

The *Wednesday*



The Magazine of the Wednesday Group at Albion Beatnik - Oxford

Editorial

Conversational Approach to Truth

Analytic philosophers are obsessed with the notion of Truth. Many theories were suggested from correspondence, substantive theories to deflationist theories. But the one that attracts me is that Truth is conversational. Truth is not ready-made but can only be approximated. Of course, you can have different versions of it. You may want to say that Truth does exist, from the beginning (*is this what you mean?*), via some theological belief, but we don't know it in its complete reality. We can only know it partially and it will reveal itself after a long historical process. Nietzsche seems at times to hint at this conception with his metaphor of Truth as a devious woman who conceals her secrets. But you might think that Truth is the end of the process and not the initiator of it, as Hegel might consider it. We come to Truth when we come to Absolute Knowledge. But you may, on Rorty's view, want to leave the issue of Truth open-ended: Truth is what we have at a given moment of the development of knowledge and science.

(According to Phil Walden's reading of Hegel: there is a distinction between Correctness and Truth. Hegel's view is that if say we are truthful about an historical event, then our thought is correct about it, not that it is the Truth with capital letter. Truth comes only with Absolute Knowledge which is the completion of the logical and historical process. This can be easily seen from the different reading of one event, say the French Revolution, at different times, given the benefit of time for example and the revelation of more facts about it. But this does not represent the Truth, until the event reveals its full reality. At least this is my understanding of the point.)

Still, I am interested in the idea that Truth is revealing itself partially and historically and through conversations, say papers presented in a conference or academic journals, the Internet or through **The Wednesday**. Britain, unlike France, did not have until recent decades the Intellectual café culture, but now book festivals makes writers approachable and the audience has the chance to discuss directly with the author. Many prominent bookshops, like **Blackwell's in Oxford** or **Albion Beatnik**, now have a full programme of lectures, book signing, poetry, Jazz, films and dramatic presentations of major works.

Contrary to the widely held view that the Internet and modern means of communications (mobiles, emails etc.) have turned us towards an artificial realm and far from social reality, the opposite is true. People are communicating more, not less, not only with their local social environment but around the globe. Perhaps the Internet is a realisation of the One Active Intellect that Aristotle talked about that is active when we think, and the one pool in which we all dissolve when we die, on Averroes' view of Aristotle. What joins us together is One Intellect and what divides us are the different bodies.

The Wednesday is a platform for different voices and conversational in nature. That is why we include in the issues reports on our weekly meetings, and topics that have been discussed by the Wednesday group on the email system. Please write back with your views of what has been written in each issue and take an active part in the debates that have been going on. All are welcome!

The Editor



Deconstruction: Heidegger & Derrida

Part 1 Heidegger

DAVID SOLOMON

Deconstruction is a fashionable term in philosophy, literary criticism and architecture. It has been attributed to the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. But its history goes back to the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. The following article, in two parts, discusses the differences in the way Derrida developed Deconstruction from Heidegger's original formulation and suggest some reasons for this.

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The term Deconstruction has been overused in general conversation to the point of cliché. It is frequently used to mean 'to decompose something' as in 'deconstruct the myth of right and left', or even literally to destroy or take apart something as in 'deconstruct the EU'. In fact, the term has a particular resonance in philosophy. It is associated with the French philosopher **Jacques Derrida**, but it goes back to the work of the German **Martin Heidegger** in the 1930's. It has often been assumed that Derrida took over the idea unchanged from

his predecessor and that he was a continuer of Heidegger's work, in simple terms he was a Heideggerian. He certainly started to make his name in the 1960's as a detailed commentator and reader of his predecessor but I would like to argue that he developed his philosophy in a different direction to him, and that his work marks an implicit criticism and departure. In a succeeding essay, I would like to point out the differences in the way Derrida developed Deconstruction from Heidegger's original formulation and suggest some reasons for this.

The development of the idea of Deconstruction will also shed some light on one of the most controversial aspects of Heidegger's life: his involvement with Nazism and his refusal in the eyes of his critics to adequately acknowledge after the war, the extent and significance of Nazi atrocities and in particular the **Holocaust**. Derrida, unlike other philosophers such as **Hannah Arendt**, **Marcuse** and **Levinas**, did not study directly under Heidegger, but like them his background was Jewish. He was brought up in Algeria and lived through, as a boy, the German occupation of France, and at one stage experienced the enforced separation of all Jewish students and teachers in separate schools in that colony. It is inconceivable that Heidegger's life taken as a whole was not an issue for him.

The term that we call Deconstruction, originally appeared in Heidegger as **De-struktion** spelt deliberately with a hyphen to emphasise the way in which we have to look at the word slowly and closely in order to understand what is going on when we employ it. As in the use of other terms that are part of the western philosophical tradition such as 'substance', 'appearance', 'object', 'truth', Heidegger wants us not to take this word for granted but to look at it in a way that returns it to a more original elemental meaning that has been distorted, simplified and buried over time. In this case Destructiion does not mean destruction in a simple sense. More the term can better be understood to mean '**destructuring**', taking a term and going back to its elemental meaning that has been buried. There are a number of words that appeared in their full strength with the Greeks, especially **Pre-Socratic** Greeks. Since then the terms have lost their full force and western philosophy has been forced down a progressively narrower track. The distinction between **Subject** and **Object**, the notion of truth as **Correspondence**, philosophy as logic, and ultimately modern science and technology has been the result of this narrowing. Heidegger does not want to say that **science or modern technology** is wrong or false, he wants to show how it has become



Heidegger

possible. **For Heidegger, truth is not the matching of an idea that we have in our head with an object in the world, but a revelation of Being for which he uses the Greek term Aletheia or Unforgetting.** Truth as revelation is a possibility and an obsession of human being (which he calls **Dasein**) as he emphasised in his earlier works such as **Being and Time**. Later on, his stress shifts from human being to **Being** itself and the way that it has revealed itself or hide itself in different ways over time. **In our modern age, Being has revealed itself one-sidedly in the form of technology.** Technology is not just something that we use in order to achieve certain ends, but something we are immersed in without realising.

Heidegger wants to shake us out of our unawareness of this narrowing and return us to a philosophy and an understanding of concepts that have their full original force. The term he uses to describe this is often '**Primordial**'. **De-struktion involves the overcoming of one-sidedness and the return to something more archaic, authentic and original.** So, for him De-struktion (Destructuring) is a conservative

project, one of recovering as far as possible, one which looks back to the Pre-Socratic Greeks, an attempt to restore to a more powerful original meaning from its source.

It is possible that Being can reveal itself (Aletheia) especially poets like **Holderlin**, one of his favourites or to a philosopher such as himself. He spent a lot of time trying to describe what he called the essence of something: of freedom / truth / beauty etc. He thought that if you could get past the trivial degraded obsession with anecdotes and details, you could get to the real core of something. The problem with this is that in trying to get to the essence of something, there is a risk of leaving something else behind, of excluding: what he regards as details, the degraded fixation with conventional ways of thinking.

For example, when Heidegger describes what is meant by **Home**, he sees it as where we are rooted, where we can become and nurture ourselves, where we are close to the truth of who we are. He himself preferred to live in a forest hut and turned down the opportunity to live and work in Berlin. **A modern city is to him the epitome of estrangement, of rootlessness, where we drift far away from ourselves, from the truth of who we are.** As a description of the effects of modern rootlessness and the search for belonging and rootedness this has been regarded as very important, and shows the ways in which Heidegger's philosophy has been influential in areas such as psychology, therapy etc. But at the same time, he is not concerned with the actual facts of homelessness, of people sleeping in the street, or of people losing their homes, of becoming migrants or refugees. **He wants to make a stark polarity between rootlessness and rootedness and to go straight from the depletion of being of modern life to the connectedness of the farmer or the peasant rooted in the land closely connected with the materials of the forest and the soil.**

When we try to describe the **Essence** of something, it seems a useful or at least harmless activity when we apply this to simple objects. For example, if we were to define the essence of a table, we might say that the fact that it might be white or made of plastic is not essential. We can exclude a lot of details that might belong to specific tables, and eventually come down to a definition such as that 'a table is an item of furniture used for putting things on' etc. There seems to be no harm in this. But if we applied this technique to a concept such as **Freedom**, it might be more problematic. **For Heidegger, we are essentially free when we are living for our own projects which are authentically ours.** When he was told at the beginning of the Nazi period in the 1930's that people were being arrested, detained in camps, his reply was 'Don't bother me with trifles'. His idea of what Freedom was, was altogether different.

This brings us to the most controversial part of Heidegger's life: his relationship to Nazism and the difficulty this has caused subsequently for many of his students and admirers. For a year he was Rector of Freiberg University. He was a member of the Nazi party right up until the end. His inaugural rectoral address had a distinct Nazi flavour. A recent film about his life showed his failure to stand up for his friend **Edith Stein**, a Catholic nun of Jewish background when she was arrested and murdered. One of his students talked about the fact that outside a university hall where Heidegger was giving a seminar could be seen the burning shell of a synagogue which had been set on fire during **Kristallnacht**, which he also did not address. Still more significant was his refusal, despite the urging of famous students like Marcuse and famous poets like **Paul Celan**, to address specifically the holocaust after the war. Scholars and followers of Heidegger have been embarrassed by this part of his life. The problem has been to decide what relevance and connection if any there has been with his philosophy.



If I take death into my life,
acknowledge it, and face it squarely,
I will free myself from the anxiety of
death and the pettiness of life - and
only then will I be free to become
myself.

— Martin Heidegger —

AZ QUOTES

Heidegger Quote

There seems to be a choice: Either we say that this was a weakness a character flaw (he was a bad man, he was a weak man) but something that had nothing to do with his philosophy, that these were blind spots or character flaws, that he was a great philosopher but not a very nice man. According to this we can separate his philosophy and his life. Or else we recognise that there was something in his philosophy that made it easier for him to follow a totalitarian ideology. Followers of Heidegger have been reluctant to take the second option because it might mean distancing themselves from his philosophy, something they are unwilling to do given the originality of his ideas, the influence in many fields (philosophy, psychoanalysis, aesthetics etc.) and the force with which it was expressed. There has resulted in a certain awkwardness. Is it possible to point out tendencies in his philosophy without abandoning it altogether? Followers of Heidegger, including Hannah Arendt and Derrida have been accused of deliberately ignoring the darker aspects of the life of their predecessor. In actual fact, I think that the whole of Derrida's work can be seen as a critique of Heidegger's version of deconstruction and its development in a different direction.

A lecture Heidegger gave in 1949 contains this passage in relation to the effects of technology on the world:

Agriculture is now a motorized food-industry—in essence, the same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockading and starving of nations [it was the year of the Berlin blockade], the same as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs.

My suggestion is that the weakness in his version of Deconstruction ('De-struktion') is connected with his preoccupation with Essence, and confidence that the philosopher (himself) and a few other people can fly past details and differences and attain to a basic truth, a position from which to judge other descriptions of whatever it is that has to be identified as being lesser, trivial and superficial. In other words, this version of Deconstruction has a stopping point.

In another article, I will try describe the way in which I think Derrida implicitly undermines these tendencies in Heidegger's thinking, remaining faithful to his idea but at the same time developing it along his own lines. I would like to show that **to Derrida, Heidegger did not deconstruct enough, was not Heideggerian enough. In developing his own language and terms such as Closure and Différance, Derrida implicitly but definitely addresses these weaknesses.**

Poem

The Philosopher's Cabin

Poem by DAVID BURRIDGE

*A planked containment, empty but for his afforded thought.
Simple awareness would find room to spread piece upon piece
buttressed and jointed in a sound structure.
Would appearance of dry-rot spread fear of a questionable premise,
or the roof stall transcendence?
Through the windows the forest view might crowd the thinker's perception
with the empiricism of all that can be found in nature.
Step out through the door and there are riddles and outcomes
of growing, reproducing and dying, even decay that can nourish.
Or perhaps the philosopher can only figure truth in an empty space,
his existence after all is validated in his head.
Storm in the forest; saplings snapping, roots torn from the ground;
a complex of dead fingers and old trunks lying body-like side by side,
waiting to be chopped and dragged to be something useful.
All peripheral to Sein und Zeit?*

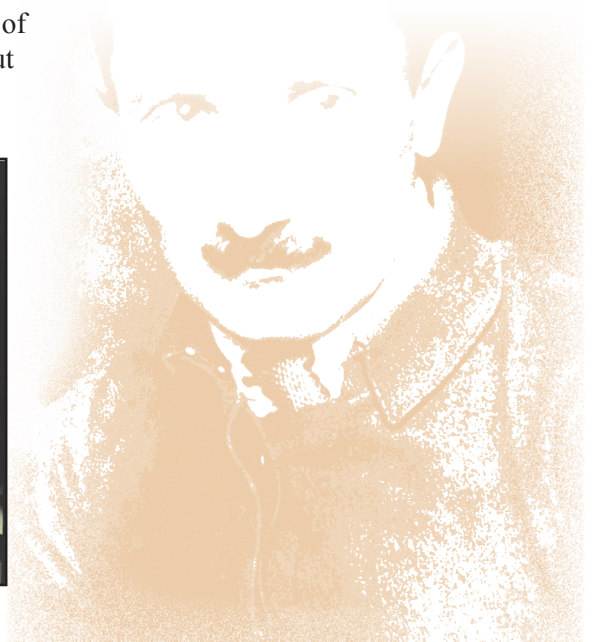
Inspired by the Heidegger's cabin near the village of Todtnauberg (Black Forest). Inside this wooden hut he wrote his book: Being and Time



Heidegger inside his cabin



David Burrige



“Blowing in the Wind” By Anona Greening



FREEDOM:

Beyond Berlin's 'Two Concepts'

The following article reviews the debate on Freedom in the light of Isaiah Berlin's Two Concepts of Liberty. The distinction between positive and negative freedom has been explained. The debate has also been updated to more recent philosophers and commentators:

RANJINI GHOSH

The issue of freedom or liberty has been central to the discourse of philosophy in general and political philosophy in particular. Issues of the true meaning of freedom have been debated by philosophers. Philosophers have pondered over the question of autonomy of human action, causality of nature and the extent of freedom available to individuals in totalitarian regimes.

Negative Liberty

The question related to negative liberty basically is about the question as to what extent I am free? What options are available to me? How many doors are open to me. All these questions relate to the *domain* of liberty. These are basically questions about the external conditions of freedom. Negative liberty has been characterized as the absence of external obstacles. For **Isaiah Berlin**, negative liberty as freedom is the *opportunity* to act and not action itself. The opportunity concept of freedom focuses on the availability rather than exercise of opportunity.

Positive Liberty

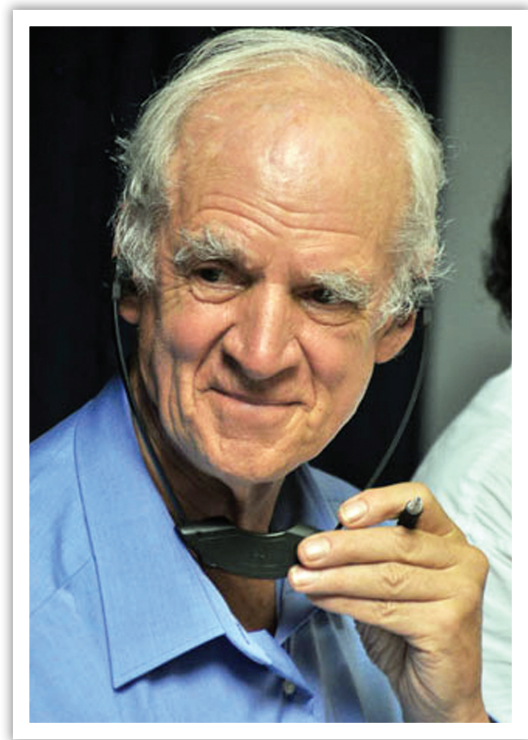
Positive liberty asks a different question; who or what controls/governs me? People want to govern themselves and be in control of their

lives. This conception of freedom says that I want to be an agent and not an instrument in the hands of others. It proceeds with the idea that each individual has two selves within him, a higher rational self and a lower empirical self. It is the higher self that demands the individual to be his own master. **Positive liberty has been seen as the *freedom to do*. Negative liberty on the other hand is *freedom from*.** Whereas negative freedom was just having opportunities, positive freedom is the “exercise concept of freedom”. It is exercising and availing of opportunities. Positive liberty is also seen as being open to the idea of being governed by a law or elite. This also provides for the danger of lapsing into a kind of totalitarianism where the state may decide what is good for the individual. Rousseau emphasized the importance of the collective will over the individual and Hegel accorded primacy to the universal over the particular or the society over the individual.

What's Wrong With Negative Liberty

Charles Taylor (Taylor, Charles, “What's Wrong with Negative Liberty”, Nigel Warburton (ed) *Freedom*, Routledge, 2001) has objected to the positive concept of freedom and its external character. He says

that **there is also a possibility of internal obstacles in an individual**. For example, imagine a person who wants to become a professor but has a fear of speaking in public. So, this fear prevents her from pursuing her ambitions due to some internal constraints on freedom which is quite different from the concepts of negative and positive freedom. He also says that **conceptualizing negative liberty as a mere opportunity concept is a useless notion**. He gives the example of traffic lights. In a strict sense traffic lights restrict a person's domain of negative liberty, the opportunity of crossing the street. But one could also look at the other side and say that traffic lights do not hinder our liberty because they are important for our safety. Therefore the loss of some opportunity is not necessarily a loss of liberty. He says that **negative liberty may be a necessary pre-requisite but not a sufficient condition for freedom**. He believes that formulating negative liberty as opportunity concept of freedom and positive liberty as the exercise concept of freedom is misleading. He argues that **the concept of freedom should also include the concept of self-realization**. He says that we cannot say that someone is free, on a self-realization view, if that person is totally unrealized. For example, if someone has the talent of singing and there is no obstacle on the person to sing then no negative liberty is violated. However, there cannot be true freedom if the person is not able to get an opportunity to sing. Self-realization is important component of freedom. Sometimes it may so happen that the person on her own cannot self-realize and some other external agency is required and herein lies the danger of manipulation and control by an external agency like the state. Charles Taylor has acknowledged that **the concept of positive liberty, if understood in the framework of Rousseau, is prone to danger**. Immanuel Kant had said that the negative dimension of freedom was the "independency



Charles Taylor

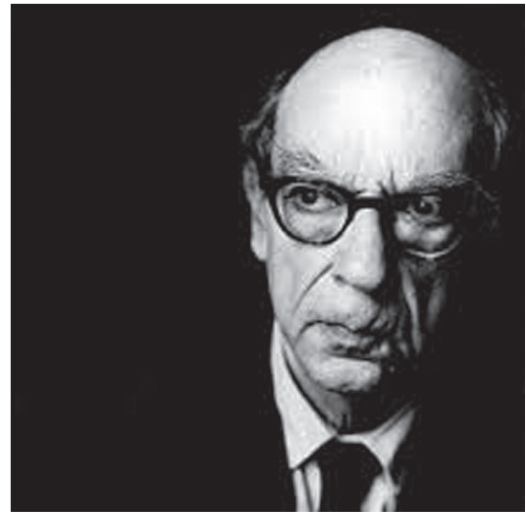
of alien causes "such as our desires. When we are led by our desires instead of practical reason then we may become playthings of external alienating forces. Tim Baldwin believes that negative liberty is essentially an opportunity concept but it does not mean that opportunities should also be realized. As Isaiah Berlin said if a person sits in his chair and has the opportunity of standing up and yet decides to continue sitting then his liberty is not impaired. **Negative freedom has been stated as freedom to do something. But this something is not specified and so it remains a general concept.** Freedom to do is a mere opportunity and it can mean the freedom to read Dan Brown or even the freedom to murder. These are opportunities only. Some may be valued some maybe immoral or stupid. **Negative liberty is certainly a pre-condition for self-realization.**

Freedom As A Triadic Relation

Gerald MacCallum has argued that the distinction between positive and negative



Hanna Arndt



Isiah Berlin

liberty is not correct. It is not enough to say as in negative liberty that X is free from Y because it masks a triadic structure underlying a single concept of liberty i.e. X is free from Y to do Z. A subject is free from some constraints to do something. Therefore, freedom is a triadic relation between three things; an agent(X), preventing conditions(Y), doing certain things (Z). Hence any statement on freedom can be put in this form.

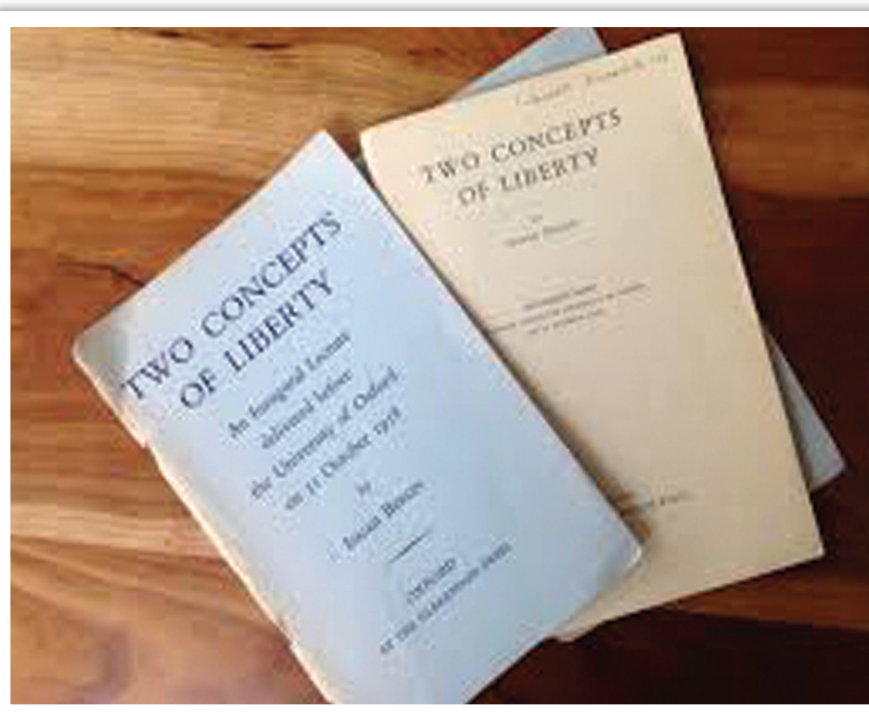
Three Distinctions

Adam Swift in his book *Political Philosophy* (2014) clarifies the concept of negative and positive freedom

1. *Effective freedom v. Formal freedom:* -

Swift says that the difference between them is the difference between the power or capacity to act in a certain way and the mere absence of interference. The fact that nobody is preventing me from doing something does not necessarily mean that I can actually do it. He gives an example to illustrate this. All British citizens are free to go on a holiday to the Bahamas whereas the country of *Totalitaria* denies its citizens the right to go anywhere on a holiday. There is a law preventing them from going anywhere on a holiday. Though Britain does not have any such law but can

all its citizens go to Bahamas on a holiday? Consider the poor who cannot afford a ticket. So, there is formal freedom in the sense that nobody actually prevents anybody from going but **effective freedom is available only to a few**. This leads to the debate between libertarians and others. Thinkers like **Nozick** believe that the role of the state should be limited to a “night watchman” role. The leftists claim a more active, interventionist and redistributive role of the State in guaranteeing positive freedom. In terms of **MacCallum’s** triadic relation: Since poverty is a constraint on freedom it is a Y. This concept of ‘effective’ freedom Isaiah Berlin called the positive freedom. But he warns that we should not confuse freedom with the “conditions of its exercise”. Whereas all British citizens are free to go on a holiday to the Bahamas but very few have the conditions to exercise that freedom. According to him freedom should be understood in the negative sense as non-interference. When we argue for a conception of effective freedom then we are confusing freedom. He says that redistribution of income cannot be said to promote freedom. The state may be justified in interfering in people’s lives on grounds of justice or equality but if such justification by the state is given in



Two Concepts of Liberty, 1958

terms of promoting freedom then it could be dangerous.

2. *Freedom as autonomy v. Freedom as doing what one wants:* -

This distinction is what led Berlin to say that totalitarian regimes often justify their rule in the name of freedom. The concept of autonomy can be related to the idea given by Kant. Each person is divided into a higher rational self and a lower empirical self. Autonomy is achieved when the higher self-controls the lower self or reason is in control of the desire. If we act in accordance with our desire or emotion then we are not in control and we are acting heteronomously. Hetero means other. This other can come to mean a state or a higher agency who claims to know better than myself as to what I should do. Then in the words of Rousseau we may be “forced to be free”. We can see this idea in many countries where religious doctrines have been used to propagate the belief that human beings have a higher purpose and the fundamentalist state claims to know what that purpose is. Rousseau’s “general will” can also be found in the views of Hegel where the particular is to conform to the will of the universal. Therefore, Berlin feels that this

notion of positive liberty can prove to be risky. It is better to restrict the term positive liberty to the idea of freedom as autonomy.

3. *Freedom as political participation v. Freedom beginning where politics ends:* -

The distinction drawn by Isaiah Berlin between positive and negative freedom has been seen by some political philosophers as the conflict between freedom achieved through political activity and freedom being essentially a private concept. **Hannah Arendt** has forcefully argued that one can achieve true freedom only by participating in the political community. This is a variant of the conception of positive freedom. Aristotle’s view that man is a political animal is that what is special about human beings is the capacity to deliberate collectively in a society. Rousseau believed that the most important kind of freedom is obedience to a law we give to ourselves. This sounds paradoxical because we choose to live under a law and yet be free.

Ranjini Ghosh is in the senior year in High School. She loves cooking, *learning new languages and believe in Amor Fati.*

Notes on Wednesday Meeting 2nd Aug 2017

The topic that brought attention this week is Music and Philosophy. The debate started by emails before the meeting (some of these email exchanges are reported in the present issue.)

Music was said to be emotional and vague while philosophy has rationality, clarity and preciseness. The emphasis on rationality is deemed better. But humans are a whole. You can't dismiss one part of humanity i.e. feeling by saying it is inferior. Rationality has been argued as being Instrumental. The aesthetic could be objective.

How about inspiration? Is this completely rational? There is some flash of inspiration that comes like a bolt of lightning. It is well known that **Coleridge** wrote *Kubla Khan* after an opium-induced dream. He had a sleep after reading a book on Xanadu, the summer palace of the Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan. Upon waking, he started writing lines of the poem that came to him in his dream until someone from the Somerset village Porlock interrupted him. The poem never got completed. Thus, "A man from Porlock" came to mean "unwanted person".



Rainer Maria Rilke

Ibn Arabi, the Andalusian mystic, claimed that his book "*The Gemstones of Wisdom*" was given to him in his sleep; although the book is challenging to read and full with settle arguments.

Rainer Maria Rilke wrote the *Sonnets to Orpheus* (a cycle of 55 sonnets) in three weeks in what he described as "a savage creative storm". He had his inspiration in the Chateau du Muzot in Veyras in Switzerland.

The debate moved on to Tragedy and Emotions. The views of **Aristotle** (i.e. catharsis) and **Nietzsche** were contrasted.

Why do we feel better after watching a tragedy? Is there some sort of group effect? We don't get this effect when we read the play on our own! **Plato** would say we are bewitched by the author or performance. Does this link to Plato's dislike of copying? On his account, we need the real thing not images and copies!

Nietzsche thought that through Tragedy and Music we come to a sense of unity with all existence. We empathize with the hero who goes under destruction.

The philosopher is haunted by the question of death. The question for philosophy is why do we go on living? why not commit suicide? **Schopenhauer** thought we are driven by a blind will and life not worth living. But he escaped the cholera when it hit Berlin. He wanted to survive and moved to a place with no cholera.

A few other remarks were made but not picked up. And the meeting ended with the expectation of more and diverse topic for the next Wednesday.

Paul (with additional writing by Rahim)

A trip to Oslo Munch & Ibsen



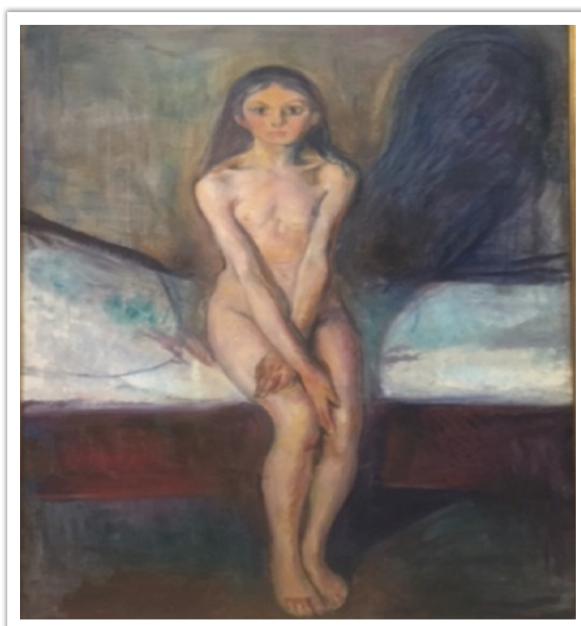
The new opera house in Oslo designed to look like an iceberg, and to me also a ship

Fred Cousins gave a description of Munch and his Museum in Oslo in issue 2. Here, he rounds off his trip with a visit to the Ibsen Museum

I visited the **Oslo National Museum** with more paintings by Munch. From there, I visited the **Henrik Ibsen Museum**. Munch and Ibsen used to drink together. I have seen one of Ibsen's plays called "A doll's house", performed in Oxford. Henrik Ibsen is known as the father of modern drama, and the museum is well worth a visit.

After this, I caught up with my friend Steve again and he took me to the **Fram Museum** to see the ship used by Roald Amundsen. He travelled to both the Arctic and the Antarctic and was the first person to reach the South Pole in December 1911, four weeks before Captain Scott who arrived there in January 1912.

A great four days in Oslo. The work of Edvard Munch will live with me now for ever.



The haunting painting that Munch called **Puberty** (1895). Munch made this painting a symbol of the modern female. Notice the shadow on her side. Munch said "Her shadow spirit hovers behind her. Perhaps a looming fear of the unknown..."

Romantic Art

Caspar David Friedrich:

The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog

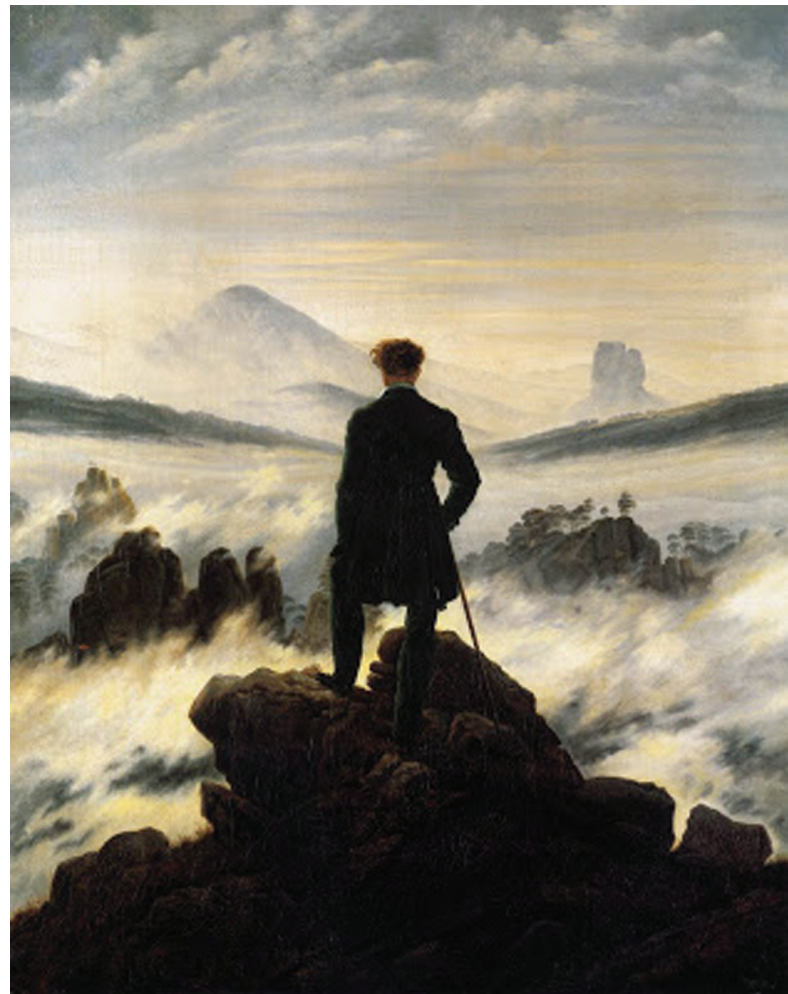
Reflections on the famous painting

We have debated recently the artwork of the German artist Caspar David Friedrich and his perspective on Nature and Man, especially his Wanderer. Here are some views expressed in the debate:

‘Man is part of nature’. In most landscape paintings, we place ourselves in the position of an observer, as if we are seeing through the artist’s eyes; a field say or a mountain. But in this painting, we have a ‘superman’ type of man standing on a very high rock looking at a sublime misty wild mountain view below him.

Looking at this painting we are one further removed than normal so to speak – the painting includes the landscape **and** the man looking at it. We are looking at both from behind. We think about what it means to be someone who is looking at nature, rather than just appreciating the landscape. **It is as if the painting asks ‘Are we part of nature? Or are we able in a sort of superhuman way to detach ourselves from nature, looking at it as if it is outside ourselves? How did the man in the picture get there? How is he going to get down? The man in the painting appears to be in a perilous place....**

proceed- detracts from the idea of the viewer as any kind of ‘superman’. My interpretation is totally against such a view.



Wanderer above the sea of fog

I disagree with this interpretation of the Friedrich painting. **In this painting, it seems to me that nature is not the subject but rather the material used to express the painter’s idea.** The precipitousness and the uncertainty of path - just HOW is he to

Friedrich uses landscape not as a way of looking at nature or of saying how pretty it is, but to express ‘the meaning of life’, including political and socio-historic matters. In this approach, the landscape takes the place of human emotions and actions, and is a kind of poetry, lyrically and dramatically expressing meaning. The Abbey in the Oakwood, for example, expresses the total destruction of a world by the new Napoleonic (i.e. Satanic) spirit; yet the true human (and Christian) spirit survives and struggles on despite all. **Friedrich is no weak-minded impressionist** saying “Aren’t those lilies pretty!”

The wanderer is not neutrally ‘gazing at the landscape’, like some natural scientist – he is looking at his prospective path, the path that lies ahead of him at a crucial point in his life. In this sense, he is Everyman. This is what gives the painting its power

Peter Wood

The wanderer is not neutrally ‘gazing at the landscape’, like some natural scientist – he is looking at his prospective path; the path that lies ahead of him at a crucial point in his life. In this sense, he is Everyman. This is what gives the painting its power.

Peter

I have looked again on what you have said about Friedrich. It seems to me, if I have understood you right, that he is using nature as the Objective Correlative that Eliot talked about.

Rahim Hassan

That’s right, Rahim, for Friedrich nature/landscape is the Objective Correlative of an internal psychological/spiritual state, and also of external social-historical-cultural affairs. Thus, nature becomes an expression of the spiritual and, as such, tells us about life.

Peter

The Wednesday



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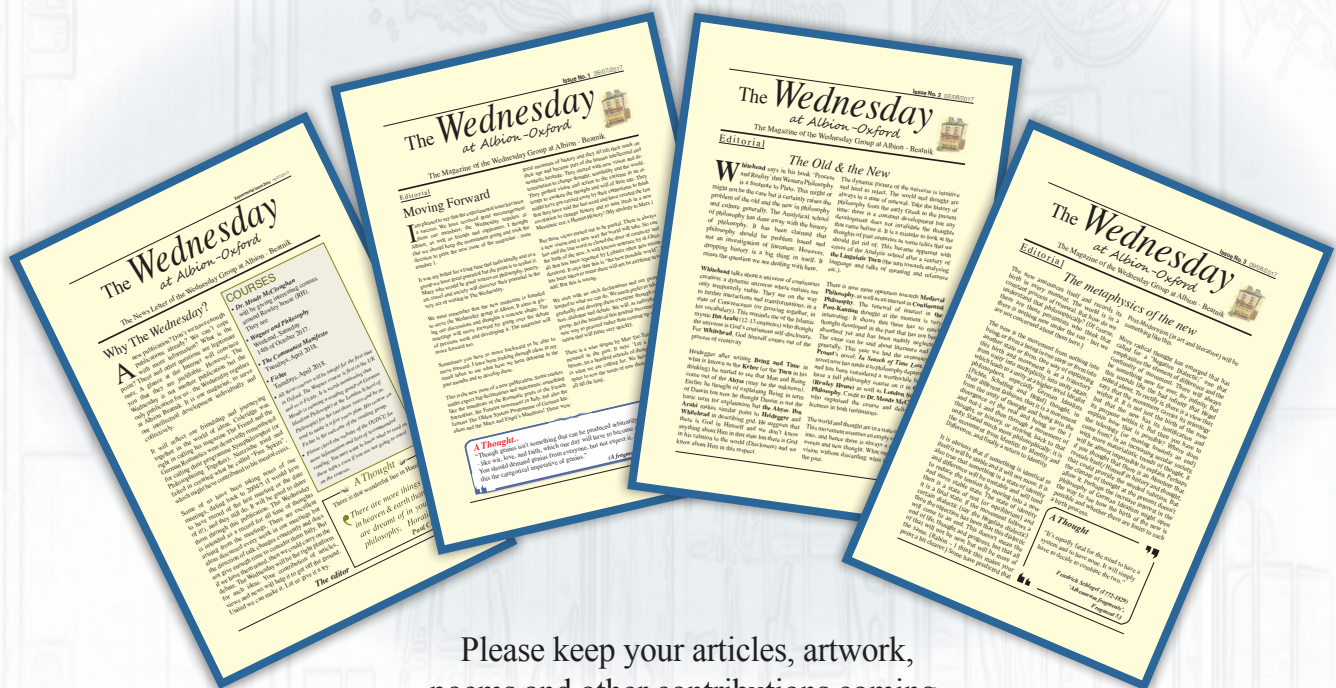
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The Wednesday



The Magazine of the Wednesday Group at Albion Beatnik - Oxford

*Written by friends..
for friends..*



Please keep your articles, artwork,
poems and other contributions coming.
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Visit us at AB on Wednesday afternoons