The *Wednesday*

Editorial

On the Plane of Immanence

The 'plane of immanence' is an important theme in the writings of the French philosopher Giles Deleuze and it is truly original. It is central to his thinking from his early book *Difference and Repetition* to his (almost) last book *What is Philosophy?* Sometimes it is mentioned directly, other times under a different title, such as 'the image of thought' or 'the plane of consistence'. It is linked to the concept of 'conceptual persona' but also to the very idea of 'concepts'.

My reading of Deleuze is an ongoing project and my interpretation may develop or change with time. The one aspect that gives me confidence that I am on the right track is my belief that Deleuze, particularly in his last book, shows that he must have read Fichte and Schelling very well. I know for a fact that he wrote on Spinoza and Kant. Spinoza was re-discovered during the mid-eighteenth century by the number of German philosophers, including Herder, Mendelsohn, Jacobi and the German idealists. My interpretation will veer towards German Idealism, although Deleuze's idea could be read in the context of 'life philosophy,' the vitalism of Bergson and process philosophy, such as Whitehead's.

Deleuze introduces the idea in his last book by saying 'the plane of immanence is neither a concept nor a concept of all concepts'. He adds: 'Concepts are like multiple waves, rising and falling, but the plane of immanence is the single wave that rolls them up and unrolls them.' That is because the plane of immanence is the condition of all concepts but itself is not conditioned by them. That is why he says: 'If philosophy begins with the creation of concepts, then the plane of immanence must be regarded as pre-philosophical.' Possibly, that is why he keeps referring to it in a figurative rather than conceptual way. He says somewhere else that it is beyond the grasp of thought. It may even sound paradoxical since he is talking about it, so it must be graspable but on the other hand it is not a concept or an entity or a being of some sort.

It is a field (metaphorically speaking) of forces: 'The plane of immanence is like a section of chaos and acts like a sieve. In fact, chaos is characterised less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanishes.' It is the limit point where chaos starts to take shape when a thought announces itself as new and creates a paradigm for thought. Deleuze sometimes gives a geographical description of this plane but it is not a geography that is static but one that is dynamic. It is the absolute beginning when the indeterminate thought becoming conscious of itself. But this announcement comes together with a conceptual persona that speaks in its name and a concept or a set of concepts.

I am tempted here to interpret this scheme as a Fichtean picture where the absolute self is taken to be a sheer activity and unconscious. It becomes conscious by positing (thinking) itself (the conceptual persona). But it is not only conscious of itself, it is also conscious of other things (here, concepts). But in Deleuze's case, the otherness here is internal to thought and to the plane. That is why it is called 'immanence.' In the extreme case, it is a 'pure immanence', the thought only conscious of itself, so that the person who thought it drops out of the picture and will be replaced by the conceptual persona (Dionysus replacing Nietzsche, for example.) We may come back to this topic in another issue.

The Editor

Philosophy

Lyotard:
Forty Years after *The Postmodern Condition*

PAUL COCKBURN

The French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924 – 1998) taught philosophy in Algeria from 1950 to 1952 just before the Algerian revolutionary war started in 1954. He was a Marxist but came to believe that Marx's theories did not adequately explain the war. Marx held that a successful revolution required a proletariat, a class of wage-earners, but Algeria was a colony of France and largely a peasant society. Lyotard reacted strongly against Marxism, though remaining on the left and becoming involved in the 1968 student uprising in Paris.

He proclaimed the death of all 'grand narratives' such as Marxism. As well as Marxist theory not fitting the facts, he thought it ignored what he called the 'libidinal' economy. There are economic rules, but there is also an energy and 'buzz' in capitalism which drives it along. He suggests somewhat outrageously that the workers in the Industrial Revolution in Britain were not exploited but enjoyed their work!

Other grand narratives that need to be jettisoned are progress in history, absolute freedom, and the belief that science can explain everything. A grand narrative is too powerful, it drowns out other voices. Lyotard says there is no 'right' ideology, and that justice demands no one ideology should silence the 'phrases' of another. There is a 'differend' between competing theories, which has to remain. In fact Lyotard says he did not reject Marxism, he 'left it floating'. Scientific discourse is incommensurable with religious discourse, which means that both should be tolerated, one cannot win against the other.

A strong theory or grand narrative will not allow those who support an opposing narrative to have a say, a differend occurs which can make them victims with no voice. We can generalize this to historical situations. For example, the practice of 'suttee' in India. A woman whose husband died was burnt alive on his funeral pyre, a practice which was condemned as illegal by the colonial power. But previous to this condemnation, was the voice of the widow listened to?

Lyotard wants the voice of the oppressed, the weak, the subjugated to be heard as a matter of justice rather than being ignored and overpowered by another more powerful narrative voice.

In his book *The Postmodern Condition* commissioned by the Canadian government and published in 1979 Lyotard outlines his theory of knowledge. He believes there is an 'incredulity towards meta-narratives'. We have to tolerate the incommensurability between the language games of different ideologies.

Knowledge is no longer seen in a narrative way, so there are many language games which do not connect with each other. The problem then is, how do we get people with different ideologies to agree? Lyotard believes the Enlightenment project and its emphasis on reason is another grand narrative, so he does not weight rationality highly. There is no longer a progressive development of consensus in post-modernism. Habermas criticizes Lyotard for this, saying that there is still a role for reason being used to achieve consensus, he proposes a theory of communicative action which allows for this. We can learn from others, and people from different cultures can question their cultural norms. Traditional narratives or customs (as opposed to grand narratives) Lyotard sees as being buried in a culture, they are unconsciously accepted and hard to question.

I think we have to hope that Habermas is right, but Lyotard's views have proved to be remarkably prescient. Lyotard wrote in *The Postmodern Condition* that knowledge is becoming

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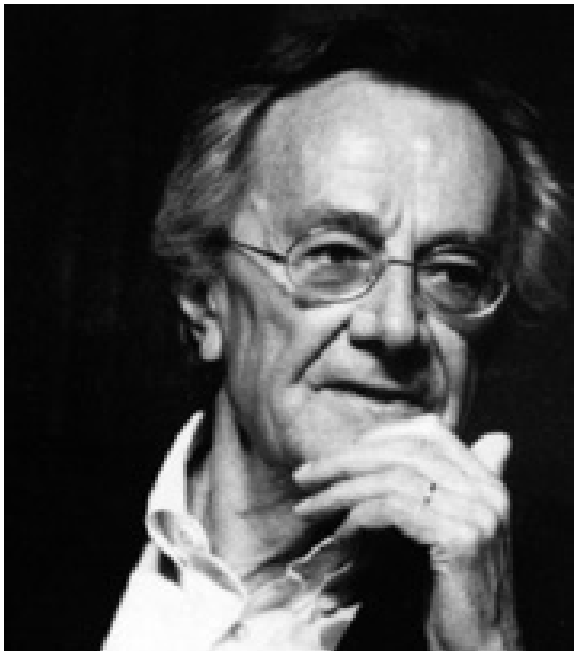
Lyotard

Habermas

performative, the key question being how useful is it? The status of knowledge alters as we move into a post-industrial age. It is a commodity and can be used to gain profits in a capitalist society. Knowledge must now be translatable into information, such that it can be stored and manipulated by computers. He envisages nation-states fighting for the control of information in a power game.

Science requires proof, verification, falsifiability and is limited by this. Lyotard wants 'paralogy', creative thought which dissents and delights in paradox and instabilities. He thinks science has fragmented into many disciplines, it is not now a unified project.

Lyotard promotes paganism, which he sees as affirmative, energetic and vital, linked to dramatic events. He thinks pagans, among whom he includes the sophists of ancient Greece, use rhetoric as a tool to bemuse people, to win over their opponents. Their speech acts have transformative potential. Pagans can make judgements without criteria he writes, and so must we.

He also writes on the sublime, in an aesthetic sense. He is particularly interested in avant-garde art, because it disrupts conventions, shocks us. In the same way poetry can reveal meaning in a new way. Artworks can release libidinal energy in new ways. The etymological meaning of the word 'subliminal' is 'under the threshold', so it can refer to that which cannot be said, only point to it, something out of view until it is brought into our field of vision.

Lyotard and Post-Modernism
So what are we to make of post-modernism and Lyotard? He supports diversity, he sounds like Mao Tse Tung saying, 'let a thousand flowers bloom'. There is an 'under-current' of Nietzsche's Dionysus in his work. Life surely needs the libido, and energy, but doesn't it also need Apollonian form as well as Dionysian energy?

There is a problem in that his philosophy can be considered to be just another language game and grand narrative. Proclaiming there are no grand narratives is in a sense a grand narrative! It seems to lead to relativism. His championing of victims and the oppressed is to be applauded, but how does he justify this ethical stance? He does not believe ethical consensus is easy to achieve, there are no universal ethics, incommensurability usually rules. However, he does think we have obligations to others. Levinas treats our obligations to others as primary, but for Lyotard ethical discourse is just another language game. Lyotard is keen for everyone to have a voice, he favours diversity. But what about its opposite, unity?

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Johann Koeing (1586-1642): St George defeating the dragon

St George, the Dragon and the Power of Myth

Although many people ask the question, 'Did St George really exist?' a more interesting question is, 'How is it that the popularity of St George has been so widespread and remained so persistent for so long?' Stories about St George, particularly the story of St George subduing the dragon and rescuing the princess, clearly resonate with the human imagination in a profound way. Men, women and children of many different countries and cultures have been drawn, and still are drawn, to George and the dragon probably without knowing consciously why they are so drawn to the story.

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ADRIAN RANCE-MCGREGOR

The answer to the question about the spread and persistence of the cult of St George is to be found in an understanding of the nature of the myths and symbols that shed light on the secret depths of humanity's struggle to make meaning out of the world we live in and of life itself. For many contemporary readers the word 'myth' will suggest stories about people who

are simply fictitious, or events that are not true, or perhaps claims that have been exaggerated, in the way, for instance, the effectiveness of a remedy might be dismissed as a myth. But true myths are stories involving characters and events that are indeed imaginary but which function as symbols representing deep and eternal truths that are to be found in the lives of every human being. The biblical myth of creation, for instance, grew out of a deep enquiry into the origin of the world and the universal experience of suffering. The story is neither true nor untrue for it is a metaphor but it explains, in a way that makes sense in any age, why things are as they are.

In pre-modern times people had no need of explanations about how myths work; the stories were enough in themselves. But the modern rational mind wants to understand everything and the most fruitful explanations of myth have come from the insights of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and Carl Jung's analytical psychology in the 20th century. For Freud myths are analogous to dreams; myths are in a sense public dreams and dreams are private myths (Campbell, Joseph, *Myths to Live By*, p. 6). Jung understood myths as positive and life-enhancing symbols that put people back in touch with their inner psychic world. Myths tell us of inner powers that have to be recognised and integrated into conscious life, and so are essential to the psychic well-being of individuals. Societies that recognise the power of myth can be nourished by mythic stories that sustain the collective life and well-being of the society.

Myths take many shapes and forms but the myth involving the archetype of the hero seems to be universal. The mythologist, Joseph Campbell, has identified a theme common to all hero myths, which he calls the *monomyth*. The monomyth has a clear structure which most stories follow:

St George, Cretan School, 16th century

'A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious venture with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man' (Campbell, Joseph (1993), *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 30).

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Mythology

St George and the Dragon (1502) by Vittore Carpaccio

Medieval Europe elaborated the hero myth in the cult and pageantry of chivalry, with its most celebrated literary forms being the *chansons de geste* of 12th century France and the legend of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table and the quest for the Holy Grail as written by Thomas Mallory in *Morte d'Arthur*, first printed by William Caxton in 1485. The *Golden Legend* account of St George, the dragon and the princess, transforms the warrior saint of the Crusades into a hero of medieval chivalry; he is for all intents and purposes a knight of the Round Table. Edward III must have seen St George in this light when he abandoned his plan for a chivalric order of the Round Table and founded instead the Order of St George known as the Order of the Garter. St George not only fulfils the role of hero – he subdues the dragon and rescues the princess – but he also converts the king, queen and citizens of Silene to Christ. Just as the Knights of the Round Table seek the Holy Grail for their personal salvation, so St George not only becomes the embodiment of the medieval ideal of sacred warfare to convert the pagan, but becomes a heroic warrior Christ, bringing salvation to the citizens of the mythical Silene.

There have always been dragons, at least from the time of the Babylonian creation myth in which the world is created when the sun god Marduk kills his mother the great dragon Tiamat and her army of monsters that embody the powers of chaos. Since then successful dragon slaying or subduing has come to symbolise a universal theme of humanity's ability to subdue and overcome the powers of evil and destruction. But dragons have other attributes: they often live in caves where they are guardians of gold and other forms of treasure, as contemporary children will know from the dragon Smaug in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Dragons are universal, they are found in almost all parts of the world and are connected with breathing fire, tornadoes, floods, omens of catastrophe, immortality, fertility and even the ability to encircle the world. (Blust, Robert (2000), *The Origin of Dragons*, p. 520). A commonly accepted account for the widespread appearance of the dragon in mythology, folk-tales and ritual is that the idea originated with the priests of ancient Egypt and spread around the world eventually reaching the Americas. However there are theories about the independent discovery of the dragon motif around the world which range from the idea

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St George and the Dragon by the 15th century Italian artist Paolo Uccello, now at the National Gallery, London

that dragons represent a genetic memory of the dinosaurs, to the idea that they come from exaggerated travellers tales of giant lizards that are actually found in different countries; and there is the relatively modern psychological view that the dragon is a universal symbol of the unconscious dark forces that lurk within each one of us.

Just as the dragon that succumbed to the power of St George lived by a lake, so dragons across the world are associated with lakes, rivers and waterfalls. In a Seneca (One of the First Nation tribes of what is now Canada and North America) legend there is a 'horned serpent' who was responsible for clouds and rain and a guarantor of fertility. The serpent, whose name is Hé-No, and who lives in a cave behind the Niagara Falls, destroyed another great water-serpent, which was killing local people, and the body of the bad serpent was so vast that it blocked the flow of the water and caused what today is known as the Horse-

shoe Falls. A recent study of associations of dragons and serpents with rain and sources or flows or water around the world has shown that the rainbow which naturally appears only when it rains led to a belief in the serpent as the creature responsible for the creation of rain, a belief that morphed into a belief in dragons. It was only after societies became urbanised that the dragons then became identified as the symbol of evil (Ibid. p.536).

In Britain there are numerous local stories and legends about dragons. Dragon Hill in Oxfordshire is where St George is reputed to have killed his dragon, and on the summit a bare patch of ground where nothing will grow bears witness to the scorching it received from the dragon's breath. In other counties such as Devon and Shropshire there are tales of dragons guarding treasure. Many British dragons are associated with rivers, lakes, pools, swamps or wells of water while others

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Mythology

are recorded as living in ruined abbeys, a prehistoric burial mound or a church tower. The majority of the dragons come to a sticky end through the bravery of a local hero who might be a local nobleman or a woodcutter, villager or other humble man. One story from County Durham, the Lambton Castle tale, suffices as an example of these local stories:

> *'Young Lambton broke his Sabbath by fishing and swearing: he caught an ugly reptile, which he threw into Worm Well, but then repented and became a Crusader. The creature grew into a dragon that coiled round Worm Hill, devoured livestock and had to be pacified with troughs of milk. If attacked, it re-joined its severed fragments. Young Lambton returned; by a witch's advice he donned spiked armour and fought the dragon on a rock in the river, so that the current swept the severed portions away. The witch had asked for the life of whoever first greeted him after his victory; he tried to ensure that it would be his dog, but it was his father. As he refused to kill his father, the witch laid a curse that no Lambton would die in his bed. At Lambton Castle in the nineteenth century one could see the trough the dragon drank from, statues said to represent the hero and the witch, and a piece of the dragon's hide.'* (Simpson, Jacqueline (1978) *Fifty British Dragon Tales: An Analysis*. p. 87).

There is a painting of St George and the Dragon by the 15th century Italian artist Paolo Uccello, now hanging in the National Gallery in London, which can be used to explore the mythic themes of the hero and the dragon and why the story of the rescue of the princess has remained so popular since it was first written down in the 12th century. Uccello painted his picture about 1460 when the chivalric culture of St George was at its height in late medieval Europe (The painting hangs now in the National Gallery in London, NG 6294). As we have seen, the story of St George and the rescuing of the princess from the dragon has archetypal qualities that relate to that which is deep within each human person. It is a story about each one of us for it tells of the deepest unconscious parts of our psyche, the bits we are afraid of and of that hero within each one of us that can bring transformation and light out of the darkness. It is a story of what it means to be human, hence its enduring appeal. The first thing to look at is the setting of the scene in which the main characters appear: Uccello does not present a 'natural' landscape, rather it has an other-worldly or dream-like quality. The scene is set as darkness turns into light. A crescent moon is high in the sky and the light behind the hills in the distance suggest that dawn is breaking; a dream state just before waking up. In the distance, sitting on the side of the hill is the city surrounded by its walls and battlement. We will see that the city plays an important part in the working out of the

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myth. The trees in the foreground over which the battle is fought form a labyrinth which was widely used in the Middle Ages as a symbol either for the journey of life with all its twists and turns or, in the case of the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral, as a symbol of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Both in a psychological and in a spiritual sense the labyrinth represents the inward journey to the discovery of the true self.

In the story as told in the *Golden Legend* of Jacopo de Voragine, the subduing of the dragon of darkness by St George and the rescue of the princess is the heroic action that leads to the baptism of all the people of the city. It is a story about a transition from spiritual darkness into the light of Christ. But the myth is not just about the conversion of the king and his people to Christianity; it tells of transformation of the individual person living out of the darkness of his or her unconscious life into the life of enlightened consciousness. On the left is the cave; dragons live in caves, which symbolically represent the deep unconscious part of the human psyche where the dragon of our chaotic and destructive impulses lies. The discoveries of psychoanalysis in the 20th century have provided a profound scientific understanding of the human psyche that previously could only be expressed in art and poetry. At the heart of each person is the power of unconscious forces, which has characteristics that either belong individually to a person or, in the understanding of C.J Jung, belong to a collective unconscious which is in the collective psyche of races, nations or tribes of people, transmitted from generation to generation. Of the cave Jung wrote: 'Anyone who gets into the cave, that is to say, the cave which everyone has in himself, or into the darkness that lies behind consciousness, will find himself involved in an – at first – unconscious process of transformation. By penetrating into the unconscious he makes a connection with the

Tintoretto's St George and the Dragon (c.1555)

contents of the unconscious. This may result in a momentous change of personality in the positive or negative sense.'

The dragon represents those primitive instincts of the unconscious that are always threatening to break out and wreak havoc with our controlled and domesticated lives. You can see the power of this force in the sinews, the movement and the ferocious face of the dragon. The dragon is both reptile and bird and in this way it is born of both the underworld and the sky; the dragon represents the universal and the roundels on its wings are like eyes. Jung writes of another dragon of mythology, '…on this mountain lies an ever-waking dragon who is called Pantophthalmos, for he is covered with eyes on both sides of his body, before and behind, and he sleeps with some closed and some open.' Just as nothing escapes the notice of the unconscious forces that drive our lives, nothing will escape the notice of this dragon that represents the very life force that we all have within us (Gee, Hugh (1995), *The Deep Unconscious in Uccello's Painting St George and the Dragon*).

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The distant city with its walls and fortifications can be taken to represent another aspect of the person; the individual ego self, that part of ourselves with which we are familiar in our day to day lives, the outward sense of self which if it is to survive builds defences around itself just as a city wall defends those who live within. The ego defences are not only defences against intrusion from other people, they are a defence against forgotten memories of what happened to us in the past, particularly in childhood, the chaotic forces of the dragon of the unconscious. The trouble is that an integrated person cannot live a fulfilled life within the fortifications of their own ego. Walls don't work and the destructive forces of the unconscious can only be tamed by going out to meet them in the open.

The reason why the story of St George resonates with people, although an individual may not know why he or she is attracted to it, is because it is about the transformation of the human person into an integrated, or what Jung called the individuated, person, and that is why is has endured for so long. It is only with this transformation that fear can be tamed and the freedom of enlightenment be gained. In real life the dragon forces of unconscious fear have to be fed, and we feed them with more fear, and that is why there is so much psychological suffering in the world. In the *Golden Legend* the dragon has to be fed with human sacrifice until it is the turn of the princess, who can be taken to represent the higher nature that is in all of us. St George is the force who then transforms the situation. It is important to see that when he rescues the princess he does not kill the dragon; he tames the dragon. The scene that Uccello paints is not of a violent battle scene for there is not much blood and gore, for the dragon is being subdued, not killed. One cannot kill the forces of the unconscious, what is needed is for the forces to be tamed.

There is something ambivalent about the figure of St George; on the one hand he is a manly chivalric knight bent on destruction, but look at him closely and you see he is quite a feminine figure with a face that it as much at prayer as it is dealing with conflict. There is also another force directing his lance against the dragon; one can see that the diagonal line of the lance is not only a device of artistic composition for it provides a line from a circular whirlwind cloud through the hand of the saint down to the dragon. The circular cloud, which is a feature of icons of St George from Georgia, can be taken to represent the eye of God or the whirlwind of the spirit, so it is God subduing the dragon and St George is working as the agent of God. It is noticeable that the horse is not a charging warrior horse; it is serene, almost as if it is dancing.

The painting is about the taming of the chthonic power of the dragon and the resolution of conflict at the heart of the human person through the 'marriage' of opposites, bringing together in harmony the masculine and the feminine side of the human person. Uccello had probably encountered the idea of the 'coincidentia oppositorum', the meeting of opposites as it was well known in medieval mystical theology, (The phrase was used by Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464)) and it now forms an important part of the psychology of Jung. The two sides of the person are the 'anima' (from the Latin for 'soul' or 'breath of life') and the 'animus' (from the Latin for intellect). The hero St George, is the masculine outward thrusting male energy in the form of the chivalric knight; his *animus* is the dominant force. His feminine face represents the contra-sexual character of his *anima*. The princess represents the feminine side of the person, the *anima*, and she also shows the contra-sexual aspect by having her forehead shaved to give the appearance of a high forehead which in 15th century Italy was a sign

of high intelligence, thought of as a masculine characteristic. (Gee (1995)). The dragon, who contains within itself all the chaotic forces of life, is first of all tamed by the masculine hero and then the princess ties her girdle around the neck of the dragon (represented by Uccello as a chain) and she, who is the feminine side of all of us, leads the tamed dragon back home to the city and to her parents and the citizens who had been living in fear, and the grateful citizens are all baptised.

This transformation, which has been described above in terms of modern psychology, is seen as being effected by the redemption of Christ. The biblical story of creation opens with the myth of God over-coming unformed chaos, 'the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep and the Spirit of God was brooding over the face of the water.' Then God said, 'Let there be light.' For a timeless moment creation lives in the harmony of Paradise but then comes the serpent who is none other than the dragon that lies in the depths of human consciousness. It is the serpent whose actions lead to Adam and Eve leaving the harmony of Paradise. From then on humanity has to live their lives from the walled cities of their little independent egos. Everyone is destined to live lives that lead to killing others as told in the myth of Cain and Abel. Everyone protects their sense of self by the walls of the ego defences, and the citizens of Silene live behind the city walls in the *Golden Legend* in fear. In the Christian myth it is then the action of Christ that transforms the raw material of our being and has the potential to set each person free, so St George then is performing the action of Christ. (This elision of St George and Christ is portrayed by Edmund Spenser in his hero, the Red Cross Knight in *The Faerie Queene*.)

The *Golden Legend* has a final interesting twist to the tale; St George goes on to kill the dragon once the citizenry have been baptised. There was actually no need to do this as the dragon had already been tamed, but this unnecessary act portrays the fact that as human beings we are not able to tolerate our own ambiguity and want to destroy our inner demons; that is why we project the evil in ourselves onto the world outside which we then try to destroy instead. The statue of St George and the Dragon outside the United Nations building in New York has a dragon made of redundant nuclear missiles; a poignant reflection of how destructive this projection can be. The very ordinary human story of tragedy and redemption told in Uccello's painting is summed up by the Anglican bishop Stephen Verney in his reflection on the painting and its meaning:

> '...*The dragon is human nature, the dark, chaotic, undifferentiated raw material of the Roman Empire, or of the fifteenth century or of the twentieth century, the illusion to which we are all chained – or is it chained to us? As St George strikes there is terror and fire, blood and agony. Then, only a maiden, a soldier, and someone's eye contemplating them.*' (Verney, Stephen (1976), *Into the New Age*, p. 157).

11

Vulnerable

Everything is vulnerable at nightfall.
All rooms in the empty house
are blurred by the penetrating
darkness.

Inside the bedroom the bed
is still disentangled. No one
has slept there since he was found
naked, shrouded, no more
breathing.

No more efforts to get up, dress,
making coffee
arm himself with the usual words
to greet the day,
to see the light

how it is creeping
under the furtive rays of the early sun
touching an empty bed

unmade, unowned.

12

Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

Thoughts on Consciousness
Consciousness Everywhere?

Notes of an Oxford Literary Festival Event with David Papineau, Philip Goff and Stephen Law

PAUL COCKBURN

The mind/body problem is linked to the enigma of consciousness. The inner world of human beings is personal. We see, taste, and hear things in what appears to be a hidden world in the brain. Descartes, as a dualist, thought mind and matter were separate. Materialists however think that our perceptions, such as seeing red, are just neurons firing in our brain in an electro-chemical reaction. The physical process and the experience of seeing red are one and the same thing.

Others believe that consciousness is something extra which has to be added in some way to the process. The feelings we have and our experience seem somehow different to a physical or electro-chemical process, but materialists think this belief is an illusion. They tend to believe in the power of science: science has been very successful in many fields, including the biology of the human body, and science will eventually uncover what consciousness is. Mental events are just produced in a causal manner from physical events, but mental events cannot cause physical events. This is the view of epi-phenomenalists.

Philip Goff has written a new book called *Galileo's Error* which will be published in August 2019. He finds that Galileo, who some say was the founder of modern scientific method, specifically states in a book in 1623 that his scientific method is quantitative, not qualitative. Primary qualities could be observed and treated in mathematical terms, but secondary qualities have the power to produce 'impressions' in the mind. In terms of colour theory, say, we can measure the wavelength of the red light that produces the sensation of red in our experience, but we cannot measure the qualitative experience of seeing red.

Goff then looks at work done by Russell and Eddington in the 1920s and argues that science can tell us nothing about the intrinsic nature of an entity such as an electron – what it is 'in itself'. We know how electrons are affected by various forces, we can observe them in terms of readings on our instruments, but not what they actually are. He thinks we see matter as it is from the outside, how it behaves, but we don't know what it is on the inside. We do know however that the matter in our brain involves consciousness. The brain is probably a lot more complex than an electron, so consciousness is probably graded in terms of complexity in some way. A chair if it is conscious is not as conscious as a human being. There could also be a problem with the unconscious – what is its role?

These are interesting ideas - look out for Philip Goff's book *Galileo's Error*, out this August!
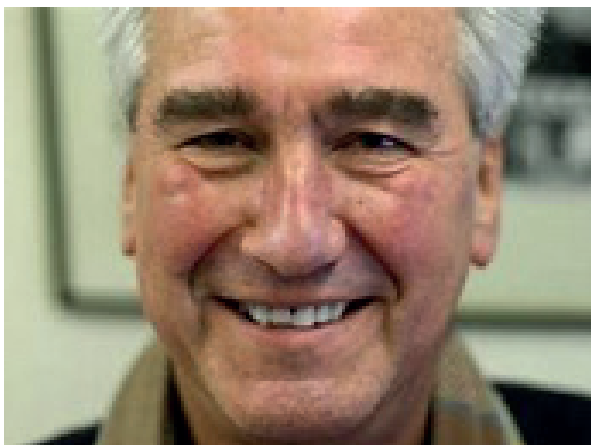
David Papineau

Philosophy:
The Search For Alternatives

Notes of Wednesday Meeting Held on 3rd April 2019

PAUL COCKBURN

We discussed whether philosophy was becoming irrelevant to public life. Do we think it is worth staying with philosophy? One view was that philosophy is a highly professional field of study and it is too serious. It is becoming too academic and almost irrelevant to public life. But what are the alternatives? There has been a variety of recent trends in academic philosophy, such as admitting new list of names into the philosophy canon, mainly from continental philosophy, or brining in Feminism, Mediaeval, Islamic and Asian philosophies, but has this weakened or strengthened philosophy?

Philosophy has been dynamic in the past, perhaps never more so than in the historical path trod by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. But that was many years ago. To make a true beginning now seems much more difficult. We don't have a blank sheet to write on, it is hard perhaps to be radical. Nietzsche and Deleuze were quoted as more recent philosophers who were radical.

One view was that the Romantic view of seeking wholeness and unity, rather than concentrating on the parts, was still important. Another view was that philosophers create concepts. We should look at facts in fields like psychology, sociology, and other scientific fields and then try to look at how knowledge in these fields is structured and created conceptually. But we may go to the idea of the philosopher as a sage. A philosopher should love wisdom, so how does he differ from a sage? In ancient times there may not have been a great difference between a philosopher and a sage. Socrates and later Plotinus for instance certainly had a mystical side. In modern times Zen Buddhism appeals philosophically to people.

So maybe philosophy is useful and worth staying with. Useful in the sense of setting people's minds free and thinking.

The *Wednesday*

The Second Year

Volumes Five & Six are now out

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Thinking Out Loud
Volume Five

2019

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