

The Wednesday

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Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford



Editorial

Philosophical Encounters: Spinoza

We wrote in a previous issue about the posthumous fame that some philosophers have enjoyed. Spinoza is currently becoming influential and enjoying fame that he had not found since Goethe resurrected him and a generation of German philosophers then referred to his thought in one way or another.

A group of enthusiasts spent the whole summer reading Spinoza's *Ethics*. I am pleased to say that I took part in these readings. The *Ethics* is an unusual book, not only in its geometrical style of argument, with definitions, axioms and propositions, but also in its conclusion. If the geometrical method puts off some possible readers, the conclusion also puts off many keen readers who have been journeying through the book until part five (Book V) where Spinoza talks about a higher grade of knowledge called 'intuitive knowledge' and the immortality of the mind. Many readers were shocked by this conclusion because they did not realise until too late that they had bought into the argument already advanced in the earlier part of the book (Book II) without anticipating what Spinoza was going to do with it.

Spinoza talks about three grades of knowledge: Firstly, sense perception that involves memory, imagination and our interaction with other bodies. This first grade is the lowest and a confused one that he calls 'inadequate knowledge'. The second grade of knowledge is 'reason knowledge'. This is the knowledge of clear and distinct ideas. It is 'adequate knowledge'. It is a knowledge of distinct causes. But this is a middle grade. The highest grade is the knowledge that Spinoza calls 'intuitive knowledge'. It is a direct knowledge of its object and independent of any chain of causes. Spinoza illustrates this knowledge using geometry and mathematics where we can understand the

properties of a triangle from a first look, or guess a missing number in a ratio by just looking at the numbers involved. This suggests that it is not a different kind of knowledge from that of 'reason'. But what Spinoza wants to show in these two examples is not the power of the mind in terms of calculation but a direct seeing of the truth. He would soon qualify this knowledge as knowledge under the form of eternity 'sub specie aeternitatis'. It is neither empirical knowledge nor discursive.

Spinoza says that it is knowledge of a different kind. It is the knowledge of eternal truths. There is a sense in which all truths are eternal, but this knowledge is of the essence of things which exists eternally in God's mind. We are, according to Spinoza, modes of God's attributes. We exist in time (or duration). All references to existence are references to duration. Existence in duration refers to bodies and bodies are paralleled by minds. But there is some part within us that is eternal even as we exist in time. But once we cease to exist in time, the part that survives is the essence of the mind in parallel with the essence of the body. Both will survive in God's mind. I take it that the more we have a mind engaged with truth the more we survive in God and are blessed.

Spinoza was at one point condemned for these beliefs and thrown out of his synagogue. Modern materialists and reductionists (famously exemplified by Jonathan Bennett's commentary on the *Ethics*) have condemned Spinoza for being too religious. Poor Spinoza didn't fit the religious age of the 17th Century and now he doesn't satisfy a secular age. Controversy about Spinoza's religiosity will no doubt run for centuries to come.

The Editor

A Philosophy Of Freedom

People who take an interest in philosophy often do so in an effort to understand the world and adapt appropriately to it. If this is so it is for such people that *The Philosophy of Freedom* (alternative title: *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*) is intended. Written by Rudolf Steiner and published in 1894 when the author was 33, the preface to the 1918 edition explains its purpose: ‘The book addresses two of the fundamental questions of human existence: Is it possible to find a view of the essential nature of man such as will give us a foundation for everything else that comes to meet us, and secondly, is man entitled to claim for himself freedom of will, or is freedom a mere illusion begotten of his inability to recognize the threads of necessity on which his will, like any natural event, depends?’

WILLIAM BISHOP

In a preface by the translator, Michael Wilson remarks: ‘Man ultimately has his fate in his own hands, though the path of this freedom is a long and hard one, in the course of which he must develop merciless knowledge of himself and selfless understanding of others. He must, through his own labours, give birth to what St Paul called “the second Adam that was made a quickening spirit”. Indeed, Steiner has referred to his philosophy of freedom as a Pauline theory of knowledge.’

This book is not to be identified as a typical speculative philosophical text. While it discusses other relevant views by other philosophers, it is an account of an *experienced* personal enquiry into the possibility of the ‘free spirit’. It has to be stressed that the thoughts expressed were *experienced* by the author, who strived for concrete experience and wished to avoid speculative abstractions. Steiner: ‘It is not meant to give the only possible path to truth but is meant to describe the path taken by one for whom truth is the main concern. The aim is a philosophical one – that knowledge itself shall become organically alive.’

The essence of *The Philosophy of Freedom* is that an individual with moral imagination is able to engage intuition to grasp and selectively relate a concept to a particular situation. In other words the experience of freedom for the ‘free spirit’ consists in the ability to access the objective world of ideas and out of love select a concept as a motive for an act of will. Indeed, while the free individual within society may be a cherished ideal it is a condition that hardly exists at the present stage in human evolution. The discussion begins by considering the reality of thinking within monism. According to Rudolf Steiner monism regards the phase of following instincts and the obedient following of moral standards as necessary preparatory stages of morality, bearing in mind that the human being is a developing being and not a finished product.

MONISM

‘The world is given to us as a duality, and knowledge transforms it into a unity. A philosophy that starts from this basic principle may be called a monistic philosophy, or monism.’ Monism is key here where spirit and matter form a single world where the universe is a unity – but to have knowledge



Michael Wilson



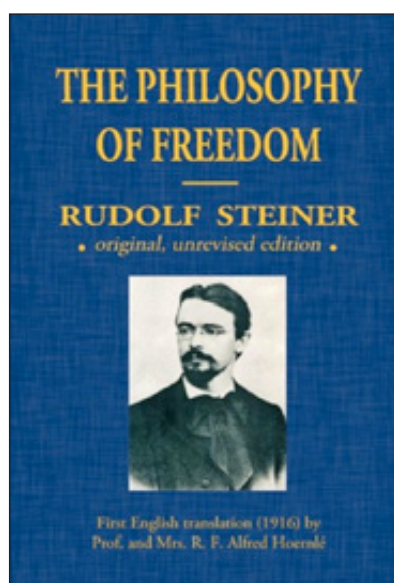
Rudolf Steiner

of it requires separation (as an observer) from the continuous world process. To achieve this separation the self-conscious ego divides subject from object. Steiner puts it this way: 'Human consciousness is the stage upon which concept and observation meet and become linked to one another – human consciousness is the mediator between thinking and observation.' It is because of this incision into the continuum of the world process that duality arises, but in fact the duality applies only to the human mental organization. The duality is in the human being and it is our consciousness that splits the world into 'I' and World, but the 'I' (in thinking) reconnects the separation. The process of thinking reunites object and subject by uniting the percept with its concept, thereby creating knowledge.

Monism means everything is included within the unity of the universe and thinking (reason) is an integral part of the world process. For monism knowledge consists of the combination of the percept with a concept, but Steiner importantly distinguishes between what is normally called 'sense experience', which is in fact a percept already entwined with a concept, and a pure percept that is free from conceptual content. Unlike the point of view of dualism,

which necessitates Kant's limits to knowledge (the inability to know the 'thing in itself'), there are no limits to knowledge in monism because thinking that matches a concept to a percept applies both to sensory perception and non-sensory (or spiritual) perception. This is made possible by enhancement of a person's ability to think intuitively. Owen Barfield said: 'Thinking is – and strengthened thinking will be aware of itself as being – that factor in man through which he inserts himself spiritually into reality. It will make direct contact with reality somewhat in the manner we normally attribute to perception.'

For Steiner: 'Dualism defines the divine primordial Being as that which pervades and lives in all men. Monism finds this divine life, common to all, in reality itself. The ideas of another human being are in substance mine also, and I regard them as different only as long as I perceive, but no longer when I think. ... Hence every man, in his thinking, lays hold on the universal primordial Being which pervades all men. To live in reality, filled with the content of thought, is at the same time to live in God. A world beyond, that is merely inferred and cannot be experienced, arises from a misconception on the part of those who



The Philosophy of Freedom

believe this world cannot have the foundation of its existence within itself.’

THINKING

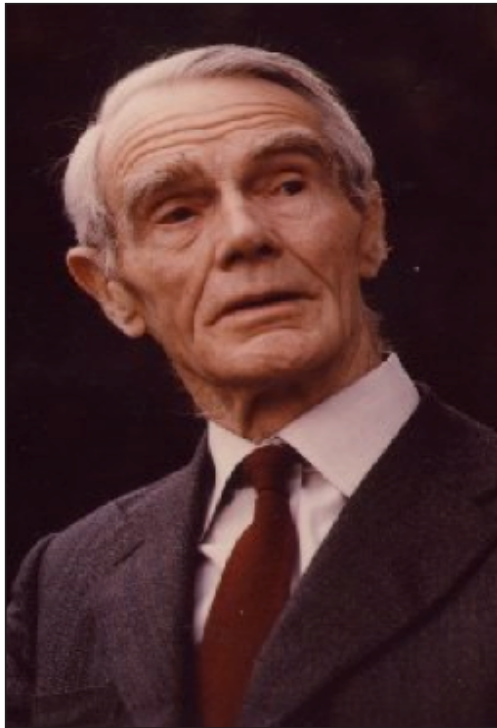
‘The thinker seeks the laws of phenomena, and strives to penetrate by thinking what he experiences by observing. Only when we have made the world-content into our thought-content do we again find the unity out of which we had separated ourselves. ... Only in the thinking activity does the “I” know itself to be one and the same being with that which is active. ... Thinking lies beyond subject and object. It produces these two concepts. When, therefore, I as a thinking subject, refer a concept to an object, we must not regard this reference as something purely subjective.

It is not the subject that makes the reference, but thinking. The subject does not think because it is a subject; rather it appears to itself as subject because it can think. ... The way I am organized for apprehending things has nothing to do with the nature of things themselves. The gap between perceiving and thinking exists only from the moment that I as spectator confront the things. ... The manner

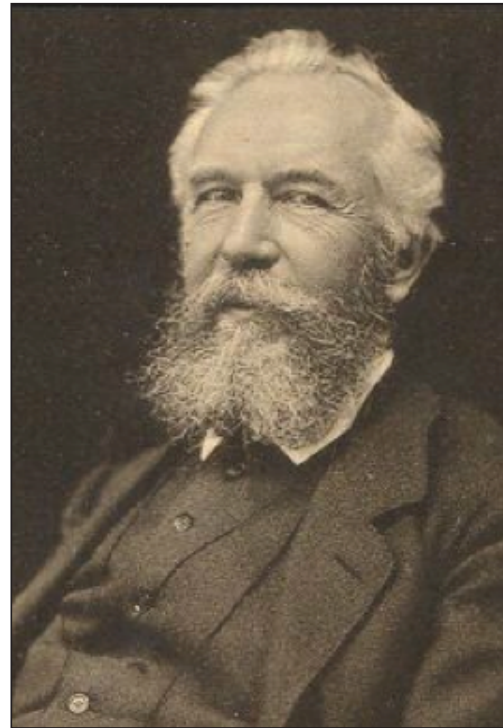
in which the world continuum appears to be rent asunder into subject and object depends on the organization of the perceiving being. ... Our thinking is not individual like our sensing and feeling; it is universal. It receives an individual stamp in each separate human being only because it comes to be related to his individual feelings and sensations. ... Feeling is the means whereby, in the first instance, concepts gain concrete life. ... In so far as we sense and feel (and also perceive), we are single beings; in so far as we think, we are the all-one being that pervades everything. ... The forces which are at work inside my body are the same as those that exist outside. Therefore I really am the things; not, however, “I” in so far as I am a percept of myself as subject, but “I” in so far as I am a part of the universal world process.’

FREEDOM

Freedom arises when a person is conscious of the motive for their action (the mental image) and can choose. The knower and the doer are not separate but the knowing-doer is the unified person. Any investigation into freedom of will must include an understanding of thinking



Owen Barfield



Haeckel

in its role in consciousness. Man produces concrete mental pictures from his world of ideas and so what is needed for a 'free spirit' is *moral imagination*. (Imagination is that faculty and process for creating mental pictures and a product of our consciousness, which is a step towards the realization of something new).

Steiner wrote: 'When we observe our thinking, we live during this observation directly within a self-supporting, spiritual web of being. ... When an intuition is present in human consciousness, then it has not been developed out of the processes of the organism, but rather the organic activity has withdrawn to make room for the ideal activity. When I observe an act of will that is an image of an intuition, then from this act of will too all organically necessary activity has withdrawn. The act of will is free. This freedom of the will cannot be observed by anyone who is unable to see how the free act of will consists in the fact that, firstly, through the intuitive element, the activity that is necessary for the human organism is checked and repressed, and then replaced by the spiritual activity of the idea-filled will. Only those who cannot make this

observation of the twofold nature of a free act of will, believe that every act of will is unfree.'

ETHICAL INDIVIDUALISM

A mental image becomes a motive for the will to act. But the decision to act depends upon the subjective nature of feeling linked to a person's disposition of character, which reflects their personal world of mental images. An ethical individualist will derive their motive for action from their own world of concepts in which an objective element arises from the fact that intuition draws upon thinking as a self-supporting spiritual continuum. In Steiner's words: 'My disposition of character is determined especially by my life of feeling. Whether I shall make a particular mental picture or concept into a motive of action or not, will depend on whether it gives me joy or pain. ... The sum of ideas which are effective in us, the concrete content of our intuitions, constitutes what is individual in each of us, notwithstanding the universality of the world of ideas. In so far as this intuitive content applies to action, it constitutes the moral content of the individual. To let this content express itself in life is both the highest moral driving force and

the highest motive a man can have, who sees that in this content all other moral principles are in the end united. We may call this point of view “ethical individualism”. ... Only when I follow my love for my objective is it I myself who act. ... My action will be “good” if my intuition, steeped in love, finds its right place within the intuitively *experienceable* world continuum. ... On the path towards this goal the standards play their rightful part. The goal consists of the realization of moral aims grasped by pure intuition. ... An action is felt to be free in so far as the actions for it spring from the ideal part of my individual being. ... Man is free in so far as he is able to obey himself in every moment of his life. A moral deed is my deed only if it can be called a free one in this sense. ... Our life is made up of free and unfree actions. We cannot, however, think out the concept of man completely without coming upon the “free spirit” as the purest expression of human nature. Indeed we are men in the true sense only in so far as we are free. ... Each one of us has it in him to be a free spirit just as every rose bud has in it a rose. ... Ethical individualism, then, is the crowning feature of the edifice that Darwin and Haeckel have striven to build for natural science.

It is spiritualized theory of evolution carried over into moral life. ... It is from individual ethical intuitions and their acceptance by human communities that all moral activity of mankind originates. In other words, the moral life of mankind is the sum total of the products of the moral imagination of free human individuals. This is the conclusion of monism. ... Man can find his full and complete existence in the totality of the universe only through the experience of intuitive thinking. ... To understand intuitive thinking as man’s inwardly experienced spiritual activity by *experiencing* it amounts to a knowledge of the freedom of intuitive thinking. ... We shall regard man as a free agent if, on the basis of inner experience, we may attribute a

self-sustaining essence to the life of intuitive thinking.’

It will undoubtedly come as a surprise for some to have to consider thinking as an activity of the spirit, but this explains the objectivity of thinking. According to Hegel: ‘It is thinking that turns the soul, which animals also possess, into spirit.’

Indeed, it is this spiritual aspect of thinking that distinguishes the human race from animals. Thinking is in fact an expression of the creative forces of the world process and according to Steiner thinking (reason) is infused with the unifying power of love. As a self-sustaining spiritual activity it can only be grasped by intuition. The ‘I’ or ego is said to be in the essence of thinking but actual ego-consciousness arises from the trace of thinking left in the bodily organization. Indeed the brain acts somewhat like a mirror by maintaining a reflection of the self-supporting thinking process.

The will, related to the bodily organism, is motivated into action by a concept (a mental image) along with the disposition of one’s character. If the motive for the will is intuition (pure concept without a percept) this is pure thinking. Customarily called ‘reason’ this pure thinking can be called ‘practical reason’.

This idealism bypasses the subjectivity of the character-disposition so that the motive force of ‘ethical individualism’ is one’s love for the objective (the love of the action). This is moral freedom. Out of this arises the profundity of Steiner’s social maxim: ‘To live in love towards our actions and to let live in the understanding of the other person’s will, is the fundamental maxim of free men.’

A knowledge of human nature may be sobering, but idealism provides present hope. The Pauline ‘quickening spirit’ is modern humanity’s birthright.



Art Is The Dark Wish

Art is the dark wish of all things.
Anxious words long to walk in a poem
amid arid landscapes completing the picture
where sad people turn into beautiful ones,
guardians of unimagined secrets
happy to let go of their senses
burdened by dark longings.

They pull us into their thirst
an excuse for our own feelings.
Fleeing convention, they want to be
what we think they are.
Humbly they aim to carry the new names
the writer has given them.

The cry that the poet hears
is the wish to be his language:
he will save them, lift them out of the tedious
relationship of an established pattern
into the great contexts of his nature.

Poems and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

Reports of the Wednesday Meetings Held During October

Written by RAHIM HASSAN

Is there an Objective Reality?

Notes of the Wednesday Meeting held on 7th October

‘Is there an objective reality?’ This was the title of a remarkably interesting paper by Ruud Schuurman presented to the Wednesday meeting. The arguments in it and the conclusion seem counter-intuitive. This is not a negative point in philosophy because it is in the very nature of philosophy that it counters common beliefs and opinions.

Ruud cleared his use of the term ‘real’. He said: ‘With an “objectively reality”, I mean something that (also) exists in some other way than as an appearance in me. To believe in an objective reality is to believe that there are things that exist objectively (i.e., exist in some other way than as an appearance in me) and are real (i.e., exist in some other way than as an appearance in me). In other words, to believe in an objective reality is to believe that (some or all of) the appearances that appear to me (“in here”, subjectively) are perceptions of things that exist (“out there”, objectively).’

He argued against all these views and concluded that there is no objective reality at all. What he meant is ‘that what is real, is not object to me; that what is object to me, is not real.’ It seems that Ruud takes the world as we perceive it as a

mere appearance. The aim is to loosen the hold such ‘reality’ has on us and by doing so get to the real reality or as he put it: ‘To gain our soul, we must lose the world (i.e., to realize what we are (in essence), we must lose our belief in the reality of the world; to realize what is real, we must lose our belief in what is not real).’ A religious aspect can be easily detected here.

Ruud presented detailed arguments to prove his case. Here is the main one:

There is no proof for an objective reality.

There are no other good reasons to believe that there is an objective reality.

The assumption that there is an objective reality results in absurdities, i.e., is false.

This view may imply solipsism, but Ruud accepts such a conclusion: ‘Not in the naïve sense that I am the only human being in the world. But in the sense that there is nothing besides what I am (in essence) and the appearances that appear to me’.

Ruud presented his argument in a careful way through several steps with time allowed for discussion after each step. The arguments deployed against him were based on a common-sense view of the world and other minds, and most of them were of an inductive nature. But what the argument calls for is an engagement with Ruud’s thought as a logical and philosophical system regardless of the consequences for any reality principle, science or common-sense. Other arguments presented depended on a polarity principle. For example: a misperception conceptually implies that there are potential ‘correct’ perceptions, the idea of consistency in the real world and what is inconsistent can be referred back to what is consistent in reality. To deny reality, it was suggested, is to deny all intelligibility. Arguments from linguistics analysis were also presented.



Ruud Schuurman

The Pre-Critical Kant: his 1755 Cosmogony

Notes of the Wednesday Meeting held on 14th October

Terrence Thomson presented to the Wednesday group a survey of Kant's cosmogony in his pre-critical period. His paper was concerned with Kant's cosmology as it was put forward in his 1755 work *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*. This book has been overshadowed by the critical turn that Kant's thought took later on. But Terrence argued that it is fundamental to gaining a better insight into Kant's entire corpus.

Kant's cosmology has been read as science, but this reading misses out the philosophical significance of the work. Kant was writing in a period dominated philosophically by the Leibnizian theological-philosophical system and view of the cosmos and the new Newtonian scientific, mechanistic order of the universe. Terrence discussed Kant's cosmology around three vital concepts: universe and world structure, world system, and elementary primary material. The discussion below is based on an abstract and a handout supplied by the speaker as well as notes taken during the meeting.

Terrence started with 'world structure and universe'. Kant intended to show the vitality of the universe and wanted to question the mechanistic conception of the world. He also suggested that we are not the centre of the universe, which is infinite, but 'we still actually find ourselves only in proximity to the midpoint of the whole of nature.' (*Universal Natural History* 1:313).

Kant also presented the idea of a totality, that the universe is the totality of existing and possible worlds. The universe is not dead matter but living and productive, giving rise to infinite worlds. It is infinite in space, or in matter, but also in respect of forms. He searched for a unity, or a totality, that comes through the action of attractive and repulsive forces.

Terrence then moved to his second heading, 'world system'. The world is not scattered parts but forms a 'chain of being'. It is a causal, harmonious order. In Alexander Pope's famous lines:
'Vast chain of being, which from God began/



Kant

Natures ethereal, human, angel, man/Beast, bird, fish, insect! what no eye can see/No glass can reach! from Infinite to thee/From thee to nothing!' (Pope's *Essay on Man*, 279). Kant emphasises the connection between the different levels in the chain. Connections and relations are life while empty space signifies death.

Terrence's third headline was the 'elementary primary material'. Kant thought of 'a subtle though universally active matter which, in the formations of nature, constitutes the active principle and, as a true Proteus, is able to assume all shapes and forms.' (*The Question, Whether the Earth is Ageing* 1:211). Kant also thought of 'a community of moving forces' in the solar system where the attraction of our sun dominates.' (*Only Possible Argument* 2:144-5).

It was pointed out during the discussion that Kant was not an empirical scientist but doing philosophy, although he was speculating on science. The scientific aspect could be superseded but not the philosophical. It was also pointed out that philosophy draws limits, and this is exactly the task Kant took on in his critical turn by pointing out the conditions of possible experience. But then in the period under discussion it was difficult to draw a line between science and philosophy.

Being as Communication

Notes of the Wednesday Meeting held on 21st October

Communication is normally linked to conceptual, discursive thinking. But what about a mystical, non-conceptual experience, will it be of any relevance to communication theories? Johan Siebers explored this topic in our Wednesday meeting. His paper had the title: 'Being as Communication'. It gives an ontological dimension to communication. Building on ideas from Buber, Whitehead, Chinese thought, and Medieval theology, Johan has been able to demonstrate the usefulness and necessity of 'being' to communication theory.

The starting point is with the nature of mystical experience. The experience can be characterised as 'a direct, intuitive grasp of the undifferentiated oneness that pervades all being, and which often involves a breaking or loosening of ego-boundaries in which, in one sense or another, a fusion with reality is experienced.' This is total consciousness, a direct, non-conceptual experience. Some call it 'Radical Intuition'. What such experience shows is that 'the universe is an interrelated web.' But taken to a higher level, this interrelated being is given to knowledge. In oriental thought, this might come in the form of a parable or a story, but in Western philosophy this has been expressed as the unity of being and thinking. So, being is communicable, all beings affect other beings and are also affected by them, but also being is 'communicated as giving-to-be known.' That is to say that 'Being communicates' and this is the first element of the communication theory proposed in the talk.

The difference between the effective (productive) causality between beings has been taken to be different in kind from the relation of knowing 'which is one of sensation, recognition and intellection'. But Johan mentioned Whitehead's idea that the difference is one of degrees not of a kind. They are both instances of creativity. There is in both a feature of sharing but also of withholding. That is to say that 'communication is not a "merging into one" but a "being together"'. As Johan put it: 'Communication is a mutually overlapping sharing and withholding'. This is the second feature of the communication theory suggested here.



Whitehead

The third element of communication according to the model is freedom: 'Communication is free spontaneity'. Being communicates freely: '(As I) sit quietly, doing nothing,/ Spring comes and grass grows of itself', as a Chinese poem says. This is ontological generosity, or self-giving as a mere overflow. It is beyond the mechanical and causally determined view of communication. It is important to notice that this is not an ontological order that links all beings causally but it is matched by 'an excess or surplus of being in the entities themselves, which can, as it were, traverse an open space and establish an encounter.'

The concluding remark of the talk is worth citing in full: 'Communication is a universal feature of being as such, given in intuition, infinitely open to exploration and creative development. Communication is not owned by anyone, but is the intractable and uncontrollable freedom by which the spirit embodies the world and animates it with the paradoxical, sometime harmonious, sometimes chaotic, togetherness beyond discursive thinking that mystical experience gives us access to. In communication, we go out of ourselves, into the groundless stream of being - and find that we float.'

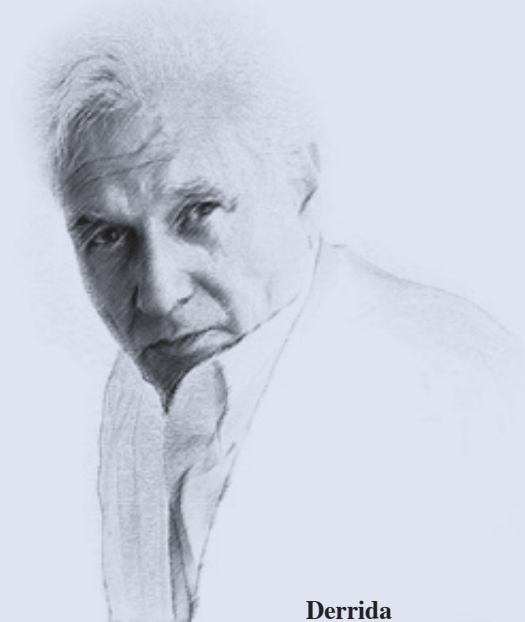
Derrida: A Poetic Response

Notes of the Wednesday Meeting held on 28th October

We had a different format for this particular Wednesday meeting. Instead of a lecture or a talk, we had poetry readings with a commentary by our poet and philosopher Professor Chris Norris. He read from his forthcoming collection *Hedgehogs: Verse-Reflections After Derrida*. Chris is a world authority on Derrida's thought and on the literary movement known as Deconstruction. In the last few years, he has created a new form of responding to philosophical problems by writing verse-essays and poems about ideas.

The meeting of poetic language and the ordinary language of a commentary has a special significance for Derrida. He wrote in a literary fashion. But when asked 'are you a literary writer?', he denied that and insisted that he was a philosopher. He hesitated between the demand of philosophy for clarity, and literary writing with all its devices. He was influenced for a while by the group around the magazine *Tel Quel* with its radical-textualist tenets, with endless significations and the infinity of meaning. Amongst its writers were Barthes, Foucault, Blanchot, Derrida and Kristeva. Its influence on Derrida came to the fore in a text like *Dissemination*. Derrida was also influenced by Mallarmé who revolted against classical French writing. All this made Derrida skeptical of poetry's ability to represent reality. He was against poetry engaging in the language games of everyday life and distancing literary from ordinary language. But, according to Chris, in his later books Derrida 'did move toward more substantive forms of ethico-political engagement, as well as more direct, less high-theoretical ways of approaching them.'

Derrida wrote an essay entitled 'What is Poetry?' in which he used the metaphor 'Hedgehog'. Why does one engage poetically with Derrida? Two reasons were suggested. Firstly: Derrida turned towards literary language to use the resources of poetry to highlight speech acts. He thought that all philosophy is metaphor, but this results in selling short both philosophy and literature. Secondly: Derrida's text is very philosophical, dialogical and metaphorical, but it also contains sustained philosophical contemplation.



Derrida

Unlike Derrida, Chris believes that words have 'at least some elusive reference to objects, events or matters "outside the text"'. This is where his poetic commentary takes effect by 'achieving closer contact between poetry, philosophy, and life in general.' For him 'poetry can have propositional content and thus be at liberty to reason or argue a case beyond the confines of its own purely autonomous formal or rhetorical structure.'

Chris read several poems from his forthcoming collection. Some of these poems have already been published in *The Wednesday* and each needs special treatment and a citation. They provide an indirect way of engaging with Derrida's thought. Questions were then asked after each reading. One question that was put to Chris was: did Derrida believe that there is ultimate truth? The answer was that Derrida did not believe in ultimate truths but in the necessity of two irreconcilable claims. One has to follow the consequences. He used this method to undermine many philosophical claims and got engaged with major figures in the history of philosophy to show the contradictions present in their texts. The choice of the metaphor of 'hedgehog' was also raised. Chris answered that a poem is like a hedgehog, it is defensive but also vulnerable.

Flesh In The Juices Of Autumn

Forgive the apples for sweetness
when you wait for fire but I come as the wind.
We both take to forbidden fruit,
quarter our kisses, we share
the flesh in the juices of autumn. Withered
in cracks, fuchsia, buddleia and starflower
grow wild like us, hunched against the rain.

We grasp for treasure and are
forced to tread water. It is not so much
about love as thinking it might be possible
collecting small change for good causes
as bags of tomorrow's ripe chestnuts.

Forgive the autumn for winter
when you stay in the sun but I come as the cold.
We both shiver in silence, crawl
into hideouts of bracken to gather
the wild plums of my nipples and shield them
from the beaks of the blackbirds and pheasants,
ready to spill the red droplets of love

We hold pleasure tight for just
a bit longer. It is not so much
about waiting as love is possible now
with the knowledge between us
of all the sweet apples of Paradise.



Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*



Grieve for me piecemeal



CHRIS NORRIS

Grieve for me piecemeal, dearest, grieve
For what's deleted year by year,
Those bits of self that disappear,
The shrinking self they deign to leave,
The names too far back to retrieve,
Those scenes that fail to show up clear
As each assault grows more severe
And countermands each short reprieve.

It's what goes missing you should mourn,
The gaps that lengthen week by week,
The gist of things now far to seek
In verbal pile-ups, words stillborn,
And every sign put up to warn
Of what's to come as ciphers speak
Of past lives void, of mindscapes bleak,
Or revenants to silence sworn.



Best take them singly day by day,
Those losses, and refuse to let
Sheer grief for me replace regret
For each thing lost, each new display
Of vacancy. For then you'll pay
No excess price, no outsize debt
Of mourning but, like me, forget
What 'I' and 'me' once let me say.

The coastline crumbles, shores retreat
From hour to hour, and it's for you,
Close-sailing them, to wonder who
Hangs out here, one you might just meet,
Should you put in, and think to greet
Once more had they but met your cue,
Not acted then as strangers do
Who catch your gaze, then cross the street.

Be with me at each stage in my
Stepwise self-grieving but let go
The thought, once we've sat through this slow
Snuff movie, that it's really I,
My one-time self, you've just seen die
When there's no punctual end-point, no
Last flicker of me left to blow
Out gently as you slip from my mind's eye.

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