

The Wednesday



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

Editorial

In Praise of Philosophy

We hear so much about doom and gloom in different aspects of life. This has afflicted philosophical circles with talks about a 'crisis' and 'the end of philosophy' and soul-searching questions about the nature and task of philosophy. I was so struck by such talk that I thought I should write a defence of philosophy. That was initially the intention but thinking hard on the matter and considering different aspects of a possible defence, I thought what is needed is not the defence but the praise of philosophy.

Take, for example, analytical philosophy. There is a lot of talk about a crisis, and perhaps there are grounds for that, but then think of the achievements of this school of philosophy in technical sophistication and the range of topics that it deals with and their relevance to practical matters, especially law and political theory, not to mention language and the mind which has been its main concern for a long-time. Similarly, take the contribution of continental philosophy with its postmodern turn, with its analysis of power, gender, embodiment, together with phenomenology, hermeneutics and critique which have been its powerful contribution to contemporary thought generally and to specific domains of discourse. The result is a richness in content and sophistication in technical analysis, together with different roles in term of involvement with society. The one might be conservative, the other subversive and revolutionary.

All the above gives philosophy a special role to play in society at large. Alan White had argued in his book *Toward A Philosophical Theory of Everything* that all the particular disciplines (or sciences) have a limited sphere of discourse but only philosophy has an unlimited sphere of discourse. I take his claim to mean that philosophy legislates to the other sciences and not the reverse. But we have been so much influenced by the success of science that philosophy has been conceived as subservient to science when

all that it needs is that it should be informed by science. It was Feuerbach who moved philosophy towards the human and the sensual. He was reacting to the speculative philosophy of Hegel which he sees as a disguised Christian theology. But as Nietzsche said, undermining the idea of God had the result of undermining the idea of the human being as a privileged creature. This led to the bringing down (or the undermining) of metaphysics, and had the result of undermining the position and role of the philosopher. Socrates in his defence, before he was sentenced to death, as reported by Plato in the *Apology*, claimed that he had a divine duty to do philosophy and to discuss with people. Here are his words:

'Gentlemen, I am your very grateful and devoted servant, but I owe a greater obedience to God than to you; and so long as I draw breath and have my faculties, I shall never stop practising philosophy and exhorting you and indicating the truth for everyone I meet.'

Boethius in his last statement before he was executed, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, describes philosophy as a beautiful heavenly woman that appeared to him in exquisite dress:

'On the bottom hem could be read the embroidered Greek letter Pi (contemplative philosophy), and on the top hem the Greek letter Theta (practical philosophy). Between the two a ladder of steps rose from the lower to the higher letter.' Another indication of the unlimited sphere of the philosophical discourse.

It is good to be reminded of these images because we don't now have this imaginative transcendence that was once there. Philosophy is divine and the philosopher has the claim of a prophet to have a message and to communicate with ordinary people.

The Editor

Rationalism And The Empiricism Challenge



We considered the rationalist conception of knowledge in part one of this article. Here we are going to consider the empiricist view.

RANJINI GHOSH

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One of the main challenges to the rationalists came from logical positivism. We will now discuss this school of thought.

Logical Positivism

Logical positivism came into prominence in the early part of twentieth century through a group of philosophers and mathematicians who were part of the 'Vienna Circle'. Logical positivism has

been considered by many to be an extreme form of empiricism. Its primary target was Hegelian Idealism and in particular the idea of 'Absolute'. They also criticised traditional metaphysics and the basic rationalist claim of a priori knowledge.

A.J. Ayer in his book *Language, Truth and Logic* said that the fundamental tenet of rationalism is that thought is an independent source of knowledge and more trustworthy than experience, and that the only necessary truths about the world

which are known to us are known through thought and not through experience. So, if it can be shown that either the truths are not necessary or that they are not truths about the world then support for rationalism will go.

Bertrand Russell, though not exactly a logical positivist did of course give his support to the position of Hume that our knowledge of the world must be based on sensory experience. For him, every proposition must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted. The constituents are the data given by our senses. Therefore, Russell considered sense data as the fundamental building blocks of our knowledge. We must also not overlook the fact that science deals with many entities that are not directly there in experience – like points, particles of quantum theory. But Russell considered these entities to be logical constructions of sense data. Hence Russell's position as regards the source of knowledge was empiricist.

But Ludwig Wittgenstein was concerned with abstract problems of the structure of propositions and their meanings. He attempted to demonstrate the truth value of elementary propositions. His picture theory of meaning was an attempt to establish a correlation between the logical parts of a sentence or proposition and a possible state of affairs in the real world. But Wittgenstein's theory and views did support the empiricist position when he said that ethical or aesthetic judgements are not genuine propositions because they are not pictures of facts in the world.

The positivist view was emphatic in its claim is that all metaphysical claims in philosophy were meaningless. They laid stress on the principle of verification to establish the truth or falsity of any proposition. Hence any discussion about substance, monads or the Absolute could not be verified. But then so are logical and mathematical statements which cannot be verified experimentally or observationally. They have an a priori character and are counted as genuine contributions to human knowledge. For logical or mathematical propositions, their truth is independent of experience and this is because of the meaning of the symbols involved in such propositions. When we say that $2 + 2 = 4$, its truth depends simply on

the symbols $+$ and $=$. A statement such as 'Either hamburgers are nutritious or they are not nutritious' is necessarily true and independent of experience. This proposition is true in all states of affairs. Therefore, it is a tautology. Such a proposition actually means nothing. A meaningful proposition may be either true by definition (tautology) or may make a genuine claim about the world whose truth or falsity can be empirically or observationally established.

The logical positivists say that a statement which is neither a tautology nor verifiable by observation is meaningless. They are of the firm opinion that there can be no a priori knowledge of reality. Hence, they dismissed the great rationalist questions of substance, necessity, God, causation and freedom as meaningless. The positivists considered natural science as truly meaningful. But even laws of natural science like, say, 'All water at a given atmospheric pressure boils at 100 degrees Celsius', is an unrestricted universal generalization and its truth cannot be established even through infinite observation. In higher science there are abstract structures and entities like electrons and photons and complex theoretical models which are not amenable to direct empirical observation. Therefore, the positivist claim that natural science passes the test of verifiability is doubtful. The positivists faced a dilemma in that they would have had to make their criteria of verifiability very stringent or weaken the criteria to allow metaphysical speculation. This was the major failure of the positivists: they could not come up with a satisfactory principle of verification. Even a good deal of natural science is beyond direct observation and this can also be said of metaphysics.

Revival Of Innatism

In 1969 a counter revolution started in philosophy which claimed that the empiricist view of knowledge from Locke onwards was false. Their main target and reformulation was Locke's view that the mind was a blank slate on which experience imprinted itself.

The American linguistic philosopher Noam Chomsky was foremost in reviving the Platonic conception of innate knowledge. Chomsky was fundamentally concerned with the problem of

the acquisition of language by children. How is it possible that children around the age of three years old can understand structures of language? Chomsky criticized the empiricist/ behaviourist view of language acquisition given by B.F. Skinner. This view proposed a stimulus-response theory of language acquisition and said that appropriate sensory stimulus is responsible for conceptions of language. But Chomsky did not agree with this and said that a child can produce and interpret a number of sentences with ease. The input data given to a child is very small but the understanding of language in comparison is very large. Sounds emitted by animals do depend on stimuli, but human language is stimulus-free and much more creative. By 'creative' is meant the ability to produce and interpret new sentences.

Chomsky's explanation was that all human beings are born with innate knowledge of a 'universal grammar'. Despite surface differences between different languages all languages share a common deep structure. A child possesses innate knowledge of universal grammar and therefore can easily master any language. The child maps the surface features of any language onto the deep grammar of which it has innate knowledge. Chomsky considers his theory of language acquisition as essentially rationalist because the basic principles that underlie it are determined by the nature of the mind. The role of experience, according to him is only to activate this innate schematism. Plato's example of the slave boy in *Meno* is an example of innate knowledge.

Falsifiability And Empiricism

Many rationalists like Spinoza were influenced by the deductive model of knowledge. Propositions are deduced from first principles. But empiricists argued that logical deduction was not enough, and one needs observation and not deduction. They believed that scientific laws must be based on induction. The scientist arrives at general truths from particular observations. But Karl Popper argued that even a large number of finite observations is not enough to establish the truth of a proposition. His view was in sharp contrast to the verification principle given by logical positivists. Popper believed that how scientific truths are arrived at, even through induction, is irrelevant

because scientists often arrive at their theories in very creative ways. For him, the important question is how scientific theories are to be tested. He proposed the criterion of falsifiability to test the truth of scientific theories. His criterion of falsifiability overturns the empirical dogma of verificationism.

In contrast to rationalism, whose central tenet is a priori knowledge, Popper argued for a posteriori empirical observation that can falsify a scientific hypothesis. Observations cannot guarantee the truth of scientific theories but can always empirically falsify them. Thomas Kuhn gave a new concept in the philosophy of science that refuted both the empiricist view of observations and the Popperian view of falsifications. He argued that at any point in time a particular scientific theory becomes dominant in the scientific community and the whole scientific community then tries to support this theory and does not allow any kind of falsification. Such a theory or model becomes what Kuhn famously called 'a paradigm'. A paradigm then enjoys a kind of protection.

Quine's Attack

The American philosopher W.V.O. Quine attacked the empiricist dogma. The empiricists, following Hume, divided propositions between a priori and analytic on the one hand and synthetic and a posteriori on the other side. Analytic truths are a priori, independent of experience and are like the tautologies of logic and mathematics whose truth follows from the symbols used. Synthetic propositions are statements about matters of fact that can be verified by empirical observation. It is on this basis of Hume's fork that many rationalist propositions have been criticized.

In a famous paper entitled 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', Quine attacked the empiricist dogma of analyticity. This was the dogma of Hume's fork. He criticised the doctrine of two kinds of truth, truths of meaning and fact. He said that this kind of dichotomy between analytic and synthetic statements was a metaphysical article of faith of the empiricists. He also attacked the dogma of reductionism which proposed understanding a proposition in terms of its truth or falsity. Quine believed that it is not individual propositions



Leibnitz

which are important but a total system of beliefs and theories. He says that all the laws of pure science can be seen as a circular field of force. Those beliefs that lie on the periphery of the circle of total beliefs can be modified by experience and are like the synthetic propositions. The ones which are near to the centre are less likely to be modified. There is no clear demarcation between the two types of truth. The inner truths may be like analytic ones, but they do not have any privileged status. They are not immune from any kind of revision. Therefore, Quine's arguments challenged the empiricist attack on the rationalist that truths can either be analytic or synthetic. He said that propositions on either side are capable of revision and modification.

Quine claimed that there is no fundamental difference between analytic and synthetic beliefs. No belief is true simply because of the meaning of words. Beliefs are true because of the way the world is and the meaning words have. These two components cannot be separated. Let us consider a standard analytic belief like, 'All bachelors are unmarried'. We may mean a bachelor as an unmarried man but if we think that there are married bachelors it means that we have changed the meaning of the words. Quine said that we can define the bachelor as a man who is not in a relationship with a woman which late twentieth century people would think of as marriage. These differences become significant for people in

different situations. What Quine was pointing out was that what we consider sometimes as a priori may change its meaning according to the situation.

Quine said that beliefs are linked to one another in a whole network which he calls a 'web of belief'. For example, the belief that the earth is round is linked to various beliefs like the compass pointing north, light travelling in straight lines etc. If we try to bring evidence against any one of these beliefs, then we would have to consider the other beliefs as well, and examine the evidence against these beliefs. In this web of beliefs some beliefs are on the periphery of the circle and some are near to the center. Those beliefs which are on the periphery are more closely related to perceptual experience and can be easily modified. The beliefs at the centre are linked to other beliefs but less to perception on the periphery. Beliefs at the centre change very slowly in the light of new evidence.

Kant said that some beliefs are very crucial and without them we will not be able to make sense of our experience. Quine argued that everyone must have some beliefs which are at the centre of their web of beliefs. Those at the centre cannot easily be challenged by evidence. Beliefs are also to be distinguished from concepts. In order to have a belief we have to understand the concepts involved. If we believe that cats eat mice, then we must have concepts of what we mean by 'cat', 'mice', and 'eat'.

Japanese Philosophy and the West

A dialogue with Mao Naka

*** The Japanese translation of the term ‘philosophy’ is not familiar to us since it was coined relatively recently**

We have taken the opportunity of the presence for a few months in Oxford of the Japanese philosopher Mao Naka among the Wednesday group to have a conversation with her on the state of philosophy in Japan and its relationship with philosophy in the West. The result was very enlightening, and we thought that we should report it in full.

Mao Naka is an associate professor of ethics and philosophy in the Graduate School of Letters at Kobe University, Japan. She studied philosophy in Japan and France. Mao wrote a PhD thesis on phenomenology. She selected French phenomenology because it is the school most interested in analysing concrete experience.

She started her career with Levinas’ philosophy. Lately, her study has been centered on ‘reproduction’ from gender and corporeal perspectives. She uses the term ‘reproduction’ in a broad sense: from pregnancy to child-care, including infertility, abortion, stillbirth and adoption. Also motherhood, reproductive technology, and baby-hatches in theory and practice are her recent interests (see her recent paper in *The Wednesday*, issue 72, on feminism and motherhood.)

❖ You mentioned that philosophy in Japan is not different from contemporary philosophy in the West. I do understand. But some writers suggested that Heidegger and Nietzsche were influenced by Eastern thought, see for example the first chapter of Heidegger’s book *On The Way to Language*. For Nietzsche, please see: *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, edited by Graham Parkes. This raises the question of influences. What type of Western philosophy influenced Japanese Modern Philosophy? Is it continental, analytic or something else? Is there anything like ‘Modern Japanese Philosophy’? When

did it start? What was before it? How did the change come about (if there was any)?

- While Japanese ancient and medieval thought consisted of a mixture of indigenous Shinto and Buddhism which came from the Asian Continent, early-modern thought (in the Edo period) focused on Confucianism. In the middle of the Edo period, the study of Japanese ancient thought and culture was revived, and also Dutch Studies started. These two areas of study were opposed to each other.

The Wednesday*



Japanese modern thought started in the Meiji Restoration (1867-8), influenced by Western thinking, especially English Philosophy of the Enlightenment and the French idea of human rights. After Capitalism was introduced into Japan, Socialism and Christianity also developed. At the same time, Nationalistic thoughts based on the Shinto religion came to the fore.

After that, German Philosophy was studied enthusiastically in Japan. In the later Meiji to Taisho period, the Kyoto school started, which tried to fuse Western thoughts and Oriental thoughts such as Zen Buddhism.

One of the founders of the Kyoto school is Kitaro Nishida. He wrote *Zen no Kenkyu (An Inquiry Into the Good, in English)* (1911). His main theory is that of 'pure experience', which theorized the 'state of nothing' of Zen Buddhism to mean the unification of objective and subjective phenomena. He aimed with his theory to get over the confrontation between idealism and materialism.

Hajime Tanabe studied in Germany and interacted with Husserl and Heidegger. He specialized in the Philosophy of Mathematics and Physics.

Tetsuro Watsuji is known by his books *Rinrigaku (Ethics)* (1937-49), and *Fudo (Climate and Culture)* (1931). He studied in Germany and was influenced by Heidegger and published books about Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. He criticized Western individualism and argued that a human being is a relational being rather than an independent being.

The term used for philosophy in Japanese, 'Tetsugaku', was coined for the first time around 1868 as a translation of the Western word for philosophy. Before that time, there was no concept exactly corresponding to 'philosophy', although there had been 'rich thoughts' which we can retrospectively call 'philosophy.'

❖ **Do you think that philosophy is a way of life (that philosophy is related to the life of a society)? If yes, how is Western philosophy related to Japanese society?**

- Yes, I personally do. But, in that case, I keep in mind philosophy as a way of thinking, not necessarily limited to Western philosophy.

With regard to Western philosophy, in one way, it is difficult to say that it has penetrated into



**Mao Naka with
members of the
Wednesday group**

people's life and mind-sets. Most Japanese people have an impression that philosophy (which is considered almost equal to Western philosophy) is difficult, advanced, and unapproachable. One of the main reasons comes from the fact that Western philosophy emerged from other places, cultures, and languages than ours. The Japanese translation of the term 'philosophy' is not familiar to us since it was coined relatively recently, and the word sounds formal. The Japanese people's way of thinking, and their culture and language are not compatible with the strictly logical thinking of Western philosophy.

On the other hand, Western philosophy has helped to develop academic sciences and practical matters in Japan. It has also helped to partially change the way people think, their way of discussing matters and their way of doing practical works.

Philosophy as an academic method has generated new academic sciences such as Philosophy of Law, Philosophy of Education, Philosophy of Religion (including Buddhist Philosophy), Philosophy of Social Sciences, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Language, and Philosophy of Economics. For example, Philosophy of Law in Japan relies on Western Philosophy (of Law), which has supported the Japanese system of law.

❖ **Is there an active translation movement of Western philosophy to Japanese? Who is the**

philosopher who attracts them most (Marx, Nietzsche, etc.)?

- Almost all the main philosophical works have already been translated. The most popular philosophers for younger generations (who are necessarily students in philosophy) are Heidegger, Nietzsche, Foucault or Deleuze. Among students in philosophy, there are many who choose as their specialty Kant, Hegel, Husserl, or Heidegger, by taking into account both the influence of the particular philosopher and their own concerns. Recently, Levinas or Merleau-Ponty are also often chosen, and student choices are diversifying.

There was a time when Marx had a grand influence both on students in philosophy and on ordinary people, but now he is a rather minor figure.

❖ **How about schools of philosophy: Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, Feminism, etc.? Are they present in Japan? Are the questions by these schools the same in Japan?**

- In general, philosophy students and researchers are categorized by languages, such as classical Greek, German, French and English-speaking philosophy. Also, we have the main schools such as Classical or Medieval Philosophy, Modern Western philosophy (in French, Germany,

or English), Phenomenology, Analytic Philosophy and Philosophy of Science.

❖ **English speaking philosophy is interested in language and mind, are they important in Japan?**

- Yes, it is enthusiastically studied in a school of philosophy among others, especially by many younger students.

❖ **You mentioned the differences in Feminism between French and English-speaking Feminists (UK and USA). Are Japanese Feminists different in their concerns? What issues are important for them?**

- Japanese Feminism has been led by sociologists, most of them often refer to American feminism. In particular Japanese Feminism seems to focus, in particular, on the theme of the family beside other concerns. One of the reasons for that is the fact that Japanese culture and customs have put enormous importance on the family system, which is one of the main sources of gender discriminations. It also has a variety of themes such as sexuality, the body, unpaid work and reproduction.

❖ **You studied Levinas and Heidegger. Was there a reason for selecting them?**

- When I chose my specialty, I was interested in the relationship between the self and the other, and I had already learned French. That is why I choose Levinas as my primary philosopher to study.

❖ **Is it possible to give a general overview of philosophy in Japan and the big names there with their concerns?**

- Philosophical studies in Japan have been mainly separated into language categories (Ancient Greek, German, French, English) and applied ethics, although institutionally academic posts for philosophy and departments of philosophy in universities had been reduced year by year, influenced

Some of Mao Naka's papers are contributed to the following joint works:

“The Otherness of Reproduction: Passivity and Control” in Nicholas Smith & Jonna Bornemark (ed.), *Phenomenology of Pregnancy*, Södertörn University Press, 2016.

“Some Glimpses at Japanese Feminist Philosophy: In terms of Reproduction and Motherhood,” in *Contemporary Japanese Philosophy: A Reader*, ed. John W.M. Krummel, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019.

Other articles:

“Baby-Hatches” in Japan and Abroad: An Alternative to Harming Babies, in *The European Conference on Ethics, Religion & Philosophy 2018: Official Conference Proceedings*, 2018.

And

“The Vulnerability of Reproduction: Focusing on Pregnancy and Breastfeeding,” *Aichi, Kobe University, Faculty of Philosophy*, No. 28, 2016)



by Government policy which focuses on practical academic sciences.

Among others, Noburu Notomi (Plato), Sumihiko Kumano (Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, Levinas), Yoshimichi Saito (Husserl, Levinas), Tatsuya Higaki (Deleuze, Foucault), Shigeki Noya, Motoyoshi Iriyugi (Analytic Philosophy, Philosophy of Language), Tetsuya Kono (Philosophy of Mind, Merleau-Ponty) are popular nowadays. Most of them study Japanese philosophy recently.

❖ **What course you are going to teach your students when you go back to Japan?**

- I have lectured on selected topics in philosophy, especially ethics, practical ethics and seminars.

• **Mao Naka was interviewed by Rahim Hassan, 9th January 2019**

Scatter The Ashes

I am unstoppable, in a burst
of light I am forced out
to be put in place.

The wind speaks its language,
old idioms never to touch,
but their contours dying not far away,

around a corner, up a hill,
the AWOL-gone sky,
while the ancestors mutter
in different tongues.

Old border words trash
this corrie, the ashes in the valley.

Why should I descend
into its capillaries,
explore boundaries?





Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

San Pedro and the Aeroplanes



CHRIS NORRIS

The cave-shrine of Catholic Saint Hermano Pedro (1626-67) occupies a striking and very beautiful layered-rock site near El Medano, South Tenerife. It is located at the end of the airport runway, directly beneath a main flight-path. The reference to Ezekiel concerns a visionary passage sometimes taken to prefigure the advent of jet aeroplanes.

Glossing Ezekiel the saint maintains
Two theses contrary to common sense:
Time-travel and a thought of aeroplanes.

His cave and shrine abut the airport fence.
Such to-and-fro his hermit soul disdains,
Yet no affront to God, the switch of tense.

Flight-paths reduplicate the angel-lanes.
San Pedro stoops to count the pilgrim pence.
A turbine drowns his eventide refrains.

On kitschy goods the vapor trails condense
As kerosene anoints the saint's remains
And candles waver in the turbulence.



Still daily rise the heaven-touching strains:
‘Sire, they take off downwind, a good league hence;
For decibels, consult the weather-vanes’.

As Pedro tolls for Prime so flights commence.
At Terce, Sext and None he regains
Ezekiel’s wingéd vision, God knows whence.

Blessing or curse, still nothing to the pains
They bore whose dark prophetic sapience
Brought thunder fit to shake the martyr’s chains.

Some aerial law of cause and consequence
Must hold, he thinks, if flight’s what God ordains,
Though miracles may hold them in suspense.

Why scorn these gaudy relics? he who feigns
Belief in them may come by such pretense
To credit tales of gods or aeroplanes.

Tenerife, January 2019



Peter Townsend and the Friday discussion group

BOB STONE

The New Year saw the end of an era for the Philosophical Society at Rewley House, as Peter Townsend relinquished the reins of the Friday evening discussion group which he founded nearly 17 years ago, and which has been thriving ever since. The group meets on the second Friday of every month, and any Society members from the Oxford area – or even from as far away as Worcester – can turn up at Rewley House at 7pm and be assured of two hours of high-quality philosophical discussion.

The format varies: sometimes a member introduces a topic with a paper, or a short summary of their views, sometimes we discuss an issue that has been decided in advance without any one person leading, or else we may rake over the latest OUDCE philosophy weekend course. Peter has often introduced the topics himself (and will no doubt continue to do so), but his main job has been to organize the topic/leader for the next meeting, to arrange for the room to be available, to keep members informed of what's happening, and, not least, to collect our money at the end to pay for the room hire.

Peter has ensured that the meetings are informal enough to enable everyone there to have their say, regardless of each person's level of philosophical expertise, and for there to be no rigidity limiting the course of the discussion; but he has also kept it organized enough to avoid any feeling of rudderlessness – a firm, but utterly non-despotic hand on the tiller.

It is a great tribute to his leadership that there is a strong regular clientèle, with a number of others who can make the meetings from time to time, and that the reins can pass seamlessly to the new organizer, Chris Seddon. But the 'new era' is not, thankfully, a clean break. Peter not only attended the first meeting under the new régime, but also contributed his usual complement of sharp, witty, well thought out, slightly off-beat points to the discussion. It is to be hoped that he will be doing the same for many years – but now without the monthly grind of organizing everything. The Philosophical Society owes him a huge debt of gratitude, and the best way of showing that is to keep the Friday discussion group strong and healthy for decades to come!



Peter Townsend

Follow Up

Philosophy, Language and Life

Notes of Meeting Held on

January 23rd 2019

PAUL COCKBURN

The Wednesday weekly meeting started this time by talking about mathematics. It is an abstract system, but if you add the scientific method to it, it has immense power. Newton's laws of motion and gravity can predict the path of objects on earth, and they can also explain the orbital paths of the moon and the planets. This was tremendously powerful in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe. But what is the true relationship of mathematical language to the world? Even the act of counting, say two objects, can be vague as we have to classify exactly what an object is. The precision and (almost) perfection of mathematics has to be admired, it is very pure and quite different to our everyday language. But where is the 'life-world' in mathematics? Is mathematics part of the fabric of nature?

Language Acquisition

We moved on to discuss language and how children learn to speak. They presumably repeat words they hear from adults, but how do they utter grammatical sentences which are completely new. According to Saussure there is a structure to language which is somehow transmitted to the next generation, along with culture. It could be that this is acquired unconsciously. There seems to be a lot of implicit knowledge which we just 'pick up', we are somehow aware of. Chomsky is probably still searching for the 'language generating' machine in a child's mind.

Connected to this is novelty: how does it work? How do languages change, why is there the 'shock of the new' in art?

Philosophy and Life

Wittgenstein thought that as philosophy develops and changes it may 'take away the mental discomfort engendered by the old philosophy'. And in fact, the vagueness in language may help us to discover something new 'in between the cracks.'

Philosophical theory can be connected to real problems. An example was given of medical ethics, where the real-life situations encountered can be analysed in terms of higher-level concepts. And in architecture the principle of using building spaces for the benefit of the community can be emphasized rather than building 'show-piece' buildings which have little practical use.

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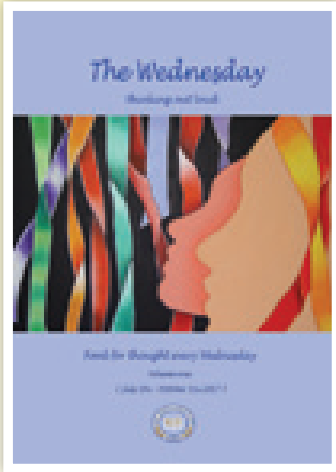
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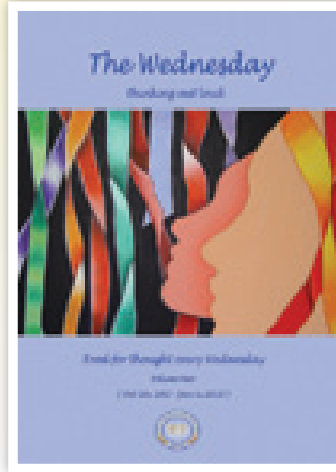
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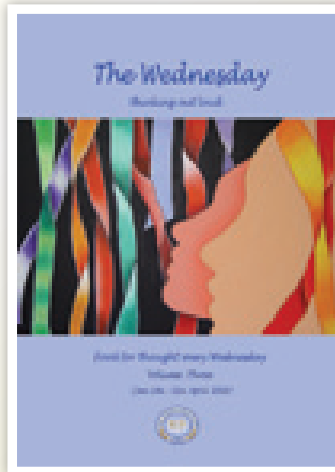
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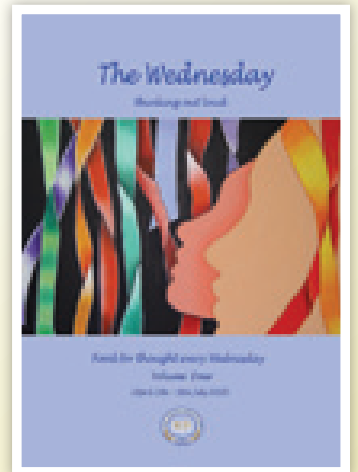
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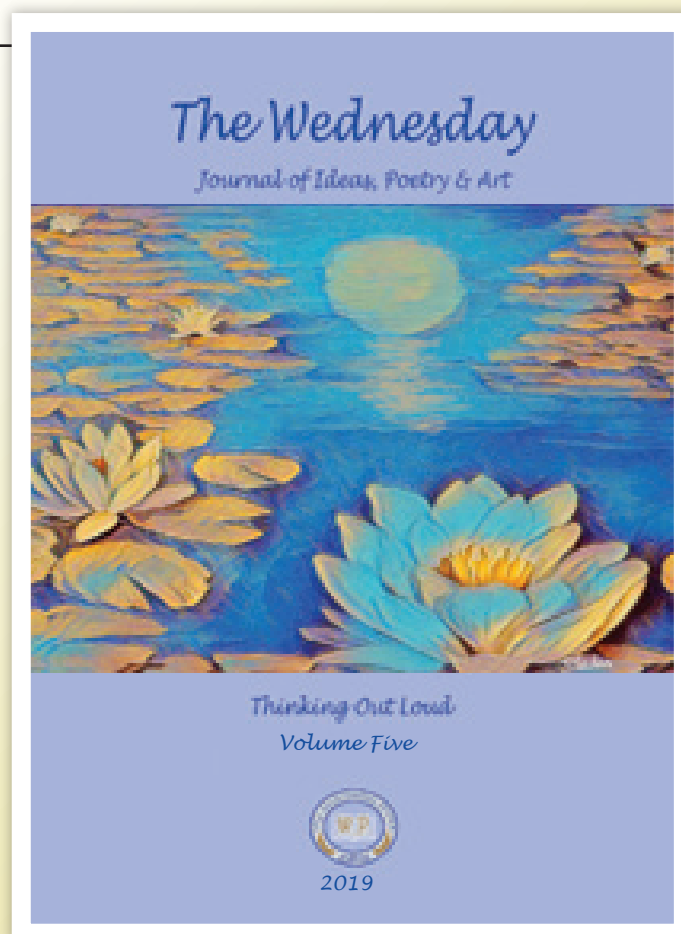
BOOK THREE



BOOK FOUR



BOOK FIVE



is now out