

The *Wednesday*

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Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

Editorial

On the Way to Philosophy

How do we orient ourselves in philosophy? The question may be answered by reading introductory books on philosophy, biographies of other philosophers (books that document and reflect on the intellectual and academic development of their authors), or books on the history of philosophy.

Philosophy endeavour could be motivated by a variety of reasons. For the early Greeks, it was the love of wisdom. This aim seems to have been dropped or forgotten in our time when philosophy has become a highly technical and professionalised task. With the rise of religion philosophy turned towards metaphysics. Questions about human life, the good life and conduct, moved towards a life beyond. The Forms replaced the particulars and took other names, such as God, divine names and angels. Modern philosophy moved back to the Greeks' position of concentrating on the here and now though not exclusively. But more recent philosophy, since the beginning of the last century, has radicalised this move and tried to eliminate anything that has a hint of metaphysics.

The last move, represented by the positivists and then carried out by most analytical philosophers, was and still is close to science and technology, especially neuroscience and artificial intelligence. Philosophy seems to be advancing by the elimination of both the Greek's love of wisdom and any theological, metaphysical motives. Science which arose out of philosophy seems to have taken over philosophy and logic has dominated the scene rather than insight and imagination.

But philosophy has also found support from ideology. When philosophy abandoned abstract metaphysics, it became allied with the social sciences, and adopted Marxist views, such as those found in Critical Theory or in the different versions of the Post-modern turn. Philosophy seems to provide skills for the analysis

of concepts, and connect theory with practice. But it seems that the general trend of philosophy now is to ignore ideology and critique. Science and technology seem to have won.

However, theology, technology and ideology don't exhaust the motive to do philosophy, although they support philosophy and culture generally. There is also the interest of finding out what humanity has thought about the essential questions of meaning and value in the long history of philosophy, and the need to examine these opinions critically in the light of the development of philosophy itself, in terms of concepts and methods. It is the seeing of philosophical problems through the tradition of philosophy. But we don't seem to just review all philosophical views with neutral eyes. Some views get favoured over others. My question is: how and why?

One answer is that philosophy, as was indicated above, takes on the form of the culture of its time: humanism, theology, science, ideology. It could also be a reaction to its culture and the dominant ideas in it, such as we find in the Enlightenment or anti-Enlightenment, Post-Modernism. We find ourselves in the middle of opposite trends of thought. We either move with the current or against it. But the answer I favour is a personal, more psychological one. The philosophy we choose is one that resonates with us. But such a choice is not independent of the general trends in our time or society. The sixties of the last century had competing views between individualistic, existential philosophy and class struggle. They were both a reaction to ideology and technology but in different directions. They are also expressions of valuing freedom but again in different directions. Valuing freedom is a great motive for philosophy, a motive that joins with the personal touch to make a choice of a philosophy dependent on who you are and what you value most.

The Editor

Reading Wittgenstein's Tractatus

I recently started to read the *Tractatus-Logico Philosophicus* [TLP], the only book that Wittgenstein published in his lifetime. The original German text appeared in 1921 and the Ogden translation into English appeared in 1922. As I read I kept thinking: If the aim of philosophy is to bring clarity to our understanding of the world we live in, why do some philosophers make themselves so difficult to understand? Wittgenstein's style is simple and his vocabulary not unusual, but his thoughts are expressed concisely, almost to the point of being gnomic.

In this essay I comment on the first section of the TLP, mainly to help clarify my own understanding. Anybody who may be interested in reading the book may also get a taste of its philosophical approach. I am still reading it, so my comments below may be confirmed or refuted in a section I have not yet reached.

PAUL BELSEY

I shall look at the first seven sentences of the *TLP*. The numbering system is Wittgenstein's own. This section is commonly referred to as 'the ones', for obvious reasons.

- 1 The world is everything that is the case*
- 1.1 The world is the totality of facts, not of things*
- 1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by these being all the facts*
- 1.12 For the totality of facts determines both what is the case, and also all that is not the case*
- 1.13 The facts in logical space are the world*
- 1.2 The world divides into facts*
- 1.21 Any one can either be the case or not be the case. and everything else remain the same*

Compare this, for example, to Plato. There is no dialectic, no explanation or exploration, no attempt at persuasion. Just a series of definitions. Take proposition number 1:

'The world is everything that is the case'.

What exactly does he mean by saying that something in the world 'is the case'? Does he mean that it exists as a material object, a thing that we can see and touch, one of the objects which make up our everyday life? Not exactly. Let's take a look at the next proposition, number 1.1:

'The world is the totality of facts, not of things'.

So, something which is the case is a fact, not a thing. A house is a thing. So, what exactly is a fact? Later in the book Wittgenstein adds:

2. *What is the case, the fact, is the existence of atomic facts*
and
2.01 *An atomic fact is a combination of objects (entities, things)*

An atomic fact contains no other facts, but it does contain other things. 'Apples grow on trees' is an atomic fact. It contains information and a structure, it defines relationships between things at a very low and specific level of definition.

'Apples grow on trees and are good for the health' is not an atomic fact, as it contains two further facts: 'Apples grow on trees' and 'Apples are good for the health'. This type of fact can be called a molecular fact.

Wittgenstein doesn't seem to be very interested in how we can know what a fact is and what is not. He insists on the greater importance of facts rather than things but without providing any means of resolution if there is a difficulty in verification.

If Barack says that unicorns exist in the world and Donald says that unicorns do not exist in the world then one of them is wrong, and one of these assertions is not a correct description of the world. Which one? In general, how can we verify that what appears to be a statement of fact is actually

true? Later in the book Wittgenstein says in proposition 2.1:

'We make to ourselves pictures of facts.'

And in 2.223:

'In order to discover whether the picture is true or false we must compare it with reality.'

In the original German the word 'Bild' is used, which is literally 'picture', but I think that the word 'model' can be usefully substituted. The constituents of a model can be rearranged, the behaviours and properties of different components can be revealed, the model can change. Where is a picture (model) located? In the mind of each of us.

How are we able to perceive 'reality' so we can compare it with our picture? This is not made clear. The pictures we create for ourselves are governed by variables of temperament, environment, culture, religion, politics, and so on. Different pictures of the same facts can, and do, vary widely between people. Sometimes we can agree on what 'reality' is, sometimes we can't.

What follows if you and I disagree about a picture, its content, what it is a picture of? What if you dismiss everything I say as fake news? How can we establish what is true in these cases? It is not just a question of looking, there must also be finding, evidence. What constitutes evidence? A painting, a description in a book, a dream, testimony from a usually reliable source?

A number of people apparently believe that the Apollo 11 moon landings were faked and did not actually take place. Probably the majority of people do not think this. Each side points to the film released by NASA of men appearing to walk on the moon to be evidence confirming its own position.

Most religions narrate their origin in written accounts of divine revelation, which is deemed to be sufficient evidence. Different religions usually have overlapping and conflicting claims on life, which are supported by their own evidence, their own pictures of facts.

These are examples of questions which seem to require empirical verification, a procedure which Wittgenstein passes over.

To continue, with proposition 1.11:

‘The world is determined by the facts, and by these being all the facts.’

Wittgenstein’s position seems to be that there *are* facts, that we can *know* that they are facts, that we can know *all* the facts.

In principle, if we know all the facts then we know the world in its entirety. But how do we know when we have *all* the facts? More fundamentally, *can* we know all the facts about the world? Is this a realistic proposition?

Also, we may focus our attention on *facts*, but what should be our attitude to *things*? If atomic facts are combinations of things then surely the existence or non-existence of things is intrinsically important? Wittgenstein appears to think not, he seems to have very little interest in things by themselves, or even in themselves, in a Kantian context.

A proposition corresponds to a fact only by virtue of being correctly constructed, it is not a natural entity. To enable valid propositions to exist there must be a language which is capable of containing objects and relationships in meaningful ways. The objects in the language must refer to real objects which exist in the world.

There must also be agents capable of using the language. The agents need not even be human. It is well known that bees communicate distance and direction of pollen from the hive by performing a ‘dance’ to other bees. The dance is in a language, each movement communicates an accurate statement of fact. It communicates knowledge.

Representation of the world is expressed in language. The larger and more expressive the language, the larger is the world. The world of the bee is smaller than the world of the human being (pun intended).

We can also use language to make statements such as ‘Honesty is the best policy’ and ‘Picasso was a great artist’. Wittgenstein would not consider these as valid propositions. They do not refer to facts, pictures of things in the world. They are not the same type of statement as ‘Tokyo is the capital city of Japan’. Their truth or falsity is not established in the same way, if at all.

Let’s proceed with proposition 1.12:

‘For the totality of facts determines both what is the case, and also all that is not the case.’

As described above, a fact is a true proposition, which can be true in either of two ways. It may refer to something that exists in the world and that thing actually does exist. Similarly, it may refer to something that does not exist in the world and that thing does not exist. The totality of all true propositions is the totality of facts.

The totality of facts describes a particular situation at a particular time, but it is not static. Things cease to exist and come into being during the passage of time. Human inventions are new creations of what is ‘the case’.

I have already discussed above whether and how we can know all the facts, so I shall pass directly on to the next proposition in this section, number 1.13:

‘The facts in logical space are the world.’

What is ‘logical space’?

Consider a book describing the game of chess. It defines the names of all the pieces and the legal moves each piece is allowed to make. It defines the board the game is played on, the number and layout of the coloured squares. It defines the starting positions of the pieces on the board. It defines the number of players. It may even contain strategies and tactics for each player depending on the current positions of the pieces and the stages of the game.

It does not define the shape of each piece. A piece’s

permitted moves are not dependent on its physical shape. It does not define the size of any pieces. I have seen outdoor games of chess being played using pieces several feet in height. The pieces need not be three-dimensional. Chess can be played on a computer, or on a hand-held device, where each piece is represented by a two-dimensional image. The pieces need not even be material in any way. Chess masters are able to move pieces in their imagination, can play whole games in their mind, are even able to see several possible moves ahead.

Everything in the book is pure logic. What it describes are facts existing in logical space. What is the relation of logical space to 'facts' and 'the world'? Logical space is the totality of facts and their *possible* combinations, while the world is the totality of facts and their *actual* combinations. The world is the current subset of logical space. Where does logical space exist? In the human mind. Logic is a human invention.

The next proposition is number 1.2:

'The world divides into facts.'

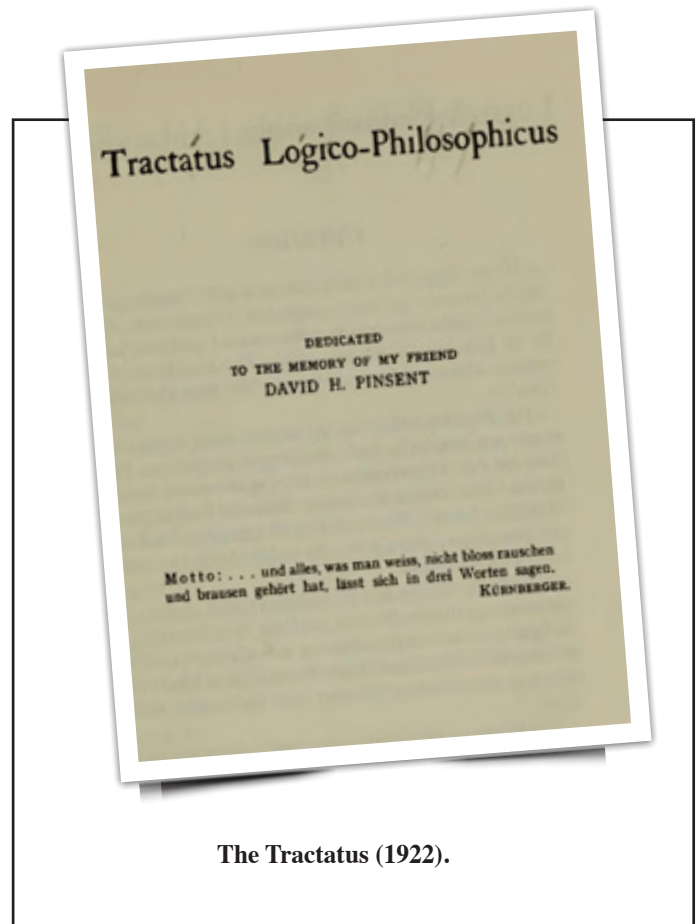
This seems to be just repeating what has already been said, but in a slightly different way. So why do it? Perhaps to indicate that facts can be treated both individually and collectively. And to reiterate that the world does not divide into things.

The final proposition in this section is 1.21:

'Any one can either be the case or not be the case. and everything else remain the same.'

I take this sentence to refer only to atomic facts, and not to molecular facts, since I assume that if a molecular fact changes then that must in some way affect the atomic facts it contains. In the example of the game of chess, the legal moves of each piece are atomic facts and can change without affecting the legal moves of any other piece. The rules can even be changed to remove the piece entirely, changing atomic facts collectively rather than individually.

This is the end of 'the ones'. What conclusions



The Tractatus (1922).

seem to have been reached? It is evident that this is not going to be a book about a philosophy of justice, or living the virtuous life. Rather it seems it is about what we say, how we say it, and whether what we say is an accurate reflection of reality.

Wittgenstein is engaged in constructing a philosophical model using pure logic. The propositions are axioms. They cannot be proved or disproved by external references. They can only be logically correct or logically incorrect. If incorrect, then they are made so by a failure in reasoning.

This book, written in a peculiar and cryptic style, will inevitably foster different interpretations of what it actually means, an outcome that Wittgenstein must have foreseen.

Finally, to return to my question at the start of this essay, if I answer that Wittgenstein could have written differently but chose not to, is that 'the case' or not?

Humanitarian Values: Beliefs Of The Few Or Fundamental To All Of Us?

What is humanitarianism? Is it culturally determined? Can it be argued that behind culture there are basic human needs that we all share, and rights that we are all entitled to? How do we determine the self and the other? Can we be truly internationalists?

DAVID BURRIDGE

The word ‘humanitarian’ gets bandied about in discussions as if it is just a possibility, but I want to explore the dimension of humanitarianism further. Of course, there are and have been individuals who have acted in other people’s interest often at the expense of their lives or liberty. But are these special cases - people who have stepped away from their cultural ethics when it enforces unjust behaviour? Is there a set of values which we all have access to if we turn away from self or narrow social interest? Can we actually contemplate morals beyond what we have been taught is socially correct?

A good place to start in the philosophical field would be Socrates, or perhaps those philosophers like Plato who used him as a model. In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates had a mission to examine people relentlessly, demonstrating their ignorance - and encouraging them to care more for virtue than for the wealth they prized. I am not sure that this leads to humanitarianism. One can sit and one can live a hermit’s life being virtuous about intake but harbouring selfish thoughts. As Jesus was reported to have said in St Matthew : *It is not what enters into his mouth that defiles a man; but what proceeds from his mouth that defiles the man---the things that proceeding from the mouth come out of the heart and defile a man.*

So, for him the narrow-mindedness and selfishness, which we can all exhibit, is in our heads and the things that defile us must be tackled by stretching our motives beyond our self-interest. Hence the Good Samaritan.

Socrates sought *Eudaimonia* (happiness or wellbeing). He argued that the best way to happiness is through the cultivation of the virtue of one’s soul and by acting virtuously in one’s daily affairs.

For a more practical delivery we can turn to Marcus Aurelius and his *Meditations*: *Venerate your faculty of judgement. For it depends entirely on this that there should never arise in your governing faculty any judgement that fails to accord with nature or with the constitution of a rational being; and it is this that guarantees freedom from hasty judgement and fellowship with humankind, and obedience to the gods.*

The path to humanitarianism for Marcus would be to always define or describe whatever presents itself to your mind so as to see what sort of thing it is when stripped to its essence. Reason is a valuable tool, but what moves us to take up the tool? Who is likely to be the Good Samaritan?

When thinking about this question I came across some psychoanalytical writings from the 1970s



The good Samaritan

which seemed to me to address this question.

Altruism is an important topic to address if we are to understand human nature. The likelihood that someone might behave in an altruistic way might be because he/she is driven by what has shaped the unconscious during childhood, such as loving parents, or it might be driven by a guilt feeling. There was a study in the 1970s of rescuers in Germany who had helped Jews escape from the Nazis. In one particular case the rescuer's secretary begged him to help her husband who was Jewish and was being threatened by the Nazis. He helped the man to escape and then found there were others and, feeling guilty about what the Nazis were doing, he helped hundreds of others to escape.

Similar studies were done by Rosenhan (1970), with people who became involved in the civil rights movement in the US. He categorised them into different types. There were passive supporters, who gave money to civil rights but who didn't become personally involved. They were often people who had friends, who were personally involved. The passive supporters gave money to maintain the friendships. This Rosenhan depicted as *situational altruism*. He furthermore distinguished between individuals, those who were partially committed and those who were fully committed. He identified among those who were partially committed people who

had difficulties with their parents and their weak altruism was a response to their internal issues. But real Good Samaritans were identified, and these were people who were characteristically committed to helping others, regardless of their own self-interest or dangers that might threaten them. Researchers drew the conclusion: the most critical element in the life history of these individuals was the experience of an early loss and the simultaneous or immediate subsequent exposure to a person who demonstrated consistent helping behaviour.

Our altruism, then, can be influenced by what we have learnt from others and what has been given priority in our experience. We are driven by the personal pain inside us and inspired by a true Good Samaritan.

The next question is the exploration of humanitarian values: Who is my neighbour? In a complex and dislocated society that now exists we may react to other peoples' problems by saying that they are outside our social experience and we cannot get involved in things that don't concern us, or we don't understand. Cultures of course do shape values and also the language that delivers those values. Can it be argued that behind culture there are basic human needs that we all share in, and rights that we are all entitled to? I believe there is but how do we source such judgements.



Civil right movement in America

Kant posited a *good* without empirical limitation, which he referred to as the *Goodwill*: *A goodwill is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, because of its fitness to attain some proposed end, but only because of its volition, that is because it is good in itself.*

There were for him high moral maxims which we all could agree with, and these would be equivalent to humanitarian values. I take the view that we need only to briefly stand back from the empirical world. Of course, the intuitive feeling that something is right or wrong is a necessary first step and we then need to deal with the empirical world to achieve consequences as close as possible to pure goodwill.

But we have internal and external forces that may determine our humanitarian responses. External determinants basically mean that we respond to what we think is our social responsibility. Courageous people such as Sophie Scholl died because she thought it was her responsibility to criticise the Nazi regime. The white helmet rescuers in Syria put the rescue of children before their own safety - truly a Good Samaritan response. In both these cases their motivation was more than just a sense of social responsibility. It was also an empathetic concern with the

plight of others. To rescue children from danger surely amounts to a categorical imperative. We would all agree that innocent children deserve protection regardless of the conditions involved. But how many Syrian refugees did this country open up its borders to?

There are those who would argue that ethical judgements can only be viewed within the context of particular cultures. What is right or wrong can only be determined within the rules that are formulated within that society. If this were the case, then humanitarian values would be inappropriate. It was Aristotle's viewpoint that considers knowledge as human nature or the distinct nature of our distinctive capacities as human beings. Man has the *Nous* to reason. I agree absolutely with him. Beneath cultural differences there are values which are cogent for us all to respect and struggle to achieve. If that means particular cultures and societies must change their ways, then that is the road to human progress. This is why such organisations as the United Nations (in all its activities) is critical to maintain. It also my opinion that social introversion, which leads to nationalism and populism must be resisted. We must ask ourselves the question: *Who is my neighbour?* And answer: *The whole human race.*

Morning

Dawn spirits the hour with guesses,
begins its chorus with prayer,
hints of a breeze or a presence –
Uttar Pradesh, where
a clap of the hands
can get God himself to appear.

Faith, planted with only a stick
and a flick of the wrist,
flames and flowers all year -
and smoke, thin as rope,
is cinnabar-spiced
and tightly drawn up to the sky.

Bats hang black in the peepul tree
like bells tumbled silent -
and far below, at a leaning tap
a shining child cries
“Umma!”
as the cold splash enfolds him.

Erica Warburton

Uttar Pradesh: is a State in Northern India, bordering
on Tibet and Nepal, with its capital at Lucknow
peepul tree: sacred fig tree
Umma!: Mummy!



Philosophy and the Personal Touch

Notes of Wednesday Meeting Held on 16th October 2019

PAUL COCKBURN

Rahim Hassan, in an introductory note, raised the following questions for discussion:

Is philosophy about the search for objectively fixed truths and forms or does it have a personal touch? How do we find our way within the different trends of philosophy and the long list of philosophies and philosophers? Why does someone dedicate his life to the study of a particular philosopher, be it Hume, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Derrida or others? Why not do philosophy through your own ideas? Could we drop the history of philosophy and select logic to concentrate on?

Does philosophy itself require such dedications or is this the outcome of the academic teaching of philosophy? Should the personal touch (inclinations towards certain philosophers or philosophies) win or should the objective view win?

Nietzsche said that philosophy is the confession of the philosopher and he 'psychologised all philosophy'. Is he right? Is there an insight here or is he completely mistaken?

Chris Seddon's response to Rahim's questions was:

I doubt that anyone interested in philosophy would devote themselves entirely to the study of what other philosophers have written, without developing any of their own ideas about it at all. I also doubt that many educated people since ancient times would develop philosophical ideas without studying what other philosophers have written at all. It seems to me that we all

have a different balance between studying other philosophers and developing our own ideas.

The questions above suggest that a tendency towards original research is associated with the search for objectively fixed truths, forms and logic, and a tendency towards studying other philosophers is associated with a 'personal touch', trends and history. I can understand that studying philosophers involves awareness of trends and history, but surely the other associations need not be the case? I wonder if they merely reflect the traditional division in the educational systems of the twentieth century between Secondary Modern, Technical High, and Grammar schools and subsequent tertiary education, that trained so many of us to focus on just one of the modalities of knowledge - the techniques, the arts, or the sciences - at the expense of other modalities of study and thought. It seems to me that to polarise the balance between original research and studying other philosophers merely reinforces this unhelpful silo thinking.

Our personal philosophy is grounded in our personal experience, but it is also grounded in intra-personal and non-personal considerations. So, my starting point would be to take all Rahim's alternations as inclusive - I mean, it is not a question of either/or, but a question of and/or. Philosophy is partly the search for objectively fixed truths AND it can have a personal touch. We can study other philosophers AND we can develop our own ideas. We can study the history of philosophy AND concentrate on logic. The 'personal touch' and the objective view can BOTH win TOGETHER.

Foundational Concepts

In our discussion we looked at the concept of truth and the search for foundational concepts in philosophy. If we want truth, one view is that we try to find what is fundamental and foundational, and derive our philosophy from these foundational principles. Many philosophers do this, they start from a foundational principle- Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am', Fichte's 'I' or ego, Heidegger's 'Being', Kant's 'Copernican Revolution'. Everything then follows on causally from the founding principle, it underpins their philosophy. There is a danger that having found the foundational principle we build an edifice which is too wide-ranging on top of it, and then try to force our beliefs on others as the total answer.

We tried looking at possible universal truths, such as 'all living things must die', time always goes forwards, mathematical theorems are eternal truths. Modern philosophers such as Rorty do not believe in a truth 'out there' in the world, we can only produce descriptions of the world, and all beliefs are contingent.

One view was that fundamentalism is often based on taking metaphors too literally. Examples include disagreements between fundamentalist Muslims and Christians as to whether 'God is One', or between fundamentalist Atheists and Theists as to whether 'God exists'. Metaphors are typically used to illustrate an aspect of the topic under discussion which it is difficult or unhelpful to delineate too precisely in literal language.

How about having different perspectives? Knowledge is purpose-driven in this respect - we choose which facts to focus on. We may differ on whether something is indeed a fact, but this is not the same as differing on which facts are important. Metaphysics often uses metaphorical language, so disagreements such as whether the world is comprised of 'a universal substance', 'atoms', 'strings', 'ideas', or 'facts' can also be matters of perspective rather than fundamental matters of fact. More often it seems that



Nietzsche

metaphysical disagreements are based on taking investigations into certain useful concepts as if they were investigations into fundamental truths. For example, Wittgenstein's famous opening 'The world is all that is the case' tells us something about the way we use language but nothing more about 'the world'.

We discussed Nietzsche and his perspectivism. He believed in the 'will to power', and he wanted art and philosophy to be life-enhancing. He thought the Romantics were decadent and therefore weak, looking backwards instead of the future. His Zarathustra announces the coming of 'Overman'; the post-human. It was suggested this could be humanity combined in some way with mechanical and/or intelligent machines. Nietzsche's writing is rhetorical, he tries to persuade rather than presenting a rigorous proof. Much philosophical writing is prosaic, but Nietzsche writes in an entertaining and provocative style.

Chris Seddon expressed the view that we should be able to combine the personal and the logical. He thought that in the treatment of drug addiction we want to help addicts overcome their addiction, and logical analysis can help to do this. In philosophy we can be technical, logical, and also be poetic and insightful.

Moonstruck

Green waters lapping in eternal sound
engulfed a bay of moonlit tranquil shore.
A soft warm wind scattered the scudding clouds,
turned playfully and mockingly to hound
the moon, exposing Selene's body more and more
as moonlight was the silk gown Selene wore.

Her strong white hands were holding back the reins
to pull Poseidon's horses and restrain
the lashing tide, the flashing white of manes,
the galloping of waves in her domain.

And yet in crashing splendour they would die
and sigh as they retreat to sink beneath
receptive sands as smooth as velvet fleece
leaving a shimmering circle, like an eye.

The beauty and the wildness of the sphere
disturbs my thoughts, so calm before and clear;
when distances perturbed, and out of order
all seeps into my sleep, where on and on it seems
the waters break and crash against the border
of many shaken and disturbing dreams.



A Lament

Vandals have smashed up a model railway show, leaving exhibitors devastated and distraught. 'I trained as a teacher and a youth worker, but I'm in total confusion', Peter Davies told the BBC. 'Models that were made over years were trodden on and thrown around. It's total wanton destruction.' Davies said one club member had spent 25 years working on an exhibit that had been wrecked, adding: 'It's just horrendous. We will never have the time to build those sorts of layout again. That's where the anger comes from'.

The Guardian, May 19th 2019

There's something weird about it, something skewed,
You might think, or a bit 'new-male',
That unaccustomed show
Of shared emotion at the tale
(God knows it's sad enough) of how some brood
Of mindless vandals trashed the rail-
Way modellers' dream, a blow
(It seemed) to every 00-scale
Track-layer, signal-man, or driver who'd
Long wished to follow back the trail
To worlds dreamed long ago
And who now felt, in that wholesale
Destruction, how the real world may intrude
To say: your dearest plans will fail,
Your high hopes be brought low,
And your dream layouts prove as frail
As those the vandals stamped on, smashed, and strewed.

Yet there's a sense, in that male-only *cri-
De-coeur*, of things that touch some core
Of human need, that tell
Us plainly: these are toys we shore
Against oblivion, artifacts that we,
The makers or admirers, store
Away as means to quell
The fear that we'll have nothing more
To show for our brief lives than you might see
Consigned to any bottom-drawer
Of failed ideas. Let's spell
It out: those modellers implore
The tribute of all us who bend a knee
To skill, finesse, *esprit de corps*,
And willingness to dwell
Years-long on what they're searching for,
That last fine-detailed point that holds the key.



CHRIS NORRIS

Who knows what other hopes or fears might play
 A role in this, their endless quest
 For a perfection freed
 From time, change, error, and the rest
 Of those real-world infirmities that they,
 The world-artificers, found best
 Acknowledged through their need
 Not simply for some mindscape blessed
 By childhood memory, but for the way
 A favorite layout met the test
 Of beauty, scale, and speed
 Well-suited to the wish expressed
 In all such time-bound projects to allay
 Their constant worry: how time messed
 With guild-rules long decreed
 For those whose life-vocation stressed
 A truth to details past, not present-day.

But, more than that, the locos and the track,
 Plus all the scenery, the fine-
 Drawn posters, track-side gear,
 And other evidence combine
 To emphasize that talk of looking-back
 For some 'lost childhood' up the line
 Won't serve to make it clear
 Why others said 'Their grief is mine',
 Why they too suffered that insane attack,
 And how the value we assign
 To certain bits of mere
 'Neat metalwork' can still incline
 Many to think: such skills and man-hours stack
 Up to a point where they enshrine,
 Or seem to, what's as dear
 As life to those now left to pine
 For all that so enraged the vandal pack.

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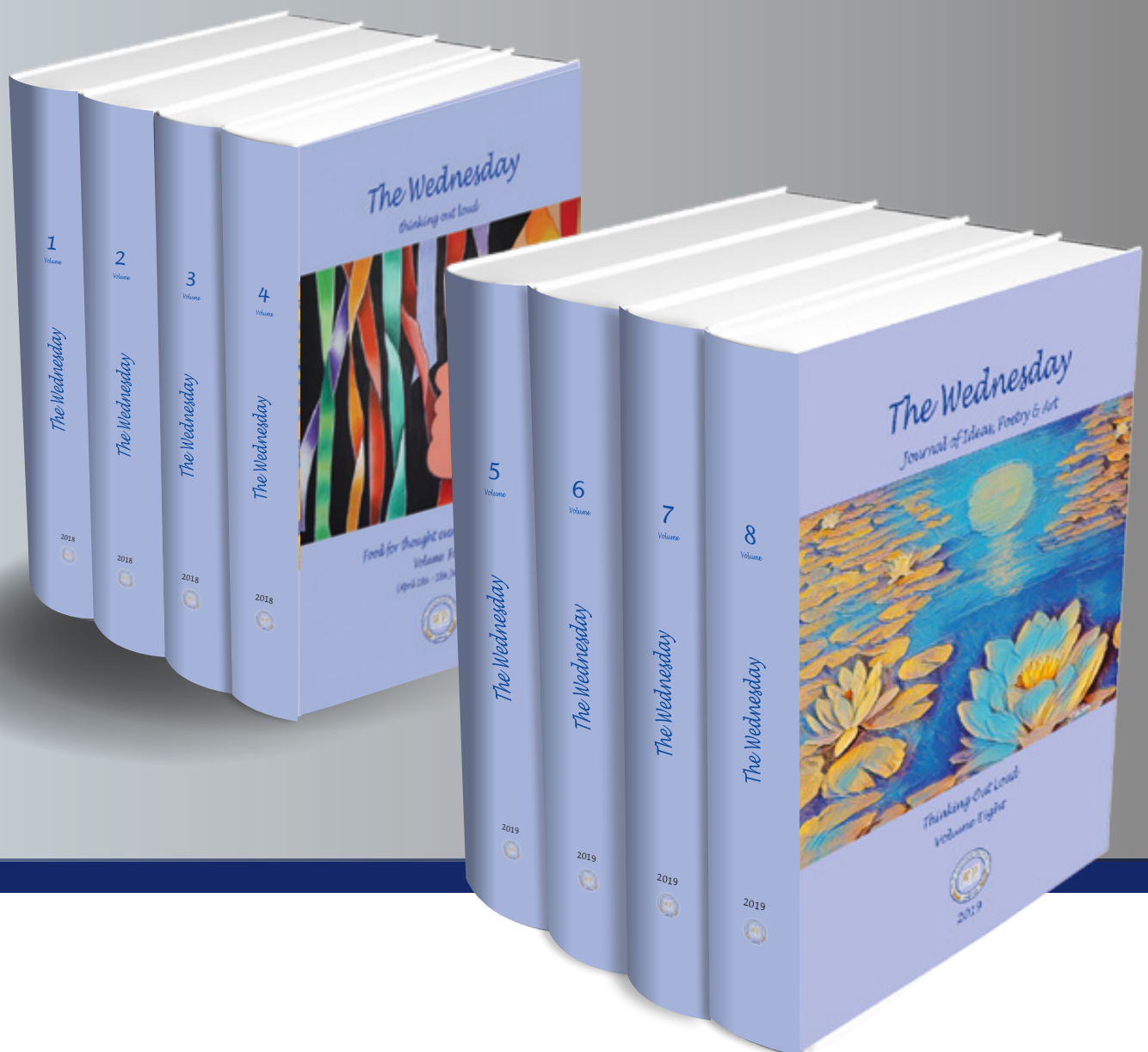
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