

The Wednesday



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

Editorial

Philosophy as a Career

Mary Warnock who died before the end of last month at the age of ninety-four was the youngest and the last of the group of five women, among other females, who were studying philosophy during the Second World War. The other four are Mary Midgley, Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot and Iris Murdoch. They were the early generation of female philosophers at Oxford. Warnock made a name for herself as a philosopher on many national committees on matters of environment, education, the use of animals in laboratories and human fertilization. She came close to being an advisor to the Conservative Party before the party abandoned the idea of requiring a philosopher's advice. That was during Thatcher's time. The Labour Party, as Warnock says, was well equipped with left-wing intellectuals and philosophers.

Years ago, I read her life story that she told in *A Memoir: People and Places*. It is a life spent in learning and teaching philosophy, getting married to a philosopher, raising kids, entering the public life as a headmistress before coming back to teaching at the university (Oxford), becoming a broadcaster on the BBC *Third Programme* with three other philosophers (Peter Strawson, Geoffrey Warnock and David Pears), taking a job at Cambridge and sitting on many committees.

You could say it was an ordinary life in an extraordinary place and time (the peak of analytical philosophy) with exceptional figures (such as Ryle, Austin, Strawson, Anscombe, Ayer, Hampshire and many others.) But philosophy for Warnock wasn't a passionate love affair. It was a career. She tells us that she couldn't find anything interesting in philosophy that she felt passionately about. However, she liked Phenomenology and thought that Husserl was engaged in the same enterprise as Wittgenstein but

Anscombe, always faithful to Wittgenstein, wasn't happy with that. She says her book on existentialism was purely commercially motivated and the only book she really wanted to write, the one on imagination, was a failure because of the mixture of philosophy and literature in it. That was my judgment too when I read it, although I found it interesting. She admits that she wasn't good at philosophy and did not want to spend her life as a tutor in the subject.

Warnock's *Memoir* gives a short history of the rise of analytical philosophy in Oxford in the thirties, the influence of Ryle, the effect of the war, the coming of foreign scholars to Oxford. The influence of Ayer's book *Language, Truth and Logic*. The aura of Wittgenstein and his influence on Anscombe. The lack of interest in moral and political philosophy. But most interesting are her memories of Anscombe and Murdoch. She comments on Murdoch had an interest in philosophy from Plato to Sartre: 'In some ways, she was a magpie, flying over a wide field, picking up what caught her eye and making it her own.' But it is the details of the support Anscombe had for Wittgenstein that are most interesting. Anscombe's reaction to Austin after attending a seminar by him was so dramatic that she used rude words to refer to him. She also talked about the hostility to continental philosophy in Oxford and Cambridge in the fifties.

The departure of Warnock is a closing of a chapter in the intellectual and philosophical history of Oxford. Philosophy became cleverer, more diffuse, with more variety and detailed investigations. The time of the big names is over but there is plenty of talent around and more books and articles are coming out. Maybe there is a new trend in the making or it may all turn out to be just professional duties and a career.

The Editor

Repetition in Hegel and Kierkegaard

A Reading of Kierkegaard's Novel Repetition

We published part one of this article in issue 84 of *The Wednesday*. We discussed how the post-Kantian philosophers began to build their systems with the positing by the I of itself as object, and Hegel with the fundamental category of Being. Each were required in different ways to posit a resistance to the initial act and its compensating reiteration in repeated and modified forms. They were therefore required to utilise the notion of 'repetition' either explicitly or implicitly. We have already discussed this notion in the context of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). We now discuss it in relation to his *Philosophy of Right* (1820) and go on to show how Kierkegaard used the concept in his novel *Repetition*.

DAVID SOLOMON

Part 2

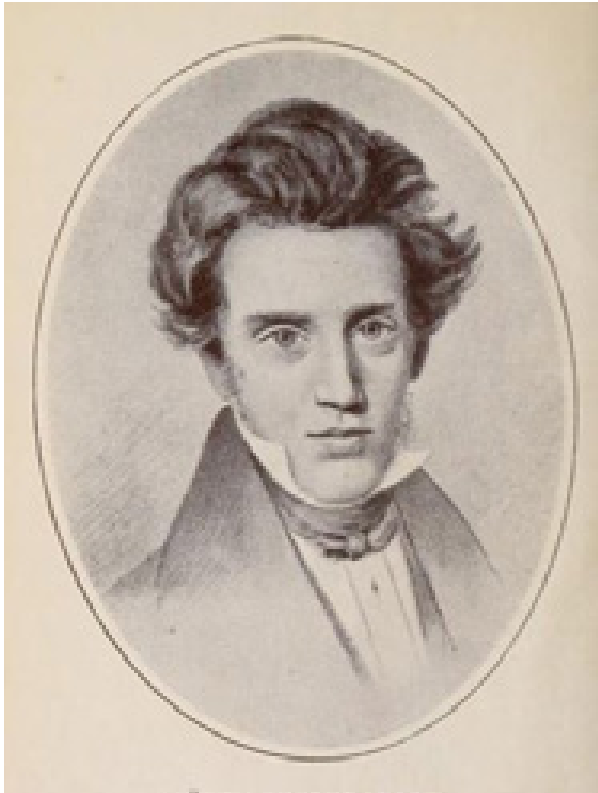
In his tragi-comic, satirical and philosophical novel *Repetition*, Kierkegaard explores the concept of repetition, setting it up in opposition to the Hegelian concept of mediation. In doing this he vindicates the situation of the Individual exception against the Universal.

Hegel's dialectic, as he described it in the *Phenomenology* (1807), involves a series of forward leaps by which an idea, movement or action is put forward which in itself contains a contradiction or opposition which appears to negate it. Implicit in this tension is a higher synthesis of the two which maintains the contrary positions by cancelling them out while at the same time preserving them. Thesis, antithesis and synthesis are repeated until the achievement of the Absolute, in which all logical contradiction is taken up in the Truth. It is also the resolution of all conflict between the individual and the universal, between the slave and the master, between the individual and the threatening, unknowable alien world which confronts him / her. At different stages there is conflict and anguish, but their resolution is guaranteed by reason which is always implicitly present. The individual with his / her problems and suffering is taken up in the universal, though this is

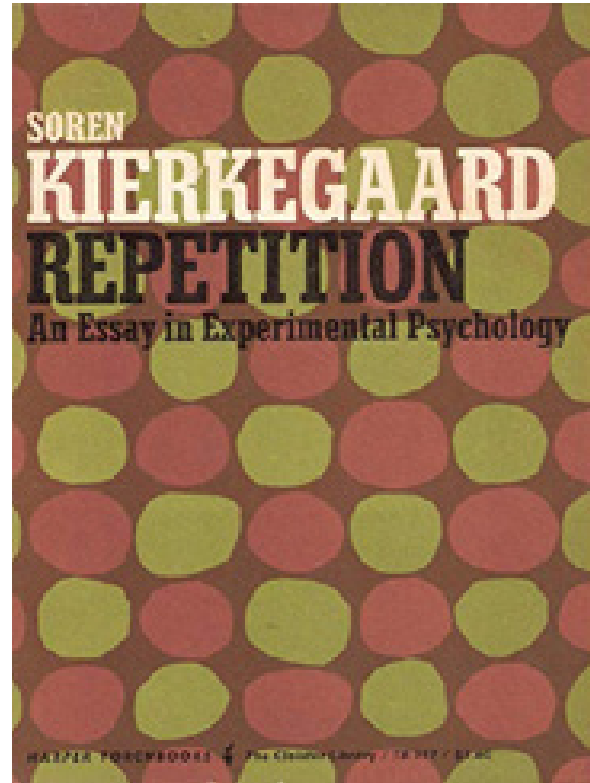
only fully realised at the end of the process.

There is something retrospective about Hegel's account, a sense that it is only at the end of history, which he identifies with his own time, that we can understand the 'End of History' in the other sense of being the reason and purpose of it. This he articulates in a famous metaphor that appears in a subsequent work.

Philosophy, as the thought of the world, does not appear until reality has completed its formative process, and made itself ready. History thus corroborates the teaching of the conception that only in the maturity of reality does the ideal appear as counterpart to the real, apprehends the real world in its substance, and shapes it into an intellectual kingdom. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only known. The owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering. (G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (1820), 'Preface'; translated by S W Dyde, 1896.)



Kierkegaard



Repetition

This idea of retrospective justification can be seen as a reworking of the Socratic notion of knowledge as recollection.

Kierkegaard on the other hand in his 1843 novel opposes the idea of recollection in favour of *Repetition*, the title of his work.

He who chooses repetition, he lives. He does not chase after butterflies like a child, or stand on tiptoe in order to glimpse the wonders of the world. He knows them. Neither does he sit like an old woman and spin on the spinning wheel of recollection. He goes calmly about his life, happy in repetition. (*Repetition* [10]).

The novel *Repetition* is deeply ambiguous. It deals with the anguish of the individual for whom the guarantee of reason, and the confidence in the resolution of the individual's problem in the universal is not present. The treatment of this theme is at the same time comic, ironic, and tragic. The narrator and pseudonymous author

of the novel is Constantine Constantius (a name which itself suggests repetition), who describes it as 'an Essay in Experimental Psychology'. In the first part, Constantine is introduced as a detached observer of life, an aesthete who claims to live by his philosophy of freely willed repetition by which he intends to repeat the beautiful experiences of his life in all their psychological complexity and intensity which have been made more intense by the constant practice of reflecting. Into his life comes a young man whom he befriends. The young man is poetic and melancholic. He has fallen in love and become engaged but the love affair is doomed from the start. It had taken a poetic form such that the more he loves his fiancée the more she becomes for him a poetic idea and less an actual person. He realises that she has become for him the expression of an idea, and the affair has created a fissure in him that threatens to destroy him.

On the other hand, he did not really love her, but only longed for her. All this was accompanied by a strange change in him. A poetic productivity awakened in him, to

Philosophy

an extent that I would not have thought possible. Now I understood everything. The young girl was not his beloved, she was simply the cause that awakened the poetic in him and thus transformed him into a poet. This was why he could love only her, never forget her, never wish to love anyone else, and yet still merely long for her. She had permeated every aspect of his being. The thought of her was always fresh. She had been important for him. She had made him into a poet, and with this signed her own death-sentence. (*Repetition* [15]).

The young man is a poetic introspective individual who cannot achieve the universal (getting married) because everything he does becomes an expression and inspiration of his poetic sense. Furthermore, he risks wronging his beloved, insulting her and destroying the purity of her faith in life. Constantine gives advice to the young man, and concocts a bizarre plan by which the latter can free himself from his inner division and at the same time prevent his beloved's innocence from being destroyed. The young man must pretend to be disreputable and uncaring. He must pretend to be involved with someone else. As a result, his beloved will break off the engagement. The whole of society will think he is a scoundrel, but he secretly will be free and will know that he is justified in the face of the universal and in defiance of God and fate. He will stand as an individual against the universal but will be justified through this defiant 'diabolical' action. He will then be able in the future to repeat the experience in all its rhapsodic complexity.

The young man however does not go through with the plan, and vanishes from Constantine's life, not wanting to meet him again.

But the young man disappeared. I never saw him again. He had not had the strength to carry out the plan. His soul lacked the elasticity of irony. He had not had the strength to swear irony's promise of silence, to keep the promise, and only he who keeps silent amounts to anything. Only he who can really love, only he is

a human being, only he who can give his love any sort of expression whatever, only he is an artist. In a certain sense, it was perhaps right that he did not even attempt it, because he could hardly have endured the horrors of the adventure. (*Repetition* [22]).

Following this is a tragi-comic interlude in which Constantine tries to live up to his own philosophy by 'seeing if repetition is possible'. He decides to revisit Berlin where he has been two years before when he has had experiences which he



Repetition

recalls as memorable and beautiful, in the people he has met, the things he has observed (he is pre-eminently an observer), his visits to the theatre etc. But everything turns out disappointingly. Nothing is the same as before. The furniture in the hotel room he was staying in has been altered. The performances at the theatre are not as good as he remembers them, the people he remembers are now not the same. He decides to return home early. To his dismay he finds that his servant has moved everything around in his absence. He realises that his philosophy has failed in its own terms, and that repetition, or at least his version of repetition, is impossible for him.

After several days' repetition of this, I became bitter, so tired of repetition that I decided to return home. I made no great discovery, yet it was strange, because I had discovered that there was no such thing as repetition. I became aware of this by having it repeated in every possible way. (*Repetition* [45]).

This section is written in a comic vein. But there is a tragic undertow. Constantine admits that he has lived his life in despair and that he has hardly ever been happy. There follows an account of the one exception to this. This amazing passage that deserves to be quoted in full, exactly mirrors the experience of conversion that Kierkegaard underwent when he was twenty-four. Here, Kierkegaard (Constantine) is actually satirising his own experience of conversion.

'The older one gets, the better one understands life and the more one comes to care for and appreciate comfort. In short, the more competent one becomes, the less one is contented. One will never be completely, absolutely, and in every way content, and it is hardly worth the trouble to be more or less content, so one might as well be thoroughly discontented. Anyone who has really thought through the issue will agree with me that no one is ever granted even as little as half an hour out of his entire life where he is absolutely content in every conceivable way. It goes without saying that more is

required for this sort of contentment than that one has food and clothing. I was close to achieving it once. I got up one morning in unusually good humour. This positive mood actually expanded as the morning progressed, in a manner I had never before experienced. By one o'clock my mood had climaxed, and I sensed the dizzying heights of complete contentment, a level that appears on no scale designed to measure moods, not even on the poetic thermometer. My body no longer seemed weighed down by gravity. It was as if I had no body, in that every function hummed along perfectly, every nerve rejoiced, the harmony punctuated by each beat of my pulse which served in turn only to remind me of the delightfulness of the moment. I almost floated as I walked, not like the bird that cuts through the air as it leaves the earth, but like the wind over the fields, like the nostalgic rocking of waves, like the dreamy progress of clouds across the sky. My being was transparent as the clear depths of the ocean, as the night's self-satisfied stillness, as the soft soliloquy of midday. Every mood resonated melodically in my soul. Every thought, from the most foolish to the most profound, offered itself, with the same blissful festiveness. Every impression was anticipated before it came, and thus awoke from within me. It was as if all of existence were in love with me. Everything quivered in deep rapport with my being. Everything in me was portentous; all mysteries explained in my microcosmic bliss that transfigured everything, even the unpleasant, the most annoying remark, the most loathsome sight, the most fatal collision. As I said, it was exactly at one o'clock that my mood reached its peak, where I sensed the heights of perfect contentment. But then suddenly I got something in my eye. I do not know whether it was an eyelash, an insect, or a piece of dust. I know this though, that my mood immediately plummeted almost into the abyss of despair. This is something that everyone who has ever experienced these heights of contentment, and still



Contentment

speculated to what extent complete contentment was possible, will easily understand. Since that time I have given up any hope of ever being completely contented in every way, given up that hope that I had once nourished, of being, if not always completely content, then at least occasionally completely content, even if these occasions never became more numerous than, as Shakespeare put it, 'a tapster's arithmetic was capable of summing up'. (*Repetition* [46-47]).

That is the end of the first part of the novel. The second part also begins with the title *Repetition* and is clearly itself a repetition in a different register of the first part. Here, Constantine receives a series of letters from the young man, who has gone his own way while at the same time continuing to keep in touch with his mentor but at a distance. The young man is still in near despair from being trapped in a relationship through which his whole existence is split.

One sticks his finger in the ground in order to judge where one is. I stick my finger in

existence — it feels like nothing. Where am I? What is the 'world'? What does this word mean? Who has duped me into the whole thing, and now leaves me standing there? Who am I? How did I come into the world; why was I not asked, why was I not informed of the rules and regulations? (*Repetition* [68]).

He compares himself to Job who is tested by God by being deprived of his children, his property and his health. Job's friends try to convince him that he must have been in the wrong for God to punish him, but Job refuses to accept this. He is certain that he is justified before God, but neither does he want to reject Him. Similarly, the young man does not think his predicament puts him in the wrong. But he will not follow Constantine's plan of vindicating himself secretly in defiance of universal humanity. Eventually Job's justification is made clear. It has been a test all along and he is restored with his wealth and children many times over. For the young man, the resolution comes when he hears that his beloved has become engaged to someone else. For him, what has been given back to him is an inner liberation and



Blake: Job and his comforters

reconciliation with himself.

Since then I have not been able to bring myself to take a closer look at the announcement. I am back to my old self. This is a repetition.... I am back to my old self. This 'self', which another would not pick up off the street, is mine again. The schism in my being has been removed. I am whole again. The anxieties of sympathy, which my pride nourished and supported, no longer force splits and separations. Is repetition not possible? Have I not received everything back, only doubled? Have I not myself again, and in such a way that I have a double appreciation of what this means? And what is a repetition of worldly goods, which have no meaning in relation to spiritual matters, compared to such a repetition? (*Repetition* [87-88])

The young man has held on to his sense of being in the right before God. The resolution has come from the outside, miraculously 'like a thunderstorm'. This restoration of himself to himself is a religiously orientated repetition, more successful than the one that Constantine has

tried and failed on the aesthetic level. It is also a vindication of the individual in the face of the universal. The individual, the exception, is not destined to be absorbed into the universal in the manner of Hegel's synthesis, or as Kierkegaard describes it, in the form of 'mediation'. Instead the universal stands in an ambiguous relation to the exception, needing it and exasperated with it at the same time.

On the one side is the exception, on the other side the universal, and the struggle is itself a strange conflict between the impatience and anger of the universal in relation to the spectacle the exception causes, and its besotted infatuation with the exception; because the universal delights in the exception to the same extent that heaven delights in the reformed sinner — more than in ninety-nine righteous souls. On the other side is the resistance and defiance of the exception, its weakness and infirmity. The whole thing is a rupture, in which the universal breaks with the exception, breaks with it violently, and strengthens it with this rupture. (*Repetition* [93]).

Insect

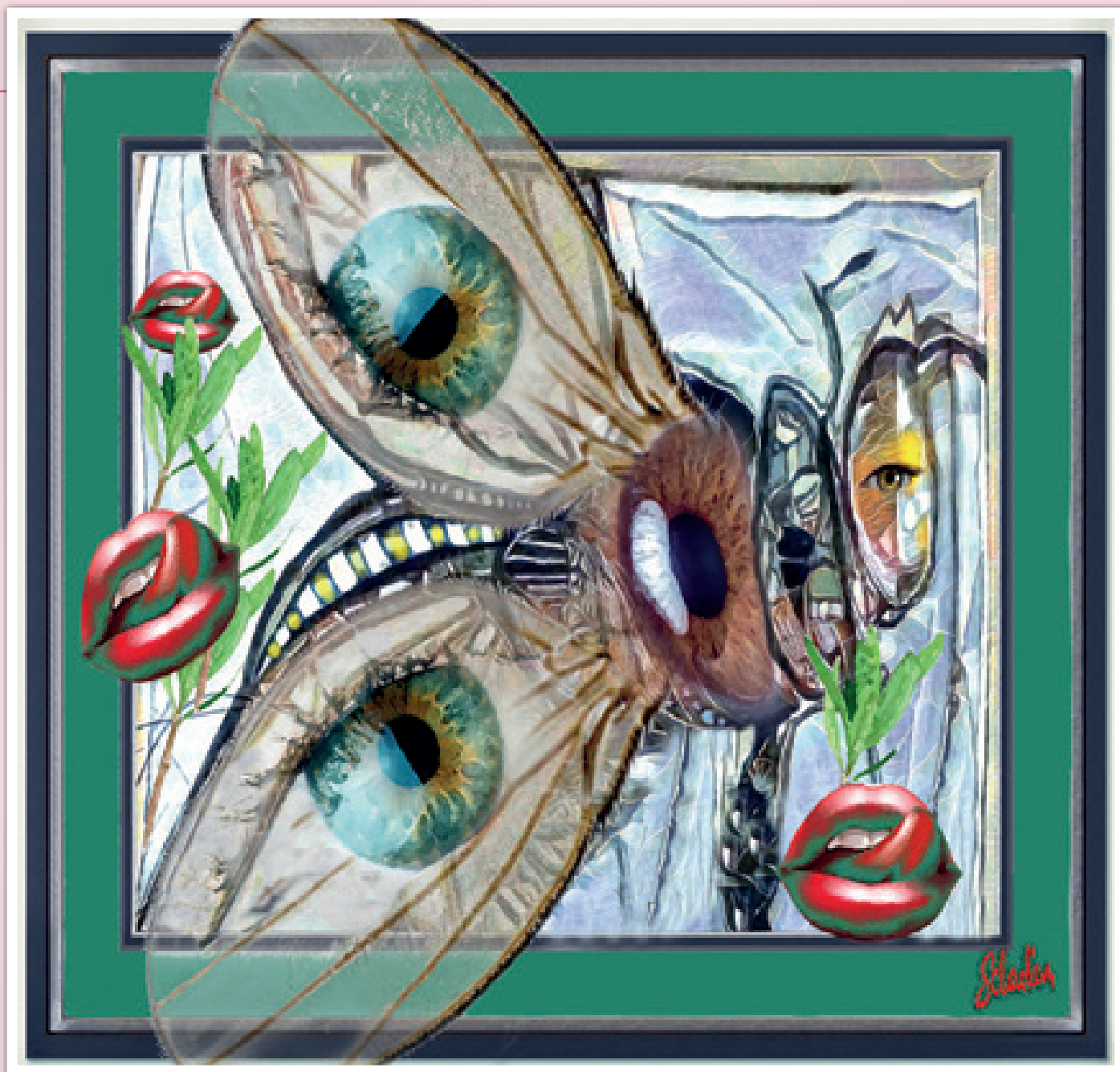
See-through wings, past waving grasses
seeking out red lips -
Paper-folded rose surpasses
those narcotic trips...

Orchard-legged, heavy-handed
I control all movement,
as my day has not yet ended
I see an improvement.

Roots, connections and foundation
are seducing me
to the wonders of creation
often hard to see.

8

Aerobatics and then tumbling
through those pale perspectives,
until bird-eye views make gambling
treasure hunt collectives.



Am I dreaming, am I falling?
everything so still, unknots...
No leftovers, I keep sprawling
my enchanted sky-blue thoughts...

Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

An Uncommon Reader



CHRIS NORRIS

It is not expected of critics that they should help us to make sense of our lives; they are bound only to attempt the lesser feat of making sense of the ways we try to make sense of our lives.

At some very low level, we all share certain fictions about time, and they testify to the continuity of what is called human nature, however conscious some, as against others, may become of the fictive quality of these fictions.

This is an age of theory, and theory is both difficult and usually not related to anything that meets the wider interest I speak of.

Frank Kermode

Frank Kermode

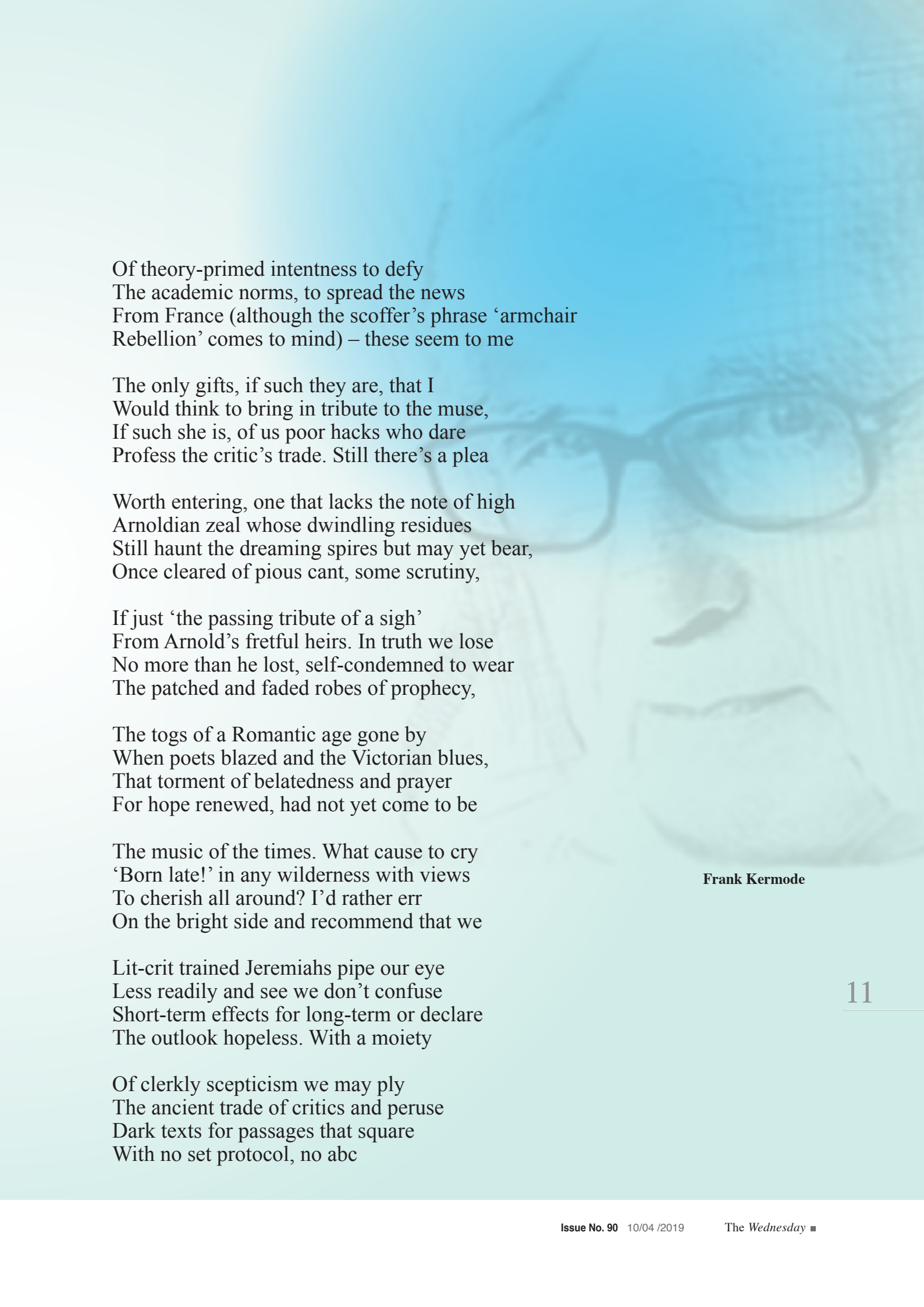
They ask me 'Why no novels, why not try
Your hand at fiction; surely you could use
All those ideas, those insights, all the rare
And subtle arts that were your specialty

As literary critic and apply
The self-same gifts to any theme you choose,
Creating narratives that might compare
With the all the fictive texts you've helped us see

In new and complex ways?'. They flatter my
Poor efforts in that line, my quest for clues
As to what constitutes the reader's share
In finding some interpretative key

That unlocks secrets and what ought to lie
More squarely with the author's canny ruse
For bringing us to recognize how they're
In charge of every hermeneutic spree

That otherwise risks sending sense awry
And all too easily forgetting whose
The mind that shapes the tale. A certain flair
For posing suchlike questions, a degree



Of theory-primed intentness to defy
The academic norms, to spread the news
From France (although the scoffer's phrase 'armchair
Rebellion' comes to mind) – these seem to me

The only gifts, if such they are, that I
Would think to bring in tribute to the muse,
If such she is, of us poor hacks who dare
Profess the critic's trade. Still there's a plea

Worth entering, one that lacks the note of high
Arnoldian zeal whose dwindling residues
Still haunt the dreaming spires but may yet bear,
Once cleared of pious cant, some scrutiny,

If just 'the passing tribute of a sigh'
From Arnold's fretful heirs. In truth we lose
No more than he lost, self-condemned to wear
The patched and faded robes of prophecy,

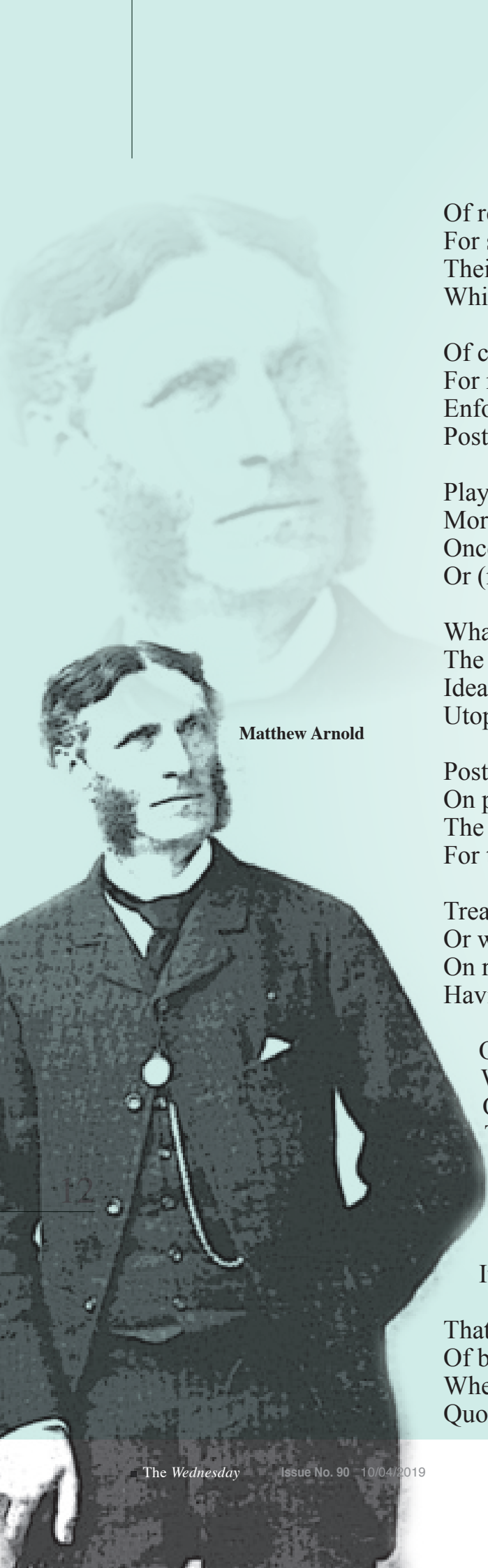
The togs of a Romantic age gone by
When poets blazed and the Victorian blues,
That torment of belatedness and prayer
For hope renewed, had not yet come to be

The music of the times. What cause to cry
'Born late!' in any wilderness with views
To cherish all around? I'd rather err
On the bright side and recommend that we

Frank Kermode

Lit-crit trained Jeremiahs pipe our eye
Less readily and see we don't confuse
Short-term effects for long-term or declare
The outlook hopeless. With a moiety

Of clerkly scepticism we may ply
The ancient trade of critics and peruse
Dark texts for passages that square
With no set protocol, no abc



Matthew Arnold

Of reading. That might serve as alibi
For skimmers chiefly anxious to excuse
Their preference for idling in dead air
While, scarcely felt by them, the energy

Of clashing signifiers rends the sky
For readers less in hock to the taboos
Enforced by taste or custom. Doctrinaire
Post-structuralists may celebrate the 'free-

Play of the signifier', but they'd fly
More scenically if they'd just cruise
Once in a while, with altitude to spare,
Or (not to milk my metaphor) just see

What's lost by theories dead-set to deny
The yield that comes of paying equal dues,
Ideally, to the giddy joys of their
Utopian devising and the pre-

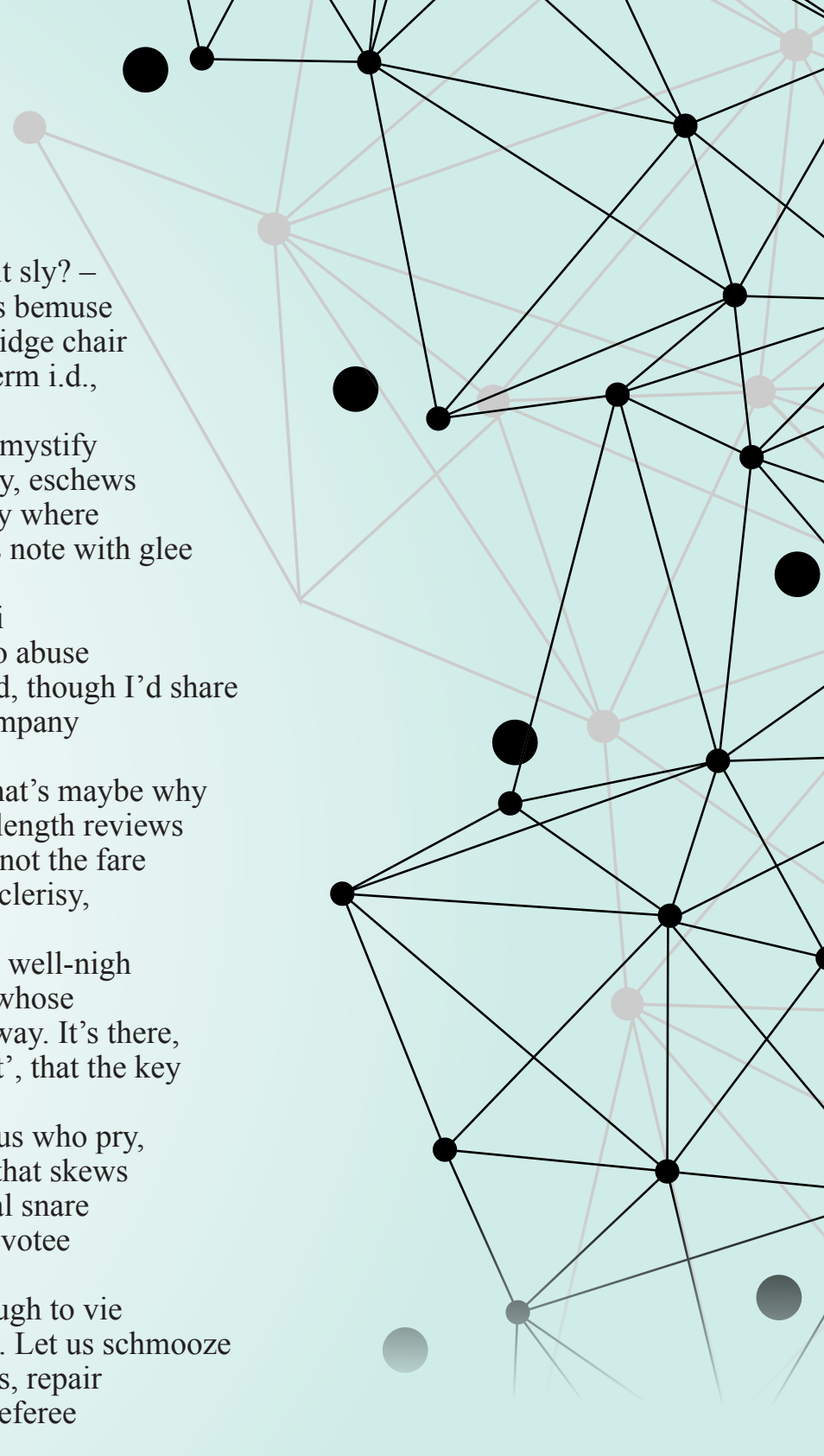
Post-structuralist way of sometimes getting by
On plot and character. Each will accuse
The other of displaying too much care
For their pet notions, reading sloppily,

Treating the novelist as their fall-guy,
Or waiting for a chance to put the screws
On rival critics. Call it savoir-faire,
Having it both ways, fake humility,

Or (my strong preference) having fish to fry
With both lots, 'common readers' and the crews
Of theory's Fleet Air Arm. I've tried to pair
Them off by seeing points where they agree,

Like favoring those novels that untie
Their plot-knots gradually, that hide the ruse
Behind their fictive workings, or prepare
Its revelation through an artistry

That still has things to hide. Such fighting-shy
Of bluntness, such reluctance to enthuse
Where caution's called for, such a host of scare-
Quotes gently pleading 'Don't take it from me!'



And such a courteous – or is it sly? –
Reminder that these subtleties bemuse
The recent holder of a Cambridge chair
In English Literature (short-term i.d.,

Not a good time) just as they mystify
The reader who, quite sensibly, eschews
All ventures into alien country where
High theory rules. The papers note with glee

This irony that has the alumni
Of Oxbridge lined up ready to abuse
‘Those theorists’, me included, though I’d share
That label sooner than the company

Of bonehead scholar-toffs. That’s maybe why
You’ll find me writing essay-length reviews
For a ‘broad’ readership, and not the fare
Served up to members of the clerisy,

Like me back then, in articles well-nigh
Incomprehensible to readers whose
Life-interests didn’t run that way. It’s there,
With ‘mankind in the midst’, that the key

Must lie, the guiding light to us who pry,
Discreetly, for some episode that skews
The story-line or lays a textual snare
Arcane enough to snag the devotee

Of theory yet with twists enough to vie
With thrillers or crime novels. Let us schmooze
Once in a while, pen causeries, repair
The high/low culture rift, or referee

The match so both contenders can descry,
In no man’s land, what either might construe
As novel-reading’s good *vin ordinaire*
Yet with a touch of theory’s *bel esprit*.

Lyotard: Against Grand Narrative

Notes of Wednesday Meeting Held on 27th March 2019

PAUL COCKBURN

We discussed Lyotard's philosophy. It was based on a paper by Paul Cockburn which is going to be published in the next issue of *The Wednesday*. There were other discussions before and after the reading of this paper.

Lyotard believed that grand narratives such as Marxism should be abandoned. In his book *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (1983) he wrote that disputes arise between different theories and they usually cannot be resolved. This was opposed by Habermas, who thought that consensus could be reached. But Habermas believes the Enlightenment trust in the universality of reason, while Lyotard regards Enlightenment's reason as another grand narrative.

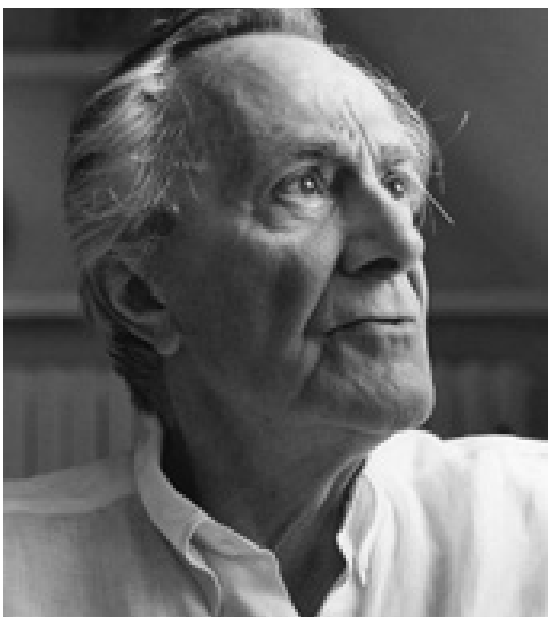
In our discussion it was suggested that it

may be that ideological conflict could lead to something good. 'Without contraries there is no progression' Blake wrote. There is an energy behind life, and this includes our thinking, and ideas are produced from this energy. In terms of politics there are rules to think about in political disputes, which are usually decided in terms of whoever has the greatest number of votes wins. But language games are not quite the same

In terms of language games, there is a link to Wittgenstein, but it may be that Wittgenstein was using this term in a different way to Lyotard, as language is not governed by rules that are like the rules in something like a game of chess. The rules in a game are fixed, while language has to deal with particular contexts, perhaps an infinite number of them! We have to be careful about generalizing too much.

Lyotard wanted the voice of the oppressed to be heard. We discussed this idea in contrast with Habermas' idea of the 'public sphere'. There is an issue in terms of the misuse of power and of epistemic injustice, the public sphere is in fact limited as it excludes people who cannot take part in it because they do not have sufficient knowledge. Education is needed but so also is a fight against unjustified prejudices.

A view was expressed that analytical philosophy seems slow and ponderous in comparison to continental philosophy which seems faster and more energetic. The latter has small narratives which can develop perhaps like seeds in the ground (to use an organic metaphor).



Lyotard

News

A Debate on Philosophy and Science

The Philosophical Society at Rewley House (Oxford) organises monthly talks on philosophical issues. The speaker for this month is Kingsley Micklem and his topic is 'Philosophy and Science.' He is a biologist who is interested in philosophy and science. What brought him to philosophy is the literature produced by philosophers on science and scientists on philosophy. He wanted to make sense of both. The talk is at Rewley House this coming Friday 12th April at 7 pm. A copy of his talk has already been circulated by the chairman of monthly Friday meetings Chris Seddon.

Firstly, Kingsley will discuss aspects of quantum mechanics that appear to challenge a view of reality that supposes that 'the properties of an object pre-exist... measurement, and... observation only reveals and [does not] create [those properties]'. The conclusion is that 'entities can have nothing but a relationship with others, no other existence prior to observation'.

Secondly, he is going to discuss some philosophical issues in biology including adaptationist ideologies in evolutionary theory; a dualism of conscious and unconscious decision-making in neuroscience; and the use of science to promote atheist ideologies.

Kingsley is an advocate of science, being a scientist himself, but he objects to the hijacking of science by writers, philosophers and journalists who have their own 'ideological' agenda. Their views represent a pseudo-science that is becoming a religion (or anti-religion) and it has a negative impact on the reputation of science. To hear the full argument, please turn up to the meeting if you are in or near Oxford.



Kingsley Micklem

The Wednesday

Editor: Dr. Rahim Hassan

Contact Us:

rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk

Copyright © Rahim Hassan

Website: Currently unavailable

Published by:

The Wednesday Press, Oxford

Editorial Board

Barbara Vellacott

Paul Cockburn

Correspondences & buying

***The Wednesday* books:**

c/o The Secretary,
12, Yarnells Hill,
Oxford, OX2 9BD

*To obtain your copy of the
cumulative volumes one to six,
please send a signed cheque
with your name and address on
the back
£15 for each volume
inside the UK*

*or £18 for readers
outside the UK:*


*Please make your cheque out to
'The Wednesday Magazine'*

or pay Online

Account Number:
24042417

Sorting Code:
09-01-29

Assignment

—  —
*Man makes the word, and the word means nothing which the man
has not made it mean, and that only to some other man. (Peirce).*

A delivery of sound to pick out meaning.
A knot of words dangle for completion.
I am urged to a window, to stare down
into a traffic of signifiers. Which shall I pick?
Rhythm and rhyme are open spaces
to be measured and tuned.
Is my conceptual meaning preconceived,
with predetermined sights and sounds?
Like the open throat of a thrush.
Or are signs just things to be plucked,
like instrument strings?
Of course fresh thoughts rising in my mind,
need to be shaped to an understood sound.
But without my mind's intention,
nothing could be passed on as meaning.

David Burridge