

The *Wednesday*



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group at Albion Beatnik - Oxford

Editorial

The Romantic Absolute

Fichte ignited the search for the Absolute by grounding the self and nature into the Absolute subjectivity (Absolute I). He considered this as a principle of knowledge as well. His philosophy was foundational. It is based on Absolute subjectivity. He thought that the Absolute is the point at which there will be an identity of subject and object. When the self reflects on its ground, then subject and object are one, and we have self-consciousness. He defines this unity as an Absolute I.

But the Romantics (Niethammer, Holderlin and Novalis) raised questions about this Absolute I. They questioned Fichte on two grounds: Could there be a first principle in philosophy? And could subjectivity be the ground of itself?

It was Niethammer who first objected that any first principle needed a grounding principle, and this would lead to regress. Philosophy would never be foundational and Fichte's attempt was futile. A similar idea was then voiced by Friedrich Schlegel. Both thinkers thought that philosophy should start in the middle, since it can't have a grounding principle.

In fairness to Fichte, he thought that the self-positing itself is self-evident, much like Descartes. But the question then is, who is doing the positing? Is it another I or something different? How are we going to gain knowledge of this ground of the I? Holderlin took this further and argued that the 'I am I' is a judgment, but asked: who is judging? Is it another I? If it is we have to start again. If it is not, how do we come to know anything about it because any reflection on it will presuppose the division of subject – object? Holderlin thinks that the identity of subject - object is not a stable situation since it will quickly fall apart into its

components. He suggested instead that there is Being which is pre-supposed by this identity. It is a unity beyond identity. But this Being is not open to reflection, or let say conceptual reflection.

Novalis came to the problem from a different angle. He thought that the Absolute is a limit concept; it is the limit of our conception. Novalis said that we seek the unconditioned but we always end up with the conditioned. This might sound like a restriction on our knowledge in the way Kant thought of metaphysics. But it is not, since Novalis allows a non-conceptual way of approaching the Absolute, say through art and poetry. He calls it a feeling for the Absolute and a longing. Novalis may have been here influenced by Friedrich Jacobi. Incidentally, Jacobi thought that philosophy can't reach a first principle but must take it on faith.

This part of the thinking of the German Romantic is very difficult since most of it has been left in notes and fragments. But the point to be made here is that there was a strong religious nature to their Absolute. However, there is an increasing trend to eliminate any transcendent aspect in philosophy and to give it more immanent interpretation. This has happened with Hegel's idea of the Absolute that is worth a separate treatment. Also, the German Romantics are treated for the most part as a footnote to the development of Transcendental Idealism and not as philosophers in their own right. But the picture is now changing with the making of more and more of their texts available in different languages. They may not have generated a system, but they revealed the short-sightedness of some philosophical thinking in their time and beyond and generated renewed interest in the Absolute and the value of art.

The Editor

Freedom From Vs. Freedom To Reading Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm is at the cross road of philosophy, psychology and sociology. In this article, and more to come, there will be comments on his main ideas and their relevance to our time:

DAVID BURRIDGE

Fromm



Someone once asked me whether or not I believe in social progress. My knee-jerk reaction was to say no. A quick review of some horrors that are going on in the world today would easily justify my answer. Human beings do seem to be obsessed with the need to dominate and destroy each other. Nevertheless I want to believe that things can get better, if we genuinely head in the right direction. The road to freedom is so often yearned for, that we should know just what is the right direction (without using *Satnav*). I believe that the most important route has been mapped by Erich Fromm in his book *The Fear of Freedom*. A book that brilliantly explores the interaction between sociological and psychological factors. Fromm wrote it after having to leave Nazi Germany but his understanding of why people were attracted to Nazism was very balanced and inciteful. Later in *The Sane Society* he was equally able to criticise unbridled capitalism in the US, in an age when it was not fashionable to criticise American Industry.

He defines freedom as a human experience, one which we always have an inherent desire to achieve. Well what is it? Is it the absence of external pressure or the achievement of something substantial?

Individuation is a natural psychological process. We need to belong of course, to family community, work, and political /religious community. But we also want to actualise ourselves in the context of the community around us. If I want to write a poem to give vent to my creativity I would be more than delighted if it was read or heard and accepted by the world I live in. But a sense of completion is actually

achieved the moment the poem is complete. I can find my completeness through freedom to create. Many great artists and writers have struggled to break away from the social control to seek this freedom. Then felt the cold wind of emptiness and craved to get back somehow (classically this was the case with the German Romantics).

There is a powerful need to belong and Fromm explained:

Every Society is characterised by a certain level of individuation beyond which the normal individual cannot go.

Clearly, we have social responsibilities and must respect rules and laws that are meant to secure us to that society. But it can be more than this. Separation from a world which has had a powerful moral control over you and all your forbears, might at first seem like liberation but then quickly produces isolation, powerlessness and anxiety. In a strong religious community for example you will have a set of beliefs which have a valence in the community, so by enacting those beliefs you get social approval, esteem and maybe security of social and economic position. If you are an artist and are given endless contracts, by your cardinal, for religious paintings then your 'I' is beautifully in with the 'WE'. If you then breach a dogma with your work and are excommunicated then you are in the wilderness with all the resulting loss of security. Or on the other hand it might lead you to a whole new vista of creation. Fromm asserted on the one hand a social or religious community blocks your development as a free self-determining, productive

individual and on the other hand identity with a clan or religion gives an individual security.

Growing individuation means growing isolation-----the feeling of one's own powerlessness and insignificance as an individual.

With the Reformation the individual was no longer bound by a fixed social and religious system. The individual was deemed to have a direct relationship with God, not through a priest. This development of Lutheran and Calvinistic cultures meant that the individual was free to make his own way in life:

The individual was no longer bound by a fixed social system ---he was allowed and expected to succeed in personal gains as far as his intelligence courage, thrift or luck would lead him.

Great news for the high performers, but by what we know from the industrial revolution, people created machines and became enslaved by the machines and the production processes they created. Then when that social process crashes as it did in the 1920s Germany, then individuals seek an external authority and are prepared to surrender their freedom and be drawn in to a new bondage, Nazism. The same might be said of Stalinism in Russia.

Fromm describes the process leading to authoritarianism:

– to give up the independence of one's own individual self and to fuse one's self with somebody or something outside oneself in order to acquire the strength which the individual self is lacking.

So, in the chapter: 'Mechanisms of escape' of *Fear of Freedom*, Fromm summarises the choices to the individual facing the world outside himself – to overcome the unbearable state of powerlessness and alone-ness - *He can positively embrace freedom and - relate himself spontaneously to the world of love and work ---* or surrender his individuality and submit to a new bondage. Why should he do the second? Well, it is perhaps a

response to social alienation. But there is also an important psychological aspect to consider: our inherent tendency to masochism, which in turn inspires sadism in people eager to dominate other people. Even setting aside the extreme versions of these character traits, Fromm argued that: *Sadistic and masochistic traits are probably to be found in everybody.* So, when economic and social conditions become unbearable then we are content to surrender our individualism.

In an effort to escape from aloneness and powerlessness, we are ready to get rid of our individual self either by submission to new forms of authority or by compulsive conforming to accepted patterns.

In his later work: *The Sane Society* Fromm says:

...that man has a need for a sense of identity. It's so vital and imperative that man could not remain sane if he find some way to satisfying it.

So far, I have focused on 'freedom from' and all its dangerous outcomes. One might at this stage just draw the conclusion that humans are herd animals and need to be controlled constructively, even kindly in an appropriate herd. But there is a powerful difference between humans and other animals and that is expressed in the power of reason. We have the capability of using freedom to improve human existence.

Fromm rejects the idea that there is a vicious circle of being released from one bondage only to be scooped up by another. After all, freedom allows us then to attain the realisation of oneself. He argues that freedom gives the human the potential to realise his/her total personality: *Positive freedom consists in the spontaneous activity of the total, integrated personality.* He argues that we are all capable of it and I agree - not just some intellectual elites. Yes, I am moulded by powerful social forces, but I have the capacity to create and to spontaneously act as an individual. Returning to my original question: Is there such a thing as social progress? Yes if we reject all ideology and dogma, encourage freedom and democracy, protect peoples' rights in a balanced society and realise we are all human beings with the same potential to create positive freedom.

Is there progress in history?

It has been argued that Hegel thought history is teleological and continually progressive. The following article examines this claim and raises many questions.

PAUL COCKBURN

Did Hegel take history to be teleological? It is teleological in the sense that there is an Absolute which will be attained at some point in the future. There is Spirit (or Reason) behind history, where Reason means more than logic and rationality. Hegel also talks of the 'Cunning of Reason', a strange term! It might mean for instance we have to go backwards before we can go forward. Hegel's thought also has a religious dimension as we aspire to some sort of Utopia.

We can perhaps see progress in Europe in terms of a feudal system giving way to a democratic system in the 19th century where people can vote for a future which will be better for them rather than being powerless and at the mercy of a powerful ruling class or a monarch or dictator. It seems a democratic system where leaders and parties can be voted out of power must be better than a dictatorship, although it is possible to have an enlightened dictatorship. It is the abuse of power which needs to be stopped, and this abuse can happen both in left-wing and right-wing governments. There has to be a rule of law which is enforced to protect people's rights, and the judiciary and the executive of a country need to be staffed and run by people who can be trusted.

beliefs and *mimetic behaviour* (in short, we tend to copy one another). In the case of nations there is a dynamic of growth which can threaten other nations (as it did in colonialism) and also there is often a fear of people from other nations – they don't look like us, behave like us, or talk like us!

So, to me, our identity is strongly linked to our 'groups', national or cultural, and these group identities are a key factor in explaining our behaviour. Does Hegel idolise Prussia as the 'culmination' of the state, which then by some distorted group effect leads to the Nazis? Germany was the last large European nation to unify in the 19th century – perhaps leading to some megalomania? The modern cosmopolitan ideal of the 'citizen of the world' and world government looks to be an ideal we should promote, but it looks a long way off. We are currently in a situation where revolution or any political improvement will probably happen within countries rather than across the whole world. But how do we stop war between countries? This seems to require a revolution in human nature, at least in terms of international relations and probably human nature in general. If we ever did end warfare, would Hegel's thesis end up as an 'end of history' thesis,' as expanded by Fukuyama?

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Another area where there does seem to be progress is in science and technology. The health and general well-being of people has improved over the last 300 years in Europe because of medical and technological advances. But we do make mistakes in terms of the social consequences of implementing technology e.g. the growth of car traffic and other problems! However, for a nation or a group such as a political party *loyalty to the group* is required, and members of the group identify with each other because of common

We now have to recognise that history is not always proceeding in a linear fashion. Take for example the French revolution which descended into 'The Terror' in 1794, when according to some sources about two thousand people were executed. Was that progress? Well it could still be an advance in human history. It does show that freedom for a whole mass of people could be attained by overthrowing a corrupt monarchy and a failing political system. However, building a new political system is much more difficult and the French Revolution



Heidegger

descended into chaos. Before the Terror, in 1792 it was decided, against Robespierre's wishes, to export the revolution to other European countries by sending the French army to invade them. The initial campaigns failed, but by 1802 there were many successes under Napoleon. Since the French revolution there have been many more revolutions. How does a revolution instigate a new way of living without ending up as a dictatorship?

This is not to say that the current world capitalist system is the answer: we have seen in the financial crisis of 2008 how fragile and dangerous the financial workings of capitalism can be. Does capitalism lead to ever-increasing inequalities? And democracy has failings – Churchill famously said 'Democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others'. This seems to acknowledge democracy needs to be improved.

Heidegger vs. Hegel

Philosophically we can contrast Hegel's view of historical progress with that of Heidegger. Heidegger sees the western mind as trying to practise its 'will to power' (not his term but Nietzsche's) over Being. But he thinks that in fact it works the other way round: Being reveals itself to us.

In terms of civilizations, Heidegger sees it almost

as a succession of disconnected epochs in history, with differing national groups appearing, taking the stage and then disappearing. Heidegger sees Being revealing itself to us in a non-teleological way, there are just successive epochs. Civilizations occupy a sort of stage, the clearing, act out their play, and then disappear! Hegel wants a more active struggle, not a mere passive 'revealing', involving the will of the people overcoming exploitation and negativity. Heidegger's timescales seem to involve many hundreds of years, Hegel's analysis of the French Revolution and its consequences is much shorter and involves as he sees it a radical discontinuity in history. Heidegger sees Being revealing itself to us in successive epochs but Hegel thinks we make these epochs as history marches on. It seems that Heidegger thinks Being is there and sending us versions of itself and Hegel thinks that Being (or the Absolute?) is the outcome of a series of struggles over a long period of time!

It is interesting that Heidegger's 'solution' to history is weighted towards poetry, mysticism and perhaps even the irrational while Hegel sees in history the fulfilment of rationality in a perfect political state. Although it does seem to me there may be some truth in Heidegger's view of history it lacks a firm ethical basis, as perhaps did Heidegger's attitude to the Nazis.

It was also suggested that philosophy determines history, that philosophical progress is the Spirit which interacts with history. Is philosophy that important? Has this thesis withstood the advances of science and its power to re-shape how we live our lives (particularly in the developed world) and our history? Maybe economic and scientific advances are more important, combined with an ethical stance. It could be that the old discipline 'natural philosophy' gave rise to science and economics, but these disciplines now seem to be independent of philosophy. After a political or social revolution, we might expect to see progress, but they often seem to descend into dictatorships which ignore or twist ethical standards, going against their founding principles, and the French Revolution was no exception to this 'rule'. Still, the world needs much more of *liberte, egalite, fraternite* – let's seek how these principles can be implemented in the right way.

Fromm In The Context Of Buber

Was Fromm turning psychoanalysis into idealist ethics? Were Ricoeur and Lacan in 1964 really arguing about ethics or was Lacan right that hermeneutics was overrated as to tool in this discipline? What does the expression 'post-Freudian' mean?

DAVID CLOUGH

If today Talmudic reading is mostly associated with Emmanuel Levinas; both Fromm and Buber were also Jewish thinkers influenced by Hassidism and the Talmud. But whereas Buber was born in 1878, Fromm was born in 1900, and Buber's best-known text *I and Thou* (1923) is from the same period as Joyce's *Ulysses* and Eliot's *Wasteland* or more relevantly perhaps Rudolph Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*. Certainly, when our clergy started talking about Buber in the 1960s in the aftermath of *Honest to God*, figures like Fromm and Herman Hesse were also trendy. I can remember a poster for a Fromm book with a mushroom cloud background. These were heady days as we worried about catastrophic destruction and drug-trip hedonism simultaneously. The fear was that splitting atoms was a step too far, a bad example of Pandora's box. But Buber died in 1965 before the later sixties brought on further changes.

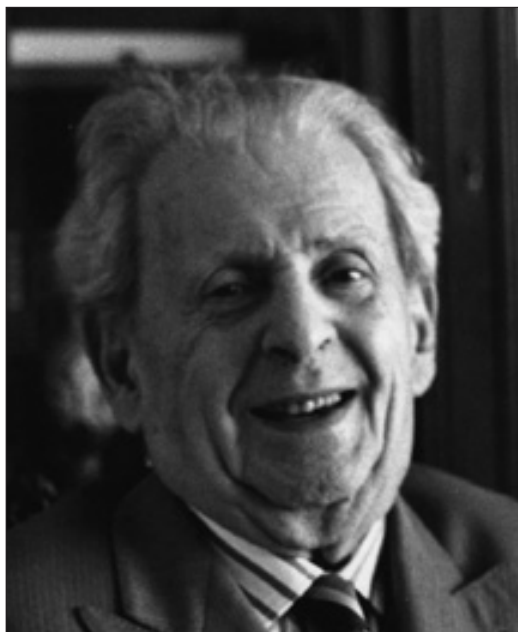
There was also an emerging worry about the wisdom of the analyst who had himself undergone analysis already. Would that map out how another patient was in fact mapped. Anti-psychiatry in the form of R. D. Laing and others adopted Sartre. But Levinas was rather hidden away, having just published *Totality and Infinity* in 1961. However, Levinas is not doing psychoanalysis and ends up with an ethics as asymmetric as Sartre's but the other round way where the 'other' makes demands on you as the just position not as an imposition, though I admit both thinkers are a bit subtler than this. Scholarship continues

to rewrite them much in the way Husserl and Heidegger are also rewritten.

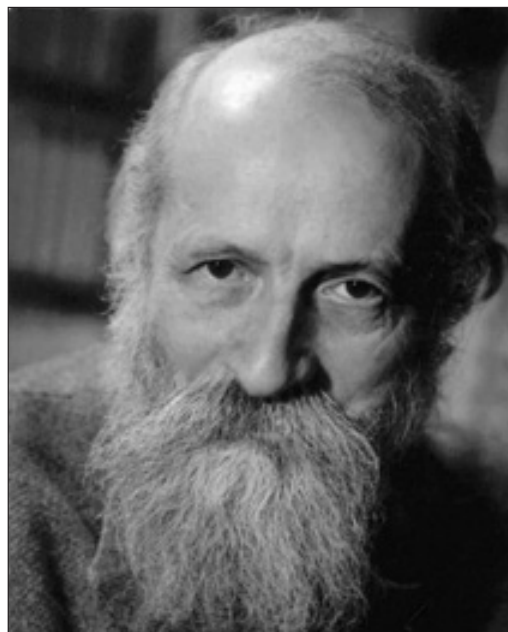
If Levinas was born in 1906 and died in 1995 but only really got well known in the late 1980s. Dane Knud Logstrup (1901-81) offers a view somewhat similar to Levinas. However, Logstrup presents an alternative understanding of interpersonal life, not only from utilitarianism and Kantianism, but also with Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism and forms of subjectivism. For Logstrup, there is no Christian or secular morality, only human morality.

When Fromm was writing his second tome *Man for Himself* in 1947, the elderly Buber wrote the superficially similarly titled *Between Man and Man* as a follow up to *I and Thou* in the same year. Erich Fromm (1900-1980) wrote *Fear of Freedom* between 1941-3 during the stress of the war. After the war, other members of the Frankfurt School, like Horkheimer and Marcuse, changed direction. But is Marcuse right that as time goes on Fromm and others like Karen Horney lose sight of the original libidinous aspects and turn psychoanalysis into a form of idealist ethics? And is there some of that in Ricoeur's hermeneutic reading of Freud, albeit perhaps it is not so idealistic? That set me thinking.

In *Eclipse of God* (1952) Buber then argued with Jung, but Rollo May is perhaps better known as a critic of Jung in terms of having no clear ethics (i.e. maybe it is just self-



Levinas



Buber

fulfilment at all costs). May and Viktor Frankl gave humanistic existentialism a slightly more affirmative tone, but May and another figure, Ernst Becker, were more pre-occupied with the dark side and even evil potential that still lurked within. There is some synergy between May and Tillich. Perhaps more like Nietzsche than Freud. May locates or posits love and the Daimon naturalistically rather than its Freudian association with the super ego. Fromm has seen love as a productive relationship where the personalist, borrowing from Marcel and Mounier, can still see it traditionally as love. May was born in 1912 and was still publishing books in the 1980s like *The Discovery of Being*. Both Frankl and Becker formed rather isolated movements but May and Frankl are certainly start-up figures in the burgeoning story of existential psychotherapy.

If it is supposed that Jung followed Feuerbach, some say Schopenhauer, I see James Hillman as more Nietzschean. As well as Hillman, on the more Jungian side there was *Personal Mythology* by Feinstein and Krippner where one was encouraged to move towards globalised awareness by expanding one's mythology beyond its present cultural limitations. Ernst Kris first used the express term Personal Myth in 1956. Hillman chooses the metaphor of myth to describe psychic

processes rather than physics or alchemy. Alchemy was obviously important to the later Jung and his expositors like Edward Edinger.

Just as there are pictorial books about the history of Freud and Hesse, there is one on Fromm by Rainer Funk. Emmy Van Deurzen's book on *Everyday Mysteries*, a handbook on Psychotherapy, doesn't include Fromm at all but it credits Rollo May with introducing the more Heideggerian Menard Boss and Ludwig Binswanger to America via his involvement with the 1958 book *Existence*. It also confirms his somewhat Tillich-like approach. There's nothing about Ernst Becker either, but then I doubt he really created much in practice, but a short section on Frankl does precede the May section. Like some readings of Ricoeur and even Lacan his logotherapy centres on the quest for meaning while Lacan brings up the rather Heideggerian role of language that Ricoeur also develops beyond Fromm or the current Heidegger studies around Dreyfus and learned routines. I suppose I take Ricoeur's point to be that once a dream or an action becomes a text, metaphoric plurality can begin. But it is also probably true that the inner tensions of guilt have become increasingly displaced by public shaming and Fromm's marketing personality, whatever its role in the Mad Men era, is very strong today.

Delayed Choice 1: Entanglement

The observer's delayed choice determines whether the photon has taken one path or two after it has presumably already done one or the other. The experimenter has changed something that in our normal understanding of time-flow has ALREADY HAPPENED. In other words, he has changed what happened in the past.

Anthony Peake



CHRIS NORRIS

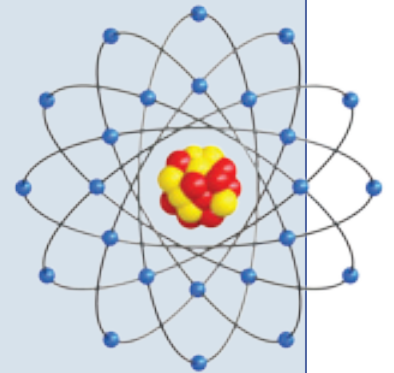
**It seems spin-values can't be in-the-source.
You split the singlet pair and off they fly.
Tests show they anti-correlate mid-course.**

**Some say it was no absolute divorce
Since measurement perpetuates the tie.
It seems spin-values can't be in-the-source.**

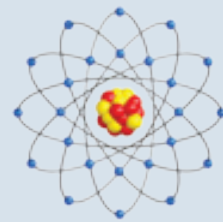
**At any rate most experts now endorse
Remote entanglement, and this is why:
Tests show they anti-correlate mid-course.**

**Delayed-choice findings go to reinforce
The point: no local realists need apply.
It seems spin-values can't be in-the-source.**

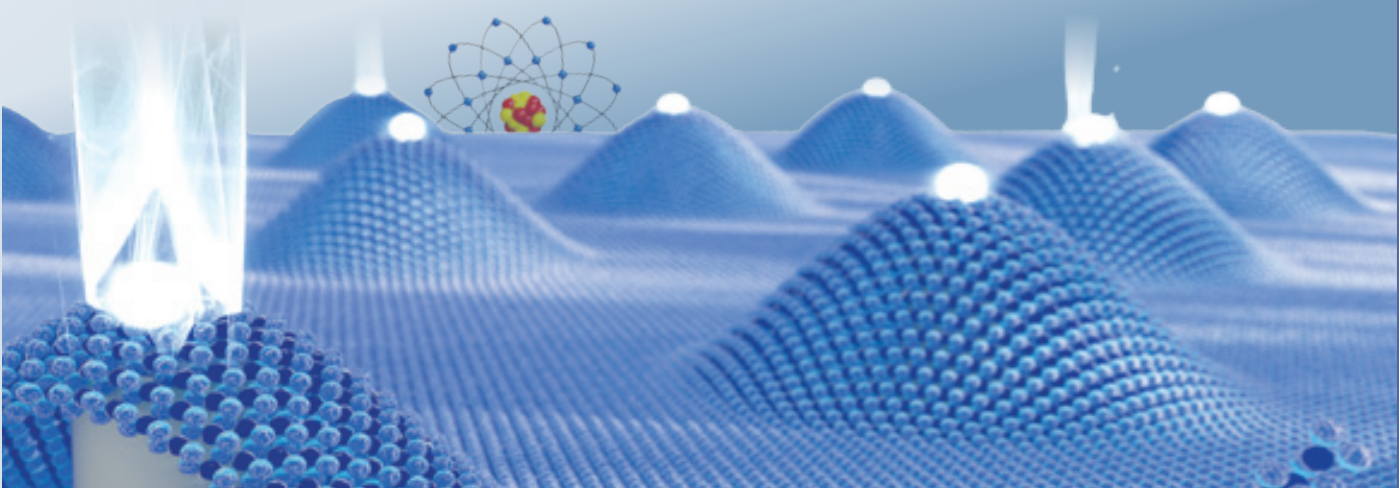
**Light-years apart yet still that quantum torse
Lends false assurance of a common sky.
Tests show they anti-correlate mid-course.**



**My question: what's this two-way Trojan horse
Between two particles that said goodbye?
It seems spin-values can't be in-the-source.**



**Perhaps it's not the physics but remorse
That says 'give hidden variables a try'.
Tests show they anti-correlate mid-course.
It seems spin-values can't be in-the-source.**



Delayed Choice 2: A Quandary

Your brain makes up its mind before you realize it, according to researchers. By looking at brain activity while making a decision, the researchers could predict what choice people would make before they themselves were even aware of having made a decision. The work calls into question the ‘consciousness’ of our decisions and may even challenge ideas about how ‘free’ we are to make a choice at a particular point in time.

Nature, 11th April, 2008



CHRIS NORRIS

They've done the scan and it's all down to brain.
They've done the scan
and now it seems that mind
Kicks in too late to have a master-plan.

They said: decide on action of some kind.
They said: decide,
then signal so we can
See if such folk-psy talk is justified.

Mind's prone to feign 'here's where the act began'.
Mind's prone to feign
and consciousness to hide
Those test-results the voluntarists disdain.

It lags behind; the brain-scans can't have lied.
It lags behind
and shows that we shall gain
Small comfort once the lag-times are assigned.

Their findings ran against the human grain.
Their findings ran:
'all your fine thoughts combined
Won't help restore the high estate of man'.

Cast down your pride, with falsehoods deep entwined.
Cast down your pride
and quit the dwindling clan
Of those who still take Descartes as their guide.

It showed up plain, spread like a peacock's fan.
It showed up plain
 and proved our mind-talk wide
Of any mark within its rainbow stain.

Just choosing blind or, at the best, one-eyed.
Just choosing blind
 is how we must re-train
For acting once volition's been sidelined.

Split-second span yet free-will's missed the train.
Split-second span
 yet mentalists must find
Some other way around the free-will ban.

Time was they vied, before this double-bind.
Time was they vied
 till cells fired sooner than
The time those button-pushers signified.

Thought strives in vain to stay out in the van.
Thought strives in vain
 when its last chance must ride
On bucking the communication-chain.

Let humankind not spurn what's cut-and-dried.
Let humankind
 give up that failed campaign
To keep its old prerogatives enshrined.

Too partisan we've been in mind v. brain.
Too partisan
 and stubbornly inclined
To have man out-perform orangutan.

Take it in stride as ghostly myths unwind.
Take it in stride;
 Don't fear it's your *élan*
Vital washed out with mind's receding tide.





The Art of Painting: A Personal Experience

Michael Joseph England (b.1967) studied art at Chelsea school of Art, Foundation, 1986-1987, St Martins school of Art, B.A. Fine Art, 1987-1990 and Cyprus college of Art, Postgraduate in Fine Art, 1996-1997. He exhibited his work in joint exhibitions in Manhattan, New York 1993, Nicosia 1997, Zurich, Switzerland 1997 & 1998. He also had solo shows in London 1999, Tokyo, 2000 – 2001 – 2002, London 2010, Oxford Arts week 2015, and Spain 2016. He is a member of the Wednesday group and wrote the article below to explain the creative process in art from his own experience.

MIKE ENGLAND

The Art of Painting is a very difficult thing to explain with words as it is a visual language. I shall try to explain from my perspective in simple terms, so all can understand. I shall attempt to explain

mostly from the experience that I have gained from giving my life to painting. Since I was sixteen I have studied painting, with an acute sense of 'trying to understand' the nature of painting, to push it as far as possible (with



The exhibition in Spain



Mike England and his daughter in his 2016 exhibition



Tabula Rasa City



my own painting), and therefore to discover meaning and understanding (I am now fifty). My life has been and is lived around it. Everything I do, feel or think, is related to painting. Firstly, I would like to say there is no right or wrong way to paint, just honesty and authenticity, and added to this is motivation (Your reason why you feel the need to paint?). Motivation is another subject, that requires a lot of other things to think about, but for the moment I shall just stick to the nature of painting.

Questions that only YOU can answer

When looking at a painting, there is first and foremost a relationship that is made between the painting and the viewer. This relationship

can be powerful or weak, depending on your reaction when first meeting the painting. If the painting engages you and you find it interesting, you are more likely to spend time looking at it, and doing some research about it, or you may find yourself just glancing at it, registering it but not looking and absorbing it. This feeling teaches you about what YOU like and don't like (or don't understand). You must then ask: why do I feel and think like this? And then keep asking why, so as to get to the bottom of YOUR motivation.

There are only relationships and No relationships

Each relationship has its own presence or power (its own voice, so to speak). There are



relationships between colour, form, ambience and composition etc, created by the application of paint and marks, and decisions made during the making of a painting. For example, a relationship between colour is just one ingredient that goes into the mix when making decisions while painting. Colour relationships are made by colours next to each other, one colour surrounding another, one colour inside another etc. There are no bad colours just bad relationships between colour.

So, deciding what you like or want comes from understanding your motivation.

Making Decisions is life

Making choices is what we do all the time.

The choices we make have an effect on how we perceive the world around us.

To me, painting is about making choices, it is also a visual expression of Life.

It is not about just making a picture, but also about making choices.

Choices allow us to understand motives behind the reason why we make certain choices. Choices allow us to grow and evolve (I am sure this is one of the reasons for existence, to try and understand ourselves before we hang up our earth clogs).

Painting and freedom

Painting allows a freedom of expression that I am interested in. A painting should have both logic (mind) and Heart (spirit), both loudness and quietness, it should have meaning as well as feeling free and an obvious sense of mastery and control, it is a balance between order and chaos, the duality that seems to exist in all things: yin and yang.

Painting to me is not just about confronting and understanding my motives, but also about letting go of fears and pre-conceived ideas, so that decisions are free and are guided by experience and instincts, between the mind and heart, so that when painting, the act of painting is as free



as possible. Surely as we are part of nature, any expression of it, is nature.

How I paint.

(A basic explanation... as much as possible)

- 1] Choice of canvas size.
- 2] Composition: how I divide the canvas up.
- 3] Decisions: regarding: colour, colour relationships, tones, luminosity, forms, surface texture, etc.
- 4] Application: how the paint is applied, applied fast or slow, with intention, accidentally, brushed on, washed on, size of brush, scum-bled, thrown, dripped, splattered, brushed, scraped; is the paint wet on wet, or wet on dry, varnishes, glazes... so on and so forth (the only limitation is imagination).

It is not just about putting on paint, it also about taking paint off, and learning when to leave the painting alone.

The next stage is to Start

After deciding on an initial idea about the feeling I want the canvas to have.

This feeling is a pattern of expression that I recognise that has repeated itself over the years like a signature or a style. I have become very clear about what I want to achieve.

I start every canvas not knowing how I am going to get there.

So the whole journey is to try and guide the image through the paint (and the infinite choices) to this point.

When I start, quite quickly one idea leads to another..., and before I know it I am immersed in the process of creating, composing an image that builds and starts to suggest to you what it needs.

You (one) are confronted by your own fixed ideas, limitations and attachments.

Finishing a painting.

Finishing is always a difficult thing to understand, we tend not to know where the line is until we have passed over it.

As you get older and hopefully more in tune with yourself, you become more sensitive to the subtleties of life, and I guess the more time you spend doing a particular thing you get better at it. Your understanding of its strengths and weaknesses becomes more instinctive. I have learnt that it is the painting that tells you when it is finished, you just have to listen.

The process of painting really is an experience. To me It is about being both involved (inside) and detached (outside), both mental and emotional at the same time. Anyhow, it is something along these lines, as far as the use of words can explain.

The Wednesday

Editor:

Dr. Rahim Hassan

Contact Us:

rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk

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Contributors:

Barbara Vellacott

Paul Cockburn

Prof. Chris Norris

Prof. Nona M. Ferdon

Dianne Cockburn

David Solomonn

Fred Cousins

David Clough

Raymond Ellison

David Burridge

Ranjini Ghosh

Sara Berti

David Jones

Monika Filipek

Erica Warburton

Scharlie Meeuws

Dennis Harrison

Paul Enock

Mike England

Departing



*How have I felt the shape that parting takes?
I still perceive it as the dark that wears
and numbs all feelings. It awakes
the conscience to a perfect bond, then tears*

*apart - how did I feel exposed by looking on
what lets me still go calling, getting small
and smaller, out of shape, near gone
and finally leaves nothing there at all*

*but waving? Was there still a link?
A slight persistent waving unexplained,
perhaps a branch from where a bird complained
of dwindling light, time on the brink....*

Scharlie Meeuws

Scharlie Meeuws is a German born digital artist and poet who has several collections of poems in her name. Her poems written in German, Spanish and English have been discussed in the national press as well as in various writing sites by her many fans online.