conduct philosophical experiments rationally, attempting to determine whether it makes sense to say that non-literary objects can have poetic/literary sides. The methodology of RPE shall also be introduced.

In Section II of Part A, the focus is on philosophy and imaginative literature. It makes sense to say that there is no gap between the two.

In Section III of Part A, some tools of the RPE experiments are introduced or, more precisely, the *Literary factors*—that is, factors that we find in literary works that might also play a role in non-literary objects, including philosophical theories. These factors are metaphors, narratives/stories, fictions, and literary genres. The concepts of *metaphorism*, *narrativism*, and *fictionalism* shall be introduced; the first two are my creations, the last one is the name of a well-known philosophical movement.

Part B is dedicated to the *poetic of reason*, one of the main aims of the RPE is to argue in favor of this poetic. In Section I of Part B, the concept of rationality is discussed, and the concept of the *poetic moderate rationalism* is introduced.

According to this kind of rationalism, metaphors, narratives, emotions, evaluation, imagination, and rhetoric play a pivotal role in rationality, just like in imaginative literature. Furthermore, it makes sense to look for Literary factors in scientific models, everyday reasoning, and language. If language is the foundation of reason, then reason has by implication some Literary traits.

In Section II of Part B, it shall be shown that emotions have cognitive moments and can even play a role in scientific inquires. It will furthermore be illustrated that emotions have Literary traits and that artworks can play cognitive roles by being disclosive. It makes sense to talk about *deflated disclosure*. It shall be shown that the Literary traits plus works of imaginative literature can help us come to grips with the myriad background assumptions on which our beliefs, theories, emotions, models, and utterances rely.

Neologisms are introduced by being written in the bold mode: *Rational Poetic Experimentalism*, for short *RPE*. Metaphors are in small capitals and have their first letter in the upper case: **MAN IS A WOLF**.

In this book, I use the expressions “the proponent of the RPE,” “the present writer,” “the instigator of the RPE,” “this proponent,” “the RPE,” and “I” and its cognates to denote the same person, i.e., the author of this book (me). By this I wish to show myself as someone who may not have one given self, but rather a plurality of selves.

Chapter 1 in Part A, Section I, Chapter 1 in Part A Section II, Chapters 1 and 2 in Part A Section III, and Chapters 1 and 2 in Part B Section II have roots in my book *Metaphors, Narratives, Emotions. Their Interplay and Impact*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010.

I thank the current holder of the publishing rights for allowing me to publish elements from this book.

Chapter 1 and 2 in Part A, Section II, have roots in my article “Philosophy and Literature: The No Gap Theory,” published in *Metaphilosophy*, Volume 53, no 4, 2022.

I thank the editor for allowing me to publish elements from this article.

Chapters 1 and 4 in Part B, Section I, have roots in my book *Minerva and the Muses. The Place of Reason in Aesthetic Judgements*. Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget, 1999.

I thank the current holder of the publishing rights for allowing me to publish elements from this book.

Chapter 3 in Part B Section I, has roots in my article “A Poetic Pilgrimage”, Valery Vinogradovs (ed.): *Aesthetic Literacy. A Book for Everyone*. Melbourne: Mont Publishing, 2022.

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