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Editorial

Posthumous Thoughts

Nietzsche wrote an interesting paragraph in his *Ecce Homo*: 'I am one thing, my creations are another. Here, before I speak of the books themselves, I shall touch upon the question of their being understood or not understood. I shall do this in as perfunctory a manner as the occasion demands; for the time has not yet come for this question. My time has not yet come either; some are born posthumously. One day institutions will be needed in which men will live and teach as I understand living and teaching; maybe also by that time chairs will have been founded for the interpretation of Zarathustra.' (*Why I Write Such Good Books*). I found this text prophetic.

I only mention Nietzsche here because he is an example of a new birth in a new generation and a new interpretation. Suddenly the world wakes up to missed ideas and possibilities. This is happening now with the discovery of the value of Spinoza's thought. A growing number of researchers across Europe and America are working on his ideas. Some find them necessary to understand the Enlightenment, others see them, together with Leibniz's, as the key to Post-Kantian philosophy.

One can say the same about mediaeval philosophers and mystics. In the last thirty years, there has been a great interest in the 12/13th century Islamic mystic Muhyi ad-Din Ibn al-Arabi. It is interesting that his name connotes 'The Reviver of Religion'. Some reasons for the interest in his thought is due to their relevance to our time and their connections with the intellectual side of mysticism which I find very philosophical, but also to the discovery of more of his original texts and the availability of more and more of them in critically edited copies. This also could be said of other mediaeval philosophers.

It seems that there is a kind of destiny for books and their authors. Ancient texts had that about them. For example, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and *The Rosetta Stone*. Ideas have their destiny to be found and discovered, but there is also so much creativity in the world that has not yet been absorbed.

But it is not only the actual written books. Some unwritten books have find their way to the light or come to birth posthumously. A few years ago Professor Adam Smyth wrote an interesting article tracing the history of such almost imaginary books. George Steiner who died recently wrote in his *My Unwritten Books*: 'A book unwritten is more than a void. It accompanies the work one has done like an active shadow, both ironic and sorrowful. It is one of the lives we could have lived, one of the journeys we didn't take. Philosophy teaches that negation can be determinant. It is more than a denial of a possibility. Privation has consequences that we cannot see or gauge accurately. It is the unwritten book that might have made the difference. Which might have allowed one to fail better. Or perhaps not.' One could discuss this with the help of Borges's *Library of Babylon*.

The age of globalization is not all doom and gloom, but has created the possibility of people and ideas moving across the world, and the mixing of nationalities, traditions and languages. The gap between languages is narrowing, giving access to the whole human intellectual heritage, especially with the increase in translations. The future is bright and pregnant with all sorts of possibilities for looking at past texts or creating future ones. I will expect more posthumous births of philosophers, poets and artists and their works. It will be indeed a time worth living to see - a 'high noon', metaphorically and intellectually speaking.

The Editor

Losing Faith: J.S Mill And Friedrich Nietzsche

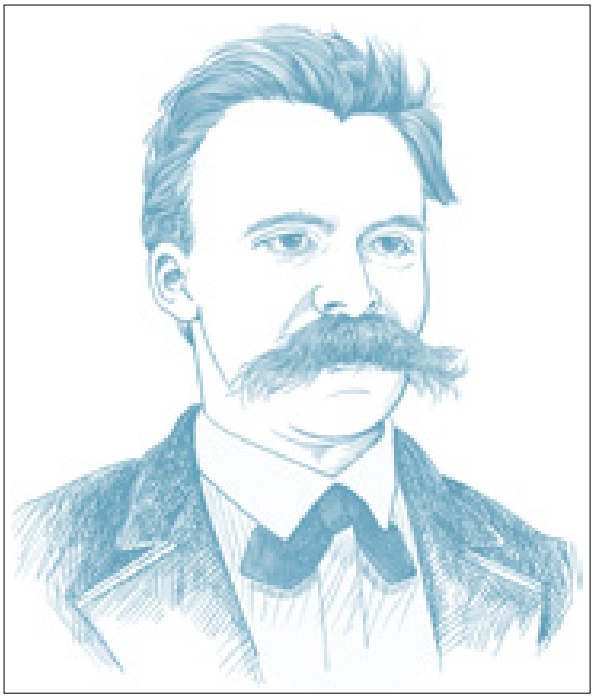
EDWARD GREENWOOD

The nineteenth century produced two of the greatest and most comprehensive minds in human history: John Stuart Mill and Friedrich Nietzsche. They were the most comprehensive minds because both of them, unlike most earlier philosophers, thought that a critical history rooted in psychology was the key to understanding human nature, life '*kata to anthropinon*' as that most politic of human historians Thucydides put it, 'Life according to the human thing'. True Rousseau had made great strides in widening the scope of human individualism and introspection, but his egoism pointed not only to the achievements of a Wordsworth but to the self apologies of such canaille as Dostoevsky's underground man and a thousand other contemptible modern self-apologists, whereas Nietzsche's egoism was the egoism of those worthy of having an ego, those who practiced an ethic of *Vornemheit* or aristocratic distinction.

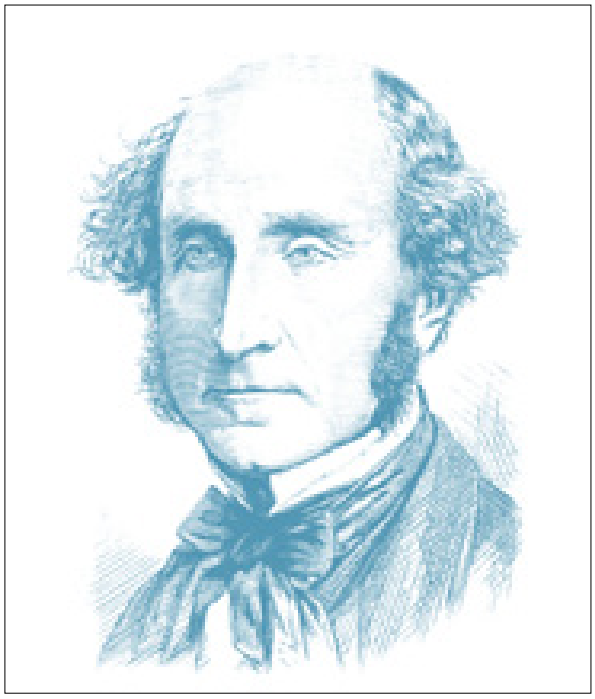
Kant and Hegel had valued history, but the two latter had made the great mistake of thinking they could extract themselves from history and view it, so to speak, from outside and above. They both arrogated to themselves a providential vision of the direction of history as a whole, a vision which would be possible to an omniscient God alone. In this they secularized, in effect, the Christian idea of Providence. Here Mill shows himself the inferior of Nietzsche. Mill, by both Bentham's futurist optimism and Comte's historical progressivism, also believed human history has a direction, namely a move to the expansion of individualism and liberty. In this too Mill is the heir to Christian 'linear' thinking. Humanity was moving to a sort of secularised 'City of Humanity' rather than a 'City of God'. Nietzsche, on the contrary, though he saw individuals as capable of discovering their best selves and realizing them, rejected any notion of linear progress and preferred a cyclical view.

However, both Mill and Nietzsche regarded the first intellectual virtue as putting a premium on both the discovery and propagation of truth. Indeed, though Mill had a residual attraction to a sort of Deism, both of them gave cogent reasons to be atheists, because a sincere devotion to philosophical truth is used to undermine all religions. Both natural science and history reject the supernatural and, in adopting naturalism, they undermine the basis of most religions from the start. Natural science explains in purely physical terms the unplanned causation of events. In doing so it undermines all justification of religion by pure reason or so called natural theology. Here religious claims are shown not to be false but logically incoherent, for as space and time all there is, it is as inconceivable that there is a mind outside it and causally controlling all within it as that there is such a thing as a round square. History takes account of this, but adds to it by a quasi psychological investigation of the reasons behind the acts of agents. This exposes the human basis of all pretentions to prophecy and so to the justification of religion through revelation. This is the empirical overthrowing of religious pretentions.

Mill, the earlier of the two, never knew Nietzsche, so we do not know what he would have thought of him. I like to think his view would have been like mine, one of measured approval. Nietzsche's prejudices come out in his view of Mill. Nietzsche thought only the Greeks and Germans were capable of profound philosophizing and regarded most Englishmen as addicted to a shallow pated Utilitarianism. In *The Twilight of the Idols* he refers to the '*Beleidinge Klarheit'*. The 'hurtful clarity' of Mill's writing. Mill was a eudaemonist, Nietzsche a self-perfectionist, but both shared a deep fear of the conformity of mass society. Gladstone called Mill 'the saint of rationalism', but Mill transcended any too narrow view of reason by wishing to supplement it by a responsiveness to the poetic imagination



Friedrich Nietzsche



J.S. Mill

and in his balancing of the value of Coleridge as against the limitations of Bentham. Nietzsche, on the other hand has been stigmatized as 'the prophet of irrationalism' because of the febrility of his tone at times. But such a judgment is quite unfair. He prized reason quite as much as Mill, hated nationalistic prejudice and was as vocal as Tolstoy in denouncing the European nations in the 1880s as an armed camp. Far from being the warmonger so many have thought him to be, Nietzsche was a pacifist. We might call this side of his work the unknown Nietzsche, particularly evident in the early '*The Wanderer and His Shadow*', a work which should be much better known than it is. Even in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche at his most vatic, we find in the section 'Of the Flies of the Market Place' such remarks as 'Truth has never yet clung to the arm of an inflexible man.' Zarathustra himself is an oxymoron, 'a sceptical prophet.'

One striking contrast between Mill and Nietzsche is in the time which it took them to emancipate themselves from their respective upbringings. This may be partly because Mill's whole education was progressive and forward looking, whereas the Young Nietzsche was brought up in an atmosphere of stifling backward looking Lutheran piety. Mill's wonderful *Autobiography* shows how slow and painful the emancipation from his father's narrow calculative rationalism was. In chapter five of the Autobiography he tells us how it was in the autumn of 1826, that is in his twentieth year, that he fell into a dejection similar to that to which Coleridge had given consummate expression in his 'Ode on Dejection'

> A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear,
> A drowsy, stifled, unimpassioned grief,
> Which finds no natural outlet or relief
> In word, or sigh, or tear.

Utilitarianism is essentially a forward looking creed and Mill had suffered an arrest of forward progress when he asked himself whether he would feel personal happiness if all the aims of his creed were fulfilled and found the answer was a decisive and debilitating 'no'. Nietzsche's emancipation from his upbringing came in his eighteenth year when at Easter 1862, the time of his first communion, he suddenly realized that he no longer held to the faith in which he had been brought up. He broke free from 'the stifling atmosphere of 'Naumburg piety'.

Book Review

A Journey Along The Christian Way

FLORIN TOADER **TOMOIOAGĂ***

The metropolitan bishop and theologian Kallistos Ware dominated with his personality and work the academic Orthodox landscape of the last decades, mainly but not only in Great Britain. His friends, colleagues and former pupils edited in his honour three *festschrifts* (2003, 2016, 2018).the last volume, entitled *A Journey along the Christian way. Festschrift for Rev. Kallistos Ware* is edited by Dr. Elena Ene D-Vasilescu, lecturer in Church History and Doctrine (that includes Patristics and Byzantine Studies) at the University of Oxford, UK. Celebrating Metropolitan Kallistos Ware 85th anniversary, the book represents an answer to the challenges faced by the Church in the 21st Century, an actualisation of its ancient tradition and wisdom in dialogue with contemporary issues. The volume has three main sections and nine articles, varying from themes related to ecology, philosophy and anthropology to liturgical, cultural and ecclesiastical topics. Almost all the contributors of this book underline the direct impact of the metropolitan's work and personality in shaping their own way on the Christian journey.

The first section, "Creation and theological anthropology", includes three papers. The first one of those, signed by Elizabeth Theokritoff, is "How to read the creation". An expert on the Orthodox vision on creation, applied in the context of contemporary ecological crises (see her book *Living in God's Creation*), Elizabeth Theokritoff offers in this chapter a Patristic synthesis on the theological significance of the world. The main focus of the author is on the unity between the Holy Scripture and the 'book' of Creation. This unity is rooted in the fact that God is the unique Author of both 'books'. Implicitly, Theokritoff rejects any kind of fundamentalism regarding the Scripture. She remarks that the single-level interpretation of both books is the huge problem that lies at the centre of the ecological crises and of the 'desacralisation of nature' in the West. Trying to avoid the 'conflict between religion and science' by positing 'non-overlapping magisteria', Stephen Jay Gould actually separates the two 'books'. Theokritoff contests this principle (similarly to Richard Dawkins, but for different reasons, of course) and considers that if God is the author of both 'books', then each will in some way illuminate the other. Nature can be contemplated by the believer and its 'reading' requires an ascetical preparation, not only an intellectual one. this 'reading' enables one to perceive the *logoi* of creation and instead of adopting the model of stewardship, human beings must treat nature as a mentor (*biomimicry*). In this way, the Orthodox 'solution' to the ecological crises goes beyond the dangers of Protestant fundamentalism (the firm separation between revelation and worldly wisdom, Scripture and nature, natural and supernatural), as well as those of theistic evolution specific to Catholic theologians like Theilhard de Chardain (equating the world vision of an epoch with the Christian truth).

The second paper, signed by Elena Ene D-Vasilescu, is entitled: "Is there progress in the sacred world? Patristic ideas up to the seventh century". In its frame, the author analyzes the idea of progress (προκοπή, *prokopē*) as it relates to motion, divine purpose and eschatology. The question formulated in the title contains an implicit challenge: is change possible in the realm of metaphysics – traditionally seen as immobile? Of course, the researcher doesn't ask the question from the point of view of a process theology applied retrospectively to patristics, but from the point of view of spirituality, starting from the perspective of human advancement. Despite the ambiguity of the term προκοπή (*prokopē*) and the difficulty of its translation in modern languages, in the patristic view it means advancement in the mystical life and in the knowledge of God. The semantic load of the term is underlined in different patristic contexts: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor. If for Gregory of Nyssa the perpetual discovery of the soul is rooted in the infinite distance between God and creation (epistemology), for Maximus the human being passes from the active phase (history) to the passive phase (eschatology). From the texts of the Church Fathers the idea of infinite progress was adopted and applied to human history by different thinkers.

In the last paper of the section, Clemena Antonova writes about: "Neo-Palamism in the Russian Philosophy of Full Unity: The Icon as Energetic Symbol". Despite the fact that researchers are still debating over the possible impact of hesychasm on

Dr. Elena Ene D-Vasilescu

Russian religious painting of the 14th and 15th Century and the fact that Palamas's writings were omitted from older versions of the Philokalia, hesychasm influenced modern Russian thinking. This article approaches the icon from the perspective of the philosophy of full unity, as it was expressed by Pavel Florensky, using hesychast terminology. P. Florensky represents the culmination of a school of thought founded by Vladimir Soloviev. Its main representatives are the two brothers Sergei and Evgeny Trubetskoy, Sergei Bulgakov, V. F. Ern, etc. They stressed the relationship between the subject and object in the process of knowledge and the relationship between the imminent and the transcendent, among other similar concepts. Applied by Florensky to the icon, the 'full unity' describes the union between the viewer and the object of representation (God, Christ, saints). In Palamite terminology, the icon as an 'energetic symbol' contains the presence of what is represented. Therefore, if the icon of Christ contains His presence, the viewer is facing the Son of God Himself. This beautiful application of philosophy and hesychasm to aesthetics is one of P. Florensky's major contributions in the field of iconography.

Image and Liturgy

The second section of the book is dedicated to the 'Liturgical and ecclesial life of the Church'. Sebastian Brock, a scholar in the field of Christian Syriac literature, writes about "An episcopal adventus in Syriac". The author tries to reconstitute the ceremonial entry of a bishop into his see according to a Syriac document dating from the 8th or 9th Century but preserved in a newer version. When does an episcopal adventus take place? This ceremonial happens when a bishop returns from a pilgrimage, from exile or at his initial entry to his see.

Fr. Andrew Louth, emeritus professor at Durham University, contributes to this volume with the chapter "Image and the Liturgy in St. John Damascene". Focusing on the doctrinal synthesis accomplished by the celebrated Byzantine Saint and defender of the icons, he stresses the holistic character of Orthodox spirituality. The visible and the invisible reflect each other in the liturgical rhythm of the Church, beautifully exemplified by the Cherubic Hymn. The author underlines that for St John Damascene the notion of image, εἰκών, is central to his understanding of icons, liturgy and theology. Therefore, A. Louth presents the six meanings of the term in the work of this Patristic author. The human being lives in a world of signs created by God in order to manifest Himself. God is revealed through certain signs - the *Theophanies* of the Old Testament like Jacob's fighting with God, God's back seen by Moses, the man seated on a throne in Isaiah's vision, etc. But a human being is not only a 'reader' of these signs, but he/she is skilfully described as a 'hermeneutic being' - created in God's image, he/she is able to make images as well. This ability represents the theological foundation of the icon.

Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, signs the chapter "Liturgical Humanism: Olivier Clément on the anthropology of worship". The author begins with the idea that revelation presupposes that God is addressing us. Starting from here, he gives a relational definition of the human being: to be human is to be called to 'communion'. But this definition changes not only the relationship with God, but also the relationship with other human beings. From this perspective, 'to look at the face of a human other is to look at a reality that is the focus of an infinite attention'. One of the main questions which is addressed by the author is how such an

anthropology may be reflected in the liturgy. Liturgy, like anthropology, is essentially responsive. Due to the responsive character of both, the two notions are combined in the expression 'liturgical humanism", observed mainly in the work of Olivier Clément. In the frame of worship, 'liturgical humanity' is a humanity preceded and overtaken by the communication of God. The suggestion implied is that a true human being is a liturgical being.

The last paper of the second section, written by György Geréby, is a question: "The angels of the nations: is a national Christianity possible?". The author observes the emphases on national identity in the liturgies of Eastern European countries. Concretely speaking, nationalism penetrates the sacred space of Christianity in the form of flags, images, secular anthems, and sermons. They have no canonical approval and are pure innovations. All the dimensions of the Church are invaded by them: iconography, theology, and homilies. Although similar traits of identification can be found, for example, in Russia, Romania, and Serbia in the Orthodox liturgies, they are more visible in the Protestant or Catholic Churches of Hungary. Based on the Bible, on the early Christian writings like *Epistle of Diognetus* (c.190/200) and on Church Fathers like Ephrem the Syrian, the author stresses the universal dimension of Christianity which transcends all nations. In a possibly too literal interpretation of the biblical story of the Babel Tower, György Geréby asserts that nations did not come into being according to the plan of the Creator. After this event, they turned to worship their national angels instead of the Creator. Therefore, he meets with great scepticism the statement of the Hungarian Bishops' Conference, that 'before the face of God … every nation is of real value'. The conclusion is that the liturgical innovations mentioned above are cases of liturgical amnesia. Although it uses powerful arguments, the paper does not do justice to the concrete context in which each people lives its relationship with God. It gives the impression that this relationship takes place in a disembodied place and time.

Aspects of Byzantine Culture

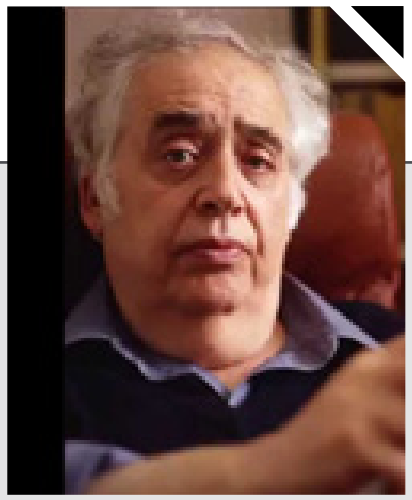
The third and last section of the book approaches "Aspects of Byzantine culture in connection with the Church". In the first paper of the section, Graham Speake writes about "Robert Curzon's Visit to Mount Athos (1837) and his collection of manuscripts (today in the British Library)". The paper focuses on Robert Curzon's book *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant* (1849). It describes Curzon's visit to Mount Athos in search of old manuscripts, starting from Great Lavra and ending at Koutloumousiou, before leaving the peninsula. Although Curzon focussed mainly on finding 'uncial manuscripts and unknown classic authors', he offers interesting details about the monastic life of Mount Athos near the middle of the nineteenth Century. He presents in vivid colours his negotiations with the monks for the acquisition of rare manuscripts and the state of the Athonite libraries. Analyzing Curzon's passion for ancient books, Graham Speake indicates some of them of inestimable value that were passed by the English collector. For example, he missed the only known manuscript of the *Shepherd of Hermas* which was still waiting to be discovered at Gregoriou.

The second paper of this section, which ends the volume, is Elena Ene D-Vasilescu's: "The Iconography, History, and Linguistics of Uric's *Tetraevangel*, 1429: Bodleian Library MS. Canon. Gr. 122". It analyzes Gavril Uric's *Tetraevangel* written in 1429 in Neamţ Monastery, Romania and it describes the manuscript's journey from Neamţ Monastery to the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The model of the Oxford Gospel under discussion is borrowed from Byzantium (Palaeologan epoch), but its miniatures envisage the achievements of the Moldavian mural painters from the epoch of Stephen the Great. Unfortunately, even Romanian art critics tend to neglect Uric's contribution to traditional art, focusing on the paintings of famous monasteries like Humor, Voroneţ, Sucevița or Moldovița Monastery. The main contribution of Ene D-Vasilescu's chapter are the comparisons of MS. Canon. Gr. 122 with other manuscripts from the point of view of the redaction of the texts. Besides, the author summarizes the opinions of the most qualified specialists regarding this document. At the end of her text Dr. Vasilescu makes an excellent suggestion, that the manuscript should be made available on the Bodleian Library's website.

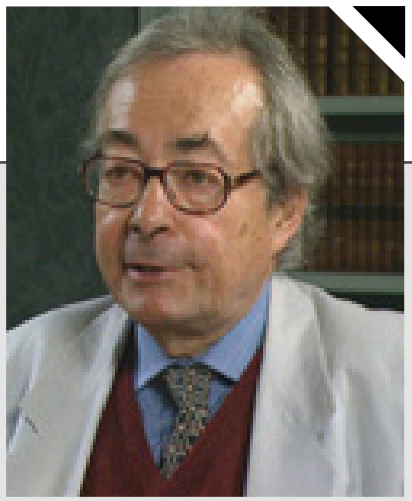
The volume *A Journey along the Christian way* offers kaleidoscopically brilliant insights particularly in contemporary Orthodox thinking and generally, in Christian theology. Although it displays a thematic diversity, the inner unity of the volume consists in the living dialogue between the present and the past accomplished by the authors in the frame of Orthodox theology.

• *Florin Toader Tomoioagă, Lect. PhD.,*
Faculty of Orthodox Theology,
University of Oradea, Romania

OBITUARY



Bloom



Steiner

Two Giant Literary Critics Leave the Scene
Bloom (1930-2019) and Steiner (1929-2020)

DAVID CLOUGH

Aside from Paul de Man, Harold Bloom alongside Hillis Miller and Geoffrey Hartman led the Yale school of literary criticism that came after the so-called New Critics: Wimsatt, Burke, Cleanth Brookes, Allen Tate and others. But unlike de Man, Hillis Miller and to an extent Hartman, Bloom became sceptical of deconstruction and some versions of post-Colonial critique which he came to identify in a rather Nietzschean sounding way as a politics of resentment. So, he restated what he called 'The Western Canon' in 1983 just as other movements were getting going. But he, like George Steiner, also found the Holocaust a big impediment to traditional religion and Christianity. His solution, already implicit in his best known work *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) and more so after *Agon* (1988), was his version of Gnosticism which in his study *The American Religion*, he saw as characteristic not just of the 19th century US sects but of mainstream US religion also. But the *Anxiety of Influence* is also typically Freudian. Hamlet and the ghost of his father is a motif that is said to characterise a lot of thinking mid- twentieth century. Other later American critics like Stephen Greenblatt also discussed it.

Steiner too was deeply scarred by the Holocaust and used to discuss it with Donald Mackinnon at Cambridge. His 1964 *Death of Tragedy* probably reflects this, but it also follows Lucien Goldmann's *The Hidden God* which looked at Pascal, Racine and Port Royal. Goldman (1913-70) was more explicitly Marxist like Ernst Bloch (1885-1977). His book on translation *After Babel* shows his link to the linguistic turn in philosophy going on at the time. This is probably why he wrote the Fontana Modern Masters book on *Heidegger*. The second chapter of *Bluebeards Castle* (1971) raises his views on anti-semitism that have made him another somewhat controversial figure. In later more relaxed works like *Errata* and *My Unwritten Books* one can eavesdrop a little more informally around these themes. *No Passion Spent*, a collection of occasional pieces like his introduction to Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* coupled with the rarely discussed *Book of Adler* are other later works.

While all this was going on, Ricoeur and MacIntyre in their sole joint collection from 1969, responded by reconstruction faith in the aftermath of WWII. This throws light on Bloom's and Steiner's more obvious reaction to it. While Ricoeur was still defending a canon and religious doctrines, in some ways Bloom can be read as providing a new assertive positivist spirit to defending certain values which one could compare with some aspects of analytic theology. But it is Steiner who remains more the fragile pessimist.

Bloom seems Nietzschean in some respects but gives the Holocaust as the main reason for his gnostic turn, not 'the death of God' of Nietzsche. George Steiner meanwhile lists certain of his star pupils by their initials only. The most recognisable to me is Stephen Greenblatt though criticism of him rarely mentions Steiner. While Greenblatt's treatment of Renaissance self-styling and his readings of Shakespeare are both influential and admired, his foray into post-colonialism in *Marvellous Possessions* is more contentious. Some think his focus is too French. But I am not sure Bloom or Steiner really engaged with Greenblatt here or elsewhere.

From The Certain To The Uncertain

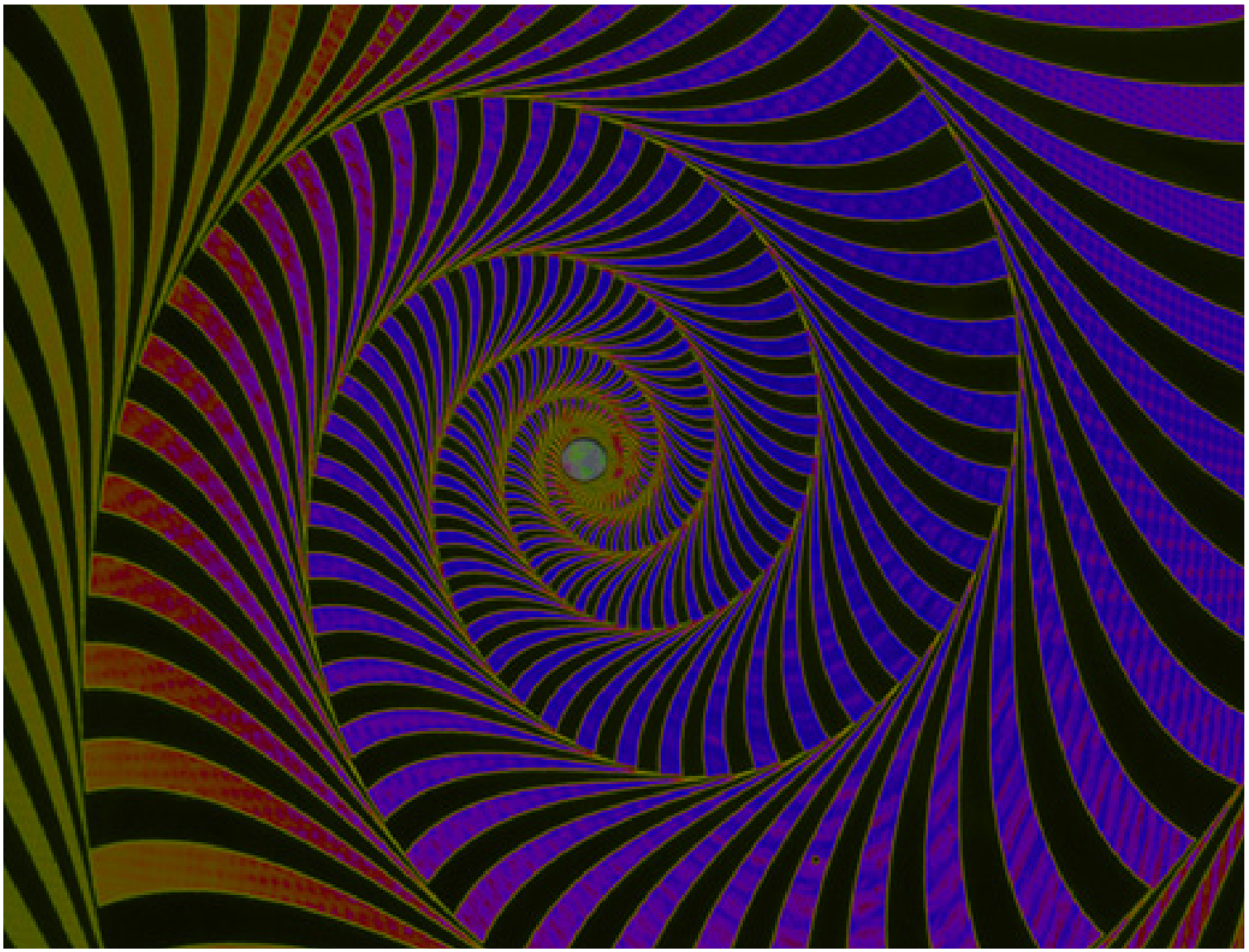
Sleep seeps out, trying to sift the important
from the unimportant,
the certain from the uncertain.

We are endlessly straining the dreams
through a sieve as gold seekers do
in remote rivers far in the outback.

When we sleep we are constantly busy,
gliding from the unspoken through
to colours. I think in colours.
I dream in scents. Words
are non-essential, perfumed
and rising like the fragrance of burning incense.

What was certain before, is now nameless
and heavier in substance.
I know you are important in my dreams,
but go around in circles,
starting again and again the search
for the amalgam of many souls
I have known.
Who are you?

Feelings are multi-coloured indecisive,
forever easy, always known and understood,
yet fleetingly disappear as soon as I awake
to the reality of an unreal world.



Poem and Artwork by Scharlie Meeuws

The Relevance of Medievalism

Notes on the Wednesday Meeting Held on 12th of February 2020

RAHIM HASSAN

The Wednesday meeting had another good session with a talk by David Clough on French thinkers and Medievalism, with Lacan as an example. David circulated some notes before the meeting that formed the background to the debate although the discussion went far beyond the notes. The question of love and desire came up in regard to Lacan's work (his idea of unsatisfied desire or what he calls 'object a'). Also the topic of Medieval Europe and courtly love came up.

According to David's interpretation, Lacan's concern is with the self. He thought that as infants, we don't have a sense of self, but we get that through the stage of the 'mirror'. We recognise ourselves in the image. But this recognition is a fiction and alienation. Language could express our sense of self but again this is also considered a source of alienation from ourselves. However, according to David, desire is at odds with all these alienations. Thus Lacan, in his reading of *Hamlet,* explicitly links the notion of the *objet a* (the object of desire) to what is called a *vanitas* in the religious tradition, and, in the discussion of Plato's *Symposium* in Seminar XI, he argues that the *objet a* represents 'immortal life' as what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of biological reproduction. Lacan's example thus demonstrates that the classical discourse on Eros and mortality remains essential to the contemporary discourse on desire.

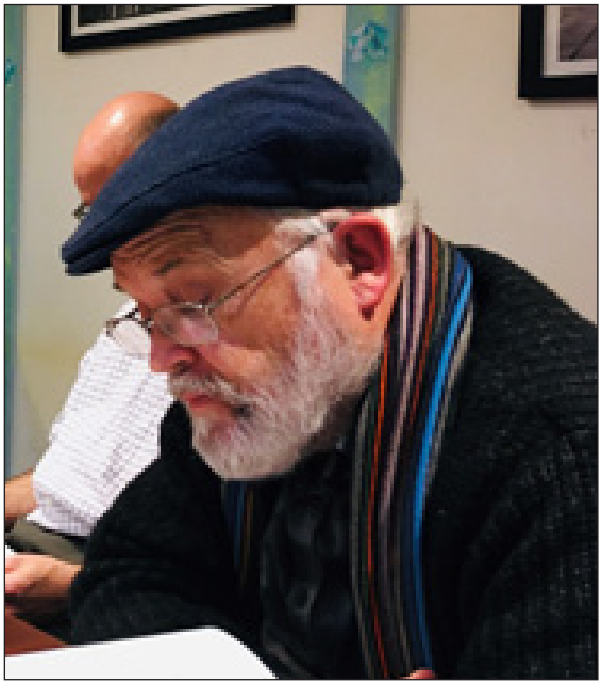
Courtly love follows an historical path. Holsinger in his book *The Premodern Condition* refers to the Arabic origin of courtly love. His source is Denis de Rougemont's book *Love in the Western World*. The idea and practice of this courtly love was traced to returned Crusaders after mixing with Arab and Islamic culture. Apparently both Lacan in his *The Ethic of Psychoanalysis* and Batalli wrote about the subject. There were also influences through Islamic Spain. Some researchers found out that the Troubadours originated from Spain and then went into France and the rest of Europe. Medieval Europe was not at ease with with carnal love but Arab culture had much poetry and many books on love and at least one, *The Ring of the Dove* by the theologian and philosopher Ibn Hazm, was written at the request of an Arab king in Spain.

Looking at the present state of literature in the subject, David listed a number of books, such as Holsinger's *The Premodern Condition,* and the books by Aers and Stayley *Powers of the Holy,* and Bloch and Nichols *Mediaevalism Modernist Temper* seemed to connect contemporary French theory to mediaeval studies. But he suggested that the approach of these French thinkers was somewhat different to the Germanic thinkers like Walter Benjamin. The German thinkers seem to have idealised ancient Greece ever since Winkelmann wrote his *History of Ancient Art* (1764).

French Medieval Studies

To explain the historical trajectory, David mentioned that Gaston Paris dates the earliest parts of the *Song of Roland*, pretty close to its battle (Roncevaux) in 778. But some of his building blocks are not French. e.g. Charlemagne's Frankish warriors and the Father of Roland may come from the Rhine. In short, there are Germanic origins to France's national myth. But as the Great War approached, this was challenged in Bedier's

Lacan



David Clough

Epic Legends from 1913 which instead seeks to canonise its founding as being of a purely French character. After 1870 this desire to disown any Germanic origins was undeniably strong, but it did not deter Gaston Paris from expressing his views in 1885-6. Also, Bedier's *Epic Legends* on the cusp of WW1 perpetuates a long struggle over Alsace, Colmar and Strasbourg and between the two cultures French and German.

David also added that in English there are medieval texts like *Gawain*, *Piers Plowman*, *Beowulf* and *The Dream of the Rood* which are somewhat more religious with political overtones. There are obvious medieval elements in Morris, Ruskin, and the Pre-Raphaelites. In 1927 Helen Waddell wrote on Medieval Latin lyrics and in 1936 C S Lewis published The *Allegory of Love* but this centres more on the *Romance of the Rose*, not *The Song of Roland*.

All this looked historically plausible until David raised the following doubts about this account: Chaucer scholar Talbot Donaldson described 'courtly love' as pure myth because it is not actually supported by the mediaeval texts. Norman Cantor claimed that courtly love was just an invention, a complete fiction. In fact, Cantor is after something more than the history of a discipline. For him, the life of each medievalist should be understood as a response to the intellectual and political history of the twentieth century: 'Creating a medieval world picture and projecting themselves into it were one therapeutic recourse by which sensitive and benign twentieth-century people sought to regain their sanity and get control of their feelings in the evil times of slaughter and madness'. For some, this 'therapeutic recourse' meant rewriting medieval tales into moralized, cosy fantasies of a world that never was in order to evade the harshness of both the medieval and the modern periods. Such criticism comes up when critics look for something disparaging to say about theatre productions, e.g. Birtwistle's operas (as if the music wasn't a more obvious problem). But it seems that we need myths to make sense of ourselves.

Sutton Boys

When I was teaching, shouting
at downtown Sutton Boys,
where stone-flagged penal corridors
with grey gum-spattered floors
echoed on past litter kickings
to tall bruised double-doors
and institution stairs with funny
scribbles on the walls,
the bell exploded boys
into my room like cannon fire.
"Did you see that? He pushed me, Miss!"
Cuffs, pokes, prods, trips,
laughs, kicks, slaps, scuffles -
hoping to be noticed, scolded,
known and named - grinning
they settled, bit by bit, at desks.

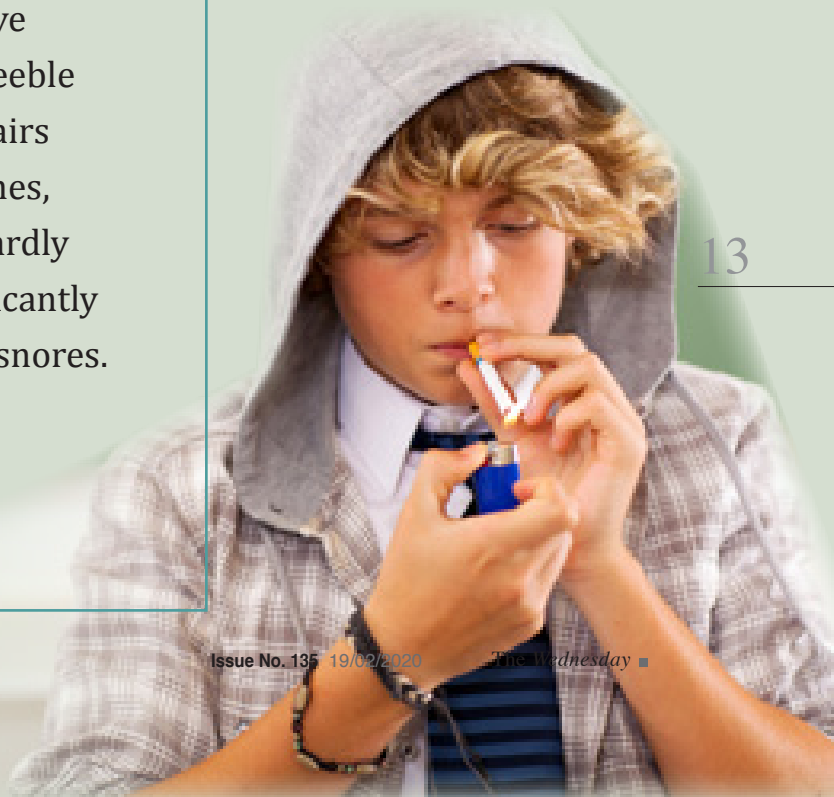
Much later, tilted to their work,
lulled silent, heads down, sighing,
whispering their pens, shuffling
their lace-ups, halt, stopped up
for a while, caught, but not for long -
"Miss, I can't do this. I'm stuck!"
(A book pushed off the desk)
"Come on. I've done enough."
Then, like a shoal of fish
they turn, squirm, wriggle, dangle
backwards on their chairs,

twist, tease, reach over, grab
things, flick things, scrawl
a page of insults, laugh, and
keep on glancing my way –
waiting for my voice to strike.

Just then a triple shriek of bells
peals out the second that
the clock above the blackboard
twitches and clangs out the hour.
Chairs scrape back, desks clap,
doors bang, as they rush, run,
slide, skid, slam their lockers shut
and escape for break before
the corridors and stairs jam up
with heads and blazer reds.

Then heavy-eyed, slope-shouldered
teachers elbow, push and shove
around the coffee urn, make feeble
jokes, slope off, slump into chairs
with newspapers and magazines,
or fall asleep stretched awkwardly
on torn upholstery, mouths vacantly
repeating shallow temporary snores.

Erica Warburton



Thing

CHRIS **NORRIS**

The etymology of *thing* reveals that its abstract meanings in Old English – as 'a thought, an idea; a notion; a belief, an opinion' – come into existence alongside, even predate, its connotations as 'a material object, an article, an item; a being or entity consisting of matter, or occupying space'.

Freya Johnston, 'No Bottom to Them', *London Review of Books*, 5th December 2019, p. 44

It's a real mind-stuff puzzler, that word 'thing'.
The OED's a help: the record shows
Things change, but bygone attributes still cling.

No end to the surprises words may spring!
From inner state to stuff out there it goes.
It's a real mind-stuff puzzler, that word 'thing'.

'I feel all *thing*', you said, and made it swing
Right back to source as you or usage chose.
Things change, but bygone attributes still cling.

It's not just fetishists who catch the ring
Of old desires that object-talk bestows:
It's a real mind-stuff puzzler, that word 'thing'.

Let's think it's keener harkening that they bring,
A sense of things the object-lover knows.
Things change, but bygone attributes still cling.

Those harmonies at which the senses sing
Are what well-tuned oscillographs disclose:
It's a real mind-stuff puzzler, that word 'thing'.

For it's just there, in each vibrating string,
That sentient listeners find their highs and lows.
Things change, but bygone attributes still cling.

No fixing boundaries, no establishing
The 'it's-my-thing' to 'that thing' ratios.
It's a real mind-stuff puzzler, that word 'thing';
Things change, but bygone attributes still cling.

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Philosopher's Journey

Time to leave the realm of pure beliefs,
squeezing through the hard dogma gates.
Hope to strive to a given horizon,
but there are high gradients,
to strain my climb, then trip me off,
with a threat of dark tumbles into
those ditches where my thoughts might drown.
Perhaps I should have stayed comfortable,
in the soft sufficiency of beliefs.
I am devilled with doubt in the dark of night.
But then in the splinter of morning light,
I see ahead a forest path at last the chance of a *simple gait*
Of course there are gentle gradients to be tackled here
Some struggles up, some stumbles down,
but all in a direction with a goal before me,
which I will reach as fast as I can.

David Burridge