

# The *Wednesday*

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## Editorial

### *Philosophy and History*

This is not the first time we have discussed this topic but there has been a renewed debate within *The Wednesday* meeting regarding the reality of history and this occasioned some new reflections on the link between philosophy and history. There are many aspects to such a relationship. There is at one level, the reality of history. Can we be sure that our knowledge of history is correct? Can we know the past? I am on the side of the realist here. There is also the discussion within philosophy as to whether history has laws or is just a matter of contingency. The question for philosophy, then, is what is the relationship between the laws of history and human agency?

This is the contribution of philosophy to history but what does history contribute to philosophy? History is valuable to philosophy in two ways. There is first the value of reading the history of philosophy, i.e., reading the ideas of past philosophers. Secondly, there is the recognition that philosophy is not a random list of thoughts and figures but has a necessity of its own. Both ideas are important to philosophy. Philosophy is the attempt to understand ourselves and the world. This happens in the context of meaning and value.

Such context gives importance to philosophical questions and makes it mandatory to see philosophical questions in a historical perspective. It is good to recognise that we are not the first on the scene in debating this, and that the questions have puzzled generations before us. Therefore, we need to look at their answers and in so doing we will be able to formulate our answers. It is not a call to be a slave to earlier generations, say the Greeks, but it is important to be informed by their thoughts.

Besides, philosophy is a hard subject and it is very difficult to stay at the abstract level without anchoring it in some examples of thought that work as a template to argue for or against. That is why part of the training in philosophy is to read the thoughts of great figures in philosophy from different periods of history. It might also liberate the mind from falling under the paradigm of the day, whether it is theological, ideological, or scientific. Hopefully this will lead to a new start in philosophy so we do not repeat the same method and repeat the same questions. But we should not lose sight of the fact that present day philosophy has advanced tools under its disposal and that a return to older period should not mean abandoning these tools. The same applies to discussing philosophies from outside the Western tradition.

But more important is the thought that philosophy is historical in the sense that it unfolds itself in history. The rise and fall of ideas may look random but gradually there will appear a pattern in thought that discards the idiosyncratic details of a particular philosophy and keeps, in the main, the concepts, ideas and methods that will contribute to future philosophy and enrich the human mind. To think that we live in an 'eternal now' is itself a particular view in the history of philosophy and it may be the aim of philosophy but not the starting point. Here we come to the main idea that joins history and philosophy. If history can be shown by philosophy as the unfolding of reason, then history can overcome its contingent aspect and take a form of necessity. Similarly, philosophy which is a development of reason in history, will have the same degree of necessity and they both will converge. This is the teleology of the historical process and its goal.

*The Editor*

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# The Thought Of Georg Simmel

**Georg Simmel was both a philosopher and a sociologist. This article concentrates on his philosophical work. A general view of his philosophy was presented in the first part of this article. Here, in the second and last part, is an examination of his book *The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Essays*.**

EDWARD GREENWOOD

Part II

Simmel's work as a sociologist naturally raises the question of the nature of sociology. A starting point might be a comparison of the view of the American sociologist George Homans in his book *The Nature of Sociology* (1967) and the view of the Wittgensteinian Peter Winch in his book *The Idea Of a Social Science* (1958). The Homans title sounds confident. The Winch title suggests that a social science might not be realizable.

Although Simmel collaborated with Max Weber and Ferdinand Tönnies to found a German sociological society in 1909, Raymond Aron does not include him in his two-volume study of *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*. He deals with Montesquieu, Comte, Marx, De Tocqueville, Pareto, Weber and Durkheim. However, I have decided not to deal with Simmel the sociologist here, but to concentrate on Simmel the philosopher. Philosophy was his primary vocation. I want to devote this second part to dealing with his last work. This was completed in 1918 the year of his death from liver cancer. As we have seen Simmel himself said that 'a philosophy is a temperament seen through a world.' It is fitting then that taking off from Dilthey's influential view in *Das Wesen der Philosophie* that a philosophy is a *Weltanschauung* or world view, Simmel's last book should be *Lebensanschauung: Vier Metaphysische Kapitel*, (*The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Essays*).

The work is divided into four chapters. Chapter one 'Life as Transcendence' (pp.1-19) chapter two 'The Turn Towards Ideas' (pp. 19 - 62), chapter three 'Death and Immortality' (pp. 63 - 98) and chapter four 'The Law of the Individual' (pp. 99 - 154).

By transcendence Simmel does not mean being in touch with a world outside time and space,



Edward Greenwood

but rather the human capacity to be beyond the moment within each moment, a capacity which, as Nietzsche had noted, the animals do not share. It is of course bound up with our being the only animals to have language. That makes us the only animals capable of creating categorial concepts. In every moment we seem to have the possibility of the choice between the morally or aesthetically lower or higher (again concepts not available to animals whose choices are purely appetitive). Life is always a 'not yet', a project, and death, in the sense of the possibility of life's ceasing at any moment, is always present. Fleeting life wants to embody and so objectify itself in persisting forms (poems, say,) but once it is so objectified it is to some degree alien to us. Life wants both more life and to be more than life. It is in that sense that it embodies transcendence. The end of the chapter shows how, in the past, this led us to embody values in separate existences such as gods or God. Then 'Against this naivete arises critical enlightenment.' This makes traditional other-worldly metaphysics impossible as Kant had shown in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. However what Strawson was later to call revisionary metaphysics is still possible and it

is this sort of critical metaphysics which Simmel is practicing. In his practice he is much sounder than Heidegger was to be. As Simmel acknowledges it is only human beings who create values. In the words of W.B. Yeats' wonderful lines from the second song of 'Two Songs from a Play':

Whatever flames upon the night  
Man's own resinous heart has fed.

The second chapter 'The Turn Towards Ideas' deals with our power to transcend will and purpose. Simmel focuses on the *terminus a quo*, or starting point, rather than the *terminus ad quem*, the goal. We are capable of what Kant in his *Critique of Judgement* had called '*Zweckmassigkeit ohne Zweck*', 'purposiveness without purpose' The artist creates works which are ends in themselves whereas, as Collingwood was later to say, the craftsman creates useful artefacts such as tables or cups which have a use. It is only a cultural philistine who asks what is the use of a Raphael painting or a Beethoven Symphony, or of a poem - 'What does it prove?'. 'Man is the least teleological creature' (p. 24).

Human beings can distinguish happiness from pleasure and whereas sex in animals obeys the Darwinian imperative to produce offspring, sex in human life becomes sociologically complex, giving rise to such phenomena as flirting, adventuring, Platonizing and various other forms of human behavior and, of course, to such institutions as marriage and prostitution. Each of us evaluates differently and in the sphere of value no single truth exists for all. We don't just know in order to live, but live in order to know, as in the case of the natural scientist and historian. The painter does not see to live but lives to see. Natural science and art are not purely instrumental. Social life generates typical behaviour and so we get such types as the adventurer, the miser, the barmaid, the officer, the civil servant, the solicitor. A great writer can give rise to such concepts as the Quixotic type or the Hamletic type. Religion in ancient time was, of force, public and teleological. In modern times it can be private and autotelic.

In chapter three 'Death and Immortality' Simmel states that given death must be its ending, death



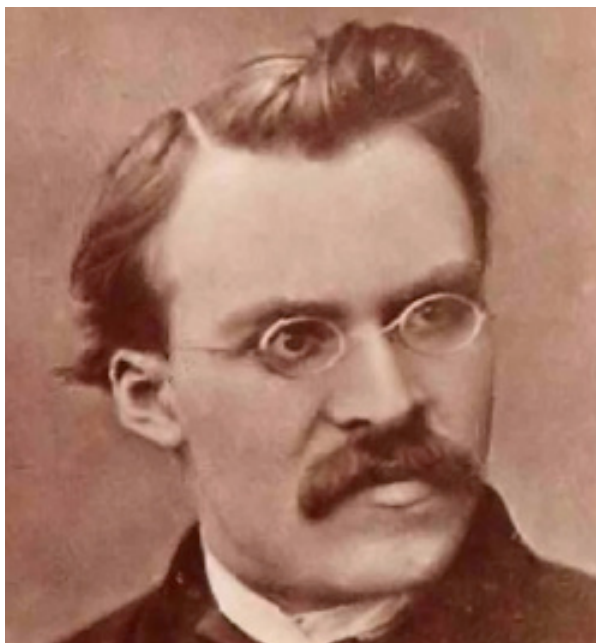
**Madonna della Sedia by Raphael (1513-14)**

gives life form. Like Montaigne and Nietzsche before him, Simmel thinks that Christianity has put too much emphasis on our comportment at the hour of our death. Again, he alludes to the fact that cultural life can produce forms which are antagonistic to life, what he calls 'the tragedy of culture'. Simmel sees the human invention of the Devil as a way to shift responsibility for wrongdoing from ourselves. Kant's acute division between the rational and the sensuous he sees, rightly to my mind, as giving rise to 'moral megalomania'. He was perhaps influenced by his admired Nietzsche here. In matters of moral reasoning Nietzsche had memorably called Kant a 'Verhängnisvolle Spinne' (a catastrophic spider).

We now come to the final and most difficult chapter 'The Law of the Individual'. It is one in which Simmel sometimes reaches an almost Hegelian opacity as he had done in his large treatise on money which, it has been remarked, manages to devote 400 pages to money without mentioning economic science.

In Kantian vein we normally think of law as universal and exceptionless, though Nietzsche, with his emphasis on human diversity, had questioned





Nietzsche



Montaigne

this. As Simmel says Kant's categorical imperative had both 'the logical structure of a natural law of mechanistic provenance' (p. 126) and 'that of a legal proposition'. A natural law is 'immanent in the individual fact', a civil law commands 'the individual from outside'. Such social laws are not a matter of necessity, but of contingency. A natural law must be obeyed. A social law need not be. Therefore, a civil law raises the question of a moral choice. Simmel is trying to subtilise what lies behind the common saying that each person is a law to himself or herself. A person is like a plant rather than like a calculable sum. A life has a root. It is an organic unity. Simmel poses a very Nietzschean question 'can you decide that all men behave, from their first minute to their last minute, as you do?' We can reverse this and ask: 'can all men ask that you behave as they do?'. Kant says yes. Surely the difference in quality between lives at least makes the Kantian claim extremely dubious!

The sections following this are complex and not always clear. Simmel tells us that 'we aggregate our behavior into persistent character traits' (p. 136). A trait is not as substance. It is not a substance Greed that is greedy, as in medieval personifications, rather greed is a predicate of an individual substance, a person, an aspect of a complex whole. A person is a 'unitary continuity'.

Simmel is still struggling with Kant's categorical imperative which 'perhaps does not possess the logical or self-evident necessity claimed for it'. (p. 140). Simmel claims that Kant's categorical imperative had not, as he thought, liberated the moral from any character as a means, for it is itself designed as a means to bring into existence a logical world. But the world is not logical.

Examples are always testing, and Simmel gives us a dubious one on page 143, that of the anti-militarist who refuses military service. This was of course a burning issue during the First World War and Simmel arrives at a surprisingly banal nationalist solution, namely that, as the anti-militarist owed his upbringing to his state, he ought to defend it. But this ignores the obvious objection that the state may be a criminal state and the war unjust.

From here on the work grows more and more opaque, the opacity reaching its utmost around page 150 and afterwards as he tries to elucidate what the law of the individual is. Though Simmel's thought is always subtle, the earlier part of the book was far clearer. What remains clear, however, is that he thinks the categorical imperative is an evasion of 'the creative aspect of the ethical realm'.

**(This is part two of Edward Greenwood's talk to *The Wednesday* meeting 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021)**



## *Mother*

‘Tell me how much you love me?’ she coaxed.  
Transactions of any weight  
have gains as well as losses, worse  
every process can admit mistakes.

‘Up to the skies and down to the valley below!’  
I flung my arms out wide.  
Childhood’s truth is strewn with bunting  
so that happy thoughts can root.

‘You told me once you loved your father more.’  
Imperfections are important  
in a study; in fact, accident has accounted  
for wonder of the highest order.

‘Only this much more.’ I brought my short thumb  
near my pointy finger, and closed  
the gap up with my eye. But, of course -  
nothing captures the whole story....

Now all of that was half a century ago; yet today  
when I look her up in my head,  
she’s still there, still shaping my world  
with touching errors of mind.

*Erica Warburton*

### Reports of The Wednesday Meetings Held During October 2021

Written by RAHIM HASSAN

## Dilthey: Between History and Philosophy

### Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 6<sup>th</sup> October.

Dilthey (1833 – 1911) is not a thinker well known in the English-speaking world in spite of his immense contribution to sociology, psychology, history and philosophy. He held Hegel's chair in philosophy at Berlin University. He was taught by two of Schleiermacher's students and wrote a thesis on him and edited his letters. All this ignited his interest in hermeneutics and made him sensitive to the role of feeling and imagination in philosophy and human studies. His main concern is how the world of nature and history is given to a 'living', as opposed to an abstract Cartesian, subject. He was considered an empiricist of a unique type because he used hermeneutics in his method and studies. He was interested in the 'historicality' of the human subject. He recognised the importance of living historical experience - an experience that includes both a subjective feel and an historical unfolding. History becomes a series of worldviews. Just before his death, he presented three overall worldviews: a naturalist one, that falls on the side of the object, subjective idealism (of Kant), and objective idealism (of Hegel). The first two represent alienation of subject – object, while the last shows the harmony of the two.

The Wednesday meeting invited Edward Greenwood to give a presentation of Dilthey's life and work and the philosophical significance of his thought. He gave an excellent talk that covered many issues in Dilthey's works. Edward concentrated on Dilthey's role in the debate over the difference between the human sciences such as history and the natural sciences such as Newtonian physics. Comte and the positivists

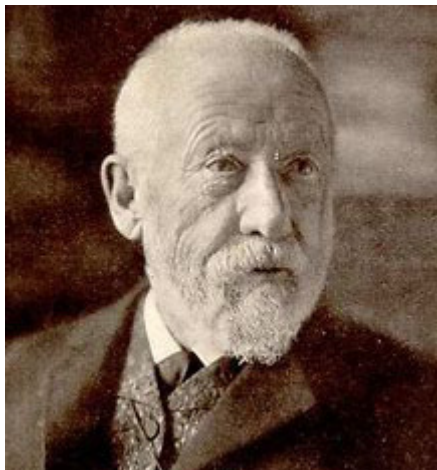
and later John Stuart Mill in the sixth book of his *Logic* hoped to posit universal laws in history which would parallel those of Newton in physics. Dilthey and Windelband saw that this cannot be done. But while Dilthey emphasized that this was because of a difference in subject matter, Windelband emphasized that it was because of a difference in method. Dilthey was concerned with what the participants in events felt about the events, their *Innerlichkeit* or inwardness. This put a premium on interpretation or hermeneutics. Both natural science (physics) and human science (history) look for causal explanation. The difference is that natural science looks for objective facts, history looks for subjective facts or how does it feel to participate in an event of history.

Edward then moved on to talk about two major works by Dilthey: *Introduction To The Human Sciences* and *The Essence Of Philosophy*.

According to Edward, the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* asks what is the task of the human sciences and what are their ancillary disciplines? How are we psycho-physical units related to the society we produce? The primary fact about us is that we are the products of history and at the same time orientated to the future. Dilthey also called for *A Critique of Historical Reason* which would do for a history what Kant had done for Newtonian physics. The *Introduction* is a prolegomenon to, and a partial sketch of, such a critique.

In *The Essence of Philosophy*, Dilthey considers the various forms philosophy has taken over the centuries, starting from objectivity to subjectivity and then to freedom. According to the summary Edward gave, Dilthey saw in Kant the turn towards epistemology and that philosophy became subservient to other sciences rather than being their lord. Edward said that Nietzsche rejected this position.

Edward said that in 1906, Dilthey brought out an important piece of literary criticism *Experience In Poetry on Lessing, Goethe, Novalis and Holderlin*. In it he made another important distinction, that between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. *Erfahrung* is the usual word for experience, *Erlebnis* is the word for an experience especially attended to by the reflective consciousness, central to poetry.



Dilthey



# *Appearance and Reality: The Metaphysics of Bradley*

## *Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 20<sup>th</sup> October.*

Bradley (1846 – 1924) is not a name mentioned often in recent philosophy, but he was famous at the turn of the twentieth century. Bradley was held, at one time, to be the greatest English philosopher of his time. His brand of Idealism made a connection with continental Europe, especially German Idealism but the criticisms that were directed against his philosophy by Russell and Moore put a stop to that trend of thinking and established analytical language as the alternative. But Peter Stibrany gave a good presentation on the thought of Bradley to *The Wednesday* meeting. He thought that there is a renewed interest in Bradley's thought and some relevance to philosophy and science. Reality is one for Bradley and modern physics is looking into theories that unify all appearances into one. Think of the unified field theory, string theory and others. Neuroscience is also looking into ways of unifying all mental and material phenomena.

Francis Herbert Bradley is famous for his books *Appearances and Reality* (1893) and *Essays on Truth and Reality* (1914). The main thesis seems to be that we are experiencing appearances and that reality is beyond our cognitive grasp. We can't get to reality in itself through propositional thinking. But to use the term 'in itself' is confusing. This Kantian term does not apply to Bradley. There is no world in itself existing independent of the appearances.



**Peter Stibrany**

The appearances of course are appearances of something but this 'something' does not exist apart from its appearances. One might refer to reality as the Absolute. The appearances are manifestations of the Absolute. But we can't infer reality from the appearances, and this seems to be what Quantum theory says. Bradley also rejected both ideas that the world is made up of real objects existing independent of experiencing them and the plurality of these objects. For him, reality is one and it consists of an idea or experience. But we can be in touch with reality or the Absolute through non-propositional experience. A sort of direct mystical experience.

To compare appearances and reality, Peter gave the example of a mannequin in shop window. The model is covered over with clothes. It appears in them and through them. But if they were removed the model itself will disappear.

Bradley was also famous for his theory of degrees of truth. Since reality for him is one, truth is identical to this one reality. Therefore, any partial or particular judgment is not completely true but relative. There are degrees of truth or knowledge and there is a progression of knowledge. The truth can be achieved only with a full knowledge of reality and being identical with it.

Bradley may be opposed to a common-sense view of the world and concepts such as space, motion time and causality. Bradley thinks that these concepts are incoherent. Zeno type paradoxes were mentioned in the talk to show the incoherence of these concepts. However, for Bradley, the law of non-contradiction is the criterion of reality because reality is not contradictory. If he could show that the concepts employed by the common-sense view of the world are contradictory, he would have proven that such experience of the world is only the experience of illusions and not reality. That was exactly what he did. Bradley modified his views over the years. He was influenced by many philosophers but didn't credit them. His influence on his contemporaries and the following generation was in metaphysics, logic and ethics. The present crisis in analytical philosophy is driving the philosophical community towards re-discovering Idealism and this may regenerate interest in Bradley's thought.

## What Was 'Theory'?

### *Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 27<sup>th</sup> October.*

We were pleased to invite Professor Chris Norris to give a presentation to *The Wednesday* meeting on the question of: 'What was theory?'. Theory was mainly talked about in the field of literary studies, but it also had ramifications in sociology, historiography, and anthropology. Chris saw the birth and rise of literary theory as a student in the early seventies and then became an active writer on the subject in the succeeding decades. It is always interesting to invite a speaker who is part of the making of an era or a writer who will talk about his work. The advantage is that you get a rare insight into the intellectual activity, its beginnings, purpose, context, and main players. It was a very enjoyable talk.

Chris observed that 'there's been a bit of a fashion during the past couple of decades to speak of [literary theory] in mock-sorrowful tones, as a thing of the past and examine its achievements – real or pretended – as if they're best viewed as a closed episode in the history of thought.'

By 'theory', Chris means the developments around Structuralism and post-Structuralism along with its offshoots and reactive aftermath. He admitted that he had changed his mind about it, but he still thinks of it 'as a great period in which to have come intellectually of age'. He recalled that he grew up with it during the early seventies through the seminars of Frank Kermode at London University and Terry Eagleton at Oxford. Eagleton's seminar was on Marxism and literary criticism. It was an early stage of translating from French and introducing new ideas of structuralists, such as Barthes, and post-structuralists as exemplified by Derrida. This was happening during a time when English departments were under the influence of F.R. Leavis who stood for a set of assumptions about morality and tradition. The aim of literary criticism for Leavis is the pursuit of true mature judgments. Literary theory came to question all beliefs and assumptions behind literary works, criticism, and interpretations. Leavis also thought that philosophy and theory are alien to literature, something that literary theory questions as well.

Kermode's seminar led to a paper that London University students sat which was called 'Critical Methods'. It covered critical methods from Aristotle to American New Criticism, together with French



**Chris Norris**

theorists and some Russian Formalists. French structuralism aimed to be a unifying theory for all aspects of human culture, but it was a fated movement. It was undermined by Derrida in his paper to the John Hopkins University conference in 1967. Ironically, the conference aimed to introduce Structuralism to the American intellectual elite, but Derrida presented what will be his own idea of Deconstruction. This is the birth of what has become known as post-Structuralism. Critical theory became suspicious of Structuralism. Post-Structuralism took off in the mid-seventies with thinkers like Hayden White and Edward Said arguing that literary theory provides us with models to be used in other fields of study.

Chris observed that theory has two aspects to it. It has on the one hand a system building project. It is based, in the French tradition, on the linguistic theory of Saussure's ideas about signification. On the other hand, it has a speculative side which runs the risk of wild speculations. But what comes next? There has been no clear sign of a new trend but only a drifting away from Structuralism and post-Structuralism. This encouraged the remark by one member of *The Wednesday* group that possibly the thesis of the 'intentionality fallacy' and the 'death of the author' are both dead and the present time is a good time for literary biographies. There was also an objection to literary theory that it had drifted away from the literary text and lost sight of the experience of literature.



# Contextualising the Chinese Heart-Mind (Xin)

## URSULA BLYTHE

My whistle-stop talk was pitched towards a new reader of Chinese philosophy, in attempting to illuminate the ethical and educational significance of different philosophical traditions from East to West, but is not merely about studying similarities and differences. On reflection, I have always been drawn to different schools of thought, as it enhances thinking beyond my own epistemological training. In doing so, one ponders the exploration of unfathomable and sometimes taboo belief systems, and the exchange of diametrically opposed arguments from different cultural contexts. However, within the realm of ancient China, the *Hundred Schools of Learning* (baijia zhi xue) provided a diverse range of thinking and sophisticated argumentation, going as far back as the Warring States (c. 475 to 221 BCE).

It is important to realise that epistemology is primarily relational in Chinese culture, as it understood the world to be ordered as a network of relations which form a dynamic structure. The heart-mind (xin) was designed to be in harmony with this cosmic all-embracing organic system, known as 'li' in this context. In the Chinese language, there was no corresponding word that aligned with the term 'metaphysics'. Yet, China has a long tradition of philosophical enquiry concerning the fundamental nature of reality, such as its origins, its being, elements of flux, and so on. Most strikingly, the heart-mind is regarded as a type of sense organ in ancient China and is understood to be 'the ruler of the body' (Yu, 2007: 27-8).

The Chinese heart is not only conceptualised as mind or consciousness, but the source of both emotions and reason, so is therefore envisaged as the central faculty of cognition (ibid). Rošker (2021) explains that the heart-mind was viewed as continuously integrated with the phenomena of the external world that manifested itself in human perception of *things-events* (wu). This perspective differs significantly from Western dualism which maintains the separation of reason and emotion, as exemplified by the 'binary contrast between mind and heart in particular, and mind and body in general' (Yu, 2007: 27). The 'continuity of internal and external worlds'



Ursula Blythe

was the framework of Chinese epistemology until the 11th century, when it was further developed through the Neo-Confucian texts (Rošker, 2021).

In recent years, there is more agreement that *Comparative Philosophy* should go beyond binary investigations based on 'compare and contrast' and engage in more meaningful dialogue and reflection from both sides of the debate. Moreover, the possibility of creating a synthesis of philosophical traditions is somewhat futile. Instead, one must appreciate that Chinese philosophy was created on the basis of holistic existence, such as the co-dependency of femininity and masculinity (yin-yang), the way (dao), and heaven (tian), as well as epistemological and metaphysical paradigms which were historically and culturally situated (Wong, 2021).

In summary, the purpose of Chinese philosophy is primarily to reflect upon and enhance human nature in correlation with the universe and to pursue a better way of life through the dao. Most Chinese philosophers were striving to convince the ruler to act in the dao they defended, so various Eastern philosophies are steeped in socio-political histories and context. So, I encourage researchers to dig deeper by appreciate Chinese philosophy on its own terms and being open to the concept of heart-mind.

**(This is a summary of Ursula Blythe's presentation to The Wednesday meeting 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021)**

## Prince of the Skies

*(Horst Rippert, a German fighter, had just learned that one of his 28 kills in wartime was Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of his favourite book 'The Little Prince')*

Strange how he arrived at the truth  
before settling on the meaning  
sending him deep into the night,  
along his own sandy beach with a hint  
of wind, sand and stars.

At a young age he had read the man,  
between hasty landings and take-offs.  
Has his final voice now risen from the sea,  
up to him the Prince of the Skies?

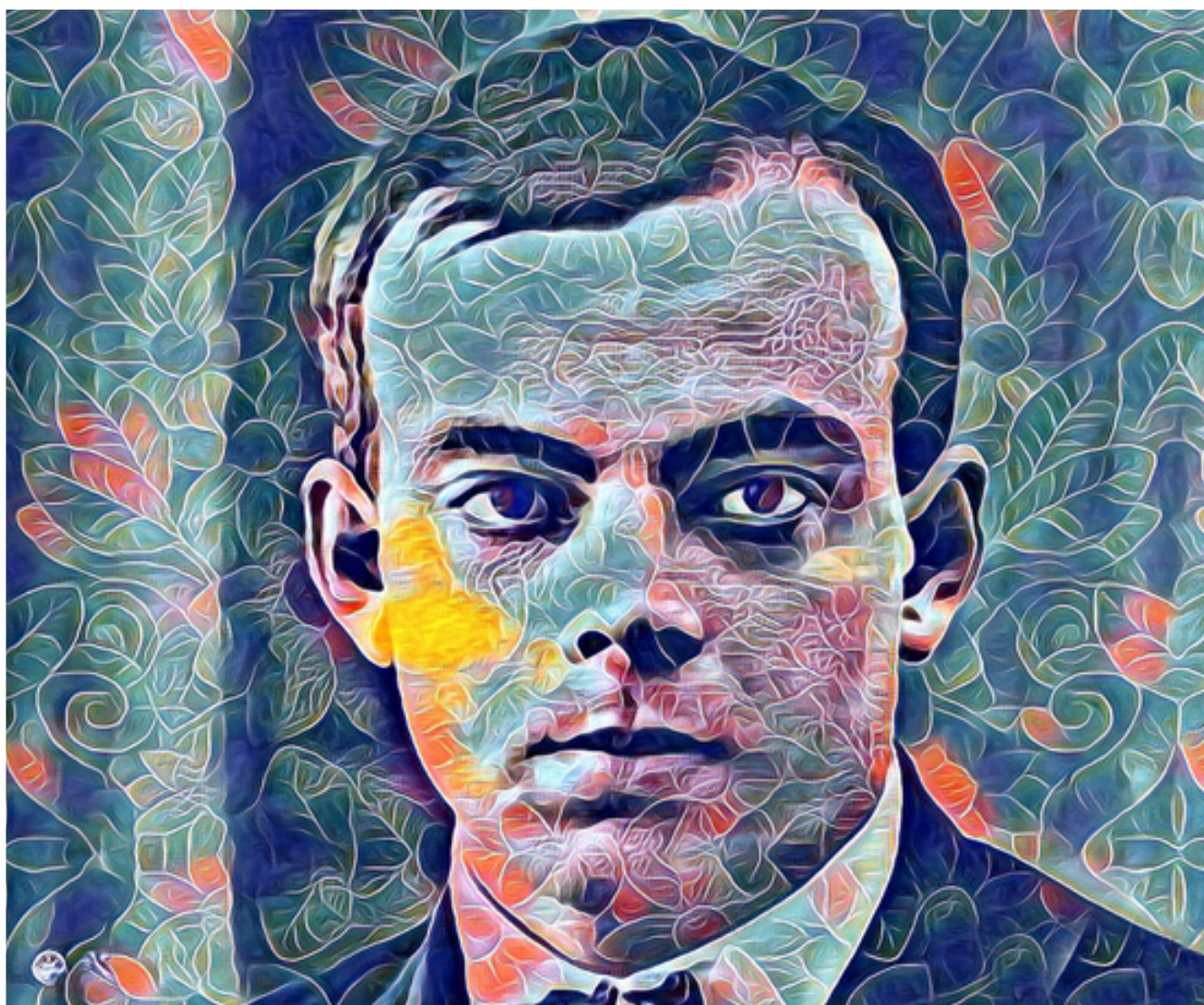
He had to prepare for the true meaning,  
invisible to the eyes,  
to understand what lay at the bottom of the sea.  
Did he not have to shoot down 28 of those allied  
planes  
to only now learn of his super kill?

And here he is, 64 years later, wanting to know  
more about cause and effect hitting the heart,  
while the ghostly creator still trembles  
seaweed-entangled, clam-encrusted.

Walking back slowly, he feels the heat  
and the buzz of the old Kameraden  
in the putrid sweat of loneliness.  
His old legs threaten to give up,  
the closer he gets to the boneyard...







Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*



## Against Perfection



CHRIS NORRIS

1

‘Perfection’, as Nietzsche put it, ‘should not have become’, that is, it should not appear made. Yet the more consequentially it distances itself, through perfection, from making, the more fragile its own made existence necessarily becomes: the endless pains to eradicate the traces of making injure works of art and condemn them to be fragmentary.

T.W. Adorno,  
‘Art-Object’, in *Minima Moralia*,

‘In truth alone can art’s perfection lie;  
How find it out if not by gift of taste?’  
Two claims you’ll know the bourgeois critic by.

The truth’s revealed when language, on the sly,  
Has ‘lie’ (sense one) by ‘lie’ (sense two) replaced.  
It’s truth that art’s perfection must deny.

Taste seeks the perfect artwork, and that’s why  
The bourgeois artworld’s so supremely graced  
With works as fine as auction bids run high.

Seek truth and you’ll acquire a canny eye  
For those whose tasteful beauties may be traced  
To having no truth-principles apply.

Taste says: let me decide, don’t think to pry  
Where shared beliefs require a verdict based  
On equal slices of the judgement-pie.

It’s the same view those aesthetes take who try  
To pass the truth-buck lest they’re promptly faced  
With proof that ‘truth is beauty’ just won’t fly.

Too many mouldy pies in that dark sky,  
Bright lives, like Keats’s, too soon gone to waste.  
‘Whom the gods love’: see how they blaze and die!

What’s perfect has the connoisseur deny  
Its making, deem its history erased,  
Cast off along with every human tie.

No maker’s craft or skill but some decry  
Its touch of mere banausic cut-and-paste.  
*Odi profanum*: let them not come nigh!

Construct or artwork: how shall *techne* vie  
With pure *poiesis*, not reply ‘thou sayst’  
When it’s the maker-types they’d crucify?

\* \* \*

Taste lays it down: perfection can't be made!  
No *Herkunft*, no enquiring why or whence.  
Sprung fully formed, all art that makes the grade.

So they opine, those critics amply paid  
To tell the burghers art's their last defence  
Against the crass demands of cash and trade.

Let art's rough draggings-up not be displayed  
By tracking genesis at form's expense:  
The plea of every fine-arts light brigade!

The perfect work of art's then one that's laid  
Its coming-forth aside and lost all sense  
Of living change as mortal prospects fade.

For what's to halt the cracks as they invade  
Art's fragile citadel and re-commence  
The work of time, the waiting ambushade?

No artwork more minutely self-betrayed  
Than that which touts its ideal permanence  
And scorns to call the maker's gift in aid.

Note how it's Yeats's thought of 'bodies swayed  
To music' tips us off we may dispense  
With timeless symbols perfectly arrayed.

It says: let things eternal not upbraid  
Our finite lot so long as their pretence  
Shows clear in every temporal glissade.

Despise production, let perfection jade  
Your art, your judgement, your intelligence;  
Then history's revenge, though long-delayed,

Will show up in the patchy masquerade,  
The fragments, gaps, and other evidence  
Of how it goes, the fine-art rule obeyed  
By making's self-owned lack of consequence.

2



Keats



Yeats

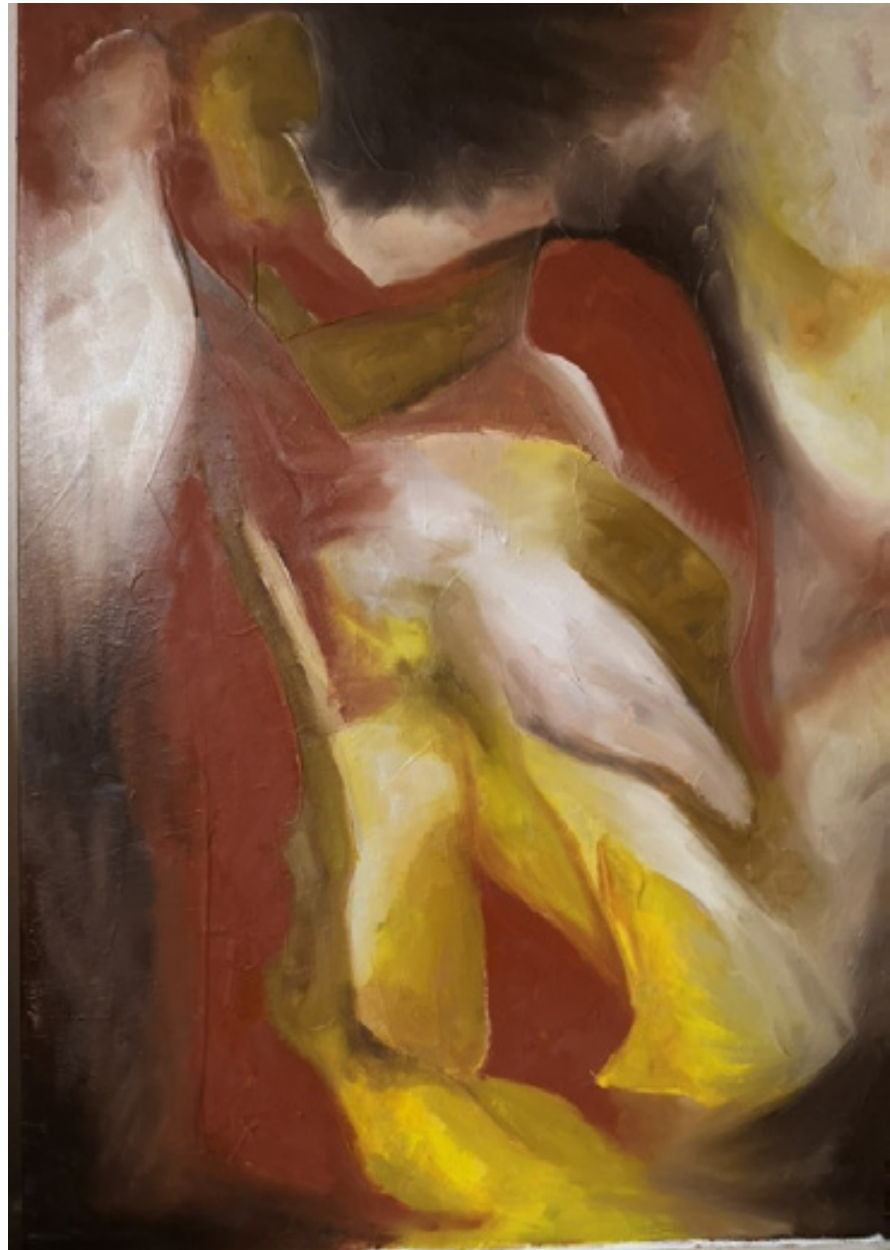
13

# Building, Dwelling, Thinking

Dr ALAN XUEREB

*Being and Time (Sein und Zeit)* is the 1927 *magnum opus* of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. However, my interest was caught by his short influential essay: 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (1951). Heidegger links dwelling to what he refers to as the 'gathering of the fourfold'. Heidegger is difficult to read in both German and English, but this essay evoked some images. This painting is a two-dimensional representation of those images.

We attain to dwelling, according to Heidegger, only by means of building. The latter, building, has the former, dwelling, as its goal. Still, not every building is a dwelling. Bridges and hangars, stadiums and power stations are buildings but not dwellings; railway stations and highways, dams and market halls are built, but they are not dwelling places. Even so, these buildings are in the domain of our dwelling. That domain extends over these buildings and yet is not limited to the dwelling place. The truck driver is at home on the highway, but he does not have his shelter there; the working woman is at home in the spinning mill but does not have her dwelling place there; the chief engineer is at home in the power station, but he does not dwell there.



(*Dasein* – oil on canvas, 50x70 cm, 2021)

Nevertheless, if we listen to what language says in the word *bauen* (building) we hear three things: 1. Building is really dwelling. 2. Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth. 3. Building as dwelling unfolds into the building that

cultivates growing things and the building that erects buildings.

The spaces through which we go daily are provided for by locations; their nature is grounded in things of the type of buildings. If we pay heed to these relations between locations and spaces, between spaces and



space, we get a cue to help us in thinking of the relation of man and space.

One of the main concepts in this essay is the *Geviert* (the fourfold). Earth and sky and divinities and mortals. The four apparently contribute to the oneness of being. This simple oneness of the four we call 'the fourfold'. Mortals are in the fourfold by dwelling. However, the basic character of dwelling is to spare, (or care perhaps) to preserve. Mortals dwell in the way they preserve the fourfold in its essential being, its presencing. Accordingly, the preserving that dwells is fourfold. Heidegger sometimes continues to employ the sense of world that he established in *Being and Time*, which is why it is useful to signal the new usage as the transformed notion of world, or as the world-as-fourfold.

In the last 40 years, several notable architectural critics and historians have turned to the work of Heidegger, especially to his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking'. Those interested in architecture may or may not find anything to think about in such remarks as, that for a human being 'dwelling is always to be learned' or that 'we can only build if we are capable of dwelling.'

In dwelling, then, *Dasein* (being there) is located within a set of sense-making practices and structures with which it is familiar. From an architectural perspective one needs to read Christian Norberg-Schulz interpretation of Heidegger. In Norberg-Schulz's words:

*'In general, the language of architecture expresses the existential structure called "spatiality" (Raumlichkeit). Together these (spatial) structures form the existential basis for the language of architecture or in short Architecture ... As the "house" or that aspect of Being which Heidegger calls spatiality. Architecture discloses the existential structures just mentioned. As a language. Architecture "speaks" or rather "shows" (Christian Norberg-Schulz. 'Kahn, Heidegger, and the Language of Architecture'. Oppositions 18. (New York. 1979).*

Before doing that, I got some inspiration which I have translated into images of relational spaces in this atypical painting of mine (*Dasein* – oil on canvas, 50x70 cm, 2021). Indeed, my impression at this stage is that Heidegger is all about relational spatial fields. However, I may eventually change this impression!

## *The Wednesday*

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*Autumn Once More*



Autumn again, but still the leaves are green,  
And warm late sunshine ripens fruit once more,  
How often have I looked out on this scene:  
My years now number seven and fourscore.

Just like the climber on the sunlit wall  
I cling to life but will it cling to me?  
I do not want to hear death's dismal call  
When being finally must cease to be.

I have felt brows as cold as winter's ice  
And hurried past a room a coffin chilled,  
I know no stratagem and no device  
Can ever stop the heart from being stilled.

Words can't avert the moment that must come:  
The moment that will make all language dumb.

*Edward Greenwood*

