ISSN 2516-2292 (Online)
ISSN 2516-2284 (Print)

Issue No. 149 02/12/2020

The Wednesday

www.thewednesdayoxford.com

Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

Editorial

Philosophy – The Anti-Intellectualist Challenge

Is philosophy a kind of sophistry? Do we need to read hundreds of books and follow endless arguments? Why don't philosophers just simply be practical and follow the method of science by creating hypotheses and testing their claims through empirical evidence? This may sound a reasonable suggestion but is it valid and does it engage with philosophy? Of course, that depends on how you understand philosophy. I want to argue that philosophy, unlike science, is not to be measured by results. In fact, I want to suggest that philosophy does not need external justification for its existence, in terms of any use or utility.

This anti-intellectualist attack on thought in general and philosophy in particular was first mounted by Napoleon. Being an army leader, he had no time for thought but favoured action. After losing his Russian campaign, he addressed the Council of State, blaming men of ideas for being behind the ills of France and calling them '*idéologues*'. Napoleon said: 'We must lay the blame for the ills that our fair France has suffered on ideology, that shadowy metaphysics which subtly searches for first causes on which to base the legislation of peoples, rather than making use of laws known to the human heart and the lessons of history'.

Just over thirty years later, Marx and Engels adapted this term for the title of their book *The German Ideology*, again accusing philosophers, particularly the Young Hegelians, of being ideologues. Marx's clear statement of what that meant came out in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point is to change it.' Marx then looked to a scientific method for justify his social theory, although his thought owes much to Hegel's philosophy.

But I think both Napoleon and Marx missed the point of philosophy. Philosophy provides the concepts that vitalise debate in any area of society and intellectual life, yet it is independent of them all. Philosophy could be useful. But it also has an internal life of its own. It is the life of creative thought. The useful and testable aspect of science is not applicable in this regard, although science at its creative moment has an affinity with philosophy. It is concerned with a guiding thought that may look strange and unusual from the point of view of ordinary scientific practice. Compare, for example relativity with Newtonian mechanics. Both in philosophy and in science, there is a moment of rupture with accepted norms and opinions, when they are both at their creative moment. But both degenerate at other moments to the level of opinions and recycled ideas or doing the same without taking thought to a higher level.

What goes on in academic philosophy is an example of transmitting information and it may be a mistake to identify philosophy with institutions. The fact that nowadays you have to study philosophy in an institution is not a part of philosophy, but is a contingent fact about philosophy. Deleuze, to whom I owe some of these ideas, makes a distinction between what belongs to thought as a matter of fact (de facto) and what belongs to philosophy by right (de jure). What belongs to philosophy by right is what is essential to thought. Deleuze goes to the extreme in making this distinction in order to preserve the purity of thought and I have reservations about his approach. But I agree with him that philosophy is about creativity and not utility. It has to maintain its freedom from external pressures, whether they are social, political or utilitarian and affirm its right to creativity. Creative thoughts are not ways of adjusting to the environment but ways of resisting all shallow conceptions of what thinking and philosophy are.

The Editor

On The Nature Of Tragedy

If I were walking along and a tile fell on my head and killed me that would, in itself, be quite accidental because it could have easily been otherwise. Only by flattering hyperbole could you say it was a tragedy. In tragedy, harm or death must come about through a complex 'labyrinth of linkages' which seem to have been woven by some kind of necessity implicit in the action unfolding.

EDWARD GREENWOOD

As with so many things in our culture, tragedy was invented and even, in a way, perfected by the Greeks. Later tragedies have been not necessarily better, just different. Philosophers have been concerned with tragedy since Aristotle. We will review here some of their views. The Greeks had nothing in their literature corresponding to that wonderful invention, the modern realistic novel, though there were elements of tragedy within the epic. For them, apart from messengers' speeches, tragedy was a primarily non-narrative dramatic genre of enactment. Moreover, that drama was not naturalistic. It was much nearer to opera, with episodes divided by choruses which were sung. In what follows I am going to endorse Anthony Quinton's contention in his excellent paper on tragedy in *Thought And Thinkers* that Aristotle's claim that tragedy must 'be dramatic not narrative' is a purely morphological or formal requirement. As he writes: 'What is requisite for tragedy is that works as a whole be calculated to arouse the emotions'. The emotions he is referring to are those which Aristotle sees as necessary to the tragic: *eleos* and *phobos*, 'pity' and 'fear'.

Tragedy and Justice

Perhaps the greatest barrier to our appreciation of Greek tragedy is not its form, but the large role Greek myth and the Greek gods play in it. As Hugh Lloyd-Jones has argued in his penetrating study *The Justice Of Zeus*, it is not just that the destiny of an Agamemnon is woven by what happens to him in his own time and circumstances, but, in addition, the chorus often suggest an interwovenness with a pollution of the family line through some misdeed going back to the very foundation of that line. Lloyd-Jones reminds us that Apollo had warned Oedipus' father Laius not to have children, because he had kidnapped out of infatuation Pelops' son Chryssipus, who had consequently committed suicide. Pelops had cursed Laius. As a further consequence, Laius is then murdered by his own son, Oedipus. Unlike the Greeks, we find cross-generational guilt hard to accept. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus himself claims that he had not murdered his father Laius intentionally. For the Greek dramatist, it seems that gods are not necessarily unjust; it is rather that their justice is mysterious, inscrutable and puzzling.

The issue of justice raises the question of the extent to which the action of a tragedy calls constantly for moral evaluation on the part of the audience, or in the case of the novel, on the part of the reader. It is important to bear in mind that, according to Lloyd-Jones, the issue of free will and determinism was not raised as an abstract and philosophical problem till Hellenic times, that is after the period of the tragic drama of fifth century Athens. We have the paradoxical sounding phrase 'putting on the yoke of necessity', used by Aeschylus of Orestes. We have a passion spontaneously arising in a person, when it is also put there by a god or goddess (sometimes called 'double causation.') For example, Aphrodite, the goddess of love, is portrayed as outraged by the virginal Hippolytus' devotion to Artemis, the goddess of chastity, in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Artemis inspires Phaedra, the wife of Theseus, with a passion for her stepson Hippolytus. Thwarted by Hippolytus' chastity, Phaedra sends a letter to his father

Oedipus at Colonus

Theseus denouncing him as having raped her and so cuckolded his own father. When Phaedra kills herself, she expresses a wish to punish others: 'But in my death I shall at least bring sorrow / upon another too' (ll. 727-728). Confronted by his father Theseus, Hippolytus rightfully but vainly pleads innocence, but is exiled by his father with a curse and a prayer that Poseidon, the sea god, punish him. He is badly injured when he is riding his chariot by the shore and Poseidon sends a huge wave which makes his horses bolt so his chariot is overturned. The goddess Artemis then tells Theseus that his son was innocent and the wounded body of his dying boy is brought before him. She then tells Theseus that he too is innocent, as he was deceived into thinking his son was guilty. He, of course, is nevertheless heartbroken. One strange compensation for suffering (which goes back to Homer) is to be made aware that one will live on after one's death in story. Artemis says to Hippolytus: 'Your name will not be left unmentioned, / nor Phaedra's love for you remain unsung" (ll. 1429-1430). Hippolytus acquits his father of blood guilt. The chorus concludes laconically by observing:

> This is a common grief for all the city;
> It came unlooked for. There will be
> A storm of multitudinous tears for this;
> The lamentable stories of great men
> Prevail more than of humble folk. (ll. 1462-1466)

Unlike in modern times, the Greeks developed no philosophical view of tragedy: i.e. though the plays were concerned with ethical issues which called for a continual evaluation of conduct by the spectators, neither Plato nor Aristotle considered there was any philosophico-metaphysical substance to be drawn from them. Plato notoriously condemned tragic drama outright. For him all art was a lie, and tragedy was moreover dangerous emotionally in that it aroused the passions and damaged self control. His was a sort of proto-Stoic 'stiff upper lip' doctrine. Aristotle, on the contrary, although he recognised that poetry is *philosophoteron* and *spoudaterion* more philosophical and nobly serious than history (he had a low view of history as just one fact after another), also gave it no philosophical significance. What was the most important thing about tragedy was not any philosophical reflection to which it might give rise, but its emotional effect. Unlike Plato, he thought this was psychologically beneficial because it gave an emotional catharsis to the passions. Unfortunately, no one has fully explained what catharsis means and how it works.

Tragedy and Metaphysical Problems

Nevertheless, Anthony Quinton in his paper on tragedy may raise a qualification to what I have just said. He writes: 'The chief virtue of Aristotle's formula is that by clearly specifying the essential value of tragedy, it suggests, even if it does not explicitly raise, the question of its ultimate and underlying purpose' (p.102). The answer to this is that tragedy 'gives a literary,

Samson and Delilah by Van Dyke

an imaginative solution to the most humanly interesting of metaphysical problems' (*ibid.*). It took later philosophy to make that aspect of tragedy explicit. What then is that most humanly interesting of metaphysical problems? Quinton puts it very well: 'The point of tragedy is that it is an image of human life, a condensed, heightened and telling representation of man's place in the universe and the possibilities of action open to him.' (*ibid.*). To this I would add that tragedy is particularly concerned with the role of suffering and death in human life, and, as such, an alternative to a religious theodicy. I shall be looking shortly at three philosophers who deal with this aspect of tragedy: Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

Because Aristotle came to be treated as a literary authority in the Renaissance and Neo-classical periods, his work gave rise to a lot of unfortunate misunderstandings. The dubious doctrine of the three unities of time, place and action was read into him. Even worse was the didactic doctrine of so-called 'poetic justice' which required that the bad be punished and the good rewarded, the very reversal of the tragic. Dr Johnson in his wonderful *Preface to Shakespeare*, though he rejects the three unities, still feels uneasy because Shakespeare did not comply with the demands of 'poetic justice' in his tragedies. He writes: 'He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose.' Kurt Von Fritz in his 'Tragische Schuld und Poetische Gerechtigkeit' ('Tragic Guilt and Poetic Justice') in his *Antike und moderne Tragödie* (*Ancient and Modern Tragedy*) has enabled us to read Aristotle's *Poetics* more correctly and shown that Shakespeare's tragedies fulfil its requirements far better than the French Neo-classical dramatists who were influenced by misinterpretations of the work.

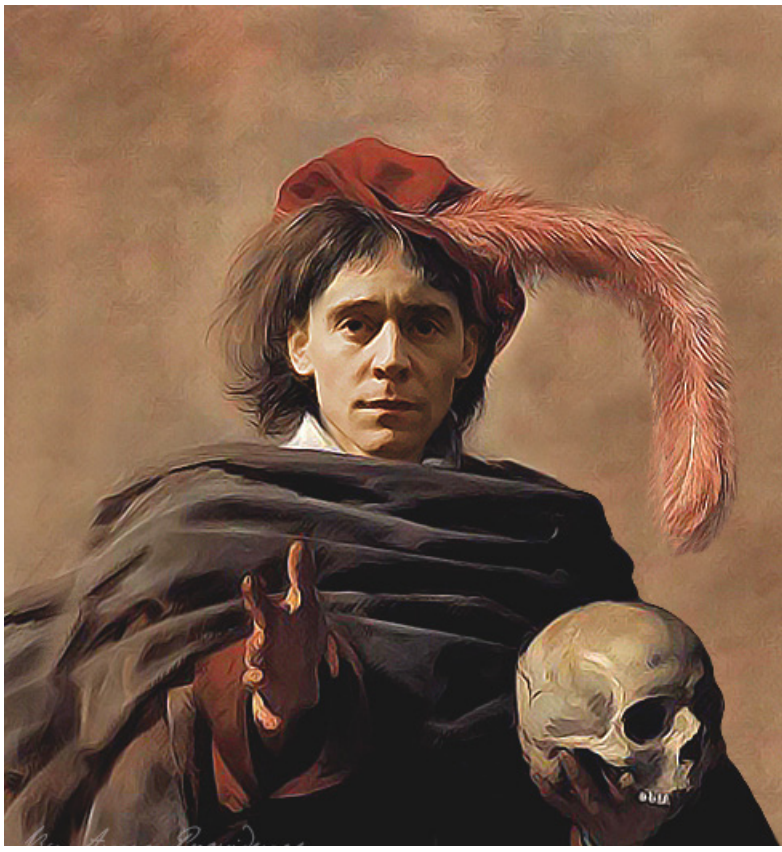
A Character Flaw

Aristotle, unlike Hume, does not regard the emotions as merely contingently and externally related to their objects. Hume does not allow for '*to prepon*': that the nature and quality of emotions may be appropriate to that to which they are directed and internally relate. Aristotle emphasises this very nature of the emotions. He observes that a morally perfect person's suffering would be loathsome and abhorrent rather than arousing pity, and a wicked person's suffering would be regarded as a just punishment. The tragic figure must be neither too good nor too

bad. The term *hamartia* should not be misread as a flaw of character leading to a poetically just downfall. Of course, both Oedipus and Antigone show irascibility and hot temper, but these are not the flaws which led to their downfall. We must remember that the Greeks would not regard righteous anger as a flaw, as when Oedipus strikes the old man - whom he does not realise is his father - who has tried to kill him over a right of way dispute. *Hamartia* is a mistaken decision, not a flaw in character, but not a merely intellectual error either, but prompted by passion. In killing his father Laius and marrying his mother Jocasta he does what is objectively terrible but subjectively guiltless, because he did not recognise them as who they were. For Aristotle, the more guiltless the more pity is called for. Aeschylus' Orestes murders his mother Clytemnestra knowingly and intentionally, but he does so on the instruction of the god Apollo who wants him to avenge his mother's murder of his father Agamemnon and her marriage with her fellow murderer Aegisthus, a story of which Hamlet is a reprise. The matricide is most definitely not the outcome of a character flaw in Orestes, but a duty laid on him by a god. Von Fritz concedes *hamartia* is combined with the character flaws of persons given tasks beyond their power to cope with in the plays of Euripides. It may be recalled that Aristotle said that while the characters in Sophocles were better or nobler than the usual, those of Euripides were worse or baser.

Shakespeare

Von Fritz points out that with the more rounded characters of Shakespeare and modern drama, the tendency of the tragic situation to arise more from within the character than to be imposed from the outside becomes more frequent. Hamlet is a good example of this. As Von Fritz wittily puts it: '*Hamlet* is the tragedy of a man who wants to make sure he doesn't make a mistake.' Stoic tragedy, influenced by Plato's hostility to the passions, was completely untragic by Aristotelean principles. It was designed to warn against the passions. Corneille and Racine are influenced by this idea. Stoic drama, such as that of Seneca, showed characters who miss the mark



Hamlet

morally and who deserve to suffer. Aristotle, on the contrary, unlike Plato and the later Stoics, thought the passions were rightly watered by tragedy, and that in them suffering is undeserved and undeserved suffering is what most arouses pity. Tragedies afford psychological catharsis for him, not moral warnings as to what to avoid. With Christianity's reversal of ancient values, its exaltation of the base rather than the noble, its rewarding suffering with eternal glory and its refusing pity to the rightly damned, we enter a world where Aristotelean tragedy is impossible. The ending of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* where the chorus speak of the witnesses of Samson's downfall as experiencing 'calm of mind, all passion spent,' seems to embody both Stoic and Christian elements.

Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

In the nineteenth century we get philosophers who, in different ways, try to define tragedy giving what Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* called 'metaphysical comfort.' The great danger of this is that the philosopher becomes less interested in the particular details of a play and turns it into a vindication of his own philosophy.

Euripides

Three major philosophers put forward a view of the philosophico-metaphysical significance of tragedy: Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Hegel's favourite exemplary play is Sophocles' *Antigone*. He sees it as a conflict between two rights: the state as represented by Creon, and the family and the individual as represented by Antigone. But, as Von Fritz points out, the two rights are not evenly balanced. Though Creon could have acted better, Antigone could not. Creon is portrayed as too tyrannous to be seen 'as a moral representative of the claims of the state.' Hegel's metaphysical vision is ultimately an optimistic one in which some kind of harmony and order supervenes and antitheses are reconciled in a synthesis. If Hegel is a metaphysical optimist, Schopenhauer is the ultimate metaphysical pessimist. Drama for him illustrates Calderon's 'Pues el delito mayor/ Del hombre es haber nacido', ('The worst crime of all for man is to have been born.') This is not to be confused with the sentiment expressed by the choric ode in lines 1388-1390 of Sophocles *Antigone* , an ode which acknowledges the blessings of 'a decent length of life' and reproaches clinging to it when those blessings are gone. No, the Calderon, though it may allude to the Sophocles, is really an expression of a doctrine that would have been totally alien to Sophocles, the Christian doctrine of original sin. Though Schopenhauer is an atheist his world view is homologous with this doctrine.

Our third philosopher, Nietzsche, in his wildly rhapsodic and often erroneous *The Birth Of Tragedy,* has the virtue of rejecting the necessitated optimism of Hegel and the necessitated pessimism of Schopenhauer. As Quinton nicely puts it, with Nietzsche we are 'midway between the extremes of Hegel and Schopenhauer and asserting the reality of human excellence in a world that neither guarantees the triumph of good nor the fruitlessness of human effort…' It is good to find a writer so extremist as Nietzsche for once striking the Aristotelean 'golden mean.' For Quinton the tragic vision of life is compatible neither with Hegel's optimistic view that the good will necessarily prevail, nor with Schopenhauer's view that the bad will, but with Nietzsche's view, which allows for contingency.

Where Will My Heart Go?

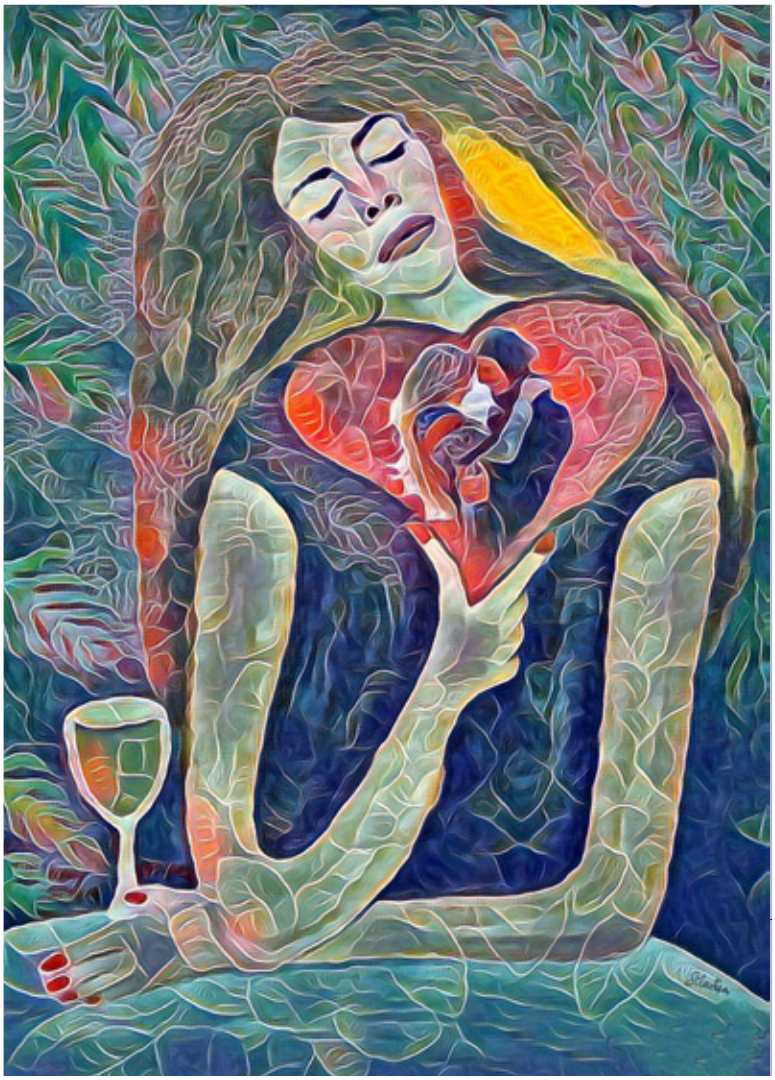
You silenced love
when you left our blue paradise.
Even the moon shrouded her face.

We always brought hearts
to each other, united
by beating nights.

Where will my heart go?
Will death throw it down a well,
bury it in a garden of stone?

I fear the night without stars.
The uncountable stars
lightened your blood,

when love bloomed from love
multicoloured.
Where will my heart go?



Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

Reports of the Wednesday Meetings Held During November

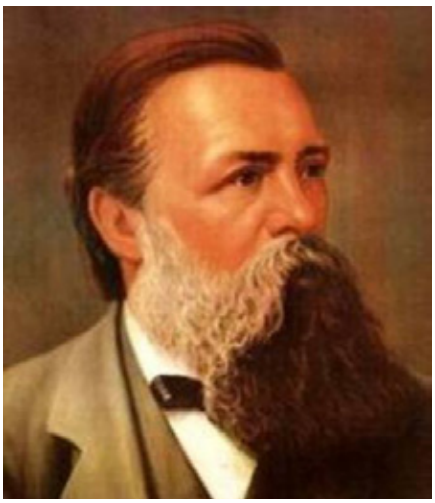
Written by RAHIM HASSAN

Engels and The Dialectic of Nature

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 4th November

We were pleased to welcome Professor Sean Sayers for the second time to give us a talk on Engels' book *Dialectics of Nature*. His talk was based on a lecture he gave marking the 200th anniversary of Engel's birth and also shows his thinking as a philosopher in his own right rather than being in the shadow of Marx. A more philosophical reason for discussing Engels' philosophy of nature is that he was severely criticised for it. He was accused of not knowing Hegel, introducing mechanistic, reductionist materialism and confusing logical contradictions with contradictions occurring between the different components of nature. These accusations were refuted in the talk. Living organisms and human consciousness, Sean explained, are natural phenomena that have emerged as a result of natural development.

The mechanistic view of nature was created by scientists and philosophers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as Hobbes, Gassendi, La Mettrie, and D'Holbach. They had a crude mechanistic conception of nature with some exceptions for human beings. This implied dualism. Engels rejected both the mechanistic aspect and dualism. His materialist conception applied to all nature, including human beings, in a non-mechanistic, non-reductive, dialectical form of materialism. All things have a mechanical and physical aspect. As Sean put it 'the mechanical and physical aspect of natural phenomena is only one of their aspects. Concrete things are never solely mechanical or physical, they are always parts of other processes and have other aspects as well. The purely mechanical view of nature abstracts from these other aspects.'



Engels

Living organisms are governed by principles that cannot be reduced to purely physical or chemical terms alone because they have their own specific forms and properties. It is also true that biological organisms have a higher and more complex form of organisation of matter. This results in more complex systems which reduce the role of the mechanical and physical principles. They, in Hegel's words 'cease to be final and decisive and sink, as it were, to a subservient position'. But the biological level of development is not independent of the physical and chemical levels. In this way, chemical and biological forms and principles are not reducible to mechanical and physical ones, nor do they completely transcend them. These different levels, Engels argues, can change into each other.

Sean explained that the same dialect obtained in the realm of human thought and activity. Human activity and thought are taken to be natural phenomena. Humans are characterised by thought and freedom. But can we reduce human thought and activity to mere physical properties? Engels agrees that there are fundamental differences between humans and other animals. Animals act according *to* principles rather than *from* principles. He also says that both humans and animals have a history, but humans make history while animals have their history made for them. Talk about history involves a discussion of freedom and Sean gave an account of freedom as a naturalistic, dialectical materialistic conception: 'freedom is the insight into necessity.'

Finally, Sean concluded his interesting talk by saying that 'nature develops, it has a history, it is dialectical. It becomes organised – it organises itself – in increasingly complex forms, until it develops consciousness of itself. Human capacities, including consciousness and rational thought, are natural capacities that have emerged through the development of natural processes. These are the ideas that are involved in Engels' dialectical and materialist view of nature.'

The Essential Question - What is Philosophy?

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 11th November

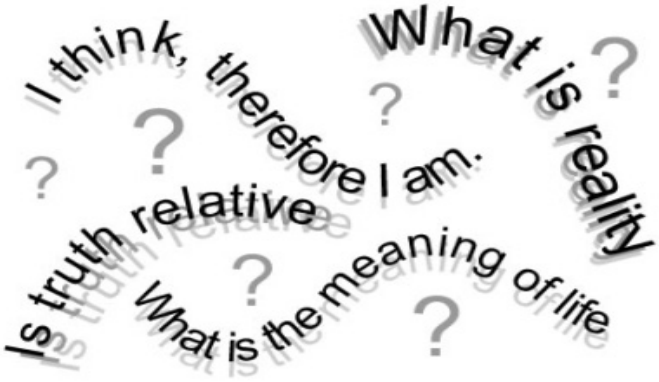
Ruud Schuurman presented to this Wednesday meeting a fresh attempt at answering the question: 'What is philosophy?' That was the title of his talk which tried to follow the question from basic concepts through to ultimate conclusions about consciousness and Being. It was all done with a lot of careful thinking and a minimum of references to the history of philosophy. The question guiding the investigation is not about defining the discipline 'philosophy', as Ruud made clear, but analyzing the concept of philosophy.

It turned out that the question about philosophy is a question about wisdom which is defined in terms of knowledge. Knowledge is then defined as correctly distinguishing between 'what is' and 'what is not'. But talking about 'what is' and 'what is not' is talking about what is real and what is not real or mere appearances. Reflecting on this move it becomes clear that it is about being and what has no being but is mere appearance for a being. Since the whole inquiry is a construction by the philosopher, this being is the 'I am' of the philosopher. The appearances will be appearances to the 'I'. Everything appears to the 'I' but the 'I' is not part of the appearances. The 'I' is then 'cashed out' in terms of consciousness. Ruud did not use the term, but one could say that this 'I' is not the empirical consciousness of particular subjects, but consciousness in general. This concept, if pushed further, will end up as the absolute 'I' or absolute consciousness. But the absolute I, or absolute consciousness, is none other than God.

The steps summarized above lead us away from the world of plurality to a unity of being. But what happens to the individual? On the picture presented in the talk the world of individuation and plurality loses all reality. What is true, real and has being is the one mind (I or consciousness). But we live in a world of plurality and charge individuals with having responsibilities.

This in turn assumes that individuals have freedom. But the picture outlined in the talk is that all this is not real. Being is ubiquitous and eternal now. Everything exists necessarily the way it is and we have to accept it. So what about the problem of evil? It seems to be accepted and reconciled in the one whole being. The picture presented also implies solipsism but Ruud sees no problem with this result if that is what the philosophical analysis leads to. Both points (the presence of evil, and solipsism) generated intense debate because they seem depressive. But the talk implied that changing the world view from appearances to reality (i.e. accepting what the speaker presented) will take care of all that and will be therapeutic.

It is worthwhile pointing out that although Ruud gets to his conclusion from first principles, with the mark of self-evidence, many philosophers and mystics have argued in a similar fashion and ended up with the same results. What is remarkable in the present talk is that you come face to face with someone who is not reporting other philosopher's views but his own and he sincerely believes them and has founded an Institute to promote them. His clarity of thought and courage are worth commending.



Puzzle of the Self

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 18th November

The concept of the self is controversial in philosophy and psychology. We invited a Professor of psychology to tell us what the issue of the self is and what are the practical implications of this theoretical controversy. Tatiana Bachkirova presented a well-argued case for a developmental conception of the self. This is the result of more than ten years research working on this issue, which she first published in her book *Developmental Coaching: Working with the Self* (2011). Psychologists seem to be concerned with knowing what the self is because they can use this knowledge in their theories and working practices, and because we don't really know ourselves.

The title of the talk was: Three Notions of the Self for Applied Purposes, with some 'Remaining' Puzzles. The 'Applied Purposes' in the title refer to the work coaching psychologists do with professionals, leaders and managers.

Tatiana presented three stories of the self. Firstly: The self as an operator: the self is taken as some unchanging substance that is distinct from the organism. Secondly: There is no self. The third is a developing self.

Tatian Bachkirova

A different way of conceptualising the self is to see how we experience ourselves. This is the phenomenological approach. We do feel ourselves as an 'I'. This is a pre-reflective awareness and represents a minimum self. Secondly, how do we act? This is concerned with the neurology and biological constitution of the self as agent. The third approach is more of a narrative approach: how do we tell stories about ourselves. But after considering all these approaches there are remaining puzzles: Is the self a 'thing' or a process? How many selves are there inside us? Which one of these is in charge?

The speaker favoured the 'mini-selves' model with elaborations concerned with natural selection and empirical evidence relevant to self-development. Tatiana presented a model of the self as an 'executive centre'. It is a certain network in the brain comparable to the role of the self but a momentary one in response to a stimulus and adjusting to the task through a feedback. It has internal connections between the mini-selves and the environment.

The self in this conception is modular but instead of one unified self, there are many modules. They are independent functioning units, each allows the engagement with a certain task. Each mini-self is a particular pattern of links between different areas of the brain. The Ego is the name for the executive centre and a network of mini-selves that present to us the unified self at a given moment in a given situation. The Ego is related to actions and creates the sense of agency. The Ego also develops. However, development is not always a matter of consciousness and will and there is always an element of luck. Decisions are not one's own but an outcome of an internal process, and in the interaction with the environment. Agency in this sense refers to the whole organism.

The moral implication of this picture of the self is that because of the element of luck involved in what we are, what we become, and what we do, we are not responsible for our character - but we can develop our character. There is always room for development but complete control of this development is an illusion. This conclusion caused a lot of discussion.

Iris Murdoch and the Mystery of Love

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 25th November

We were pleased to have invited Dr. Stephen Leach (Keele University) to present to the group the topic of 'Iris Murdoch and the Mystery of Love.' The problem with love is that everyone seems to know what it is, but little time has been spent on understanding what it really is. Murdoch had the unique advantage of being a philosopher (of ethics and aesthetics) and a novelist. She has the rationality of a moral philosopher and the sensibility of the artist but above both a taste for love. Stephen made it clear that the place to find Murdoch's philosophy of love is in her essays in the decade from 1959 to 1969. Iris Murdoch approaches love through art and morality. She sees a commonality between them and that they both share the same enemies: social convention and self-love. Murdoch thinks we become better persons when we put aside our blinding self-interest. Love for Murdoch is respect for the other and it is bad social conventions or too much egoism that prevent us from seeing people for what they are and relate to them in a loving way.

She criticised the current philosophy of her time for failing to recognise the fact that love is a central concept in morals. The fault, in her opinion, arises from presupposing that morality is primarily about practical reasoning and action. In her view, the resulting philosophy is impoverished in that it treats moral conduct as a list of instructions, like a shopping list. She argues that the world of morality is concerned with understanding other individuals. However, we can never claim to fully understand other persons. Understanding others is an unending task. Perhaps she is reconsidering Kant's concept of the sublime through the mystery of love. It is beyond the capacity of the imagination to take it in.

Murdoch criticised both Kantian ethics and Bentham's utilitarianism for being shopping list conceptions of morality, and argues that: 'Man is not a combination of an impersonal rational thinker and a personal will. He is a unified being...'

However, she suggests that love can name something bad, so it cannot always be relied upon, although its natural inclination is towards the Good. But how then can we know that love has set us on the right path? Stephen answered that we cannot know but we can take a chance. He concluded with three criticisms of Murdoch's conception of love:

Stephen Leach

First criticism: She only discusses loving. She does not discuss being loved. This leads to love conceived as 'striving'. But being loved may involve wanting to be loved and can show up our inadequacies that need to be admitted in the context of love and trust.

Second criticism: The relationship between attention and action is unclear. One might be attentive to someone, aware of their situation, but do nothing, or left not knowing what to do. The shopping-list conception of ethics give rules and principles, but here there are no rules. Perhaps she left it for the individuals to work it out for themselves.

Third criticism: She does not write from any firm philosophical foundation. But philosophy, in its abstract way of arguing, may not provide the foundation for love. Maybe it is a matter of feeling for other people.

Questions were raised in the discussion that followed about freedom and the demand of love and also questions about solipsism. Murdoch's relation to Platonism was also discussed.

Beasts

CHRIS **NORRIS**

The possibility of pogroms is decided in the moment when the gaze of a fatally wounded animal falls on a human being. The defiance with which he repels this gaze – 'after all, it's only an animal' – reappears irresistibly in cruelties done to human beings, the perpetrators having again and again to reassure themselves that it is 'only an animal', because they could never fully believe this even of animals.

T.W. Adorno, 'People are looking at you', in *Minima Moralia*

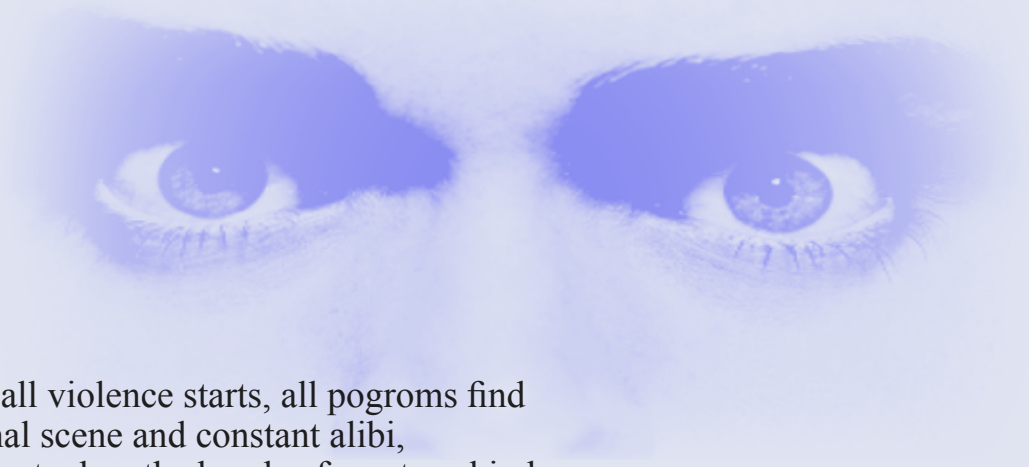
As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called 'animal' offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say, the border-crossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself.

Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*

Adorno

Eyes meet, the hunter tenses, lifts his gun,
Aligns them, sight and prey, then quietly waits
For it, the animal, to turn and run
Before he fires, while, as he hesitates,
The creature stirs, then freezes, and creates,
Between them, a complicity where fear
Of death pre-empts the shot and so negates
Both hunter's ego in its sovereign sphere
And victim's turn-tail drive to get well clear.

And yet he'll fire, put paid to that brief spell
Of eye-locked indecision, shoot and bring
His target down, remembering where it fell
But not, or not for long, the living thing
That held his eye in mute soliciting,
Required he register its stricken gaze,
And feel how predator and prey, like king
And beast, link solitudes as death betrays
The lie that lasted out their mortal days.



It's where all violence starts, all pogroms find
Their primal scene and constant alibi,
That moment when the bonds of creature-kind
Are ruptured yet affirmed, when any tie
Between them, man and beast brought eye-to-eye,
Becomes the atavistic blood-lust stirred
Each time the hunter's gaze says 'plea declined',
The prisoner's call for justice goes unheard,
Or some death-squad commandant gives the word.

See how the species-shutter blanks all trace
Of common creature-hood, how Nimrod's heir
Puts suchlike feelings firmly in their place,
Assigns to childish minds the human care
For sentient animals, and bids we share
With them, our brave precursors, the same will
To have no false compunction spring the snare
But let brute instinct first find blood to spill
Then, manhood proved, be in at every kill.

Both parties, prey and predator, may blink,
And with good reason, though it's 'who blinks first'
That most concerns the hunter keen to think
His steady gaze the mastery rehearsed
By killers through the ages, while the worst
Of end-life scenes for his fixated prey
Is witnessing the mortal hatred nursed
By those whose blood-lust finds no other way
To slake its need than this poor passion-play.

Auden

Re-run the scene, have human victim take
The place of cornered animal, and then
Don't simply state the difference it must make
But ask: what chance he'll act upon it when
That cold, unblinking gaze is turned on men,
On Jews or Palestinians, and required,
As endgame grips both parties yet again,
To stare them rigid till the shot is fired
And yields up the catharsis long desired.

‘Our hunting fathers’, Auden says, would shoot,
Fish, spear or trophy-hunt yet think ‘how sad
The animal condition; trusty brute,
That dog, the cleverest one I ever had,
And such a good companion’ – but then add
‘So cruel of nature, such a rotten deal
They got, those poor old animals – too bad
Their want of reason means that all they feel
Are instinct’s promptings, duly brought to heel’.

The Aesop twist: it’s human swine alone
We label ‘beast’, not critters such as these,
When there’s some horrid deed that we’d disown
By negative projection, or appease
Our guilty consciences by the old wheeze
Of shifting blame to any victim weak
Or biddable enough to show that he’s
The ideal surrogate, just what we seek,
Us higher types who reason, think, and speak.

‘Only an animal’: the knifeman stares
Unseeing at the beast, the beast stares back
Unknowing as its butcher now prepares
To add one further carcass to the stack
While, in the killing fields, some other lack
Of common looks or language goes to prime
The executioner, or squads who hack
Their way through remnant scruples till the time
When killing seems a duty, not a crime.

It’s settled when the wounded prey lets fall
Its desolate gaze on him, this man who zaps
Live creatures just for fun, or treats it all
(The hunt or pogrom) as a minor lapse
From customary norms, or empties traps
By tearing legs, and then adopts the ruse
(One strongly favoured by those shooting chaps)
Of bidding us and them remember whose
The power to say who flees and who pursues.

You say I trivialise mass-murder, treat
The deaths of human beings on a par
With creatures killed on any hunter's beat,
Or view such actions, lethal though they are,
As if they equalled evils greater far,
Like that which seized the German soul and sent
Me into exile under a dark star,
Cursing the Nazi butchers as I went,
While millions stayed for lives too quickly spent.

I say: the road to barbarism starts
In that primordial hunting-scene and lies
Through every zone the killing-manual charts,
First when the hunter's drawn to humanize
His prey by that entanglement of eyes,
Then as he fails to credit what he wills
Himself to make-believe: 'no creature dies
The death we humans do, and he who spills
Non-human blood is guiltless when he kills'.

For then it's no great distance to the plea
Of every camp-guard and the common creed
Of all who seek a moral amnesty
For deaths inflicted on some lesser breed,
Some 'animal' or 'beast' whose nature freed
Those guardians of the human to proclaim
Its killing justified beyond all need
For moral retribution, since the blame
Lay squarely with usurpers of that name.

And I say more: they keep a secret tryst,
The huntsman and the commandant, a pact
Of *Übermenschen* out to rule by fist,
Knife, gun or other means and so exact
The homage due, the high estate they lacked
For want of attributes that might hold good
Against the victims' plea that they subtract
The toll in body-bags, then see what stood
In witness to their human brotherhood.

The ***Wednesday***

Editor: Dr. Rahim Hassan
Contact Us:
rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk

Website:
www.thewednesdayoxford.com

Published by:
The Wednesday Press, Oxford

Correspondences & buying The *Wednesday* books:

c/o The Secretary,
12, Yarnells Hill,
Oxford, OX2 9BD

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09-01-29

The Banished Bard

I was banished long ago
From the republic of old Plato.
I was found guilty of frivolity –
For trading fish and fiction
With philosophers at sea (He mistrusted my scent and mascara).
But, despite philosophers and theorists,
I think therefore what I wish to say is this:
I have survived, disguised
Beside the open grave – whereof
My fickle words console.
There I am, now as then, veiled
In proclamations of belief
And adorned with penannular brooches.

Stephen Leach