

# The *Wednesday*



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

## Editorial

### *German Idealism Revisited*

There is an increasing interest in continental philosophy, particularly in German Idealism and the ideas that were created around it or in response to it. Kant is, of course, the reference point and he has been accepted into the school of analytical philosophy, as has Hegel, though to a lesser degree. However, there are now study circles in this country and in the United States dedicated to the works of Fichte, Schelling and the German Romantics. One group in this country has been running for about four years and has been studying, systematically and chronologically, the work of Fichte, Schelling, Novalis and Holderlin. It is led by Dr. Meade McCloughan and meets weekly at Conway Hall, London as part of the London School of Philosophy. It is a text-based reading group and has the form of discussion rather than lectures. Besides the reading group Dr. McCloughan runs courses on Kant, Fichte and Hegel's *Logic* and *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I have been a member of the reading group since its start and have benefited immensely from it and the courses. A few of the writers of *The Wednesday* are also participating in these philosophical projects.

One thing that comes out from the reading group in particular is the intellectual intensity of the time in which these figures were writing, their knowledge of each other, and how they responded to each other. They thought they were surpassing the Greeks and creating a new philosophical revolution. Kant said that the categories of Aristotle were haphazard and that he himself deduced them from the nature of reason and the forms of judgment. He also suggested that the completion of philosophy was within sight. Twenty-five years later Hegel wrote that philosophy had now been completed.

There have been a number of conferences on German Idealism and the German Romantics recently, and there are more to come, but there is one taking place soon that I feel it is worth mentioning. It is *Transcendental*

*Philosophy and the Public Role of Philosophy*, to be held in November at Diego Portales University in Santiago, Chile. The brief for the conference says:

‘Transcendental philosophy is usually associated with debates in epistemology and philosophy of mind. The role that transcendental philosophy plays in the public sphere has received lesser attention...

Kant's texts and lectures on anthropology, history, politics and education make it clear that the transcendental philosopher has a responsibility to the public which manifests itself in multiple dimensions. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, transcendental philosophers have contributed to the analysis of the rational conditions of life in society by examining the philosophical foundations of politics and law, the conditions of the authority of institutions, and the normativity of our concrete practical life. From this perspective, one can find a rich variety of proposals: viz. Kant's and Fichte's reflections on ethics and the political role of philosophy, the Neo-Kantian contributions to practical philosophy, and Husserl's transcendental phenomenological approach to ethics and praxis. These contributions have also permeated contemporary debates, among which are the foundations of practical normativity, the relation between morality and law, and the practical dimension of theoretical philosophy.’

This is a good summary of the achievement of transcendental philosophy and does justify our interest in this school. In this issue and the following ones, we will publish articles on German Idealism as well as the exploration English writers (particularly Coleridge and Barfield) made of transcendental philosophy, with the aim of creating a wider awareness and interest in this area of philosophical thought.

*The Editor*

# Coleridge: a Dynamic Philosophy

**John Stuart Mill said of Coleridge: 'The class of thinkers has scarcely yet arisen by whom he is to be judged.' J. S. Mill realized that the subtlety of Coleridge's thinking could so easily be misunderstood, especially since his ideas radically contradicted the received wisdom of the time.**

## WILLIAM BISHOP

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Coleridge's dynamic philosophy challenges Descartes' dualism of mind and matter, which had become a dogma. Also, his idea of an active evolving intelligence within nature, with kinship to human consciousness, reveals a science that is concerned merely with the finished (dead) products of nature, as limited to the level of mechanics and the calculus of mathematics. It is hardly surprising therefore that his appreciative audience was small in an England strictly governed by empiricism. However, hopefully in today's world it is possible that 'the class

of thinkers' can be found to seriously consider and rightly judge his philosophy. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) had a complete system of philosophy in his head but only expressed this in fragmentary ways in publications such as *Biographia Literaria* and the *Friend* and in notebooks. Owen Barfield's book: *What Coleridge Thought* (1972) admirably elucidates Coleridge's thought, generously quoting from the poet-sage.

Coleridge conceived Life as originating and

evolving on the principle of polar logic, which forms a tri-unity. One generates an Other while remaining the same, and the quality of the One, which is in the Other, unites them. This is the principle where the One is in the many and the many are in the One. Life thrives in this way through active projection. The two poles interpenetrate instead of being severed from each other. The prime example of tri-unity is the Holy Trinity where the Father generates the Son and the Spirit they have in common unites them. This is the same principle as the Pythagorean Triad and Tetraktys as the generator of Nature utilizing the opposition of unrestricted expansion against a limiting power that creates form. The significant point about tri-unity as polarity is the interpenetration between what might otherwise appear to be separate poles. Coleridge stresses the need to *distinguish* as opposed to *dividing* into separate parts. He regarded the failure to distinguish between Reason and Understanding (regarding them as the same) as a failure to recognize the difference between the human being and an animal.

Coleridge appears to have come to the idea of tri-unity by reading Richard Baxter's *Life of Himself*, on which he comments: 'Doubtless the principle of Trichotomy is necessarily involved in the Polar Logic which again is the same with the Pythagorean Tetraktys, that is, the eternal fountain or source of nature.' He comments that the Pythagorean Triad is then a discursive arrangement as a tri-unity. Another likely influence could be the pre-Cartesian art of Ramon Lull with its interpenetrating Triads and psychology of intellectual 'descent' and 'ascent' to and from the divine 'Dignities' of the spirit, which are constitutive of nature and the mind of man.

Coleridge believed his philosophy brought all knowledge into harmony – speculating on the Logos mentioned at beginning of the Gospel of John, he writes: 'Might not Christ be the world as revealed to human knowledge – a kind of common sensorium, the total *idea* that modifies all thoughts? And might not

numerical difference be an exclusive property of phenomena so that he who puts on the likeness of Christ becomes Christ?' The Logos is seen as the Evolver, and Imagination as the Prime Agent of human perception. It is as the 'high-priest and representative of the Creator' that man exerts Primary Imagination in the act of perceiving. The 'Word' becoming incarnate in man brings the light of reason into human evolution; faith for Coleridge was fidelity to 'one's own being'. If a person rejects the light of Reason they are refusing fidelity to their own being and may end by denying it!

## Imagination and Nature

Reason is the ground from which ideas arise (the nous of Plato); it is the Word or Logos that has become incarnate in humanity, an active, living Evolver operating from within. The Understanding (common to animals) is distinct from Life and Sensation. Its function is 'to take up the passive affections of the Sense into distinct thoughts and judgments.'

Coleridge makes the following distinctions:

REASON	
IMAGINATION	
UNDERSTANDING	active
<hr/>	
UNDERSTANDING	passive
FANCY	
SENSE	

A polarity exists at the heart of Understanding. The passive pole adapts itself to the finished products of Nature and is expressed mechanically; the active pole relates to the activity of nature: its active mode of organization. The orientation of our Understanding (restricted to Fancy and Sense *or* illuminated by Reason and Imagination) affects our attitude. The human being is part of nature but also participates in the higher level of the world of Reason. Coleridge's relationship to nature is one of I–Thou. The polarity he distinguishes in nature is 'natura naturata': the finished phenomena (the noun quality), and 'natura naturans': the active process of nature out

of which finished phenomena arise (quality of the verb). So, there is nature in its ever-changing active state and its product as nature, the finished world we see around us.

Primary Imagination is 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am'. Secondary Imagination 'is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead'. Coleridge also makes a distinction between Imagination and Fancy, which he defines as a mode of Memory blended with and modified by the will. With the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive its materials ready made from the law of association.

Coleridge regarded 'The Enlightenment' as a 'shuttering of the Understanding from (active) Reason'. 'Active Reason' is a conscious function of Life, while 'passive reason' acts below consciousness. Reason is present in Nature, while Understanding involves the ability to generalize and name. In Understanding (abstraction) we are separate from nature but in Instinct we are connected with nature and subsequently reconnected with nature through Reason. Coleridge says that it takes Imagination to apprehend polarity and that Cartesian dualism of mind and matter at the heart of 'science' ignores change. Life itself is continual change and transformation where something common to what changes persists. It is 'the power that discloses itself from within as a principle of unity in the many'. He also regarded Life as the principle of individuation. His *Theory of Life* includes a complete theory of evolution: the genesis of nature proceeds from its origin in the Spirit as productive unity, under the law of polarity. The active principle in nature is the same as that in the intelligence of the human mind above nature but at one with it.

## Outness

There is awareness of things without us, and awareness of oneself perceiving them. The first

is a law of our nature; it is experience and is identical with immediate self-consciousness. But reality, although it is real, is also appearance. Nature is essentially one with intelligence; outness is unconsciously involved in the I Am. The tendency 'at once to individuate and to connect, to detach, but so as either to retain or reproduce attachment' could culminate in one way; only in a combination of 'the most perfect detachment with the greatest possible union'; only in 'things without us' at the one pole, and 'us', self conscious, at the other; yet with the two so related that the one extreme is 'identical and one and the same thing' with the other.

We only understand the 'tendency to individuate', on which life is based throughout when we see it as this potentially self-conscious subject, operant as the agent of process at every stage of the process; from the origin of matter itself, through the evolution of matter into vegetable life, of vegetable life into sentience, and of animal instinct into Understanding. Of that process where life 'becomes a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively to itself, outness as the law of self-conscious nature, is the end product.' No matter how outness may be a law of our unthinking (unconscious) nature, it is untenable as a conclusion of our judgment, and if *fixed* outness is discarded then the whole Laplace-Lyell-Darwin closed-system universe (together with its fancied billions of earth-years and millions of light-years) can be abandoned with it; for a system is not part of our unthinking nature, but a series of logical conclusions dependent on each other. A distinct objection Coleridge made to establishment science was that instead of the speculative running parallel with the empirical they were not actually kept distinct. So the speculative judgment that there is a dichotomy between the observer and the phenomenon observed becomes accepted as a fact, and models are also accepted as empirical truth, and in geology the past is judged from the perspective of the present.

The mind has two kinds of awareness: the



**Ramon Lull**



**Richard Baxter**

‘outwardness’ of objects (naïve realism); and awareness of the ‘I’ perceiving the objects. The second awareness can reflect and dissolve the ‘outness’ theory – and yet ‘outness’ presents itself strongly to common sense. ‘Outness’ is at one with self-consciousness (linked subconsciously) and the fact that nature is essentially at one with intelligence in us is revealed by this unconscious participation in the outer representations (which are part of reality). As Coleridge says, ‘In every act of conscious perception, we at once identify our being with that of the world without us, and yet place ourselves in contra-distinction to that world. Life is a subject with an inherent tendency to produce an object, wherein and whereby to find itself.’ Here the self and ‘outness’ present an example of the principle of polarity and the life of nature as ‘separative projection’. Barfield remarks that the underlying reality (sub-stance) of things is thus not matter, nor any equivalent inanimate base, but immaterial relationship. Primary Imagination is an act of which we are not usually conscious; and Secondary Imagination is when philosophically or poetically it is raised to the level of consciousness and able to be expressed. Primary Imagination’s expression is

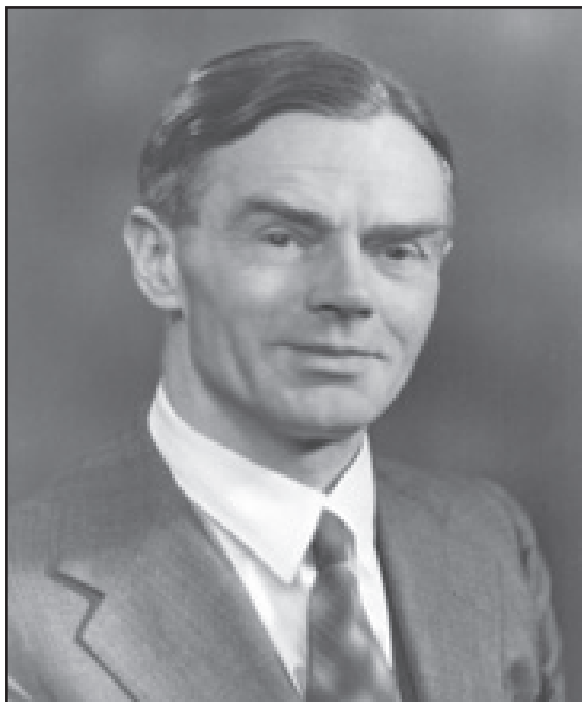
nature; and Secondary Imagination’s *rules* are the very powers of growth and production. Here are two forces of one power with the relation of polarity between them.

### **Coleridge’s Method of Natural Science**

The method’s principle is unity with progression: instinct raised to consciousness as a living idea, based on the order of *natura naturans* (creative nature), which is the natural order of the mind. ‘This method should stem from the participating apprehension of related ideas, and thus of that timeless articulation of ultimate reality, out of which *natura naturans* emerges to become the static multitude of *natura naturata*.’ (nature as objectified in natural objects).

The method results from ‘the balance between our passive impressions and the mind’s own reaction to the same.’ Nature is all that is objective but the relation between mind and nature remains an inseparable polarity. ‘In order to comprehend and explain the form of things, we must imagine a state antecedent to form. All form is engendered organically; it is only as organization ceases that mechanism commences.’ This is an opposite





Owen Barfield

premise to that of 'science' which when examined is based on the separation between mind and matter (which for Coleridge is speculative rather than empirical); it is a maxim of interpretation rather than a truth of fact. If Coleridge is right, remarks Barfield, then for cognition, physical process cannot be isolated from mental process, nor natural science from human and ethical psychology.

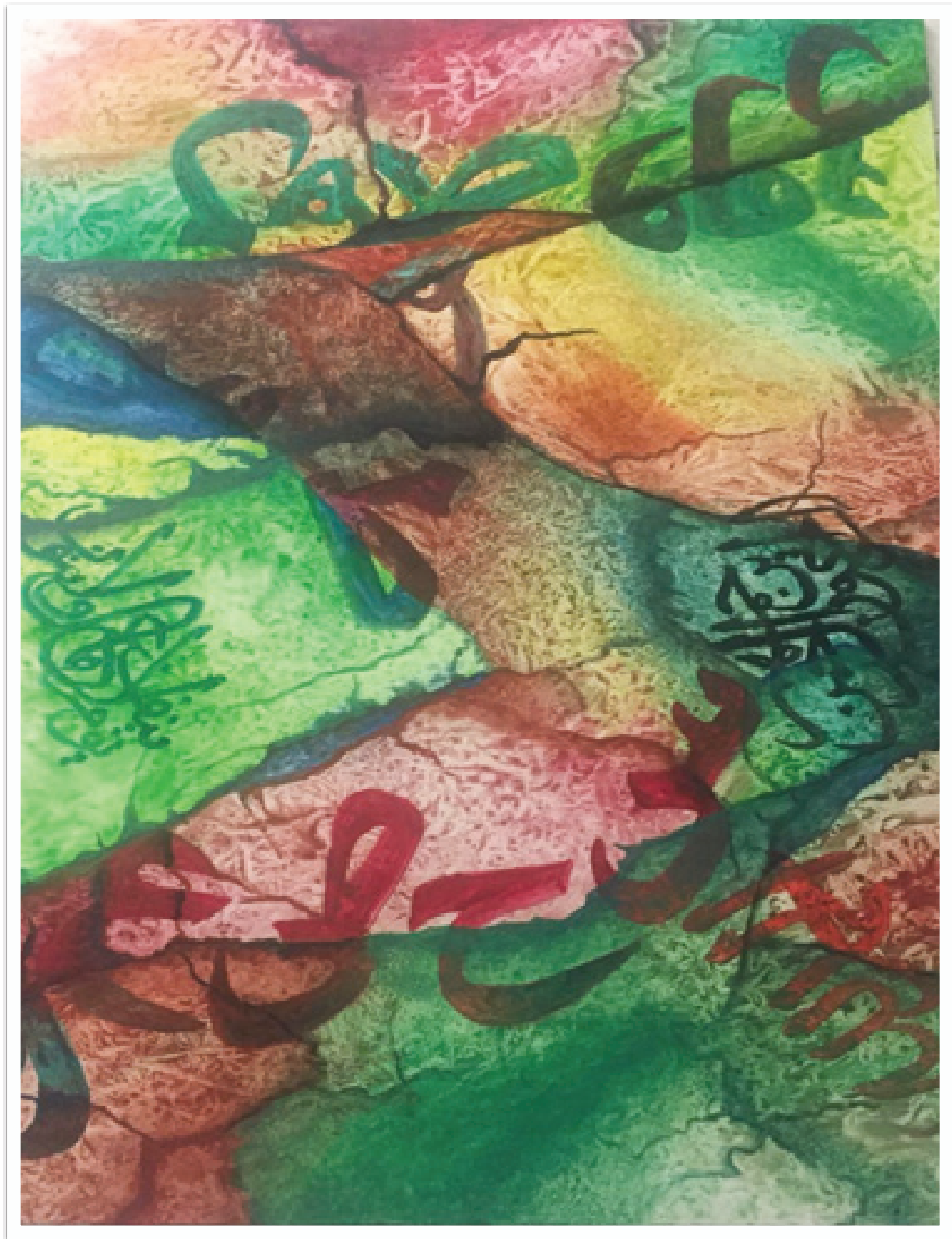
Science cannot advance beyond its present state with the presupposition of 'outness' unchallenged, since this presupposition confines its methodology to the presumption it prescribes. It must be remembered that Coleridge was contemporary with the adoption of field theory in science (Faraday and Maxwell) where polarity is fundamental, but he wasn't aware, as we are now, of the detectable effect of the observer on the observed as in quantum mechanics. But for Coleridge polarity was the basic act of Imagination. If polarity is a universal principle, then with the spirit/nature polarity there is no separate independence of mind and phenomena but connection through the unity of polarity – mind and phenomena affect one another.

## Reason

Interpreting Coleridge, Barfield says: 'Through Understanding we experience the culmination of our detachment; through Imagination and the gift of Reason we realize, in polarity, that very culmination as the possibility of a different and higher order of attachment'. Refusal to distinguish Understanding from Reason is 'the omission to notice what not being noticed will be supposed not to exist. If you will not acknowledge the 'downshine' of Imagination and Reason into the active Understanding, you will have nothing to set over it but Fancy all over again.' The Word, or Logos, is Life and communicates life with the entire process culminating in the individual understanding, but it is also light and communicates light; and this light is Positive Reason; whereas the Negative Reason which alone the Understanding can be said to 'possess', is only 'the capability with which God has endowed man of beholding or being conscious of the divine light. Reason is the source of ideas, which Coleridge identifies with Plato's *nous*. In referring to matter as a datum, Coleridge comments, 'As soon as the gross prejudice is cured by the appropriate discipline and the Mind is familiarized to the contemplation of matter as a product in time, the resulting phenomenon of the equilibrium of two antagonistic forces, attraction and repulsion, *that* the Negative and *this* the Positive pole of I gravity (or the Power of Depth) the difficulty disappears – the idea of Creation alone remains.'

The Understanding leads to *outness*, which can lead to Idolatry: to revere means as ends; to idolize the Understanding instead of awakening the Reason slumbering within it is to pervert Reason. This is what Coleridge thought happened with the 'Enlightenment'. Indeed, in *Philosophical Lectures*, Coleridge considers the history of humankind as if it were the striving of a single mind: as 'the gradual Evolution of the Mind of the World, contemplated as a single Mind in the different stages of its development.' If there is anything in that then surely Coleridge, with his active Imagination and Reason tuned to this Mind, has a message of vital importance to communicate of which otherwise we might remain unaware.

*‘Composition’ by the Iraqi Artist Mohamed Mustafa Kamal*



# Re-Tooling The Cogito

**In the Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty revisits Descartes fundamental concept: I think; therefore I am. He is proposing a new Cogito. The Cartesian cogito acquires its significance only through my own cogito, and I should have no thought of it, had I not within myself all that is needed to invent it. Self-consciousness is the very being of mind in action.**

DAVID BURRIDGE

**T**he individual's existence in the world is determined by the structure of perceptions that are unique to that individual. The empirical physical world is for him a perceptual construction. Merleau-Ponty draws on the Gestalt ideas of pattern recognition. We don't look at atomic bits but look for formulations of perceptions to make sense of things around us. He seems to me to go beyond the principles of Gestaltism and is seeking to construct the uniqueness of a mind which determines the world and the relations in the world.

*A-fortiori the sensible beings which lie around me, e.g. the paper under my hand---do not yield their secret to me, rather that my consciousness takes flight---*

The self is a unique construction of ideas and the thinking process is the evidence of this pattern of existence. There is an element of final truth in the Cartesian return of things or ideas to the self. Descartes clearly defines what he means by the body and the soul in his second meditation:

*By the body I understand all of that which can be defined by a certain figure: something which can be confined in a certain place and which can fill a given space in such a way that every other body will be excluded from it; which can be perceived either by touch, or by sight, or by hearing, or by taste.*

By the soul he means the mind:

*What of thinking? I find here that thought is an attribute that belongs to me; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am, I exist, that is*

*certain. But how often? Just when I think; for it might possibly be the case if I ceased entirely to think, that I should likewise cease altogether to exist.*

The uniqueness and independence of the mind which determines our existence described here by Descartes is conveyed also by Merleau-Ponty. He argues that for us to know anything we must have a prerequisite capability:

*Unless thought itself had put into things what it subsequently finds in them, it would have no hold upon things, would not think of them and would be an illusion of thought.*

The process of thinking is either a collection of psychological events which happen to occur and have no lasting substance or it is a spiritual process of grasping things at a distance to compress into and define the self.

*How could the mind know the significance of a sign which it has not itself constituted as a sign? The Cartesian cogito which is the theme of my reflection, is always beyond what I bring to mind at the moment.*

He develops a spiritual dimension, but unlike Descartes, who saw God as an external being who has shaped the universe, Merleau-Ponty is seeking perfection inside the self. He is using the reference to God only as an expression of the completeness and uniqueness of the self.

*If the cogito reveals to me a new mode of existence owing nothing to time, and if I discover myself as the universal constituent of*





**Merleau-Ponty**

*all being accessible to me ....it must be said with no qualification that my mind is God. My cogito is necessarily unique and cannot be shared by any other. We perceive a world only provided that, before being facts of which we take cognizance, that world and that perception are thoughts of our own.*

For me this is the weakness of Merleau-Ponty's concept of self, and perhaps also of other Existentialist thinkers. The 'I' is essentially conjoined with the 'We' and the perceptions that we use to make sense of things, are drawn essentially from our social experience. A healthy individually is one that finds a healthy place in society. Moreover, we have learnt to deploy socially determined word skills. If I were standing in Merleau-Ponty's flat staring out his window and seeing 'the Seine' my perception will be shaped by all that I have learnt about rivers; what that river means to us.

Descartes argued that the mind is a thing which thinks (i.e. doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels.) For Merleau-Ponty all these faculties are shaped by the unique construction of perceptions inside us.

*Perception is precisely that kind of act in*

*which there can be no question of setting the act itself apart from the end to which it is directed. Whatever be the case with our empirical perceptions, which may be true or false, these perceptions are only possible if they are inhabited by a mind able to recognise, identify...Appearance is, within me, reality, and the being of consciousness consists appearing to itself. I can effect the cogito and be assured of genuinely willing, loving or believing, provided that in the first place I actually do will, love or believe and thus fulfil my own existence.*

He is essentially reinforcing the Cartesian process of thinking. To think is evidence of existence. The difference between Descartes and Merleau-Ponty is that for Descartes the proposition means that thinking determines existence, whereas for Merleau-Ponty thinking and existence are equal but separate conditions:

*I think; I am - the two assertions are to be equated. Hence it is not because I think I am that I am certain of my existence; on the contrary the certainty I enjoy concerning my thoughts stems from their genuine existence.*

This, therefore, is his new Cogito (re-tooled). Thinking and existing are powerful but independent conditions.

*where the banyan tree leans on its fingers*

*and the sticky eucalyptus spills milk*

*lippu the cook's boy*

*barefoot always*

*only in a shirt*

*sits in the dirt*

*his thin brown legs*

*dust-blurred*

*and his mouth open crying*

*a roughnecked goat*

*flat papped*

*slipping on the stones*

*pulls at dry grass*

*kicks its trapped foot*

*fitfully back*

*three-legged*

*but the rope holds fast*

*there are chickens untidy*

*two-toed half-tailed*

*glancing this way and that*

*they bicker they curse*

*spoiling for a scrap*

*pick at things*

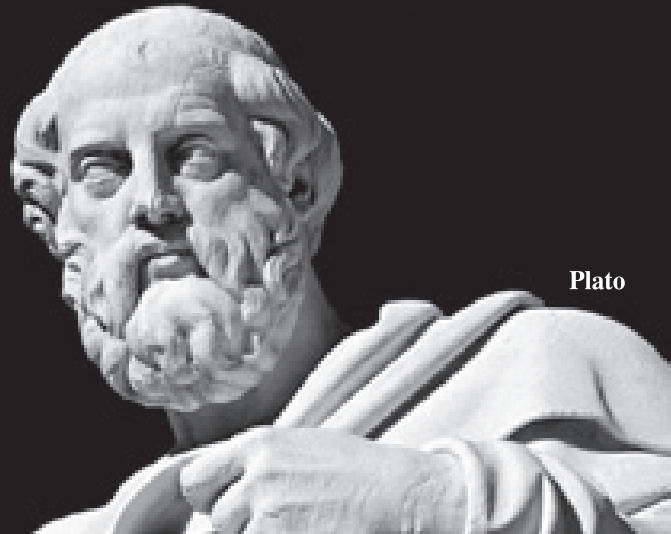
*scratching up*

*a defiant living*

*Erica Warburton*

# Some Criteria for The Real

DAVID JONES



Plato

**I**dealism is a theory of ‘reality’. Which is to say that it is a way of thinking about the cosmos that is described and defended by the use of reasoned argument to affirm that the property of being ‘real’ is not limited to particular physical objects and forces. It is notable that different theories of reality are based on correspondingly different criteria for whether something is real or else merely an image of something else which is more real.

Some philosophers such as Plato prioritise the persistent over the transitory. Under this way of thinking about reality, the sun, the moon, and the mountain, which persist, are considered more real than plants and animals which are transitory. The important things which persist were given ‘divine’ names because to be divine means to be eternal. Plato did not regard ideas as something that comes into existence in human brains. He regarded humans as having a special organ of perception with which it could perceive the ‘form’ of a particular thing separately from the material that instantiated the ‘form’ physically. Natural things do not present chaotic randomness. Nature presents its particulars in regular and identifiable ‘forms’. Each form is expressed in many, albeit transitory, particulars. It follows from this that the one ‘form’ is more real than

the many transitory instances in which it is expressed.

Other theories of reality prioritise with a different criterion, such as regarding something that can be sensed directly as more real than an idea about what can be directly sensed, which is the opposite of the way Plato thought about reality.

In the modern scientific period the focus has been to find all the regular patterns of behaviour of natural things so that these patterns can be used to construct the many types of artificial objects which civilised people benefit from. The success criteria for a scientific theory is that it implies predictable changes which can be reliably be tested. It follows from this criterion that anything that is not determinable from a previous state is outside the domain of what is useful for science. It would, of course, not be rational to claim that the limited domain of the determinable is necessarily also the criteria for the ‘real’. It is not difficult to see that if the criteria for reality is limited to phenomenon that is deterministic then it would be logically consistent to infer that everything that cannot be determined is not real and only unknown. In this way an argument is made to claim that there cannot be any human free will.

### The spell

**You are the reality, rebellious  
against the shadows.  
You are the miracle,  
oh, blue veil for my eyes, wind  
slowly wafting through the cool dusk.**

**Soft afternoon light or melody  
with which you ignite the ashen air,  
your soft pink, your fragrant breath  
of roses and jasmine spreading.**

**Who knew about your spell?  
To become a scent in the morning,  
morning freshness after dark.**

**Dazzling light, burning signs!  
Revival, rebirth, and pure growth  
in any life.**



Poems and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*



# Morality and Cultural Differences

(Notes on the Wednesday meeting held 29<sup>th</sup> August 2018)

**We discussed in this meeting the following questions: Can there be an 'I' without a 'You'? How can we make and acknowledge claims on one another's conduct? What is the role of the 'We' and the state in ethical and moral relations? How rational are ethical rules and society norms?**

**PAUL COCKBURN**

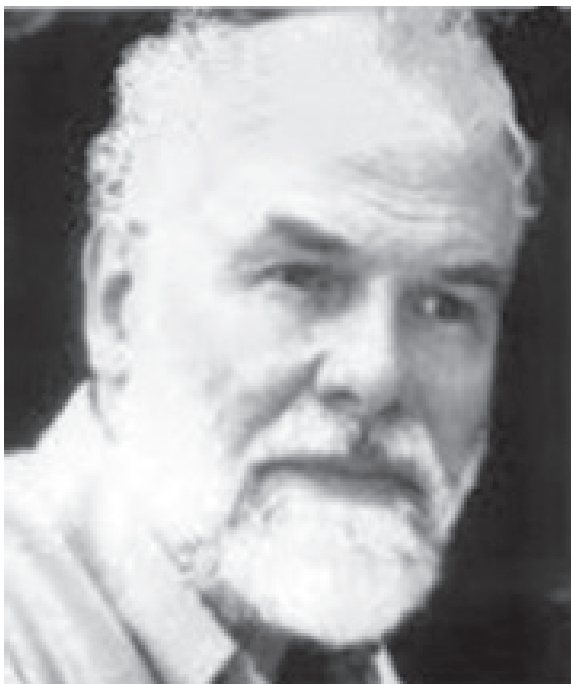
**O**ne aspect of the 'you' is that it is a personal aspect of the 'we'. There are obligations from one individual agent on another, but some obligations of this sort come from the 'moral community'. The 'we', society, has norms and moral rules, and these are applied and worked on in individual relationships. The 'you' involves a personal address or summons to another. This includes orders and commands, which may lead to moral issues in terms of whether to obey the orders you are given. The master/slave dialectic, authority issues, and the parent/

child relationship are all I/You relationships. Descartes put the emphasis on the rather solipsistic 'I'. Hegel and existentialism deal with the relationship of the 'I' with the 'other', other people.

Rationality and the social and emotional are mixed in ethics: Kant's over-riding, imperative rationality has to work on social situations which in fact cannot be read only in rational terms. If we try to read them only in terms of rationality, then the emotional factors involved have to be weighted in some way, and different people will weight the various emotional factors in different ways. But a problem occurs when we deal with other cultures and nations, as each community seems to have its own morals and norms. If we visit another country we may be obliged to modify some of our behaviour.

An extreme case might be female genital mutilation, which is against the law in Britain. What would your attitude be if say you were working as a health professional abroad and found out this practice was going on? In practice you would probably express disapproval, but you have no authority to stop it. You would just 'dialogue' hoping over time attitudes would change. And morals do change over time.

We moved on to group attitudes, customs



Peter Winch

and society norms, which are of course important in defining our moral outlook. For example, there is the current debate about the niqab, where a Muslim woman covers her face and body. Politicians in the past kept judiciously quiet about some issues, but now they are looking for controversies. Controversy can equal popularity, as opposed to the past when perhaps we expected politicians to be more circumspect. But in fact cultural differences can be explored as liberating and positive, rather than negative and threatening. The 'other' can be exhilarating and interesting rather than frightening.

### **David Clough added**

When faced with incommensurable cultural or political differences we can simply dig in deep to our 'foundational' values that offer identity in the time of crisis. But then we become so rooted in them that we cannot move or give them up.

## **Cultural Relativism**

### **A Further thought from Carolyn Wilde**

We also discussed the work of the Wittgensteinian Peter Winch relating to cultural relativism. Rejecting all philosophical arguments claiming to authorise some general abstracted account of moral principles and judgements can seem to commit us to what is critically described as 'relativism'. But this simply takes us to the other extreme. As Peter Winch says in his work on moral philosophy, understanding a moral position depends on seeing how it is actually embedded in the lives of human beings - that is, in Wittgenstein's sense, within the complexity of our practices and relations with each other. Our moral concerns and issues do not all have the same conceptual character, and so cannot be generalised under any singular description. Thus, there are limits in terms of what we might respect or confirm within other cultures or times, and this of course can result in conflict or, as it has done so throughout history and across cultures, imposition. And even when the same moral concept is used, there can be radical disagreement about its application to particular cases. But a philosopher cannot help us find any abstractly rational way out of such conflict. Instead we have to recognise that disagreement and difference in human values and their application is something we have to take our own moral responsibility for.

## *The Wednesday*

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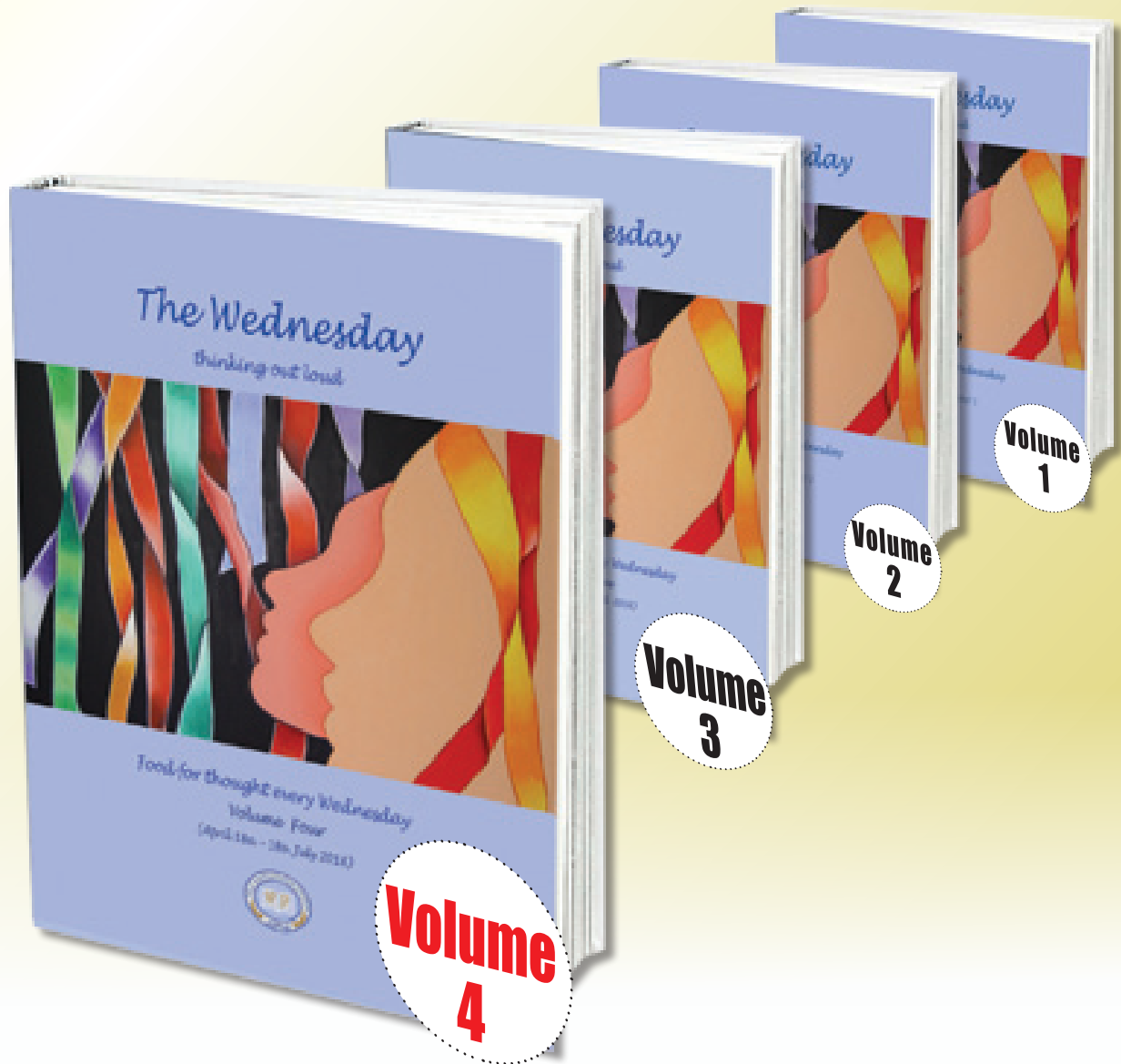
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