

The *Wednesday*



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group at Albion Beatnik - Oxford

Editorial

Weak Thought

It was fashionable at one time to talk about weak thought, the end of grand narrative, the end of ideology, end of philosophy, multiple identities and many other similar trends. They were philosophical, social and political theses. But they may need to be reconsidered. They were initially influenced by Nietzsche's thought and were considered elements of a strong society and opening the door for philosophy to open up to other disciplines. But were they?

I can easily see the connection with Nietzsche through his attack on metaphysics, the self and philosophy itself. If God is dead, the statement that Nietzsche is always remembered for, then the idea that underpins the system of belief, ethics and the conception of the self will be directly threatened. Vattimo, whose name is associated with weak thought, thinks this is nihilism but a positive trend of nihilism. Nietzsche himself thought the same. Both thinkers thought there is no need to panic or fall into complacency. They call instead for a positive nihilism that thinks the matter thoroughly and creates a new self, society and politics. Nietzsche, who came to this realisation late in his short productive life, thought that he had just started his philosophical project. He called it 'the revaluation of all values'. Vattimo thought that his own project of weak thought would create a new united Europe and new values. He did in actual fact served as a Euro-MP.

Weak Thought is a call to be less certain of one's philosophy, values and any unifying, or overarching, norms, laws or given principles. It opens the door for more democratic participation in society and politics on a large scale which goes beyond the national borders, say in the European Union, but is not limited to this frame. It grants freedom to small nations and communities

to practice and develop their languages and traditions. Vattimo talked a great deal about law and justice and the need for a new type of law that is less universal and allows more participation for the defendant in court.

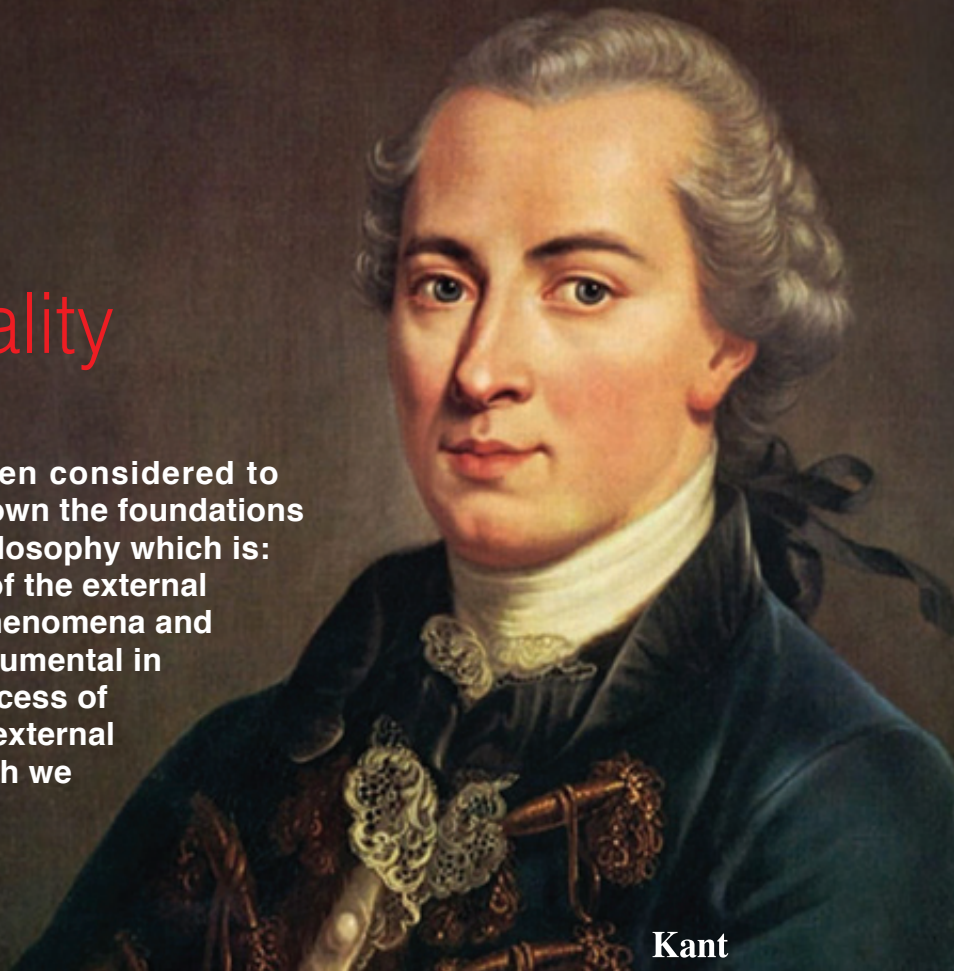
In the United States of America these ideas made their impact on the debate on the nature and future of philosophy and other issues. No wonder then that we find Richard Rorty writing a foreword to the again wide-ranging selection of Vattimo's writings *Nihilism and Emancipation*, edited by Zabala (2004). Rorty saw that Vattimo's thought could help liberal democracy as well as leftist trends by giving up the Enlightenment's idea of rationality and that: 'They may come to agree with Vattimo that nihilism and emancipation do, in fact, go hand in hand'. Rorty adds that 'the left's political purposes will be better served if we stop talking about unconditional moral obligations, universal validity claims, and transcendental presuppositions of rational inquiry.'

The implication for philosophy, in Rorty's view, is that Vattimo's interpretation of Nietzsche, will help philosophers to realise that there is no 'matter of fact' for philosophy but only interpretations. This chimes with Rorty's claim that philosophy does not have a subject matter. Rorty interprets Vattimo's thought to mean that '...philosophy ceases to be ancillary either to theology or to natural science. Instead, it takes the form of historical narrative and utopian speculation..., it becomes ancillary to socio-political initiatives that aimed at making the future better than the past.' Will this lead to the end of philosophy? How truthful is Vattimo's interpretation to Nietzsche's thought? How relevant is it to the debate on identity? More discussion is needed.

The Editor

Kant And Reality

Kant's metaphysics has been considered to be path-breaking in laying down the foundations of the central question of philosophy which is: how do we have knowledge of the external world? Kant's ideas of the phenomena and the noumena have been instrumental in our understanding of the process of accessing knowledge of the external world. The article below which we publish in two parts reviews Kant's Transcendental Philosophy with new interpretations.



Kant

RANJINI GHOSH

Part 1

Before we look at Kant's philosophy, let us have a look at what went before Kant. How can we know reality?

Before Kant

How does knowledge arise? The English philosopher John Locke announced that all our knowledge comes from experience and through our senses. He said 'there is nothing in the mind except what was first in the senses.' The mind at birth is like a clean sheet, a *tabula rasa* on which sensory experience writes itself and from there we get memory and from memory, ideas. What affects our senses is only material things so we must acknowledge that it is matter which is the cause of our sense experiences. So matter, in a way, is the material of our mind. This is what is known as materialist philosophy.

But Bishop Berkeley argued that in Locke's analysis matter doesn't exist except in the form of mind. Since Locke had said that all knowledge is derived from sensation, Berkeley added that our knowledge of anything is only the sensation of it

and the ideas we get from that sensation. Therefore, when we perceive a thing it is merely a sensation; it is merely a bundle of perceptions which are nothing but sensations that have been classified and interpreted. Every experience of matter then is a bundle of sensations and all this is a condition of the mind. Since all matter is a mental condition then the only reality is the mind.

David Hume said that we know about the mind just like we know about matter only by perception, though the mind is internal. We do not perceive a separate entity called 'the mind'; we only perceive memories, ideas feelings etc. The mind is not an organ but only an abstract name for ideas, perceptions, memories and feelings. As Will Durant says, the result is that as Berkeley destroyed matter, Hume destroyed mind, so 'no matter never mind'. Hume had further said that we never perceive causes or any underlying laws in a sequence of successive events. We observe events and sequences and *infer* causation and necessity. What we call laws are merely a summary of our experiences. There is no

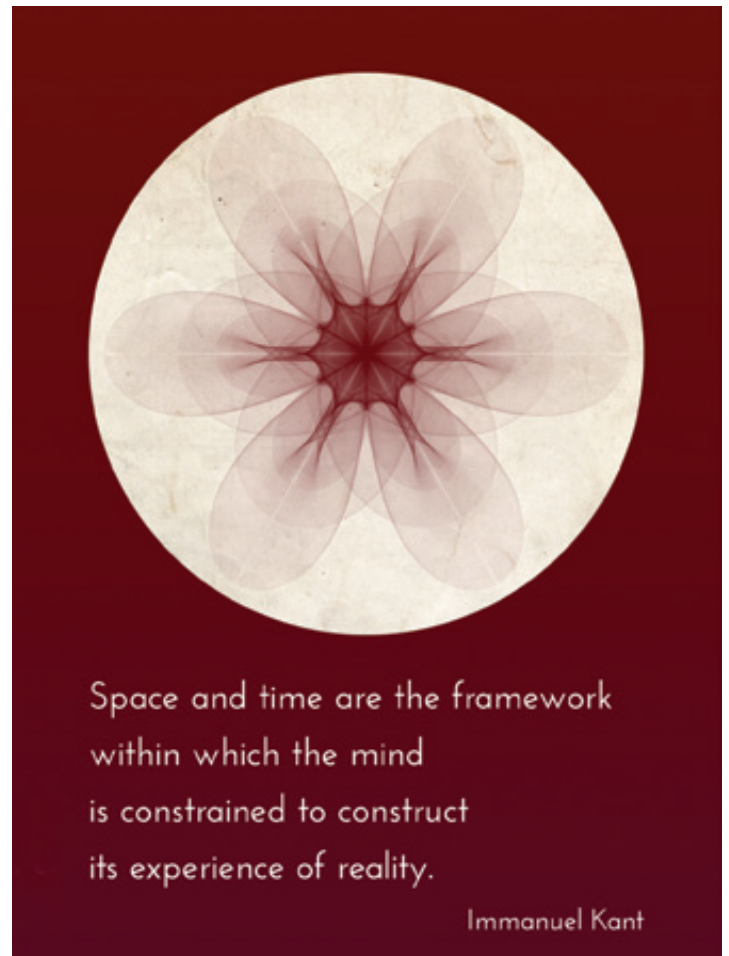
guarantee that the sequences which we see will also happen in the future in a similar manner. Law is an observed custom in the sequence of events but there is no necessity in custom. Then where can we see necessity? We can see it in formulas of mathematics, like $2+2=4$, which is a necessary truth because the predicate is contained within the subject and adds no new information. It is tautological.

From Sensation To Knowledge

It is after reading Hume that Kant woke up from his ‘dogmatic slumber’. Kant questioned Hume on why we cannot do without these notions. Hume had merely said because we couldn’t live without it. It is clear that this wasn’t a very strong argument. But Kant said that the manner in which the human mind is constructed mandates that whenever the mind looks at the world it is bound to have ideas about it. We cannot choose to ignore something we see. This is what he called ‘*Anschauungen*’ or viewings. He also called these ideas ‘concepts’ and ‘categories’; they are *a priori* and come before the experience. He believed that such ideas are innate in the mind. For example, a baby can’t speak on its first day but over the natural course of time speech happens because certain ideas or ‘tools of understanding,’ as Leibniz calls them, are part of our mind. Kant claimed that these ideas are not a result of experience and experience doesn’t shape everything. This was at the time when Newtonian laws were first introduced. He was very impressed by them. Hence, he was sure that there had to be something that explained causal relations.

Kant says that if we can have knowledge that is independent of sense experience and whose truth will be certain to us even before we experience it – i.e. *a priori* – then absolute truth would become possible. As Kant said, ‘My question is, what we can hope to achieve with reason, when all the material and assistance of experience are taken away?’ Is there anything without experience? How does the mind change sensations into perceptions?

When various sensations group together about an object in space and time, then they become perceptions. For example, a sensation is only a stimulus like taste, smell, sound touch, light on the eyes etc. It is not knowledge. But when these



Space and time

sensations come together in relation to some object then all these sensations which we get from the object – i.e. its colour, smell, taste – group together about this object and this becomes perception. So, we have now moved from sensation to knowledge. For Locke and Hume this grouping of sensations into perceptions is automatic and spontaneous but for Kant it is not. There has to be a coordinating mechanism that receives these sensations coming from various sources and makes sense out of them. It is the *mind* which does the job of selection of these sensations and their coordination. It does so through space and time. That is to say that our sensations of objects are sequentially arranged in time and also spatially.

Space and time are *modes of perception*. They are like organs of perception which makes sense of sensation. Without them our sensations cannot become perceptions. So this explains how we

move from sensation to perception. The perceptual knowledge of objects is raised to conceptual knowledge of relationships, sequence and laws. It is the tools of the mind that are involved in the process of refining our experiences into science. The perceptions arrange sensations of objects in space and time, conception through 'categories' arranges perceptions of objects and events into concepts of thought or knowledge i.e. ideas of causal relationships, necessity etc. *Categories* are structures into which perceptions are received and the mind therefore is the coordination of experience. Hence the mind is not a mere passive receiver of senses as Locke and Hume thought. Will Durant says, 'sensation is unorganized stimulus, perception is organized sensation, conception is organized perception, science is organized knowledge'.

Kant said that perceptions without conceptions are blind. We know that the same experience maybe experienced by many but that some men raise this experience to the level of higher knowledge or truth. This is possible because perceptions do not themselves automatically group themselves into ordered thought. But it is the mind which plays the role of coordinating mere sensory experiences into perceptions and then organizing them into categories of thought. It is from this process of organized thought that mere experience of sensation is raised to the level of higher knowledge of science or sublime art. It is through this ordering and classification of experience into thought that we get to science and philosophy.

But it must be accepted that our knowledge is limited to our mode of experience. It is the mind that shapes our stimuli into knowledge. The objects that appear to us as phenomena are different from the external objects before they come into the orbit of our senses. We may never know the original object because we may not be able to experience it. Kant does not doubt matter or the external world but admits that our knowledge of them is limited by our experience of sensations which we have about them. Kant said that science cannot prove or disprove the nature of ultimate reality about religion since our understanding cannot go beyond the limits of our sensibility.

Propositions

Philosophers originally defined propositions into two categories, namely analytical and synthetic. Analytical propositions refer to those statements that are self-explanatory, like 'bachelors are unmarried', it is quite evident that a person who is unmarried is called a bachelor. Hence if the meaning is properly defined and doesn't need scientific proof, we call it an analytical proposition. Such statements which don't require empirical proof are called *a priori* as in prior to the event. Synthetic on the other hand needs empirical proof. The meaning isn't defined within the sentence. Since it requires proof and can only be affirmed after testing with experience we call it *a posteriori* as in after the event.

Kant in his book *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), explained that our minds perceive the world according to the equipment that is within our mind like senses, reason etc. This constitution of the mind is also *a priori*. It doesn't derive from experience. Kant goes on to explain David Hume's fork. Hume had hypothesized about a fork. One side would be analytical statements and *a priori* knowledge, the other side would be synthetic statements and *a posteriori* knowledge. Kant had said that it was possible to have a synthetic *a posteriori* combination.

Kant's main concern was how *a priori* synthetic knowledge was possible. *A priori* truths are truths that remain true independent of experience. *a posteriori* truths owe their truth to experience. Kant argued that *a priori* truths are of two kinds: analytic and synthetic. In an analytic truth the truth value is determined purely by the meaning of the words used in the propositions. All other propositions are synthetic. In other words, an analytic judgement is one in which the concept of the predicate is included in the subject. When we say that all bodies are spatial, it is an analytic truth because the concept of body includes spatiality. Other examples of analytic propositions are:

1. All bachelors are unmarried
2. Nothing is both red and not red
3. The supreme ruler is sovereign

The assumption is that if we have understood the meaning of the terms in these sentences then the



**“ That all our
knowledge begins
with experience
there can be
no doubt. ”**

Immanuel Kant (Critique of Pure Reason)

Kant's quote

sentences are true and we do not have to discover any further facts in the world.

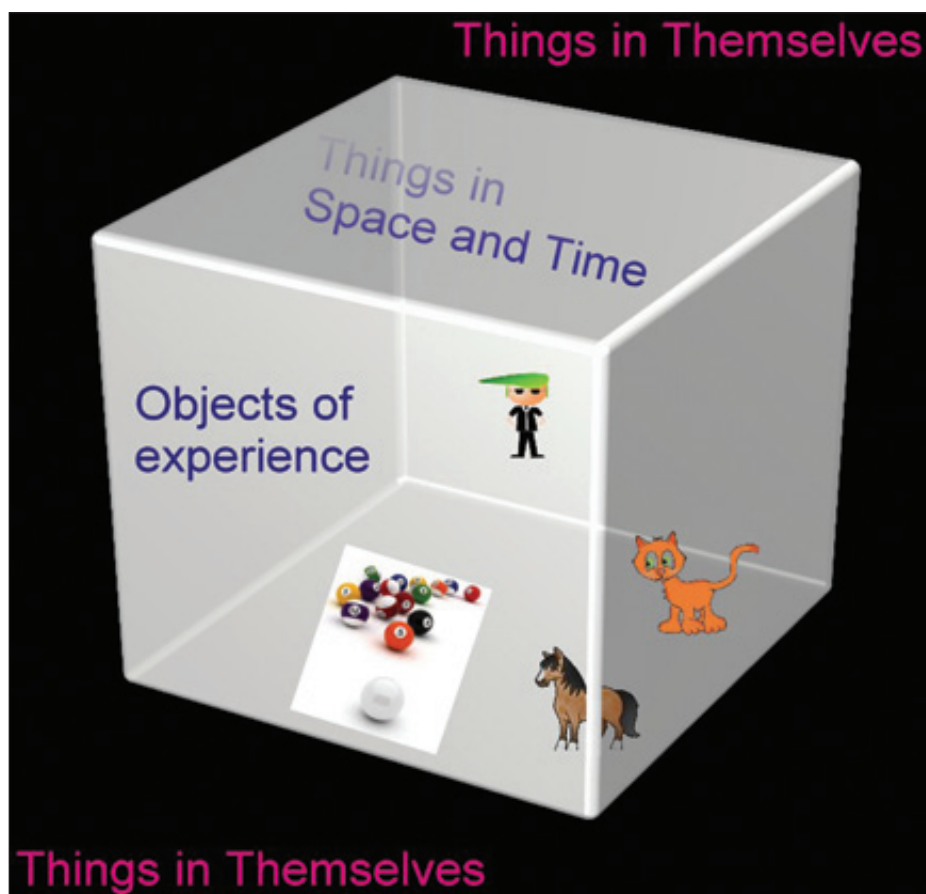
David Hume thought that all propositions can be divided into 'relations of ideas' or 'matters of fact'. The 'relations of ideas' is what is meant when saying that one concept is *contained* in another.

When we say that bachelors are unmarried, it is true because of the relations between the ideas: bachelors and unmarried. But if we say that bachelors are unhappy then it is a matter of fact and this could be proved to be false. The empiricist viewpoint as exemplified by Hume believed that all *a priori* knowledge was analytic. There could be no synthetic truth without experience. The empiricist viewpoint was further developed by Logical Positivists who argued that all *a priori* truths are analytic. They believed that all metaphysical propositions were meaningless since they were neither analytic nor *a posteriori*.

Kant was convinced that metaphysics could not be denied in the pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, his main question was: how can we know the

world through pure reflection without recourse to experience? Kant argued that we can have *a priori* knowledge only of the world that we experience. There cannot be *a priori* knowledge of a world which is beyond our knowledge. Hence when Kant set out to seek synthetic *a priori* knowledge, it meant knowledge of truths which are *a priori* and at the same time not derived merely from the meaning of the words. If synthetic *a priori* knowledge is not possible then metaphysics is also not possible. Kant believed that mathematics is an example of synthetic *a priori* knowledge. We cannot prove mathematical truths by analysis of the meaning of the mathematical symbols. He claimed that no philosopher has proved that mathematical truths are analytic. For him the task of philosophy was to discover synthetic *a priori* truths in metaphysics. He believed that our knowledge of the world we experience has its limits. This is *a priori* understanding.

All analytic beliefs are *a priori*. But are all *a priori* beliefs analytic? Empiricists said that evidence from perception is the main source of our knowledge. What this means is that there cannot



Limits of experience

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be any belief about anything in the world *a priori*. All such beliefs depend on experience or evidence from perception. The only *a priori* beliefs that do not require experience or evidence from the world are beliefs based on meanings of words in a proposition. These are analytic. To reiterate, all beliefs are either about the world or entirely based on meanings of words in a proposition. But let us take an example. Let us take a belief that as a yellow colour gets more red it cannot also get more blue. When we say that we have a belief that a yellow object becomes orange and less green then we can know this fact without considering any evidence. The only thing we have to know is what colours are.

Immanuel Kant pointed out that whenever we gather evidence for or against some belief we have about the world, this itself first requires that we are guided by some belief. To be able to understand what we see through a telescope in space we first have to have a belief about distance and space,

otherwise we will not be able to interpret what we see through our telescope. He argued that we must have a body of fixed beliefs before we start having beliefs about other things. In order to find and interpret evidence for some beliefs we have, we have to start with some beliefs first. This body of fixed beliefs we have before we start are synthetic *a priori* beliefs. The belief in time, space and causality are examples of such fixed beliefs we have to start with before we start experiencing the world. Without these presuppositions or beliefs the experience itself is not possible. When we think of colours and various shades of colours then we have to start with belief in the degrees of various colours and their shades. Only then can we understand what is more green or less green. What he was saying is that before we can begin to describe the world we have to make certain assumptions and these are what we call synthetic *a priori* beliefs. We consider such beliefs to be true because we make them to be true in the first place.

Avoiding Evil

Notes of the Wednesday Meeting 28th February 2018

PAUL COCKBURN

The meeting started by discussing how we combat evil. David BurrIDGE introduced two quotes from John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and a disputed statement of Edmund Burke:

Mill said:

A person may cause evil to others not only by his actions but by his inaction, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury. The latter case, it is true, requires a much more cautious exercise of compulsion than the former. To make any one answerable for doing evil to others is the rule; to make him answerable for not preventing evil is, comparatively speaking the exception.

Burke is reported to have said:

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is when good men do nothing.

David BurrIDGE thought we should try to prevent evil and have an active social responsibility. We should try not to be involved in evil in any way and should try to stop a crime or evil being committed at an early stage.

We moved on to discuss the internet and mobile technology. The technological advances seem to have led to a 'dumbing down' of important issues. It has involved us in just the 'here and now'. It involves extreme views being expressed because these views are noticed and picked up. There seems to be a social desire for the unusual, the out of the ordinary. This leads to distortion and naïve views, as history is neglected and the 'total' picture is ignored. Where is the power behind what we read on Twitter or in the media?

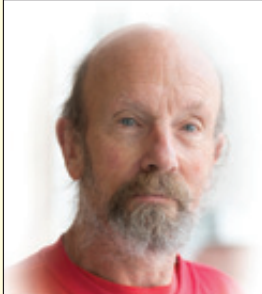


Burke

What do we fundamentally pay attention to in our philosophy? One suggestion was to analyse texts to find meaning for our lives in them. However, the full implications of a text are not obvious, as Derrida showed. The question was then raised - what about the spoken word – is it more powerful than a text or more limited? Narrativity was also thought to be fundamental – stories are basic to our lives, our personal history and that of the groups we belong to is key to who we are, our identity.

The issue of our social identity was raised in terms of the demise of the neo-liberal consensus which was much stronger and accepted in the past. This consensus is now perhaps being lost and seems to lead to nationalism and racism. We should maintain dialogue even say in moral situations which seem unacceptable such as the practice of female genital mutilation. We should dialogue with those from other cultures and try to understand the cultural reasons for such practices.

Kant: border-crossing (three sestinas)



Chris Norris

I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith.

Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer.

The light dove, cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance, might imagine that its flight would be still easier in empty space.

Immanuel Kant,
Critique of Pure Reason

The whole analytic of aesthetic judgment forever assumes that one can distinguish rigorously between the intrinsic and the extrinsic Deconstruction must neither reframe nor dream of the pure absence of the frame. These two apparently contradictory gestures are the very ones – and they are systematically indissociable – of what is here deconstructed.

Jacques Derrida,
‘Parergon’, in *The Truth in Painting*


I
My watchword: let all thought observe due bounds.
Curb reason’s flight; set knowledge on firm ground;
Restrict its scope, and so make room for faith.
Let faith not claim to know but rather think
Those postulates of reason that good will
May raise into a true kingdom of ends.

Not that each starts just where the other ends.
No such dogmatic beating of the bounds,
But a critique that shows us how they will
Keep hopping borders, filching bits of ground,
Or annexing new land just when you think
They’ve signed up to the system in good faith.

I meant it when I said ‘It’s here, in faith,
That my whole enterprise begins and ends’.
Yet those there are who still prefer to think
That a religion broached ‘within the bounds
Of reason only’ must yield vital ground
For atheists to colonise at will.

Not so, say I: those God-proofs surely will,
Once proven false, leave no resort for faith
Since their ill-judged incursions on its ground
Mix up conceptual means with rational ends
And so create, within pure reason’s bounds,
Such strife as harms our very power to think.

Yet, strangely, thoughts like these are what we think,
Us wayward types, each time the errant will
To venture out beyond such prudent bounds
Asserts itself and bids us pin our faith
Once more to certain speculative ends
That have us soar too far from solid ground.



Yet when I'd run the last of them to ground,
Those vexed antinomies, I came to think
That all productive thought begins and ends
With speculative impasse, so my will
To rein in contradictions shows less faith
In reason than the soarer's leaps and bounds.

Why then yield ground to his insensate will?
They err who think to fly on wings of faith.
My groundwork ends where thought exceeds all bounds.

II

My second rule: for everything its frame!
Let intuitions be a perfect fit
For concepts; let each moral problem-case
Be brought beneath the universal rule
Of moral law; let beauty likewise lie
Within the frame of judgment fixed by taste.

In each case judgment would come down to taste,
And taste alone, if thought supplied no frame
By which to know just where the limits lie
Between art and non-art, or persons fit
To judge and those unfit, or how the rule
May brook exception in the special case

Of genius. Yet this has to be the case
With moral judgments also, where a taste
For problems, quandaries, dilemmas, rule-
Book upsets, and their like may crack the frame
Or serve to show that what makes judgment fit
That case cannot be how the ground-rules lie.

My book says: always wrong to tell a lie.
Why so? It constitutes a clear-cut case
Of setting other persons up as fit
Means to some end that, through our vicious taste
For self-advantage, leads us to re-frame
Their personhood as ours to over-rule.

Yet how uphold this universal rule
That ends trump means as reason not to lie
Against the counter-arguments they frame,
My critics, when they cite some awkward case
(For me, that is, though wholly to their taste)
Where my truth-telling maxim doesn't fit?

Instance: the blood-crazed axeman throws a fit
At your front door, screams 'Is X here?', and rule
'Speak-True!' instructs: 'Let not your strong distaste
For bloodshed tell you it's OK to lie –
At least a lesser wrong – if that's the case,
Or any such scenario you might frame.

And if it's fit and proper, then, to lie
And break my rule, then I'll admit this case
Gives me a taste of things no law can frame.

III

I once said: three great questions make me think.
They are: 'What can I know?', 'What should I do?',
And then 'What might I reasonably hope?'.
All three drew negatives. That which we know
Can have at most such warrant as belongs
To those who track its limits as they ought.

Please note: this epistemic sense of 'ought'
Applies lest we rash over-reachers think
We've somehow come to grasp that which belongs
Beyond our mortal ken. My point: make do
With those innate resources that we know
To offer human knowers their best hope



Of cognitive advance. Shun the false hope
That has us striving to cognise what ought,
By rights, to find no place for claims to know
Since given us as ideas fit to think
In speculative mode, as those may do
To whom the dove's sky-cleaving gift belongs.

Yet it's that yen of mine for what belongs –
What goes with what, how knowledge, morals, hope
Stand vis-à-vis each other as they do –
It's that compulsion that perhaps I ought
To strive against, the more so when I think
That strains are showing up in ways I know

From past thought-venturing. For if 'to know'
Is, properly, a factive that belongs
To things known truly, not just things we think,
Then I know for a truth that my one hope
Of finally connecting 'is' and 'ought'
Is to cease splitting things up as I do

And take my turn at lumping. This might do
All that I've dreamed of doing: have us know
Where hopes are rational, fill out the 'ought'
With moral substance, then say what belongs
To what in such a way that knowledge, hope
And virtue join as plain good sense would think.

Yet it won't do, this mind-trick that belongs
To sanguine sorts who 'know' they've grounds for hope
And for whom 'ought' translates 'do as I think'.

when love and wisdom met

The night wakes me, hands me her moonlight.
I dress in dreams, follow her call through the dark
And crouch down by the horizon.
Her amber eyes are soft in the North West,
her breath filling the cold air with mist.
But her wide hips and immense torso know
how to give birth.
Light out of nowhere, small as a thought, a desire.
I had wanted to see this: Wake me no matter what.
And here it is, the new constellation, Venus and Jupiter
emerging as one in blue velvet, as though
brought here from deep inside her womb.
This is a heavenly birth.
In the dead of night I kneel in the sand,
watch the new starlight licking the sea
nudge it to wobble, see a miracle.



Poem and Painting by *Scharlie Meeuws*



The Fragmenting Social Imaginary

DAVID CLOUGH

Latour is an important thinker. As well as his *Actor Network Theory* (often written as ANT) his latest book is on Lovelock's 'Gaia' idea. According to Latour we have never been modern. But then as we see he is not a big fan of critique or the critical theory edifice erected on it. Latour could be seen as querying the category of the modern that is so important to the critical school. He does that by adopting Serres and his 'Five Senses' in the art domain.

Meanwhile Rita Felski wrote *The Limits of Critique* to try to restore some balance and level headedness to the growing sense that postmodern critique had been so acute that now critical readers were not so much critics as plainly paranoid. There is suspicion or scepticism but when it turns to paranoia a different intervention is necessary. And to do this she was already drawing on Latour, but first:

Is The Idea Of The Old Unified Social Imaginary Itself Fragmenting?

There are, to be sure, different ways for trying to account for what we all seem to know is actually happening, at least to a degree. Under the pressure perhaps of post-colonial critique or simply, globalisation, technical changes are leading towards big data management and we might find ourselves in smaller tribes with more mirror like identities. We could be fragmenting into smaller identity cells so that where the social imaginary used to be a Western unified concept, like in Peter L Berger's *Sacred Canopy* book. Now it is not. It has been pluralised.

Can Taylor, Ricoeur and Castoriadis work in this plethora of imaginaries? I suppose they might. But don't groups find it increasingly harder to speak to each other? Maybe we do still feel alienation

within our own group. We are also all consumers now. This too has reduced our globalised feelings of inauthenticity but it may also have accelerated the tribal drift towards our current on-line cellular myopia.

But as well as fragmentation, globalisation could mean extending one's reach. Indeed, some scholars have seemingly tried this other direction. They take their national literature as a whole and recasting it as global. In some ways it might seem a brilliant move to 'appear global' but it could so easily just be a nationalism recast. But what gives you the right seems to be the dominant power position your culture already has. But in some cases at least more genuine critical discoveries are perhaps possible.

Such is the case with Wai Chee Dimock, the scholar of American literature when she asks: How do the civilizations of Mesopotamia, India, Egypt, China, and West Africa, as well as Europe, leave their mark on American literature. Emerson somewhat surprisingly emerges as a translator of Islamic culture; Henry James's novels become long-distance kin to *Gilgamesh*; and Black English loses its un-grammatical nature when reclassified as the Creole tongue, meshing the input from Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Throughout, Dimock contends that American literature is answerable not to the nation-state, but to the human species as a whole, and that it looks dramatically different when removed from a strictly national or English-language context.

This comes as something as a shock if you still see it as a power grab of the sort that Alex Ross may have done for writing his definitive *Rest is Noise* historical account of 20th Classical Music where the whole emphasis shifts to how composers did or

should have succeeded where the money was in the American context. But as a move, it has not been unattractive or that easy to resist in music at least. As culture dissolved its high-brow labels most of the new lower-brow stuff was either American or in the case of Rock and Roll, British artists doing innovative things with an essentially US idiom.

Is all literature whatever its cultural setting global literature? That is surely taking it to an extreme. Is America unique because it is peculiarly a 'melting pot' so to speak? Not every country with a literary tradition is like that and there are factors that limit diffusion and translation. What characterises the most translatable works? Why do certain works get translated and become famous throughout the world? Can we really rule out post-colonial and other traditional power reasons? And then as regards music, how and why did classical music get to Russia? How far will Indian or African music increase in Britain? Does it have to be fused with other British musical types already popular in a hybrid fusion? Why has rap become popular?

Why have I drifted into this you might ask? Well it is a bit of a repetitive theme perhaps but it shows how the sort of high-brow critique that someone like Adorno had is now almost toothless. But if that is the case and critique has been blown out of the water so to speak, why are we still worrying about paranoia? Probably because as academic critics we have to. The dissolving into populism is not what makes us distinctive. It is still a kind of necessity to impose some superior opinion. One alternative to paranoia might indeed be to



Wai Chee Dimock

rubbish the hierarchy that critique created, and post-modernism itself has already started to do this, particularly in popular culture. Indeed, the deconstruction of the division of high and low culture is one of its most easily understood achievements. To preserve a legitimate if more curtailed role for critique it needed to be on a different basis from just fighting to restore the old high/low situation, tempting at times though that still is. So, people came up with various terms like meta-modernism or digi-modernism, a kind of return to modernism but with elements of Ricoeur's second naivety. This is still critique based but just more moderate.

But turning instead to literary field, contextualism had displaced the once commonplace but now risible notion of 'the modernist work itself' which has been endlessly dissected, dismembered, and dispatched into New Critical oblivion. In the Post-Modern context this is no longer optional. But 'Context,' to continue with Latour, 'is simply a way of stopping the description when you are tired or too lazy to go on.'

The Wednesday

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Website: Currently unavailable

Published by:

The Wednesday Press, Oxford

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The Outsider



(Albert Camus' grave in a cemetery outside Loumarin)

Pinned to a post, Mistral-tugged,
ink-smudged, like a gone-to-lunch note.
We finger the stains for direction.

Mantelpiece vaults crowded with ceramic.
Pious stone lined up for resurrection.
Family squabbles laid out for judgement
---gossip lowered to holy whisper.

There he is smothered by lavender.
Untidy twist beside his wife's neat grave.
Inside at last but not in the queue.

David BurrIDGE