

The *Wednesday* at Albion-Oxford

The News Letter of the Wednesday Group at Albion - Beatnik

Why The *Wednesday*?

A new publication? Don't we have enough publications already? We can't cope with more information? What is the point? These and other questions are legitimate ones. A glance at the Internet will convince you that they are justifiable. However, The *Wednesday* is not another publication but the only publication for us - the *Wednesday* regulars at Albion Beatnik. It is our magazine, to serve our intellectual development individually and collectively.

It will reflect our friendship and journeying together in the world of ideas. Coleridge was right in calling his magazine *The Friend* and the German Romantics were deservedly remembered for calling their programme *Symphilosophie* (or *Philosophising Together*). Nietzsche tried and failed in creating what he called "Free Spirits", which might have contributed to his mental crisis.

Some of us have been taking notes of our meetings, dating back to 2004/5 (I would love to have record of the first meeting or the date of it!), and they still do. It will be good to share them through this publication. The *Wednesday* is intended as a record for all time of thoughts arising from the meetings. There are excellent ideas discussed every week in our meetings but the direction of talk changes constantly and does not give enough time to consider them fully. But if we have them noted, then we could carry on the debate. The *Wednesday* will be the right platform for such ideas. Your contribution of articles, views and news will help it to get off the ground. United we can make it. Let us give it a try.

The editor

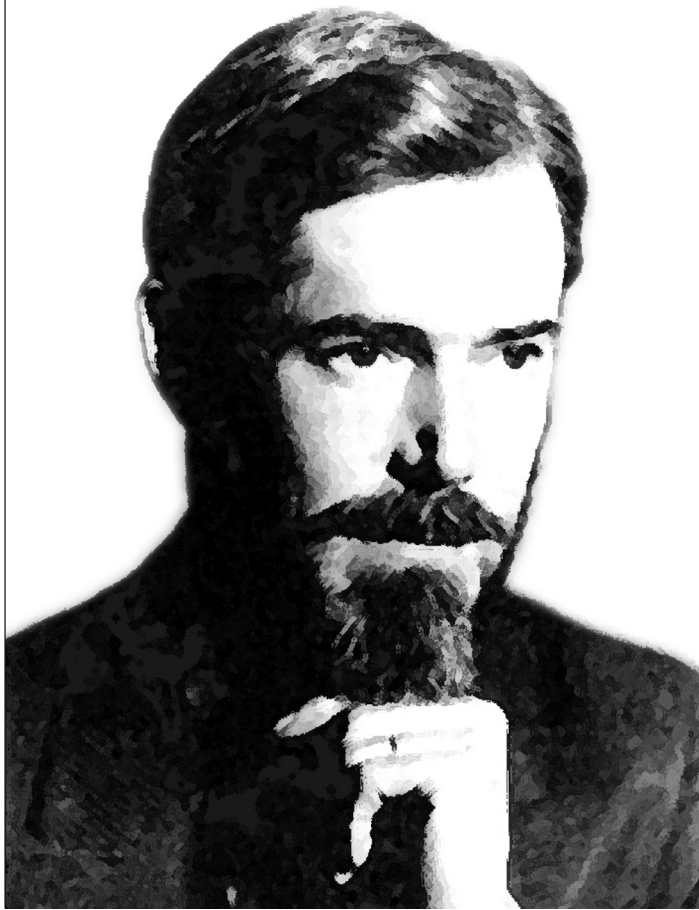
COURSES

- **Dr. Meade McCloughan**
will be giving interesting courses around Rewley house (RH).
They are:
- **Wagner and Philosophy**
Weekend, Saturday
14th of October 2017.
- **The Communist Manifesto**
Tuesdays, April 2018.
- **Fichte**
Tuesdays, April 2018.
- *All these courses will be taught for the first time in Oxford. The Wagner course is first in the UK and so is Fichte. It is worth mentioning that Meade is running a reading group on German Idealism Philosophy at the London School of Philosophy for the last three years and he intend to make it a five years plan. His course on Fichte is the outcome of the reading group.*
- *Please check the website of the OUDCU for more information and lists of recommended reading. You may want to know what to read on these topics even if you are not going to enrol on the courses.*

~ A Thought ~

There is that wonderful line in Hamlet:

“There are more things
in heaven & earth than
are dreamt of in your
philosophy, Horatio.”
Paul Cockburn



Beyond Ressentiment: **Macmurray** and the Form of the Personal

PAUL COCKBURN

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Over the last year or so a group of about seven of us have been studying the Gifford lectures that were delivered by John Macmurray. We have all enjoyed it. He is certainly stimulating even if you do not agree with him.

I will say just a few words about John Macmurray. He was born in Scotland in 1891 and died in 1976. He studied at Balliol. His stud-

ies were interrupted by the First World War, in which he was wounded, and won the Military Cross. After the war, he became a Professor of Mind and Logic at University College London from 1928 to 1944. He is sometimes defined as a Personalist; believing that the concept of persons and all that it implies is important. Interestingly he has been air-brushed out of philosophical history – his successor at UCL was AJ Ayer. He gave the Gifford lectures in 1953 and 1954 and most of what I am going to talk about which is I hope related to ethics is in the second part of his talk which is in a book enti-

Part1

tled 'Persons in Relation'. Macmurray argues for persons being free agents having free will, and who exist primarily in relation to other persons. I don't want to get bogged down in the free will argument. You could say that he has converted Descartes' Cogito; the 'I think', into 'I do' or more to the point 'we do'.

What does this mean in terms of ethics? Well, his Personalism highlights the importance of morality, and he links this to his philosophy of the state, and I will talk about how he uses psychology and psychoanalytic theory in his philosophy.

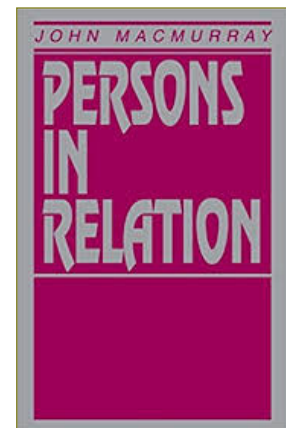
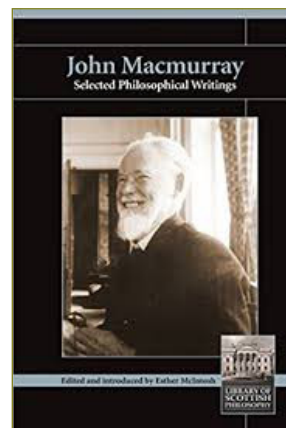
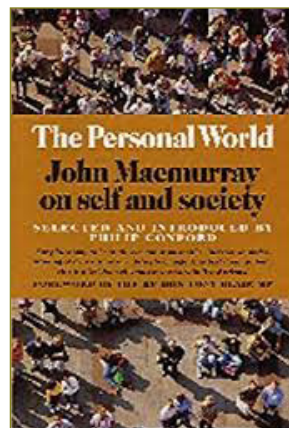
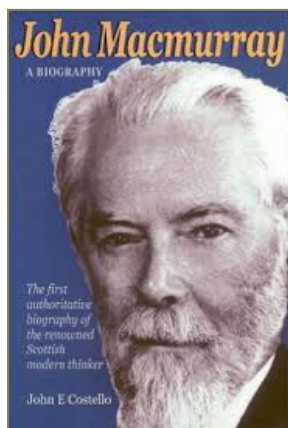
Macmurray believes that what he calls the Form of the Personal is established in our early life. He gives a detailed analysis of child development. He describes the experience of the child in the child/mother relationship. A baby (he in the following) gets hungry, cries, is fed by his mother, and then the hunger repeats. This basic personal experience is the pattern of our lives in terms of our desires. The baby must learn to wait for a response from the mother to his cries. Then by repetition the memory of the process of wanting to be fed, crying, the mother's response and the desire being met leads to feelings of anticipatory pleasure, through waiting and then actual satisfaction. These feelings all coalesce so that the period of waiting merges with the later satisfaction. The child can imagine future satisfaction.

The first behaviour of a child is unconscious

and presupposes knowledge of an other, in this case his mother, and mother and baby are communicating and the baby is having its needs met. This communication between mother and child is two-way even in the early stages of life before language is learnt.

When a child cries, if the period of waiting for the mother is too long, then positive expectation is replaced by a negative distress, perhaps expressed in a tantrum. As the child grows up, to help him acquire new skills the mother will do less and less for the infant. This refusal is in fact an expression of the mother's love (she wants the child to do more for itself and become fully a person), but to the child it may appear to be like a betrayal, he feels isolated. He expects the future to be like the past, when his mother cared for him much more. The child becomes anxious that the mother does not love him any more, and only the mother can reassure him at this point.

The mother's refusal to do what the child expects leads to a clash of wills, self-assertion against the other. He hates his mother, hoping she will change her mind. In this conflict, moral struggles are pre-figured, as the child is conflicted between his own will and the love of the other who is part of him, whose love the child needs. If the child learns to do what is required of him through negative emotion, fear of what will become of him, worry that his mother will withdraw her care for him, his character becomes negative. It is necessary the positive relation to the mother is re-estab-



lished, that somehow the child has to recognize the illusion of the negative phase, that his mother still loves him and that her refusal to give in to his demands is somehow good for him.

But when the child accedes to his mother's demand because he must, against his will, he remains egocentric, dissatisfied. There will be a split in his mind between the ideal and the actual. He either conforms obediently and feigns 'goodness' or rebels and becomes a 'bad boy'. If he becomes a 'good' boy he will placate his mother whose enmity he fears. He may inhabit an imaginary world, a phantasy world, where his wishes are granted, which to him is real. On the other hand, he may become a 'bad' boy, rebellious and aggressive; seeking to gain by force or cunning what is not freely given to him. His real life is practical; he seeks to use power over the other for his own ends. Over time individuals thus become submissive or aggressive in character. He becomes either less

practical and more contemplative or pragmatic and more practical. Both 'reactions' are egocentric, for the self rather than the other and in both cases excluding mutuality.

The child has to learn to trust his mother despite appearances. The mother's task is to convince the child that despite her refusing to satisfy the child's desires, his fear that she is against him is an illusion. In future, instead of doing something for himself out of fear, he needs to do it in co-operation with the mother.

Macmurray also mentions other family members besides the mother. He says the father is important but does not elaborate. There can be splits in the family where negative emotions play out: negative emotions against the mother are projected on the father, or on another sibling. The whole family may be united in projecting their mutual hostility against an outsider; the unity of a nation is intensified by the need to combine against an enemy nation.

NEWS

CONFERENCES:

▲ **Capitalism: Concept & Idea: 150 Years of Marx's Capital:**

The Philosophy & Politic of Capital Today.

Friday-Saturday 13-14

at Conway hall and LSE.

Free but you have to register.

▲ **Hegel and Metaphysics**

Hegel Society of GB annual conference.

7-8 September 2017

St Edmund Hall, Oxford.

Registration ends 1st August.

If you are not a member the fee is 15 pounds.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE DEBATES

- You may consider the following thought by Marcel Proust: "The real journey of discovery is not in seeing new land but seeing with new eyes."
- Why do we go to poetry when we are in love, distress or looking for a deep truth? Is there a metaphysical ground for this? Is it the influence of the music of poetry or the imagery? Are we wrong in thinking this way?
- "The Plane of Immanence" a thought from Deleuzes and Guattari.

Debate

Every Wednesday we get ready for a debate. The starting point is an email. Here is a development of thought through the email prior to the debate at Albion. The date is 5th of April 2017.

Dear friends,

F. Von Hardenberg (Novalis) has proven that his writing is a good mine for thought. Around 1798/9 he started a project of writing an Encyclopaedia. He was inspired by several such attempts by French and German scholars, philosophers and scientist. However, he intended something different which he refers to as a (Bible). He says in section (557):

* «My book shall be a scientific Bible-a real, and ideal model-and the seed of all books.»

(Please notice Novalis's two words: real and idea.)

The idea might have come from Lessing who wrote (1777) in his book:

«The education of the human race»:

«It will certainly come, this age of a new, eternal gospel, which is itself promised in the elementary books of the new covenant.»

Novalis thought his idea can become a reality if he cooperated with the other Romantics (Schleiermacher, Tieck, Schlegel. In fact Schlegel had such an idea in mind but never achieved it.). They were going to write «a gospel for the future». Novalis indirectly appeals to the New Testament (Roman 5:14 and Corinthians 15:45-47). He thought that there are four gospels and they need to give rise to a «future and higher gospel». This is in line with his thought of what poetry and philosophy could do by raising a thing or a thought to a higher level. This is one aspect of the thought of a Bible. (Recently Grayling did collect quotes from philosophers to present them as a Secular Bible, see his: (The Good Book: A Secular Bible, 2011.)

But this is only one aspect of Novalis's Bible project. The other aspect is to present a unified picture of science where all human knowledge could be harmonised within one spirit. He calls it a Gattungsbegriff (or a generic concept). David W. Wood, on whose interpretation and knowledge I rely heavily, nicely puts it: «A Bi-

ble is simply the highest form of a book in the specific genre or discipline.». But I think that Novalis thought of the Bible as all inclusive book within, or towards, One Spirit. Here is a crucial quote (Section 571 of Encyclo.):

«All the sciences amount to one book.....My undertaking is really a description of the Bible-or better, the theory of the Bible-art of the Bible and theory of Nature. (Elevation of a book to a Bible). The accomplished Bible is a complete and well-organised library.» (One could think of Burges's The Library of Babel!) finally (Sec.433): «Ever human history shall be a Bible-will become a Bible. Christ is the new Adam. Concepts of rebirth. A Bible is the supreme task of writing.» (Reference to Roman 5:14 and Corinthians 15:45-47). Sorry for writing so much but I needed to give you the background to my questions:

1. Does science amount to one book? And does it reflect one spirit?
2. Is this a project of showing that Nature and Revelation are one page written in different letters?
3. Is the One Spirit given already in the Four Gospels or is to be the outcome of raising the four to a higher power (i.e. 4 to the power of 2, 3 etc.)?
4. Is the Bible already an Encyclopaedia of knowledge; a unified one, of human history dictated from above?
5. I wonder what implications are there for the Quran in all this!
6. How could we read the Holy Books (or Science generally) after Novalis?

I am trying to provoke a debate for today and tomorrow. I am open to more questions, observations or replies. I look forward to seeing you all tomorrow. (I am afraid I may need to leave by 5.40 to catch a train to London.)

Best wishes

Rahim

■ Some quick tentative thoughts on Rahim's mail and questions.

The Bible is incredibly diverse - it contains poetry, prayer, genealogy, prophecy, inspirational mysticism, stories of how God works so to speak in nature and people. And so is science diverse. Physics and chemistry are I think radically different to biology (and by the way I distrust physics where it deals with the incredibly small or large - the mathematics may work, but interpreting what it means is another matter). So for me any unity is difficult to see, but I do applaud raising things or thoughts to a higher level, which I think implies unity.

Yours.

Paul

■ Dear all, In his 3-volume History of Philosophy Hegel has a very short section pointing out that Novalis's thought is an obsessive and very one-sided whirl of inner subjectivity untempered by analysis of objectivity and society. Novalis's approach results in madness.

In terms of German Romanticism, Holderlin and others are much more important to Hegel than is Novalis.

Let's get real!

Phil

Follow Up

RAHIM HASSAN

I am pleased to say that we have already made progress on the NL project in our last meeting (Wednesday 12/07/2017). It has been agreed to give it a go although some members have some strong reservations that can only be overcome by testing our abilities and seeing how much of the dream we can realise. We also managed to find a person (or two) who is going to sum up our meetings every Wednesday. A sub-editor to guard against bad English has also been appointed. I agreed to carry the main responsibility for the time being.

Art contribution weekly has been assigned to two people. One for original production the other is for a reproduction of a work of art of his choice with a minimum bit of writing. A working title has been suggested. It is "The Wednesday" or "The Wednesday at Albion-Oxford". Please send your preference or suggest a title. No number of pages have been decided on. We may start with limited number of pages and expand them later on. One member already warned against long articles and we all agreed.

It is agreed that the NL will contain a highlight

of thoughts arising from the Wednesday meetings and not a record or a summary of them. We also agreed that religion and politics are not going to be excluded but to be treated in the spirit of inquiry.

Similar experiments in history were also talked about; starting with Plato's record of the Socratic dialogues, clubs and societies of the 18th century, the Encyclopaedists in France, the German Romantics magazine the *Athenaeum*, Coleridge's *The Friend*, the Café culture in France in the 20th Century, etc. However, our aim is far less ambitious than all these experiments. (Some of these experiments failed but even then, they have created tremors through out the intellectual history!) Finally, the Holy Quran says: "...if you have decided, then put your trust in Allah" (Ch.3, verse 159).

And a Chinese proverb attributed to Laozi says: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". (ch. 64 of *Tao Te Ching*). With this experimental issue, you would have seen that we have taken the first step. March forward with full confidence! No retreat.



Creative Art

PAINTING BY **DIANNE COCKBURN**

A Taste of Summer - where would we be without bees?



Workshop on **Hegel's** Logic and His System

PHIL WALDEN

I have recently participated in the workshop on Hegel's Logic and His System (20th of June 2017). It was organised by David Merrill, an American Philosopher who is currently in Oxford and Gareth Polmeer. There were around 30 people present including the speakers. Both myself and Rahim Hassan were there. Here is a summary of the papers presented during the workshop:

The first paper was by Gene Flenady entitled «Hegel's Logic and his System». Flannery said that Robert Pippin, Kenneth Westphal, etc, deny the relevance of intellectual intuition to Hegel.

Sally Sedgwick, however, thinks it continued in Hegel's work in a way that still shows Schelling's influence. But Paul Franks, Angelica Nuzzo, Daniel Breazeale, think intellectual intuition has more to do with Fichte and Schelling.

In the discussion, someone called Malakov said that it was by going back to the Greeks

that Hegel was able to go beyond Kant and empiricism.

Gareth Polmeer said - thought thinking along: Stephen Houlgate writes «Thought is directly aware of being as thinkable». This seems a very big claim. In Aristotle thought is passive divine. But Hegel brings in actualised spirit. But still nothing has to be present - this is the Parmenidean problem.

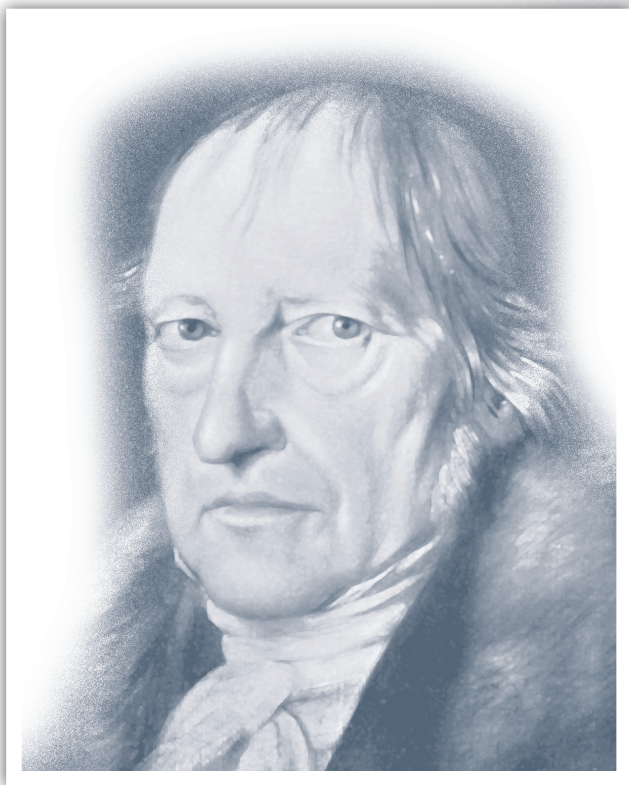
The second paper was by Christoph Schuringa entitled «Life in the Logic». What Hegel is after through his whole logic is being as such. Karen Ng says that «Life» is a bit of a stretch in the Doctrine of the Concept.

Hegel says that logical life is a different genus to natural life. Herbert Marcuse says that life in Hegel's writings stands for true being. In Hegel the living being is the Gattung (genus).

The third paper was by Susanne Herrmann-Sinai entitled «Two Forms of Universality from the Logic: Liberation and Self-Determination». Only the latter can explain Hegel's freedom of spirit.

Habit is a liberation; but habit is a necessity





too. Habit is necessary for us to understand how freedom can be self-determining. Spirit understands itself through its other. Spirit observes its own activity in order to understand its own development.

There is the distinction between Willkür and Wille. The Philosophy of Right builds on this through Hegel's development of the concept of free will. Spirit creates something so it must understand that it is self-creative.

The fourth paper was given by David Merrill entitled «Hegel's Logic and the Philosophy of Capital». Every step in the Realphilosophie must follow the stages in the Logic.

I will give no discussion of the labour theory of value. My thesis is based on the book by Richard Winfield entitled Rethinking Capital. In this book I believe Winfield overcomes the methodological individualism of bourgeois economics.

Agents already have to operate within a state of ethics. We do not live in a state of nature. The true kind of capital is one consistent with right. The philosophy of capital is analogous

with the philosophy of being. Labour-power is the illusory being of capital.

[Phil Walden comments: something has gone wrong here because in my view Marx is right to say that labour produces capital, and Hegel is wrong to think that capital produces capital.]

The fifth paper was given by Gareth Polmeier entitled «Images without Images: Logic, Intuition and Appearance».

To Stanley Rosen philosophy is the absence of structure with the presence of structure in the absence. Rosen has a reformulated Platonism and a reconstructed Hegelianism. The original intuited ground in Plato becomes a logical ground in Hegel. I agree with Stephen Houlgate and Quentin Lauer who see the Logic as ontological.

Hegel puts philosophy higher than art and religion and this seems to be a shift away from intuition. Hegel says: «Logic is the eternal vision of itself in the Other».



A desert Romantic and the Lake District poets

RAHIM HASSAN

I travelled only once outside the UK. It was in 1984. I was the editor of the cultural section of a newly founded Arab weekly magazine based in London. I was sent to cover the Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia the capital. The driver in the taxi I took from the airport asked me why I was in Tunisia and I told him that I was a journalist reporting on the festival. He said the festival hasn't started yet but there was a literary conference in the desert at Tozeur (an oasis in the desert) and that he would take me there if I gave him fifty pounds. I declined the offer.

On reaching the centre of Tunisia the capital I asked if there was a bus that went to Tozeur. I was told yes and it did turn out very cheap (I can't remember now whether it was a pound or less but no more than five pounds at most!) The bus didn't leave until after sunset and I spent the night on the bus. My bag was in the luggage compartment and the bus made a few stops on the approach to Tozeur. On arrival, I couldn't find my bag! Some good people were embarrassed by the incident and feeling sorry for me called the police and to my surprise the police turned up with my bag in less than half an hour. They had established with

the driver which stops he had made and they followed the people who took my bag. They caught them before they got to their houses.

It was nearly morning and there were people on the street who welcomed me and made me feel at home with friends and they took me to the local mosque to perform the morning prayer. It was then five years since I had prayed in a mosque on Arab soil.

In the morning, I joined the conference on the poet ash-Shabbi, one of the great Romantic poets in the Arab world who lived for only 25 years! Some of his poems were sung and one of them became the Tunisian national anthem. He always sang for the freedom of the individual and the nation and called for a greater exercise of the will. He celebrated nature and he has embodied in his poetry the image of the Romantic hero. He also wrote a book on The Arab Poetic Imagination (in Arabic).

On the final day, we toured the area with its Oases and groves of date-palms. The French built an Airport to access the area and to export the dates during their occupation of the country. I asked to have my



Abū al-Qāsim ash-Shābbī
(24 February 1909 - 9 October 1934)

photograph taken on the very rock that ash-Shabbi sat on to look over the oases but unfortunately the photograph has been lost in my former magazine archive. We also visited his house which was very simple and still occupied by some relatives.

A year later, I was invited by the British Tourist Board to take part in a tour of the Lake District. It was my first visit to the area and it has left its everlasting impact on me. I have never seen the lake district again in the same light. We were taken to the Dove Cottage at Ambleside and we were shown inside Wordsworth's house.

Reading later on about Coleridge and Wordsworth; their Romanticism and their interest in the Imagination (and Fancy), I remembered the earlier trip to the desert. There is a great contrast between the desert on the one hand, and the abundance of water in the Lakes on the other. But I thought how close ash-Shabbi was to Coleridge and Wordsworth despite all the details of history (and what Sartre calls Facticity). I said to my friend Barbara Vellacott the other day: if Coleridge wrote and lived in Germany he would have been considered one of the German Romantics, because of the shared interest and creativity of poetry and thought. I could say the same of ash-Shabbi and the English Romantics if their times and places had coincided.



Ambleside, Lake Windermere

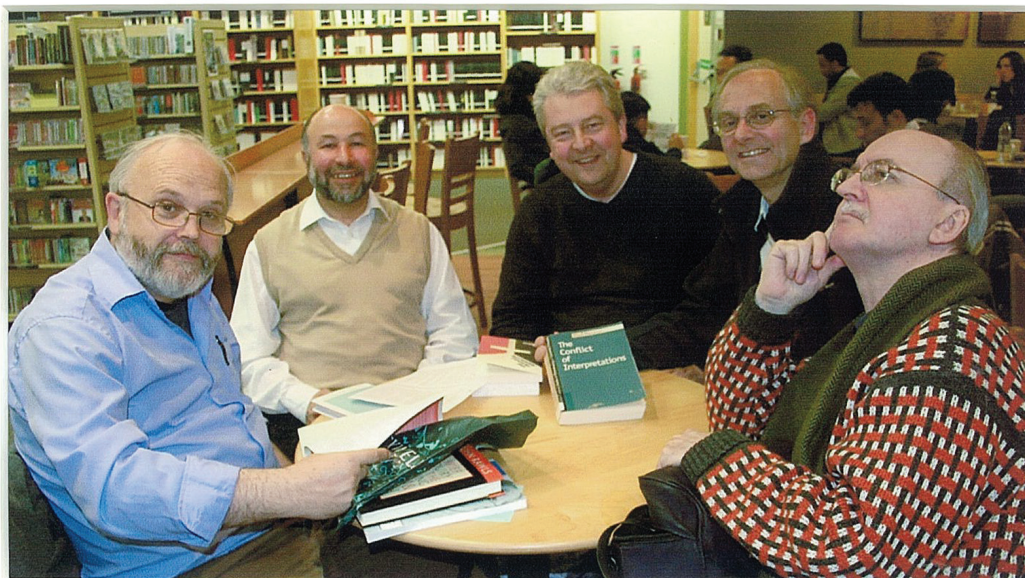


Wordsworth's house - Rydal Hall, near Grasmere in the Lake District



Sitting room, Rydal Hall

MEMORY LANE



The original group at Border c. 2008/9 (!)

From left: *David Clough, Rahim Hassan, Phil Walden, Paul Cockburn, Peter Wood*



A Big Thank You to Dennis

The *Wednesday* group started at Borders Bookshop around 2004/5 (?). It was a very convenient place. The shop itself used to organise talks for every evening of the week. But the group was a separate and independent activity, although individual members did attend some of the talks.

After the shop's closure in 2010, the group moved to a number of premises around Oxford city centre, including Waterstone and Blackwell's bookshops. We then moved to Mumu's Café in Little Clarendon Street and we all thought we found a home. However, the shop closed down abruptly and without notifying us and we were made homeless again. Here came Dennis to the rescue and he welcomed us to his bookshop which is really more than just a bookshop. Opening from morning to late at night (roughly 11 pm), and with Jazz, poetry, book reading, silent films, plays and many more, it is truly The cultural centre of Oxford. Recently the proprietor Dennis Harrison became a publisher and a magazine has been issued, now in its third issue and the newsletter of Albion Beatnik bookshop is regularly sent to subscribers.

So, it is a big thank you to Dennis for all the tea, coffee, cakes and your smile, inspite of the noise we create every week. We are now a constant feature of the shop every Wednesday with a reserved table that is well guarded before our arrival for the meeting. Thanks Dennis!



Dennis Harrison

The Wednesday regulars.