

The Wednesday

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Editorial

Philosophy Sans Frontiers

There were recently a few conferences announced across Europe on immigration and borders. The increased movement of people towards Europe and America offers challenges to identity and culture which are the constant concern of policy makers, but also of philosophers. We present below a philosophical perspective on the issue.

In their book *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari present a novel idea. It is the idea of the geographical context of thinking. For them, thinking is not just a relationship between subject and object but takes place within what they called 'earth' and 'territory'. Territory is a limitation of Earth. Earth is not a synthesis of subject and object, but a condition of thinking. Earth will have borders and becomes a territory. But there is also a process of territorialisation where territory is again converted into earth. It all depends on socio-economic-geographical conditions as well as nationality (state), and values (such as freedom and democracy).

Some of these conditions are external to thought but there are also internal conditions of thoughts themselves. Thought could expand geographically, beyond the limit of a given territory in a process of de-territorialisation. But thought also reaches a limit and forms another territory. The process of de-territorialisation is relative, giving the contingent conditions of the world. It is an immanent process. This is different from the totalising (Absolute) de-territorialisation as it would be if the process were a transcendent one, as for example, in major world religions. Most importantly, the processes of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation bring together different groups of people and facilitates their intellectual exchange. When the processes are settled, a national character is formed, and philosophy takes on this character. The authors connect the rise of philosophy, as in the Greek experience, with such processes.

I am not sure that they were successful in their scheme. But what interests me is the world image in which philosophers from different nationalities and regions

come together to form a philosophical community and share debates and ideas. The Enlightenment period across Europe (Holland, France, England, Scotland and Germany) was such a time that witnessed a large movement of philosophers across Europe since the days of Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Hobbs, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau and others.

Nietzsche was very European in his thinking and he wanted to create a fraternity of 'good Europeans' who were beautiful and 'free spirits'. He admired Napoleon for his attempt to unite Europe. Maybe he thought of Europe as a geographical body with a multiplicity of drives, aligned in one direction to maintain a unity of character. Although he admired the desert Arabs and Japanese as warring nations, he didn't admit them into his European conceptual geography. However, he admitted the Persian Zarathustra as a figure of wisdom and prophecy.

Modern France provides an ample example of bringing philosophers from different parts of Europe and beyond to form the overall French philosophical scene, including names like Kojève, Levinas, Franz Fanon, Irigaray, Derrida, Levi-Strauss, Kristeva, Castoriadis, and others.

America has welcomed many refugee philosophers and sociologists since the 1930s. They transmitted to America the new European schools of thought, from Positivism to Critical Theory. They also became a conduit channelling continental thought, through translations and commentaries, into the English-speaking world.

In all these times, there is a constant movement from territory to de-territorialisation, but also a reverse movement in some cases. The world as we live in it now has a tension between the two directions. The hope is that the expansive, healthy and abundant trend (in Nietzsche's terms) will win over constriction, weakness and poverty of spirit and thought.

The Editor

A Note On Kant And Metaphysics

EDWARD GREENWOOD

A friend wrote to me apropos my account of Kant as a dethroner of metaphysics asking how he could call his late work *The Metaphysics of Morals* if he had dethroned metaphysics, as I had claimed.

This led me to look at Kant's own definition of metaphysics in section 6:217 of that work. It runs 'a system of a priori cognition from concepts alone is called metaphysics.' He then goes on to say that a practical philosophy, by which he means a prescriptive philosophy which deals with the norms of conduct as opposed to a descriptive philosophy which deals with the foundations of our knowledge of the laws of nature, would require what he calls 'a metaphysics of morals.' This would not be based on experience, but applicable to it. Experience only tells us what has happened and will happen, morality tells us what ought to happen, and is in effect moral wisdom. It discerns not laws of nature, but norms. But

surely this gives us not cognition, but directives. But can the a priori ever get us beyond such statements as 'a circle is a figure in which every point on the circumference is equidistant from the centre', or a grammatical remark (in the Wittgensteinian sense of philosophical grammar) such as 'red is darker than pink'? Can any concrete moral dilemma such as whether contraception, abortion or capital punishment for murder are right actions possibly be answered a priori? Kant does not want morality to be rooted in experience, but where else could it be rooted?

But to come back to the problem of the nature of metaphysics. It is interesting to contrast Kant's idea of metaphysics with that of Aristotle. According to David Ross Aristotle's metaphysics is 'really an ontology'. It is an inquiry into what sort of entities there are. That, for Kant, would be the task of natural science. Among the things which Aristotle's



Kant



Moses Mendelssohn

metaphysics posits are, as Ross points out, non-sensible substances such as God and the powers which move the spheres, the angels of medieval scholastic philosophy. This is the very sort of metaphysics of the transcendent which Kant says is not possible, for it violates the bounds of sense, what P.F. Strawson in his commentary on Kant calls 'the principle of significance.' It arises from the 'logic of illusion' which Kant investigates in the Dialectic section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

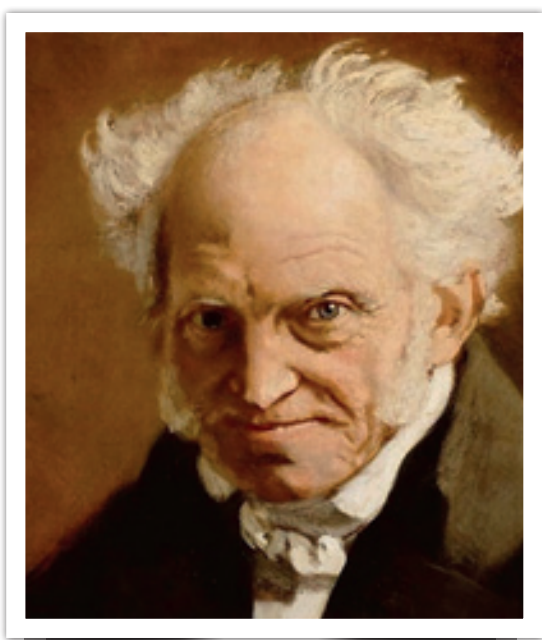
Kant's metaphysics is what he calls transcendental as opposed to transcendent. The only viable kind of metaphysics for Kant is an investigation of the categories which make both our daily experience intelligible and natural science possible.

Unfortunately, however, Kant wanted not only to expose illusion, but also to refute materialism and atheism. In attempting this he abandons the disinterestedness of his exposure of illusion and falls into some illusions himself.

We have seen that for Kant morality must

not be subjectively derived from our reason engaging with experience, but objectively conditioned independently from experience. He puts great emphasis on duty. He thinks he has established beyond doubt that we have the duty to see that all those guilty of murder are executed, even if circumstances make this difficult. Sexual pleasure can only be justified by a contract between married people only to use each other's sexual organs to achieve it. We have duties never to lie or to commit suicide. It is even a duty to have a religion, though what religion Kant does not specify, presumably because only the Abrahamic faiths were available in Prussia at the time. In what way can a 'metaphysics of morals' justify these claims?

So the atheist is given short shrift. However it is clear that Kant derives God from morality and not morality from God. Moreover it turns out that the morality derived curiously coincides with that of Immanuel Kant. To many religious believers this derivation of God from morality is nothing less than atheism. Not for nothing was Kant called 'Der Grosse Alleszermalmer', 'The Great All destroyer', by Moses Mendelssohn. As Schopenhauer (who thought Kant's view of ethics quite mistaken) wrote in his 'Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy' an appendix to volume one of *The World as Will and Idea* 'on page 510 in the E.F.J. Payne translation 'He has eliminated theism from philosophy; for in philosophy as a doctrine of science and not a matter of faith, only that can find a place which either is empirically given, or is established through tenable and solid proofs.' Surely Kant's *Religion Within The Bounds of Mere Reason* (1793) has rightly been called an oxymoron, for anything that could be attested to by reason alone could not possibly be God, as the concept of a non-sensible something totally outside of the totality of material things, yet both the creator of that totality and interacting with it, goes beyond the bounds of sense and so is incoherent.



Schopenhauer



Belief as a Necessary Component of Knowledge and as a Moral Imperative

DAVID JONES

4 Aristotle, in his book called 'Categories' used the term 'homonym' for a single word that is used in more than one way to denote distinct and different meanings. The use of such words is therefore ambiguous, and a reader or listener could understand the use of the word in a way that is different from the author's intention. If an author writes of 'going to the bank', a reader might be interpreting the speaker as referring to either a journey to a high street financial institution or to feed the swans by the side of a lake. Usually the context enables the reader or listener to intuit the intended use of the homonym 'bank' because the two different meanings are sufficiently distinct. It would seem strange if someone argued that water and money are equivalents because they are both accessible via banks.

Could something equally strange be occurring with the use of the word 'belief'? In a philosophical context the word 'belief' is used to translate the

Greek term '*doxa*'. *Doxa* is also sometimes translated with the word 'opinion'. In the dialogue called 'Theaetetus' by Plato, the characters try to discover the circumstances in which a belief may also be regarded to qualify as 'knowledge' (*epistemie*). They first of all decide that for a particular belief to also be regarded as knowledge it is necessary that the belief be actually true. Then they decided that although the truth of the belief was a necessity, it was not '*sufficient*' for it also to be regarded as 'knowledge'. Something else was also necessary. After more consideration, the members of the dialogue agree that a third requirement, in addition to having a belief and that that belief be actually true, is that the person *who is doing the believing* of the thing that is true, is able to inwardly experience a 'rational account' of the truth of the belief. A more recent commentator (Edmund L Gettier) on this traditional account of the difference between a true-belief and a true-belief which qualifies as knowledge has identified



Aristotle



Plato

that the ‘rational account’ itself can also be true or false; and generally people do not regard the necessary criteria for knowledge to be met by a true-belief for which the rational account is false or mistaken.

It is clear from this that both ‘belief’ and ‘knowledge’ refer to a *particular activity* of a sentient being, and in the case of ‘knowledge’, of a sentient being which is also a *rational* being. It would follow from this way of understanding these terms that if there were no sentient, rational beings there would be no beliefs or knowledge. On the other hand, there might well be actual states of affairs in the world. The *existence* of states of affairs in the world does not seem to be dependent upon any sentient or rational beings having any cognizance of them. It is helpful to distinguish clearly between knowledge, which is an activity or property of a particular rational human being, and a state of affairs, which is a particular set of properties of the cosmos.

When a person converts a true belief into an aspect of that person’s knowledge it would seem that some *activity* from the potential knower is necessary. The new true belief needs to be coherently integrated into the person’s existing understanding of being in the cosmos. For this ‘rational understanding’ to qualify as ‘knowledge’ it would seem to require some degree of sufficiently awakened consciousness; the inclusion of ‘unconscious knowledge’ would seem to contravene the special requirement that the term ‘knowledge’ implies over and above other states of consciousness. These observations contribute to a way of thinking about the distinction between ‘belief’ and ‘thinking’ being connected to the difference between the *passive receptivity* of belief and the *active transformation* in cognition required to attain some particular item of knowledge. It would follow from this distinction that if a listener heard a person who is regarded as an expert make a judgement on something (within their area of



Edmund L Gettier

expertise), it would not be sufficient for the listener to claim that merely remembering the expert's words was enough to make the content of that judgement an item of the listener's knowledge. It would require that the listener had *more* than a belief in what the expert had said. I might believe that a surgeon can do an effective job, but that does not entitle me to claim possession of his abilities.

It is interesting to observe that the Greek word 'epistemology', that is translated as 'knowledge', contains the stem '-ology' which is derived from 'logos' which in this context is understood to refer to 'an account by reason'. In addition, 'epistemology' has no derivation from the word for belief or opinion (*doxa*). The 'ology' is preceded by 'episte' which is a term related to the Greek word 'pistis' which is sometimes translated as 'faith'. Today, people use the terms 'faith' and 'belief' synonymously, but this modern custom might not accord with an earlier use of the word 'faith'. We find in common usage the expectation that the word 'faith' referred to an *activity* rather than a cognitive state, as may be seen in examples such as: 'he faithfully wound the clock for fifty years', 'the faithful servant', and 'she was a faithful wife'. The fact that this way of understanding the way the word 'faith' was used as distinct from 'belief' might be related to why the word 'epistemology'

does not begin with '*doxa*' - that is, with opinion or belief - but with a Greek word that denotes a deliberative purposeful personal *activity*.

The word 'belief' is also used to convey another completely different meaning. If someone says: 'I have a belief in fairness', they are not expressing a cognition of a state of affairs in the world. They are expressing a preference or intention to make a change to the world in order to make the world correspond to their idea or imagination of that change. This is the *reverse* process to the role of belief within knowledge. The 'truth criterion' about knowledge is concerned with the extent that the beliefs and understandings within a knower *actually* correspond to how the facts of the world are. In the other use of the word 'belief', which might also be called a 'moral intuition', the imperative is to *make changes to the facts of the world* so that they correspond to an idea in a person's mind.

There appears to be at least four different types of categories of expression of belief as a moral imperative, although it should be questioned whether or not they all are valid as 'moral imperatives'. A statement of belief might concern something that is *within the power of the agent* to affect the world. An example of this might be something like: 'I believe in always telling the truth'. On the other hand, the statement: 'I believe that other people should always tell the truth' is a statement about changing a state of affairs in the world that *is not in the agent's power* and consequently has a very different type of meaning to the statement that the agent can put into effect. It would seem to be an expression of the agent's approval or disapproval of the acts of others, so it is not a statement about the world but is rather a statement about the agent. A third variation in the expression of moral beliefs would be a statement of belief in a *non-existent state of affairs which is currently practically unachievable*, such as the statement: 'I believe in world peace'. This would also seem to be a statement about the agent. In theory, beliefs could also be expressed as wishes for something impossible, such as: 'I believe that all children should achieve above average educational attainment.

Semantics

There are arguments
which time cannot settle.
Time itself means

too intimate. So we try
beginning again. Iteration.
Back to roots

to divide. Too much
becomes hard-wired
into memory. Science tries

where the Plains
remain hot, and *The Hills*
are the same

to solve by separation.
But you and I
are a failed experiment.

salt, carbon, grit,
and all cornucopias are stone.
Sunye! Sunye! Sunje!*

*Aljabr** facilitates:
bringing the parts together.
For us this proves

Accidence, syntax, they
make no difference. We quit
India in the hot season.

Erica Warburton

* *Aljabr*: algebra

* *Sunye!* Please, listen to me!

The Hills: the British would pass
the summer in the Himalayan
foothills to escape the heat of the
plains. Army quarters were also
located in these hill stations.



On The Edge Of Uncertainty

Soon this place will turn dusty yellow with angry winds,
the vague memories of spring change

into the twilight of blizzards, power failure,
torn cables and ghostly snowed-under shapes.

Snow drifts end up piled high at entrances,
frozen windows turn opaque in silence,

and with the sense of threat and death
the fires continue to rage in the cities, devour
people, their faces, their thoughts,

burn the houses down, the parks with the old trees,
scorch the wings of birds, whose lifeless bodies float down the gullies.

Soon there will only be strangers, who take our places
somewhere below us,

the other level, where everything resurrects and birds
open their wings again and nobody asks *why* and *what for* –

This new day will be different, nameless, relentless
but with confidence and urgency for anonymity

on the edge of uncertainty, there are no rules anymore
and all is moving steadily towards the Northern horse latitudes,



past the charred fields, beyond the afterglow
and the scintillation to recover what was taken from us,

the houses, the fenced paddocks, the woods, the moors
and to forget the raging fires, the broken glass
and the colour of blood.

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Poem and Artwork by Scharlie Meeuws

Can The World Be Global Without States?

Notes of Wednesday Meeting Held on 2nd October 2019

PAUL COCKBURN

David Clough spoke on ‘the city’, expanding his previous talk. A city like London can create envy: the people in smaller towns such as Derby and Reading can ask why can’t we have the sort of ‘capital city’ features and facilities that London has? There are big pressures on space in a modern city: London has marvellous natural parks some of which, such as Hyde Park, are large. But now they need to have a function; the park exists so that owners can take their dogs for walks, or there are running tracks for keep-fit fanatics. Why not have crazy golf and some cafes in the park? There seems to be a natural city growth dynamic: the buildings get taller and bigger, the city expands until it gets to an impossible size. Londoners seem to want their place in the city and their place in the country. Some of us living in Oxford feel like refugees from London!

Building cities was a major task at one time in history. For example, the mission of Islam started in a small city, Mecca, which was surrounded by tribal regions and very small cities. Once Islam got power, after the event of Prophet Mohammad migrating to Medina and establishing a city-state there, the prophet encouraged the move from tribal life to a city life based on the new message of Islam. Those who accepted Islam were asked not to move back to their old ways of life in the desert. The Quran also speaks negatively about the scattered tribes living the traditions of pre-Islamic times. It wasn’t an attack on the romantic way of life but a reorientation of life of individuals and their dwellings towards an idea that governs their life and surroundings,

in what Hegel might call *Sittlichkeit* or the ethical life. Islam then expanded and founded new cities in the new lands it conquered, for example, Kufa, Basra and Baghdad in Iraq.

In modern times, being in a city becomes synonymous with being in an extremely intense and dense information loop. We can do some things almost at the speed of light. But at the same time all previous stages help us navigate its spaces. The hunter gatherer, the agrarian pastoralist, the romantic, all remain inner prompts and voices as we wander around.

Saskia Sasson, in her many books, writes about the ‘global cities’ such as Tokyo, London and New York. These cities are important in the global economy, and house global institutions, they can instigate worldwide trends in art and culture. Having extolled the status of such global cities, Sasson then turns to a critique of the inequalities. She uses photographers like the Brazilian Salgado and his vast Genesis project collection. She finds in Salgado’s photography the capacity to show the multi-sited global presence of a vast array of logics of expulsion. He finds an articulation between the particularity of the local event in his photos with a larger process that engenders it.

Can we also have a global citizen? Nietzsche envisaged a global situation without borders, and in his life he was a wanderer around Europe. But migrants seek a better life. There is an idea of completely free movement, letting migrants come across the borders. Does this require the almost complete shrinking away of the nation state?



David Clough (middle of the photo) with members of the group

The State

We also discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the state. Hegel sees the state as improving, guarding the rights of people with laws, paying for the education of citizens, we would add paying pensions, running the health system, building the transport infrastructure, passing laws for the public good etc. However, in a world with a number of states all with different languages and cultures, developing at different speeds, there are inequalities which have led to large-scale migration. And unfortunately, in human history there has probably always been a war somewhere on the planet.

The state often shows a dark side in its treatment of its citizens, with repression and persecution. But there are other types of pressure. Kafka wrote of the struggle of the individual against an invisible bureaucracy, but it was suggested by some that his novels were about inner psychology.

Gary Shapiro's book *Nietzsche's Earth: Great Events, Great Politics* is against a Hegelian view of history or a view whereby we try to impose by force heaven on earth in

political terms. Rather than the state imposing homogeneity, we should look for diversity which is productive of new possibilities which inspire people. We need migrants, new cultural combinations, and nomadic wanderings which create new ways of living and understanding. States usually want to protect their sovereignty, but it is remarkable that in the European Union states have given up some of their sovereign rights seeking to avoid war and to create a large trading bloc which can benefit all within it and be a global player. Globalism is needed now as it is clear we need a global vision and a resultant response to tackle climate change and pollution. Nation states, particularly the industrialized nations, have to combine to reduce pollution and prevent climate change. It is as if climate change is nature fighting back against the ecological harm humanity has inflicted on the environment. But what would a globalised stateless world be like?

Lyndsey Stonebridge's book *Placeless People* sees in Hannah Arendt's work a suspicion of the state and the creation of a non-political world of the imagination. How do stateless people re-create their identity? What rights do they have?

I.Q.

While thought has forgotten how to think itself, it has at the same time become its own watchdog. Thinking no longer means anything more than checking at each moment whether one can indeed think As thought earlier internalized the duties exacted from without, today it has assimilated to itself its assimilation into the surrounding apparatus, and is thus condemned even before the economic and political verdicts on it come fully into force.

Adorno, 'I.Q.', in *Minima Moralia*, trans. Jephcott



CHRIS NORRIS

You've caught me napping yet again – that's you,
Old teacher in the wily ways
Of dialectic, always out to slew
The course of fixed thought-habits, raise
The stakes by lightning coup and counter-coup,
Expose unguarded turns of phrase,
Show hidden premises not followed through,
Reveal the symptom that betrays
A psychic block, shift viewpoint bang on cue
To bring the dupes up short, and faze
Those predisposed, like me, to think they knew
Enough by now to self-appraise,
To make the grade as readers, fit though few,
Whom no such jump-cuts can amaze
Since having you as guide (plus high IQ)
Got them well past the entry phase.

That's how you put critique in first to bat,
When you say IQ's just a test
Of mind-routines or habits got off pat,
Of giving active thought a rest,
Avoiding any doubt-inducing spat
With dialectics, faring best
At thinking-tasks you've long been expert at,
Tasks set by those you've second-guessed
A hundred times, and showing it's old hat
To you, this endless need to manifest
Your role as thought's internal bureaucrat,
Poised at society's behest
To self-apply its prudent caveat
Against all thinking-ventures pressed
Beyond the caution: 'let him bell the cat
Who counts us mice with nine lives blest'.





Adorno

Thought its own watchdog – that’s the gist of your
Mind-wrenching text: to have us note,
And strive against, the thought-debasing chore
Of IQ tests and every rote-
Like mental exercise that tells us more
About what has us by the throat,
Out there and deep within, than what small store
Of wit it takes for some to gloat
‘We’re way up-scale’, as if one’s IQ score
Were what best sorted sheep from goat,
Thought’s poor foot-soldiers from its elite corps,
And so ensure that those who float
Straight to the top are those who soon deplore
All risky ventures to promote
The thought that dialectic’s mouse might roar
As monologic’s antidote.

But then I think: that’s one big reason why
I read Adorno, that desire
Of mine to test the speed and power of my
Thought-processes against his wire-
Drawn dialectics, or to come out high
On his thought-checklist, or acquire
Some trusty scale or progress-chart whereby
To match wits with the test-supplier
And so commit, however hard I try,
The same mistake that drew his ire,
The view that thinking’s something you ‘apply’,
Some set of tools assembled prior
To any use you make of them, the lie



That has us ready reckoners aspire
To do no more than check or certify
Our labouring brains are worth the hire.

And that's my point: so many ways they close
In tight to block thought's might-have-been,
Shades of the mental prison-house for those
Caught up in some crass thought-machine,
Like IQ testing, as the darkness grows,
Automatism works unseen,
And poor *res cogitans* no longer knows
What these forced protocols might mean.
Yet I think idly sometimes: 'Just suppose
Your quick-shift dialectics screen
From consciousness a protocol that goes
To reinforce its own routine,
A work-out discipline I shrewdly chose
To let me oscillate between
The restless energy of your thought-nettled prose
And my relief as test-scores intervene'.

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Epistemology



I ponder what I am supposed to know, all those ideas picked from a book.
Truth is, a million pictures are crammed in my head.
They will fashion whatever I want to say.
Perception they call it.
As if my ideas were tooled into a coherent form.
Something happens out there and it *pings*,
something similar I can remember.
Done that before, mustn't do that again!
Testimony they say, *it's what the high teachers will tell you.*
Scribble it down and trust it to be true!
True belief is perfect knowledge.
That is all very well, but I have other beliefs too.
Best if I try to make sense of what happens at the door.
The street is the world that I need to explore.

David BurrIDGE