

The *Wednesday*



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

Editorial

Anger and the philosopher

The question of anger is becoming more urgent with the increase of uncertainty locally and internationally. It also forces itself on those philosophers who feel that the world situation does not allow change and they feel indignant about that.

We discussed in our weekly Wednesday meeting the subject of anger. What brought up these thoughts is the forthcoming conference in November of this year at Brighton University. The title of the conference is very suggestive: 'When things turn ugly? Anger, politics, and the morality of protest.' The conference will deal with the philosophical aspects of anger: What is anger? Is it simply an affective reaction? Or can it be considered a rational, perhaps even necessary, response? The relationship between feeling anger and acting on or expressing it. The strategic role of anger in social movements, and morality and anger.

The earliest analysis of anger, philosophically, is that of Aristotle. He thought that:

'In respect of anger ... we have excess, deficiency, and the observance of the mean. These states are virtually without names, but as we call a person of the middle character gentle, let us name the observance of the mean gentleness, while of the extremes, he that exceeds may be styled irascible and his vice irascibility, and he that is deficient, spiritless, and the deficiently spiritlessness.'

But Aristotle is also aware of the context of anger. He suggested that '...we praise a man who feels anger on the right grounds and against the right person, and also in the right manner and at the right moment and for the right length of time...' We also blame the man who is spiritless if he does not get angry at things 'in the right manner, at the right time, and with the right people' because he will not stand up for himself.

However, Aristotle is talking about a person's character and the flourishing of the individual and not about social protest. But one could keep in mind Aristotle's 'golden mean', and the context of applying it, as a measure of one's reaction in an individual behaviour and social protest.

But if anger is irrational, is it appropriate for the philosopher? The history of philosophy does not provide very good examples. Some philosophers criticise their fellow philosophers in a most degrading way. Hegel seems to be the victim of such criticism from Schopenhauer, Schelling, Feuerbach and Nietzsche. The first accused him of being a charlatan, the second of stealing his ideas and the third and the fourth of a lack of clarity. But regardless of their criticism, Hegel remained a great philosopher who was seeing a growing interest in the English-speaking philosophy after a relative neglect. You can say, according to Aristotle, they failed on three grounds: they went for the wrong person, on the wrong ground, at the wrong moment and for the wrong length of time. However, their criticism does not appear in the main body of their philosophical work, except that of Feuerbach, but in letters, biographical notes and introductions to their books.

The point is that philosophers do not always keep to the *Ethic* of the master (Aristotle) and neither to rationality. We often hear in debates 'This is rubbish!' But is 'rubbish' an argument? To have a fruitful debate, anger has to be contained. But we also need to apply a 'principle of charity,' to allow the opponent to put his case, or in his absence to make his position, clear in the strongest possible way before critiquing it. Anger, if allowed free rein, could obscure the good points in both arguments for and against and will not serve philosophy or philosophers.

The Editor

What Is Authenticity?

A simple definition of ‘authenticity’ might be: be true to oneself, or *Werde was Du bist*. (Become what you are.) A profound difficulty in philosophy is found when we first ask the questions: who am I? And can I really believe that I exist purely as an individual remote from the social values etc. that shaped me?

DAVID BURRIDGE

Of course, there are great social heroes who fight against the system often sacrificing their lives. Are these individuals brave because they see a whole new existence, like an entrance into an authentic world, or are they combating a current evil to reassert a lost goodness – an essence that precedes existence? (Contrary to what Sartre contended).

Are we in fact essentially both social and individual beings, and to actualise ourselves we normally use the social equipment that is *vorhanden*; available from our upbringing, education, or just the examples set by others? It is essential that before deciding to aspire to an *Authenticity* we can be absolutely clear what is meant by the word, or we may just be trading one bad faith for another.

In this essay I want to explore what some Continental philosophers would view as the reality which leads to Authenticity and from this decide whether ‘I’ or ‘We’ should be aspiring to such a condition.

I would like to consider first how Heidegger dealt with authenticity. It might be argued that the concept of authenticity was established by Heidegger in his *Being and Time*. He certainly uses it as a condition of *Dasein*. He makes no value judgement as to whether either inauthenticity or authenticity are desirable. He just sees them as alternative facts of consciousness. One is either living authentically or inauthentically. For him the average everyday world indicates an inauthentic consciousness. Presumably *Dasein* operating at this level is not realising its individual potential. As Stephen Mulhall points out (*Routledge Guidebook to Being and Time*, P. 37):

‘Inauthentic existence is not a diminution of *Being*; it is no less real than authentic existence. Nor is Heidegger’s talk of (in) authenticity intended to embody any sort of value judgement; it simply connotes one more distinguishing characteristic of any entity whose Being is an issue for it.’

But this raises a concern about the logic of *Dasein*: ‘the fact that a misunderstanding of its own BEING is so commonly held by the Being to whom an understanding of its own Being properly and uniquely belongs requires explanation--- for any entity capable of inauthentic existence must also be capable of authentic existence.’ (*Routledge Guidebook to Being Time*, P. 38) So why does *Dasein* ever embody the inauthentic?

Heidegger is more concerned with describing the potential states. For example, anxiety brings *Dasein* face to face with its being free for the authenticity of its Being: the new world is disclosed first and foremost by anxiety ---anxiety makes itself manifest in *Dasein* as its Being towards its own potentiality ---that is its being free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. Anxiety brings *Dasein* face to face with its being free for the authenticity of its Being, and for this authenticity as a possibility as it always is.’ (*Being and Time*, P. 187-188).

Heidegger’s concept of Authenticity he describes as *Eigentlichkeit* in German, which has the root of *Eigen* – own. So authenticity is an own-most state. Anxiety is an inherent human condition, essentially because of the reality that death stalks all of us.



Heidegger

So following Heidegger if we are to choose either authenticity or inauthenticity we are choosing between two viable propositions. Section 193: 'Dasein can comport itself towards its possibilities, even unwittingly ---even in inauthenticity Dasein is essentially ahead of itself.' (*Being and Time*, P. 193).

Heidegger accepts that Dasein might start as a social animal: 'The Self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self*, which we distinguish from the authentic Self...' It must first find itself...' (*Ibid.*, P. 167) if Dasein discovers the world in its own way and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic being; then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing away of concealments and obscurities.'

The problem with this approach lies in the question: Where in world is Dasein (or a seriously thinking individual) going to find the knowledge that leads him along the path toward authenticity? Dasein is not from outer space, so its realisation has to be constructed from the elements of culture in which the individual has been developed. So the inauthentic being explores all the elements of his life to select those which will lead him to the light of authenticism. This might suggest that there is an implied ethic within us all that enables us to judge in this way regardless of empirical experience. A hint here of the Kantian goodwill and the categorical imperative.



Jasper

Any attempt to pursue an *authentic path* would clearly need to take account of what is reality. Jaspers in his essay *Reality* explores reality: 'Authentic reality is the Being which cannot be thought in terms of possibility ----- Any actuality, whose existence I comprehend through the causes that produced it, could have been different under different circumstances – When we are dealing with reality itself, however, possibilities cease. Reality is that which can no longer be translated into possibility...' (*Philosophy of Existence*, P. 69)

Jasper is exploring an idea which came from Schelling; that thought by itself cannot reach reality. Jaspers argues that a completely thinkable reality is conceivable to us and that this therefore means it is only a derivative version and not the authentic reality, which would liberate us from illusion. We might seek reality through historicity, but this only can give us a sense of transition. He is not concerned with an arbitrary moment of mere occurrence. (*Ibid.* P.72) It is not about knowing history and regulating ones behaviour based on this knowledge. He says: 'The reality of the world does not become a whole with which man could become identical and thereby achieve authentic being.' (*Ibid.* P.73)

He is seeking pure thought in this work, a greater unity, and only in this way seeking the authentic self. It has more to do with metaphysics than of organising the world towards a practical code of ethics, which might lead to some identifiable authenticity.

Sartre is thoroughly concerned with the facticity of this world. In *'Existentialism Is a Humanism'* he declares: "what is at the centre of existentialism, is the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realises himself in realising a type of humanity." So we are free to find authenticity (although he doesn't use this term). Essentially it is for each of us to reject bad faith, by not deceiving ourselves. The right choice is one that has its own persuasive force: '--whenver a man chooses his purpose and his commitment in all clearness and in all sincerity, whatever that purpose may be, it is impossible for him to prefer another' But there are difficulties: 'One can judge a man by saying he deceives himself. Since we have defined the situation of man as one of free choice, without excuse and without help, any man who takes refuge behind the excuses of his passions, or by inventing some deterministic doctrine, is a self-deceiver.' (See *Existentialism Is a Humanism*).

Bad Faith is far deeper than a lie, because it essentially governed by belief or as Sartre describes it as a lie to oneself: 'Bad Faith has the appearance of a lie – the appearance of the structure of lying. Only what changes everything, is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding this truth.' (*Being and Nothingness*, P. 72)

So belief can stand in the way of authenticity, though a believer might well consider himself emancipated and authentic, shortly before he cuts the throat of a non-believer.

Freedom for Sartre is the first condition of action (*Being and Nothingness*, P433): 'We should observe first that an action is on principle intentional'. He does not mean that we can necessarily always know the consequences of our actions. The unintended consequences might be what the determinist refers to as the cause.

Sartre describes the paradox of freedom which means that there will be restrictions on our freedom, through:

1. What he calls 'My Place' meaning the place assigned to me when I was born. (*Ibid.* P.511)



Sartre

2. 'My Past': 'Of course the past does not determine our acts ---nevertheless--- the freedom that escapes toward the future cannot give itself any past.' He acknowledges that our past might shape our decisions. (*Ibid.* P.517)

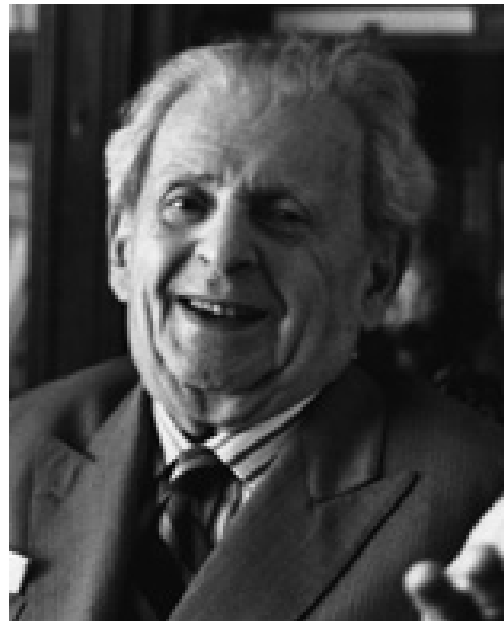
3. My Environment: 'made up of the instrumental things which surround me, including their peculiar coefficients of adversity and utility.' (*Ibid.* P.525)

4. My Neighbour: '...the meaning which I discover as already mine (my nationality, my race, my physical appearance), and finally the other as a centre of reference to which these meanings refer.' So, Sartre would prefer to concentrate on being as an individual but recognises the other as a factor. (*Ibid.* P.531)

A more positive consideration of others is given in one of his essays: 'I am obliged to will the Liberty of others, at the same time as my own. I cannot make Liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim.' He calls those that hide from their freedom as cowards and those that pretend they are driven by determinism as 'scum.' (In *Existentialism Is a Humanism* Sartre says: 'We can judge, nevertheless, for, as I said, one chooses in view of others and in view of others one chooses himself.')



Husserl



Levinas

Of course, outcomes cannot always be predicted, but our authenticity is determined by how we go about our decisions; 'The content is always concrete, and therefore unpredictable, it has always to be invented. The one thing that counts is to know whether the invention is made in the name of Freedom.' So, freedom is not an ethical vacuum. If it is to be used to realise our authenticity it requires us to consider all the constraints and decide what is good not just for *myself* but what is good for all of us.

We have the choice to break out of the inauthentic life and transform it into an authentic one, but there are constraints that may influence our decisions, even send us in the wrong direction believing in things of bad faith, then we must seek to understand our own intentions.

This takes us back to the Phenomenology of Husserl and his ideas of intentionality. Our minds are never empty, they are filled with objects and acts of consciousness: analysing, judging, reflecting, adjudicating, imagining, willing, and expecting all noeses. Or better still all ideas that will lead to action.

An individual, who is seeking to live an authentic life will strive for it and he needs to explore and

understand what factors shape his strivings. That individual will have a cluster of factors in his psyche which will persuade him towards a particular outcome. Maybe he has to liberate himself from prejudice and previously unchallenged belief. He needs to explore his own belief system. How do I know what I am capable of? How secure do I feel and what evidence do I base feelings on? Authenticity is worth pursuing if we challenge ourselves in good faith.

There is one more consideration which is given to us by Emmanuel Levinas. Our pursuance of authenticity will fail if we do not take into account of our existence in a shared universe. More specifically: 'the other person addresses me, calls to me. He does not even have to utter words in order for me to feel the summons implicit in his approach'. To experience a need for him was to experience an anticipation of fulfilment. The 'I' defined by Husserl seems to allow a self-sufficient transcendence, but we will experience a failure of mastery when we experience face to face encounters. Our need to belong, clarified through face to face encounters is essential to our true authenticity. We are a social animal and what we do for ourselves we do for mankind. The 'We' should be seeking authenticity and the 'I' should be taking part.

'The World Must Be Romanticized!' Why? How?

In terms of the history of ideas, the German Romantics were reacting to the Enlightenment. The 'light' the Enlightenment thinkers seek to emphasize is that of reason, logic, criticism and scepticism as opposed to what they thought was the blind faith, dogma and superstition found in the medieval world-view. But is their vision possible?

PAUL COCKBURN

One key aspect of the Enlightenment was the success of many scientists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The most startling and successful instance of this was exemplified by the work of Isaac Newton. He described how objects move mathematically and conceptually, so that the motions of objects could be predicted and understood. This applied to the macroscopic, to large objects such as the planets, whose elliptical orbits round the sun could be explained by the inverse square law of gravity. But it also applied to the motion of far smaller objects on the earth. Newton's three laws of motion explained how forces act on objects however large their mass. This mechanical world view that the cosmos consisted of matter in motion was very influential in the eighteenth century. It also chimed in with the Cartesian world view. It was

then applied to the microscopic, by scientists such as John Dalton and Lavoisier in the eighteenth century. They were successful in investigating atomic theory, in particular how atoms form molecules, and how chemical reactions work.

Could the scientific mechanical and deterministic world-view be extended into the biological and even the human world? It was possible to imagine living things including humans being conceived of in entirely materialistic terms: the realms of morality, free will and freedom would then be threatened. In terms of motion can we actively will our movements rather than just being passively moved? (And present-day materialists can point to such later discoveries as the discovery of the genetic structure of DNA in the 1950s as continuing evidence for the materialistic view as applied to genetics).

In philosophy, Hume extended empiricism and scepticism to religion and human behaviour: there was no such thing as a miracle. Causation was problematic: we only see one thing follow another. Immanuel Kant credited Hume with awakening him from his 'dogmatic slumbers', and he sought a firmer basis for morals which he thought Hume undermined. Kant distinguished 'duty' from 'inclination', allowing for free will, and emphasized the role of reason in morals. In studying perception, Kant concluded that the subject's mind had to impose categories such as space and time to enable us to perceive external objects. What is subjective, rooted in the person, and what is external, objective?

The German Romantics, who followed after Kant, essentially try to show that certain



John Dalton



The Odyssey

elements in human nature are ignored at our peril if Enlightenment thinking is taken too far, particularly the emphasis on the role of reason. They wanted reason to be integrated and joined together with other aspects of man's personality: feeling, emotions, intuition and imagination. Scientific objectivism should not be allowed to completely exclude the personal, the subjective.

The appearance is key for human consciousness. In terms of the material and probably much of the biological realm, the reality behind the appearance is mechanical, atomic, but the appearance is still how we see in terms of human perception – we generally see and interpret surfaces, not what is underneath the surface. So, the simple application of the mechanical to the organic or the material does not work; we are actually in the realm of the appearances – our senses deal with the appearances – we cannot see, hear or feel atoms. Living beings are complex hierarchical structures with many component parts. So, the Romantics found their meaning in adding to the appearances, not stripping everything down to the mechanical behind the appearances. They were not anti-science – they wanted to flesh out the picture that science gives, to add to it. Novalis was a mining engineer: he used reason, but he also used his imagination to make connections with nature for which there may be no empirical tests.

The counter-criticism of the Romantics is that they emphasize too much the emotional, imaginative and creative parts of human nature. What they do show perhaps is that the 'feeling' part of human nature, and creativity and imagination, have to be in balance with our reason. There has to be a true unity of all the aspects of human nature in order for human beings to achieve their best. If any aspect of that nature is too dominant, then the consequences are not good!

Poetic epics such as the Odyssey are romantic in the sense that they give meaning to life, to history, to our origins. They show human beings stretching themselves, trying to catch a glimpse of the infinite, although we are finite.

So, the world must be romanticized in order that a true balance is maintained, rational and scientific reasoning must not be allowed to dominate in an unhealthy way in the human psyche at the expense of other key parts of our make-up. The 'how' is more complex: how do we integrate the scientific and rational side with the feeling and intuitive sides of our nature: must one side always dominate? How do they work together? The danger is the objective and rational can become too dominant in our nature, pushing out the personal, and what makes us truly human.

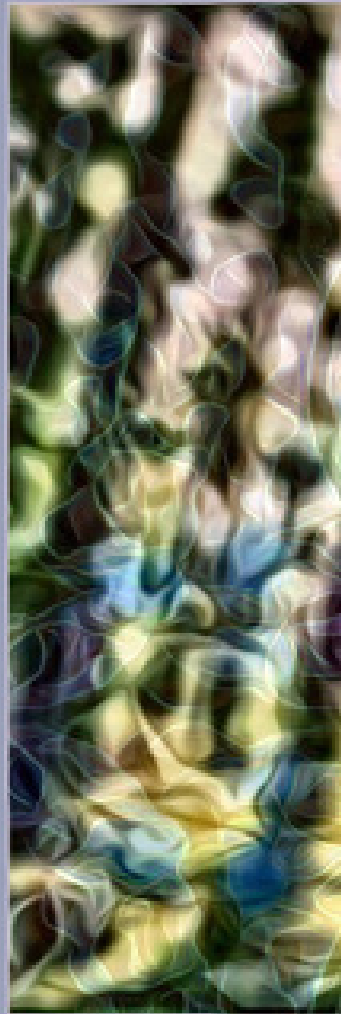
Group photo

Imagine gathering roses for a vase
and casually select their different faces,
put them in ranks, some tight in inner places
and others loose around an outer base.

Chose colours close in shades of red and pink,
pick a dark purple, leave the yellows out,
arrange the shy ones from their dark hide-out
to complement and beautify a link,

then keep them into focus as a whole
and change the scene to your perfect delight,
right to the moment, when you stop to scroll

back to the start, until your eye conceives
exact the instant, when the brightness weaves
perfection, which the camera applied.





Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*



CHRIS NORRIS

Cartoonist

‘For Dennis Fairfield, 1932-2019’

When I look at someone’s face, there’s something in my brain that just clicks – that breaks down their face into the elements that go into a caricature. It might be like the way a chef tastes a dish and can break down into elements what went into it.

Steve Breen

A question I have often asked is, ‘What would an inoffensive political cartoon look like?’ What would a respectful cartoon look like? The form requires disrespect and so if we are going to have in the world things like cartoons and satire, we just have to accept it as part of the price of freedom.

Salman Rushdie

People have been murdered over cartoons. End of moral analysis.

Sam Harris

Here’s what I do: I size them up, then go
Online to get a visual fix,
Then read around for all I need to know
About their lives, their politics,
What friends they’ve made, what lucky breaks they owe
To whom, what crafty bag of tricks
Once helped to save their bacon, and – if so –
What went into the noxious mix
Of lies, deceit, hypocrisy, and low-
Life intrigue that those tell-tale pics
May almost hide from view yet always show
To my trained eye as something clicks.

You say they're monstrous, these cartoons of mine,
Grotesque, no likeness, figures drawn
From some dark psychic realm where fears combine
With shapes that our worst nightmares spawn
But I, their constant prey, let re-define
My waking world in ways that dawn
Should properly dispel. Not so: each line,
Each shape, each stroke's an image born
Of daylight scrutiny though its design,
Which seems to you a blend of porn
And politics, lets absent virtue shine
The more for vice held up to scorn.

You ask me what devices, what 'technique'
I use to make them each appear
A typecast monster, lunatic, or freak
While also making crystal-clear
Just who they are, just what their vicious streak,
And why they populate that sphere
Of moral obloquy. But still you'd seek
To know by which fixed points we steer
When sketching them, or thanks to what oblique
Projective trick our cartoons veer
So far from simple likeness? Then I'd speak
The one trade-secret we hold dear,



William Hogarth

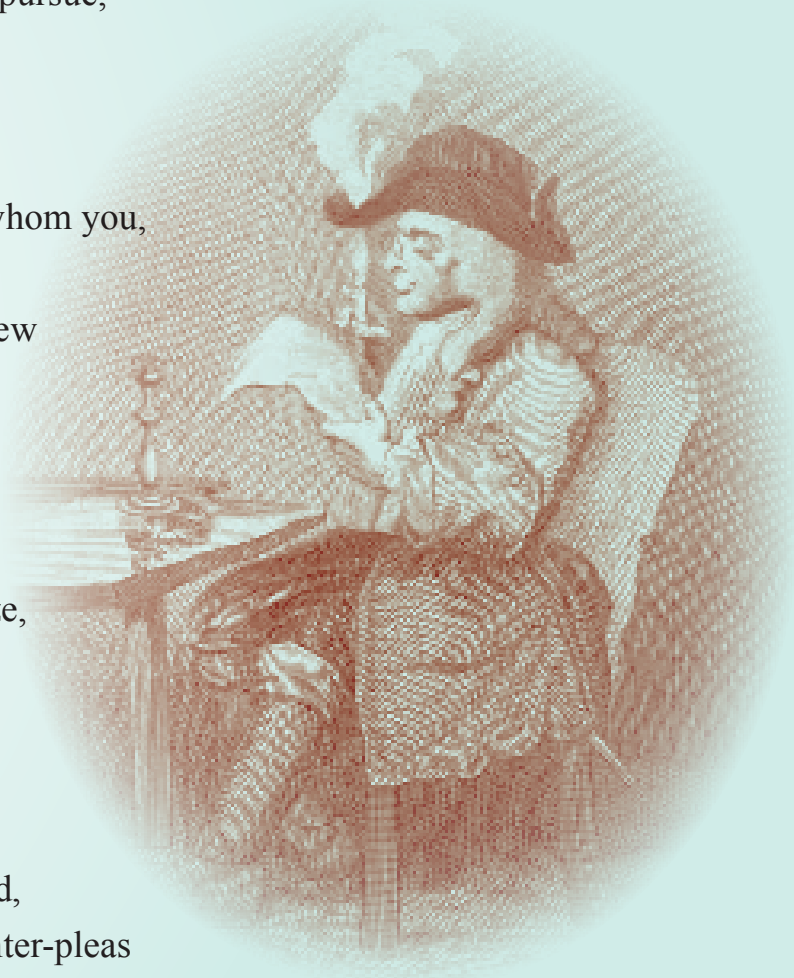
Poetry

We dealers in a truth found not 'between
The lines' but where the lines that trace
Some monster's dewlap chops, or his obscene
Hind parts, or stomach-churning face
Are crossed by geometric lines whose clean,
Objective contours mark a space
Where neither human vice nor satire's spleen
Find room. It's that geometry by grace
Of which we see, sharp on our mental screen,
A palimpsest that, in each case,
Reveals how draughtsmanship and truth convene
To keep all vices in their place.

I call it moral geometry, the way
Those perfect figures – circles, squares,
Ellipses, triangles – serve to convey,
In graphic form, the sense that there's
This constant falling-short we all betray
Through word and deed, though billionaires
And servile politicians in their pay
Show up, in the cartoon's cross-hairs,
As deformations of our mortal clay
So gross that we disclaim all shares
In the freak twist of moral DNA
Their every latest lie declares.

Again I'm asked: what geometric cue
Or abstract rule-and-compass route
Could some Hogarth of these bad times pursue,
As you advise, and nail a brute
Or fool with images that do
As much as his once did to shoot
Them down, that same rogues' gallery whom you,
Theory aside, give phizogs that so suit
Their greed, corruption, readiness to screw
Their colleagues over, put the boot
In when they can, or join a palace coup
So long as winning odds compute.

I say: the shapes are also there to squeeze,
To stretch, compress, deform and twist
The vice-revealing flesh so that one sees
How steadfastly the satirist
Has shunned all inclination to appease
Good taste by limning traits we'd missed,
Things less malign. Yet mark those counter-pleas
To cold perfection which insist
That falling-short comes always in degrees,
That vice may skew our virtue-list,
And that egregious monsters such as these,
The Trumps and Boltons, co-exist
With us in that dark zone where exit-keys
Turn only in a clenched left fist.



Politican by Hogarth

Art

Reflections

WILLIAM BISHOP



Fire, earth and air
Watery alchemy of life
Heart, hearth and home
Yearning for the sky

Follow Up

Translation, Recognition and Truth

Notes of Meeting Held on February 6th 2019

PAUL COCKBURN



Hegel

In our weekly Wednesday meeting we talked about the problems of translating philosophy texts from one language or culture into another. Walter Benjamin as a translator wrote about this. He postulated a universal language as an ideal, but every language is created by a particular context and an 'intentional mode': the job of a translator might be to re-create that mode in another language. In its widest sense translation involves entering another world view and includes our attitude to the 'other'.

We then discussed Hegel's view of historical progress and the master/slave relationship. The latter involves violence, it is a fight to the death and the slave succumbs. The master then learns from the slave who ends up with more skills and knowledge than the master. Ricoeur wants this process of recognition to be more peaceful. Is the power dynamic, as exemplified in Nietzsche and Foucault, always more pertinent? We want a process of cultivation rather than a power struggle, a conversation rather than a fight. The work of translation avoids this violence.

We moved on to Nietzsche and the 'will to truth'. The search for fundamental explanatory principles taken to the extreme seems to somehow work against life. Truth should be in the service of life in the world. There is a truth for the strong and a truth for the weak. Truth can perhaps be found in conversation, a meeting of minds.

The Wednesday

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The Second Year

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