

Summary Abstract of “What Is It to Be Post-Critical?” by Dale Cannon, p. 1

Basic aspects or elements of “Being Post-Critical”

1. “Post-critical” is an identifying characteristic of a specific comprehensive orientation of thought, a framework of thinking, an intellectual sensibility, or a philosophy
2. “Post-critical” in some respects is a symbol or is symbolic.
3. “Post-critical” specifies and assumes a historical transition—specifically from “critical” (characteristic of modern, Enlightenment thought and sensibility) to “*post-critical*” (characteristic of a specific kind of post-modern thought and sensibility, but distinct from what has become fashionably known as post-modernism).
 - (a) *Post-critical* is neither to be confused with what is *pre-critical* nor with what is *un-critical*.
 - (b) Although *post-critical* might be said to be *post-modern*, it is not to be confused with much that has been identified as post-modern, especially of a “deconstructive” sort.
4. To move or change from being critical to being post-critical is *to undergo a paradigm shift*, a comprehensive paradigm shift.
5. For a person to undergo the shift from critical to post-critical entails that she or he undergo something of *an existential transformation*.
6. Nevertheless, the transition from critical to post-critical is more than a personal shift and transformation; it is *a cultural happening* that actually exists, that is actually happening in the culture we live in, to which Polanyi and Poteat sought to call our attention and come to recognize. It is *not just their idea*, or some new frame of reference that they were proposing. It is not just an individual happening.

Review “Beyond Post-Modernism” Chart

Polanyi’s contributions: To think post-critically is . . .

7. To recognize and acknowledge that we know more than we can say.
8. To acknowledge and accredit the fiduciary foundations of our knowledge (actually, of all knowledge). Absolute certainty apart from faith is an illusion.
9. To recognize the priority of methodological faith and trust in all reasoned inquiry.
10. To have renewed an *acritical*, impassioned, yet fallible, commitment to the firmament of our deepest motivational ideals—i.e., truth, beauty, good, justice, . . . (insofar as this commitment has been lost, repressed, compromised, or attenuated as a result of our having bought into the paradigm of modern critical thought).
11. To repudiate scientism and the widespread adulation of natural science as construed by scientism as a false and distorted image of natural science, and to recognize instead that the natural sciences *in practice* are something very different that stands in complementary relationship with the different kinds of inquiries pursued among the arts and the humanities, as well as in manual labor and commonsense experience.

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12. To recognize and accredit our pervasive personal participation in the constitution, shaping, and appreciation of whatever we understand, value, and know about things, not as a fault but as an essential and central condition of our knowing.
13. To recognize that *all* knowing involves a *from-to, tacitly lived stretch of situated, relational knowing, in community with others*, reaching out fallibly from the largely unspecifiable particularity of our incarnate, bodily being toward a horizon of universal truth-in-common.
14. To recognize and pursue a different, truer understanding of *objectivity* than what has been promulgated by scientism, one that seeks *recognition in common* among competent and independent inquirers into whatever matters are in question, not despite, but in virtue of, the multiplicity of perspectives brought to bear upon them.
15. To acknowledge and appreciate the rich array of multiple forms and levels of emergent order and achievement in nature, in biological evolution, and in human life and activity (contra reductionist ideologies of whatever stripe), and to recognize human life and the human quest to know and understand as a meaningful destiny within this cosmic panorama.
16. To recognize that our quest to know, in the final analysis, relies upon grace-filled intimations of a reality we are progressively coming to know that continues to manifest itself inexhaustibly to those who prepare for it and who pursue it diligently, humbly, and selflessly.
17. To believe and trust that people within their particular local environments of activity, awareness, and conversation are often in a better position to understand, and exercise wiser discretionary judgment concerning, governance of matters that concern them, than are persons at a distance (both literally and figuratively).

Potat’s contributions: Building on Polanyi’s contributions, to think post-critically is . . .

18. To become progressively aware of the tacit, *pre-reflective* (or *unreflected*) dimension to any reflective frame of reference—specifically, its *existential* dimension—of which we may be quite unconscious. [Note: this is a matter of becoming cognizant of what Polanyi would call the *from, or subsidiary, dimension* of our reflections—something not easily done.] More specifically, to be post-critical is to become sensitive to and aware of *ironic, existential contradictions* (at the level of fundamental assumptions that are difficult but not impossible to track and identify) that pervade the modern critical perspective as lived.
19. To become alert to, aware of, and engaged in counteracting, (in this pre-reflective dimension) certain abstract “pictures that we both have and imagine ourselves in the midst of,” “pictures that hold us captive,” and “metaphorical intentionalities” prevalent in the language of our culture, which in modern Western culture can captivate our imagination and implicate us in abetting skeptical, relativist, reductionist, and even nihilist views without our realizing it. It is here that the problematic aspects of the modern critical paradigm are most in evidence.
20. To realize that what in the present makes these “pictures” and “intentionalities” so powerfully deceptive is the intellectual posture of non-committal or detached, impersonal

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reflection on explicit, abstract representations of the things to which we reflectively attend (what Poterat dubs the “theater of solitude” [sometimes he calls it the “theater of reflection”] as an imagined, private inner stage for reflection)—itself generated from the attitude of doubt and suspicion directed toward any candidate for belief, insisting that it must first prove itself worthy of belief. Though alleged to be a means for transcending or avoiding the biases and gullibility of human subjectivity, this mental posture conceals within itself (and gives license to) the distorted and highly problematic expression of egoistic bias (at times an ideological bias) that is “objectivism.”

21. To recover an alternative, more fundamental ground (and posture) for reflection: namely, our pre-reflective, tensive mindbodies in the commonsense world, convivially alongside one another. This is where we are ourselves the actual persons that we are. Nothing makes any sense at all apart from its rootedness within this concrete context, this “most concrete of all realities,” this foundation of commonsense. (Thinking thus is what Poterat calls “post-critical logic,” “post-critical reason,” and “post-critical inquiry.”)
22. To be suspicious and uneasy with—and therefore to be critical and suspicious in *the post-critical sense of being critical* toward—*anything* that is a product of the modern critical intellectual posture sketched above. When considering such abstractions, to be post-critical is always
 - (a) First, to exit the theater of solitude, to step outside of this uprooted and detached posture of reflection, and
 - (b) Second, to recover one’s convivial (commonsense) mindbody ground (to re-establish oneself within it) vis-à-vis that to which one is reflectively attending in order to be in a position to regard, understand, assess, and counteract these abstract products of critical reflection for what they are in their true light.
23. This return from abstraction to our concrete mindbodily being in the world opens up an access to the following cultural resources:
 - (a) Recovery of the richness of our aural/oral experience from captivity to timeless abstractions drawn from visual perception and literacy.
 - (b) Recovery of our sense of place, locality, and somatic orientation and familiarity from captivity to the abstractions of infinite homogenous space.
 - (c) Recovery of the richness of embodied, heterogeneous temporality from captivity to the abstractions of homogenous spatially imagined clock time.
 - (d) Recovery of the Hebraic metaphors of being, presence, particularity, historicity, limitless possibility, revelation, and encounter from a history of prejudicial occlusion as a result of an overreliance upon Hellenic metaphors of timelessness, symmetry, universal form, necessity, etc.
 - (e) Recovery of patterns of irreversible, non-formalizable logical inference from captivity to the idea of a complete and closed, formal system of logic.
 - (f) Recovery of the rich multiplicity of forms and uses of language and gesture, especially at the boundaries of creative articulation, pregnant silence, and what we feel but are not yet able to articulate, from captivity to univocal, wholly explicit, exact articulation.
 - (g) Recovery of the wellsprings of our passion, the reasons of our heart, and the sense of personal calling that are to be found within the apparent limitations and humbleness of our own parochial background and personal experiences, from the

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idea that it is only by divorcing ourselves from these limited and humble roots that we can participate in truly rational modern intellectual life.

- (h) Recovery of our own unique access to being, the access we have in our own unique embodied person (as a person among persons) and through our own personal presence, relationship, and indwelling participation, as a point of access to the discovery of truth in common with other persons, including persons very unlike ourselves, from the idea that there is no access to objective truth except by leaving behind one’s own unique personal perspective and adopting an impersonal, universal (“Modern Western”) pattern of thinking.
 - (i) Recovery of the possibility of participation in transcendence (and even eternity) in some fundamental sense, yet retaining full recognition and appreciation of the mindbodily roots of all meaning making and meaning discernment, including of these possibilities in particular.
24. To recognize for what it is, and to counteract, the modern critical impulse *to know and understand a thing so as to be its manipulator, its master and possessor, with impunity*. Inversely, we need rather to recover, cultivate, and refine our intellectual passions, our love for truth and good and beauty and justice, in order post-critically to know and understand a thing fully for what it is and for its own sake, which is a ultimately a contemplative kind of knowing and appreciation, not knowledge for the sake of power.
25. To seek out and identify other thinkers having affinities with these ideas, and others yet unknown, among *the convivial order of post-critical thinkers* (indeed, to help build up this convivial order): to look and listen for how and in what respects they too facilitate the paradigm shift to a post-critical intellectual ethos. (Consider the following thinkers [in addition to Polanyi and Poteat]: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ludwig Wittgenstein (in his later work), Gabriel Marcel, John Macmurray, Eugene T. Gendlin, Parker Palmer, Stephen Toulmin, Alasdair MacIntyre, Hans Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Richard Bernstein, Charles Taylor, Wayne C. Booth, Peter Elbow, Robert Bellah, . . .)
26. In short: the central or core idea of the shift from the critical to the post-critical to which Polanyi and Poteat have introduced us involves a profound existential shift:
- (a) *away from* being withdrawn into an attitude of detached indifference, taking critical suspicion to be the prime mover of reflective inquiry and resorting to the strategies of reductive abstraction that go with it,
 - (b) *to* a participative methodological faith seeking to search out what is hidden from being rooted within one’s mindbody, mindbodily reaching out to explore and indwell the world, taking faith in this sense to be the prime mover of authentic reflective inquiry and making use of the strategies of empathetic indwelling and taking note of how things are concretely manifest, without losing track of the context within which they are given.