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Editorial

Philosophy as Minority Literature

There have been increasing voices in philosophy calling for a change in the established philosophical canon. These voices are coming from minority groups that are concerned with establishing justice. They may be working at the margin of philosophy, but they are getting more powerful. They come from feminists, non-Western cultures, decolonised societies, excluded groups such as the disabled, and non-whites. It is not a new phenomenon, but it has its roots in past struggles, cultural critique and social and political theory.

Marx once said, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it'. So although perhaps this comes under the wider concept of critique, it is not a critique in the universal sense as envisaged by the Kantian project. It is a critique on a smaller scale but very effective politically and socially.

These voices are producing what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in a different context, call 'minoritarian literature'. It is this term that I wish to use and to look at philosophy not in isolation but as part of a wider discourse that aims at expressing the desire of a minority to re-address the imbalance and injustices that it feels. This is partially political, but it could also be useful for generating more creative forces in philosophical discourse. It could also show how philosophical texts written differently, such as Nietzsche's works, could revolutionise philosophical discourse. It is not only a matter of style but also a change of perspective.

Rorty, in his major work *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, talks about two types of philosophical perspectives. He calls the first 'normal' philosophy and the second 'abnormal' philosophy What distinguishes the two is the kind of assumption made, particularly in Rorty's case. That is: the priority of epistemology in normal philosophy and the phenomenological approach in abnormal philosophy. So, it is a matter of changing perspectives or revising old assumptions. But these assumptions and perspectives are still within the general traditions of philosophy; they do not touch the question of any minority or the politicisation of it. To address this problem, we may need to look elsewhere, somewhere outside the philosophical tradition as we have known it up to now. It maybe something to do with the use of language.

Deleuze and Guattari suggested that there are two ways of using language: minoritarian and majoritarian. Their argument is that language is for the most part majoritarian, with the aim of maintaining power and domination. The function of a majoritarian literature is to use language without upsetting the dominant power. It is interesting to see that Marcuse, in his major work *The One Dimensional Man*, criticised Wittgenstein because of his emphasis on ordinary language which can be described as majoritarian. Minoritarian literature tries to disturb the dominant power and its assumptions. This comes out in presenting a critique, a hermeneutics of suspicion as Paul Ricoeur called it, or specific discourses, such as writings on gender and minority interests. But, as Deleuze and Guattari pointed out, 'minor literature is not something one can opt to do but it requires the position of minority from which to speak.' In this sense, it is political. It puts the thinker into a political immediacy. Minor literature expresses a collective point of view, a collective view of marginalised groups and societies.

Claire Colebrook in her book *Gilles Deleuze* says that minority literature 'produces what is not already recognisable. It does not just add one more work to the great tradition; it disrupts and dislocates the tradition'. For example, in this literature, the terms 'man' and 'woman' are not given or privileged one over the other but in a process of creation, creating a new sense of identity, an identity that is open and evolving. But 'once a term becomes expressive, rather than creative, of identity it becomes majoritarian.' The function of a minoritarian philosophy and literature is to force a re-thinking of words and concepts to see how they have been used and why, and to suggest how they should be used and why. It suggests a new language for philosophy.

The Editor

Homer and Greek Society

Why should we pay a greater attention to the Homeric poems?

The Homeric poems (the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) had a powerful influence on ancient Greek civilization, if not the whole of humankind. Many find this statement to be true but do little to examine it. I propose to reopen Homer's case to show how the poems established themselves within their culture and gained a widespread circulation in ancient Greek society. Their appearance and diffusion are much more significant than commonly believed.

LIVIO ROSSETTI

To account for the importance and significance of the Homeric poems is probably more rewarding than might be imagined. I will begin by stating a handful of facts and conjectures.

First, the Homeric poems are supposed to have met with impressive success since the 8th century BC, just when the Greeks begun to plant more than one hundred new settlements all over the known world, which quickly became poleis. This diaspora occurred in three directions: (a) towards the west, notably here and there in Sicily, southern Italy and southern France up to an area situated beyond the Columns of Heracles; (b) along African coasts, notably in Naukratis (mouths of the Nile) plus many settlements in the Cyrenaica (nowadays Lybia); and (c) almost everywhere in the Propontis (now the sea of Marmara) as well as almost everywhere along the coasts of the Black sea.

Second, it is not unreasonable to presume that in all these Greek settlements people continued to speak Greek and to feel themselves part of the same world. This was due to a considerable extent to the success and the quick circulation of the rhapsodes who sang Homeric songs – that is, Homeric tales – and to a widespread pleasure in attending these entertainments.

Livio Rossetti

Thanks to the Homeric songs, the Greek of the rhapsodes – a very characteristic language – established itself as a language that was basically understandable everywhere in the diaspora; so much so that it became an element of identity and therefore a resource for people to share, not just a language, but a much more comprehensive culture.

At the same time, Greek religion developed its basic features according to the Homeric poems, with their portrayal of the Olympian gods. This was not just a matter of statues and temples. These poems ended up showing the whole Greek community who their gods were, and what sort of relations with them were appropriate.

Their gods were satisfied with modest ritual, with less emphasis on animal sacrifices. The gods were seldom perceived as threatening, despite their superior powers – quite the contrary, they were portrayed as basically benevolent and often helpful and remarkably human in their behaviour. As a consequence, humans had little to fear from them. Moreover, Zeus was at the top, but tolerated various forms of insubordination. This idea of the Olympian gods, in turn, largely replaced a previous tradition of violent narratives. These narratives were situated before Zeus' rise to power.

The Homeric poems, while shaping a particular mentality, could only be the expression of a tolerant society where people felt in basic harmony with the Homeric idea of gods and humans. This rather gentle and not so authoritarian system of relations made it

conceivable for 'Homer' to give greater prominence to Achilles, the prototype of a young protester against the established authority of Agamemnon, at the expense of the latter. It is not by chance that, in order to enact a partial reconciliation with Achilles, Agamemnon needed the involvement of experienced leaders such as Nestor and Odysseus, and their wise speeches.

Intelligible Poems

In turn, the prominence the *Iliad* grants to these protesters says something about the Hellenic poleis where, we must presume, kings and other authorities tolerated some forms of disagreement, if not of insubordination. If so, a system of non-authoritarian (or at least not very authoritarian) relations is likely to have marked both the world portrayed by the Homeric poems and real life within the Hellenic poleis.

Another notable feature is that these stories were anything but incomprehensible. Many of the situations could easily be understood by anybody, speeches abounded, and were understandable in anyone's eyes, like the emotions that they evoked. As a consequence, there was no risk of losing the audience by obscure allusions. A measure of familiarity with these stories, plus the recurrent association of each hero with an ad hoc epithet such as 'lord or shepherd of peoples' for Agamemnon, the 'swift footer' for Achilles, and the 'waving helmet' for Hector, and the relative abundance of formulaic hexameters, were enough to ensure the basic understanding of the tales of the rhapsodes, and toleration of the occasional variations each rhapsode may have introduced into his song. Therefore, intelligibility extended from the flow of discourses-in-situation, reflections, fears, hopes, decisions and encounters. All this indicates what prompted 'heroes' to say what they said. In this way, almost every listener was able to put himself in the shoes of most, if not all, the protagonists.

Since we are talking about an era in which even Greek alphabetic writing was in its infancy, we may be sure that the songs were listened to with the firm desire to learn much more than a few songs. Besides, people surely tried to hum and sing them by themselves, because it was still normal not to rely on writing. Indeed, the commitment to memorize, if not for everyone, must surely have been felt by many. So it is conceivable that in the breaks from daily work in most Hellenized countries, someone often sang one of these songs and bystanders joined in as best as they could. These songs had the power to strike and feed the imagination of many people everywhere and approximately in the same manner.

Homer

Beautiful Society

Also noteworthy is the quality of the speeches as portrayed. They exhibit good taste, tact, discretion, and a sense of proportion even in moments of tension. Abandoning oneself to unbridled or abject conduct is never represented. If I remember correctly, self-control never fails. This is not a secondary detail, since the Homeric poems told 'beautiful' stories. The Greeks of Homer were the strongest and won their 'great war'. Moreover, the unsurpassable Achilles was Greek; the most astute man in the world, Odysseus, was Greek; the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, was Greek. Greeks, in their own way, were also gods and goddesses. They were also Greeks in their customs – for example they used to have common meals enlivened by a singer; something that significantly could occur among men as well as among gods.

Since everything was beautiful – from the Achaeans

Zeus

with flowing hair and Ilium with many foals, to Zeus the gatherer of clouds, Aphrodite with a beautiful crown, Hera with white arms, Athena with blue eyes, and even the Dawn with rosy fingers – it does not take much imagination to understand that this recurring evocation of the fascination associated with that imaginary world conveyed a certain satisfaction for the audience to whom these stories were sung. Therefore, people probably found it natural to boast of belonging to the Hellenic ethnic group and not to any other!

Remarkable Greek Ladies

Such a whole, it should be noted, probably helped – unlike other epic poems such as the *Nibelungs* – to thrill the female population as well, and perhaps particularly the female population. We have a more than convincing clue of this in the very first book of the *Odyssey*, when we learn what Penelope said when addressing the one she had heard singing while she was still in her rooms:

'Phemios, since you know many other actions of mortals / and gods, which can charm men's heart and which the singers celebrate, / sit beside them and sing one of these, and let them in silence / go on drinking their wine, but leave off singing this sad / song, which always afflicts the dear heart deep inside me, / since the unforgettable sorrow comes to me, beyond others, / so dear a head do I long for whenever I am reminded / of my husband, whose fame goes wide through Hellas and midmost Argos.' (*Od*. I 337-344, transl. R. Lattimore)

These verses document in the best possible way the existence, in 'Homer', of a conscious attention to female sensitivity. The story of Nausicaa, in turn, is marked not only by the unexpected focus on a female figure and her mental and emotional world, but, possibly to a greater degree, by the delicacy that permeates it. In the *Odyssey*, book VI, the poet helps us to see reality with the eyes of a girl, and this is already a very special feature. Notice the gentle reticence with which the girl, Nausicaa, avoids mentioning her wedding expectations to her father Alcinous, and does not tell Odysseus that her father is the ruler of the island. Only with the maids Nausicaa dares to express the idea more directly: 'Oh, if such a man could be my husband!'. To Odysseus, on the other hand, she is careful to say: 'Now please get off the chariot, I would not want people to rush to recognize my future husband in a handsome and big man like you'. As you see, these are mere outward manifestations of how in the meanwhile the girl is interpreting a changing situation, but we are not told what she was thinking. The task – and the pleasure – of going back from these allusions to Nausicaa's mind, and imagining the situation in every detail, is evidently left to the audience, with the clear intention of rewarding the more attentive and less superficial listener. It can be deduced

that these songs probably had some following also in the gynaeceum, among women as well as couples.

These are only some of the features that combine to give an admirable empathic quality to the Homeric poems. What is more, empathy was not attained thanks to trivial combinations of, say, beauty and tears. The combination is rather a matter of beauty, success and levity. Beauty was an absolutely qualifying feature of this fantastic world, and it was met everywhere in the stories told. Success is related to the Greek heroes that defeated Troy and for the most part were able to return each to his country. By levity I mean the quality of life, with nightmares replaced by basically innocent stories such as the judgement of Paris, or a very precocious simulation of the Olympic games which was meant to honour the dead Patroclus, or with tales such as those of the Syrenes, Calypso, Polyphemus, and Nausicaa.

All in all, a fascinating world takes shape: a world not affected by serious nightmares, nor obsessions; a world where many die but hardly anybody, even if not a hero, has to face undeserved contempt, and at least some subordinates such as Eurycleia and Eumaeus are treated with great respect; a world where hunger, illness, madness, severe physical infirmities, abuse and other forms of oppression were non-existent or almost non-existent - and there was no need for a paradise or other serious escapes from reality; and one which is invariably marked by good taste, beauty and reasonably happy endings.

Concluding Remarks

If there is a grain of truth in the above portrayal, these poems are much more universal than usually deemed. They spread optimism, they deny room to oppression, they outline a high quality of life where considerable levels of freedom, even in face of the gods, mark every kind of relation since that so remote time. And, so far as I know, only the Homeric poems do so. Therefore, European civilization owes a lot to so archaic a model. And it is not irrelevant that philosophy flourished for the very first time among the Greeks, while the weakening of the Homeric model in different epochs often led to an impoverished climate of thought and a decline of civilization. The connection between Homer and civilization – or if you prefer, between Homer and western civilization – as well as between Homer and philosophy, probably deserves to be considered much more in depth than I dared to do here and now.

In my opinion, the Homeric poems deserve and need to be rediscovered, since so long ago they succeeded in outlining a kind of society that, despite the millennia,

Penelope

is remarkably similar not to our present society but, at least, to the kind of society we would like to live in. If I am right, this gives ample opportunity for reflection. For example: if philosophy is part of our reality, is it by chance that philosophy flourished in Greece, and then in countries where a type of society near to that of the ancient Greeks, as well as that of the Homeric poems, affirmed itself?*

(*This paper was presented to The Wednesday Meeting held on 26th October.)

Song of The Words

When you write with your pen,

lines move to shimmer in dance.

When you play the flute,

colours advance,

helping the words

to sing -

The beauty they bring

runs acutely

into the moment of things –

Poem and Artwork by
Scharlie Meeuws

Reports of The Wednesday Meetings Held During October 2022

Written by RAHIM HASSAN

Philosophical Reflections on Poetry and Poetics

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 12th October.

We were pleased to have invited Chris Norris, a philosopher and poet, to discuss some philosophical questions bearing on poetry and some philosophical aspects of thinking about poetry. He gave *The Wednesday* meeting a wide-ranging talk on 'Poetry and Poetics'.

One question Chris raised was intention in poetry. Plato maintained that poetry is nothing to do with intention. The poet was swept away by inspiration and thus became irresponsible. But, ironically, Plato himself was a highly poetic writer and used metaphor and imagery in his arguments, such as the two horses of reason and passion, as well as the elaborate imagery of the cave. Aristotle had a lot more time for poetry and came out strongly in its defence against Plato's strictures. He was a very prosaic, even pedestrian writer.

Renaissance and After

In the Renaissance poetry was on the whole held in high esteem except among some scholastic philosophers or theologians who regarded it as a sinful distraction from higher concerns. Tolerance reached its religiously motivated low point with the advent of Puritanism in the early-to-mid seventeenth century. This was very much in line with Plato's strictures though without his saving graces of metaphor and imaginatively load-bearing imagery. Before this, poet-critics like Sidney had thought that Poetry was not in the business of making assertions or making statements that claimed to be true. For Sidney, poetry only pretends, feigns, imagines, or creates alternative possible worlds. Therefore, it is wrongheaded and pointless to accuse poets of lying.

By the 18th century, the general belief was that poetry is continuous with other kinds of discourse. Pope and Dryden made statements, statements of fact, moral truth, or political allegiance. Then another shift came with the Romantics who were metaphysically ambitious. They thought that poets do indeed create alternative worlds through the imagination, with Coleridge as the thinker who goes furthest towards articulating these ideas by acknowledging Kant's influence, along with that of Fichte and other German idealists including the Jena School.

After the romantic period in English literature came Matthew Arnold who is less interesting philosophically than Coleridge. For Arnold, poetry saved us from disenchantment with religion. Arnold believed that science had stripped away a lot of the consoling and uplifting beliefs that religion once supplied. So poetry helps to re-enchant the world. However, Arnold's view is that poetry does not need to be true or factually, historically, or scientifically truthful. In this respect Arnold is a version of Sidney, but two centuries later.

When we get to the early 20th century, we find I.A. Richards saying we welcome the severance between poetry and belief, which is something he derives partly from Arnold and partly from TS Eliot. Eliot's reason for separating the two is that he wants poetry to have nothing to do with history or science. He wants it to be something autonomous, separate, and self-sufficient.

Chris moved on to discuss the question of intention in poetry. He mentioned the essay by Wimsatt and Beardsley on the Intentional Fallacy. Their argument is that we can't tell what the poet's intentions are, that they are private until they are formulated in language - much like Wittgenstein's private-language argument. Their essay had great influence in late 1940s and early 1950s among the New Critics and it seemed convincing. But Chris challenged this view. He suggested that it is still possible to take a different view and to say that poetry is formed in language and language is expressive. But what language expresses is

Chris Norris

intention. Chris said we wouldn't be language-using creatures unless language could express intentions. From early babyhood we respond to words even before we understand what the words mean. We respond to tone and then gradually fill out our semantic and syntactic resources, so why would we want to cut poetry off from this basic communicative function? Poetry after all is the most expressive and the most finely nuanced kind of language we have. However, the intention in poetry is not a preconceived intention that has gone ahead of the poem and that dictates as far as possible which way the poem goes.

Imagistic Poetry

So, intention is another big philosophical issue, and this leads to the question of propositional content. Ezra Pound and TS Eliot were writing, at least at one stage of their careers, imagistic poetry. This comes in the form of very short poems full of juxtaposed images and relies on the reader's imagination to make sense of them. They tried to cut out discursive connexions, syntax and anything in the poem that might unduly complicate or obscure the image. Chris rejected the views of Pound and Eliot.

Chris then pointed out that there is another tradition of English poetry that runs from Hardy to Auden and Philip Larkin. They are poets of syntax, and syntax is important in their poetry. It is important in the sense that syntax articulates thought - though they are arguing not in a logical, propositionally consequential way, but in the more informal, down-to-earth style that Empson calls 'argufying'. So there are these two main lines of descent in modern English poetry, one of which tends toward images and the primacy of the image, while the other runs crucially through Hardy.

The other question Chris discussed in his illuminating talk was that of emotional versus cognitive content. He was very much in agreement with Empson here. Empson wrote *The Structure of Complex Words* to push the cognitive line and came out strongly against Richards who was his tutor at Cambridge. Richards said that poetry was not in the language game of making statements or presenting propositions. It has to do with feelings. Poetry allows us to experience complex emotions in a more orderly way. Empson comes back against that and says, on the contrary, that if you analyse the language of poetry properly you will see that it is susceptible of analysis in terms of truth and falsity.

Finally, Chris talked about rhyme and the question of whether it helps or hinders the poet in his or her work. He thought positively of rhyming and relied on his experience of writing poetry that when you are 'casting around for rhymes then suddenly you hit on something that takes you in a new direction, something that opens up new creative possibilities which you wouldn't have found if you were writing straight prose'. Chris also read some of his poems to illustrate this point and the ideas put forward in the talk. It was one of The Wednesday's most enjoyable sessions.

What Is It To Be Rational?

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 5th October.

Ruud concerns himself with philosophy: the love of wisdom. He also calls it first philosophy to distinguish it from a broader understanding of what philosophy is. The purpose of (first) philosophy is to attain wisdom. According to Ruud, it is important to attain wisdom because it is totally satisfying; not just rationally, but also emotionally, and even spiritually. Ruud does not see wisdom as a worthy but unattainable goal; he says it is attainable, by reason alone. But what is reason? What is it to be rational? What is rational discourse? Those are the questions he set out the address and discuss in this talk.

Ruud started from the etymology of the term. It comes from the Greek term 'logos', which was first translated into Latin as 'ratio', then into French as 'raison', and finally into English as 'reason'. So, to be rational is to reason. But what is it to reason? To reason is to base your beliefs on reasons. More formally: to base your conclusions (beliefs) on premises (reasons). More simply: to believe what you know.

Nowadays, most philosophers seem to believe that knowledge does not require certainty, and that a relatively high degree of justification (e.g., failing to falsify a hypothesis) is sufficient for knowledge - perhaps because there is so little of which we can be certain.

According to Ruud, however, knowledge does require certainty. After all, it makes no sense to say things like 'I know it, but I am not certain of it.' Either way, wisdom - the state of knowing- requires absolute knowledge, certainty (of course, we can never be certain of statements, but only of our interpretations thereof, that is, of the ideas that statements point at or that we read into them. Confusingly, the term 'propositions' is used for statements as well as for the ideas they necessarily inadequately try to express).

Ruud Schuurman

Since wisdom requires certainty, and only deductive arguments are conclusive (i.e., truth/certainty preserving), Ruud uses almost exclusively deductive arguments. He tries not to be swayed by non-epistemic (e.g., rhetorical) motives, like pathos (emotions) and ethos (the credibility of the speaker).

Due to the lively participation of the members, Ruud never got to the second question: what is rational discourse? But the handout explains what he means by it: A rational discourse is an exchange of reasons for and against a thesis; an exchange of arguments. Logic, the study of logos/reason, provides the ground rules for reason and rational discourse: arguments consist of premises and conclusions; premises and conclusions must be propositions; premises must be true or, at least, mutually acceptable to all participants in the discourse; inferences must be valid (i.e., follow from the premises).

What Ruud wished to stress is that all elements of an argument (i.e., premises, conclusion, form) should be as clear and concise as possible. He criticised philosophers who use a lot of words but fail to make their argument explicit. For Ruud, such philosophy seems rhetorical (i.e., about persuasion) rather than rational (i.e., about knowledge).

One member suggested that the word 'belief' should be replaced by another word, like 'trust'. We cannot prove that the sun will rise tomorrow but we trust past experience to conclude that it will. The social implication is that when someone breaks a promise, we feel disappointed, because trust is a source of truth. But I think the question here is an epistemological one and high epistemic standards should be applied.

Nietzsche's Overman and Eternal Return

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 19th October.

Edward Greenwood has a great admiration for Nietzsche. He gave *The Wednesday* meeting a very interesting talk on Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It is Nietzsche's most poetic work. It is the book that heralds the idea of the Overman, and, as a correlative, the Last Man. Nietzsche already talked about the death of God and the idea of the eternal return in his previous book *The Gay Science*. All these and other themes have been elaborated. Edward selected some sections from the Prologue and Part Three and commented on them. Edward also made the suggestion that the book may be a parody of Luther's Bible and that Zarathustra may stand for Jesus.

Part Three of the book is full of the idea of eternal return. For example, in the section 'Of the vision and the riddle', Zarathustra says: 'Must not all things that can run have already run along this lane? Must not all things that can happen have already happened, been done, run past?' Nietzsche contemplates in other texts the idea that all actions and moments in one's life could return eternally. The aim is to show that only the strong could stand the weight of this thought experiment and whence comes the idea of the Overman. Nietzsche disdains the decadent members of a consumer society. He calls such a person the Last Man. He is in every respect the opposite of the Overman. Such a man is 'a rope over an abyss. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end'. The last man must go under, must be overcome to allow a new type of man, which he calls the Overman. A human beyond the man of consumer entertainment.

Edward suggested that Nietzsche rejects linear time in favour of circular time. In such time things come round an infinite number of times. There were objections to this idea on the ground that it does not leave room for contingency and freedom. There was also the objection that the eternal return is a thought experiment and not an ontological thesis. Edward agreed with the thought experiment interpretation. In his view Nietzsche makes it into a sort of a test: would you want the action you take to return infinitely? Can you be a yea-sayer or are you a nay-sayer? It is a test that only the Overman can pass. Furthermore, Nietzsche conceived the idea of eternal return poetically and then looked for a scientific confirmation of it.

Edward interpreted Nietzsche's Zarathustra as a sceptic, he reflects on his thought and does not recommend

Edward Greenwood

that his disciples follow his way. He wants them to be critical. This contradicts all other religious teachers. Nietzsche takes this line because he does not think there are universal truths. Nietzsche also think there is no general morality. Nietzsche also sees that good and bad are on a scale and not antithetical, unlike the more religious idea of good and evil. Edward mentioned that the historical Zarathustra was a dualist and believed in good and evil.

Edward finished his talk by reading the 'Midnight Song', Nietzsche's best poem, which was set to music by Mahler and comes in section 15 of the book. He used Graham Parkes' interlinear translation of the tolling of the bell at midnight:

Eins! Oh Mensch! Gib Acht!
One! Oh Man! Take Care!
Zwei! Was spricht die tiefe Mitternacht?
Two! What does Deep Midnight now declare?
Drei! Ich schlief, ich schlief -,
Three! I sleep, I sleep -
Vier! Aus tiefem Traum bin ich erwacht:-
Four! From deepest dream I rise for air:
Fuenf! Die Welt ist tief,
Five The world is deep,
Sechs! Und tiefer als der Tag gedacht.
Six! Deeper than day had been aware.
Sieben! Tief ist ihr Weh -
Seven! Deep is its woe -
Acht! Lust - tiefer noch als Herzeleid:
Eight! Joy - deeper still than misery:
Neun! Weh spricht: Vergeh!
Nine! Woe says: Now go!
Zehn! Doch alle Lust will Ewigkeit! -,
Ten! Yet all joy wants Eternity -
Elf! -will tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit!
Eleven! wants deepest, deep Eternity!
Zwölf!
Twelve!

Femur

CHRIS **NORRIS**

I have tried to answer the question which sent me to Samoa: are the disturbances which vex our adolescents due to the nature of adolescence itself or to the civilization? Under different conditions does adolescence present a different picture?

Margaret Mead,
Coming of Age in Samoa

A broken femur that has healed is evidence that another person has taken time to stay with the fallen, has bound up the wound, has carried the person to safety and has tended them through recovery.

(Attributed to Margaret Mead)

That part-healed femur gave the world a clue:
Behold, our ancestors, a caring breed.
That part-healed femur gave the world a clue.

Cynics and misanthropes said 'pay more heed
To those smashed skulls, piled bones: rough way to care!
Behold, our ancestors: a caring breed?'

Two views of them and us in conflict there:
We nurse and tend, we crush and kill our kind.
See those smashed skulls, piled bones: rough way to care!,

Or else 'the femur, just keep that in mind
And always say they gave it time to heal;
We nurse and tend, not crush and kill our kind'.

'It's your, not their, fine feelings you reveal.
"Let history and science make the case",
You always say: "they gave it time to heal"'.

Why grant those disciplines no human face?
One turned up how the other got her through.
Let history and science make the case;
That part-healed femur gave the world a clue.

Let sanguine types then pay the tribute due:
The femur point we owe to Margaret Mead.
Let hopeful types then pay the tribute due.

Margaret Mead

It's her Samoan vantage point we need,
Her calm *vue éloignée* that we should share.
The femur point we owe to Margaret Mead.

The insights fugitive, life-changes rare:
Home cultures rule, and so its natives find
Her calm *vue éloignée* so hard to share.

We're all bound up in it, that double-bind.
It tells us: go Samoan, the whole deal!
Home cultures rule, or so its natives find.

But no: she keeps the space-time distance real,
The femur and the shifts from place to place:
No saying 'go Samoan, the whole deal!'.

It's our real-world alternate we embrace,
The culture-differences, the me and you,
The femur and the shifts from place to place,
Us sanguine types who pay the tribute due.

The Philosophy of Black Holes

Dr. ALAN XUEREB

The title echoes the title of an article turned book chapter by Gustavo E. Romero's *Philosophical Issues of Black Holes*. Firstly, a black hole is a region of space-time. He says that it is not unexpected that the analysis of black holes has philosophical impact in areas as diverse as ontology and epistemology. In black holes, in a very certain sense, Romero says, 'philosophy meets experiment'.

Kip Thorne and Interstellar

In 2016 when my little girl was born, I was in full science-fan swing. One of my favourite scientists was back then (and still is) Kip Thorne. Somehow, perhaps involuntarily this mini-clay-bust ended up looking a lot like him. I will leave that up to you to decide. In the meantime, Thorne's input has been significant not only when it comes to science but also in relation to science fiction. In fact, through Thorne's involvement, the movie-making business has, accidentally, helped make something more: a scientific discovery - one that you can experience first-hand in the film 'Interstellar'.

In the film, a crew of explorers travel through a wormhole to reach distant worlds orbiting other stars. Along the way, they cross paths with a monstrous, spinning black hole. More impressive than the beauty of the black hole, is that this stunning rendition is the most scientifically accurate image of a spinning black hole ever created. A scientific paper accompanied this image.

Kip Thorne is an American theoretical physicist who has written academic books on general relativity, collaborated with Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking, and is one of the world's leading experts on all things gravitational.

Determinism, Presentism and Eternalism

Romero explains that determinism is a metaphysical doctrine about the nature of the world. It is an ontological assumption: that all events are given. Determinism can be traced back to Parmenides and his 'what is, is'. It is important to emphasise that determinism does not require causality and does not imply predictability. Predictability is a property of our theories about the world, not a property of the world itself.

Romero states that the fact that there exist irreversible processes in the universe implies that space-time is globally asymmetric. The laws that constrain the space-state of physical things, and

Mini Clay Bust (2016)

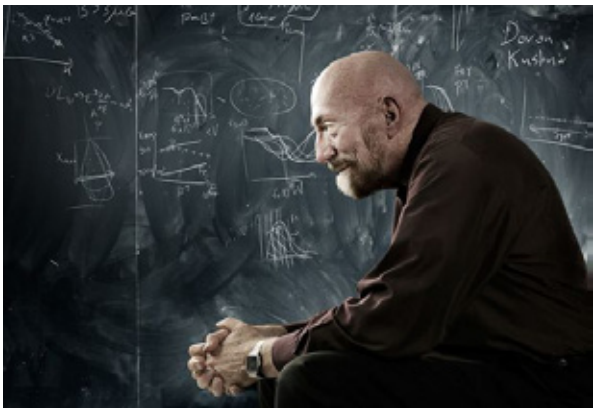
therefore their potential to change, however, are invariant under time reversal. Black holes might play a crucial role to link the global structure of space-time with the local irreversibility expressed by the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

The notion of temporal distance is defined loosely, but in such a way that it accords with common sense and the physical time interval between two events. From these definitions it follows that the present is a thing, not a concept. The present is the ontological aggregation of all present things. Hence, to say that 'x is present', actually means 'x is part of the present'.

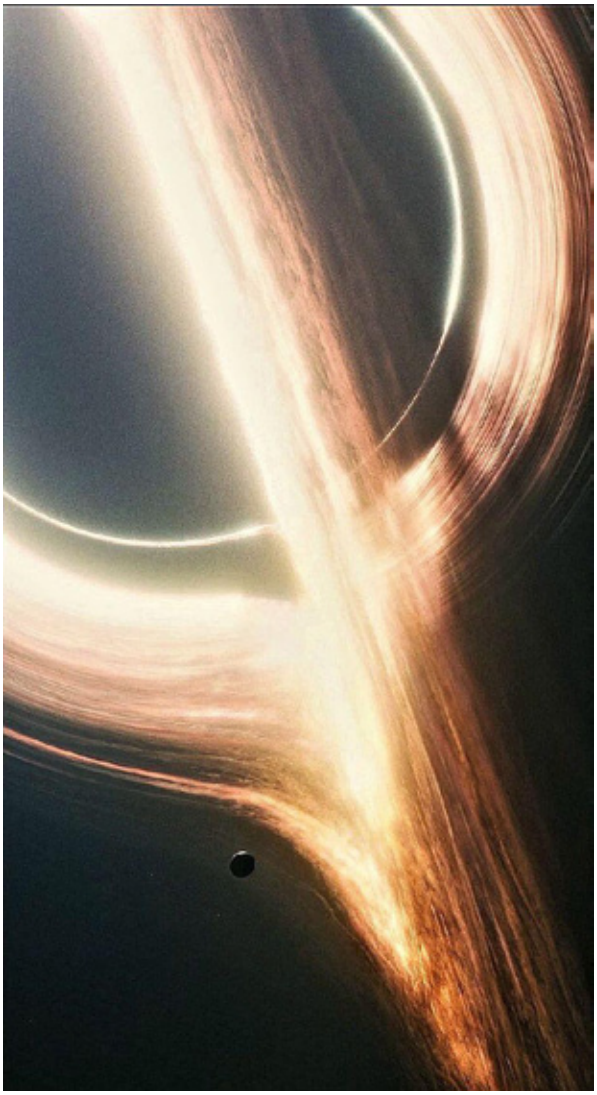
The opposite thesis of presentism is eternalism, also called four-dimensionalism. Eternalists subscribe to the existence of past and future objects. The temporal distance between these objects is non-zero. The name four-dimensionalism comes from the fact that in the eternalist view, objects are extended through time, and then they have a 4-dimensional volume, with 3 spatial dimensions and 1 time dimension.

As we approach to the horizon from the flat space-time region, the light cones become thinner and thinner, indicating the restriction to the possible trajectories imposed by the increasing curvature. On the inner side of the horizon the local direction of time is 'inverted' in the sense that all time-like trajectories have in their future the singularity at the centre of the black hole. There is a very interesting consequence of all this: an observer on the horizon will have her present along the horizon. All events occurring on the horizon are simultaneous. The temporal distance from the observer at any point on the horizon to any event occurring on the horizon is zero.

Romero remarks that the interface between black hole physics and philosophy remains mostly uncharted. He affirms that the study of black holes can be a very powerful tool to shed light on many other philosophical issues in the philosophy of science and even in General Relativity. Romero is of the opinion that in black holes our current representations of space, time, and gravity are pushed to their very limits. The exploration of such limits can pave the way to new findings about the world and our ways of representing it. Imagine for example a civilisation that not only understands black holes but can control their gravitational forces to their benefit.



Professor Kip Thorne



A black hole

The Big Thing About Small Things

One part of natural philosophy
Is focused on the smallest that can be.
The awesome power of the microscope
Can help us trace a titchy isotope.
This little tortoise beetle that you see
Is large when standing near a flea.
Well, everything in life is relative -
A fact to which we should be sensitive.
Thus when we scoff our food from off the plate
Let's think of the bacteria we ate.
Their little lives are happy in our gut,
As happy as the microbes on our nut.
A scientist of old named Robert Hooke
Drew puny insects for his special book;
Now cameras have come into their own
Minutest details can be clearly shown.
Look, 'well done' to this painter's what I say
for pict'ring beetle's glory plain as day.
I wouldn't want to wake up late at night
And meet this fearsome fellow - what a fright!
If ever insects wage a global war
These tank-like bugs will form the heavy corps
To crush the ants and sweep away the flies
And make sure no one of their genus dies.
So when you're next philosophising hard
Be sure not to ignore nor disregard
Those tiny thingies in the quantum zone
That go to make up everything that's known.

Poem by Mike Churchman

Artwork by Chris Churchman

'Tortoise beetle'

The Wednesday

Editor: Dr. Rahim Hassan
Contact Us:
rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk

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The Sleep Of Roses

Under their petals roses sleep
Near willowherb,
The silence that the roses keep
Let none disturb.

No hint of an approaching shower
In the still air,
Each beautiful infolded flower
Fragrant and fair.

The Spring has passed, no Winter snow
Yet masks the sky,
The flowers in their fragrant show
Delight the eye.

There is a silence now it seems
Will never go,
It leaves the roses to their dreams
And me also.

Oh do not wake me from my doze,
I sleep like them,
Let me be silent as the rose
Upon its stem.

There is an eloquence to charm
Where quiet is deep,
Then I can share the rose's calm,
The rose's sleep.

Edward Greenwood