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Editorial

Psychologizing Philosophy

One of the strictures of philosophy since the time of Frege is that the psychological and the philosophical should not be mixed. Analytical philosophy which followed this rule kept the psychological outside philosophy. Frege may have had in mind a logic that relied on psychological laws. But what I have in mind here is the psychological input of the philosopher in what he says.

We tend to take the philosophy of any philosopher as a finished, objective, impersonal text. However, there might be reasons other than pure philosophy that motivate the philosopher. Many of the Enlightenment philosophers had negative feelings about the clergy and religion that were reflected in their philosophies. Equally, some philosophers who had an interest in religion, reflected that interest in their philosophies, as was the case with Kant and Jacobi.

However, one can't go around attributing extra-philosophical motives to other philosophers. the much more accepted view is that philosophy is not independent of life. Psychologising philosophy is to make philosophy accountable to personal and general life. The case of philosophy could be compared to art. There was a strong movement towards 'art for art's sake', but the current of history and social issues brought art from its ivory tower to daily life and issues.

Two philosophers stood for psychologising philosophy: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Kierkegaard criticised philosophers who were busy building philosophical systems – and there were many of them in his time. For example, he always asked not 'What is truth?' but 'What is the value of truth to me?' As he put it: 'the thing is to find truth which is truth for me, to find the idea for which I am willing to live and die.' He adds: 'Certainly I won't deny that I still accept an imperative of knowledge, … but then it must be taken up in me.'

Nietzsche was even more insistent on testing philosophy by its effect on the individual's life and world. In *Beyond Good and Evil* one finds a thorough psychological and physiological study of the process of philosophising. For him, philosophising is done by the drives and instincts. It is here that you can detect whether something is wrong with a philosophy, by seeing whether the source of philosophising is health or weakness, an abundance of creativity or decadence and nihilism. The test in all this is whether the drives and instincts are acting in the direction of promoting life, or turning against themselves. 'Genuine philosophers' for him 'with a creative hand reach for the future, and all that is and has been becomes a means for them, an instrument, a hammer.'

There is also in Nietzsche the idea that philosophy could be active or re-active. In the active mode, philosophy tends to healthy, full of earnest intentions and guided by its own light. In the reactive mode, , it is weak, backward looking and decadent. One can compare this to his take on morality, where the active takes the form of sovereign, self-legislating individual. The reactive, is slavish, resentful and hateful.

Reading philosophical texts in the light of these thoughts, one will start to wonder about notions such as 'objectivity' and 'truth', especially in matters of metaphysics and morality. One might be able to use this form of psychologising thought to read trends of thought and test perspectives. But one should not jump at every opportunity to accuse philosophers of motives they don't have or attribute to them intentions they don't hold. It is also a novel perspective on philosophy and not a replacement for hard philosophising. A plurality of perspectives and methods will go a long way towards enriching philosophy.

The Editor

On The Need For Religion

A Note on the discussion of religion (Issue 117 of The Wednesday).

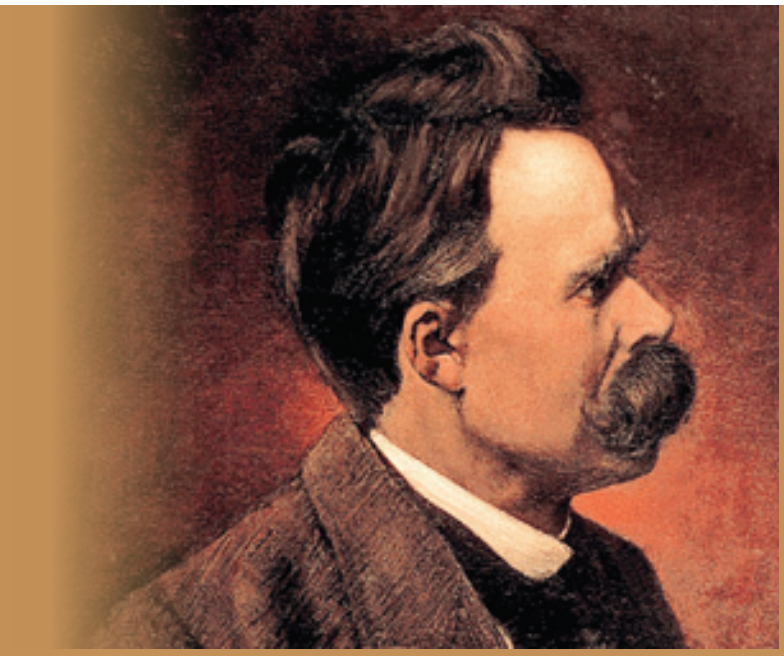
The discussion of religion by the Wednesday group on October 9th as summarized in The Wednesday prompted the reply below. The views expressed in the original article and the comment published here represent the opinions of their writers.

EDWARD **GREENWOOD**

Religion, like poetry, of which it is a form put into practice rather than treated as an object of contemplation, is a creation of the human imagination. Unlike poetry it often claims to be giving us literal truth which demands creedal affirmation. I am not impressed by the Coleridge quotation which seems to me a typical example of Coleridge's amalgamation of misunderstood Kantian idealism with an Anglicanism which is a reaction against his earlier Hartleyan materialism and admirable anti-hierarchical revolutionary sympathies.

The discussion was a fine example of tolerant liberalism with the speaker's wish to compromise by trying to find some middle way. The difficulty for the tolerant liberal is that it takes two to tango. Many religious fundamentalists in all faiths are simply unwilling to have their tenets questioned and adopt the fallibilism liberalism advocates. Worse than that, many religious believers are all too willing, when the opportunity arises, to use violence against those who question those tenets. This is particularly true of the monotheistic faiths. These faiths also have a fissiparous tendency to internal splits and factions. In Islam there is the split between Sunnis and Shias over the prophetic succession, and in Christianity the post- Reformation split between Catholics and Protestants and then (as Bishop Bossuet triumphantly pointed out) the splits between the various Protestant establishments and sects. Nor should the dreadful Christian tradition of anti-Semitism be forgotten. Sadly, it has been continued by many post-Christian secularists.

But polytheists can be persecutory too, as with the 5th century BCE trials for impiety in Athens discussed by E.R. Dodds in *The Greeks and the Irrational* on page 189. He writes: 'About 432 BCE. , or a year or two later, disbelief in the supernatural and the teaching of astronomy were made indictable offences. The next thirty odd years witnessed a series of heresy trials which is unique in Athenian history. The victims included most of the leaders of progressive thought at Athens – Anaxagoras, Diagoras, Socrates, almost certainly Protagoras also, and possibly Euripides. In all these cases save the last the



Nietzsche

Hans Joas

prosecution was successful.' In view of the fact that there were no clergy and church and orthodoxy in this period the word 'heresy' is unfortunate. The word 'impiety' would have been better. It is true also that the prosecutions of Anaxagoras and Socrates may have been in part politically motivated as Anaxagoras had close connections with Pericles and Socrates with Critias, one of the thirty tyrants when the Athenian democracy temporarily collapsed after the Spartan victory.

Modern society, as Nietzsche noted, has developed two great intellectual forces, natural science and critical history, the latter founded partly on the philological study of documents. Natural science has long ruled out any supernatural shaping and control of the causal processes which would go on in nature even if there were no human beings around. Critical history deals with the world of intentionality, the human world of meaning, reason and judgment. This is a world which only an animal which has acquired the power of language could inhabit. Most human beings are not aware of critical history and of the fact that it has shown that many of the assumptions about sacred texts which believers (even sophisticated ones) hold about them are not worthy of credence. To say that *The Bible* contains a development, as the speaker claimed, is unjustified. *The Bible* is not a unity, but just a collection of texts written at various times and places and with various intentions. The 'development' has been constructed.

To see the New Testament as somehow an improvement of the Old is an unwarranted claim on the part of Christians. Moreover the Bible can hardly encapsulate as claimed 'the whole of history'. As to the Gospels, they are of uncertain date and uncertain authorship. If you asked the ordinary churchgoer, how many would know this?

It is all very well to say: 'Truth is a dialogue, and it is always too easy to fall into the error of the "absolute" I am right and you are wrong'. This might just about pass as a caveat against blind dogmatism, but it needs much qualifying and supplementing. There are two ways of being right or wrong. One is as regards what

is the case in empirical reality. How do (or did) things stand in the world? The other is as regards the cogency of reasoning to support a case. In both these areas there are many instances in which one party is unequivocally right and the other wrong. Discovery of the truth may be helped by dialogue, but this is certainly not always the case. If one of the disputants is a bigot and wrong, the tolerant liberal must make it clear that bigotry cannot be tolerated.

It is an interesting fact of psychology that mystical experience shares many features across religions, but this only brings out that religion is a human and non-transcendent phenomenon. When it comes to doctrine (as distinct from experience) it is of significance that the mystics adopt the doctrine and creedal practices of the communities in which they were brought up, and notoriously these doctrines are often incompatible.

As Harry Austryn Wolfson said, citing Philo, the idea of God is either a product of the imagination or a product of reason. If it is a product of the imagination alone it is, as Philo claimed, tantamount to atheism. If is claimed that the existence of God can be proved by reason, Kant showed that all the traditional proofs are invalid. The idea that an eternal non-material being could stand wholly outside the material world and interact with it is not false but incoherent.

It is to the irritation, and even despair, of the atheist that in this troubled world so many gifted minds are, in effect, devoting their gifts and their time to the propagation of falsehood. This is, of course, not to impugn the good works they do, or the comfort they often bring to the afflicted. Nevertheless it is a shame that the latter, in particular, is so often twinned with make-believe. The great issue is whether we cannot have the beneficence and the comfort without the make-believe. In the words of Hans Joas '*Braucht Man Religion?*', (Does humankind need religion?) He evoked what he spoke of as secular but, as he claimed transcendent experiences, such as those of the beautiful or sublime, as possibly vindicating religious claims. I cannot go along with this. Wordsworth had many such experiences, but as he rightly said it is in this world that: 'We find our happiness or not at all'.

The proper course to follow is to try to develop and propagate a morality rooted in a sound philosophical anthropology, a morality which tries to develop a sense of what will lead to worthwhile kinds of happiness and fulfillment as far as is compatible with a recognition of the true nature of things, and to create a rational motivation which will put that sense into practical effect. In one of his best works, and one least marked by his sometimes off putting characteristics *Human All Too Human: A Book For Free Spirits* the first part of which was published in 1878, part one, section 27, Nietzsche wrote (I am using the old Helen Zimmern translation): 'But one should eventually learn that the needs which have been satisfied by religion and are now to be satisfied by philosophy are not unchangeable; these themselves can be *weakened* and *eradicated.* Think, for instance of the Christian's distress of soul, his sighing over inward corruption, his anxiety for salvation—all notions which originate in errors of reason and deserve not satisfaction but destruction. A philosophy can serve either to *satisfy* those needs or to *set them aside*, for they are acquired, temporally limited needs, which are based upon suppositions contradictory to those of science. Here, in order to make a transition, *art* is far rather to be employed to relieve the mind over-burdened with emotions, for those notions receive much less support from it than from a metaphysical philosophy. It is easier, then, to pass over from art to a really liberating philosophical science.' Nietzsche has here sketched out an admirable agenda for the atheist.

From Polzeath To Piccadilly

A stretch of shore, a gulp of perfect breath.
Eyes figure out the granite twist,
shaping the landscape and all who live around.
Surfers trade clothes for rubber skin,
waiting as they do for arrival of the highest crest,
seeking perfect balance on the charging waves,
only to be dropped back into the shallows.
Ready for another go.
Then there are the steady steppers like us,
who travail the perfect beaches of sand that skirt
the sea's pure ranking force.
Breathe in, breathe out!
This is a cure, free on demand.

Now we are marching along posh high streets,
together for the final say. *Bollocks to Brexit!*
is our laughed out shout, as we pass,
all that power ingrained in stone.
A million marchers want free movement,
a steady climb to high human values.
Snarling nationalists want us to surrender,
but the true force of nature is ours not theirs.

David Burridge

Windows

Light
casting shadows as in sleep
in corners it cannot permeate
persistent the rain
tip tapping
or is it the wind trying to search
for an entrance
or an exit?

Do we look to the outside
or watch what enters
the hidden
worlds from within

so many
windows depending on choices
such as love or fear
decide
an outcome

not a word is exchanged
in the early morning light
just the wind
blowing through the open window

mute
translucent
unlit

Poem and Artwork by Scharlie Meeuws

Art and the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution had a major influence in many areas, not least in art. The following article gives a brief introduction and overview of some of the areas in which the art of painting was affected by it.

PAUL COCKBURN

How did the Industrial Revolution influence art? There are many ways in which it did so. The Industrial Revolution was such a major change to how people lived, thought, socialized and saw nature, that it was bound to impact in many ways on art. Many artists and some schools of art in effect rejected it, others embraced it.

One major way which emerged quite early on was in art inspired by the Romantic movement. The Romantics did not like the factories and the ugliness of the cities that grew as the Industrial Revolution progressed. Romantic art idealized the rural, the beauty of nature, the pastoral scene.

The classic is perhaps 'The Hay-Wain' painted by John Constable. The picture is set in a specific place: the hay-wain is passing Willy Lott's cottage on the river Stour, on the border of Essex and Suffolk near Flatford Mill in England. Flatford Mill was owned by Constable's father, and Willy Lott was a tenant farmer who lived all his life in the cottage. The landscape and clouds are not dramatic, but illustrate nature's natural beauty, and the picture shows man and animals in harmony with nature.

The Romantics also emphasized the emotions and the imagination of the individual and felt the working conditions in the factories dehumanized people. William Blake (1757-1827) was repelled by the ugliness of the new Industrial Age and the impact it was having on people's quality of life. He thought the cotton mills were Satanic. Like many Romantic artists he was influenced by medieval art, and his pictures were usually figurative and spiritual. Interestingly he invented his own engraving technique, called relief etching, to produce copies of his books. He was also unusual

The Hay-Wain by Constable

Blake: The Ancient of Days

in that he incorporated text into his pictures.

A completely different artistic response was excitement at the new life the Industrial Revolution engendered. As in the picture below by Adolph Menzel, the machines were powerful, large and the factory is bewitching, alive. British culture now worshipped invention, discovery and new technology. Matthew Boulton, the English entrepreneur and factory owner said 'I sell here, sir, what all the world desires – power'. Maybe not just steam–power! The light from the furnace is wholesome, brimming with energy, and the situation confusing with many people doing various tasks. Such a time of fast change is unsettling, people are anxious as well as facing the future with hope.

Much later the Italian Futurists in the early twentieth century just before the First World War fell in love with machines, particularly the car. They admired speed and technology, and the mastery that man exhibited over nature. Perhaps it was possible that man could be combined with the machine to produce some sort of a razor-sharp 'Superman'. Unfortunately science and technology was used instead in the First World War to produce some truly horrific weapons: mustard gas, tanks, large canons, machine guns etc.

In Turner's iconic picture 'The Fighting Temeraire Tugged to her Last Berth to be Broken Up', exhibited in 1839, both the old and the new technology are pictured, with the old sailing ship having to be 'rescued' and towed by a steam ship. The power of the wind which powered the Fighting Temeraire is being replaced by the power of steam made from coal in the engine

The Iron Rolling Mill, Adolph Menzel

Turner: The Fighting Temeraire

of the tug-boat. The sun setting symbolically relates to the end of an era for the British Navy and Britain. The future is steam-power! The pre-Raphaelite movement, founded by the artists Millais, Rossetti, and Holman Hunt in 1848, succeeded Romanticism. They came to believe art had degenerated and they wanted to return to medieval styles of painting, pushing even further away the horrors of the Industrial Revolution. Their cause was taken up by the famous art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900).

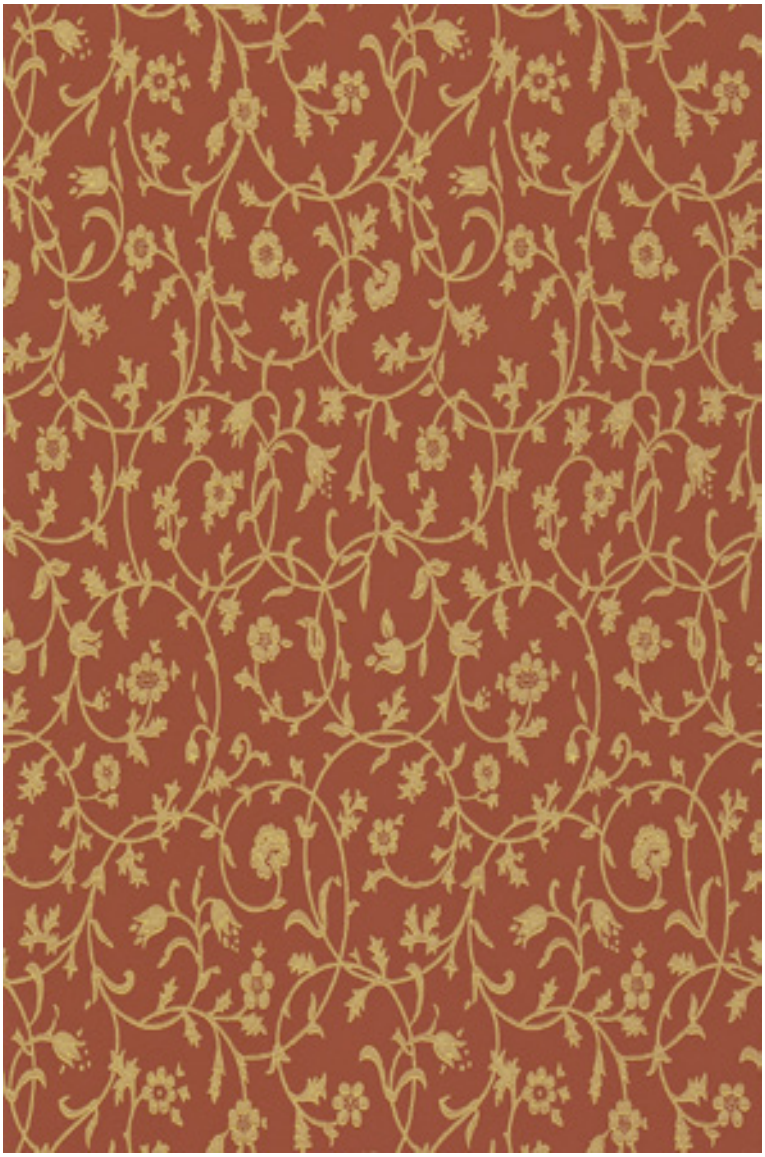
Ruskin was also influential in the founding of the Arts and Craft movement, along with William Morris (1834-1896). Ruskin and Morris wanted a return to hand-crafted decorative goods, instead of the mass-produced goods produced in the factories of the Industrial Revolution, which they considered worthless.

Morris wanted traditional craft methods to be preserved. His attitude to machinery changed over time however, as did his attitude to the division of labour. In 1881 he opened his printworks in Merton, London, and wrote how he wanted them to be a 'factory as it might be' in terms of his socialist principles. His wallpaper design prints are still famous now. He did not favour the division of labour, but in the manufacture of wallpaper for instance the design of prints is usually separated from the physical process of their production as wallpaper.

The revolt against the mass-production of artistic images was continued by Walter Benjamin much later in the 1930s. In his essay 'The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1935) Benjamin argued that an 'aura' was lost when art could be reproduced, the original single work of art lost something, it was somehow cheapened.

There were two technological changes in the 19th century which had a major impact on the way painting was actually done by artists. Up to the

A pre-Raphaelite picture



Morris: Traditional design

17th century painting took place mainly inside in studios, the artist had to create his own paint using materials such as egg yolk and dies, mixing and crushing them in pots. From 1841, when tubes of paint were invented, painting could be done 'en plein air', outside. This allowed more freedom, a painter might still sketch using pencil, say, but he/she could also add colour in real-time so to speak, for example as a sunset actually unfolded.

The second invention was that of photography in the 1830s. This allowed moments in time to be frozen and a detailed picture to be made of a scene on a photographic print. This resulted in art being able to 'escape' simple representation and art could develop at a more abstract level.

Modern Times

The recent invention and widespread use of computers, the internet and mobile phones from the 1950s till the present time can be seen as the continuation of the Industrial Revolution, or another phase of it. This phase has seen the development of abstract and conceptual art in painting. It certainly affects our mental and social lives in a very different way to the 'original' Industrial Revolution, which was more centred on the impact of manufacturing processes.

Life and Logic: an agon (Frege)

Desperate, lonely, cut off from the human community which in many cases has ceased to exist, wracked by desires for intimacy they do not know how to fulfil, at the same time tormented by the presence of women, men turn to logic.

The philosopher who combs the tangles from language must also be a butcher who trims away the fleshy fat of ordinary talk to leave the bare bones of truth.

Andrea Nye, ***Words of Power: a feminist reading of the history of logic***

CHRIS **NORRIS**

The noises start each time I turn away.
As symbols fill the blackboard so the air
Fills with my students' mockery. I bear
It without protest, hate them as I may.

The truths are hard, the insights all too rare.
How thoughts conspire to lead themselves astray!
It's truth alone keeps error's hordes at bay;
Let logic hear no more of feeling's share.

First target: natural language, where the sway
Of sentiment's a hazard to beware
Lest, using words without sufficient care,
We think amiss and there's a price to pay.

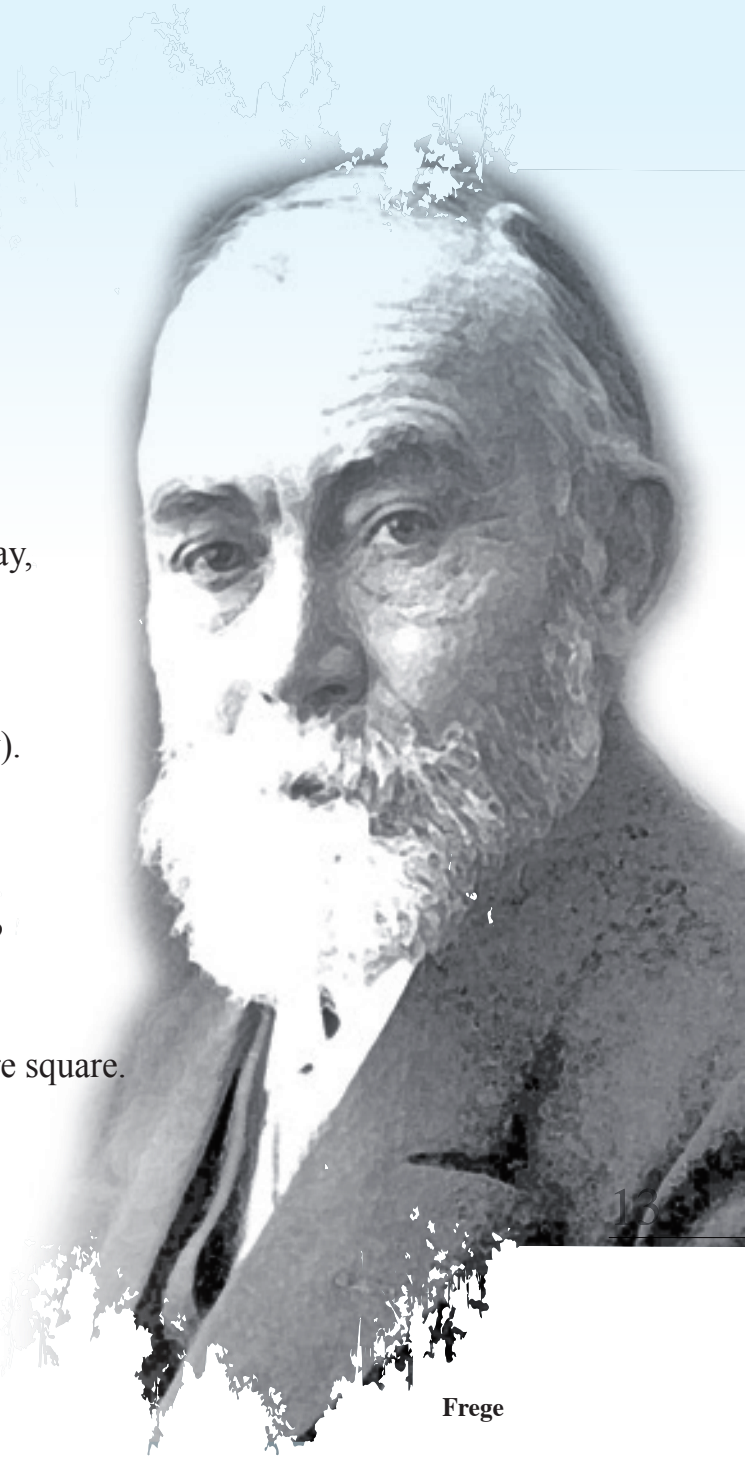
Confusing terms is one sure way to err,
Like 'concept' and 'idea', so you betray –
Like those fool students – how an everyday
Speech-habit proves a thought-disabling snare.

It's meanings merely private they convey
When speaking of 'ideas', thus showing they're
So far off-track that sometimes I despair
Of setting straight such mental disarray.

Ideas, like feelings, are one's own affair,
The sorts of fuzzy mental stuff that they,
Those students, might get by on as they play
Their games and whisper loudly as they dare.

No matter! It's thought's groundwork I must lay,
Its logical foundations, clean and spare,
No excess flesh, no feelings to declare
('Poor Gottlob, what a loveless life!', they say).

I see them, students, colleagues, pair by pair.
They live and love, but to what purpose, pray?
Make truth your idol, and those feet of clay,
Turned hard, will keep thought's superstructure square.



Frege

Not love but hatred, hate of all things skewed,
Illogical, emotive, vague, unclear,
Or plain deluded, like that crazed idea
Of Heidegger that truth might spring from mood.

Thoughts harden lest emotions interfere
Or feelings cloud their lucid solitude.
My jest: that ‘student’ signifies ‘one stewed
In a thick soup of sentiment and beer’.

They’ll find my journals one day, call them ‘crude’,
‘Misogynist’ and ‘racist’, try to smear
My character and even say that we’re
All crazed, all us logicians – monstrous brood!

And more: they'll seize on every chance to sneer
At me as just another badly screwed-
Up anti-semite, one whose bitter feud
With rivals morphed into a street-mob jeer.

What care I if my life-work's now construed,
In their crass terms, as stemming from my fear
Of women, proto-fascist traits, or mere
Logician's terror lest the world intrude.

I sense them massing now on thought's frontier,
Those soft-brain liberal 'reformers' who'd
Convince us their fake nostrums yield more food
For thought than logic – doctrine too severe!

It's crystalline perfection I've pursued,
A thinking ultra-hard and mind austere
Enough to hold, within its crystal sphere,
Truths valid from whatever angle viewed.

Sometimes I wonder what if I held dear
Those things they love, those pleasures I've eschewed
For logic's sake; then swiftly I conclude:
Subdue the flesh till logic's bones show clear!

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