

The *Wednesday*



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

Editorial

The Birth of a Thought

We mentioned last time that philosophy is a struggle and that some philosophers use the metaphor of midwifery in talking about the birth of a thought. It is interesting to see the moment of such birth in the delivery and language of philosophers. For example, it has been reported by one of Hegel's students, that he marched between the door of the lecturing room and the window, repeating the same sentence three times, every time in a different formulation, interrupted by some coughs. His entire thinking is a reflection on the birth of a thought and its unfolding. For example, a new Portuguese translation of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, says that the book 'remains to this day the most complete reflection of thought on itself, its foundations and its relations to nature, spirit and the history of philosophy.' Interestingly, the conference that will be accompanying the launch of the book is called 'The Autobiography of Thought'.

Mary Midgley reported of her teacher Donald MacKinnon that: 'He was prone to long silence, sometime not seeming to hear at all what was said to him.' But the most interesting anecdote she recorded was about Wittgenstein. This took place at the Jowett Society, Oxford, in the nineteen forties and it gave an insight into his way of thinking and the endless reflections he had.

Midgely says: 'According to his custom he had refused to prepare a paper himself but had agreed to reply to a short one from somebody else. A heroic character called Oscar Wood accordingly read a brief piece on Descartes's *Cogito*. Wittgenstein then began to reply. For about five minutes what he said seemed incredibly important and illuminating. But then he started to see difficulties. He hesitated and interrupted himself – 'No no, that isn't it – What should one say? You see, the real

difficulty here – Oh no no, it is terrible...' dropping his head in his hands and then beating it, and so on.'

The drama wasn't over: 'At the end of the evening he said unhappily, 'Oh dear, we haven't finished this', so somebody suggested that the discussion should go on the next afternoon. He agreed, and we all came back for it, but I never found that it got much clearer.'

Hendrik Steffen, a student of Fichte, recorded in his memoirs how Fichte led them into his theory of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. 'He made every effort to provide proofs for everything he said; but his speech still seemed commanding, as if he wanted to dispel any possible doubts by means of an unconditional command. "Gentlemen," he would say, "collect your thoughts and enter into yourselves. We are not at all concerned now with anything external, but only with ourselves." And, just as he requested, his listeners really seemed to be concentrating upon themselves. ... But it was obvious that they were all waiting with great suspense for what was supposed to come next. Then Fichte would continue: "Gentlemen, think of the wall." And as I saw, they really did think about the wall... "Have you thought about the wall?" Fichte would ask. "Now, gentlemen, think about whoever it was that thought about the wall."'

Fichte was leading his students to think of something in the world and then to abstract from the content and only think of the thinking itself. This was his great insight into Intellectual Intuition Steffens was convinced of the thought experiment and happy. 'Fichte's delivery was excellent: precise and clear.' Maybe that goes to substantiate the conclusion that philosophy is closely connected to the character of the philosopher and so is his method of delivery of the thought.

The Editor

Reinterpretation of Motherhood: The Separation of Being a Mother from Giving Birth

The idea of motherhood is somewhat ambiguous, as it can involve more than merely being a female parent, depending on the person and situation. The strongest reason for this appears to be that the concept of having given birth remains strongly rooted in the core of understanding of motherhood and has been assigned unreasonable importance. Moreover, closely connected to that idea is that the mother being the birth parent has the closest relationship with her child through her caring ways. As such, there is an implicit but firm connection between being a woman who has given birth and being a primary parent and caregiver. To some extent, this connection constitutes the basis of public perception of motherhood today, even though the situation has been changing gradually.

MAO NAKA

In our opinion, the connection between being a woman who has given birth and being a primary caregiver has been one of the main sources of gender bias historically. Therefore, this article will question this and demonstrate that reinterpreted motherhood could apply to people more broadly, superseding gender differences and the distinction between having given birth and not having done so.

Distinction of Motherhood

The above-mentioned view of motherhood, based on the importance of giving birth and its implicit connection with being a primary caregiver, has historically bound women to childcare and education. The natural fact that only women give birth to children is used to justify the view that women must 'naturally' be the primary caregivers of new-borns, based on the implicit connection between them according to the understanding of motherhood. In this sense, motherhood has served to oppress women for a long period in patriarchal societies.

Adrienne Rich brought oppressive motherhood into question, calling it 'motherhood as institution' in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. She distinguished between two types of motherhood, positive or favourable and negative or rejectable. While the former concerns women's own potential related to reproduc-

tion, the latter, 'motherhood as institution,' is imposed upon women by male-centered societies, restricting their choice to be a 'good' mother and subjugating them to men's control.

According to Rich, the invisible institution of motherhood 'creates the prescriptions and the conditions in which (women's) choices are made or blocked; they are not 'reality' but they have shaped the circumstances of our (women's) lives' (*OW*, P42). This means that that motherhood works to oppress women instead of cultivating and developing their potential ('Institutionalized motherhood demands of women maternal 'instinct' rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self-realization, relation to others rather than the creation of self' (*OW*, P42).)

The reason that motherhood is oppressive in this instance is that it is uniformly imposed upon women from the outside, based on gender and the fact that they have given birth. In this case, motherhood is compulsory rather than voluntary. Moreover, differences between women in terms of their characteristics, including orientation, qualities, and abilities, are not considered.

However, Rich's distinction of motherhood also includes favourable motherhood; therefore, we do not need to reject motherhood outright just be-



Coming to the world

cause it involves the downside of institutionalization. In the following section, we considered the possibility of favourable motherhood in a different manner to that proposed by Rich.

Specifically, we question whether giving birth is essential to motherhood, and if this is not necessarily the case, whether ‘motherhood’ can be attributed to individuals other than women who have given birth, including fathers and foster parents. To this end, we explore the possibility of separating giving birth from motherhood, referring to two feminist thinkers, Chodorow and Ruddick. They both consider motherhood, to varying extents, independent of feminine gender and having given birth to a child to varying extents.

Separation of Giving Birth and Being the Primary Parent

Nancy Chodorow reconsidered being a mother in the *Reproduction of Mothering*. According to this, ‘a mother’ is above all ‘a person who socializes and nurtures’ a child or ‘a primary parent or caretaker.’ Based on this definition, she asked the following questions: ‘why are mothers women? Why is the person who routinely does all those activities that go into parenting not a man?’ (RM, P11)

She insists that ‘women’s mothering is seen as a natural fact’ by many theorists, and they acknowledge no need for an explanation. This view is also

held by the public and reinforced by ideologies and institutions such as schools, the media, and families; therefore, there has been no room for questions about the connection between primary caregivers and women thus far.

‘Society’s perpetuation requires that someone rear children, but our language, science, and popular culture all make it very difficult to separate the need for care from the question of who provides that care. It is hard to separate out parenting activities, usually performed by women and particularly by biological mothers, from women themselves’ (RM, P35-6).

In contrast to this view, Chodorow posited that this connection was constructed culturally and socially, which lead her to call it into question. From a psycho-analytical standpoint, she recognized a gap between primary caregivers and women and endeavoured to reveal the social mechanism that connects them socially and culturally causing us to believe that women’s motherhood is a natural fact (this mechanism socially reproduces women’s mothering through generations and is Chodorow’s main subject in her book; however, we do not consider this further because of the risk of digressing from our main topic.)

The View of Ruddick

Sara Ruddick radicalized the separation between being a mother and giving birth further in her book

Philosophy



Adrienne Rich



Nancy Chodorow

Mother Time. She defined a mother concisely, as a person who engages in mothering. She considered mothering to be work or practice that meets children's fundamental needs, and regarded anyone for whom an essential part of life is occupied by mothering as a 'mother.'

'In my terminology they are 'mothers' just because and to the degree that they are committed to meeting demands that define maternal work.' (*MT*, P17).

'These three demands—for preservation, growth, and social acceptability—constitute maternal work; to be a mother is to be committed to meeting these demands by works of preservative love, nurturance, and training.' (*MT*, P17).

Anyone who meets this criterion, including men and others who have not given birth to a child, is a 'mother.' In addition, two or more people can share motherhood.

In contrast, according to Ruddick, a woman who has given birth is not necessarily a 'mother' based on this. There is a gap between giving birth and being a mother, which means that anyone who engages in mothering becomes a mother, while a woman who has given birth can retreat from being

a 'mother.' Ruddick interprets this gap as room for voluntary choice.

'In any culture, maternal commitment is far more voluntary than people like to believe. Women as well as men may refuse to be aware of or to respond to the demands of children.' (*MT*, P22)

The view of mothering as work or practice shows that there is room to choose between giving birth and being a mother. The fact that one becomes a mother through practicing mothering, rather than giving birth, means that becoming a mother requires some consent. There are people who cannot undertake motherhood because of undesired pregnancy or other circumstances, opposed to the majority of mothers who undertake motherhood as a matter of course. Besides, almost all mothers sometimes feel that it is impossible to continue being a mother, and some actually suspend their practice of mothering. 'All mothers sometimes turn away, refuse to listen, stop caring.' (*MT*, P22)

This is not exceptional; rather, it constitutes an essential part of the practice of mothering, as all practices can essentially be both fulfilling and painful depending on individuals and situations. Therefore, it is natural that some women do not or cannot become mothers, just as there are men

who do not or cannot do so. From this perspective, Ruddick made the bold claim that all mothers are 'adoptive.'

'A corollary to the distinction between birthing labour and mothering, is that all mothers are 'adoptive.' To adopt is to commit oneself to protecting, nurturing, and training particular children. Even the most passionately loving 'birth-giver' engages in a social, adoptive act when she commits herself to sustain an infant in the world.' (MT, P151).

Ruddick therefore emphasized that there are no qualitative differences between cases in which women who have given birth and engage in mothering and those in which adoptive parents decide to do so. In both cases, engagement in mothering is a 'social' and 'adoptive' act. In this way, Ruddick squarely opposes the general view that giving birth and engagement in mothering are continuous and constitute a 'natural' fact.

Corporeity and Way of Being in Motherhood

For the purpose of reconsidering motherhood, the above was an effective way to introduce the concept of mothering, as the emphasis on action or practice allows us to view motherhood independently of the static qualities of the individuals concerned, including the distinction of giving birth and biological or legal status. Further, it facilitates the separation of motherhood from giving birth and the female gender and allows people other than the woman who has given birth to engage in being a 'mother.' However, this perspective involves the risk of reducing the issue of motherhood to the mere issue of labour or its fair distribution between the genders and also between the private and public sectors, severing motherhood at a more profound level, which concerns one's way of being.

Certainly, it is important to address unfair labour division between genders to abolish gender bias, but we are afraid that at the same time the view emphasizing the factor of action might underestimate the fact that one's actions could be closely concerned with (or connected to? if 'involved' is unclear) a profound level which constitutes the



Sara Ruddick

person. Indeed, we believe that motherhood or being a mother through mothering must influence one's way of being.

How is it possible, then, to consider motherhood while focusing on the extent of physical action or practice without undervaluing one's way of being? We are certain that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological view is very helpful for this.

Corporeity in Mothering, Based on Merleau-Ponty

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty considers the human being and other living beings to possess a bodily existence immersed in the world, mutually interacting with the environment. With a bodily existence, one perceives the environment and its meaning only through physical movement or action towards the environment. Therefore, if one's actions change, the meaning of the environment will change, and, reversely, if the environment around the person changes, it will let the person acquire a different 'acting' system than before. With respect to this point, we can adopt Merleau-Ponty's view to our context of the engagement in mothering; we could say that once a person has a child and mothering occupies an important part of one's life, it can transform one's action toward the environment, because action or

interaction can be reorganized according to one's new valued practice and behavioural system. This change leads to changes in one's way of being or existence, because according to Merleau-Ponty, a dynamic system of action toward the world is equal to one's existence.

As Ruddick stated, mothering begins with responding to a child's needs. Therefore 'mothers' are required to transform or rearrange their action or behavioural system to respond to their children's needs appropriately. We can interpret this adaptation as a transformation of one's action toward, or interaction with the world, or a change in one's way of being or existence.

Reorganization of One's Way of Being in Motherhood

Merleau-Ponty's view allowed us to consider motherhood based on both the practice of mothering and one's way of being. However, it did not reveal the nature of the change in one's way of being through mothering. Therefore, we sought to extend and develop this view by supplementing it with Levinas's view.

Levinas posits that fatherhood or motherhood, as long as it is interpreted on a previous empirical level, is reconstituted based on the relationship with the child who is considered to be the other. Therefore, the relationship with the child constitutes the individual's way of being, preceding being oneself. In other words, being a parent, or being a 'mother' in our terminology, is not superposed at a pre-existing self-centered level; rather, the opposite occurs. It is the relationship with the child that initially constitutes the self.

We interpreted this as follows: once one has a child and becomes deeply involved with the child through mothering, this causes a radical shift at an existential level. The person's existence is then reformed when the relationship with the child becomes the foundation of his or her existence or the basis of all other aspects of the person including recognition, feelings, or values. The person's existence is founded on being a 'mother,' regardless of gender or having given birth. That is a motherhood which we like to insist on. Although it is often assumed that this is present only in those who

have given birth, and, indeed, the experience of pregnancy and giving birth requires a considerable degree of labour and can therefore be a strong incentive for mothering, those who have given birth do not have an absolute advantage, and it is not uncommon for children's relationships with people who did not give birth to them to surpass those of the people who did do so. As such, 'motherhood' as mentioned above, could be extended to all parents and caregivers, and these factors may already be present in some cases. Therefore, it is important not to draw distinctions between genders or those who give birth and those who do not.

In a Practical Context

Against the background of exploring the possibility of separating and identifying a gap between giving birth and being a mother, there were our concern about the actual context, including male primary parenthood or sole custody, foster care, or new-born adoption because of undesired pregnancy, which occasionally goes through baby hatches or anonymous/confidential childbirth systems. We use the latter as an example in the following section.

Baby Hatches

When women become pregnant accidentally and the pregnancy is undesired, they are pressurized to decide between either giving birth or undergoing abortion. However, some choose neither, because they do not want those around them to know about the pregnancy but have missed the cut-off point for abortion. In such cases, they occasionally abandon the baby to die as soon as they have given birth. Baby hatches were established to prevent infant abandonment, followed by harm to or the death of the baby in most cases. They were originally founded in Germany in 2000 but have now spread to various countries worldwide.

Anonymous or Confidential Childbirth

Anonymous or confidential childbirth is interconnected with the baby hatch system, and is proposed as a better alternative to mothers or parents who intend to use the system if a person succeeds in contacting them at the moment of leaving a baby in a hatch or beforehand, via a hotline. This system is safer than the use of a baby hatch, for both the mother and baby, because mothers can give birth

in hospital or similar facilities, while many baby hatch users give birth at home or in other places, and the child's right to know about their background is secure with confidential childbirth (in the former case, mothers can give birth with full anonymity, while in the latter they leave their information and that of their babies sealed at facilities for future reference considering their child's right to know their origins).

It should be noted that, in such cases, babies are usually handed to adoptive parents while they are still babies. Particularly, in anonymous or confidential childbirth, babies can be left with adoptive parents after birth, as adoption is arranged during pregnancy at the request of or with the consent of the pregnant woman. In such new-born adoptions, adoptive parents are able to develop close relationships with babies through mothering at an earlier stage relative to that in later adoption. This helps them to be 'mothers' rather than second-best parents.

Final Remarks

As long as people adhere to the notion that having given birth was the core of motherhood, the examples given could be considered second best measures at most; therefore, it would be preferable for people to avoid these measures, so that women who have given birth are not forced to raise their babies. A focus on a fixed and exclusive connection between having given birth and being a primary parent and the overemphasis of the biological relationship could drive other women or biological parents into child abuse or abandonment or unwanted abortions.

In contrast, we regard the extended possibility of being a 'mother,' regardless of having given birth or a biological relationship, positively. In other words, if we consider whoever engages in mothering to experience the transformation of their existence to being a 'mother,' all parents, such as male primary and foster/adoptive parents, can be the best parents and 'mothers' through their engagement in mothering. Moreover, if we do not adhere to having given birth or a biological relationship and consider giving birth and being a primary parent separately, this could increase the possibility of various parent-child relationships focusing on



Baby hatch

practical and existential factors. Indeed, it is reasonable to determine that a biological and static identity is not essential, but constant and dynamic involvement with a child based on mothering would be sufficiently radical to lead to the transformation or reorganization of one's existence.

A significant change in the mind-set regarding motherhood is required. This is why we emphasize the possibility of separating giving birth and being a primary parent. Further, we should not underestimate the one-sided hardship and burden on women who give birth, particularly during pregnancy and childbirth, which originates from biological differences but has doubled socially and culturally. So we should call this bias into question by considering giving birth and being a mother separately and ascertain whether this one-sidedness has any grounding in reality.

Cot Death

I have lived it over and over again,
the same moment, the same
slightly, indifferently flickering sunrays over the curtains,
dancing up to the ceiling, above her cot and then her world.

If you reach your hand down,
you would notice immediately,
your eyes would begin to tear and your hand stop in its track,
as if the air were a transmutation of fog
that pores out into a grey mist.
If you tasted this air, it would first taste bitter,
then hot, then surely burn your tongue.

It is like what we imagine nightmares to be:
dark, deep, unendingly drawn from the cold heart of the world,
as if derived from extinct volcanoes
stagnant, motionless, solidified, and since
pain cannot be measured, flowing, and flown.

Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

the dead child



Instrumental Reason and Social Problems

Notes on the Wednesday Meetings Held on 21st of November 2018

PAUL COCKBURN

A suggested topic for this meeting was presented by our member David Burrige. He opposed the Enlightenment's concept of Reason to that of the Romantics. Here is a short note by him and some questions that were proposed in a way to stimulate the discussion, before we report on the wider debate for this meeting.

Tick Tock or What?

The clocks in the Middle Ages were a perfect way to divide up the day of prayer in equal parts. They were not designed to be precise instruments. Then Galileo determined that he could measure the swinging pendulum by comparing it with his beating pulse. The clock as a scientific mechanism took off. Alongside it was another mechanism: the nature of Man. When I was reading his *Critique*, I always thought that Kant was constructing a complex structure of Reason, rather like a perfect Clock. It was time to push aside religious metaphysics and create a science.

The problem was then, that having created a philosophic structure that ticked regularly with reason, he opened the divide between those who wanted to pursue reason as a mechanism and those who wanted to fill the room with an indefinable spirit.

Eichendorff criticised the thinkers of his time: *Man habe die Welt wie ein mechanisches, von selbst fortlaufendes Uhrwerk sich gehoerig zurechtgestellt.* (tr. One has turned the world into a mechanical clock mechanism that works automatically.) Novalis agreed with him and compared the universe with: *unendliche Schoepferische Musik des Weltalls zum einfoermigen Klappern einer ungeheuren*

Muehle... (tr. The creative music of the Universe is like a monotonous rattle of a monstrous Mill.) Of course, that is where Romanticism all began.

The struggle still exists between those who want to concentrate on a 'hard-analytical' reasoning and those who want to explore *Being*.

Of course, the problem with all philosophers is that they start with a good idea and always take it too far.

Questions

The Enlightenment's concept of 'Reason' became the subject of a long critique by the German Romantics and then by a number of philosophers and social scientists, such as Weber, Adorno and Horkheimer. Rahim Hassan alluded to this critique in the following:

- Instrumental reason came for a lot of criticism, but can we do away with it?
- Instrumental reason was the ideal and the product of the Enlightenment. However, it led to conflicts between different nations and with nature. Is this a price worth paying? Does it invalidate reason?
- Instrumental reason is piecemeal and mechanistic. The alternative is holistic and organic. But the first led to science as we know it. Could the organic result in a better science?
- We are familiar with mechanistic science but what would organic science look like?
- Mechanistic reason led to the neglect of the individual, who is just swallowed up by a statistical approach which deals with huge populations. But organic reason led to totalitarian regimes. Do we have to reject both? Amalgamate them? Can we think of an alternative? What would that be?
- Novalis thought of a book that includes every



Weber

book (the holistic approach). But how could we get to such a book before all the individual books have been written? Do we have to have the mind of God or know in advance the plan of Nature?

Discussion

We then discussed reason and looked at how it differs from 'instrumental' reason. The definition of instrumental reason was that it derives the logical steps required to reach a particular goal. It does not choose what the goal is! Could it do that or help to do that?

In terms of society, how does the 'I' combine with the 'We'? How could this be a rational or reasonable process? We discussed Fromm's 'freedom from' and 'freedom to'. We have the freedom to be a painter, say, but in order to be an original painter we may need to be free from society's norms and expectations with regards to painting.

There is a difference between 'reason' and 'reasonable'. There is a spectrum which covers

reason in terms of disembodied rationality and logic to reasonableness in human terms, where we try to judge whether someone's actions are 'reasonable'.

Instrumental reason is primarily responsible for technology, and humanity has invented wonderful gadgets and machines, from fridges and cookers to the mobile phone. As the use of these inventions spreads across the world in the future many developing countries will improve their standard of living. But how do you control technology as a long-term project? It works, but it often has unexpected effects when it grows too big – as in pollution, global warming, and congestion on the roads.

In terms of addiction and technology there is a problem with addictive behaviour, such as gambling, and in the use of mobile phones by young people in the UK. Young people experience social problems using them in terms of social pressure and bullying by their peers.

We discussed addictions and what can be done to cure addicts. It is no use trying to reason with an addict to stop them using drugs for instance. They know what they are doing is irrational, but they cannot stop. Alcoholic Anonymous has a 12-step program to help those with drink problems. This helps by changing the focus of people's lives, helping them shift their attention away from drink. Their crisis is spiritual in nature. Is this reasonable? Reason should help us move forwards in a positive way, move us forward to the light so to speak. What is metaphysical and spiritual cannot be proved rationally, but perhaps it is what is left over when the reasoning process is exhausted.

However, the big problem we now face in the UK is the growth in inequality. The new technology is very profitable, but this wealth is not shared out properly. For poor people there is less margin for error, it is too easy for people to slip under the radar and be homeless, living on the streets.

Dust Jacket

Here's a shop that doesn't go to market,
no show with draped bikini or suntan cream,
enticing you to beach or bed to read.
Just stacks of hard bounds jacketed with dust.

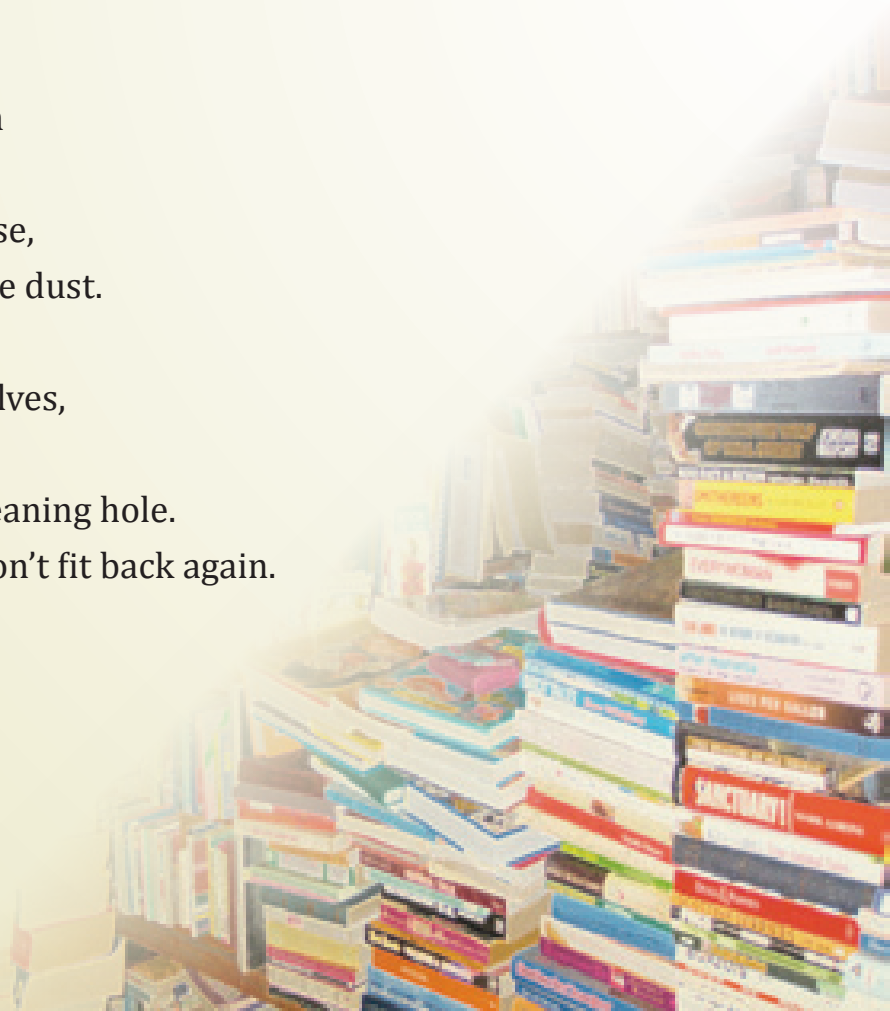
A jumble box of fingered paperbacks,
placed by the door at pencilled down prices.
First aid for the fugitive from shrieking DVDs,
or the pull of the stores that always take your card.

Slogans shout from faded typeface to
readers who have lost their place.
Books they once tried to ban now
face to face with *Mills and Boon*.

Pipe puffing authors beam from
low resolution black and white.
They wrote in rough tweed prose,
plots that gripped, thicken in the dust.

Go between neon flickering shelves,
floor to ceiling tightly wedged.
Prise out your choice from its leaning hole.
Blow off the dust and take, it won't fit back again.

David Burridge



Blood Oranges

(On route to a hearing in Croydon)

Coffee sears my stomach,
statutes pace my thoughts. I am
on my way to argue: *In-the-alternative*.

Shortcut through the market,
dodging heaving workers, all setting up.
Crashing crates tune their shouts.

I stare at the piling fruit. Trader smiles,
cuts into the red flesh, offers me a taste.
I want to cram them into my briefcase but
picture my crafted submission juiced away.

Case adjourned. So back to the market,
only to find trading is done, stalls just a criss-cross
of empty poles, wrappings dance in the wind.

A torn-off piece of local news flaps across my path:
Asylum seeker stabbed stealing an orange.

I try to recall the sweet taste,
but the fruit bleeds in my head.



Perception and the Subject-Object Divide

PAUL COCKBURN

The philosophy of perception is a key philosophical area. It might be one area where philosophy has made some progress!

We can start with Berkeley. He realized there was no proof of the external world of objects that we perceive. There is what we would now call neural activity in the brain which gives us the sensation of seeing an object, but if the nerve endings were stimulated in the right way then we would 'perceive' objects which are not there i.e. our sensory organs could be deceived. Descartes famously argued that we could be dreaming when we perceive the world. The film 'The Matrix' (1999) had most human beings as brains in vats, experiencing a simulated reality.

Husserl tries to pursue the pure act of perception, bracketing out all the mental additions we make, to the 'raw' sense data

we receive. We are left with the pure eidetic process in our mind. Whether this is possible is up for debate: perhaps those who meditate can see this best of all! When we hear our own language spoken to us, it is virtually impossible not to translate it into meaningful words and sentences when we pay attention to it. So also when we see a cup, it may be possible to 'bracket' out our interpretation that we are seeing a cup that we can drink out of, we could concentrate on only the specific shape and colour etc. of it as an object.

Kant thought there were transcendental elements in our ability to perceive the world, so that our perception is framed by the transcendental qualities of space and time. A modern view is that our mind is not passive in perception: it creatively fills in the gaps in our perceptions. If we believe there are objects in an external world that we can perceive, then these objects are in fact connected to



The Matrix (1999)

us via perception. There must be a joining of the world external to us and the perceptions we have of it, and this joining must be between a subject that experiences and the external world of objects. It seems that in our perceptual experience you cannot get away from a subject/object divide. The only possible way to abolish the divide is to say that the subject and object, mind and matter, are so indissolubly connected that they are a unity. Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), a phenomenologist, suggested something like this in his philosophy. He thought that consciousness was incarnated in the world.

Within subjectivity there is a particular aspect of the 'other', other people, how we are formed or influenced by other people, and how we react to them, and how we express ourselves to others. This is a distinct area of knowledge which is connected to perception. We see other objects which we classify as other people, and we relate to them in various complex ways. The field of inter-subjectivity is wide indeed, covering societal studies, novels, plays, and much more. It also includes science.

Scientists study objects in terms of the laws they obey, and these laws are objective and causal in the sense that as far as we know objects always obey the laws of motion, gravity etc. Scientists conduct experiments to discover these laws, and they must be objective and rational in doing this. But scientists also have personal lives, they exist in a social world of inter-subjectivity as we all do. A scientist may be motivated by the need to earn a living and to achieve a research goal, and works in a community which sets up the culture for scientists to work in. Their work has to be objective and reproducible. An artist on the other hand is usually thought of being more of an individual, using their imagination to creatively produce works of art on their own. In fact, however there have been scientific geniuses who have had to work outside of an established social group and their theories were at first rejected by the establishment. And artists seem to gain identity in establishing groups, calling themselves for example Impressionists or Cubists. The subject/object divide applies to both artists and scientists, with different aspects of the divide appearing in their psychological make-up. It seems there is no escape from this divide!

The Wednesday

Editor: Dr. Rahim Hassan

Contact Us:

rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk

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Editorial Board

Barbara Vellacott

Paul Cockburn

Correspondences & buying The *Wednesday* books:

c/o The Secretary,
12, Yarnells Hill,
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Seneca's Rome



'Death's nothing and there's nothing after death.'

Declaims the chorus in the *Troades*,

And measured Latin well pronounced can please,

Though every breath proclaims the end of breath.

So the great Stoic's hearers meditate

With enforced magnanimity of mind,

On how to meet whatever is assigned

With the proud resignation due to Fate.

Not far away a humbler band takes in

Demotic Greek which says that they won't die,

For Christ freed them from Death, Sin's dark reward.

The Law, so strangely somehow bound with sin,

The Law, whose bonds He came down to untie,

Fulfilled, not cancelled, by their risen Lord.

Edward Greenwood

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