

# The *Wednesday*

www.thewednesdayoxford.com



Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

## Editorial

### *Friendship of Thought*

The value of friendship to philosophy is as old as philosophy or maybe older. To Empedocles was attributed the creation of the word *philotēs* or *friendship* but it had to wait for Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to get its proper grounding. Almost all philosophers, such as Cicero and Montaigne, who followed laboured under the classical conception of friendship.

The classical theory of friendship is an intellectual, elitist one. It is the recognition in the friend of a mind similar to oneself. In Plato's view, this will lead to the form of friendship. It is more metaphysical and transcendent. In Aristotle's view, it is more interpersonal, earthly and empirical.

There are many challenges to this picture, and I will start with the obvious. Friendship is a human need, and as such it is not restricted to the dialogue of two minds, as Aristotle demanded. It is also not necessarily a relationship of similarity in mind or equality, but it may expand to involve the whole human race and the animal kingdom. It is also a warm relationship that involves the emotions, and does not discard them in the ascension towards the Forms, as Plato imagined. Friendship is also more than mirroring the self but allows for a difference.

It has been suggested that friendship started around dinner tables in Greece, such as we meet in the *Symposium*. It is in the nature of philosophising that you voice your thought in the presence of friends. They may agree or differ. By doing so they enrich your thought. But these agreements and differences could be imagined as internal to thought. For example, in Deleuze's scheme, thinking requires concepts and a conceptual persona to occupy and expand the immanent plane. This conceptual persona is the friend of the philosopher, but a friend who is immanent to thought. That is why Deleuze and Guattari make friendship a condition of the possibility

of thought. They interpret the word 'philosophy' as made up of two related parts, 'philo-sophy', friend-of-wisdom. So, there is a 'friend' and a 'thought' in the very name of philosophy. It is not an external, empirical component of thought, but an intrinsic one. The friend here is a conceptual persona or a figure or a mask for the philosopher.

A dialogue may ensue between the philosopher and his conceptual persona. They may agree or disagree. The conceptual persona may invite another persona. Zarathustra, for Nietzsche, heralds the Overman. The intellectual trajectory of the philosopher may become guided by his conceptual persona, as for example Dionysus for Nietzsche.

The French philosophical scene presents many examples of close friendship and cooperation between many leading figures, such as Blanchot and Bataille, or Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. One may be able to generalise this to other times, as was the case in German Idealism and Romanticism at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, and the intense philosophical debates in the first half of the twentieth century around Cambridge and Oxford.

Modern versions of the Greeks' table talk are now the conferences, the study days away locally or abroad where besides the intellectual exchange there is also friendship to have and enjoy. The advantage of the internet is that it created the possibility of sharing thought world-wide. We talked last week of the idea of deterritorialization. The internet makes such a process almost absolute. But it is for the most part abstract and faceless. As members of *The Wednesday* group prepare for the annual dinner party, we, as a group, all feel we are blessed with a friendship that helps us both with our lives and our thought.

*The Editor*

# Nietzsche's Demolition Of Kant's Metaphysics

EDWARD GREENWOOD

A friend has made two objections to my short paper 'A Note on Kant and Metaphysics.' He says that I was wrong in endorsing the view that Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, a name Aristotle himself, of course, did not use) is an ontology. It is rather 'a conceptual investigation into the most general categories of thought.' I quite agree, of course, that there is much else other than ontology in the *Metaphysics*. There is some overlap with Aristotle's *Physics*, there are remarks on the laws of logic and there is theology, but surely when in book Zeta one we find such a remark as 'from the dawn of philosophy continuously down to, and very much including, the present, philosophers have been uninterruptedly engaged with, and uninterruptedly baffled by the question "What is that which is?"' (Hugh Lawson-Tancred's Penguin translation, p.168), we must acknowledge that there is also a considerable concern with ontology in the *Metaphysics*.

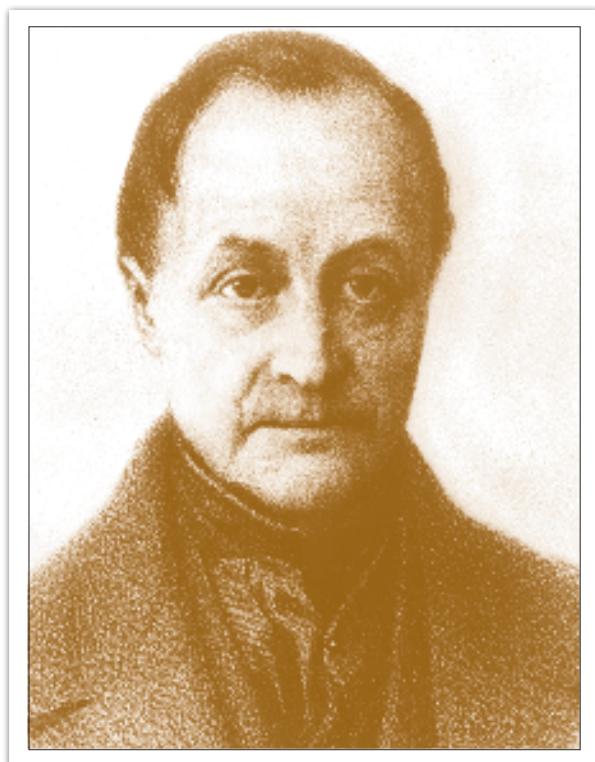
A second objection was the correct observation that Kant did not try to prove the existence of God from the existence of morals. Here my claim that Kant derived God from morality was perhaps incautious, given that Kant had shown in *The Critique of Pure Reason* that there could be no valid proof of the existence of God. By 'derived' I did not mean 'proved'. I meant that he claimed that practical reason showed that morality required that the existence of God be postulated.

To turn now to Kant's own metaphysics. It is clear that though Kant wanted to destroy the metaphysics of the past, he nevertheless wanted to perpetrate a metaphysics of his own which itself warranted destruction, a destruction which I claim was effected by Nietzsche. Just as Plato had proclaimed a two worlds doctrine of the sensory world and the

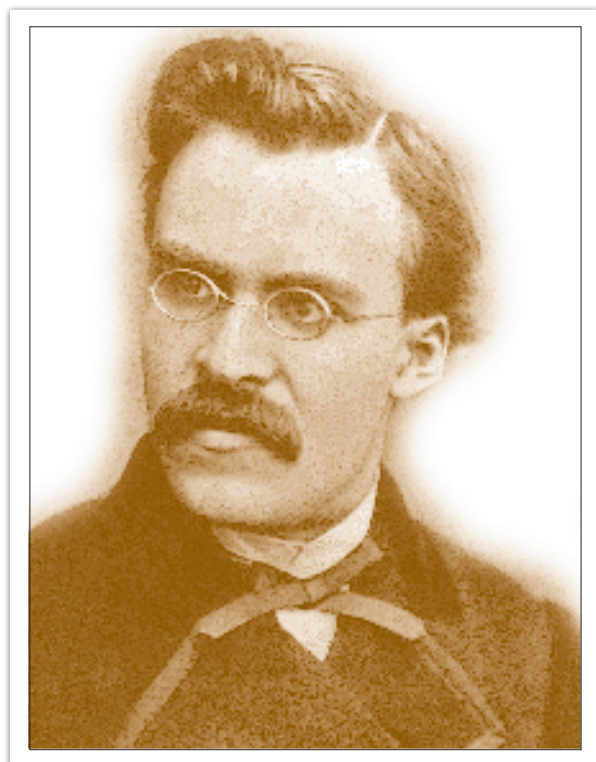
world of abstract forms, so Kant proclaimed there are two worlds, one of phenomena to which we have access and one of noumena to which we do not. The difference was that Plato thought the philosopher did have access to this second world.

The great historian of ideas Arthur Lovejoy in his essay 'Coleridge and Kant's Two Worlds' in his *Essays in the History of Ideas* writes of the dualism between Kant's 'manifold of sense' and his 'forms'. He shows that Coleridge turned to Kant for help in his struggle against Hartley's materialism and determinism. According to Lovejoy Coleridge never really understood Kant. He did not see that Kant himself was committed to the doctrine of determinism in the phenomenal world and he did not grasp the doctrines of transcendental idealism. Lovejoy writes 'Kant, not less than Plato, was a philosopher who believed in two worlds, or realms of being, corresponding to the two "faculties" of knowledge, the Understanding and the Reason.' Beyond the empirical world of the senses is the world of the 'supersensible'. It was, of course, this view which gave rise to the German Idealists, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel though they, of course, modified Kant's views in various ways. In my opinion Kant's solution of the so-called Free Will problem by claiming that the phenomenal ego is determined while the noumenal ego is free is nothing but verbal jugglery. Coleridge in his *Aids to Reflection*, according to Lovejoy, merely supplemented necessitarianism by borrowing from Kant's distinction between phenomena and noumena.

It is with Nietzsche that we get a thorough repudiation of Kant's metaphysics. Nietzsche was not, of course, a philosophical professional in the way that Kant and Hegel, or, later Russell



Auguste Comte



Nietzsche

and Wittgenstein were. But this does not mean that his reaction against Kant's philosophy was not both acute and justified. His wonderful ridicule of Kant's postulation of a 'faculty' by which the categories could be deduced in section 11 of *Beyond Good and Evil* which shows that in effect it is a *petitio principii* or begging of the question, was praised by a philosopher who was a professional, David Stove in his book *The Plato Cult*. In the same section Nietzsche sees what a gift Kant's postulation of the 'supersensible' was to the Idealist philosophers and to what he calls the 'basically piety-craving German'. Coleridge was an English example of this piety-craving, and his work became very influential on some Anglican religious apologetic in the nineteenth century and after. Lovejoy writes of Coleridge: 'Kant opened for him the gate back into the congenial fields of evangelical faith and piety.' Nietzsche claimed that Kant propagated the revolt against naturalism and materialism which was characteristic of the

German Romantics, a revolt against which Nietzsche was leading a counter revolt. Nietzsche's repudiation of the appearance/reality dualism so dear to Kant reaches its great humorous climax in the wonderful section of *The Twilight of the Idols* 'How the True World Became a Fable'. Here he claims that, in effect, that the world of noumena, the supersensible world which Kant regarded as the true world, and put forward as a consolation was, in fact, inaccessible. In this, as I have said, Kant differs from Plato, who thought the supersensible was accessible to the philosopher. Here Kant overreached himself, for how could what is inaccessible be consoling? It is game set and match to the naturalist. Kant himself had involuntarily exposed the fact that we live in only one world, the sensory world.

We must all now be positivists (though not, of course in the Comtean sense) and not metaphysicians.

# The Industrial Revolution

**The Industrial Revolution started in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was not just about iron and steel and coal, it started with water-power and the invention of the 'factory' system.**

## PAUL COCKBURN

*The Old Testament* of the Bible tells the story of the Tower of Babel. After the flood, humanity sought to build a great tower made of bricks and mortar. This involved technology, and might have enabled them to avoid drowning in any future flood! Water, air, fire, earth (silicon), all have powers to be extracted or harnessed for the benefit of humanity.

Fast forward to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century! Technology was used in many ways in past times, but something new emerged in England in the late 1700s. A number of factors came together so that industry was born and could just grow and grow, seemingly almost without limits. It was like a chemical mix which exploded over time to many countries in the world. Social factors, technological innovation, transport infrastructure, entrepreneurs, the availability of workers, colonialism, raw materials and markets all combined to make the Industrial Revolution happen.

Matthew Boulton opened his Soho Manufactory factory in Birmingham in 1766, and operated a mass production system to produce buckles and buttons and other goods. Workers would work on a production line, repetitively carrying out one task on a product and then passing it on to the next worker in the line.

In Cromford in 1771 Richard Arkwright opened the first water-powered mill, which produced a strong yarn from cotton. He used a spinning frame machine which could simultaneously work on a number of threads in parallel. The machine replaced work usually done by skilled men. The machines were easy to maintain and up to two-thirds of Arkwright's workers were children, initially some aged only 6 years old. Workers worked thirteen-hour shifts.

After these early beginnings, factories opened all over the British Isles, starting in the Midlands and

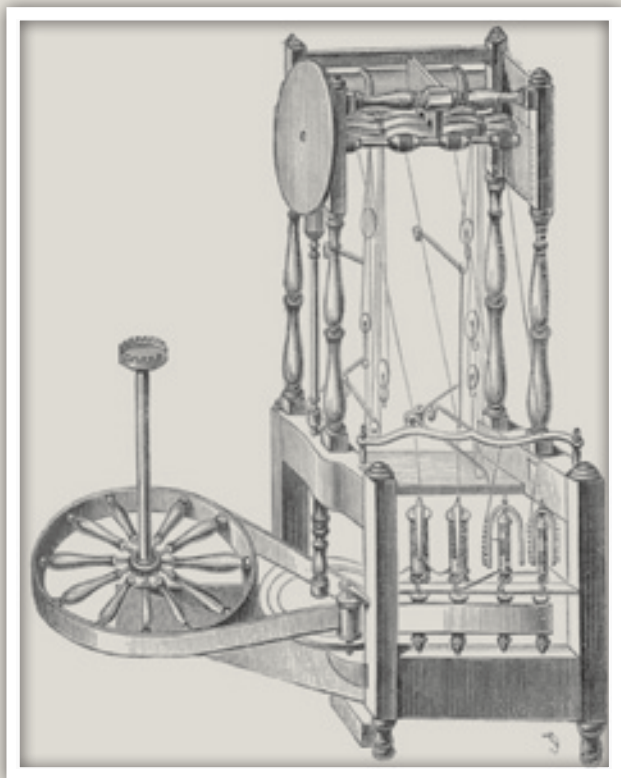
the North of England. The Enclosure Act of 1773 in many instances allowed landowners to remove the right of common access to land. Many farm workers previously used common land to grow vegetables and to graze animals, so they often left the countryside to work in the factories in the towns or cities. The Industrial Revolution started in the textile industry, but soon the manufacture of cast-iron and the use of steam power for many diverse purposes - engines, pumps, hydraulics etc. had a far wider impact.

### What Enabled the Industrial Revolution?

A number of factors enabled the Industrial Revolution to take place. New sources of power were needed for the machines, initially water and then steam power from coal. Water-power had of course been used for centuries to power water-mills to grind grain, the Greeks were doing this over 2,000 years ago. But using it to power machines in factories was new. Transport was needed to get raw materials to the factories and then distribute the finished goods. At first canals were built to transport raw materials and goods, followed by railways with locomotives powered by coal and steam power. The railways were cheaper to build than canals and quickly took over from canals. Money could be raised to invest in manufacturing, and a workforce was available as people moved from the countryside to the towns. For the cotton industry a ready supply of cotton came initially from India, later it also came from the Southern States of North America. The Enclosure Act provided a 'willing' workforce and people were soon flocking to the towns and cities in search of a better life.

It was socially acceptable for workers to work shifts in large factories. The wealth created did 'trickle down' to some extent. In the British Isles it needed entrepreneurs with vision and drive such as Richard Arkwright to set up and run the factories





**Portrait of Richard Arkwright  
and his Spining Water Frame**

and manage the major engineering projects such as the canals and railways.

Even in these early days of the Industrial Revolution, it was not all good news. The cotton industry did not cause as much pollution as iron smelting. In 1781 at Ironbridge in Shropshire the first cast-iron bridge in the world was built to cross the River Severn. The forges to produce the cast-iron produced heavy smoke and toxic waste products. The pollution from this and the other factories in the area, making tiles and china goods, became a serious problem blighting the area. Working conditions were often poor, and wages low. Back in areas such as Cromford the Luddites were skilled textile workers who objected to the new machines in the textile mills. They broke into the factories and tried to destroy the new machines as the machines de-skilled their jobs and lowered their wages.

### **Later History**

The Industrial Revolution was tied in to colonialism. Raw materials were transported from the colonies to Britain, and new markets for British goods were established and grew in the colonies. Scientific and engineering processes were improved, and these advances created more efficient ways to

manufacture products. These products could then be transported all over the world. Since the 1750s to the present, the same factors have created a number of industrial revolutions in different countries of the world. France, Germany and other European nations, and America, quickly followed Great Britain. Japan started industrializing about 1870, Russia 1880. Competition became fierce and British manufacturing has decreased significantly since the 1900s. America became the world's largest industrial economy in 1871 and it still is. China has recently become the second largest economy in the world, based on the same principles of the industrial revolution which started in England: technical know-how, a factory system, power sources, the creation of sophisticated transport systems, and the availability of workers.

Factories were central organised points where manufacturing took place using machinery and a local work-force. Once transport infrastructure - roads, railways etc. - was in place, everywhere was connected together. Pipes could be manufactured and then transported to anywhere in the country. Sewers, gas, and water pipes could be laid under the roads and connected to domestic homes. The gas provided light and fuel for cooking, the sewers disposal of human waste from toilets, and water

## History

the ability to wash clothes and bodies in the home. Cities grew and the countryside was left with a much smaller population, but new technology such as tractors allowed the land to be farmed by far fewer people. Life for some in the cities became more leisurely in time, and cities allowed a flowering of cultural goods for those with more free time.

### The Future

It is possible that any country could industrialise, but there are factors often militating against this: the existing industrialised countries can block development in other countries, and the social conditions in a country may not be compatible with the creation of an 'industrialised' workforce. It helps to have local sources of minerals and power: in the case of England there were plentiful sources of water-power in terms of rivers, and a lot of high-quality coal, factors which were crucial at the start of the Industrial Revolution.

It is clear however that for many different reasons most of the world's countries are not industrialised, agriculture still dominates the lives of about half the people in the world and is the main source of work. It is estimated 45% of the world's population now live in the countryside, using the land to grow their food. Economies of scale as well as other barriers to entry to international markets can make it difficult for countries to industrialise, as well

as social factors. The global banking system, the stability of national currencies, social conditions, and many other factors all play a role. It is still clearly the case that many raw materials are still transported from mainly poorer countries to richer countries to be processed. The case of oil is interesting as so many products are made from it, such as plastics and chemicals, and it is the major fuel source for cars, heating etc. The world's economy is heavily dependent on the price of oil, and countries rich in oil can become economically rich exporting oil to be processed and used in other countries.

What happens next in this revolutionary story? Globally besides the inequalities between nations, which has led to a migration crisis, the growth of industry has led to two other problems: pollution and climate change, and worker alienation. People are not slaves in an industrial society, there are many benefits, but their lives are circumscribed to some degree by the state and economic factors. The impact of climate change due to pollution is a major concern, but this could also be a significant positive factor in terms of creating new non-polluting technologies - if there is time still to do this! In the longer term, new technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics will further de-skill jobs, so societies need to be careful how these technologies are introduced in terms of their impact on workers.



Cromford Mill

## ***On the Return to Oneself***

If I stay alone, my eye single,  
illuminated by the pages of the good  
and the great, that bright community  
at the gate or travelling inside me;

if I treasure up my middle-age -  
it is a grace, that measured length of air  
I sharpen in the singing blades of moon -  
to tune my ear with memories;

if I keep time personalised,  
baggy, loose, free to be energised by any  
lucky notion, gobbet, wormhole, passion,  
like Blake's joy, kissed as it flies;

if I keep playing pen and brush -  
chance habits of mind, habits of mine;  
I think dissonance would stay distant,  
a slight fiction, a rumour only.

***Erica Warburton***

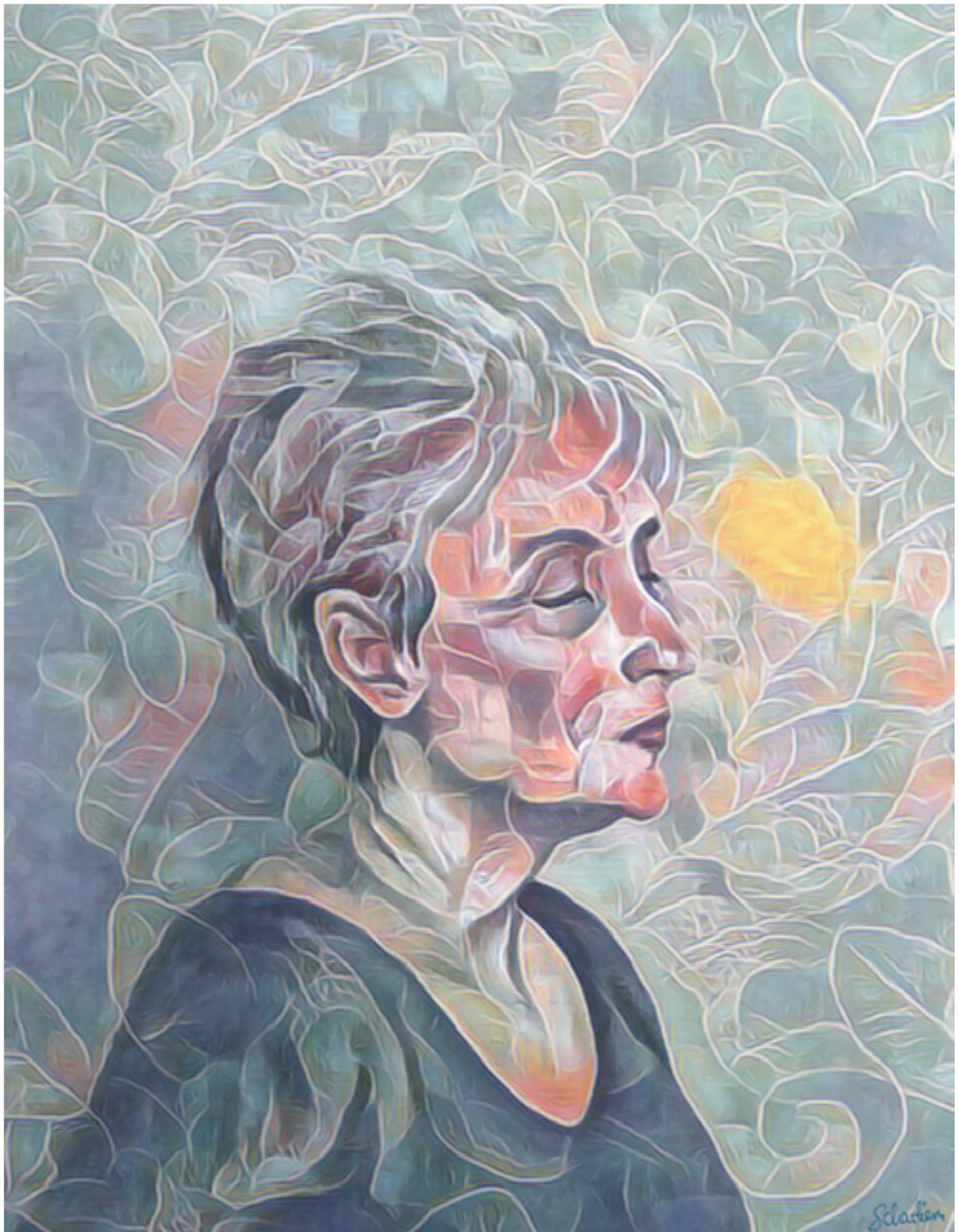




## Since His Death

since his death  
silence is deafening  
screams at me  
do I have to live in the void?  
breathe in a vacuum?  
all corners bump me  
windows darken  
walking is hard  
hour after hour  
my hands hold nothing  
my heart feels forward  
as in a tumble  
joy falls.





*Poem and Artwork by Scharlie Meeuws*

## Judging Religion and Social Conflicts

*Notes of Wednesday Meeting Held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019*

PAUL COCKBURN

We welcomed John Holroyd to our meeting to discuss his new book *Judging Religion*, which has just been published. In his book, John wanted to look at the ethics of religion as a way of life. John read Richard Dawkin's book *The God Delusion* twelve years ago and found it wanting in many respects. Dawkin's arguments are limited in so far as he only has one string to his bow. He knows a lot about biology, but he does not know a lot about religion. Dawkin's latest book is entitled *Outgrowing Religion* and is focused on the young. The 'new atheists' have an evangelical mindset and they want the whole world to embrace atheism. John also found Christian defenders of religion such as Keith Ward and Sam Harris wanting.

We need more of a 'middle path' between the extremes of atheism and faith. It is important that if we make an ethical judgement about someone that we also understand their situation in depth. In fact, if we truly understand them and their circumstances, we may well change our judgement of them. This is true of religion also. How far can we understand something such as faith if we just attack it? The literal interpretation of texts can be problematic. But the experiences which religious people have should perhaps be considered more important, especially if we want religious dialogue to be fruitful. One view was that the mystical experience of the various religions was very similar, and we can be open rather than dogmatic in our views. In dialogue we should agree to disagree. What is the best way to disagree? We want peace not war, and this should apply to religious debates. Religion

should be about love, not hatred and war.

The statement 'the truth is relative' cannot be true in an absolute sense, it is self-contradictory. John thought there were dangers in relativism. One way of avoiding relativism is to say that if the Other is well informed will he/she stick to their point of view or move on to a higher moral stand. It is always difficult to judge another culture that exists geographically far from ours, or historically in a different time. Usually there will be a difference in the state of knowledge. We can come to understand another culture by adapting ourselves to its internal dynamics, knowledge and ethics but should not get bogged down by its particularity. The true engagement when entering into a dialogue with another culture is to empower it with the knowledge we have - if it is higher knowledge. Truth is always a dialogue, and it is always too easy to fall into the error of the 'absolute': I am right and you are wrong. Sometimes the powerful control knowledge and they do not allow other points of view, which results in an epistemic injustice.

Barbara Vellacott reminded us of the role of creativity in religion. Coleridge wrote: 'The primary Imagination I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am' She also pointed to the common factors in spiritual experience in all religions which are found in mysticism and our experience.

A key issue related to dialogue is: is the truth eternal or 'in the making'? Hegel thinks





**John Holroyd talking to The Wednesday group**

there is progress in history. Is there progress in religion? John spoke about Islam, based on many interviews he has had with Muslim scholars. In Islam, there is the concept of 'abrogation', some texts 'take over' from other texts. This might be because they are later texts and related to the expansion of Islam during the revelation time. For example, the early verses of *Koran* state you cannot pray when you are drunk, but it does not forbid drinking alcohol. It may be that the idea behind this verse was developed and later strengthened into a complete prohibition against alcohol. Christianity is more of a story, and a progressive revelation, with the Bible containing a dramatic development from the *Old Testament* to the *New Testament*, somehow incorporating all of history. The *Koran* is authoritative for Muslims, but the Hadith, the collected sayings of Prophet Mohammad, and his actions (Sunnah) are helpful for the exegesis of the *Koran*.

A comment was made about tolerance/intolerance, that in Spain Muslim societies allowed Christians and Jews to live in the Muslim state, but after the Christian reconquest, Jews and Muslims were expelled from Spain.

In a chapter on how religion responds in difficult times, John deals with Bonhoeffer and the Nazis, the Civil Rights movement in America, Liberation and Prosperity Theology, and the Israel/Palestine conflict. A chapter on the media deals with the media's distorted portrayal of Islam.

John's book deals with many more subjects, such as religious education, ethics, multiculturalism, prayer and meditation. It aims at understanding present social and political conflicts which take religious forms. It tries to contribute towards increasing the space for religious tolerance locally and internationally. Well worth reading!

## Derrida's Cat: Six Sonnets

When I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me?

**Michel de Montaigne, 'Apology for Raymond Sebond'**

The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer? Why should the law refuse its protection to any sensitive being? . . . The time will come when humanity will extend its mantle over everything which breathes.

**Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation***

As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called 'animal' offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human, . . . the border-crossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself.

**Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am***



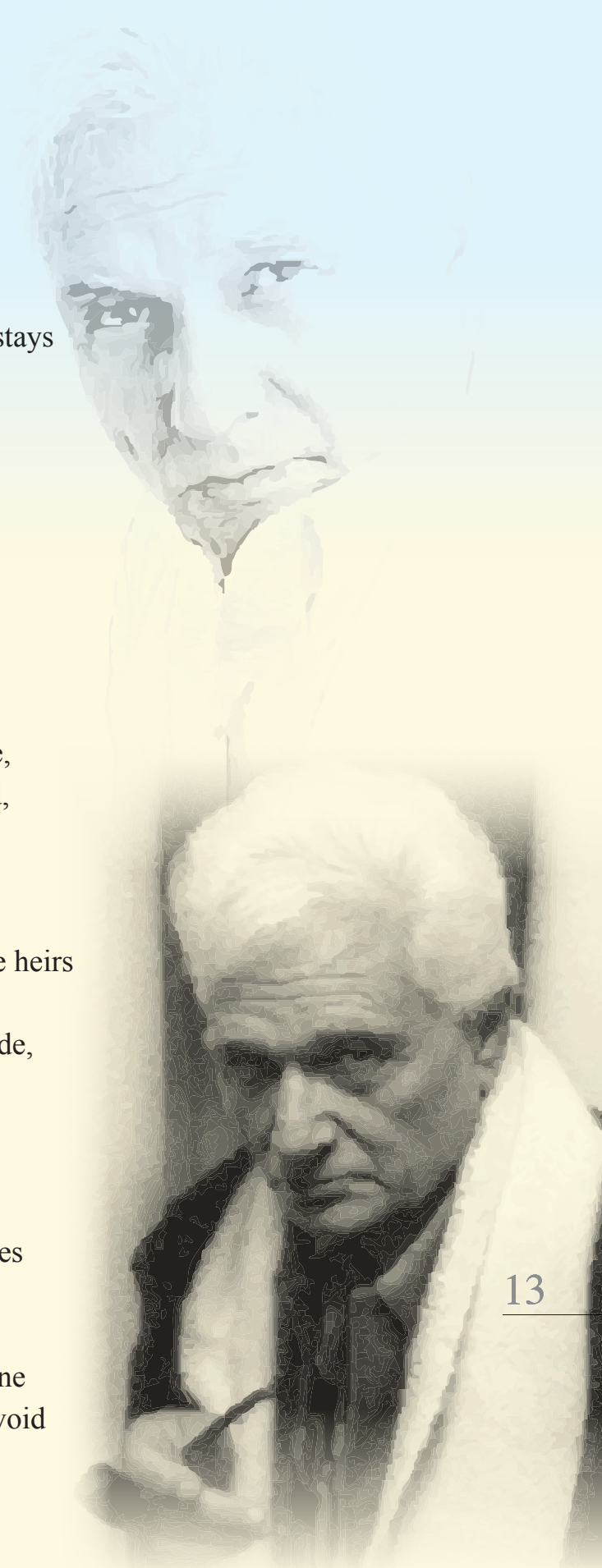
**CHRIS NORRIS**

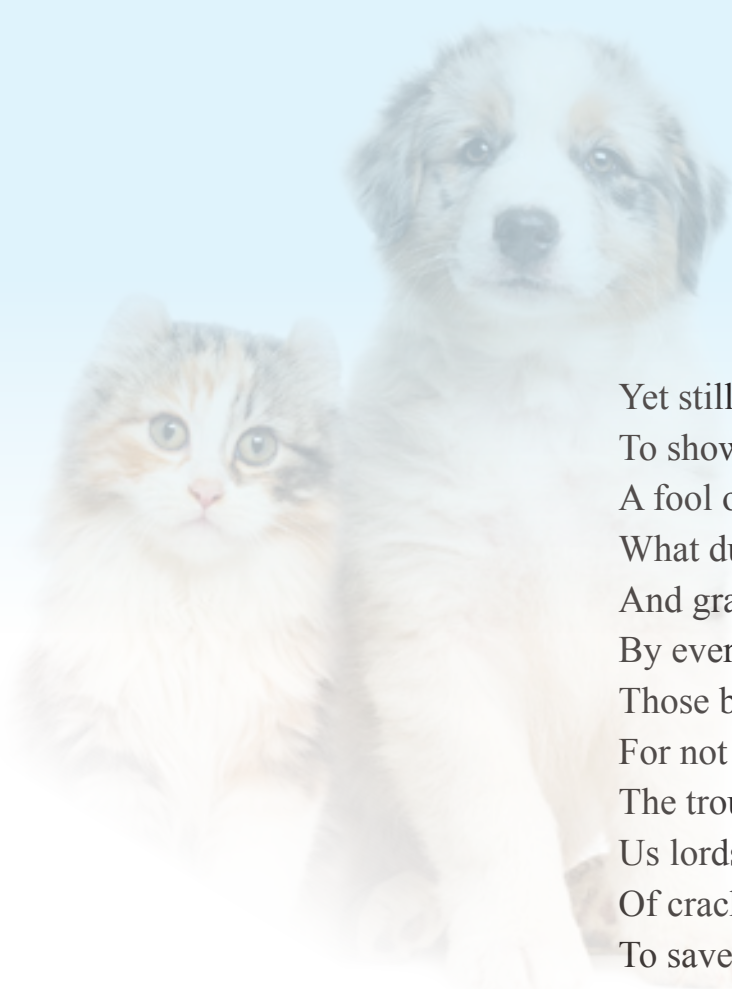
What's there to read in that impassive gaze?  
The shared alterity, the he and she.  
She sees me seeing how she sees me see.  
It's a moot point: who's played with here, who plays?  
No intercepting our communiqués;  
No guessing what the call-sign, code or key  
That lets two species channel-hop till we  
Seem life-worlds momentarily in phase.  
Too quick they are to count it fancy-bred,  
A mere cat-lover's whim, that troubling thought  
Of roles reversed that had the wily-wise  
Montaigne so egregiously misled  
As to praise animals by selling short  
Those human creatures cherished in God's eyes.




Why then this strange confusion when she stays  
To watch me after showering, looks at me  
As anybody might who'd come to be  
The silent sharer of my nights and days,  
Yet shows herself unwilling now to raise  
Her eyes or spare the level scrutiny,  
As I stand naked, of a creature free  
From shame or inhibition? When she lays  
That gaze on me I feel what scripture said  
The miscreants of Eden felt when taught  
To clothe their parts in a more modest guise,  
Do penance for those fig-leaves gladly shed,  
And spurn all further invites to consort  
With beastly kin not fit to recognise.

Such tortuous ways around they went, those heirs  
Of Descartes, in the effort to persuade  
Themselves that only humans made the grade,  
Since any thought of critters having shares  
In a life-world so far removed from theirs  
Must show the same naivete displayed  
By folk, pet-fanciers chiefly, who betrayed  
Their misplaced love by risking all the snares  
Of pure *bêtise*. Such ruses they deployed  
To make it stick, that special-treatment rule  
Whereby it's clear (let's say) my cat's the one  
That's played with, not the player, since devoid  
By nature of the wherewithal to fool  
Around with me so she gets all the fun.





Yet still she's apt to catch me unawares,  
To show (if showing's needed) how she's made  
A fool of me and knowingly conveyed  
What dupes we are, us humans, with our airs  
And graces born of being kicked upstairs  
By every creaturely trick of the trade  
Those beasts deploy to see they're well repaid  
For not too closely questioning who wears.  
The trousers. It's their favour we've enjoyed,  
Us lords-and-masters, nurtured in the school  
Of cracked-up species eminence that's run  
To save us getting downright paranoid  
Should we suspect we've joined the talent-pool  
Of those who strive that others' will be done.



From Descartes, Kant and Heidegger we hear  
The same old tale: how critters occupy  
A world or worlds apart from ours, a sty  
Of deprivation, or an abject sphere  
From whose far boundary they dimly peer  
And, just as dimly, think to wonder why  
This brute existence, born to live and die  
On the wrong side of that one-way frontier.  
Yet look again and maybe you'll discern  
The slips, aporias, and hitherto  
Unnoticed swerves of argument that show  
How reading deconstructively can turn  
The beast v human tables and undo  
That mythic pecking-order, high to low.



Don't get me wrong: no greeting peer-to-peer  
 Or inter-species meeting eye-to-eye,  
 Us and 'the animals', since when we try  
 There's just too many things that interfere,  
 Among them all the myriad ways that we're  
 Fine-tuned to conspecifics, guided by  
 The aeons of evolution that supply  
 Our diverse kinds of head- and body-gear.  
 Still there's a useful lesson there to learn  
 From those philosophers: whenever you  
 Take difference to require that we bestow  
 Prized attributes one-sidedly you'll earn  
 Another put-down from the teeming zoo  
 Of swift retorts to Descartes, Kant & Co.

## *The Wednesday*

**Editor:** Dr. Rahim Hassan

**Contact Us:**

[rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk)

**Copyright** © Rahim Hassan

**Website:**

[www.thewednesdayoxford.com](http://www.thewednesdayoxford.com)

**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

*We have published eight  
 cumulative volumes of the  
 weekly issues. To obtain  
 your copy of anyone of the  
 cumulative volumes, 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



# The *Wednesday*

*we are online now..visit us on:*

[www.thewednesdayoxford.com](http://www.thewednesdayoxford.com)



*weekly philosophy at your finger tips*