

# The *Wednesday*

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Weekly Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

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## Editorial

### *Value-Creation as a Sign of Strength*

We had a debate two weeks ago on diversity in the light of an increasing number of conferences on the topic. What is of interest for me is the language it is normally couched in and the psychology behind it. This varies from a broad, enlightened approaches to narrow minded, reactive approaches.

The Western experience of thought and politics over the last four centuries has been one of increasing confidence and a high feeling of freedom and in a large sense, insistence on rationality and universality. They represented independence of mind and a feeling of sovereignty. It is one mark of practical reason since Kant that it is self-legislating and a creator of value. This is true of most rational thinkers but also of a naturalist like Nietzsche. What combines all these philosophers is the belief that one should be active and not reactive, especially in the moral sphere. To be self-legislative is to be free, disciplined and be able to impart the feeling of respect and command around one.

There was also a high emphasis on truth. Fichte thought that to give someone false information is to limit his freedom because he will only act rationally if he acts on correct information. Rationality requires that we have the truth as basis of our thinking and acting. It is also a sign of power that one acts on truth and do not follow false opinions and propaganda. False opinion will lead to a climate of fear and reaction.

But sovereignty, freedom, truth and universality all seem now to have been gradually undermined. They are giving way to a confused discourse that is based on misunderstanding and irrational feelings, and is reactive and resentful. I am not talking here about the obvious discourse that has been voiced in the media and is also in academic and philosophical discourse.

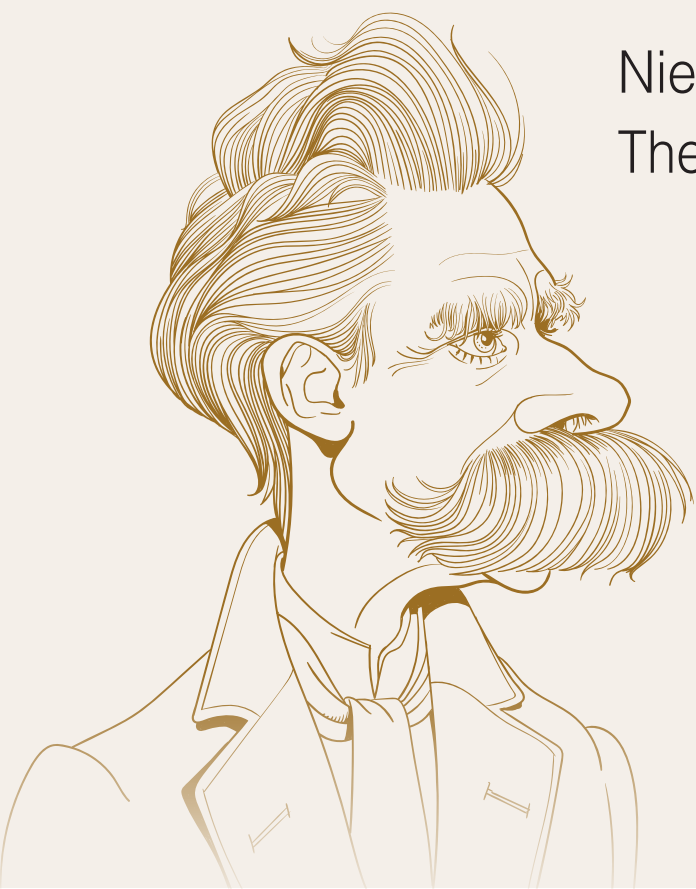
Only a generation ago, the ideas of diversity and critique were celebrated. They were regarded at as a correction and a qualification to the inherited thought in philosophy and sociology. There was a strong critique of grand narrative, subjectivity, gender and injustice. The aim was to build a new society and a politics that is more enlightened and self-assured, that will shoulder global changes and support the new age we are entering. But now all this has been put into doubt. There are those who think that critique has gone too far. There are also those who talk of divided values in a divided world, East and West, and they blame social dislocation on global trends such as immigration.

There is no doubt that major shifts are happening in technology, communications, mass migration and the disintegration of many national states. These changes carry with them positive and negative aspects. But it all depends on how we perceive these changes and philosophise about them. I suggest that we philosophise about them from a position of strength rather than from reaction to them and weakness. It is important to recognise positive aspects and use them to build a better historical development rather than refusing to engage with history and direct its movement from within.

The one advantage for the modern world is that it is self-conscious. New thoughts interact with old ones with the aim of correcting historical development and providing it with the light of truth and a feeling of strength. It is also significant that the developed world was always a leader in creating values, such as human rights, consideration for marginalised groups and solidarity with the weak and disadvantaged. It has been a sovereign legislator of good values and should stay so.

*The Editor*

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# Nietzsche As A Philosopher: The Views Of Some Philosophers

**We had published last week some of the early continental philosophers' interpretation of Nietzsche. Since then, Nietzsche gained a wide recognition as a philosopher, albeit a philosopher of a special kind with his own way of using literary devices and mythologies. In this second part of this major article on Nietzsche and his interpreters, the attention shifts towards the English-speaking philosophy and reception by analytical philosophers of Nietzsche.**

## Part 2

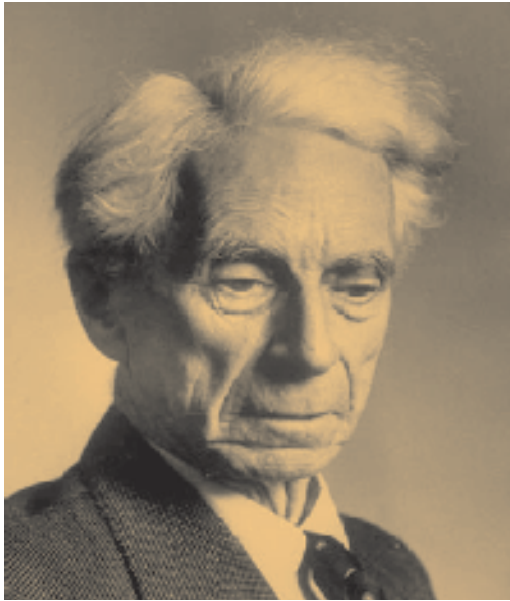
EDWARD GREENWOOD

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As far as the English were concerned, they amply repaid Nietzsche's deprecation of them as philosophers. Oxford and Cambridge in both their idealist and post-idealist phases ignored him. It is amusing to see Bertrand Russell's cocky attitude towards him when he discovered that his future wife Alys's sister Mary, later Mary Berenson, wife of the art historian, was interested in his work. On November 6<sup>th</sup> 1894, Russell prides himself on having discovered 'confusions' in Nietzsche. Two days later he writes, using the Quaker form of address: "How could thee fancy she would convert me to Nietzsche. My metaphysical conscience is the most immutable thing about me. I couldn't admire an amateur philosopher even if thee made it a condition of marriage, I believe. On the contrary I've led her to exclaim of her own accord, 'Why that's rather silly, or commonplace, or not worth saying isn't it?' several times and have shown her why certain questions shouldn't be asked e.g. 'Why seek truth?' because the answer, if true, involves that one did not set the question honestly but was covertly seeking the truth in setting it...and if false, then we were not honest in seeking the answer."

Russell's infamous potboiler *A History of Western Philosophy* first appeared in 1946 at a time when Nietzsche's reputation in the English-speaking world was at its nadir. "Nietzsche", he writes, "though a professor was a literary philosopher." He goes on: "In justice to Nietzsche it must be mentioned that many modern developments which have a certain connection with his ethical outlook are contrary to his clearly expressed opinions." This is presumably referring to Nazism. But at the end of the chapter he cannot resist the gibe, "His followers have had their innings." An ironic tone of distance and distaste is evident throughout the piece. Naturally he resents Nietzsche's deprecation of his own hero Mill and is outraged by Nietzsche's remarks about women, though one is driven to observe that Nietzsche's actual conduct towards the women he knew was much more admirable than Russell's.

The atheistic Russell finds Nietzsche's rejection of Christianity, particularly when it takes the form of 'Dostoevskyan prostration' broadly sympathetic. But Russell is surely mistaken in saying that Nietzsche was not interested in the



**Russell**



**Kaufmann**

metaphysical truth of Christianity or any other religion. It was in fact the premium Nietzsche put on intellectual honesty, a virtue he thinks most do not possess, which was what led him to think it of the first importance to engage with and reject those metaphysical claims. Russell also rebukes Nietzsche for his inability to accept the concept of ‘universal love’. But this only exposes Russell’s own self-regard and pride in his own humanitarianism. Surely Nietzsche is right to regard ‘universal love’ as an empty concept often used by those who preen themselves on being do-gooders? Russell ends with an imaginary dialogue between Buddha and Nietzsche. He is right, of course, to point to the axiomatic disagreement of the two thinkers, but he is quite wrong to accuse Nietzsche of enjoying pain and forgets that he wrote: “Alle Lust will ewigkeit” (All joy seeks for eternity) and only endorsed pain and sickness when they were bound up with achievement, not for their own sake.

The main thrust of the essay, however, is the familiar complaint that Nietzsche had no contribution to make to technical philosophy; but as the end of the piece concedes that technical arguments are of no avail except in mathematical and scientific questions, this hardly undermines Nietzsche’s status as a philosopher. As Nietzsche wrote in section 345 of *The Joyful Science*: “It makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems

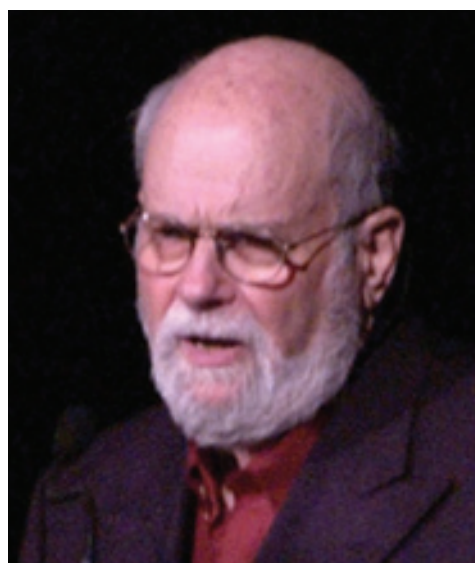
and finds in them his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an ‘impersonal’ one, meaning that he can do no better than to touch them and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought.” Philosophy cannot be confined to problems like the nature of induction or the nature of number and simply put on a level with the sciences as desired by such figures as Russell and Quine. There indeed problems can be tackled with cold antennae. But this hardly applies to the Socratic question of how one should live, or to Kant’s three ideas of Reason: God, Freedom and Immortality. Philosophy, as Waismann said, is a matter of vision as well as of technique and Nietzsche’s vision is far more complex, many sided and fructifying than that of Russell or Quine.

English analytic philosophy rose with G E Moore’s attack on Idealism. In his autobiographical sketch in the Schilpp volume, Moore acknowledged that his problems were not set by his own relation to the world and life, but rather by his relation to the bizarre things said by philosophers. His was, in short, a second order engagement with the first order problems of others and he set the agenda for philosophy to become the task of dissolving conceptual confusions, of getting flies out of bottles, a task which Wittgenstein was to perform with far more genius, brio and literary power.

Walter Kaufmann has a good, if brief, section on analytic philosophy in his *Critique of Religion*



Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen



Danto

and *Philosophy*. He points to the salutary scrupulousness and honesty of much analytic philosophy and deprecates those who deprecate it. However, he was not at all satisfied with one of the first attempts of an analytic philosopher to take Nietzsche seriously, that of Arthur Danto.

Of course, philosophers on the continent such as Jaspers, Heidegger and Löwith took Nietzsche seriously and devoted much attention to him, but they themselves were not highly regarded as philosophers in England. Kaufmann never swallowed Heidegger's Nietzsche interpretation or Heidegger's own philosophy for that matter. Heidegger's thousand pages on Nietzsche are more revealing about Heidegger than Nietzsche and his method of interpretation is of just the kind Nietzsche had condemned in *Human All Too Human*, a work about which, not surprisingly, he has nothing to say. In section 270, 'The Art Of Reading', Nietzsche writes: "Production and preservation of texts, together with their elucidation pursued in a guild for centuries, has now finally discovered the correct methods." These involve what Nietzsche calls "a simple desire to understand what the author is saying.... To have discovered these methods was an achievement, let no one undervalue it! It is only when the art of correct reading, that is to say philology, arrived at its summit that science of any kind acquired continuity and constancy." Section 17 of *The Wanderer and His Shadow* runs: "He who

explains a passage in an author 'more deeply' than the passage was meant has not explained an author but obscured him." These are the very practices in which Heidegger wilfully indulges. Nietzsche put historical philology and natural science on a level as the two great world-changing achievements of the nineteenth century. Heidegger would have regarded neither as what he called 'thought' - an activity of which he thought only he was capable.

Nietzsche fared somewhat better among American philosophers than he had done among English ones. Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen in her book *American Nietzsche* thinks Nietzsche had some influence on Royce, notably in regard to a sense of the importance of history. She says that in *The Philosophy Of Loyalty* Royce had words of praise for Nietzsche, calling him a 'philosophical rhapsodist.' That phrase, however, I think points to certain reservations. She writes that Royce warned against misinterpreting the idea of the *Übermensch* as being one who overcomes society rather than, as Nietzsche intends, 'One who overcomes the self'. She documents William James's interest in Nietzsche and ambivalence about him. Royce comes over as much more sympathetic to Nietzsche than James does. Towards the end of the chapter 'The Value Of Saintliness' in *Varieties Of Religious Experience* James discusses Nietzsche's attack on saints and ascetics and regards 'Poor Nietzsche's antipathy' to them as 'sickly.'





Royce



Maudemarie Clark



Williams

Ratner-Rosenhagen quotes James as writing that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's peevishness reminded him 'of the sick shriekings of two dying rats.' James's pupil Santayana said of James that he did not believe, but believed only in the right to believe. Nietzsche had a much more critical stance towards religious belief than James who in this respect can be enrolled among those James himself called the 'tender minded.' Nietzsche is among the tough minded and I endorse his stance in this matter rather than James's. Santayana, a lapsed Catholic of Spanish origin, devotes more than one chapter of his *Egotism in German Philosophy* to Nietzsche. The work was originally published in 1916 and reprinted in 1968 under the title *The German Mind*. Santayana was living in England in 1916 and could hardly escape the pervading atmosphere of hostility to all things German, but his temperamental detachment from human follies means this is not too obtrusive, for, though he had found much to ridicule about the Germans after his sojourn with them, there was also much he found to admire in them. As an Aristotelian realist he rejected German transcendentalism and in this rejection, of course, he was at one with Nietzsche. He is far more sympathetic to Nietzsche, whom he sees as fundamentally a tender soul, than to Hegel, whom he sees as a worshipper of success, as Nietzsche himself did. Once more, however, we get the view of Nietzsche as primarily a writer, as "poetical, fragmentary and immature," and as having (a

familiar move) "no great technical competence." He approaches Nietzsche's ethics from the point of view of a lapsed Catholic and an Aristotelian. But to say Nietzsche puts goods and evils beyond and above right and wrong is misleading. He does not make it clear that Nietzsche wants to get rid of only much in current views of right and wrong, not the ideas of right and wrong, and that he wants to substitute '*schlecht*' (bad) for *böse* (evil in the sense of sinful), and indeed wants to get rid of the Christian notion of sin altogether. Totally mistakenly, he regards Nietzsche as a pragmatist who "confessed that truth itself did not interest him", a travesty of Nietzsche's position. Santayana claims that Nietzsche could not understand the Greeks and yet goes on to claim that Plato, of all people, had a high regard for art. He seems to have forgotten the notorious attack on artists and poets in *The Republic*. Nietzsche had a far better understanding of the Greeks than Santayana who confessed that because of his Latin background he had never been able to feel at home in Greek as he undoubtedly did in Latin. Santayana's claim that the 'revelation' (presumably he means the Christian revelation) stood for 'funded experience' is absurd. Nietzsche saw that the claim to Christian revelation, far from being 'funded experience', was just a piece of human all too human hubris. In his postscript Santayana (who, though lapsed from the faith, has a strong residual hostility to Protestantism) fails to dissociate Nietzsche of all

## Philosophy

people from the German ‘racial myth’. Santayana is completely unaware that Nietzsche had rejected not only what Santayana calls the special kind of theoretical egotism of transcendental idealism, but also what Nietzsche himself referred to as the German “race swindle”.

In the last two decades, many philosophers who admire the analytic tradition (which is not, of course to be identified with the so called ‘ordinary language philosophy’ associated with Oxford) have turned their attention to Nietzsche, notably Bernard Williams and Maudemarie Clark. In Maudemarie Clark’s essay ‘On the Rejection of Morality: Bernard Williams’s Debt To Nietzsche’, published in Richard Schacht’s anthology *Nietzsche’s Postmoralism* (2001), Maudemarie Clark has a very interesting footnote in which she tells us that when she suggested to Williams that in much of his early work on ethics he had been working under Nietzsche’s influence, he corroborated this, and even said that he had been contracted in the 1970s to write a book on Nietzsche. He said that he did not write it, however, because he was unable to solve “the problem of Nietzsche’s style.” Indeed in

his essay ‘Nietzsche’s Moral Psychology,’ printed in *The Sense Of The Past* Williams wrote: “...the resistance to the continuation of philosophy by the ordinary means is built into the text, which is ‘booby- trapped’ not only against recovering theory from it, but, in many cases, against any systematic exegesis that assimilates it to theory.”

Williams is surely right. Nietzsche’s writing achieves this unassimilability partly by its choice of subject matter, partly by its style (the use of hyperbole at times, for example), partly by the sometimes shocking attitudes it expresses. These features certainly stand out against a mere straightforward exegesis of Nietzsche and an easy incorporation into the history of philosophy. Some think that these features preclude the incorporation of Nietzsche into philosophy as a serious enterprise altogether. But surely, if that is meant to imply that Nietzsche is unimportant as a philosopher, it must be wrong.

**(The third and last part will be published next week).**

## The *Wednesday*’s Festive Dinner

After our last week’s meeting, the group went to Café Rouge for our festive dinner.

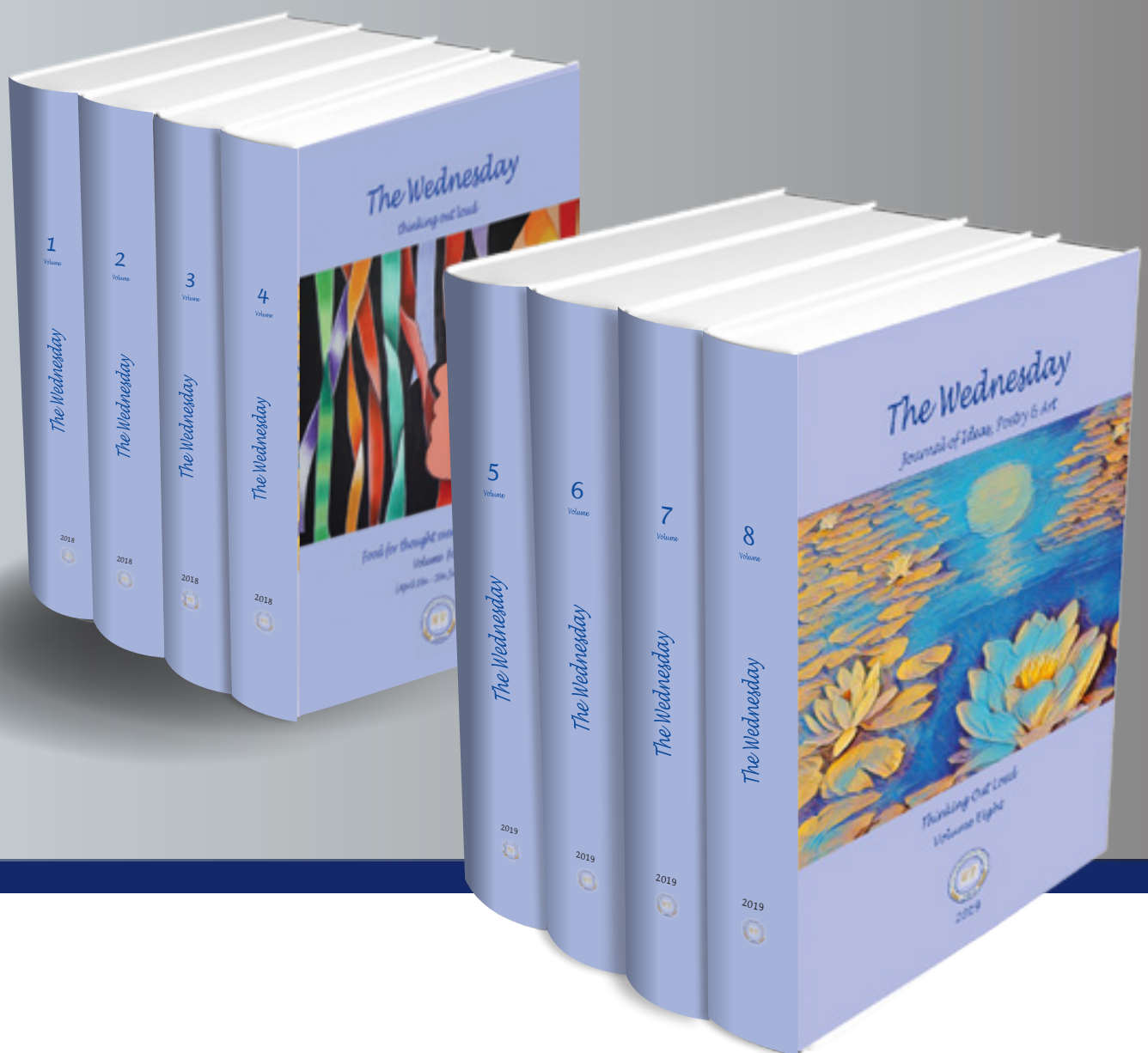


Thanks to Mike Simera who took the photograph, and missed being included.

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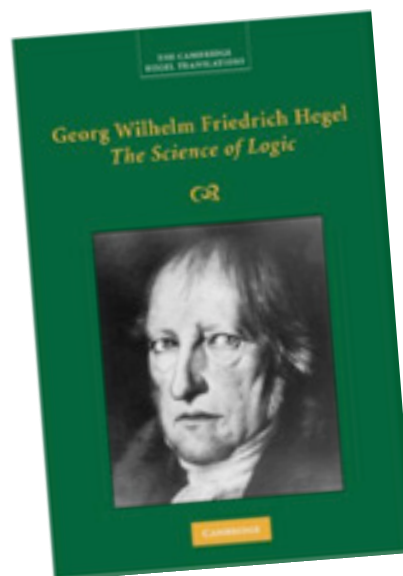
# Why Does Hegel's Logic Start With Being?

DAVID BURRIDGE

Hegel is seeking to establish a *Science of Logic*, with a purity which no other science typically has. He recognises from the outset the difficulty of finding a beginning to philosophy; it must be something mediated or immediate. In reality it will be something of both. Very clearly if a thinker starts with a belief premise, or even one with some already defined aspect of knowledge the outcome is predetermined to some degree. For logic to be pure it needs to have pure knowledge, which is only to be found in the ultimate and absolute truth of consciousness. Logic must be a pure science, from pure knowledge in the full compass of its development. Setting aside every reflection and simply taking what is there before us. No presupposition is to be made, simple immediacy. The beginning he argued is pure being. The logic that flows will be directed toward the absolute truth.

How can we achieve this immediacy? How do we avoid the usual beginning of scientific thinking; presupposing a representation which is subsequently analysed? The beginning can't be from anything concrete, because this would presuppose a connection within itself – a process of mediation and transition from itself to another. Consequently that which constitutes the beginning is to be taken as something unanalysable, therefore pure being is completely empty. The obvious question now is what does the philosopher do? Hegel's answer is that 'philosophical thinking proceeds analytically in that it simply takes up its object, the idea, and lets it go its own way.'

So it is a passive process, observing without introducing our own inventions or opinions. Pure being is emptied of all our thoughts. Therefore it is no surprise when he equates it with nothingness. But where do we find 'pure being'? Clearly not in the phenomenal world. Perhaps within what Kant called the noumenal world? But that would be an existence implied not known. Hegel's *Logic* seems to have a mystical basis. Throughout time, mystics have



Cambridge edition of Hegel's *Science of Logic*

talked about a reality outside themselves (*Cloud of Unknowing*; for example).

Roger Scruton argues: 'Logic begins from being and advances towards its conclusion, which is the absolute idea or truth itself. This absolute idea is thought and reality at once'. 'Hegel's metaphysics consists of an ontological proof of the existence of everything'.

Scruton defends Hegel as follows: 'Hegel has recently been execrated as the greatest intellectual disaster in the history of mankind. Rightly understood however, he was the true philosopher of the modern consciousness, and those who, like Russell, see only the pretentious exterior of his thinking, show themselves to be blind to the spiritual crisis that Hegel was striving to describe - the crisis of a civilisation that has discovered the God upon whom it depended to be also its own creation.'

If this is the basis of Hegel's *Logic*, then pure being is a mediated concept. If pure being is an intellectual abstraction that is fine. If it is to be seen as a reality to be found behind every object, then the empiricist in me will worry about where the *Logic* will take us.





## Walls

walls are surroundings and separations  
within the field of the heart

walls enclose and hide  
walls surround belongings and cause jealousy  
walls are everywhere  
between all of us

only lovers and ghosts walk right through them

**Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws***

### Odysseus at Forty

First you will come to the Sirens who enchant all who come near them. If any one unwarily draws in too close and hears the singing of the Sirens, his wife and children will never welcome him home again . . . Therefore pass these Sirens by, and stop your men's ears with wax that none of them may hear; but if you like you can listen yourself, for you may get the men to bind you as you stand upright on a cross-piece half way up the mast, and they must lash the rope's ends to the mast itself, that you may have the pleasure of listening. If you beg and pray the men to unloose you, then they must bind you faster.

**Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book XII, trans. Samuel Butler**

Workers must look ahead with alert concentration and ignore anything which lies to one side. The urge toward distraction must be grimly sublimated in redoubled exertions. Thus the workers are made practical. The other possibility Odysseus chooses for himself, the landowner, who has others to work for him. He listens, but does so while bound helplessly to the mast . . . Odysseus is represented in the sphere of work. Just as he cannot give way to the lure of self-abandonment, as owner he also forfeits participation in work and finally even control over it, while his companions, despite their closeness to things, cannot enjoy their work because it is performed under compulsion, in despair, with their senses forcibly stopped.

**T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott**



**CHRIS NORRIS**

Why should those songs unheard now haunt my ear,  
Disturb my nights, stir memories long subdued,  
Count my great deeds a tedious traveller's tale,  
And make this home, this Ithaca, a place  
As strange to me as distant seas and skies?

No doubting Circe's words: 'Be sure to steer  
Far wide of them, that sense-beguiling brood,  
Those sirens whose allure, for those who sail  
Too close to shore, will prove a foul embrace  
Of evil masked in beauty's cunning guise'.

Thus her advice: 'if they, your sailors, hear  
One note of it you'll soon find out you're crewed  
By sex-drunk loons, so see to it that they'll  
Have ears securely plugged lest such disgrace  
Turn out your odyssey's enduring prize'.





The return of Odysseus

Meanwhile I, as their leader, should appear  
 Strong-willed and resolute against those lewd  
 Yet lovely blandishments, so must not fail  
 To listen open-eared and yet, in case  
 Their spell prevails, make sure a shipmate ties

Me tight to the ship's mast. Then we'd not veer  
 From straight ahead despite the notes that wooed  
 My captive ear, notes sung to no avail  
 Since those unyielding ropes were there to brace  
 Me firm against all charms they might devise.

Master and crew: my task, to show that we're  
 'All in this thing together', though construed  
 More expertly it shows that there's a scale  
 That runs from those, like me, equipped to face  
 The threat head on and those whose ears or eyes

## Poetry

Need covering lest exposure cost us dear  
As all succumb. And so it was we hewed  
To a fixed course, ensured they not regale  
Our sense with demon spells, and left that space  
Of waking dream still echoing with their cries.

What if the crew repine? They know that we're  
Born warriors and rulers while those rude  
Mechanicals are there to row, to bail  
Us out sometimes, or – on command – to chase  
And sink the foe should proper cause arise.

For it was reason, vaunting yet austere,  
That taught me those devices to preclude  
The sirens' song, to fortify our frail  
Sense-organs by the tricks on which I'd base  
My game-plan when a fight-plan seemed unwise.

I think: one day they'll make it their idea,  
Those future masters of the multitude  
Who take my lead and play the alpha male,  
While every gesture bears the ancient trace  
Of women spurned to firm up social ties.

\* \* \* \*

Penelope

Yet there's another thought occurs to me  
At times in this enforced retreat, this late  
Retirement from the voyaging, the wars,  
The monsters, the temptations, and the few  
Brief times of joy such as – why now deny

The truth? – that mind-subduing melody  
The sirens sang. Years on, I alternate  
Between my stock account of it which draws  
The usual moral and the one I drew  
Back then while it was ringing still in my







Siren

Rapt ears and vibrant soul. Though Circe's plea  
Determined me at first to navigate  
As far from their sweet songs as from the jaws  
Of Charybdis, I yet chose to pursue  
That other, riskier course by which to try

What dreams, what visions, and what ecstasy  
Might lie in store could we but contemplate  
A realm beyond the future-binding laws  
Of calculative reason. Why eschew  
Such music at their chill command, and why

So readily accept the tale that she,  
The sorceress Circe, opted to narrate,  
Most likely with a view to settling scores  
With some old deity or other who  
Might help her out with Helios by and by

If I just played along. Penelope,  
My poor long-suffering wife, had vowed to wait  
In Ithaca and put her life on pause  
Until my journey's end, so I should do  
My best by her and let no vamp belie

My marriage-vows or count me devotee  
Of her wild cult. Yet had I known my fate,  
Years later, was to do the menial chores  
And tend my crops and raise stout trees to hew  
For strangers' ships then I'd have told them 'ply

An inshore course, unplug your ears, and be  
My boon-companions in a change of state  
Where beating hearts keep pace with beating oars  
And warrior-captain shares with warrior-crew  
The sound of souls attuned to sea and sky'.



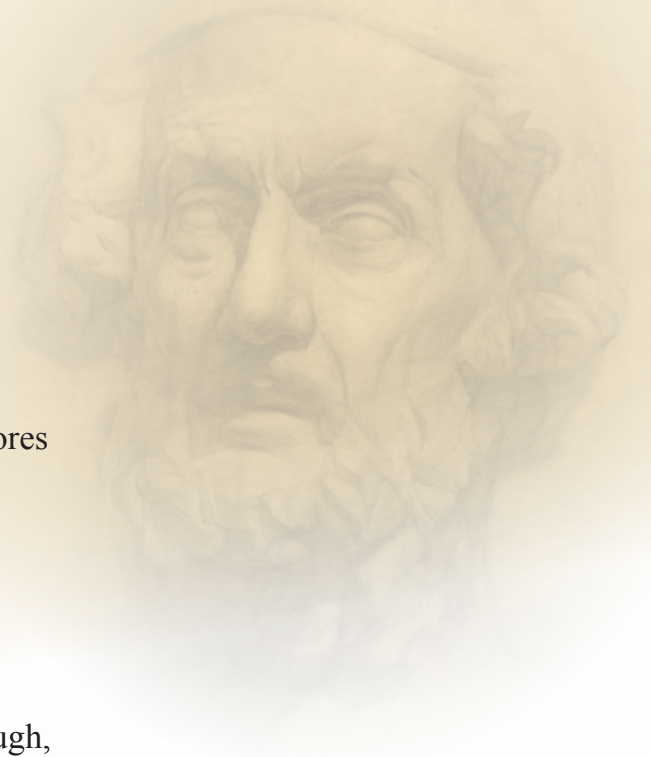
Homer

You'll ask why the interpreters agree  
With Circe, thinking fit to designate  
That sorceress my advisor in the cause  
Of *nostos*, truth and justice while they view  
The sirens, with a prejudicial eye,

As demons any virtuous man would flee  
Before their soul-corrupting poison bait  
Could charm his ears. Yet who's to say it's whores  
And temptresses alone whose songs subdue  
Male reason or who scoff when men apply

Their repertoire of scheme and strategy  
In ways that vainly strive to sublimate  
All passion and desire? It's in the flaws  
Of suchlike grand designs that they break through,  
Those forces apt to send our plan awry

By giving voice to everything that we,  
The planners, dread lest it initiate  
Yet further sailings past yet further shores  
Where wave-borne echoes shimmer in the blue  
And souls re-echo to the sirens' cry.



Sirens





Circe

Yet it's a sensual music, one set free  
From soul's dominion and the body-hate  
That comes of unchecked reason when it gnaws  
At every bond of kind and kinship due  
To fellow humans, be they low or high.

Take my Odyssean exploits as your key  
To all life-passages and you'll negate  
Whatever chance of happiness was yours  
As each strategic game-plan steals from you  
All hope of seizing pleasures as they fly.

My fate, to have the title 'Odyssey'  
Forever linked to stories they'll relate,  
Those bards, as if I merited applause  
Solely for exploits hand-picked to accrue  
Top marks from trickster, rogue, and clever-guy.

Some may remark the savage irony  
Of this, a gist their tellings must dictate,  
Not mine, since I've exhausted all my stores  
Of irony along with derring-do,  
Low cunning, guile, and meanings on the sly.

Think of me as a twice-born returnee,  
The wily hero of an earlier date  
Now turned a slave to memory who implores  
No more than time enough to dream anew  
Those voices Circe told me to defy.

## *The Wednesday*

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