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The *Wednesday*

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Editorial

The Philosopher as a Poet

There is a lot of talk about philosophy and poetry, especially after Heidegger's turn towards language and poetry and the courses he gave on Nietzsche and Holderlin. Nietzsche became famous, primarily, as a philosopher, and Holderlin as a poet although he started as a philosopher. It was the reading of both Nietzsche and Holderlin that gave Heidegger a new insight into philosophy.

In his novel *Hyperion*, the German poet and philosopher Holderlin discussed many topics that were taken up later on by Nietzsche. But it is the question of the relationship between philosophy and poetry that is worth considering. Holderlin presents what is now perhaps a controversial theory about this relationship. In the last letter of Volume One, Holderlin contrasts the intellect or reason (associated with philosophy) with spirit (associated with art and poetry). Spirit is connected with wholeness and beauty and the intellect with piecemeal work and the 'limited perception of what is.' Perhaps by 'intellect or reason' he means 'understanding' in the terminology of Kant, Fichte and Hegel. Holderlin makes his view clearer by examples:

> 'Without beauty of spirit, intellect is like a willing journeyman who constructs the fence out of rough timber as it has been sketched out for him and nails the sawn and planed posts together for the garden that his master intends to plant. The entire business of intellect is makeshift. By its ability to sort out, it saves us from folly, from injustice; but to be safe from folly and injustice is, after all, not the highest level of human excellence.'

Another example:

> 'Reason without beauty of spirit and heart is like an overseer whom the master of the house has set over the servants; he knows as little as they do what will come of all their endless toil, he only shouts: 'Get busy,' and is almost sorry to find the work being accomplished, for in the end he would have nothing more to oversee, and his part would be played.'

For Holderlin: 'Mere intellect produces no philosophy, for philosophy is more than the blind demand for ever greater progress in combination and differentiation of some particular material.' It is, as he goes on to say, a divine light that 'does not demand blindly, it knows why and to what end it demands.' You can say it is an imaginative light, which he connects to the ideal of beauty, that precedes and guides reason.

Nietzsche in a section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* ('On poets') argues somewhat contrary to Holderlin. His argument is that poetry is Platonic and other-worldly (transcendent). But recently I came across a poem by the poet Elizabeth Bishop which argues that knowledge in poetry could be worldly and historical (immanent):

> 'It is like what we imagine knowledge to be:
> dark, salt, clear, moving, utterly free,
> drawn from the cold hard mouth
> of the world, derived from the rocky breasts
> forever, flowing and drawn, and since
> our knowledge is historical, flowing, and flown.'

Both Nietzsche and Bishop are expressing immanence. But perhaps there is a truth in both transcendence and immanence. We may look to the thought in philosophy or the image in poetry when they are on the border of becoming into being, in the moment of announcing themselves. But we are so obsessed with the empirical reality of concepts and images as given that we don't look into them enough to see the richness of their source (some call it the imagination) or the process of formation and the history of the thought and the image in one's own being.

The Editor

Existentialism: Condemned To Be Free

In the second part of this wide-ranging essay on Existentialism, the concept of 'humanism' is explained and related to freedom and morality. Also, the thoughts of Simon de Beauvoir on feminism and ethics are discussed.

RANJINI GHOSH

Part 2

We come now to the discussion of Sartre's lecture on Existentialism and Humanism.

Existentialism And Humanism

Sartre outlined the main themes of existentialism in a public lecture he gave in Paris in October 1945. His lecture was a reply to the critics of existentialism. The most important theme for existentialism is the belief that 'existence comes before essence'. What he means by this is that in contrast to a designed object like a penknife, the purpose of which is clear even before it comes into being, human beings have no pre-established purpose or nature. He denied any concept of the Divine Being who could have conceived a human being with essential properties or purpose.

Nigel Warburton says that Sartre did not believe that there could be any external source of values – unlike Aristotle. (Warburton, *Philosophy Now,* Issue 15*).* Our basic given condition, which is our predicament, is that we are forced to choose what we will become. The essence of a penknife is pre-defined but human beings have no essence to begin with. Man is nothing to begin with. Man first exists, and then encounters the world. Later on, he decides what he will make of himself. In his lecture Sartre explained the meaning of humanism.

Humanism broadly refers to a theory that puts human beings at the centre of things. Sartre emphasizes a different meaning of humanism, i.e. dignity of human beings and along with it the centrality of human choice. In a way the future of humanity is in our own hands because only we decide what we become. 'Man is the future of man'.

During Sartre's time existentialism came under attack from many people. It was seen as a philosophy of despair, of inaction because of the human condition. Existentialism was also criticized because it concentrated on the choices of the individual and ignored the solidarity of humankind. Existentialism was also attacked for legitimizing heinous crimes in the name of free existential choice.

Sartre in his lecture attempted to answer the critics on these charges. He introduced the concept of 'abandonment', which means specifically abandonment by God. In saying this Sartre was echoing the remark of Nietzsche that 'God is dead.' What it meant was that there were no anchors available to humanity which could be a guide during times of extreme moral crisis. He used the concept of 'abandonment' metaphorically to emphasize a sense of loss which is caused by a realization that there is no God to validate our moral choices. The individual is solitary in the universe since there is no external source of values to guide his path. Since there is no objective source of values to guide us there is also no objective moral law.

Simone de beauvoir

Bad Faith

Sartre says that we are 'condemned to be free'. Human freedom also carried with it great responsibility since we are responsible for whatever choice we make. The situation always leads to 'bad faith'. According to Sartre we can be in bad faith in two different ways. One type of bad faith is when we refuse to face facts about our lives. It is like a wife saying: 'My husband beats me but I know deep down that he loves me.' A second kind of bad faith is when we refuse to recognize our own freedom. It is like a waiter saying: 'I cannot join the circus because this café needs me.'

Sartre makes a very important point regarding his concept of human choice. He says that when we choose a particular course of action, we choose not only for ourselves but that also we are like a legislator deciding for the whole of humankind. He gives an example to explain this. Choosing to marry and have children commits me not only to myself but also commits the whole of humankind to the practice of monogamy. This is much like Kant's concept of 'Categorical Imperative' which says that if something is morally right for one person to do then it must also be morally right for anyone else in similar circumstances.

Human freedom and the responsibility associated with it brings 'anguish'. He gives an example of a young boy who's faced with a moral dilemma of whether to stay in France and look after his mother or to join the French forces in England to liberate his country. Sartre said that Christianity would ask the youth to prepare to sacrifice himself for the sake of others and the Kantian doctrine would advise him not to treat others as means to an end. If he remains with his mother, he will be regarding her as the end and not as a means but at the same time he is also treating as a means those who are fighting on his behalf. The converse is also true that if he goes to fight he would be treating his mother as a means. By this example Sartre points out that neither the Christian doctrine nor the Kantian ethic provide any guideline out of this situation of moral dilemma. It is in this sense that he uses the concept of 'abandonment'. Each one of us is forced to choose for ourselves without any meaning.

Simone de beauvoir

Simon de Beauvoir was one of the foremost women exponents of existentialism. Anja Steinbauer says that she enriched existentialism by adding a new aspect to its picture of the human condition: 'ambiguity' (*Philosophy*

Now, September/October 2008). Simon de Beauvoir said, 'No existence can be validly fulfilled if it is limited to itself'. De Beauvoir believed that freedom is universal because in each choice that we make we undertake either to turn back on freedom or open up freedom for ourselves as well as others. She explored the most important question of why women were oppressed. It is society which makes a woman. A woman is forced to believe that she has certain roles in society and remains confined to such roles which limit her freedom. She used the concepts of immanence and transcendence to explain the conditions of women. Immanence means remaining locked up in a given situation and transcendence means moving out of that situation into a future where one can achieve one's true potential. Society imprisons women into a condition of immanence and they are unable to achieve transcendence. Men constitute women as the 'Other'. Man declares himself to be the 'One' and the women as the 'Other'. The One is the standard of the norm and any deviation from this standard puts you in the category of the Other.

The relation between man and woman that de Beauvoir explores is inspired by the Hegelian master-slave relationship. But though the women are oppressed they are also complicit in their own oppression. Through socially constructed roles that women internalize right from childhood they attempt to live up to a model of the 'eternal feminine'. They become what they are expected to become. Her famous remark is 'One is not born but rather becomes a woman'. Right from childhood girls are encouraged to play with dolls and this continues through their adolescence and so their freedom becomes nearly impossible. Women start believing they have to play the feminine role.

As an existentialist she did not believe that a woman has any pre-defined essence but her identity is socially constructed by men and society. She exhorted women to see themselves as subject and not object. Women could achieve transcendence and subjectivity by working outside the home and pursuing intellectual activities.

Simone de Beauvoir also outlined a theory of ethics. She believed that existence precedes essence and agreed with Sartre that human beings exhibit both 'in-itself' and 'for-itself'. The for-itself is the category of beings who exhibit consciousness and who continually recreate themselves through their choices. The ambiguity of human existence arises from the tension between these two aspects of human existence.

There is also an ambiguity between the limits (facticity) and future possibilities (transcendence). Human beings are caught up in their everyday situations of facticity from which they are unable to escape but they also hope that they can reach their true potential through transcendence. This is the dilemma of the human condition. The ambiguity arises because of a human being's past that determines the present and the future that they can freely create. The body is also an inescapable part of human facticity that limits one's choices. But she thought our consciousness could also allow us to transcend our physical limitations.

Kristana Arp argues that for De Beauvoir human freedom is the source of moral obligation. But the important point De Beauvoir makes is that in order to preserve our own freedom we also require the freedom of others. She draws a distinction between two kinds of freedom: ontological freedom and moral freedom. We are always ontologically free but not always morally free. Sometimes human beings fail to choose to be free. Moral freedom can be achieved through transcendence out of facticity. We should promote not only our own freedom but the freedom of others. De Beauvoir rejected any outcome-based criteria of moral actions. A moral action that increases the freedom of others is always desirable. With moral freedom there is always a moral obligation.

'Composition'
by the Iraqi Artist
Mohamed Mustafa Kamal

King or Butterfly?

'Philosophy' means 'loving wisdom', desiring and celebrating the truth, which is totally satisfying. Although the truth is true for everybody, always, and everywhere (or else it would be not be true at all), it is somehow very difficult to see. It is hidden in plain sight – so common, that we cannot see it. (Imagine a world in which all is yellow, and then try to explain that it is yellow!) To break through the impasse, some ancient cultures have produced beautiful stories to help us see the truth. They often use analogies, allegories, fables, parables, similes, metaphors, and so on. Because these stories were usually orally transmitted, there are often many versions of each. I take their gist. Here is an example, based on a story by Taoist master Chuang Tzu.

RUUD SCHUURMAN

Once upon a time, in a faraway land of fabulous pleasures, the kindest of kings lived in a splendid palace. Surrounded by his loving family, faithful friends, loyal servants, and satisfied subjects, he spent his days in perfect harmony, having all his heart desired.

One night, after a delicious dinner in cheerful company, he drifted off into a seductive dream. He dreamt he was a beautiful butterfly, fluttering freely in a field full of blossoming flowers, with the sun bringing out the brightest colours and the sweetest tastes, and a gentle breeze carrying him hither and thither, from delight to delight.

But then, upon waking up, the strangest thing happened: The king did not know if he was a king who had dreamt that he was a butterfly, or a butterfly who was dreaming that he was a king. He pondered the question but simply could not determine which of the two he really was.

He asked the people in the palace, who all assured him that he was their king and that he was not dreaming. For a moment, this was reassuring, but then the king asked how they knew and soon realized that none of them could explain him why they were so sure. None of them could prove that he was not dreaming right then and there. In fact, if he was indeed dreaming that he was a king, they would all be a part of his dream as a king and in that dream he was their king of course. So, their assurance was of no value. He would have to know for himself. What he had thought to be a silly question, turned out to be a serious challenge.

He then invited a wide variety of experts, from all over his kingdom and beyond. They all came, and politely offered their services. Some experts, the wisest, readily confirmed they could not help him. Others tried, for example, by pinching him in the arm, suggesting that that would have woken him up if he had indeed been dreaming. But by then the king realized that such proofs, albeit perhaps well-intended, were futile. Even the experts could not help him to be sure that he was not dreaming!

On the brink of despair, the king heard the daughter of one of his gardeners speak of a wise man — or a fool, people said — who spoke about weird things like this. The king swiftly dispatched a search party, and when they located the man, the king hurried to see him. He was there alright, playing swobble with some kids in the dust of the busy south gate of the city where beggars gathered. When

the game finished, the man was as obliging to the king as to anyone else.

When the king had explained his problem, the wise man laughed out loud. The king was stunned and said, 'Why are you laughing?' Noticing the king's sincerity and despair, the wise man smiled warmly and asked, 'Isn't it obvious? Don't you see that the answer lies in the question?' And when he saw the puzzled look on the king's face, he added, 'Who is asking the question? Who is it that wonders whether he is a king or a butterfly?'

The king immediately replied that 'I, the king, am asking the question of course!' But even before he finished the sentence, he realized that, if he was not certain of whether he was a king or a butterfly, perhaps it was not the king who was asking… but neither was it the butterfly… The wise man left the king to ponder the question while he and his friends enjoyed a sumptuous meal at the king's behest.

In the meantime, however, the king became more and more frustrated. 'Who is asking the question? Who is it that wonders whether he is a king or a butterfly?' The question of the wise man was useless. It only brought him back to the question of whether he was a king (who dreamt that he was a butterfly) or a butterfly (who was dreaming that he was a king). Back to the very question he asked the wise man to begin with. The wise man did not even help him. Instead, he had an after-dinner nap on the soft pillows in the king's royal carriage.

But just then, when the king was about to call the man a charlatan and kick him out of his carriage, it suddenly dawned on him: 'If I am wondering whether I am the king or the butterfly, then I am neither! If I am sometimes aware of the life as a king and at other times of the life as a butterfly, then I am that which is aware of both!' The answer was indeed in the question. That is why the wise man laughed out loud. 'Hahaha!'

Value Of Truth

(*The pursuit of truth is often thought to be 'intrinsically' valuable.*)

You can find it in the attic of memories,
under mottled timber, behind the old wardrobe,
or in between the tarnished wallpaper
and the dust of the centuries.

Maybe you can also discover it beyond
the pale gesture of an old man, in the hands of a beggar,
or the last breaths of a soul, who is giving up.

I wonder, if it helps staying on the road of endless doubt, endure
fatigue on the barren land of justice and suffer breathlessness
halfway up to the ruined tower, or if it is necessary to leave
the straight path, turn left using the footpath as a shortcut,
as if nothing remained in the abandoned house.

I ask myself, if in the night of terror, I still will walk
without tripping to cross the abyss, turn around, back to denial,
the truth on the desolate road, or if tears were necessary
in the dust of a terrible summer, or a confused alcoholic awakening,
to see oneself completely abandoned, or rather, perhaps, lost
in the dirty bargains of love, in the shadow of ideals, bought
with the price of a remembrance of light, the dawn
behind the hills and the rushing river.

I admit that, at some point, it may be important to get down deep
on the rickety stairs into the dark house despite
the uncertainty of each step, to finally penetrate into the humiliation
of the cellar and visit the place of the shadows, where in the ashes
all the tribulations of the world rest under gigantic spiderwebs,
in order not to lose heart in the long hours of thirst and stillness,
to answer the silence and face the naked truth, that seizes you
in the middle of the night, keeps you awake and robs you,
so that later on you become a longtime beggar, fallen
to the deepest depths of self, without hope to make up for the loss,
and finally, dispossessed, you feel certain in the knowledge
to have taken the right way, despite the long-lasting night.

Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

Along The Heidegger Way

(Der Heidegger Weg is a path near the village of Todtnauberg in the Black forest where Heidegger lived - a path I ironically love to walk)

From a distance it had a light wind sway.
A log-swing built from broken branches.
From a distance she looked carved and painted.
A witch seated on a swing to scare the kids
and send them skipping home.

Then she rocked her stare at me - from a distance.
An image of existence, a summary of all that *DASEIN* need be.
Did I need to take a closer look?

Black cloak, white face, an image to share and scare.
From a distance --------
But when I came closer she turned and smiled at me,
steadily rocking on the swing,
like any poor lady facing life's closure.

David Burridge

Byron And Kirilov

Lord Byron

Byron, flamboyant index of the heart,
Bounding from melancholy to elation,
Could in *Don Juan* petulantly claim
'The best of life is but intoxication',
While under all deep Nihilism lay.
Then he saw madness stare right back at him,
The mood to end all moods, that in the end,
As jailer never lets the prisoner go,
Locked in the lonely castle by the lake,
Alone with the alone in deepest darkness,
Imprisoned in the Chillon of the mind.
Then there's Kirilov lurking in the cupboard
In pitiless St Petersburg who hoped
The ecstasy his madness had produced
Would be prolonged into eternity
If he could shoot himself when it had touched
The utmost height that it had ever reached.
Incongruous pair, the one a long spoiled brat
Of aristocracy and mortgaged wealth
Who stole a coach to foil his creditors,
The other the plebeian of plebeians,
Yet both somehow as spirits twinned in hope
That they could make the nothingness of things
Explode into a world of wider scope
That somehow satisfied the heart's demands.

Edward Greenwood

Where Do Our Concepts Come From?

Notes on the Wednesday Meetings Held on 7th of November 2018

The Wednesday

The topic of discussion for the Wednesday meeting on the seventh of November was suggested by our poet and philosopher David Burridge. He submitted a summary of his paper 'State of Understanding'. He presented his case in a dialectical way. There is first the Idealist thesis that:

> 'Ideas need no object they float like spirits; their innermost truth bursts out and their cogency fills our brains with realisation.' But 'do we have an a-priori capacity to envision, frame a deep sense of knowledge in words or pictures, to avoid that awful forgetfulness, that blind screen?' The consequence is that: 'We become figments of a dialectic, like integers in some infinite calculation. Until a mistake is made, then we rush out to find which object is to blame.'

On the other hand, there is the antithesis, which is the Empiricist's thesis that:

> 'An object is perceived and extends into our consciousness, collecting helpful ideas for a rough construction of reality. Hume thought ideas are like a heap of waste in our minds. But somehow, we flick through them in a desire for clarity. The object is to be considered the key to our thinking and it triggers a perception, something like a beam from a lighthouse. When the object is no longer to be perceived then its image lies like a piece of crumpled paper in our memories, until the piecing begins again.'

His solution is a synthesis of the two views that overcomes mistakes in each of the previous views. He suggested that a concept is a construct:

> 'It's a construction. A building process beyond the speed of light perhaps but still all about joining together. There is what we already know with past experiences, stored systematically, added to what we further discover in the empirical world. We have tools, to generalise, to analyse and synthesize. But we are always working with what we can see in front of us, like a carpenter, who measures, matches and fits pieces of wood together. It must be real and useful, or we should throw it aside.'

But this is not the whole story. Further questions were raised in the debate:

> Are we talking about Ideas or Concepts? Are they the same? Are they located in the same places as David suggested (world or mind) or is there the possibility of a third realm. Frege's objection is that ideas are psychological, and concepts are logical and there is no mixing between the psychological and the logical.
>
> For Hume, ideas are impressions. He fancied himself to be a psychologist (a Newton of the mind), but Kant distinguished between 'Pure concepts' and 'Empirical concepts'.
>
> To cite all these authorities is no proof of any single view but to enlarge and inform the debate.

The mention of Frege is very relevant to this topic. Frege had a paper on 'Ideas and 'Concepts' but he also had a similar discussion on a particular concept, the concept of number. Frege, in his ground-breaking book *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, considered both the empiricist view of Mill and the a priori view of Kant and rejected both.

David Clough adds:

Thought, on the empiricist view, is defined by its object, or on the other hand by a feeling but what drops out of the picture is that a thought has a reference to the other. Thinking always originates with others even if we are alone walking on the beach where Virginia Woolf once walked but is now being sold. Even when we look as 'strangers on the shore,' we invent fictions based on our actual memories of the people we knew.

David Burridge

Julia Kristeva

However, a few other topics came up in the meeting. I will mention here the discussions on death, violence and art.

Heidegger was preoccupied with learning from our future death. Among Kierkegaardians, John Davenport seemed to perpetuate the idea in a post-MacIntyre narrative style about a final testament at the end. Ricoeur also uses this idea and the late Pamela Anderson would add Deleuze and Spinoza. Wittgenstein avoids the discussion of death, in favour of present actions.

John Davenport tackles what to others is a problem in Heidegger. This is the idea that the metaphysical subordination of death must be overcome. For Davenport death is still supposed to instill in us an awareness that our temporal finitude must figure into the 'overall meaning' of our life, as it will have been attained once we have died. But Rick Furtak then says that Søren Kierkegaard's meditation on death in *Fear and Trembling* is unlike the classical ideal of philosophy as preparation for death; rather, it is directed toward the '*intensification* of life'. This seems both like poetics and immanent aspects of being in the world.

Deleuze might be violent. But does everyone who likes Francis Bacon essentially enjoy violence or is art different? What about the horror of war and death? It distressed Adorno certainly. But the historian and biographer Alex Danchev believed that it was artists rather than politicians who had the power to change society. Indeed his 2016 book opens with a quote from Ranciere about reversing Adorno on post-war poetry. Art makes what is impossible visible. Art, it seems, can survive its ruins. Adorno was wrong in this sense but being German it isn't easy.

Kristeva's more positive view of aesthetics diverges from Lacan and Freud when she argues that the image can also generate recuperative, if not fully redemptive, iterations of meaning. For her, both Freud and Lacan imply that literary writing is basically a form of denying the trauma. It avoided 'the truth' or was evasive according to Lacan, while Freud thought the 'pleasure principle' was too dominant. Sublimation almost conquers the trauma, in other words. Although the imaginary is often linked to a period in childhood where self-deception is quite plausible, the second nature aspect seems to rescue it. It might even allow pardon or forgiveness. Kristeva sees Proust as a melancholy writer akin to abstract expressionism in painting, seeking in effect to express what can't be straightforwardly expressed.

Karl Jaspers: Philosopher of Good Sense

PAUL COCKBURN

Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) believed that it is only through communication with others that we come 'to ourselves' and to wisdom. In his last unfinished work, 'The Great Philosophers', he enters into dialogue with his 'eternal contemporaries', the thinkers of the past.

Jaspers was born in North Germany and studied medicine. He was a research assistant in the psychiatric clinic of the university of Heidelberg from 1909-1915, where he worked with some of the most famous psychiatrists in Germany. Due to a bronchial illness, he was incapable of carrying out heavy duties in the clinic. He spent most of his time in the library rather than in the clinic and the laboratory. From 1913 onward, Jaspers read philosophy systematically. He was influenced by Max Weber, Ernst Bloch and Lukács. He was a contemporary of Heidegger, but their philosophical and political views differed. After the war he wrote on politics and citizenship, particularly on constitutional rights. He has a humanistic view of the state: he is against totalitarianism, for free communication, and an ethical national culture. He also thought that the state should be supported and guided by 'responsible elites.' At the end of his life he became disillusioned with German politics and became a Swiss citizen.

He thought that philosophy is an activity, a movement of thought that knows no end.

Philosophising is an inner action in which the thinker comes to an authentic awareness of himself and reality by pressing beyond or transcending everything objective. Philosophy is the search for truth, and this search seems to be never-ending. The questions asked are more important than the answers.

Thinking is characterised by the subject-object dichotomy, which points to being as a whole. If we think about ourselves, the subject as 'I' thinks about itself as an object. In our thinking we gain only an intimation of the 'comprehensive', the whole, the '*Umgreifende*' – 'grasping the one'. Jaspers tried to update Kant, looking at the antinomies within consciousness such as being and nothing, subject and object.

He often sounds religious, inspiring. He wrote a book on Plato, and quotes Plato as saying the source of philosophy is wonder. If we think we know something, doubt arises, and in fact we need this 'critique of doubt', because certainty is a dangerous state to be in as it prohibits further

Karl Jaspers

thought. We need to be open to new thoughts and not dogmatic in a fundamentalist or antagonistic way.

We are creatures of habit and our thinking stagnates if we continually think the same thoughts. In the concept of 'the limit' Jaspers speaks of those experiences which show up the limitations of our thoughts, such as death or a dangerous experience, or suffering. We try to avoid these difficult situations, and thinking about them. We immerse ourselves in everyday living, by carrying out practical projects in the world, instead of thinking more deeply. This is the opposite to Heidegger's view of 'being in the world'. These limit situations also show there is a limit to reason, which needs to be transcended and give way to a higher form of knowledge.

Our freedom and openness also mean that we sometimes experience failure and guilt as the result of our actions. We are vulnerable, and we can be 'shipwrecked' or we can 'founder' as we face boundary situations which challenge us. This foundering can also deepen our capacity for transcendence as we have to be aware of and face up to our own finitude and limitations.

One way we can overcome limits is by communicating with others. Dialogue, Jaspers believes, is the way to truth. Authentic communication, Jaspers believes, is based on tolerance, on an acceptance of a plurality of values, world-views and ways of life. Reason can facilitate communication by acknowledging the intrinsically conflictual nature of human existence and the limitations of human understanding.

In terms of science Jaspers believes scientific knowledge is limited in the sense that it cannot cover everything. We can think and puzzle about things which are beyond the limits of scientific knowledge. Philosophy transcends science. Science does not provide us with answers to all our questions. Philosophy however cannot ignore science, it must include scientific thinking and discoveries as well as the nature of being and the existential human situation.

Jaspers' philosophy does not say much which astonishes us in terms of its novelty, but what he does write is good sense, some of it derived from and building on older philosophical traditions. He seeks a middle way between extremes. His student Paul Ricoeur perhaps carried on in this tradition.

The Wednesday

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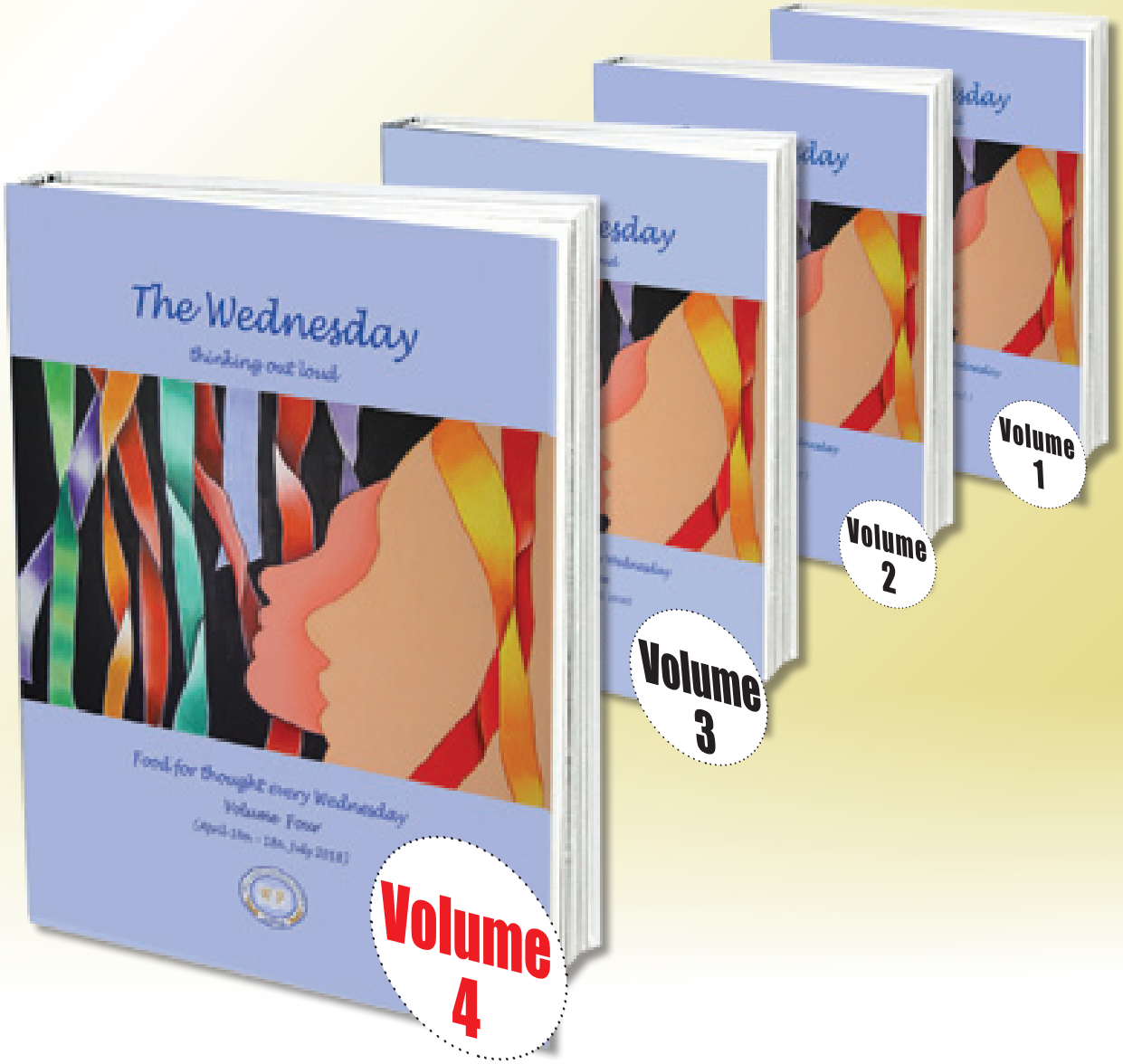

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