

The *Wednesday*



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group at Albion Beatnik - Oxford

Editorial

Philosophy in the Public Sphere

In my editorial for the previous issue I referred to Fichte's idea of a Republic of Scholars. This is the idea of creating like-minded group of highly educated people to discuss public issues or plans for reforms in the state, church or society at large. However, some readers objected to the elitist nature of such a republic. But one has to contextualise the suggestion and to read it in the contingencies of the time when education was not widespread and the universities were limited in number and many were newly formed. Fichte emphasised the value of education in his famous *Addresses to the German Nation*. For one thing, he nearly missed out on education if it had not been for the offer of a kind patron, Freiherr von Miltz, who supported him and saw him through schooling and university until his own death, which ended Fichte's university days and he had to leave without his degree.

We have moved a long way from the time of Fichte on almost all fronts: education, state and religion. But the very nature of a democratic society calls for an open debate, something Habermas calls the 'Public Sphere'. This sphere is based on the participation of all on an equal basis, with mutual understanding, respect and tolerance. But the scholarly aspect is still there, represented by Habermas's emphasis on rationality and communicability. There is more on this idea in the pages of this issue. Philosophy, seems to me, is the road to a higher rationality and communicability. Philosophy can play this role by going beyond the narrow specialisations of academia. It has to go to the public and adopt a language accessible to them.

In fairness to professional philosophers, there is more and more willingness to reach the public and in lots of cases the philosopher plays the role of the public intellectual through discussing their works in bookshops, literary and philosophy festivals or open lectures. But the great help for the cause of

philosophy is coming from the public themselves through discussion groups throughout the country. London has the largest number of these groups, Oxford has few, such as the Wednesday group, the Philosophy Society at Rewley House (and Gerrards Cross) and the Philosophy in the Pub group (PIP, in Headington and Abingdon). These groups sometime link up with the academic world through accessible institutions, such as London School of Philosophy and the Department of Continuing Education at Oxford where more structured courses and debates are organised at relatively low fees.

I was informed two weeks ago that the PIP will organise a festival of community philosophy in Oxford for the weekend of 6th-8th of April 2018, and they are inviting anyone who is involved in or interested in community philosophy from around the UK and beyond. This will largely be hosted at Hertford College, Oxford. There will be a variety of events around the city, in bookshops, cafes, pubs and in the streets. This is good news for philosophy and the community.

Finally, the philosophy press, such as The Wednesday magazine and other publications play their role in spreading philosophical knowledge and thinking. They are different from the specialised publications and periodical in that they are accessible to all levels, both in their writers and the reading public, and the general coverage of all sort of topics. There is no elitism here and there is democracy, mutual respect and a higher degree of tolerance.

All this plays its role in supporting the public sphere and prepare writers and readers to go beyond the daily occupation (or the business world) into the ethical world where meaning and values matter.

The Editor

Habermas:

Modernity and Rational Communication

Habermas

The Frankfurt School of sociology still fascinates scholars and the general public with its concepts and critical spirit. Habermas is one of its main representatives at the moment and his thoughts are more optimistic than the views of Adorno and Horkheimer. They are also related to the debate on modernity and his stress on the unfinished project of modernity. However, his theory of 'communicative act' gained support in the present social and political climate as well as bridging the gap between continental and analytical philosophies. The article below deals with this aspect of his thinking.

DR. IBRAHIM AL-HAIDARI

2 The structural changes in Western societies after World War One gave the impetus to a group of social thinkers in Germany to establish the foundation of a critical social philosophy that rejected traditional philosophical thinking. It also rejected the existing social system and the establishment. These thinkers tried to create a new critical theory and a new critical sociology with its own concepts and defined field. It was intended as a replacement for traditional philosophy and positive sociology which started with August Comte, especially after the critical theory of the Young Hegelian ceased to be critical and after the change of Marx's Dialectical Materialism theory to

a mere mechanical materialism.

This group of social thinkers formed in 1932 the Institute of Social Research at Frankfurt University, which later on became known as 'The Frankfurt School'. It represented different philosophical, social and cultural trends that all joined in their criticism of thought and society. Some of its distinguished pioneers were Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin and Erich Fromm. The last of its great names is Jurgen Habermas. We have also to add the name of Alex Honneth.

The Theory of Communicative Act

Jurgen Habermas is considered the legitimate heir to the Frankfurt School after the death of its pioneers Horkheimer and Adorno, especially after his modernisation of its stand and developing the basic foundations of this school in both its dimensions, philosophical and sociological. He is now considered to be one of the major critical philosophers of our time due to his solid philosophical work and his solo critical trend that led him to a greater degree of universality and openness to other disciplines. But in spite of his world reputation as a philosopher, he is still first and foremost a sociologist who managed to subject the socio – political phenomenon to sociological research. Such a research comes out of an analytical philosophical vision that is the foundation of the methodology of integrating philosophical analysis with sociology.

Habermas' critical reading of modernity and post-modernity led him to the conclusion that 'modernity is an unfinished project'. He believes that the Enlightenment has not run its course. He connects modern times with the exhaustion of modernity. Modernity is still widespread but it is not creative any more because it began to face deep reactions. This is because social modernisation, mixed with a new dynamism in society, communication and protest, led to social mobilisation on issues related to environmental and societal damage, and social strife.

The twentieth century was marked by explosive population growth in the Third World, changes in the structures of work and employment, increase in productivity, new digital industries, new energy resources, space explorations, the genome and the electronic communications. All these were the marks of the twentieth century with special characteristics and presented new challenges. The crisis of the international capitalist system and the development of a totalitarianism impeded modernisation that had started with the age of Enlightenment. It led to the destruction of hope in curtailing the power of the state and humanising social interaction.

Habermas thinks that Enlightenment's reason has not died, as some wrongly imagined. If we agree to criticise all the misappropriation of Enlightenment's reason during the colonial periods and the two world wars that were started by European Fascism, 'we have no right to throw away all the rational and enlightening achievements that made Western civilization in the dustbin of history.' And so, Habermas tries to save modernity from its enemies, and from critics and reactionaries who try to turn history backward because they do not believe in the spirit of the modern age and its great achievements, and also from those 'neo-cons' who attack modernity just for being different.

Communicative Rationality

In his book *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 1985, Habermas discusses the problematics of modernity and post-modernity, with the aim of creating a social reality that is connected to the communicative act and of reaching a world order that is rational and peaceful. He has a fundamental starting point that looks for conditions inside the modernist society that have not been completely achieved, and that could make it difficult for its members to turn to violence. He aims to create a new communicative rationality that directs attention towards the quality of social relations and symbolic communications, and which is able to revise its understanding through learning from other cultures and open dialogue towards the 'other', so as to achieve what the Enlightenment age failed to achieve. All this comes in a time when doubt has started to besiege modernity, its values and rationality.

In his *Theory of Communicative Act* Habermas created key concepts informed by a sociological perspective for everyday social communication that is not one-dimensional. His concepts are not aimed at creating positive relationships, but also connect the individual and society. They don't look at 'difference' with suspicion but look to the 'other' from a position of mutual respect, which doesn't necessarily mean being similar to him but 'contains the "other" in his difference'. This leads to giving equal opportunity to the 'other' who is different and the possibility of getting rid of any

hate or oversensitivity. It also bridges the gaps that could open up in any group.

He considered his book *Theory of Communicative Act* as his 'life achievement'. It is a sociological and philosophical work and an important contribution to the social sciences. It presents an analysis of a 'sick society'. It analyses the causes of the illness which he attributes to the destructive forces which threaten human beings and social life. He starts from the premise that contemporary humanity, and society, is not economically independent, and is always threatened by bureaucracy which dominates social relations which have lost their human characteristics and become formal relations. He called them 'colonisation of the Life World (*Lebenswelt*)'.

The Concept Of Communication

The concept of communication is a central one in the philosophy of Habermas. Through it he tries to build a rational communicative philosophy that emphasises 'the role of communication in rationalising and modernising society in the framework of the public sphere to ensure rational dialogue and discussion.' The communicative act includes the idea of co-existence which is based on understanding, dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect for the opinion of the other. It allows the establishment of new and independent critical rational thinking that is suitable for the present age of communication. The act of communication does not rely on the exchange of information only, but also on the interpretation of what happens. It can create bases and mechanisms that help co-existence and build the Life World. Such a world cannot become known and discovered without a knowledge and understanding of the terms used in the communicative act which only happens through language. It is also necessary to study the conditions that are conducive to the success or failure of social communication.

The communicative act presupposes the possibility of critical discussion and the right to object or agree. It also presupposes normative criteria that the majority agrees on, and these criteria are based on democratic participation in the dialogue and

rational exchange between different sides and taking decisions based on the collective will and equality.

Language is at the heart of rational communication and Habermas relies on the G. H. Mead's theory of 'symbolic interaction'. Habermas thinks that the absence of symbolic interaction means the impossibility of communication and the absence of language itself. Language enables a person to communicate with another. This is an anthropological basis that relates to all contemporary philosophical schools and aims at building rationality based on communication and plurality. This relationship is a critical one. It has enabled the critical theory of Habermas to include other schools of thought and to go beyond them.

Habermas sees that the core of the problem facing society today, beside the political security issue, is the destruction of structures of communication in its human aspect. This is due to bureaucracy in the social sphere, in addition to the encroachment of law and interest in every field including private family life.

Habermas does not deny the necessity of political laws to sort out disputes but he wants to draw attention to the social relations that we observe everywhere, where the traditional meeting places are open, in the age of capitalist modernisation, but at the same time linked to bureaucratic procedures. The communicative act includes the idea of co-existence which is based on understanding and mutual respect for the ideas of all sides. Habermas adds to the concept of communicative act the concept of Life World (*Lebenswelt*) which is rational and interactive. But when the state starts to intervene in social relations, we cannot pay attention to this rationality.

Key Concepts Of Communication

The rebuilding of critical theory as 'rational communication' meets the needs of democracy as the free formation of the public will. It will be transmitted through different means of communication which lead to dialogue and understanding and avoid violence. In this way,



Adorno



Horkheimer



Honneth

a public space will be created which Habermas considers to be the key to democracy. It will be the mediating ground between the civil society and the state because it connects the different spheres of interests and the state. It also enables individuals to get together to develop an open public opinion based on rational exchange of ideas, and to become the means of pressurising the welfare state. This is an attempt to rebuild a democracy of the public and reinvigorating public opinion.

This open space is also a symbolic space that will develop over time through the means of communication and the system of ethics so as to reflect the reality of democracy and represent different interests and ideologies. It is assumed that individuals will be free to support different organisations, political parties and government organisations. It also assumes the independence of individuals within their family and political spheres so that they can form the 'power of the word' instead of violence and social strife and class struggle.

Habermas uses the concept of 'ethical discourse' as an expression of a successful communication and liberated from any power; it is at the basis of the critical 'communicative act' and social practice.

He calls for a complete change in the concept of criticism. A critique for him aims to establish successful communicative acts and is not criticism of social situations. He also emphasis that the critique should be based on informed logic and ethics which opens up the possibility of theory of 'ethical critique' parallel to the the critical theory, but which does not dismiss it.

Knowledge, according to Habermas, consists in normative criteria that do not describe a state of affairs, but rather describe norms and lived experiences. There is a dialogue in every society which leads to agreement, as in the relation between employees and employer, seller and buyer, parents and children.

The voice of reason can penetrate all illusions and it can present rational solutions to the problems of technology which have engulfed the world. Reason will also give prominence to meditations and thinking in cultural life and help to develop social training in individual skills that help the formation and maturity of personal character. Through this rational communication we could overcome the dangers of technology and protect the world. It will also be possible to readjust the balance between the business world and the social world.

From Habermas To Ranciere: Liberalism vs. Identity Politics

DAVID CLOUGH

Habermas had targeted his account at the epistemological basis of critical theory, while Steven Pinker's latest book *Enlightenment Now* seems to follow pretty much the big data triumphalist theme of his previous book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. It follows the trends monitored by today's equivalent of big brother rather than your own actual existential interpersonal political and personal experience. So much pessimism has been around in the last couple of years he says, and perhaps he does have a point when you look at the book titles of left-wing thinkers.

Jurgen Habermas

Post-Marxist and post-colonial theory frequently seem now to hide themselves in layers of interpenetrated oppression, where the victims of identity politics endure a baseline of un-relievable perpetual suffering so no single initiative or policy remedy, not even Pinker's or Ranciere's equality, might seem to change much. Yet the victory parade of liberal achievement in authors like Pinker seems to ignore the way post-colonial and other grievances act as a foundation for great confidence. It is very hard to displace through standard forms of rational debate because it has become too personal, like an attack on identity itself. It may well be that cynical manipulative politicians today can steer the two broad tribes' contemporary beliefs further and further apart from any central discourse that can unite them.

What about Kant and Habermas? Is the liberal depthless self really the one Christine Korsgaard will still describe? Heideggerian readers post Hubert Dreyfus are one group that might challenge this. Do we have enough conscience, duty and deliberation as we app purchase what we desire, leaving less and less of what we used to call a paper trail? What did we used to say: out of sight out of mind? Most transactions are immanent and transparent with no back-story until a media scandal or claims hotline gets in touch about your relatively thoughtless act that has now cause you 'harm' or even put you in some kind of public jeopardy.

One left-wing thinker and reader of Sartre in particular, Peter Dews, thought in 1987 that Habermas rejected a view of society that is totally self-reflecting or self-determining



Steven Pinker



Jacques Ranciere

and looked instead at structures or centres of communication rooted in life world thinking but as activity centres not as a self. Some parallels with aspects of Hubert Dreyfus's fusion of Heidegger and Merleau Ponty can be sensed here perhaps. As in Latour's nexus of human and non-human actors this web-like parliament of all things needs to be traversed as sensational new theories are still needed. But can the line of argument then be both coherent and yet independent of the horizontal historical web lines it appears to cross or intersect? Much modern debate seems more like this rather than a linear logical argument. Deleuze is often key here.

In the 70s Habermas had an anti-instrumental point that both Heidegger (on technology) and the Frankfurters may have silently shared. They weren't completely happy with the rationality of Max Weber or maybe later Talcott Parsons. Around globalisation and disruptive technology, Habermas's point about instrumental reason tends to de-politicise action towards issues of technical control. Steven Pinker's big data trends are not what we actually experience because, like data mining, only machines can actually do this. The old style critical theory sought to improve human existence by fostering a form of interpretative understanding helping us to determine our way; the so called social imaginary used to have promise. But the imaginary now is more likely to be some kind of vast database of number-crunching. The Ricoeur-Castoriadis debate was after all centred on Ricoeur's 1973 articles attempting to intervene

in the Habermas-Gadamer dispute.

And there was Habermas's debate with Adorno too which was basically a sort of Hegel-versus-Kant debate. Habermas might be right that negative dialectics is an identity thinking that has turned in on itself, but for Adorno there is no hubris of absolute identity or the attempt at it; the act must include elements of his non-identity thinking. But Habermas thinks Adorno's negative dialectics deserts reason in favour of aesthetics. And the chief exponent of aesthetic politics today is Jacques Ranciere. But it has morphed into something not that close to Adorno I suspect.

If there are four principle debates between Habermas and other philosophers (Adorno, Gadamer, Derrida and Rorty), the fifth around religion I haven't discussed here. Adorno's particularism isn't that Hegelian and it is aesthetic. But how does it connect if at all to Ranciere? Habermas has not really engaged with him or Agamben or Zizek. Heidegger's metaphysics of the west still underpins a lot of what Agamben says. And one of the things Malcolm Bull sees in Agamben is how he adopts the Foucault idea that a communicative action or actor is both paradigmatic and exemplary. Ranciere's aesthetic sentiment analyses the role of the involuntary responses of the disenfranchised. How are the tastes and smells of their everyday life in fact given a voice? Can these everyday sensations really affect how we behave in the digital age? Those of us still wedded at least in part to Kant, to some metaphysical sense

of historical progress, are likely to be at least cautious about this reliance on the unauthorized sensibilities, words, and acts of those who 'have no part' in the scenes of democratic politics conventionally conceived.

In *The Problem of Aesthetics* Richard Schusterman seems to favour Rorty over Derrida. The concept of reason does not escape the self-referential dilemma. Reason reflects critically on knowledge but reason has its source in the subject. Rorty, it's argued, has a different (more GH Mead like perhaps) approach to communicative language where it is neither the incarnation of reason nor human essence but basically an aesthetic tool. This seems closer to Rancière. Heidegger, say, in his attempt to overcome metaphysics after Nietzsche and also Derrida, still tends to universalise their own background in the language of philosophical academia. Schusterman calls this the error of universalising one's own preferred vocabulary in public discourse storytelling. There remains a craving for the sublime even in Habermas and Derrida when universal validity underlies the process.

It is this that Melvyn Bragg (in a recent *In Our Time* discussion), and others resistant to continental philosophy, might be less articulately describing. But the obvious riposte used to be that Bragg and Pinker have their own storytelling too. Equally liberal but more sensitive to conservative thought Mark Lilla at least sees the problem of identity politics we face now. It is equally false to say continental philosophy is just poetic. Although that's the sort of discussion a pair of dons discussing Heidegger and Wittgenstein might have, it hardly covers Marx or the whole scope of continental philosophy themes. We might say Lacan, Derrida and Ricoeur have a poetic dimension but it's less clear in Foucault or Deleuze. If we bring it up to the present moment, this doesn't apply to Judith Butler, Simon Critchley, Peter Sloterdijk, Bruno Latour and Žižek. However, Agamben and Rancière, are quite poetic too. I was probably attracted to that.

It is true my attempt to fuse GH Mead and Ricoeur never really succeeded, but Habermas,

Honneth and Rorty by using Mead were the main motivators of that aim. But there are other questions: Why is Rancière so centred on the fairly bourgeois Flaubert and not on Zola or Victor Hugo who seemed to emphasize the socio-economic aspects to crime and suffering, while the more spiritual Russians like Dostoevsky made it more psychological? Should he be looking at other novelists and is disorientation enough of a goal any more than a drug trip is. Are we back with the surrealists here? Rancière juxtaposes seemingly incompatible objects and phenomena to create moments of sensorial disorientation. We are on a beach looking out to sea on the shores of a new exciting aesthetic reading of politics.

In his related book, *The Political Life of Sensation*, Davide Paragia argues that even the latter day flâneur can seemingly contribute to this politics. This latter day 'Proust' can taste his chocolate, drink his wine, unlock some associations and hear the noise of a crowd, coming back from the football match or demo. He can go to the cinema with a learned friend and sense the same visual impressions of filmic images as everyone else there, but such sensory perceptions are rarely, if ever, discussed in relation to democratic theory. It is he or his friend that writes in the newspapers but meanwhile everyone else is experiencing the world in 'taste and see' mode. It is aesthetic, not narrative, not intellectual.

Modernity was then seen as an event from the epochal discourse either in metaphysics (Derrida) or Foucault's power-knowledge formulations. Later Heidegger conceives language as a house of self-adaptive being with its various stages (cf. Voegelin) against a constant base. But in Foucault all validity claims are immanent in the particular discourse. And thus flattened let them play and joust without the totalising purposefulness of a Hegelian dialectic. Thus, the transcendental subject of knowledge was sacrificed.

Instead of my earlier linking of Voegelin to Ricoeur I now see vague parallels with the path from Heidegger to Levinas. At first in the *Order and History* sequence Eric Voegelin has ideas that connect with Steiner's argument: love of being



Peter Sloterdijk



Richard Rorty



Bruno Latour

through love of its divine parent gives order but the initial world transcendent God as the source of order (rather than language) in *Israel and Revelation* gets diluted as Voegelin like Nussbaum turns increasingly Greek. From here the range narrows to the Ecumenic Age, first to absolute being and then to the beyond. But in the late fifties he was still arguing against Arendt for unchanging being but for levels of consciousness that change. But this gospel of differentiation now increasingly lacks certain crucial theological features up to the time of his death in 1985. This becomes paler to me. But Mark Lilla liked his Mr Casaubon about-turn as though he had realised that liberalism might be the answer (See Lilla's *Shipwrecked Mind*).

While our publicity machine favours Pinker, Mark Lilla's almost invisible here. I haven't actually seen a copy of his *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity Politics* book though it had more impact in the States. Both Pinker and Lilla are Americans writing about liberalism, but Lilla has connections with the Kantian turn in France in the 1990s and with specific US historical politics that might make his book seem less relevant or (perhaps?) straightforward here.

It seems to me that despite the critiques of modernity and instrumentalism, Habermas,

Latour and Dreyfus, although there is still an actor perspective, have, as has Pinker, been forced to largely abandon analysis of subjective personal experience, in favour of larger more depersonalised structures or social processes. If analytic philosophy still largely has Kantian inflected agents, its continental counterpart retains a more collective Hegelian or communitarian character. While some bridging figures like Taylor and MacIntyre are not heavily turning to pragmatism, this has been in the direction that Habermas sees in Mead, of a post foundational base. But in figures like Shusterman and Richard Bernstein it is used as a mediator between the continental and analytic positions. Analytic theology too seems attracted in figures like Grenz and Vanhoozer to this post foundational aspect, but Wolterstorff resists it specifically in Habermas. In continental philosophy things are less atomistic and depthless one might try to argue. Solidarity remains ethical and not just a social phenomenon. Despite its own reading of post metaphysical desire in Nietzsche and Heidegger, it might see some anti- historical tendency in simple claims about pragmatist neutrality or it being more easily post metaphysical. I have not discussed Wittgenstein. Others might think he has the answer here, but I choose to under-use him.

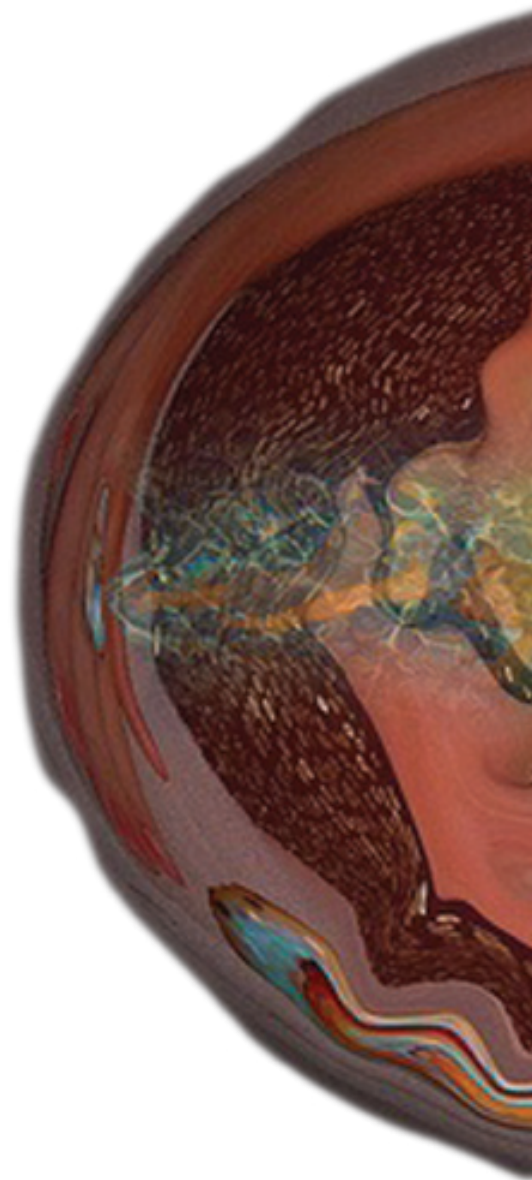
Death not alone will know

Death not alone will know. The wind could tell
that carries somehow all these nameless things.
A rose might spell between her lids
her cryptic scented code. The rings
in tree stems secretly forebode
us truth. We fail with our senses dulled,
we just import the sort of knowledge
that falls short. What we inhale
is not enough to know. We do not grow.
Our minds are stale.

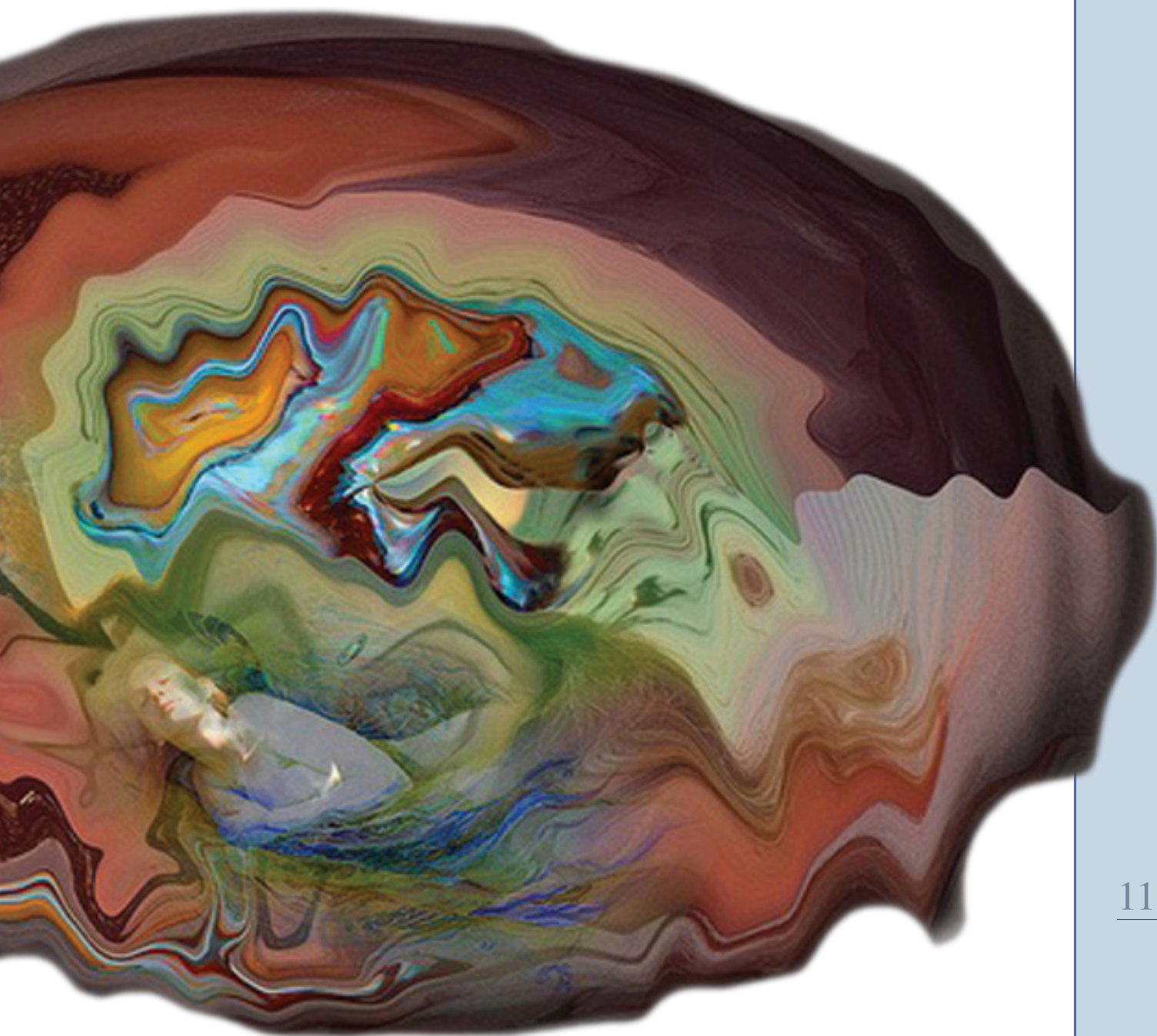
Yet look around, so many signs will talk
and yet no words are heard.
By other means and everywhere
all things convince, alert us to a truth
that's there.
We're unaware.

Death not alone will know. We might have guessed
the urgency, the wind's trying to tell.
We might have felt the scented rose's spell
when we reached out and touched a lover's hand.

We could have heeded trees' impending call,
the danger signs to try to understand.
We should have seen the messages
and all this urgent pleading.
Yet we failed,
impaired our senses, stunted our mind.
Oh poor mankind!

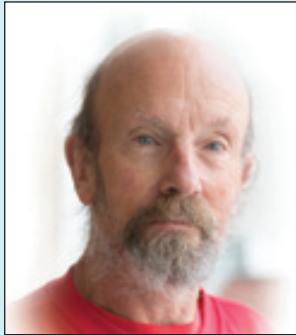


Poem and Painting by *Scharlie Meeuws*



Falling asleep, within the innermost self...

Anthropocene



Chris Norris

An article of 2015 . . . found plastics, smelted metals, novel radionuclides and raised carbon levels in every cranny of the earth's crust, as well as new rock forms made of squashed-up toys and nappies and all the other stuff that ends up in landfill. The final ruling . . . 'will depend as much on the perceived usefulness of having this unit [the Anthropocene] on the geological timescale . . . as on its geological reality'.

**Jenny Turner, 'Life with Ms Cayenne Pepper',
The London Review of Books, 1st June 2017, p. 23.**

It's piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.
Tests show we've entered the anthropocene.
See how the landfill marks our change of state.

Daily the dump-trucks come with tons of freight,
All shades and hues bar any hint of green.
It's piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

Time was when rocks were lumps you'd carbon-date
But now its sell-by dates the experts glean.
See how the landfill marks our change of state.

Soon it will be the shelf-lives that equate
To stratum-rifts a million years between.
It's piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

Then we'll read off rock-sample data straight
From source and scrap the carbon-date machine.
See how the landfill marks our change of state.





Geologists say landfill-sites create
Stuff readable as any magazine.
It's piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

Rock-like, that stuff, as new sites concentrate
The detritus of years while we spring-clean.
See how the landfill marks our change of state.

Just those odd trademark clues to indicate
That junk, not rock, is what we've got on screen.
It's piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

Yet we're hard put to differentiate
When trash looms large where once the rocks had been:
See how the landfill marks our change of state.

Already dates and fashions correlate:
'Passé, that style, three decades since last seen.'
It's piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

Ecologists may anxiously debate
What's happening, but geologists just mean
'See how the landfill marks our change of state'.

They're not so prone to fret about our fate
Or try to place us all in quarantine:
It's piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

Who's to complain when, soon enough, we'll skate
On trash hard-packed to lend a surface sheen.
See how the landfill marks our change of state.



Poetry

If they're spot-on we won't have long to wait;
Just decades and the skaters may convene:
It's piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

Yet they endure, the nappies, toys, and spate
On spate of packs marked 'personal hygiene'.
See how the landfill marks our change of state

And makes us think: what if us lot mutate
To mind-stuff just as polyethylene?
It's piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

No psychodramas then to sublimate
Or moods to swing with strong shots of caffeine:
See how the landfill marks our change of state.

Of course, there may be things to compensate,
Like that neat stuff buckminsterfullerene,
But piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

New land, new minds we'll need to cultivate
Once there's some junk-replasticizing gene.
See how the landfill marks our change of state.

Meanwhile let's, just for old time's sake, palpate
Rock samples like rolled lumps of plasticine,
Though piled-up rubbish speeds the epoch-rate.

For there's at least a chance we'll then negate
Bad facts by taking thought, like the White Queen.
See how the rockfall marks no change of state;
Stuff hardens, petrifies the epoch-rate!

Species of Concepts

DAVID JONES

The 'being' of an abstract concept emerges out of the logical 'relations' between other concepts. Mathematical objects are usually considered to be abstract concepts.

Non-abstract concepts are 'generalisations' for a class of particular natural or artificial things which have similarities and differences in their 'properties' and the common properties are used to define the logical domain encompassed in the concept. Such 'common properties' can be observed of any type of 'being' (i.e. - predication - ascribing a 'doing' or a value of 'is' to something) that is 'proper' to the particular things and is not limited to 'passive' properties such as shape and weight but may also include common 'patterns of behaviour' such as those encompassed in the concepts 'criminal' and 'gravity'.

In the natural world there are individual things that have the properties of 'self-moving' which also have some 'awareness of their environment'. The concept 'animal' is used to refer to such things even though it is known that there are several animal 'species'. It is significant that this concept 'animal' must refer to all variations (species and particular) that are within its scope so it cannot be made



David Jones (Sketched by Theresa Harris)

into a static mental image. An image would necessarily refer to a 'particular' and not a 'general' class of individual things. This is why the human activity of 'thinking' is a different one to the activity of 'picturing'.

Another type of the general distinctions that are commonly used are those that are regarded as arising out of 'cultural attitudinal habit' rather than the distinctions that are in the nature of things in themselves. An example of this type of distinction could be the divisions of the styles of music which are identified with names such as classical or blues etc. The set of words that comprise a language that is used for the purpose of communication is also a cultural artefact and of this type.

The Wednesday

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SELF/ISH



Don't label me with *Ists* and *Isms*.
Don't rough me up with *shoulds* and *oughts*.
I won't be dragged down dogma's corridor,
or locked away in a dark syllogistic box.
My only premise two short planks.

I want to dream with the clear sky above me.
Believe only in what I think might work.
Seek patterns in all I sense before me and
if I should stumble into an ideology ditch,
I will carefully recover stepping on facts.

So shelve your books and swallow your jargon.
Don't link me up with a dead thinker's lean.
I am just seeking my own understanding.
Of course still wondering what it all can mean.

David Burridge