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The *Wednesday*

Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group at Albion Beatnik - Oxford

Editorial

Symbolic Thoughts

Back in May this year, I watched the film: *Raphael: Lord of the Arts*. What attracted me most in the film is the commentary that accompanied it, particularly on the symbols in his painting. The greatest symbolism in his painting that concerns philosophy comes out in his famous painting: *The School of Athens* (1509-1511), now in the Vatican. It shows Plato and Aristotle marching through a crowd of philosophers, mathematicians and scientists sitting or standing on either side of them. The painting is full of famous personalities but I am going to stick to the main figures: Plato and Aristotle.

Plato is depicted with his right hand pointing upwards and Aristotle is stretching his hand in front of him pointing downwards. The first seems to be pointing to the true reality in the intelligible world. The second is pointing to the ground and that reality is down here in our word, the one that we can experience. Raphael increase the level of symbolic representation by making Plato holds a copy of his *Timaeus* while Aristotle holds his *Ethics*. The former deals with metaphysics and the creation of the world, the latter with the good life and politics. Again, the contrast is between metaphysics and everydayness.

In another symbolic representation of philosophers, there is Joose Van Gent's portrait of St Thomas Aquinas (1475). Aquinas is represented as counting his five proofs of the existence of God on his left hand, with the palm of the hand open towards the observer. This can be contrasted with Ernest Gebauer's oil portrait painting of Fichte (1812). He was depicted in a similar fashion, counting on his left hand with the right hand index. The hand is pointing toward the subject and not towards the spectator, as in St. Aquinas case. This might be a Freemasonry symbol. Fichte, Novalis, Schelling and Hegel were reported to be Freemasons (See: Glenn Alexander Magee: *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*.) However, a more realistic idea is that Fichte is referring to his *Wissenschaftslehre*, either to it as a foundational principle or to the number of proof and expositions he wrote of his theory.

The contrast between the two portraits (St. Aquinas's and Fichte's) is that St Aquinas was concerned in his proofs with the origin of the world. He grounds the finite world (including man) in the infinite. In Fichte's case, he seems to be replacing the idea of the transcendent God with that of the subject. He might be the first to do so, in a move that pushed Kant's Transcendental philosophy to its limit. His emphases on subjectivity could represent a move from a theistic world to that of the world that saw Nietzsche in the following century declaring the Death of God. But both thinkers, and many in between and after, do not remove the mystery of the world. The question to them both, and more in the case of Fichte, is how to ground subjectivity. His answer will be that it is rooted in the unconscious totally active realm, prefiguring Freud.

What is remarkable about these painting (see p. 15 of this issue) is that they are a projection of the mind that bestows symbolism and mystery on these figures. This is far from the mechanical way of portraying the subject as the modern camera does. The camera came to record the famous philosophers for us, but it is unable to give us the symbolism of the old painting. It is the 'tyranny of the eye' (or the lens) that fought with the creativity of the mind and it seems to have won. But I think it is a shallow sense of victory.

The Editor

The Development of German Idealism:
Holderlin and Fichte on *Being and judgment*

The article below looks at the post-Kantian philosophy in Germany. Fichte had claimed that Kant was not critical enough. Fichte's tried to ground subjectivity in the self-reverting activity or Intellectual Intuition. For him, there is an Absolute I that represents the identity of subject and object. Holderlin, the German Romantic poet and philosopher, thought that what is needed is not an identity, but a unity of Subject and object. He called it Being. The article below looks at the attempt by Fichte to accommodate Holderlin's criticism, if ever there had been such an attempt by Fichte:

DAVID **SOLOMON**

The immediate successors of Kant (1724-1804) became aware of the gaps in his philosophy, his failure to construct a system that would unify different and contrasting aspects of his theories. His decisive contribution, his 'transcendental turn' was his description of the way in which our knowledge of the physical world did not come to us directly but was the product of sensible intuition of appearances of unknowable 'things in themselves', together with the forms of our intuition and the categories of our understanding which belonged to our own consciousness. Though detailed and subtle, his system left many unfilled gaps and questions to be answered. To what extent was our knowledge of the world due to the 'impressions' of appearances caused by or emanating from 'things in themselves', and to what extent to the activity of the work of our consciousness?

Therefore, how active or passive is the process by which we understand either the physical world or our own self-conscious processes? Is the process of our understanding free because it is the result of our consciousness or determined by (the appearances of) things external to it? How do Subjectivity and Objectivity arise and what is the relationship to them? Is there an original Being that encompasses both Objectivity and Subjectivity? Is the process of knowing the world the same as the act of knowing ourselves?

According to Kant, we are in part responsible for the construction of even objects in the world that we normally think of as existing apart from ourselves. On the other hand, sceptical critics cast doubt on the idea of 'things in themselves': what could we know of these? How could we say that they were the 'cause' of appearances if our very idea of a cause (according to Kant) belongs to the sensible world of appearance?

Even in Kant's lifetime, many philosophers tried to create a foundation and a coherent system for his philosophy including K L Reinhold (1757-1823), J G Fichte (1762-1814), and F W J Schelling (1775-1854). Out of these obsessions and the need to address sceptical attacks on Kant's system came German Idealism which was then carried forward by Hegel. From the beginning this development

involved a radicalising of Kant's ideas and an attempt to systematise them. It took place in an extremely productive period in German philosophy, at a time when philosophers and poets with an interest in philosophy were bound together by close relations of friendship and mutual influence. There were parallels as well as differences in the thinking of the philosophers involved; they influenced and criticised each other and reacted to each others' criticism in a complex 'constellation' whose intricacies (in so far as they ever will be worked out) are still being worked out.

In this essay I want to concentrate on a short but very influential contribution to this process by the poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) and his influence on Fichte; to point out the parallels, in terms of system, language and outlook, that we can see when we place Hölderlin's *fragment Urtheil und Seyn (Judgment and Being)* of 1795, alongside Fichte's *Second Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre (Doctrine of Knowledge) with its introductions* of 1797-1798 and also his slightly later *System of Ethics*.

In Fichte's account, our everyday awareness of objects as being external to us, and our ability to relate to them as subjects, is a reversal of what actually occurs as a result of our consciousness. Consciousness is first and foremost a self-creating act of knowledge and creation of the I in what he describes as 'intellectual intuition' or a kind of 'self-reverting activity'. To ascend to a sense of this self-reverting activity, we can engage in a thought experiment by which we think of an object, then think of ourselves thinking of that object, then think of the I that thinks in general. The I establishes itself certainly and absolutely by means of this act of knowing / creation. It then distinguishes itself from everything that is not the I. The Not – I is the world of objects from which it differentiates itself. Fichte made repeated attempts in various works to describe the process of the I setting itself up through its own intellectual activity. The starting point, though not the origin, of this, is always our ordinary consciousness of everyday things. He repeatedly urged his students and readers of the necessity of developing the philosophers' point of view by going through the steps for themselves, something that could not in itself be proved, but only experienced directly.

In Chapter 1 of the *New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte describes the process by which we can be made aware of our original self-reverting activity, starting from our ordinary everyday consciousness. This latter (our awareness of objects in the world) he describes as consciousness in *Repose*, in contrast to the I's activity, he describes as *Agility*. Agility is involved in every act of representation whether of external objects or of I myself:

> "This agility is intuited as a process by means of which the active force **wrenches itself away** from a state of repose" [Fichte: *New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre,* Chapter 1, Section 3].

Our starting point, from which we can arrive at our sense of ourselves in our activity through intellectual intuition, is always initially the position of reposeful attitude with the world and ourselves. In fact, this must be so; we have to have ordinary understanding of things in terms of concepts, including the concept of the I, that we can express in language, in order that we can understand Fichte's summons to think of 'ourselves' in the first place:

> "In short, when you understood me, this determinacy was immediately present. This is why you understood me and were able to give an appropriate direction to the activity that I summoned you to perform**"** [Fichte: New Presentation, Chapter 1, Section 3].

How is the original foundational act, the self-reverting activity of the I to be represented by Fichte (if it can be represented at all)? Fichte is aware of the impossibility of applying the model of representation which had been put forward by Reinhold (division between representing subject, represented object and the act of representation itself

which unifies them) to the I when it is conceived self-reflexively to be in the object position. This, as Fichte himself points out in Section 2, leads to an infinite regress. If you divide the I as subject from the I as object, the I as subject has itself to become the object of a higher act of representation, and so on forever. We cannot represent the foundational act like this, as if it was an ordinary act of representation.

Hölderlin presents the problem and a solution in his own terms. Even when according to him we say 'I am I', this very formulation implies a previous splitting of original being into subject and object (although these fragments can be subsequently partially united through acts of judgment.

> 'Where Subject and Object are absolutely, not just partially united [*vereiniget*], and hence so united that no division can be undertaken, without destroying the essence [*Wesen*] of the thing that is to be sundered [*getrennt*], there and not otherwise can we talk of an absolute Being, as is the case in intellectual intuition'. [Hölderlin: *Judgment and Being*, 1795]

Hölderlin does not use a neutral term such as 'differentiated' [*unterscheiden*] but the tragic one 'sundering' [***getrennt***] for this original splitting of being. Judgement [*Urteil*] is the partial unification of subject and object in a synthesis, for which Hölderlin uses the term Identity [*Identität*] to distinguish this from the original complete unity of Being [*Seyn*]. He construes Judgment [*Urteil*] as deriving from **Ur + Theilung = Original Division.**

How far is this influential on Fichte? We do not know for sure the complex web of influences, counter-influences, actions, reactions and sensitivities between these and other actors at work here. But we can see that there are parallels between the Hölderlin fragment, and Fichte's position in the *Second Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* and the *System of Ethics*.

In Section 2 of Chapter 1 of the *New Presentation*,

Holderlin

Fichte says of the immediate consciousness:

> "This immediate consciousness is the intuition of the I just described. The I necessarily posits itself within this intuition and is thus **at once what is subjective and what is objective**. All other consciousness is connected to and mediated by this immediate consciousness, and only through this connection with immediate consciousness does it become consciousness at all… The I should not be considered as a mere subject, which is how it has nearly always been considered until now; instead, it should be considered as a subject-object in the sense indicated.

In *The System of Ethics*, the parallels are very striking.

> *"Just for me to be able to say: 'I am I', I am forced to separate; but merely in that I say this, and in saying this, the separation takes place. That One, which is separated, whereupon all consciousness has its foundation, and as a result of which*

Fichte

> *subjective and objective are immediately posited as one in consciousness, is the absolute = X, and can, as a oneness, find no possible way into consciousness."* [P. 11]

The parallel with Hölderlin appears to be that in Fiche's original self-reverting activity of the I, there is no distinction between subject and object. Fichte wants to call this the self-reverting activity of the I, whereas for Hölderlin this is the original unity of Being. They both agree that we arrive at this original being or activity through Intellectual Intuition and this cannot be directly represented in consciousness. Is Fichte responding to any implied criticism from Hölderlin? Although Hölderlin nowhere explicitly criticises Fichte or anyone else in his fragment, Fichte seems to be sensitive to the possible objection that by merely talking of the I, separation has already taken place. That is why he says in the passage quoted above that "just for me to be able to say 'I am I', I am forced to separate". Earlier on in Chapter 1, he seems to be addressing his anxiety on this score when he describes two acts of positing, an explicit one and a preceding one which does not make a clear distinction between the I and the non-I:

> "*In addition to the act of self-positing which you have at present raised to clear consciousness, you must also think of this act as preceded by another act of self-positing, one that is not accompanied by any clear consciousness, but to which the former act refers and by means of which it is conditioned*" [Chapter 1, Section 1 / 525 p. 110].

Once we have explicitly stated I = I and I = Not-I, we are already in the realm of division. The original Intellectual Intuition logically precedes this, although in terms of method, we proceed in the opposite direction, that is we can only ascend (to use his term) to this by means of what is in our ordinary consciousness.

Critics have used the term Entwinement [*Implikation*] to describe the way in which the free activity of the subject and the object, are bound up with each other in an original unity. This also suggests that the positing of the I in Fichte is not just mental but a corporeal act. In relation to the physical as well as mental positing of the I, Fichte in his Second Introduction stated that although the determinate positing of either physical or non-physical I was not identical with the original activity of the I, they nevertheless followed from it:

> 'To be sure, this type of being [*i.e. real determinate being*] will subsequently (not subsequently in time, but rather in the series of deductions) be ascribed to the I as well, though, even then it will continue and must continue to remain an I in our sense of the term. On the one hand, spatial extension and subsistence will be ascribed to it, and in this respect it becomes a determinate body; on the other hand, temporal identity and duration will be ascribed to it, and in this respect it becomes a soul' [Fichte: *Second Introduction,* 495].

So, the original self-reverting I is neither in itself a physical body or a non-physical soul, but in preceding these, implies both of them.

Reflections on Transcendence and the State of Theology

We published in issue 12 David Clough's reflections on Platonism and Transcendence in some philosophers and poets. Here he looks at the contemporary state of theology and the rapid disappearance of the idea of Transcendence:

DAVID **CLOUGH**

The Swedish Bishop (much more potent than our Durham man David Jenkins) Krister Stendhal says that my Protestant reading of Augustine is wrong. Paul was not so psychologically angst-ridden. In part, this was a reaction to the direction in which Bultmann and his pupils had taken theology. While E. P. Sanders, James Dunn and Marcus Borg et al rewrite the historical Jesus, a whole movement grew up reinterpreting Paul by de-emphasising the old/new covenantal divide and even whether Paul himself ever left Judaism.

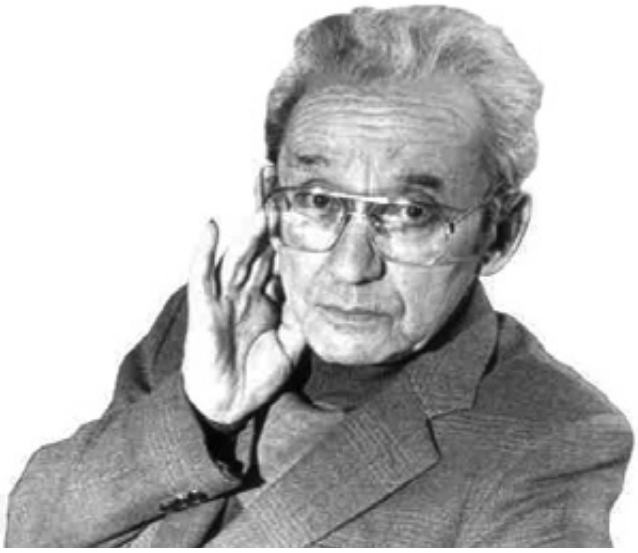
N. T. Wright is influenced by all this and though he sees himself as the new authorised Church of England Evangelical mediator, it's still a very earth-bound account pitched against the silly ideas of Victorian spiritualism (see *Surprised by Hope*), which all tends to remind me of Ernst Bloch. But that kind of transcendent utopia is supposedly out. Evangelical theology has had to respond to the New Atheists and the Greens by incorporating environmental and worldly goals into its vision of the Kingdom etc. But western Neoliberal culture is now so close to achieving these goals of equality. This leaves little space for otherworldliness as I had understood it. We emphasise now a resurrection not to a heavenly realm where only God is just but to a new earth where Christ will rule as a man. Echoes of the Great Chain of being of course still persist here.

Humility about epistemological knowledge is the new theological buzzword. John Stackhouse's book is telling titled "Need to Know" and Merold Westphal has a version of it too. Humble apologetics and viewing all religion as contemporary spiritual practice avoids 'old sovereignty', 'dead king' stuff getting in the way. But some aspects seem still there even in these revised versions.

If there has been a consensus that, Karl Barth apart, theology failed to adjust to the First World War until quite recently, in the US in particular there has been a huge reaction to Constantine and the type of public theology that came over from Germany during the Second World War. Stanley Hauerwas is the biggest name here, and, drawing on earlier work of Yoder, he draws on anti-state church Mennonite and Anabaptist traditions to oppose Tillich's and Niebuhr's 'just war' state positions. There are very few figures who seem to support war now. This was emerging before 2003 but has obviously been even more mainstream since. All sorts of doctrines started to be reshuffled and publicly adjusted in the period 2005-7 and it has in my experienced filtered down to Oxford's clergy. Some is hard to argue against of course.

Do we still need Plato? Is my view of Plato simply too rigid? I am still trying to justify the type of transcendence I saw in the last decade. The question to ask is: has social change since exacerbated or eased my seemingly perennial concerns?

There are some other points too. If Ricoeur is



Ricoeur

Karl Barth

post-Hegel and post-Kantian, Deleuze is more solidly just anti-Hegel. But can the interface between the pre-linguistic and the practical, in a similar way to Kant, be related to Deleuze and his planes of immanence?

Claire Colebrook wrote several introductory books on Deleuze but has moved on recently to working with Hillis Miller on de Man's legacy (tellingly titled *The Disappearing Future*) and is now writing about Agamben. She says that until recently continental philosophy has been tied either to the German tradition of phenomenology or to French post-structuralist concerns with the conditions of language and textuality. Giorgio Agamben draws upon, and departs from, both these lines of thought by directing his entire corpus to the problem of life - political life, human life, animal life, and the life of art. Agamben's work poses the profound question for our time - just how exceptional are human beings? There is already talk of post-humanism. After Judith Butler on self-constructing one's gender, we get drone pilots as war heroes and Rosie Braidotti's cyber world of the post-human.

Here we get the closing in from above and below the human. What starts out as a green debate about us being too dominant over animals gets squeezed from a different plane, the post-human robotics side. Over time it seems under the 'inevitable' roll out of minority rights, human rights will eventually get extended to animals and robots. How exactly does this diminish us? Peter Singer probably isn't that bothered but others are, even though they seem powerless to stop the basic process. Having endless debates doesn't actually stop that much. We might not even do that. Western liberalism sees itself as the creator of these great enlightenment values. Equality is so much valued that there has to be a diminishing of ideas like higher culture. George Steiner must be an anachronism like Scruton or Brian Sewell. The 'nothing but human rights' position is the one point of contact I have with Scruton perhaps.

Anyway, as part of its incarnate embodied cosmological shift, today's theological students are now being asked to write essays on whether robots can be priests or take communion, as well as sex dolls.

Peter Brown is the key historian really who also really revisits Augustine and however I might have read the Middle Ages or at least late Antiquity, I was puzzled as to why Welby and Williams felt so comfortable re-visiting patristic authors. Surely, they would be too Platonic. But the stoic route was one way to disarm them (Foucault and Hadot) and if that failed there's Bourdieu. Even the Jesuit de Certeau I found didn't help that much. My original position was too fixed, one could argue, in its view of Augustine or Pascal which I got from reading about nineteen-sixties' existentialism. I did not embrace Bultmann and Tillich that much either, because I retained an interest in neo-medievalism if not neo-scholasticism that hadn't fully been deconstructed or read as post these figures.

Autumn Day

RAINER MARIA **RILKE**

(A translation of Rainer Maria Rilke's poem *Herbsttag* By David Burridge)

Lord, the time has come. The summer was long.
But now cast your shadows over the sun-dials,
and across pastures, let the winds go free.

At your behest, may late fruit ripen,
in two more days of southern sun,
until their juices, fully swollen,
release last sweetness into heavy wine.

Whoever has no house, will not build one now.
Whoever is alone, will remain a long time so;
Sleepless, they will read and write long letters,
wander to and fro along the avenues,
restive, among the scattering leaves.

Autumn Leaves

DAVID **BURRIDGE**

Their beauty a disguise for death.
Crimping edges once formed a living stretch.
Before pavement scatter they swathed the trees,
wrapped delight and mourning in a single vision.

Autumn Notes

DAVID **BURRIDGE**

"Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr"
("He who has no house will not build one now", Rilke: Herbsttag)

Setting out
No more building, secure all locks, its time.
No shuffle along avenues of shrivelled dreams,
but high-road striding, our nomads lured toward
that bright incision between earth and sky.

Church Porch
Autumn is a swallow's flight.
I feel their twitch-beat, they zag and swerve,
waiting for the call to flock skywards, avoiding
the inner door - a trap in old stone.

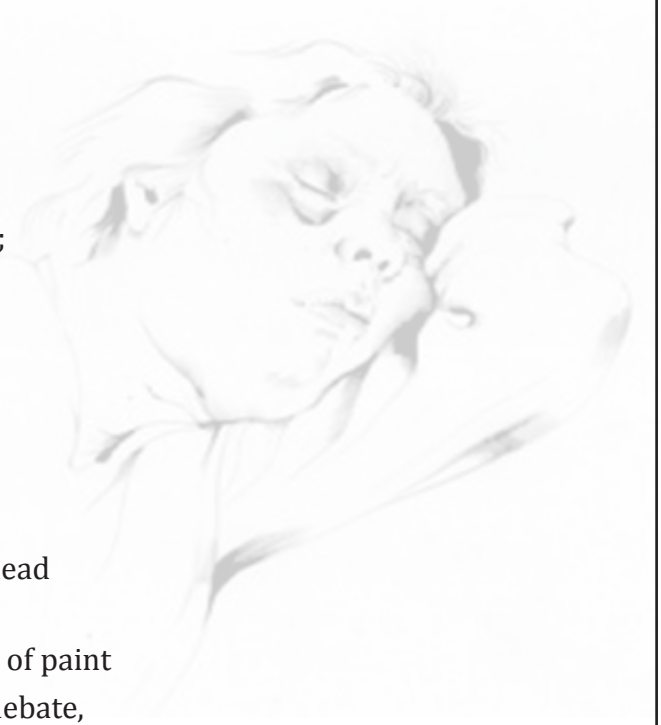
In the woods
Ferns point withered fingers towards
the bare-faced earth they once smothered.
The canopy flakes in a gentle down-pour,
what remains sparkles a gappy smile.
I am coated with ochrous light. The hard blue
eye above winks me a moment of warmth.

Of course, high summer is burnt out
and black nights will corner us.
In a turn of a day the sky may be crazed,
winter bones seized and wind lashed,
but for now, in this warm wash,
everything fits mortise-tight.

Inoperable

"In Erinnerung an Hilde."

DAVID BURRIDGE



She is fighting a bitter blanket war-
bed clothes crumpled in open revolt-
cries for the order she can't restore.
Working hands that once took charge;
tidied piles, tucked in corners, now
hover frail, grip-less – cannot smooth
the creases flat.

Dutiful relatives skirting her bed just
flickering shadows in the line of her
attention, she only sees those in her head

On the high wall before her, a smudge of paint
becomes a mouse engaging in bitter debate,
revealing his envy for the slither of cheese,
lying untouched on the hospital plate.

She smiles at the flowers brought into view.
Remarks – *They are beautiful but cut down;*
vase is a vessel of departure.

Joyful greetings for unseen visitors,
have they flown through the window
or descended gracefully from the ceiling?
Though their faces are to us obscure,
her countenance beams at people she knew.

She has something she wants to confide so
urges them quickly to cross the divide.
Her memories fade incomplete as
she slips simply into narcotic sleep,
leaving us stranded at her bed side
wondering whether we've survived.

'Oxford Impressions' by Monika Filipek

Morality as a defining feature of the Human

A review of: *On Human Nature*, by Roger Scruton, Princeton University Press, 2017.

RANJINI **GHOSH**

It is an undisputed fact that we human beings are animals governed by the laws of biology. We also exhibit a territorial imperative like the other lower order animals but when we do engage in a fight we do so in the name of higher ideals like justice, sovereignty or God. But the important question that confronted natural selection theorists was how to account for certain characteristics such as morality, self- consciousness and art that separate us from the lower animals. Charles Darwin thought that this step-wise wise development.

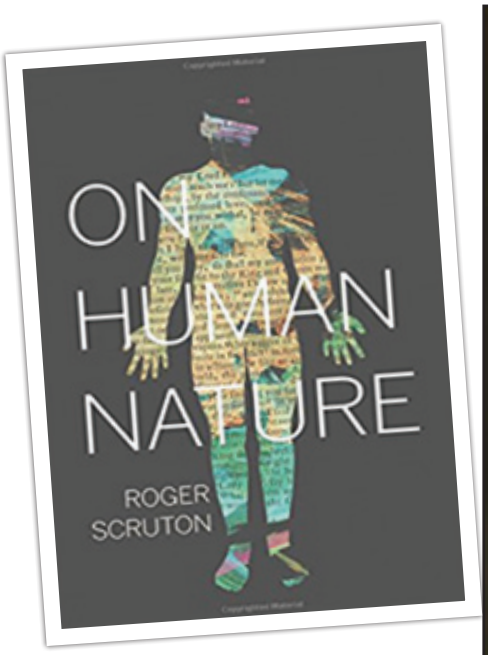
He considered our moral sense to be on a continuum with social instincts of other species. Richard Dawkins put forward the view that culture also develops along similar lines as the individual organism. Roger Scruton takes issue with these natural selection theorists and sets forth his thesis that human societies are communities of persons who organise the world in terms of moral concepts and it is in this respect that we fundamentally distinguish ourselves from other animals.

Natural selection theorists have explained the survival of species in terms of strategies of winning. Such theories essentially rely on a functionalist explanation of various traits including altruism. If a trait exists it is because it has a function. But Roger Scruton reminds us that such explanations cannot tell us about the causes of moral behaviour. Altruism exhibited by many animal species is not just a stable solution to genetic competition but there is something more to it. The answer to this lies in Kant's idea of the categorical imperative and practical reason that directs us to act in such a manner that can be willed as a universal law.

The game theory accounts of animal behaviour are inadequate for understanding our essential nature as human beings. **Kant emphasized that we are persons and not just beings**. We are autonomous rational agents bound by a moral law. Contrary to the thesis propounded by Dawkins that we are human animals, the **Kantian view distinguishes us from other animals precisely because of our capacity to act morally**. Scruton argues that what essentially distinguishes us from other animals us is the feature of responsibility.

Our world, unlike that of the other animals, is a world of rights, rewards and duties. He emphasises that we are not merely satisfied with causal explanations but instead search for reasons. We are imbued with certain emotions like resentment, envy, admiration and praise. All these flow from the idea of holding others accountable. Rights and duties are essential concomitants of this world view which we possess.

What also separates us from other animals is that we are not just conscious creatures but also self-conscious. **We are distinguished by our capacity for introspection**. We possess certain cognitive capacities that are not shared by other animals. Scruton sees the problem as an essentially philosophical one and not



On Human Nature

Roger Scruton

just biological. We are essentially embodied persons. Just like a painting of a face is not merely lines and dots but something over and above the dots and lines, so also the concept of personhood is a reality *sui generis*. **We seek justification of our own conduct and that of others. And hence we are constrained to move beyond mere causes to seeking reasons.** Notions of freedom, choice and accountability inevitably get linked to the concept of personhood. Philosophers like Heidegger, Sartre and Thomas Nagel have drawn our attention to the inescapable fact that as self-conscious subjects **we have a point of view on the world, a perspective**. Hegel had argued that self-consciousness emerges in us only when we encounter another person. This was the core idea of his master-slave dialectic.

The leitmotif of Roger Scruton's thesis is that as persons we are moral beings conscious of right and wrong, who judge others and are in turn judged by others. **We are not just individuals but our defining condition is one of deep individuality. We identify ourselves through time and we take responsibility for our past actions and we also make promises for the future. The laws of Hammurabi are an expression of this deep individuality.** We are essentially in relationship with others and this entails responsibilities and duties.

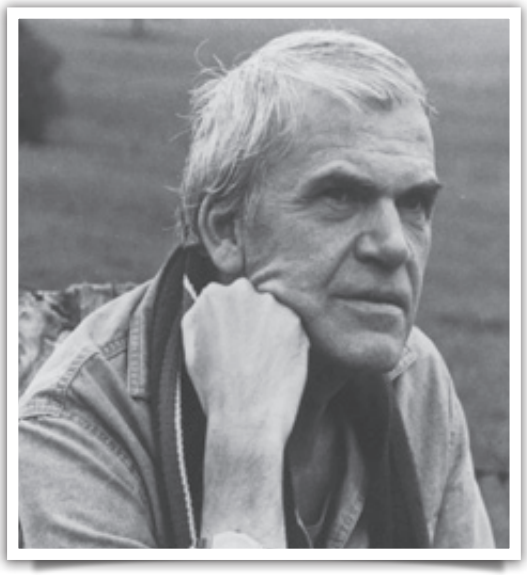
Scruton is critical of utilitarian moralists who subscribe to the reductionist view of all duties being essentially one of serving the larger good. He despises the consequentialist thinkers who see all moral problems as merely one of moral arithmetic. The famous trolley problems discussed by Peter Singer and Derek Parfit are all concerned with the best outcomes in moral dilemmas. They ignore the essential relations of rights and duties that bind us. Scruton argues that when we save our child from drowning instead of some stranger, then we do so because our child has a claim on us that others do not have. This follows from the fact that **we are accountable to each other and have obligations**. The present book makes compelling reading on the question of what makes us essentially human.

Notes on the Wednesday Meeting 1st of November *2017*

The Wednesday group had a very interesting meeting, as is usually the case. Various topics were discussed and here is a summary of the discussions.

David Clough had attended a Post-Kantian seminar on hallucination in Oxford and reported back to the group. It became the starting point for our meeting. But the discussion then took a serious turn when one of those attending brought up the topic of death: what theories could help us in the face of death? Poetry may help. David Burridge read a poem about his mother dying. How do we cope with the loss of a loved one? Is the pain of losing a loved one connected to the habit of expecting them to turn up everyday but they no longer do so? One of our members, Mike Simera, is a psychologist. He thought there are no hard and fast rules, but often feelings of guilt: 'if only I had done this…'

The discussion then turned to the views of Heidegger who talked about the human condition of what he called: 'Being towards Death'. This was thought by one member of the group to be a realistic attitude; another thought Heidegger is too dour. We can be in the 'now', we don't have to be mindful of the ending all the time, but if we are it should intensify the 'now'. In music and poetry there is a tension where the writer and composer try to 'hold off 'the ending.



Milan Kundera

Camus considered the problem of suicide. It is sometimes the case that some individual reviews his or her life and feels they cannot carry on, but this depression may be a temporary feeling. A hope for 'something to come' may help. Meditation was suggested as a cure for depression.

David Burridge read his translation of Rilke's poem 'Herbstag' – Autumn Day, as a response to the topic, as well as a poem of his own.

The Christian doctrine of resurrection was discussed in relation to death and grieving – was life given to those who have died immediately after death or do they wait for the Second Coming? One member though that those who died were translated 'out of time' on their death, time is destroyed for them so to speak. But the materialistic view is that there is nothing beyond death. Milan Kundera, the Czech writer, thinks we live on in terms of the lives of those who follow us. This is his sense of *Immortality*, a view which has recently been repeated by more than one philosopher who wrote on death.

Other topics

The poetry of Blake and Coleridge was discussed in terms of the polarities they believed in. If there is a heaven, there has to be a hell. There is a marriage of heaven and hell, so that creativity comes from opposites.

The topics of Modernity and Mythology also came up for discussion but not in any detail.

Paul Cockburn

Philosophers in Paintings

The editorial of this issue referred to and contrasted a few paintings with the theme of philosophers. There are more paintings that introduce other figures and suggest connections that don't come readily to the mind. For example, there was a mural that depicted famous personalities from the Romantic period in Britain and Germany and centred on a strange but interesting figure, Henry Crabb Robinson, who became the conduit between the two cultures.

Unfortunately, this mural was destroyed in a fire but there is a photograph of it that has survived. There might come a time to talk about it in the future.

To help the reader with visualising the contrasts made in the editorial, here are the three mentioned paintings:

The Editor

Raphael: The School of Athens (1509-1511)

Ernest Gebauer's portrait of Fichte (1812).

Joose Van Gent's portrait of St Thomas Aquinas (1475)

The ***Wednesday***

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Written by friends.. for friends

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