

The Wednesday



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group at Albion Beatnik - Oxford

Editorial

The Idea of a Critique

Kant is a good reference point or authority for both continental and analytical philosophy. He also bequeathed to his successors, particularly Fichte and Hegel, the word 'Science,' applied to philosophy. The first used it in his *Wissenschaftslehre* or 'Theory of Science of Knowledge' and the latter used it for several of his books.

However, what is more interesting is the coinage by Kant of the concept of a critique. It soon found its way to the philosophical circles of his time and after. Fichte used it in his *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelations* and confused everyone because he didn't put his name on it and it was taken to be one of Kant's works. Marx used it in his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. He also practised a critique in *The German Ideology* and *The Capital*, and so did the Left-Hegelians.

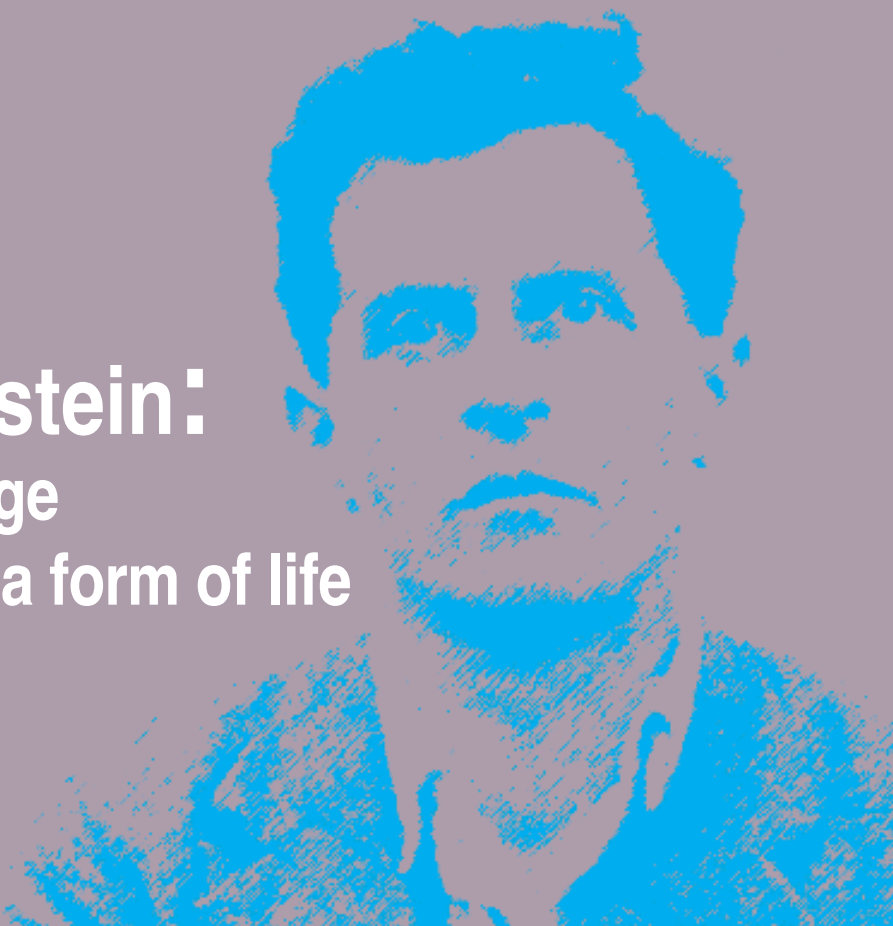
What is also interesting is the change of the content of the critique. For Kant, it meant discovering the limits of the possibility of experience and bridging the gap between science and philosophy, in the hope of setting philosophy on the path of success, as science did. He thought that philosophy should busy itself with the world of appearances, the world as we experience it and not make knowledge-claims about matters beyond the realm of experience. He called the world beyond experience the 'in-itself'. His successors were not happy with this mysterious world that is outside the subject and a force against it. They thought it was dogmatic to assume there is something given and limiting the freedom of the subject. They linked the idea of a critique with the idea of freedom (or absolute freedom). They called their philosophy 'critical' and that of Kant 'dogmatic', although Kant himself thought he was critical in his three

critiques. He was not critical enough in their view. But they also emphasised the practical aspect of Kant's philosophy and paid less attention to his epistemology. Kant himself, in fairness to him, hinted at that, but these new philosophers established what you can call 'the primacy of the will,' a feature that runs through the philosophy of Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. But it also applies to Marx, if the 'will' here gets generalised to a class and freedom becomes the dream. It is also in Heidegger's emphasis on acting in the world.

Once you suggest the will, then you have to deal with the opposition and limitation to this will. The old debate in philosophy used to revolve around psychological and metaphysical aspects of the question of the will and its limitation. But with the socialising of the will (Marx) and the naturalising of it (Nietzsche) the question now turns on the here and now and the powers that work through society, production, learning, state and all aspects of life. Oppressive powers are seen working everywhere and limiting progress materially and ethically. These powers need to be unmasked and it is the task of the critique to do this. A philosophy that performs this task is a subversive philosophy. Continental philosophy seems to be of this nature. It is critical, radical and revolutionary, perhaps because it was born during the French Revolution. On the other hand, analytical philosophy is resistant to the idea of a critique. It is more gradualist and conservative. It is not surprising then that a recent book on 'Conceptions of Critique in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy' is all about continental philosophy. Perhaps in this respect continental philosophy complements analytical philosophy and helps creating a plurality of philosophical concerns.

The Editor

Later Wittgenstein: To speak a language means to share in a form of life



Wittgenstein

Ludwig Wittgenstein is most famous for his book *Tractatus Logico – Philosophicus* (1921). His philosophy was focused on the role of language in human life and the valid and invalid uses of language. The article below explains the change in his views later on in his philosophical life. This change concerns the nature of language as a social practice.

Part 2

RANJINI GHOSH

2

Bryan Magee says that Wittgenstein's later philosophy differs from his earlier philosophy and this difference is the difference between two metaphors for meaning. In the early philosophy, meaning is picturing relationships, in the later philosophy it is like a tool which has to be put to use, i.e. the meaning of any utterance can be seen as the sum total of its possible uses. Therefore, one can say of his philosophy that there is a shift from the metaphor of a picture to the metaphor of a tool.

In his concept of language games, he said that games are rule - governed practices as well as that there is no common characteristic to various games. If games are at all related to one another then it is like a family resemblance. As members of a family share some features in common, so also do games. But otherwise every game is different from the other and one cannot find any single characteristic which is common to all games. Language is also like a game. We use language to ask, curse, greet etc. Therefore, language has a purpose and

also it is governed by certain rules. In his later philosophy he realized that names are only one part of language.

John Searle, commenting on the early Wittgenstein, says that his idea that sentences are really a disguised form of picture gives him a remarkable kind of metaphysical lever. It enables him to read off the structure of reality from the structure of language. The structure of reality determines the structure of language. Unless language mirrors reality in some way, sentences would not have any meaning. We can understand therefore the structure of the world by analyzing the structure of the language. Whether a statement is true or false, it still has meaning and therefore it corresponds to a possible state of affairs in the world. Ordinary language sentences actually conceal the underlying logical structure. It is in the elementary sentences that we can see the picturing relationship between the structure of the sentence and structure of the fact.

John Searle gives an example about how a sentence may mirror a fact when the fact exists and also when it does not exist. If someone says 'There is a cat on the mat' then this sentence pictures a possible state of affairs. But if someone now says, 'There is not a cat on the mat,' we know what the sentence means but what state of affairs does this sentence picture. What would a real picture of the absence of a cat on a mat be like. Wittgenstein said that words like 'not', 'and', 'or', and 'if' are logical constants and not actually part of a picture relationship. If there is a sign in a park of a dog with a red line drawn on it, it does not mean that the picture shows dogs with red stripes. It simply means 'No Dogs'. The red line is not part of the picture but it operates on the picture. Similarly, a word like 'not' is itself not part of the picture but operates on the sentence. This is what Wittgenstein is actually trying to convey. Wittgenstein thought that the only language that makes any sense is



Descartes

'fact-stating' language. But he also believed that important things in life were unstateable like religion, ethics, and aesthetics. He did not say that they are meaningless but that efforts to discuss them through language are meaningless.

Words As Tools

The key to understanding Wittgenstein's early theory is the picture theory of meaning. In his later theory he abandoned this concept in favor of a tool conception of meaning. Words are like tools and sentences are like instruments. In order to understand what language really is we should see how it functions in real life and what people do with words. He said, 'The meaning of a word is its use in the language'. His early view was that the structure of the real world determines the structure of the language but in his later work it was the other way round. It is the structure of the language that determines how we see the real world. The many uses of language are part of 'language games'. Therefore, there is a shift of the metaphor from language as a picture to language as a tool (Bryan Magee). There is no single essence to a language. He gives the

example of games. He asks the question what do all games have in common? If we consider various games like board games, gambling games, Olympic games we find that there is no single essence of gamehood. But there may be overlapping similarities which he calls family resemblances. Some games are competitive and some are professional. Some games are also solitary. Hence there is no one thing that all games have in common by virtue of which they are games. But they may have certain features in common like they may be learnt from others or that they are rule-governed but this is not enough. Therefore, what essentially is a game is not clear.

Wittgenstein And Plato

Some philosophers have seen that his theory is radically different from that of Plato and Aristotle which said that words get their meaning through ideas in the mind. There is another traditional view which says that in order for a word to have a meaning the word must have some essence. His examples of games go contrary to that tradition. The meaning of a word is the sum total of its possible uses. Language is used in different ways in different discourses. The way language is used in discussing cinema is different from the way it is used when talking about politics. Wittgenstein says that if we really want to understand the meaning of a word we should see how it is used in a particular area of discourse. His favorite slogan was 'Don't ask for the meaning ask for the use'. Therefore, the meaning of a word is given entirely by how it is used. The meaning of a *king* in chess is entirely different in the game when compared with its normal usage. Similarly meaning of words like 'good', 'true', 'beautiful' and 'just' are different in different contexts. His view of language is that it is something which is rule-governed and also governed by how it is used. In order to understand the relation between language and reality we cannot get outside of language to understand whether

or not language is adequately understanding reality. However, language is not bounded everywhere by rules. Every system of rules has gaps in them. In serving a tennis ball there is no rule how high you can serve. If somebody serves too high and delays the game then new rules would have to be made and rules are also interpreted differently by different people.

Rules Of Grammar

Wittgenstein says that language is *normative*. There are right and wrong ways to use words. If we say 'the window was a cat' then it does not make sense. Language is constrained by rules of grammar and grammatical rules are standards by which we evaluate whether a sentence is meaningful. For example, in a game of chess each player adheres to the rules of the game and if anyone for example moves any piece against what the rule says the opposing player immediately objects since they both know the rules. Language is not meaningful because of what it represents but because of how we use words in context. There is a normative constraint given by the rules of grammar. Suppose we have to describe that sofas are longer than chairs. We might try to first describe what a sofa is and compare its length with that of the chair. But if we try to point out a sofa or use the word sofa then certain rules of grammar have to already be in place so that what the language is conveying becomes meaningful. If we are pointing to the shape of an object instead of the color then we have to already know what shapes and color are. Pointing alone at a table does not help to make it clear that it is a table because we may be saying something else about the table like its color or size. So, to make it absolutely clear that we mean to indicate only the shape of the table and not its color we need *language*. Therefore, rules of grammar have to be in place to know what a sofa is.

Wittgenstein points out that we have to distinguish between surface grammar and



John Searle

depth grammar of the underlying logic of a sentence. Unless we do this, we will not understand philosophical problems and philosophers would be like flies trapped in a fly bottle. The concept of meaning differs from experience. He questions what it means to associate a word with a sensation. For example, he says that the word pain is an expression of a sensation and not a description of it. Sensations are private. So, when I say I have a pain in my feet it sounds like pain is like an object attached to or inside my feet but that is not what I want to convey. I want to convey a feeling or sensation.

Private Language Argument

The central question in the private language argument is whether there could be a language in which I can have words for my own private sensations. The traditional epistemology of Locke, Berkeley and Hume is based on the idea that we build our knowledge of the world from our own ideas and private sensations. But Wittgenstein doesn't agree with this and believes that language for describing our private sensations cannot be private but is a social phenomenon. There is a public criterion by which names or words are associated with our private sensations. If we try to have our own private language for private sensations then we would not be able to make the distinction between actually using the word right and just thinking we are using



Brian Magee

it right. The rules for using sensation words are public social rules. We are members of a linguistic community. There is a public social criterion for our inner social experiences. We learn the use of words for inner sensations and also for taste, smell, color, pain etc. from others. Therefore, this view has important implications for epistemology which is that we cannot form conceptions of the external world by starting from private sensations. This goes against the whole tradition starting from Descartes. Therefore, the later Wittgenstein says that all meaning is ultimately social and not private. Words get their meaning from the context in which they are used and these in turn depend on social practices.

Language is a part of life. Wittgenstein says that following the grammatical rules of language is essentially embedded in the customary agreements of the community which uses that language. Therefore, it is a public matter. Every sentence in a language is part of '*language-games*'. The meaning of language is shared by all the users of the language. Therefore, meaning cannot be a hidden process of the mind. So, there can be no such thing as language which is intelligible only to a single individual. He goes against the view of Descartes that all knowledge is based on personal experience. To speak a language means to share in a form of life.

Consequentialism and the Virtuous Agent

DAVID BURRIDGE

Consequentialism appears to be a straightforward common-sense approach to determining what is morally right. It is probably the first question we ask ourselves: *What will happen if I do this or that?* It sweeps up the utilitarianism of Mill and Bentham. Underlying this approach to ethics is the belief that the whole point of morality is to spread as much happiness and freedom in the world and to relieve as much suffering as possible. So, what's the problem? Well, not so much in the intention but rather in assessing the outcomes.

Plain Consequentialism

Consequentialism says:

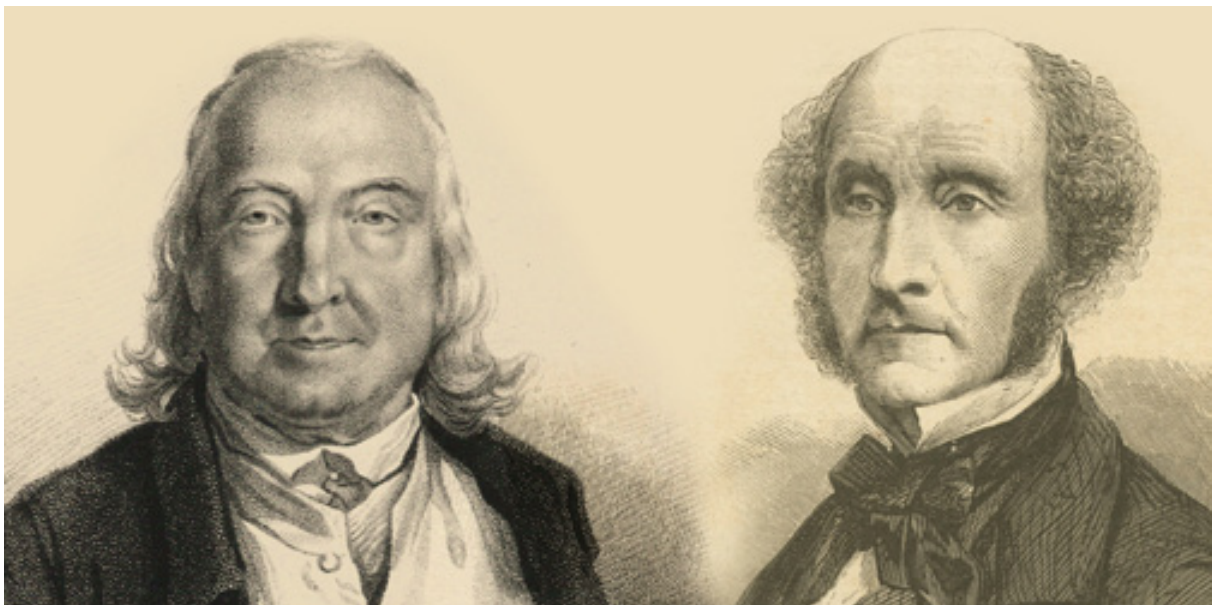
Of all things a person might do in any given moment, the morally right action is the one with the best overall consequences.

Let me take an example from employment law. ACAS (Arbitration, Conciliation and

Advice service) have just produced statistics as follows:

From April 2017 to July 2017 ACAS received 1700 notifications per week. Since the Supreme Court ruling that abolished tribunal fees, this has increased to 2200 per week.

Applying a simple rule of *Cons*, the ruling was a good measure because it meant that more people had the confidence to bring forward their cases, arguing for fair treatment. That is how I would view it. A hard right-winger would see it as a bad outcome because it meant that more public money had to be wasted on people who should do as they were told by their employer, or ex-employer. So, outcomes are subject to interpretation and it might be argued that the 2200 people per week might be ultimately very unhappy if they are persuaded that their case is weak. In law I would consequentially argue nothing can be valued until it is fully tested.



Bentham

John Stuart Mill

If we look at what we mean as ‘consequence’ we are looking at two different things: the action itself and everything the action causes. As we all know there is often a knock-on effect beyond what is initially intended. In my example only 17% of the notifications were settled through ACAS; of the rest 26% proceeded to tribunal and 58% did not. If 58% decided they didn’t have a case but it might be argued that the outcomes were not good. But if I start with the moral belief that we are all entitled to access to justice, then it was still a good outcome to remove tribunal fees. I am expounding one of Rawls’ principles of justice:

Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.

What is important is that when we look at consequences the judgement is just beginning, because we need to look at all the outcomes and evaluate both immediate outcomes (which are intentional) and the knock-on effects. This leads to what is called Plain Scalar Consequentialism:

Of any two things a person might do at any given moment, one is better than another to the extent that its overall consequences

are morally better than the other’s overall consequences.

So, I would argue that it is better to allow access to justice, even if individual cases fail, because it is right that the principles of justice are upheld. Which might indicate that I am leaning toward some Kantian maxim.

This of course brings us to one of the problems of consequentialism. When we set off with a moral action we cannot know the overall consequences until it is tested. We are therefore setting out with what we believe is morally good, which may be based on assessment of past experience or indeed belief. I would argue consequentialism is the right track if we set out on a journey as virtuous agents searching for good outcomes and start with maxims which need to be tested through our best possible actions. Of course, we must be objective and honest with the evidence and not let our beliefs override any cognitive dissonance. Perhaps a reasonable form of Consequentialism is the answer.

The morally right action is the action whose reasonably expectable consequences are best.

So, I will set out with the expectation that justice will be applied in all cases.

Philosophical Reflections

A ‘republic’ of one

DAVID JONES

Motivations for guiding behaviour are sometimes explained by derivation from religious world-conceptions and sometimes from reasoned attempts to avoid conflict while living with others. What would remain to guide behaviour if neither framework were relevant?

If an atheist found himself, or herself, alone on a desert island with no neighbours then the atheist might, at first, feel liberated from law and the desire to secure the good opinion of others.

However, after a period of adjustment, the atheist might conclude that life must still be lived in the light of one’s own experience of oneself, and decide that he does not want to be someone who wastes resources or harms animals, and does not wish to waste opportunities for developing potential human capacities. Even on a desert island there is one whose judgment you cannot escape, the judgment of your present self, which you carry forward into the future, of everything you did in your past.

Missing Hues



CHRIS NORRIS

Wherever in the image of red and green stripes the observers looked, the colour they saw was ‘simultaneously red and green’, Crane and Piantanida wrote in their paper. Furthermore, ‘some observers indicated that although they were aware that what they were viewing was a colour (that is, the field was not achromatic), they were unable to name or describe the colour. One of these observers was an artist with a large colour vocabulary’.

Natalie Wolchover

**All shades conspire to hint at missing hues.
What though they're out of mind and out of sight?
Just spin the disc: it's paint-box shades you lose.**

**That's how the sense of shades unknown accrues
Each time the quick-spin colour-wheel turns white.
All shades conspire to hint at missing hues.**

**Let parrot-charts find room for cockatoos,
Pale plumage waving subtly in the light.
Just spin the disc: it's paint-box shades you lose.**

**Here, too, the colour-watcher may seek clues
To moods beyond the simply dark or bright.
All shades conspire to hint at missing hues.**

**Then there'll be spectral variants of the blues
With chords that set a darkling mood aright.
Just spin the disc: it's paint-box shades you lose.**

**Some say those shades are ones that artists use
Though nowhere marked on colour-charts packed tight.
All shades conspire to hint at missing hues.**

Perhaps it's here that Newton pays his dues
To Goethe's *Farbenlehre* fancy-flight.
Just spin the disc: it's paint-box shades you lose.

So let your theory-choice depend on whose
Account allows that hues are infinite:
All shades conspire to hint at missing hues.

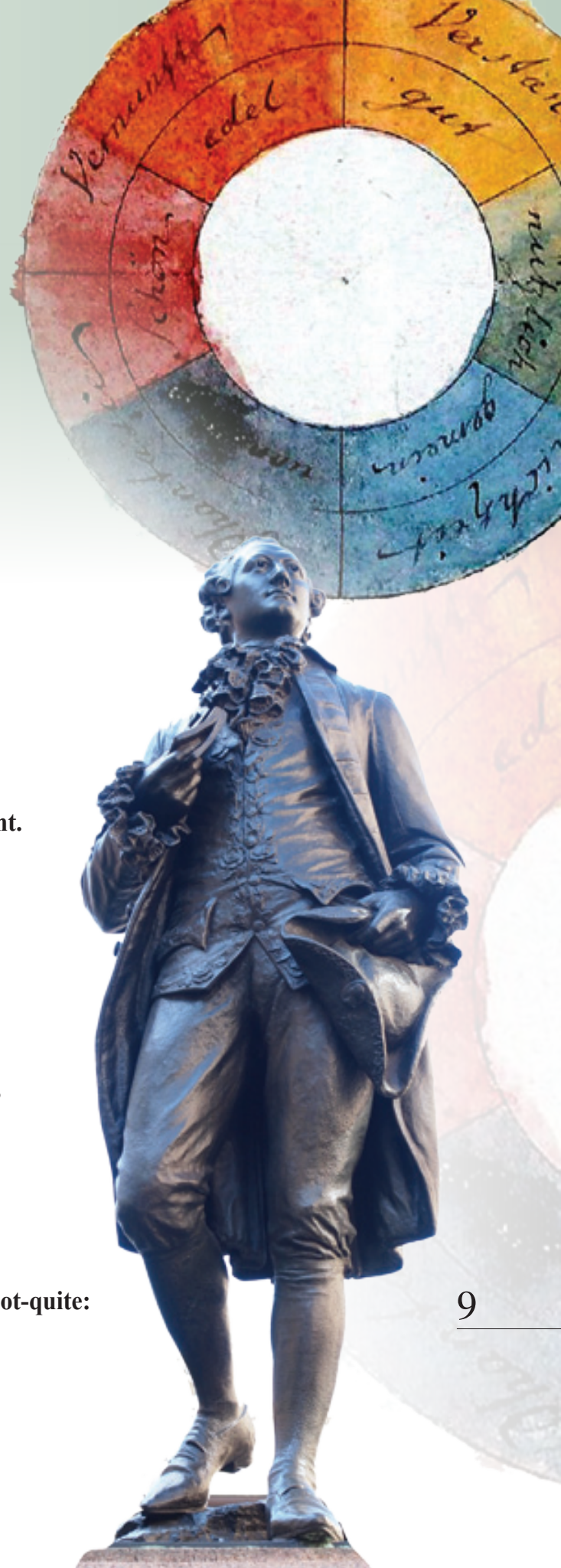
Yet spectrum-hoppers cannot pick and choose
Where best to land from some great theory-height.
Just spin the disc: it's paint-box shades you lose.

As bands dissolve so we should quit fixed views.
Let nuance reign, let differences be slight!
All shades conspire to hint at missing hues.

Why fear lest colour-boundaries blend and fuse?
Why let fixed views impose their nuance-blight?
Just spin the disc: it's paint-box shades you lose.

From what's most fugitive let's take our cues,
What's squint, oblique, opaque, half-glimpsed, not-quite:
All shades conspire to hint at missing hues.

For then maybe we'll figure what ensues
When nuance dawns as clearly as it might.
Just spin the disc: it's paint-box shades you lose;
All shades conspire to hint at missing hues.



The Post-Truth Era

Notes of the Wednesday Meeting 4th April 2018

PAUL COCKBURN

A short paper on Consequentialism was presented by David BurrIDGE (published in this issue). David's approach to ethics was pragmatic: you can have an ethical maxim, but the key thing is to test what is the effect of the maxim in practice. For instance, in the social sphere you could collect statistics to see if a maxim or rule works. This utilitarian approach is based on happiness of the greatest number. Some members of the group thought happiness needs to be more carefully defined as the word has hedonistic overtones! It was thought the statistical approach would work well in the health system, say, if the data on the people's health and treatments could be used to some good.

Another approach is that of virtue ethics, which may work better at a personal level. Can virtue be taught? Most of the group thought it could be, to suggest it could not implies determinism. David gave an example of trying to improve behaviour by means of appraisals in the workplace, by giving feedback to people and conducting role plays. There was a follow up

to the article on the play 'The Life of Galileo' by Brecht - the refusal of the Church hierarchy to look through his telescope and observe the imperfections of the moon and the moons of Jupiter. It is similar to those who prefer comforting received wisdom to the evidence of their own eyes. Maybe this links to our 'post-truth' era in which ideology is favoured over facts and the opinions of experts are ignored.

We also talked about episodic memory, the memory of autobiographical events in our lives which can be remembered, sometimes in great detail. These recollections of past events are a form of mental time-travel in subjective time. How do we retrieve past memories? If the memory is of a traumatic event, can it cause psychological problems? We also talked of mystical events, such as feeling the presence of someone who is dead, a close relative in one instance. Jung believed we have access to what he called the 'collective unconscious' which we can access and this somehow encompasses the 'soul' of humanity in terms of symbols, myths etc.



Scene from the play



Galileo contemplates the earth's rotation

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We are pleased to announce the publication of the first two volumes of *The Wednesday* in a book form. The two volumes cover the first six months. Volume one included twelve issues (1-12) plus the experimental issue; issue no. zero. Volume two includes another twelve issues (13 – 24). The issues represent the journey so far and we are pleased with this achievement. The volumes are printed by The Wednesday Press, Oxford.

We are grateful to all the writers, poets and artists who contributed throughout. Special thanks to Dennis Harrison who supported the magazine since the experimental issue and hosted the Wednesday group until the closure of his Albion Beatnik Bookstore. But Dennis is still a great supporter of the magazine and the group and we will stand by him in his future endeavours in the cultural sphere.

The Editor



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Poem and Artwork **by *Scharlie Meeuws***

Crow Land

Cool air at dawn makes sound travel further,
from the dawn chorus to a blackbird's call,
when the crows fly in, growing ink splotches
blotting out the patchy rice paper sky.

Two carrion crows chase a leveret
round makeshift burrows into the coppice,
its hide-out now under a dense blackthorn.
A wood pigeon and a collared dove flee
the chestnut tree in outrageous protest.

Limited to human amplitude
the mind must listen beyond sound, tune in
to higher vibrations for bird meaning.
A chase is not all about survival
or attraction, but it's life at the edge,
as if birds were unearthly and ghost-like,
as if wings were hands to urge and wave on
the stagnant flow of air, play down tales
of crop-thieving or fidelity-flutters.

Crows build their land by circling the treetops
with their own crow energy and voices.
Crow laws are issued in strong crow language
with frontiers laid down in keep-out-pattern
still claiming links between the living and the dead.
Forever, in the east, will be a chase
of the sun crow after the white moon hare.



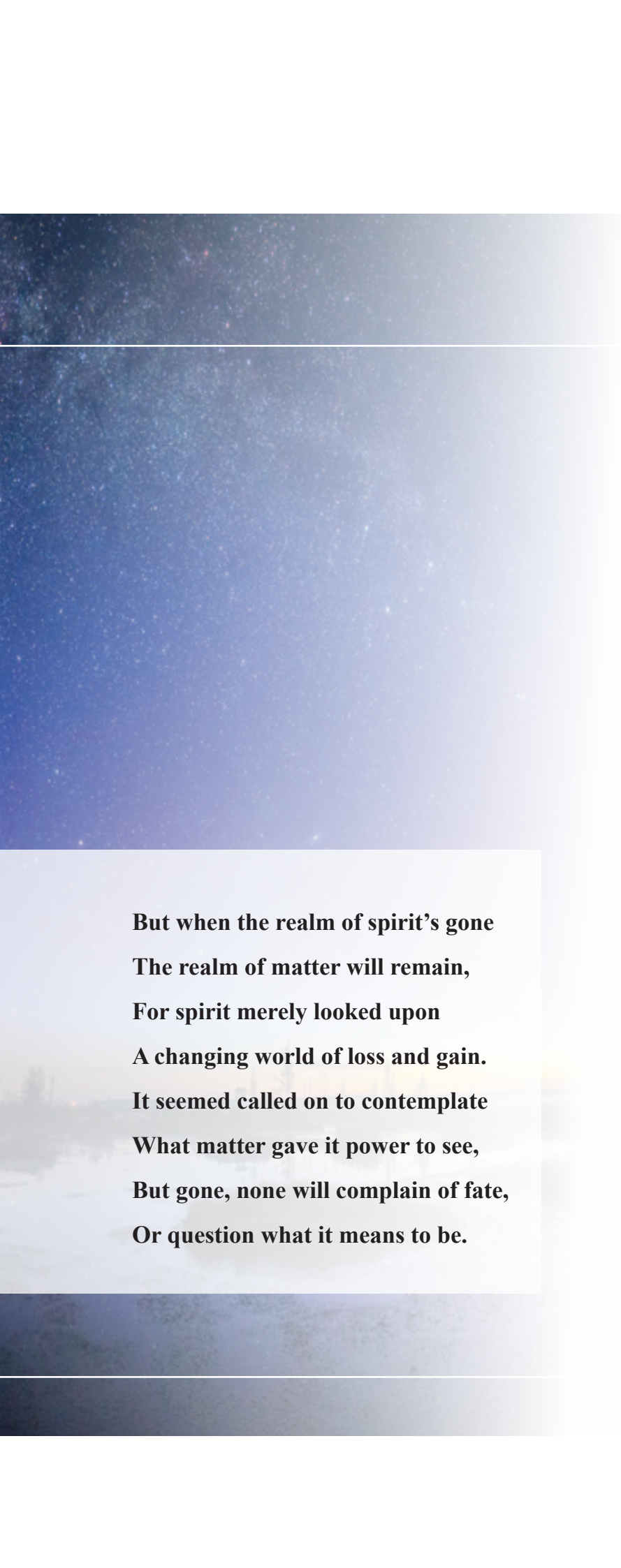
Here we have caw-music, tongues in the air,
repeated riddles of death and rebirth
that furtively live on carrion,
sneak iridescence into bleak blackness.

The Two Realms

EDWARD GREENWOOD

The realm of spirit's never still,
For even sleep's disturbed by dreams,
As though some never-ending will
Engenders never-ending schemes.
Perhaps one day dreams will be gone,
The realm of spirit there no more,
While matter's galaxies go on
Mechanically as before.

There'll be no acts without a doer,
Without a dreamer, not a dream,
There'll be no view without a viewer,
Without an author, not a theme.
The galaxies will whirl forever,
Great seas of gas without a shore,
What will give point to this endeavour
When spirit will be there no more?



But when the realm of spirit's gone
The realm of matter will remain,
For spirit merely looked upon
A changing world of loss and gain.
It seemed called on to contemplate
What matter gave it power to see,
But gone, none will complain of fate,
Or question what it means to be.

The Wednesday

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A Word in Edgeways



He staggered to his word; stuttered and dangled,
the last syllable a minute poem, locked in its rhyme.

We thought, that's it he's done. No such luck!
he moved on, his voice spiralled,
building strength and velocity,
brimming with words he was bound to spill.

Voice bounced from floor to ceiling;
scatter-gun aim with lethal imprecision.
Floor covered with spit and meaning.

Just as we thought of Noah's inundation,
he slowed to a dribble, rolled into a corner.
Safe at last we were released and we all
came out from under our seats.

David Burridge