

The Wednesday



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group at Albion Beatnik - Oxford

Editorial

The Philosopher's Utopia

Philosophers, most of the time, are busy converting their contemporaries to their rational beliefs and dream of a just and humane society. They even thought of creating an ideal state or Utopia ruled by the philosophers, as in Plato's *Republic*. In the Islamic culture, around the tenth century of the Christian era, a secret group, calling itself The Brotherhood of Purity, became influential intellectually, and to some extent politically and religiously. They produced about fifty-one epistles on logic, mathematics, philosophy, theology, politics and nature. They were neo-platonic and they were responsible for propagating this kind of philosophy throughout the Middle Ages.

Umberto Eco in his novel *Foucault's Pendulum* links the philosophical and mystical secret societies in the Muslim world to similar movements later on in Europe, including the Rosicrucians, through the mediation of the Crusaders. But our concern here is not secret societies but the dream of philosophers to build their own society and change the world according to their vision by nurturing small groups of like-minded intellectuals.

This idea flourished during the Enlightenment and after, particularly around the time of the French Revolution. The German philosophers, responsible for the movement known as German Idealism, together with the German Romantics aspired to form a new vision of the world. This came about in the document known as: *The Oldest System Programme of German Idealism*. The authorship of this document is a matter of debate. Suggested authors are: Holderlin, Schelling or Hegel. The German Romantics also developed the idea of philosophising together (Symphilosophie).

Here in England there was a real push in the same direction but with a more practical context. Coleridge the poet, philosopher and critic, together with his friend the poet Southey, thought of creating a colony in America.

If we leave for the time being the fact that this might be seen as colonisation in disguise, they thought of creating a just society with the spirit of equality. They called it 'Pantisocracy' or the 'rule of all'. Some of what they wrote in letters and memoirs show a similar vision to the *Oldest System Programme*. Robert Southey writes in August 1794: '...When Coleridge and I are sawing down a tree, we shall discuss metaphysics; criticize poetry when hunting a buffalo; and write sonnets whilst following the plough. Our society will be of the most polished order.' Marx shows a similar dream when he wrote in the *German Ideology* about his future society in a Romantic spirit: '...to go hunting in the morning and fishing in the afternoon, to tend cattle in the evening and after supper to criticize,...' and again: 'In a communist society there are no painters but only people who engage in painting among other activities.'

Coleridge wrote in his magazine *The Friend* in 1809 some reflections on Pantisocracy: 'What I dared not expect from Government and whole nations, I hoped from Religion and a small company of chosen Individuals, and formed a plan, as harmless as it were extravagant, of trying the experiment of human Perfectibility on the banks of Susquahannah; where our little society, in its second generation, was to have combined the innocence of the patriarchal Age with the knowledge and genuine refinement of European culture...'

These, and other schemes, are dreams of the philosophers and those who are spiritually motivated: mystics, poets, musicians and artists generally. They may fail or may succeed. They represent the attempt of the soul to humanise the world, especially at times when avarice and barbarism takes over the human psyche and the historical scene. Our Wednesday group is one of these attempts to create a space for thinking and exchanging ideas and keeping the spirit of solidarity and comradeship.

The Editor

Time's Winged Chariot

Why then? Why there? Why not now?

How do we conceive of time? What does time mean for the life-cycles of the individual and civilizations? The following article reflects on these and more aspects of time:

NONA M. FERDON

We are children of the Enlightenment. One of the consequences of this is that we see time as linear, and we assume (for the most part) that despite all its ups and downs it will bring us progress. But time has been (and still is) conceived of in different ways. For early humanity, and for many today, time is seen as a chaotic mist of being: each day bringing an ever-recurrent rising of the sun (or not), hunger, tiredness, ageing and death. Yet there seems to be a mysterious cycle in human events – ‘To some generations, much is given. Of others much is expected.’

Throughout history time has been viewed darkly. As Aeschylus remarked many centuries ago: ‘Time in his ageing overtakes all things alike’. Over the millennia there have developed major concepts of historical time: chaotic time, circular time and linear time.

Chaotic time is conceived of as the dominant concept in the life of early humanity: events followed one by another randomly. This was the first intuition of time. Changing of events was utterly beyond human control or comprehension. It is also the life and time of to a small child today.

Cyclical time originated when our species began to link natural cycles of planetary events (lunar months, solar years, diurnal rotations) with related cycles of human activity (sleeping, waking, hunting, feasting). Cyclical time conquered chaos by repetition. The apparent control our hunter-farmer ancestors earned by performing the right deed at the right moment in a perpetual cycle. Eventually, great cycles came to mark the duration

of kingdoms and prophecies propelled by elaborate rituals resembling the modern seasonal holidays.

Unlike chaotic time, cyclical time in classical societies prescribed moral dimension; a measure by which each generation could compare its behaviour with that of its ancestors. Yet even as belief in cyclical time overcame the chaotic, primitive view, it left less room for what modern people think of as originality and creativity.

Over the millennia linear time was conceived as a unique (and usually progressing) story with an absolute beginning and perhaps an absolute end. The Greeks sometimes hoped that Promethean reason might deliver mankind from perpetual destitution - while the Romans believed that a powerful polity could endow its citizens with a glorious destiny. The rise and spread of the great western monotheisms inspired the hope that mankind was meant for more than just Fortune's Wheel. The radical new concept of personal and historical time is a directional drama. Time begins with a fall from grace, struggles forward in immediate sequence of trials, failures, revelations, and divine intervention, and ends with redemption and entry into the kingdom of God.

This required hundreds of years to catch on, but when it did, it changed the world. Linear, unidirectional time as outlined by the early Christians remained a relatively arcane idea, but in the sixteenth century the Reformation and the spread of the printed gospel ushered in a new urgency to linear history. In the western world ordinary people began speculating about historical signs of the ‘final coming’ of Christ and they began

to conceive of new concepts, expectations and sects, according to their expectations.

Two centuries later the Enlightenment transmuted the question of linearity – (‘The heavenly city of the 18th century philosophers’) to that of the ‘Age of Reason’ –which was very far from that. Voltaire, Hume, Diderot, and Locke were mentally living in a Medieval world. These philosophers ‘demolished the Heavenly City of Saint Augustine only to rebuild it with more up-to-date materials.’

But what are these rhythms? They are patterns of nature and history, what Schlesinger called ‘the natural life of humanity’ The Romans gave it a name – the *Saeculum*. They are what Toynbee called histories’ ‘long cycle’. And cycles of human affairs are considered to be approximately the life of a known human life.

Life beats to the four phases of human life, each about 20 years or so in length; what the ancient Greeks called ‘ginos’ and what we call generation (and what I would like to call ‘fuzzy genos’. (Few people have lived 20 generations. Yet the length of a human life, under the best of circumstances, is considered to be 120 years.) I use the designation ‘fuzzy generations’ because people age at a different rate – some are mature in their late teens while other are old at 32

And history also beats to an underlying temporal beat. Generations, and therefore recurring archetypes, create and perpetuate histories, seasonal quality and together, they explain how and why cycles occur.

Today’s world, childhood memories trigger a visceral event. Our limbic systems (Amygdales, Hippocampus, etc.) are hard-wired to wake and respond to memories of a shared adolescent community. We carry deeply felt associations with what has happened at various points in our lives and our pineal gland proceeds to set off a deluge of chemical reactions throughout our bodies. As we grow older, we remember exactly what we were doing at the time of major events in history and we realise that the total of such events, has in many ways, shaped the person we are – and the



The Winged Chariot of Time

person we are becoming. It is through this linkage of a biology, ageing, and shared experience, that, reproduced across generations, that history applies personal relevance.

Human history is made of lives, coursing through time from birth to death. The full sweep of human civilisation is but the sum of this. As a full human life is divided into four phases childhood, young adulthood, midlife, and elderhood.

This dynamic has recurred throughout history. The first, chaotic, stage historically is considered to be a ‘high’ - an upbeat era weakening individualism, new civic order emerges and old values decay.

The second fuzzy cohort era is an ‘awakening’, a passionate time of spiritual upheaval, when the civic order comes under attract from a new value regime.

The third era is an ‘unravelling’, a downcast era of strengthening individualism and weakened institutions: when the old civic order decays and the new values regime arises. ‘Things fall apart, the centre does not hold.’

The fourth era is a ‘crisis’, a divisive era of secular upheaval, when the value regime propels the replacement of the old civic order with a new one.

Winston Churchill once said ‘the further backward you look, the further forward you can see.’

And we are now in a ‘crisis’ period of history.

Text and Reality: Philosophical Take on Literature

The advance of technology is turning us into texts. Are we losing control over our reality? What will happen to our memory in a very accelerating age? What is the relationship between text, reader and critic? The following article looks at this debate from the contrasted views of Ricoeur, Edward Said and others:

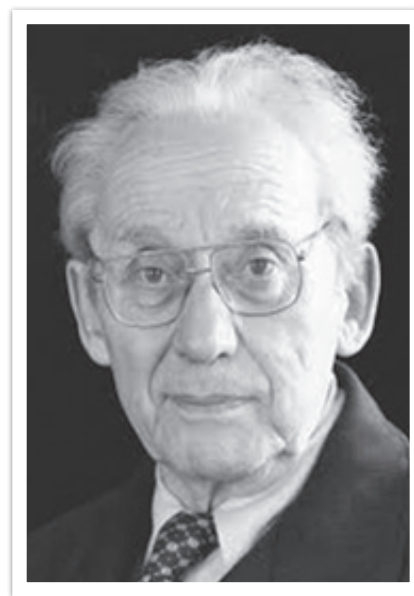
DAVID CLOUGH

Here I try to contrast albeit briefly two directions we face in philosophy, literature and life. In Jameson's *The Antinomies of Post Modernity* (1998) and his 1994 book *The Seeds of Time*, he asks relevantly: what then or now is the opposite of change if the sense of eternal or permanence that Valéry thought was necessary for art is simply replaced by Virilio's speed or velocity, which he links to our styles of representation?

Habermas, we know, has a go at Calvino's fiction as a trope of post-modernism or post-structuralism but he appeals to Searle and Austin's performativity. Speech acts have a more real effect in the real world that we don't get from reading a post-modern novel or to some extent fiction in general. There's something a bit Jungian about Calvino as Habermas shows in his analysis of the novel '*If on a Winter's Night a traveller*'. The reader is split into anima and animus, then the ideal artist is introduced. Is this a Jungian conception of the Self? But that's only an aside. Calvino is closer to Derrida, in Habermas's view, and both are too totalised so there is nothing outside. Of course, Derrida's might challenge that. Going further than either Ricoeur or Hayden White, Calvino is supposed by Habermas to collapse the distinction between literature and reality, since the reader is being

addressed in the second person and this turns the reader effectively into a member of the cast or a character. Calvino's story is literally then realised within the pages of the book and nowhere else.

Now one might argue that no stories are replicated exactly in the real world but the idea of the sense of a relation to the world is usually more important than what goes into an abstract text. All the scenes occur in reading rooms, bookshops and publisher's offices. Is



Paul Ricoeur

there not a loss of performativity that speech acts still have in the real world, Habermas will say?

In short, a reader has to work harder at the context than the hearer. We are more specifically challenged to take a position in interpersonal exchanges than when we are reading text. There, we can take our time, and be indifferent without being rude. How does this then affect Ricoeur's attempt to translate social action into text. Are its critics like Edward Said, Giddens and Thompson not raising similar points about forces outside the text? I think they are but at least Ricoeur still thinks a text points towards a reality out there.

Ricoeur's Model of the Text

Ricoeur model of the text is contained in one of his 1970's essays called *From Text to Action* which, basically implies action can be expressed as a text. Ricoeur was a philosopher rather than a critic. But the general stance of what Said argues below is similar. Ricoeur certainly does navigate a similar world of Marxism, structuralism, linguistics, and psychoanalysis though he does it from his French Protestant point of view. He is neither Foucault nor Derrida. I feel Said is closer to them in a way but his essay might suggest otherwise.

Edward Said was one of Ricoeur's critics feeling that Ricoeur's model of the text was too limited. Similar critiques were made by Anthony Giddens and even Ricoeur's Habermasian translator John B Thompson who had been instrumental in releasing Ricoeur's essays in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*.

Edward Said expressed a similar theme in an essay about the reader, the author and the critic. We get increasingly distant from everyday reality. Theory ends up as a kind of parody perhaps. (See: *The World, the Text,*



Edward Said with the Palestinian Poet Mahmoud Darwish

and the Critic. See also *Edward Said and the Work of the Critic: Speaking Truth to Power*.) The publisher of *The World, the Text, and the Critic* says that this extraordinarily wide-ranging work represents a new departure for contemporary literary theory as it was in 1983. Said demonstrates that modern critical discourse has been impressively strengthened by the writings of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, for example, and by such influences as Marxism, structuralism, linguistics, and psychoanalysis. He argues, however, that the various methods and schools have had a crippling effect through their tendency to force works of literature to meet the requirements of a theory or system, ignoring the complex affiliations binding the texts to the world. According to Said in this essay, the critic must maintain a distance both from critical systems and from the dogmas and orthodoxies of the dominant culture. He advocates freedom of consciousness and responsiveness to history, to the exigencies of the text, to political, social, and human values, to the heterogeneity of human experience. These characteristics are exemplified in his own analyses of individual authors and works.

However, in an essay called '*Phenomenology*

and *Hermeneutics*' in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* Ricoeur says that Husserl is still too idealist but then Said adds here that he is too scientific. Even JB Thompson himself is actually somewhat critical of Ricoeur.

Writing ethnography does produce texts but Ricoeur's quest for meaning is not located in exactly the same discourse area. Culture can be seen as assembled texts of documented actions as imaginative work made from social materials. Thompson thinks Ricoeur too abstractly reifies the actions. In effect Thompson places less, emphasis than Ricoeur on the semantic autonomy of the text. Responding perhaps to the controversy around Said's *Orientalism* James Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture* placed Derrida style critique in a new narrative that avoided either celebrating or simply lamenting the West's position. But to avoid master narratives Clifford turned to describing only local ones. But this might seem close to the debate between Said and Lyotard in Hussain's book. Localised subalterns could again emerge instead of generalised ones.

Text, Speed and Virtual Reality

The problem with dismissing Calvino is that current digital simulations of reality are not that hugely distinct from the problems Habermas was discussing. We are in virtual reality (or CGI) illusions walking through totally simulated spaces. I accept that when chat rooms include live conversation.

It has got some of the character of the old political interpersonal, but in textual exchanges and email we are arguably more in the positions of readers, ignoring or delaying our responses. Of course, current concern is quite the opposite, that angry and bullying behaviour also commonly arises in such rapid access to communication. The speech acts have more real affects and effects in the real world than internet blogs. They give us time

to reply but also to ignore.

It is not just Paul Virilio who's a doomster about speed. In *Technics and Time* Vol 2, Bernard Stiegler says technics is not the tool of memory but the thing itself. Instrumentalism is dead even in Heidegger or Weber. In Deleuze de-territorialisation has been forming (rhizomatic) networks since the start of exteriorisation. So goodbye calendar, chronicle and archive which are just texts. I agree that there is the temporary problem of the living witness, or living memory.

There is an immediate delivery, but as speed increases still faster, there is still a lag because due to Epimetheia we cannot experience it as fast as it now happens. Conscious processing itself is now seen as too slow. This aspect of literature has after all been fairly dominant reaching a kind of peak around Proust, I suppose. But now like our robots and computers we too can process a bit faster than our conscious experience. Hence, we push the adaptive unconscious aspects now.

If one considers the narrative nature of texts and how, according to the philosophical hermeneutics of Ricoeur, narratives shape reality or project new modes of being-in-the-world by virtue of their metaphoric power of referencing, this is because the kind of interpretation that arises in textual understanding is not a self-projection of meaning but an encounter with something entirely new, or 'the disclosure of new modes of being'. At least Todd Mei has argued this. But Edward Said disagreed with Ricoeur's narrow hermeneutic of textual worldliness and JB Thompson says writing ethnography does produce texts. But Ricoeur's quest for meaning is not located in the same discourse area.

Text and Memory

If Derrida seemed to like the freeing of the gift from anthropology and representation in his

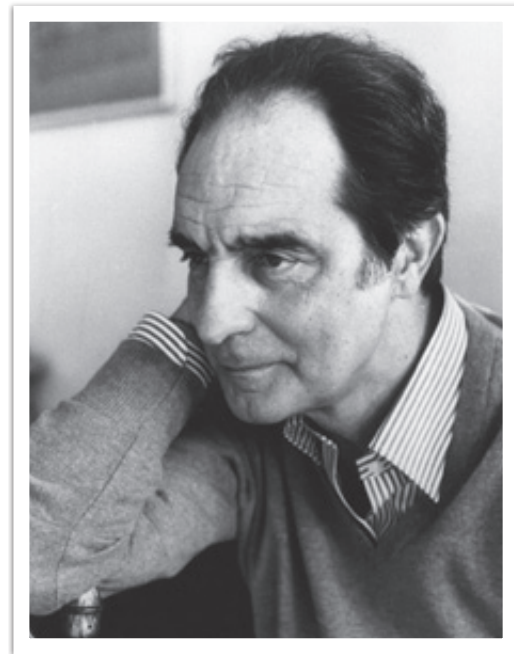
essay (*The Gift of Nature in Mauss*), Ricoeur is still exchanging objects as he is when seeing something forgotten as like something you can't see. Memory enters the debate, especially with sensitive political and national issues.

Before going to the full blown post-colonial debate, there is also the issue of generalised justice across national borders. Rawls veil of ignorance and blind justice is about great distance. But Ricoeur wants the seemingly more local sense of the golden rule to precede Rawls version of procedural justice.

Stephen Mulhall may think that Heidegger avoids the interpersonal by emphasising that instead of partially reading another's mind, or even standing in his shoes, we simply share the same thrownness and coping in a common world. But for Said and other post-colonial thinkers the encultured worlds are not actually the same. Heidegger's idea must be pre-cultural. But the issue with Ricoeur is more about distance. Others affect me and the formation of my character etc. It is more like my extended self and other approach.

Watching old episodes of *Time Team*, one sometimes sees Mike Parker Pearson, the doyen anthropologist of death and burial. On the show about Barra in the far north he talked about how people still carried human remains with them until the point when memory passed into oblivion or forgetting. Yet retrieval is very attractive right now. Since the start of either the New Age or the supposed Post-Modern Era in the late 1980s and early 1990s the memory industry still seems to roll on even if Hilary Mantel at times sounds more like Calvino. For her once you are dead you are fiction.

Actually, vintage and memory culture doesn't really seem to be that challenged by the impending automation and robotic age. We seem instead to be tending to use the impending leisure space to form benign utopic niches as



Italo Calvino

the recent BBC4 *Utopia* programme seemed to suggest. Of course, most of the culture we are retrieving is still fairly recent most of the time. *Time Team* itself is a thing of the past, but only just. It is a living memory.

Back to Calvino

Going further than either Ricoeur or Hayden White, Calvino, with whom we started, is supposed by Habermas to collapse the distinction between literature and reality. However, one might argue that no stories are replicated exactly in the real world but the idea of a sense of correlation is important.

As the world contracts into warring essentialist identities the problems of discourse and representation come to the fore again. Is there a straight dichotomy between representation and misrepresentation? Is any representation ever wholly true? Said's own complex identity should proffer a more Ricoeurian response perhaps than is currently happening. In my view, Said's basic humanism seems closer to Ricoeur and conflicts with Foucault, Deleuze and others.

Unplugged: A Critique Of The Experience Machine

There is a growing tendency towards a reductive account of the self; an account that conceives it as a machine. There is also a growing reliance on machines for providing pleasure and for living a solitary existence and disengagement from social reality. The following article argues for sociability as a human need and a self-flourishing that depends on a social context:

DAVID BURRIDGE

I am going to argue that the notion of such a machine runs counter to the human concept of personal satisfaction, even though I must accept that drug abusers and some religious fanatics might seek a reverie of 'plugged-in' satisfaction.

Nozick's questions are: Would you plug in? And what else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside? We have evolved and by definition survived as a species because we belong and need to belong in order to achieve anything of lasting value. The process of 'plugging-in' would by definition be a process of isolation and would deny us the relationships that potentially give us complete human satisfaction.

The same process would obviously eliminate achievement as everything would appear to be on tap. I would argue that human beings are by nature a species of workers (as much as any bee or ant) and need the satisfaction of achievement by our own efforts.

It might be argued that at the highest level we are unique individuals and the path to enlightenment would lead us to focus on our higher personal needs. Once these have been achieved, then the lower self can be disposed of and some process of plugging-in could be used to leave us totally satisfied, until our physical blobs give out.

It's worth considering Maslow's hierarchy of needs in respect of this argument. His theory assumed that people typically are continuously in a motivational state, but the nature of the motivation is fluctuating and complex; further, human beings rarely reach a state of complete

satisfaction except for a short time. As one desire is satisfied another arises in its place. If this is true then any programme of needs would be unstable and unpredictable. I would argue that the pattern of satisfaction is a function of the individual's living experience and separated from that, the satisfaction would cease to exist. *Having satisfied the immediate hunger of his family with berries, the caveman looks to the horizon and considers how light and moisture makes things grow. He has the overriding desire to cultivate his own plants.*

If we were separated from reality for too long we would lose the power or the rationale for choosing and the machined satisfactions would become vague, bland seeps of pleasure, in which our brains would surely dissolve. But let us look further into Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is a description of the evolution of the individual and his needs.

At the base we have physiological needs. Hunger and thirst focus the driving force of all animal survival and when satisfied we can move on upwards. Or can we? Don't we wrap our eating and drinking into social activities? Doesn't over- and under-consumption become an expression of an inner agony? Anyone who has undergone an operation knows that it is technically possible to provide the essential nutrients through a tube. But the joy of biting and chewing again with friends and family is every patient's yearning.

Once the physiological needs are reasonably met we become concerned for our safety and protection. Here it might be argued that tapped into a perfect machine this

of all needs would be removed automatically. But that is a superficial understanding of this level of need. Implicit in this level of needs-satisfaction is the particular need to protect ourselves or loved ones. To draw on Kant - we might say that there is an *A-Priori* cognition in us that responds to a sensory experience that might constitute a threat. We are configured to be *protectors* and this is therefore a need to be satisfied which could not be satisfied in a passive condition.

Once we feel safe and fed we have the need to love, enjoy fellowship and friendship. We need to belong. I would argue this need for association is not an isolated step on the way up, but immerses our whole being. Like the blackbird outside we intensively seek to feed our young, protect our own. We have a desire to be together that could never be provided for attached to electrodes. The ideology of the right that has developed in recent decades has sought to deny the existence of a social entity. I think they are dangerously wrong. In any civilised society there are social, and individual interest and needs; both are legitimate and should not be ignored. Therefore, separating ourselves into a process for pure individual satisfaction would not only be unachievable but also ethically wrong.

At the top of the hill we have ego and self-fulfilment. We actualise ourselves with self-confidence, self-fulfilment, and recognition of our status. Realisation of our potential. It might be argued that a wonderful machine could chemically programme the feelings we get from these experiences and we could lie there delighting in them. This is a dangerous myth.

Self-fulfilment can, I would argue can only, be realised or even expressed through our interaction with our fellow human beings.

I have so far assumed that the mind is a simple unit of current consciousness. But of course there is memory and this is not just a passive computer file. It actively reminds us, among other things of our 'shadow selves' and any extended period of being plugged-in might lead to a confrontation with the unconscious.

Even if we don't meet the same mythical creatures that Jung encountered in his dreams, there may be unpleasant encounters stirred up by the guilty feeling that we were not fulfilling our social responsibilities. This would be outside the control of the machine. Or would it?

Hume would say that the machine would provide our



senses with colour, weight and consistency of a tasty piece of bread, we would not need to be concerned with nourishment - that would be part of the machine's special powers. We would merely need to distinctly conceive each of the images provided to make sense of them. In fact, he would probably argue that we are already connected up to such a machine.

Descartes would say that: I am a thing which thinks, doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels. I exist even though I should always sleep and though - *the machine* - employed all its ingenuity in deceiving me, it would be evident that it is I who doubt. I am a real thing and really exist. No need to plug-in, the truth lies inside him.

Mystics over the centuries and within very different religious traditions have sought to reach out beyond the pain and struggle of life and find a new equilibrium unaffected by pain and desire. This has usually involved separating themselves from the world, first physically and then mentally, through meditational practices. This is the opposite experience to the pleasure machine. In fact, they would be seeking freedom from the pleasures that would be the popular choices.

In conclusion I would say that we can only be fulfilled as human beings by remaining 'unplugged'. On an individual level we have inner capacity to imagine, reason and create ideas which require no machine. On a social level we need to belong and express ourselves through relationships and culture. The survival of our species will only be assured if we give life to our social values rather than narrowing down to self-interest.

We are only genuinely satisfied through what we achieve, which by definition means hard work. The image of someone lying in a heap, being pleasure-pumped is a grotesque fantasy is a virtual hell.

The Music Lesson

DAVID BURRIDGE

The first time I heard it -just been caned,
sting still dancing on my fingers,
a lesson in rhythm he called it.

Outside I would have bawled.
In class, badge of honour,
sweeter than syrup.
So, bit hard and swallowed deep.

Shiny black disc drawn from its sleeve,
another dose of Swan Lake?
No! The barely electric gramophone
Jumped and howled a new sound.

From the first shout of the trumpet
my hurt was tuned. Rhythm in a hurry-
each one played his own thing -
in one holy weave.

My pulse had hardly started,
the 3 minutes were at an end.
Disc lifted never played again

In those days Jazz was never heard
except in dark cellars, barred by bruisers.
Tin can tunes is all they gave us-
abstained until old enough to choose

Later I became cool, no air-guitar for me.
I would swing with Miles and Coltrane
You must have heard me on Kind of Blue?

I saw a photo of some old-timers
playing with their faces to the wall.
Remembered my classroom pain,
how those guys had played my tune,
fifty years on still do.



“the River of Life” by Anona Greening



The Eccentric Path

‘There are two ideals of our being: a condition of the highest simplicity, in which our needs are in harmony with themselves, with our powers, with all with which we are connected simply through the organization of our nature, without any effort on our part; and a condition of the highest cultivation, where the same end would be achieved through infinitely variegated and intensified needs and powers, through the organization which we are capable of giving to ourselves. The eccentric path [*exzentrische Bahn*] along which man, in general and in particular, travels from the one point (of more or less pure simplicity) to the other (of more or less completed cultivation) appears to be, in its essential directions, always the same’.

(Holderlin: *Hyperion* Fragment, 1794)

Philosophical Reflections

DAVID JONES

Kant

Is the philosophy of Kant relevant to people today?

Immanuel Kant has provided one or two intellectual ‘mountains’ which for some who are stuck in one place might seem like an obstacle which prevents them seeing very far. However, for those who take some pleasure in the exercise of will, they provide the opportunity to get to a higher perspective from which new vistas can be seen.

What is an example of ‘Synthetic a-priori’?

Take, as an example, the pure concept of ‘a line’. This concept does not contain or imply any particular length or direction in the way that the concept “bachelor” contains

the concept ‘unmarried’. The new synthetic concept of ‘a line of a particular length’ or ‘a line of a particular direction’ or ‘a line of a particular length in a particular direction’ requires a synthesis of the original pure concept of line with other distinct concepts of particular length and direction. The truth or type of reality of such a synthetic construction is not logically derived from any empirical observation which is a way to say that it is not true ‘a-posteriori’ but it is true ‘a-priori’.

The term a-priori does not mean *temporally* prior, it means *logically* prior. Its origin may be found by reading the two sections collected in the volume by Aristotle known as the ‘Organon’ called ‘prior analytics’ and ‘posterior analytics’.

Moral Philosophy

Does Philosophy support a particular moral view?

Philosophers do not advocate particular moral imperatives. That is something religious and political movements do. Philosophers study the many moral imperatives that are practiced or preached and try to identify the different types of criterion criteria that are used in judgements to justify that actions are considered to be either good or bad, right or wrong, better or worse etc. Philosophers look for the otherwise hidden presuppositions that the cultural norms of behaviour imply.

Unfortunately, there are some writers who having identified several kinds of moral



Kant

justification such as: what furthers the human developmental fulfilment of the person doing an action; or focusing the judgement exclusively on the aggregate outcomes of an action; or whether an action complies with an accepted rule etc then feel obliged to make the judgement that there can only be allowed to be one true type of moral justification and go on to argue against the other ways in which moral judgements are justified.

When a government body discusses a proposal for a new law they might be guided by imagining the outcome. When a new law exists people expect everyone to be treated absolutely fairly and be judged on whether they actually broke the law or not. From this example it is clear that we all use more than one type of basis for moral judgements and that it is not really philosophical to argue that there is only one true basis for moral judgements.

Particular considerations of potential actions are best informed by taking into account the several general moral principles that can be acquired from the resources of philosophy. Free individuals cannot avoid responsibility for their judgements by mechanically following any abstract principles or systems.

The Scope of Moral Philosophy

Moral philosophy is generally about the various criteria that are taken into account when a choice is made concerning an action. Some people limit the scope of what is a 'moral' choice to those which will affect other people. However, it is interesting to consider a person alone on an island. If the person wasted resources then his 'present self' might resent the behaviour of his 'past self'. From this it might be seen that, in some way, we have responsibilities for our standards of conduct for their effects upon ourselves in addition to the effects our actions and failures to act have on other people.

Plato and Education

What does Plato say about education?

When Plato discusses education, he refers to a theory of human development under which the basic awareness of particular things and bodily sensations are evolved towards a consciousness that is not dependent on using a bodily instrument, and the subject material of that consciousness concerns unchanging forms of being of the highest degree of generality.

Unfortunately, this is not really what most people are thinking of today when they refer to education.

Evil

Does evil really exist?

The type of existence attributed to 'evil' would depend on the criterion used for 'existence'. At one period of history people argued that there was only one god. That period was followed by one in which thinkers argued that there is only one true criterion for 'existence' such as materialism, physicalism, etc. Perhaps it is more fruitful to consider, as did Aristotle, the various ways in which people say that things 'are'. For example, consider the question 'do images exist?' It would be strange to argue that images do not 'exist', while they might usually be considered to be less 'real' than what they are images of. Perhaps it is important to note that the type of 'existence' an image has is 'dependent' upon the type of 'existence' of the thing of which the image is a representation. This 'dependency' might be denoted as a 'relational' type of existence. A well known suggestion concerning the reality of evil is that it does not exist at all, being no more than a name we apply to an 'absence' of 'good'. In the complete absence of 'evil', then, would there be 'good'?

Glastonbury, My Magical Mystery Tor

FRED COUSINS

As a young boy I had heard of Glastonbury, famous for its music festivals. Since T Rex headlined in 1970, Glastonbury has been, and still is, the festival of festivals. So, a couple of years ago I headed off to Glastonbury, not to the festival - just to visit the town to see what it had to offer and what made Glastonbury, Glastonbury.

Well, four or five miles before you get to the town you are greeted with the sight of Glastonbury Tor. It dominates the skyline. It is this perfect hill with a castle like building on the top.

Then as you drive into the town itself there is a feeling of peace and there is an energy to the place. It's like going back in time somehow,

with its gothic shops, and hippy shops, shops that sell strange items you couldn't get anywhere else.

The car park in the middle of town is right next to the entrance of Glastonbury Abbey which dates back to the 7th century. This was my first port of call, and what a place it was. I had heard ley lines mentioned in different conversations regarding Glastonbury but never really understood what they were. Little did I know that I was about to find out.

The sky was blue, spring was in the air. The spring flowers were flowering and the trees were in bud, just waiting to explode into life.

As I walked I saw a sign amongst the ruins so



A picture, I put the daffodil there!

I walked towards it. The sign stated: *Site of King Arthur's Tomb from the year 1191*. I had stumbled upon magic and myth,

I simply had to know more. I sat down on a bench, got out my I pad and googled 'ley lines'. I found, 'ley lines or earth dragon lines' and I began to read. I needed to know more, the peace and tranquillity of my surroundings was sublime, so I read.

The earth, on a planetary scale has a number of major channels or super highways of power which are made up of subtle electromagnetic energies which are not visible to ordinary sight. I read more, gripped by what I had found. As these highways of power encircle the earth they sometimes meet in special places and are recognised as sacred sights like Stonehenge and Avebury to name but two.

What makes Glastonbury so special and feel so powerful, on a spiritual level, is that the double line crosses itself three times in the town, at the Abbey ruins, the Chalice Well gardens and the Glastonbury Tor.

I spent some time soaking up the atmosphere. There was so much going on with spring entering the afternoon, and the ruins, King Arthur and Guinevere's tomb. I spent time reflecting on what I had discovered.



The flowers

I left the grounds through the gift shop and headed for the town, I pondered the ley lines and earth dragon lines: there certainly was energy there. I chatted with a lady in one of the hippy shops. I asked her where I should eat and she told me the oldest pub in Glastonbury was The George and Pilgrim dating back to 1542 and that the food was good. So, off I went to sup an ale and meet the folk that make this place what it is. This was my first afternoon here, day one had just begun.

The Wednesday

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The Wednesday

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