

The Wednesday

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Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford



Editorial

Philosophy in The Time of The Corona

My apologies to Gabriel Garcia Marquez for borrowing the title of his novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*. No doubt the Corona virus and the shutting down of most amenities world-wide has encouraged an interest in literary works about or in the time of a pandemic, such as Boccaccio's great book *The Decameron*, or Camus' *The Plague*. But this editorial is on philosophy and not on novels, literature or works of art.

Diseases and viruses are big challenges to philosophy, especially in the analytical school, but may be more generally too. I will suggest three reasons. One: Nature is now the realm of scientific inquiry in the most restricted and narrowly defined way. But in this perspective, we deal with bits of nature and not Nature as a whole or as a creative force. Goethe's metaphorical description is helpful here: 'She (Nature) lives in a profusion of children, and their mother, where is she?' Two: Philosophy has moved away from its former speculative nature and followed a more practical line. There is no room for speculation about forces in Nature or Nature conceived as a whole living organism. Thirdly: The trust in science gave humanity a sense of confidence and optimism despite the setbacks and tragedies which mainly took the form of military wars. Even here, one finds in the middle of a terrible war talk about 'smart' weapons. But the same smart weapons caused human tragedies.

For all the reasons mentioned above and no doubt several more, the world is not ready to cope philosophically and psychologically with a tragedy that comes as a result of nature or human intervention in the life order. David Farrell Krell makes an interesting comment in his book *Infectious Nietzsche*, written during the scare of another virus. Krell says: 'We never dreamt that when Nietzsche's Zarathustra said, "The human being is something

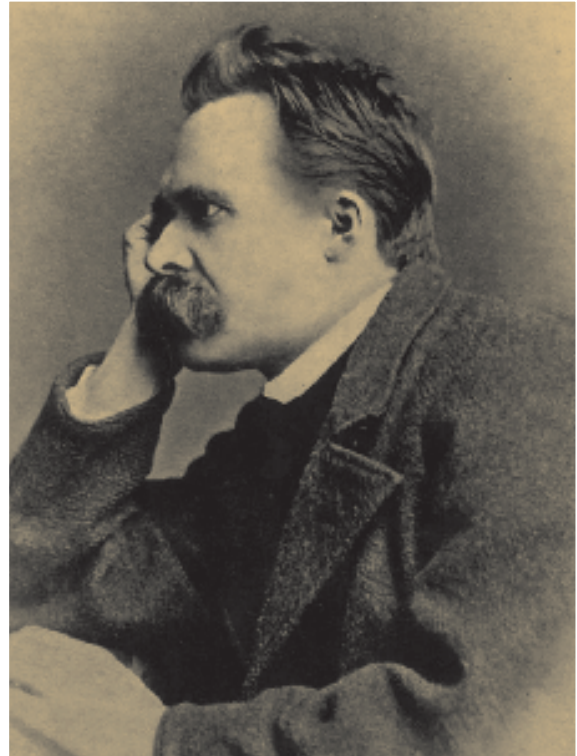
that must be overcome," a highly mobile virus was preparing to undertake the task quite literally, as though it missed the metaphor. Will anything appear in any future of ours that will allow some living creature ages hence to speculate on the "biopositive effects" of AIDS? Or has our romance language become a truly *dead* language?'

Krell uses 'biopositive effects' to refer to the contradictory conception of Nature as an interplay of destruction and creativity, death and life, as in the work of philosophers and poets who suffered from severe illness, but that very illness gave them the incentive to write. It also gave them a 'living' language by which to engage with the dynamic of life and death in the work of Nature.

But just to show how philosophy can get to grips with a crisis like the one we are going through, I will refer to an e-mail I received recently from the German *Zeitschrift für Praktische Philosophie* (Journal of Practical Philosophy) about a special issue on the Corona. It gives many hints and raises questions for philosophers to answer. Amongst them, the question of individual freedoms and restrictions. It also raises questions about individual virtues and obligations in a state of emergency, such as 'social distancing'. It asks about the economic system, economic justice and globalization. There are also cultural questions about the role of the media, the historical patterns of interpretation of illness and epidemics (e.g. as a punishment from God, or moral failure), and the existential questions about the good life and how we can find lessons from the crisis.

I think these are important questions and I look forward to this special issue to see what our contemporary philosophers say in the time of a pandemic.

The Editor



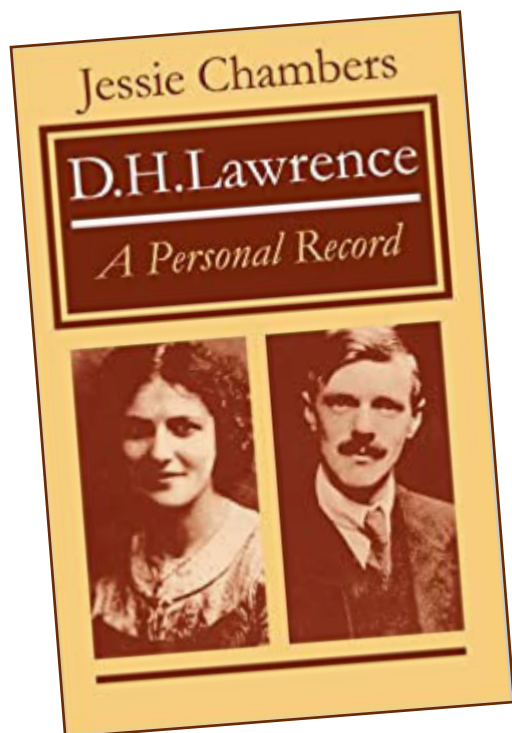
Some Notes On D H Lawrence And Friedrich Nietzsche

EDWARD GREENWOOD

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An excellent introduction to the work of D H Lawrence is to be found in *D.H. Lawrence: A Personal Record* by E.T. (Jessie Chambers, his first girl friend), a book first published in 1935. They first met when Lawrence was a pupil at the Congregational Sunday School in Eastwood, a mining village close to which Jessie's family had a farm. Both Lawrence and his mother made frequent visits to it, particularly after the young Lawrence had a bout of pneumonia. He went to convalesce there. Lawrence's mother and Jessie's became friends. Each Saturday Lawrence would go over to the farm for tea. He got to know her father and brothers well, and used to love to help with the farm work, particularly at harvest

time. Jessie shows that this was to make him particularly sensitive to Tolstoy's portrait of Levin's farming life in *Anna Karenina*. Both Jessie and Lawrence became pupil teachers and both developed a deep concern with the nature of education. Their mutual self education was a university in little. Lawrence held that the purpose of education 'is to teach people how to use their leisure'. This was of course Nietzsche's view, though at this stage they were not aware of Nietzsche's writings. Curiously though, their interest in philosophy was aroused by the philosopher who had stimulated the young Nietzsche, at first into agreement and then into revolt, namely Schopenhauer. The work they were particularly interested in was not his main



Jessie Chambers' book on Lawrence



Jessie Chambers

work *The World As Will and Representation*, but the supplementary essay 'On The Metaphysics of Sexual Love' which has some strange speculations about sexual attractiveness, but also interesting anticipations of Darwin.

As well as the concern with education, both Lawrence and Nietzsche shared, as did many thinkers in the nineteenth century, a deep preoccupation with the future of religion. Lawrence claimed that Nietzsche had destroyed our faith in Christianity as it stood and that Hardy had destroyed our faith in human endeavour. Lawrence does not emphasise the importance of the historical approach to the criticism of the Bible as much as Nietzsche does. History is of course concerned with the phenomenal (intentional) world of psychological experience. Natural science, on the other hand, in particular, physics, is concerned with the extensional, causal processes of external nature, causal processes which would be going on even if no human beings existed. Critical history is more important in the dissolution of Christianity than natural science is. In 'The Study of Thomas Hardy', printed in *Phoenix*, Lawrence somewhat obliquely refers to Nietzsche's doctrine of the *Ewige Widerkehr* or 'Eternal Return'. He does

not really engage with it, referring somewhat irrelevantly to the dancing in circles in Botticelli's painting *Primavera*. He does not see that the doctrine is dear to Nietzsche because it replaces the linear progression of the Christian scheme with its Creation, Fall and Redemption, the archetype of progressive notions of history. St Augustine was acquainted with the doctrine of the circularity of time which he associated with pagan philosophy. In book 12 chapter 14 of *The City of God* he bitterly attacks the doctrine, exclaiming with indignation that Christ could not have been crucified twice.

On page 491 of *Phoenix*, Lawrence casually asserts the spuriousness of the doctrine of the Will to Power. He shows in his most ideological novel *Women in Love* how it destroys Gerald Crich and Gudrun, while Birkin and Ursula overcome it. I don't think Lawrence understands Nietzsche's notion of the Will to Power. In Nietzsche it is not some grand metaphysical world view as in Schopenhauer, but rather an explanatory psychological concept, drawing on the notion of the force which lies behind basic human drives such as sex and ambition. Where Lawrence comes closest to seeing the Will to Power as a psychological theory is in

Follow Up

those passages in his work in which, following Nietzsche, he suggests that it lies behind the way the weak and damaged use pity as a weapon to make the strong and healthy feel guilt. Some of the attacks on the weak by both men are rather disturbing. While on the subject of psychology it is interesting to compare the views of Nietzsche and Lawrence on Dostoevsky. Nietzsche admired the psychology of resentment as explored in the novella *Notes From Underground* in particular. He also admired *The Possessed*. Lawrence - perhaps reacting against the Dostoevsky cult of Arnold Bennett, the Bloomsbury Group and Middleton Murry - was cooler, affecting to be unimpressed by the The Grand Inquisitor section of *The Brothers Karamazov*. It is interesting that Jessie Chambers concludes her memoir with a long meditation on that novel.

Jessie and Lawrence read very widely in both poetry and prose, educating each other in the process. Both loved George Eliot and both were overwhelmed by Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. On page 103 of the memoir Jessie reports Lawrence as saying: 'The usual plan is to take two couples and develop their relationships. Most of George Eliot's are on that plan'. It is the plan of his own deepest psychologico-philosophical novel *Women in Love*, with its story of the interwoven destinies of Ursula and Birkin and Gerald and Gudrun. Jessie reports (page 105) that Lawrence also said George Eliot 'puts most of the action inside.'

Jessie tells us that it was in his first year in college that Lawrence started to read philosophy. This is when they read Schopenhauer together. We know that later on when Lawrence was a schoolteacher in Croydon, he borrowed translations of Nietzsche from the public library.

On their preoccupation with Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* Jessie writes: 'In the end he brought me his own copy of *Anna Karenina*. He said it was the greatest novel in the world, and we revelled in it, my brother and I. We felt most sympathy in those days with Levin and Kitty and followed their experiments in farming with keen interest. The book was like a piece of real experience, and the people real individuals, whom we could dislike and argue with as though they had been personal friends. Lawrence, however, was more interested in the problem of Anna. (page 114). This points to Lawrence's own deep preoccupation with the nature of the sexual difficulties human beings face. Lawrence is, of course, associated with a strong endeavour to redeem sexual activity from the strong stigma which St Paul and St Augustine had cast upon it. In this he was anticipated by the Nietzsche he admired. At the conclusion of *The Antichrist* Nietzsche writes: 'The preacher of chastity is a public incitement to anti-nature. Contempt for sexuality, making it unclean with the concept of "uncleanliness", these are the real sins against the holy spirit of life'. (Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, Cambridge edition 2005, page 67.



Keira Knightley in the role of Anna Karenina

Read Shakespeare in The Bath as Art



Read Shakespeare in the bath as art,
while water leaps around your breast,
like rippled riddles of the Bard.

Read Shakespeare in the bath as art
and feel his sonnets touch your heart
and your poetic parts caressed.

Read Shakespeare in the bath as art
while water leaps around your breast.

Poem and Artwork by Scharlie Meeuws

Heidegger and Intersubjectivity

A paper presented to the Wednesday meeting 25th March 2020

DAVID CLOUGH

In early Heidegger, human beings (Dasein) are practically involved in an already culturally interpreted world, projecting into the future whilst rooted in a tacit understanding of the present and past. Later on, however, the poetics of Being itself becomes emphasised. Truth early on is therefore not correspondence or representation. These and their methods have ‘aspirations to objectivity’, but these truths are not really truths. Human Hermeneutics, not facts and science, are then a mourning for the immediate, mediated through signs and symbols but moving forward to text. Narrative is seen as the imitation of action. Narrative identity serves a middle transitional relational function in respect of the analytic approach to identity and the moral or good seeking aspect of directed action, in the acting suffering individual. Instead of Descartes’ certainty Ricoeur posits attestation or witness within hermeneutic thinking. Not *I believe that*, but: *I believe in*.

Löwith like Ricoeur describes Heidegger from within traditional philosophy. Going back to Wolin’s introduction to Löwith’s book on Heidegger and Nihilism. This knight of faith (Löwith) does not believe but still has a version of *Fear and Trembling*. What does this mean? His version is too solitary and self-enclosed. Without salvation there is no longer a wager. For Löwith, Heidegger’s ‘thinking’ has to presently situate itself between traditional philosophy and science until Being arrives with the appropriate awaited cultural vehicle. But Löwith, Wolin thinks, may have overplayed the importance of Nietzsche over Kierkegaard whose spirit in Löwith’s view is really more pervasive.

Gouwens says the qualities a man possesses must be either possessed for himself, even though used in relation to others, or genuinely for others. In part two of *Works of Love*, love is a quality for others, building up by presupposing that love is present in another. The character that Søren Kierkegaard sees at the heart of Christian existence at least is a love relating to others rather than say a communal identity. This is more like Augustine than a social theory. But can the role of witness truly exhibit neighbour love? The aim of love is to help another become his own person.

For Löwith, Wolin claims, the self is always mediated so the ‘I’ as a phenomenological construct is never achieved. Löwith thinks I never experience an immediate self-relation. While this again seems at the extreme Levinasian end it is obvious if this is the norm that Ricoeur preserves the ego too much even in the mild act of supporting the self’s interpretative role. Ricoeur goes further than this. Indeed, at the end of *Oneself as Another* (p335-41) Ricoeur admits that Ipseity and Idem cannot be separated in Levinas’s totalising approach. Ditto his move of the ego-appropriating self. i.e. there is no self-designated subject of discourse, action, narrative and ethical commitment. Levinas is, Ricoeur thinks, both more pretentious and radical than Fichte or Husserl’s self-grounding.

The two letters to Löwith from Heidegger from the 1920s give some clues to his response to the inter-personal critique, and in one he says - before Binswanger and Boss get going and Ricoeur reads Freud - that in his view psychoanalysis does not address the



Heidegger



Karl Löwith

fundamental issues in Philosophy and that Löwith is being 'too subjective'. Flaubert's *Saint Anthony* is described as someone tested by every belief then imagined. In Flaubert's next unfinished project *Bouvard and Peuchet*, two confidential clerks catalogue the ironically glorified emblems of value. Together with Baudelaire's poetry these constitute for Löwith the peak mid-nineteenth century expression of nihilism.

Short Thought

My Situationism would be to avoid the need for tragic action. Ricoeur, in the last chapters of *The Rule of Metaphor*, especially the Appendix, (See p373) says: '*classical existentialism makes guilt a particular case of finitude beyond cure and forgiveness or (as in Unamuno perhaps) an inevitable sadness in that finitude. But in order to include evil in the structure of willing the existential phenomenology developed from Husserl and Marcel/Jaspers needed modification within the area of philosophy of language. The gods quarrel, the beautiful soul gets entombed in an ugly body, trespass and taboo*'. Hermeneutics becomes for Ricoeur the art of deciphering indirect meanings.

As for Nussbaum these thoughts hold the picture of reason as hunter as opposed to the

idea of the inherent goodness of a plant. The reasonable hunter becomes inappropriate to the dramatic action. Then in Interlude two of *The Fragility of Goodness* (p378), puzzled by this, she says '*tragedy is a representation not of human beings but of action and a course of life. Action must happen*'. Here it is no good to be caught in poses. Not photos. The dilemma itself, sculpted as Rodin's thinker is not the main thing. She adds (p 380): 'the eudaimonia of a person of good character is blocked by the frustration of good deeds' i.e our inability to control events matters. For example, the good man of Psalm 1 meets conflict which starts to prevent a blameless response. A bad act may even be committed. In this limit situation goodness of character can be insufficient not just for eudaimonia but perhaps in other ways i.e. moral aspects.

Subjectivists believe that our beliefs and values often obstruct our reason in practice. Beliefs often seem to aim to protect us from ethical judgement with excuses blaming others. We need to distinguish rule and belief. For Nussbaum, ethics still involves a moral spectator, who still sees and describes a state of affairs. But Nussbaum also says that the moral agent is like a novelist in being alive and aware in thought and feeling of every nuance of a situation and the intense scrutiny

Dasein, Hermeneutics and Ethics

Notes on the Wednesday Meeting Held on 25th of March 2020

For the second time we met on Zoom conferencing software to escape the need to meet in close physical proximity because of the Coronavirus crisis. This does change the style of meeting (there is no tea and cake for instance), but it works quite well.

PAUL COCKBURN

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We discussed David Clough's paper on Heidegger and the Intersubjective (published in this issue). David gave an introduction to his paper in which he widened the idea of the intersubjective to consider how there could be dialogue between different philosophers. Those studying philosophy, particularly in universities, tend to work in groups, each group based on the analysis and development of the work of one particular philosopher, or a school of philosophy such as phenomenology, German Idealism, linguistics, the Greeks etc. The split between those who work on continental philosophy as opposed to analytic philosophy is well known. Is it possible to 'stir' philosophical views together? Perhaps find a more holistic wisdom? What do these philosophers and philosophical schools share? Can we learn from the disagreements that often mark philosophical debates? Should philosophers somehow work more constructively together? Interesting questions. Maybe philosophy is like a kaleidoscope, with many different colours, representing the many different facets of philosophy. There are books which pair philosophers together, examining the differences and similarities between them.

Can we philosophize outside a tradition? Can we throw away the authority of the past and create new truths which are 'in the present'? There is no single philosophical approach. Tradition cannot be thrown out completely,

we are rooted in it, but we should not follow it blindly. Perhaps we should engage in more speculative philosophy – we do need to move forward! There have been major new areas of discovery and new trends in philosophy in the 20th century – feminism, psychoanalysis, existentialism to name a few. These all relate to the philosophy of mind and the self.

We moved on to discuss David Clough's paper on Heidegger and the Intersubjective. In terms of Heidegger, one view was that his philosophy tries to make 'Being' an independent thing, separate from the 'real' world of existence. This was the view of Jaspers. The point was made that 'Being' is connected to the physical, where scientific laws exist. But there are no psychological laws which work like the laws of physics, and this leads to the 'anomalous monism' theories of philosophers such as Donald Davidson relating to the mind/body problem.

We had an interesting discussion on the phrase 'Truth is not correspondence or representation' in David's first paragraph. Can this be split into two separate areas: one covering the physical world e.g. 'There is a table in this room' and the other covering an inter-subjective entity, e.g. money. Money is a socially created concept, we give it meaning and it is not a fact like a table being present in a room. Is it helpful to make this distinction? In fact, the word table and room have all sorts of social connotations, and money can be a physical object.



Nussbaum

Ricoeur

This discussion is linked to the phrase at the end of David's first paragraph: 'Instead of Descartes' certainty Ricoeur posits attestation or witness within hermeneutic thinking. Not *I believe that*, but: *I believe in*'. The idea of attestation in hermeneutics perhaps implies a duty we have to witness to what believe in, but this is much more than a simple propositional belief such as 'there is a table in this room'. Hermeneutics, encompassing literature and narrativity, is not about a simple correspondence to the facts. However maybe propositional statements involving feelings such as desires and emotions, and cultural items like money, and literary concepts, could in principle be tested and verified, but the subjective and social may be too complex for this. Do such statements need to be tested and verified? Such statements probably could never be verified or refuted, but they can still at least make sense, and be discussed.

Levinas' critique of Heidegger displaces the primary ontology of Being with that of Love. The ethics of the 'other' is the fundamental philosophical ground for Levinas, we are responsible for the 'other', this is almost a divine command. Subjectivity is primarily ethical. This does not relate directly to communal identity. This is in contrast to

Habermas, who sees our relationship to the other in more rational terms and wants a dialogue where we understand where the other is coming from.

We ended by discussing goodness and consequentialism, prompted by David's last paragraph on Martha Nussbaum. There is the quandary that you can help someone, with the skills you have say, and using them with the best intentions, but the outcome may not turn out well. However, if you do not take action to help them their situation may worsen anyway. Nussbaum says, 'action must happen', and unfortunately tragedy may result. However, if the intention of someone is to do good to someone, maybe they ought to do it, it is not their fault if their action has bad consequences, the other person could be responsible. The essence of goodness is you make your choice to do good and it is independent of the consequences. The example of the White Rose Resistance Group in Germany during the 2nd World War was quoted as an example of goodness in the face of evil. A group of students distributed leaflets which denounced the crimes and oppression of the Nazi regime during the 2nd World War and called for resistance. The Nazis arrested, tried and then executed three of them in February 1943.

Blind Lady

She sat with others drinking cups of tea.
It felt at first, as if she held her beaker
a little differently, a little weaker.
And once she smiled, but somewhat fearfully.

When they were ready, leaving for a talk,
she slowly, as by chance, traversed the hallway.
I followed her and hid behind a bouquet
of yellow roses and an ancient clock.

She walked restrained, in ways a person does
who suddenly was asked to sing a song
in front of people, but she tagged along,
her eyes pearlescent like unpolished brass.

Proceeding slowly it took her a while,
as if she was unsure what was expected,
but then, with insight, everything connected
to her ability to act in style.



Poem and Artwork by Scharlie Meeuws

Rote and Rhyme: a caesurelle



CHRIS NORRIS

A vast portion of verbal behaviour consists of recurrent patterns, of linguistic routines including the full range of utterances that acquire conventional significance for an individual, group or whole culture.

D. Hymes

A considerable proportion of our everyday language is ‘formulaic’. It is predictable in form and idiomatic, and seems to be stored in fixed, or semi-fixed, chunks [It involves] our use of prefabricated material which, although less flexible, also requires less processing.

Alison Wray

Rhyme I would say is a kind of metaphor – a likeness between unlikes – and has some of the same mysterious power. It is a driver of composition and not an ornament (if done properly) – a rhymed poem should, in a sense, be ‘rhyme-driven’.

A. E. Stallings

Words come *en bloc*, or so the linguists say.
Words come *en bloc*,
not one by one as thought
Unfolds, but as birds vanish in a flock.

Whole days go by in mind-states of that sort.
Whole days go by
with nothing apt to knock
Them out of custom’s rut before we die.

The price we pay is dealing in old stock.
The price we pay
is then our need to ply
A trade in stuff that’s long since had its day.

‘Keep thought-lines taut’ is one hop-up to try.
‘Keep thought-lines taut’
so sense won’t leak away
Or fade for lack of intellect’s support.



Keep things *ad hoc*, keep thought-routines at bay.
Keep things *ad hoc*
 and don't sell thinking short
Like nifty craft too long laid up in dock.

Rhyme lets words fly, hits volleys way off-court!
Rhyme lets words fly
 while meter springs the lock
That closed their wings before they touched the sky.

Give block-cliché that rhyme-engendered shock!
Give block-cliché
 a chance to wing it high
As thinking goes creatively astray.

Else you'll be caught in custom's language-sty.
Else you'll be caught,
 link words up as you may,
With no way out save habit's stock retort.

From tick to tock it's in dead time you'll play.
From tick to tock
 with senses dulled to thwart
Your wish for kerygmatic time to clock.

How then untie word clusters custom-wrought?
How then untie
 what holds our thought in hock
To autocues that catch our mental eye?



Speech-habits lay down spoilers, chock by chock.
Speech-habits lay
 them down unless we try
What means we have to blue the grey-on-grey.

They say ‘abort this take-off, don’t ask why!’
They say ‘abort’,
 but we say ‘why obey
If one spry rhyme can jump the juggernaut?’

Empson

Note:

This is one of many poems I’ve written in a form that I should hereby like to name the *Caesurelle*. It is used by William Empson in his cryptic poem ‘The Teasers’ and is basically a tercet (three-line stanza-form) with a break – something like a caesura – midway through the second line and rhyming as follows:

Not but they die, the teasers and the dreams,
Not but they die,
 and tell the careful flood
To give them what they clamour for and why.

You could not fancy where they rip to blood
You could not fancy
 nor that mud
.I have heard speak that will not cake or dry

(Empson, ‘The Teasers’, stanzas one and two of four)

The four rhyme-sounds then rotate through the poem in the order thus prescribed. I have changed some aspects of form and punctuation but kept the unusual rhyme-scheme and tried to hit off something of what gives the Empson (for me) such a haunting quality. He thought it didn’t work on the larger scale intended and so never went back to it though he did later say, in an interview, that he thought the form was ‘a beautiful metrical invention’. I agree and think it should be used more often.

Announcement

A Letter from the Editor **Important Announcement:**

The Wednesday is now published monthly

Dear Readers of *The Wednesday*,

We have been issuing *The Wednesday* as a weekly magazine for almost two years and a half. We know from the responses of our readers that the magazine is well received. The website also shows that we have loyal readers from across the globe. They wait in anticipation for the new issues every week, as well as reading past issues. The readership is small but steady and gives us encouragement to carry on.

For almost three years, a team of writers, editors, artists and a dedicated designer worked towards producing the magazine every Wednesday on time and never missed a week. The quality of writing and the proofreading has improved over time. Members of the editorial board do their utmost to make sure that the magazine is free of errors.

However, issuing *The Wednesday* weekly is very demanding on my time and the team's and also costly. It has been suggested that I should give myself a breathing space by producing the magazine monthly. The magazine will start the new schedule from issue 141 (dated Wednesday 1st April 2020). It will then be produced on the first Wednesday of every month. I am sure that our readers will understand and hope that they will keep supporting the magazine by reading and contributing to it and following our website: www.thewednesdayoxford.com.

If you have any comments, articles, poetry or artwork, please send them to my e-mail:

rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk

Thank you for your support of *The Wednesday*.

The Editor

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Self Expression



Poetry is mine from just voices in my head.
A chain of sounds to capture meaning.
My unconscious is a stew of metaphors,
waiting to be spooned out in my expression of *Truth*.
But others may spit out my stanzas as tasteless.
Though we are all animals with similar inklings,
so rhythm and a rhyme dance in all our minds.
Meaning can be shared and lead us further on,
or back to the point of departure. My philosophy
is just a myriad of mumblings. It's how I express myself.

David Burridge