The *Wednesday*

Editorial

Dionysus Revisited

There is a renewed interest in the philosophy of mythology, especially in Schelling's late philosophy. Schelling had a continuing interest in mythology and religion since his student days, but the culmination of his work came in the last decade and a half before his death with his lectures on revelation and mythology. Schelling sees revelation as a continuation of the mythological process or a theogony. He takes myths as real facts and not a poetic creation or coded teaching about nature (allegory) or valorisation of heroes. The subject of myths for him is the gods.

Schelling sees a necessity in the mythological process. This comes out of a dialectical process of three 'potencies'. First, the possibility of being, which is unlimited and real potency. It is followed by the second potency: this is the limited, ideal potency. The third potency is the telos of the first two and leads to a higher spiritualised level.

Schelling calls these potencies gods and explains the world mythologies – Indian, Persian, Babylonian, Egyptians, Greek and Roman – as the birth, power and defeat of these mythological gods. This process or theogony culminates in the birth of Dionysus and reaches its full realisation in the Greek Dionysian mystery cults. Schelling thinks that proper Greek mythology appears with Dionysus and the mysteries.

The Dionysus of the mysteries and of Greek tragedy is also the god of suffering and Divine madness. These were linked to creativity in Schelling's *The Ages of the World*:

'That the self-lacerating madness is still now what is innermost in all things is the greatest attestation of this description. Only when it is governed and, so to speak, verified, through the light of a higher intellect, is it the real force of nature and of all its products. Since Aristotle it is even customary to say of people that nothing great can be accomplished without a touch of madness. In place of this, we would like to say: nothing great can be accomplished without a constant solicitation of madness, which should always be overcome, but should never be utterly lacking.'

Schelling goes on to make a remarkable observation:
'One could say that there is a kind of person in which there is no madness whatsoever. These would be the uncreative people incapable of procreation ... But where there is no madness, there is also certainly no proper, active, living intellect (and consequently there is just the dead intellect, dead intellectuals). For in what does the intellect prove itself than in the coping with and governance and regulation of madness? Hence, the utter lack of madness leads to another extreme, to imbecility (idiocy), which is an absolute lack of all madness.'

What is interesting in this quote is the link between suffering, madness and creativity. Nietzsche appeals to madness and suffering when he talks about innovators, especially in matters of morality and religion (see his *Daybreak*, section 14: 'Significance of madness in the history of morality').

This is the Dionysian picture that Nietzsche promoted in his *The Birth of Tragedy,* but in the *Philosophy of Mythology* Schelling gives Dionysus a more spiritualised association. He takes Dionysus to be destroyer of unity and in favour of multiplicity, and this for Schelling is how the history of Greek philosophy unfolded. Schelling argues in the *Philosophy of Mythology* that it went through a process that culminated in the static being of the Eleatic school, but Socrates destroyed that by means of a dialectic and opened the way for a free life.

Nietzsche worked with the opposition of Dionysian-Apollonian. Schelling recognised the unity of these forms in a teleological tripartite schema as forms of one Dionysus. Nietzsche took Dionysus as the symbol of unity of all being, Schelling saw in him a symbol of multiplicity. Dionysus may prove to be a more complex character than has been thought of thus far.

The Editor

Imagination and Blake's Jerusalem

William Blake personifies Romanticism: a swing of the pendulum from 'Enlightenment' heady reason and materialism towards Imagination and the feeling heart. While 'the dream of reason produced monsters', Blake, as Los with hammer, 'fought the good fight' to liberate humanity.

WILLIAM **BISHOP**

William Blake's work as poet, artist, and prophet has universal appeal because of its music, artistry, insight, and concern for humanity. A verse from an early poem, *Song by an Old Shepherd*, sets the tone for his body of work:

'Whilst Virtue is our walking-staff
And Truth a Lantern to our path,
We can abide life's pelting storm
That makes our limbs quake, if our hearts be warm.'

Blake experienced 'life's pelting storm', which is central to his work in which he identifies Imagination with Jesus – the God in Man. Such a view is similar to his fellow poet-philosopher of the Romantic age, Coleridge (1772-1834), who understood Imagination as a cognitive faculty distinct from fancy. Coleridge: *'Primary Imagination is the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite "I Am".'*

It took 36 years after Blake's death for awareness of his work to grow following the publication of Alexander Gilchrist's biography in 1863. Now his work appears highly relevant to our age of intensified 'single vision'. William Blake (1757–1827) was active in an imperial Britain that was periodically at war (e.g. the Battle of Trafalgar, 1804, the year when he began work on *Jerusalem* and *Milton*). The well-known hymn 'Jerusalem' comes in the preface to *Milton*. He also experienced the aftermath of the 'French Revolution' and the desolation caused by the 'Industrial Revolution', which affected him deeply.

Blake was a confident prophet, but his insights may not be totally free from fantasy. Besides seeing angels, he was strongly influenced by the Old Testament, the book of Revelation, Shakespeare, Milton and mystical and occult sources. His non-conformist Christianity urged the need for social justice and redemption. Any misinterpretations of history and culture on his part can be attributed to the limitations of his time.

He called his prophetic books 'songs', and a song has its own truth, drawing the listener into the living expression of the sounding Word. These works don't have an obvious linear plot but are dramas of the psyche and spirit. They concern human existence and destiny in a series of intertwined visions expressed in a mythology unique to Blake. To me these prophetic books seem close to 'outsider art' in their concentrated complexity, yet the visual art, integrated with the text, lifts them to a high level of expression. It seems that Blake very much lived in this world of the imagination and felt compelled to convey these living messages to the page in a manner similar to the medieval illustrated manuscript with its resonance of scripture's sacred authority. In *Jerusalem* we read: 'I rest not from my great task! / To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes / Of Man inwards into the worlds of Thought, into Eternity / Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination.'

Blake's epic vision of Man includes dualism with a fourfold quality. In the early prophetic book, *Vala*, we read: 'Four mighty ones are in every Man; a Perfect Unity / Cannot exist but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden, / The Universal Man, to whom be Glory Evermore. Amen.' These four ZOAS represent the different principles of Man. URIZON is reason, LUVAH is emotion, THARMAS is primal drives, and LOS is prophetic imagination. These aspects can also function independently. This fourfold (or complete) aspect and the dual nature, is presented as 'fallen Man' ejected from Eden, where he was 'made in the image of God.' In Blake's mythology females emanate from males yet retain their connection. The sexual nature (duality) and the conflict with unity and separation between female and male plays a significant role in the prophetic drama, as in life.

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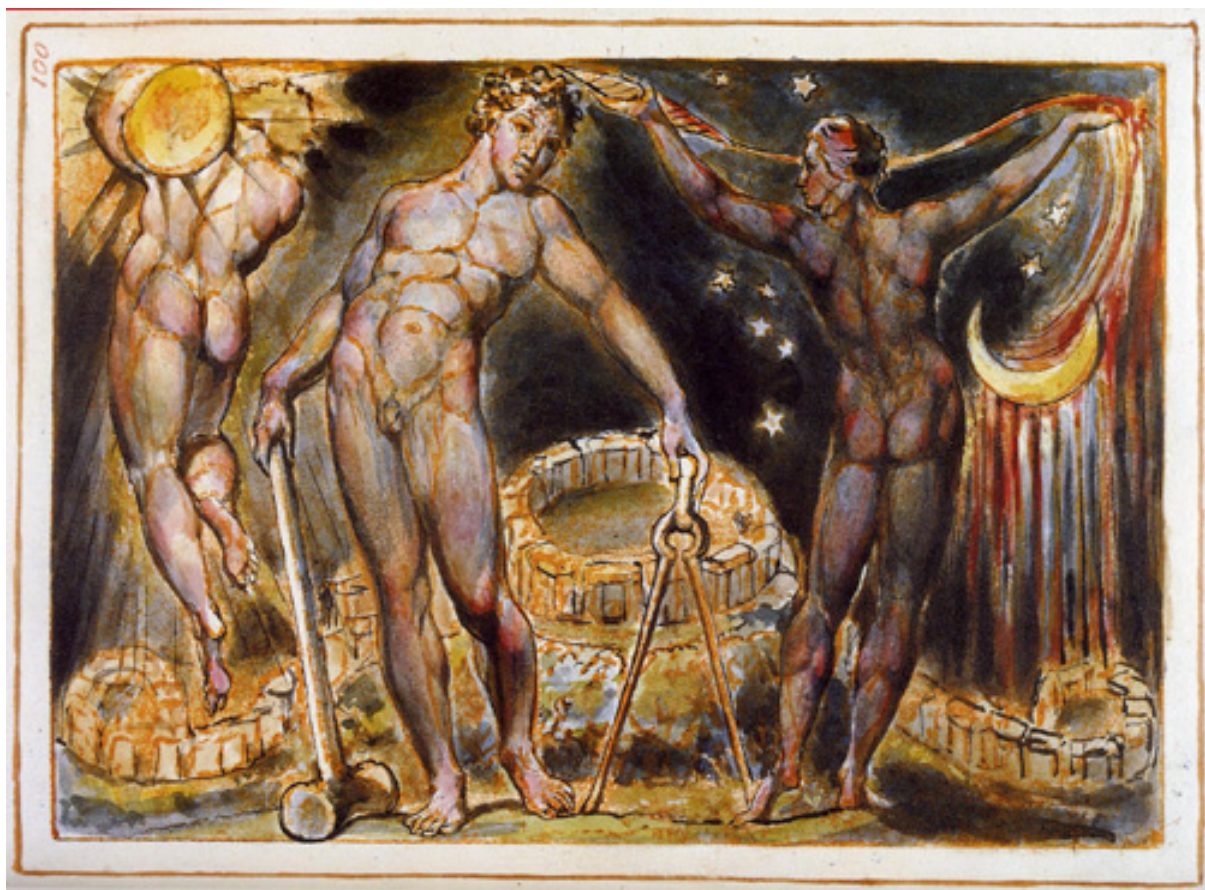
The Triumph of Los

Blake's culminating work is *Jerusalem*. Here the mastery of emotional expression through the human form is as uncanny as it is a revelation of empathy. *Jerusalem The Emanation of The Giant Albion* (the full title) is a synthesis of his poetic vision using the printing technique he invented for this purpose. He worked on *Jerusalem* from 1804 until the first copy was completed in 1820, although he announced his aim in July 1803: 'To speak to future generations by a Sublime Allegory. I may praise it, since I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary; the Authors are in Eternity. I consider it as the Grandest Poem that this World Contains. Allegory adress'd to the Intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding, is My Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry.'

Jerusalem is not fiction but reality seen from four interconnected levels. Its form is poetic and visionary rather than literal and its essential message is that the fourfold vision of wholeness is possible in the present. As a song *Jerusalem* is 'apocalyptic' (from the Greek: 'uncovering') that uncovers relationships between the earthly and cosmic, the diabolic and divine, and human relationships caught within this network. Key to the uncovering is the revelation of the four levels to life and the potential for fourfold vision, but what is needed for inner change is vision and imagination. This 100-plate illustrated poem was considered incomprehensible until recently and as a 'sublime allegory' with complex characters and

ideas with art and poetry intended for recitation, it reveals a cosmological view of creation, destruction, desolation and redemption where the forces of ignorance, evil, and enlightenment tangle in a manner that reflects conflicts Blake experienced in the early nineteenth century.

What emerges from *Jerusalem*, where characters morph into one another and are at the same time lands, is a world of four regions that are also states of mind where it is possible to progress from unhappy ignorance to eventual harmonious enlightenment. Spectres play a significant role and each person and nation has one. For Blake the spectre was synonymous with 'Selfhood' (egocentricity), which he identified with Satan. However *Jerusalem* presents the possibility of a psychological and spiritual journey from the restricted mindset and single egocentric vision in ULRO (a state of mind and land infected by Satan), through the creative state of GENERATION, to the sensually fulfilled state of BEULAH, and on to EDEN-ETERNITY, the harmonious state of fourfold vision. The potential for human development is from a state of Hell to a state of Heaven: from a condition of war, hate, fracture and the self-enslavement of egocentricity to a state of love, forgiveness, and participation in the whole.

It is interesting that Blake's printing technique required that he scribed in a reversed (mirror) fashion. This was then rendered reversed to normal when printed. In plate 41 a tiny figure is

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Los and his Spectre

The Mirror-reversed Message

seen writing and the revelatory message in mirror-image form (normalized by reflecting in a mirror) reads:

'Each Man is in his Spectre's Power
Until the arrival of that Hour
When his Humanity awake
And casts the Spectre into the Lake.'

Fundamental to Blake's vision was the problem of 'Selfhood'. This self-interested state (ULRO) causes isolation and presents a barrier to human development and movement towards an enlightened fourfold state. Blake stresses that growth and progress demands conflict between contraries, and this certainly features in the work. So the message of *Jerusalem* is an old one seen through fresh eyes and what emerges from the miasma of these multiple visions is the insight that it is unnecessary to remain living in the world-mood of limited 'single vision' with its competition, anger and war, since it is possible, through vision and active virtue, to transition to a state of harmony, peace and happiness.

Blake said *Jerusalem* was dictated to him by Jesus. Since he identified Jesus with the faculty of Imagination this seems reasonable. Indeed it is interesting how all the action happens within the body of Jesus in which Jesus is also a character.

Such 'panentheism' relates to Hinduism where God is both beyond and within creation, and interestingly when Jesus historically spoke the words in Aramaic: 'Our Father which art in Heaven', heaven meant the universe. Influenced by the Judao-Christian tradition, Blake's vision is deeply Christian and universal with its association of Adam Kadmon - the Universal Man – who embraces the full extent of the universe that contains everything: 'the mind is not in space but space is in mind, which contains the whole universe'.

Blake not only renders the visible surface, but he penetrates to hidden forces and grounds his symbolic imagery in known geographical locations. What is invisible to the senses has to be expressed figuratively, and with allegory and mythology the internal truth is not literal (single vision) but inherent in the picture as a whole. Rudolf Steiner remarks: 'if we want to see more of the context of the cosmos we need to adopt a different perspective than one based on the senses and speculation where imagination allows access to the first rung of the world of spirit – to the life or etheric level and accept the relationship of the part to the whole and the whole to the part – science sees the structure but not the archetypes that form it.' Plate 71 informs us: 'What is Above is Within, for every-thing in Eternity is translucent:

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Monstrous Powers

Eternal Day

/ The Circumference is Within, Without is formed the Selfish Centre, / And the Circumference still expands going forwards to Eternity, / And the Centre has External States; these States we now explore. … as in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven / And Earth and all you behold; tho' it appears Without, it is Within, / In your Imagination, of which this World of Mortality is but a Shadow.'

Blake's imagery cannot be comprehended by conceptual thinking. Pictures relate to feeling, and at a deep level the imagination can affect the living structure of the body: 'All imaginative knowledge based on truth is at the same time healing and health-giving, it makes the blood healthy in its circulation' - Rudolf Steiner. By means of highly developed imagination and artistry Blake was able to energetically express visions of the imminence of the transcendent that illuminate the darkness of our world where light and dark in conflict create existence's excruciating colour.

Blake's imaginative world resonates particularly with us today with our parallel or illusory world of virtual reality and artificial intelligence that threatens to absorb what remains of natural human reality. Arguably virtual reality (as fancy) could imprison people in the 'single vision' of ideological materialism, preventing a spiritual vision necessary for development towards fourfold

EDEN-ETERNITY. Albion, as Man, symbolizes humanity and Britain, personifying male 'Selfhood' that opposes the divine, while Los, as blacksmith, strives for transformation with his furnaces, building Golgonooza (in GENERATION). In *Jerusalem*'s final scenes the 'Divine Breath' awakens sleeping Albion who consults with Jesus in Eternity and then leaps into Los's furnaces. After this death and resurrection moment Albion, with bow and arrow, leads the advance on the adversary forces, attaining victory: achievement of the 'Eternal Day'. Near the end Albion notices the likeness of Los to Jesus – indeed a human being is not puny in relation to the universe, but with the potential of Adam-Kadmon, connects Earth and the Heavens (Eden-Eternity). For Blake exterior and interior are permeable with flow both ways: Atman is potentially Brahman while Brahman is inherent in Atman. Man, made in the Image of God, falls from grace, and by redemption reclaims and *is* that Image. Clearly Blake's genius lies in his Imagination (his prophetic vision), where divinity works within the human; or as Coleridge had it: Imagination is 'a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite "I Am".'

'As God is Love, every kindness to another is a little Death / In the Divine Image, nor can Man exist but by brotherhood.' – *Jerusalem,* 96: 27-28.

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Reports of The Wednesday Meetings Held During October 2021

Written by RAHIM **HASSAN**

Connective Analysis as a Philosophical Method

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 3ʳᵈ November.

Edward Greenwood gave *The Wednesday* meeting an overview of a method of philosophising called 'Connective Analysis'. This method was first suggested by Wittgenstein and subsequently developed by Peter Strawson and Peter Hacker.

Edward began his talk by highlighting the lack of progress in philosophy compared to science. Kant discussed this question and concluded that it is due to the type of questions philosophers asked. Wittgenstein thought that philosophical problems are pseudo-problems. Instead of answering them, he suggested they should be dissolved. Edward made the point that questions presuppose answers and any question that is unanswerable should not be asked.

Traditionally, philosophy was thought to provide knowledge about reality. However, Wittgenstein changed that by shifting the emphasis from reality to language. He suggested that thought is intimately related to language. But language is governed not just by linguistic rules but also by rules called 'philosophical grammar'. The application of these rules gives rise to 'connective analysis'.

Edward said that the term 'connective analysis' was first directly introduced and discussed by Strawson in his book *Scepticism and Naturalism Some Varieties*, (1985). It is also discussed in Peter Hacker's essay 'On Strawson's Rehabilitation of Metaphysics' in Hacker's book *Wittgenstein; Connections and Controversies*, (2001). Hacker points out that

Strawson rejects the Kantian doctrine of the *synthetic a-priori* as unclear but endorses the view that 'there is a massive central core of human thinking which has no history. These are categories and concepts, which in their most fundamental character change not at all. But, according to Edward, Hacker does not find Strawson's solution of what he regards as the non-contingent features of our experience entirely satisfactory. What then is the status of propositions delineating the bounds of sense? Hacker's answer is the following. 'We should treat such propositions which overtly or covertly describe connections between the major structural features of our conceptual scheme, as expressions of '*norms of representation'*.

Edward went on to talk about the connective analysis as practiced by Peter Hacker in his book *The Categorial Framework.* Hacker sees philosophy as laying down the rules for 'the limits of description'. Connective analysis seeks not to describe reality. That is the task of natural science and history in their respective domains. Philosophy shows the forms which such descriptions must take. These forms are conditioned by what Wittgenstein termed 'philosophical grammar' which is not grammar as linguists understand it.

Edward made it clear that connective analysis does not give us an inventory of the furniture of the world, or an insight into being *qua* being such as Aristotle thought. It is concerned with existence claims, and this takes the form of a connected inquiry into the conceptual dependencies associated with such claims.

Edward then presented a review of *The Categorial Framework*. He discussed language, knowledge, categories, such as cause, substance, teleological or purposive explanations, and the self.

Edward said that Philosophy does not give us knowledge of the world as natural sciences and history do. It gives us an understanding of the general structure of our thought about the world. He borrowed a statement from Hacker who said in the same book, page 75, philosophy is 'not the handmaid of science- It is the tribune of sense for both science and common discourse.'

Peter Hacker

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On the Proper Proposition Principle
Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 10th November.

Ruud Schuurman is a very interesting thinker with an original theory of Being. However, on this occasion he talked to *The Wednesday* group on what he calls the 'Proper Proposition Principle'. The principle says that: 'If a sentence can neither be known to be true nor be known to be false, we are obliged to discard it from rational discourse.' By 'rational discourse' he means 'reason, reasoning, or the truth-preserving pursuit of (true) knowledge (aka wisdom)'. He also abbreviates the unwieldy phrase 'a sentence that cannot be known to be true nor cannot be known to be false' to 'unknowable sentence'.

Ruud explained that the principle itself is quite uncontroversial. Unknowable sentences are to be discarded because they are not proper propositions. They are useless in rational discourse because they will forever remain unknown. They can cause confusion, for example, by cluttering arguments. They can even cause serious problems. But the problems do not come from unknowable sentences that are readily recognized as unknowable, such as questions, commands, exclamations, but from—what Ruud calls—presumptions.

Such sentences are presumed to be known or, at least, to be knowable, while they are in fact unknowable. For example, the sentence 'There are things outside

Ruud Schuurman

of my consciousness'. We typically presume this sentence to be known, while it is in fact unknowable because we are confined to our consciousness.

Presumptions are, in Ruud's view, a particularly devious kind of unknowable sentences. They are not readily recognized as unknowable. Even if they are recognized as unknowable, they tend to be so deeply rooted that they are not readily discarded. They are fake propositions. If we allow fake-propositions to sneak into rational discourse, they tend to cause fake-problems: Problems of trying to answer an invalid question: A question that is based on a false or unknowable presupposition. For example:
'Why is it true that 1+1=47?'
'Why are there things outside of my consciousness?'
And, more surprisingly:
'Why and how do physical processes in the brain give rise to consciousness?'.

The "problem" of answering this question became known as 'the hard problem of consciousness'. According to Ruud, this too is a fake problem because it relies on the presumption that there are things outside of consciousness, namely, physical processes in brains. Thus, the problem is not hard to solve, but it tries to answer an invalid question, and is thus unsolvable.

The discussion then geared towards three closely related issues: (1) What are the valid means of knowledge (i.e., what makes something true, what are the criteria, or grounds)? (2) What is in fact true? And (3) whether absolute truth is compatible with relative truth? The answer to the last question is 'yes', according to Ruud. Although these issues go beyond the scope of the talk, we spent a good time discussing them.

However, the hard question is the metaphysical view of reality that Ruud holds to. According to him, the only reality there is is consciousness, in a deeper sense than the empirical, ordinary consciousness of common-sense. It is not that reality is mental, but it is what appears to consciousness, to the 'I am'. To see what this means. and how to deal with the consequences of solipsism, you have to go back to previous meetings reported on in *The Wednesday*, or wait for further talks by Ruud Schuurman.

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Macmurray: On Educating The Emotion
Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 24ᵗʰ November.

John Macmurray (1891- 1976) was a philosopher who brought philosophy back down to earth through his broadcasting and writing to the public, beside his professional, academic career. His philosophy puts emphasis on the personal form, the person in relationship with others instead of the lonely Cartesian subject of knowledge. He also gave priority to action over epistemology. Jeanne Warren talked to *The Wednesday* meeting on 'Reason and Emotion in the Work of John Macmurray.' The talk was based on two of Macmurray's books: *Freedom in the Modern World* (1932) and *Reason and Emotion* (1935).

Emotion was not a topic that was admitted to academic philosophy in the thirties in Britain. However, the emotions or feelings took prominent place in Macmurray's writing. According to Jeanne, for him emotional integrity has a value on a par with intellectual integrity. That is because 'motives for action lie in the feelings, so if we continue to ignore feeling in our thinking, we can address action only partially.' For Macmurray, actions happen in a social context that needs emotional and intellectual involvement. Because reason applies to action it involves feeling as well as thinking. Reason has a function in impersonal exchanges of information, such as the case in science. But in personal action, shaped by thought and motivated by values derived from feeling, reason applies to both thinking and feeling.

Macmurray says that for the development of emotional reason it is necessary to 'shift the centre of feeling from the self to the world outside'. Only in relation to the object, the world, can our feeling (as well as our thinking and our action) become objective, that is, rational. Jeanne said that we should be honest about our emotions. Such honesty requires being educated emotionally as well as intellectually. Schools should take this seriously and encourage students to have a disciplined freedom of feeling. She gave an example from the Medieval system where authority was imposed in matters of learning and thinking, compared with modern scientific thought, which is free and undogmatic, but not undisciplined.

Before ending the talk, Jeanne looked to the role of emotions in the communal sphere, in what Macmurray called the 'generalised expressions of the personal'. These are science, religion and art. Science is the exchange of information, as in the example of two people conversing about a third person or object. The essence of the conversation here is information about the object and not the shared feelings of the two. This is comparable to science. But if the conversation is not a mere exchange of information but also a means of fellowship, 'This is the particular experience which is generalized in religion.' Imagine further that the conversation is about a beautiful sunset. The one who saw the sunset gets so completely absorbed by the scene that he becomes indifferent to the personality of his listener. Here he has become the artist. Feelings do not play a role in the first case, but they do in the last two.

It is interesting how these ideas are related to education and Jeanne took this opportunity to criticise the reduced importance that is given to art, music and drama. She also criticised the trend of over intellectualising the involvement with art and literature. Macmurray's ideas are still relevant not only to philosophy in the narrow academic sense but to society in general. As Jeanne remarked, Macmurray 'was driven to consider the emotional life partly because he felt emotional irrationality was behind many of the problems of society.'

Jeanne Warren

Facts, not Things: Challenging our Conceptual Inheritance

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 17th November.

CHRIS SEDDON

Logical or philosophical analysis includes challenging certainties that are based merely on our instinctive or cultural inheritance. This was the context for my presentation, in which I hoped to challenge our instinctive materialist ontology. I opened with a quote from the opening of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*:
"The world is the totality of facts, not of things."
as an illustration of such a challenge.

I followed this with a quote from Dicken's *Hard Times*: "Now, what I want is, Facts... Stick to Facts, sir!" to make the point that the challenge of logical analysis is not limited to "hard, logical, facts" in the way that Dicken's Thomas Gradgrind would advocate, but applies equally to any thoughts and feelings which shape our intentional actions, whether expressed in language, or perceived or experienced in other ways.

It is easy to mistake artefacts of the vocabulary and grammar of our natural language for deep universal truths. In this example, the difference between facts and things is a grammatical one - sentences or main clauses are supposed to refer to facts (real or imagined) and phrases or nouns are suppose to refer to things - but the real difference is between ideas that do not say anything until they are applied to other ideas, and the ideas resulting from such combinations that already say something - real or imagined. An example of the former type of idea was Mrs Gradgrind's '*pain*':
"I think there's a pain somewhere in the room, but I couldn't positively say that I have got it".

'*Pain*' is an idea that must be combined with the idea of one or more sufferers, before it says anything. '*You and I, Louisa, and our whole family, share a pain for which I cannot find the words.*' combines that idea with other ideas actually to say something, which may perhaps be what Mrs Gradgrind was trying to say.

It is tempting to think that such intermediate ideas correspond to '*things*', and that the ideas they eventually form correspond to '*facts*'. The latter is largely an idle theory. There is no content to the concept of '*correspondence*' - to say that an idea corresponds to a fact, is to say no more nor less than the idea. Since thought is about things other than itself, we may infer that our

Chris Seddon

combined ideas are ultimately about other things, but there is no general description of these other things, other than the ideas we have about them.

The idea of intermediate ideas such as '*pain*' or even '*Mrs Gradgrind*' corresponding to '*things*' is completely idle. The role of such ideas is merely to combine to form ideas that are about something. Not only is there no explanatory power in supposing that such ideas in isolation correspond to something else, but to do so introduces an assumption that the thing supposed is unique. Such unwarranted assumptions impede clear thought in science, philosophy, and whenever thinking deeply and creatively.

I finished with three examples from science, mathematics, and philosophy. Most members of the group were familiar with Rutherford's picture of the atom with orbiting electrons. Not all were aware that this model has been superseded by the idea of electrons as probability waves. An electron - like all material objects - is the probability of certain interactions. One or two members were familiar with Conway's mathematical game of life, in which moving 'objects' emerge from factual rules about the status of static cells. Finally, I documented a philosophical analysis of the identity of the morning star, the evening star, and the planet Venus, in which once again the solution is to discard unwarranted assumptions that ideas correspond to anything unique, other than the facts expressed by those ideas in combination.

9

Falling Apart

Their love ran out like water on the rocks.
She tried to hold it, but it flowed too fast,
as he'd already altered his heart's locks.
They blamed each other for their wanton past
invading every corner of their senses.
She craved a father helping with defences,
He, for a mother who would tuck him in;
both reaching out for sun and moon akin.

Their sky came down at night, and with the moon
tumbled their happy stars, outshone by sun,
leaving a void, a darkness out of tune,
with burnt-out stones and everything undone.
The sky had gone, with it the flock of birds.
Light had withdrawn and so had all their words.
All hope had ceased, the pain was here to stay
She prayed indoors, hid her cold self away.

Then in his search, the stars lay in his way.
Their yellow gold dust made him lust for more,
as though his heart was made to err, betray.
He found the moon rolled up behind the door,
unfolded it and wrapped it in his coat.
Brought back to health, it grew and kept afloat.
And, full at last, it had a nipple grown
for him to suckle, when he felt alone.

She looked for father sun and warmth and love
and found him in the grasp of other women.
She ripped him from their arms, tried to remove
his shine and radiance, with bright acumen,
and hid him in a drawer by her bed.
At dusk she brought him out in sunset red
and leaned against his colourful outlook.
This was the moment, when her heaven shook.

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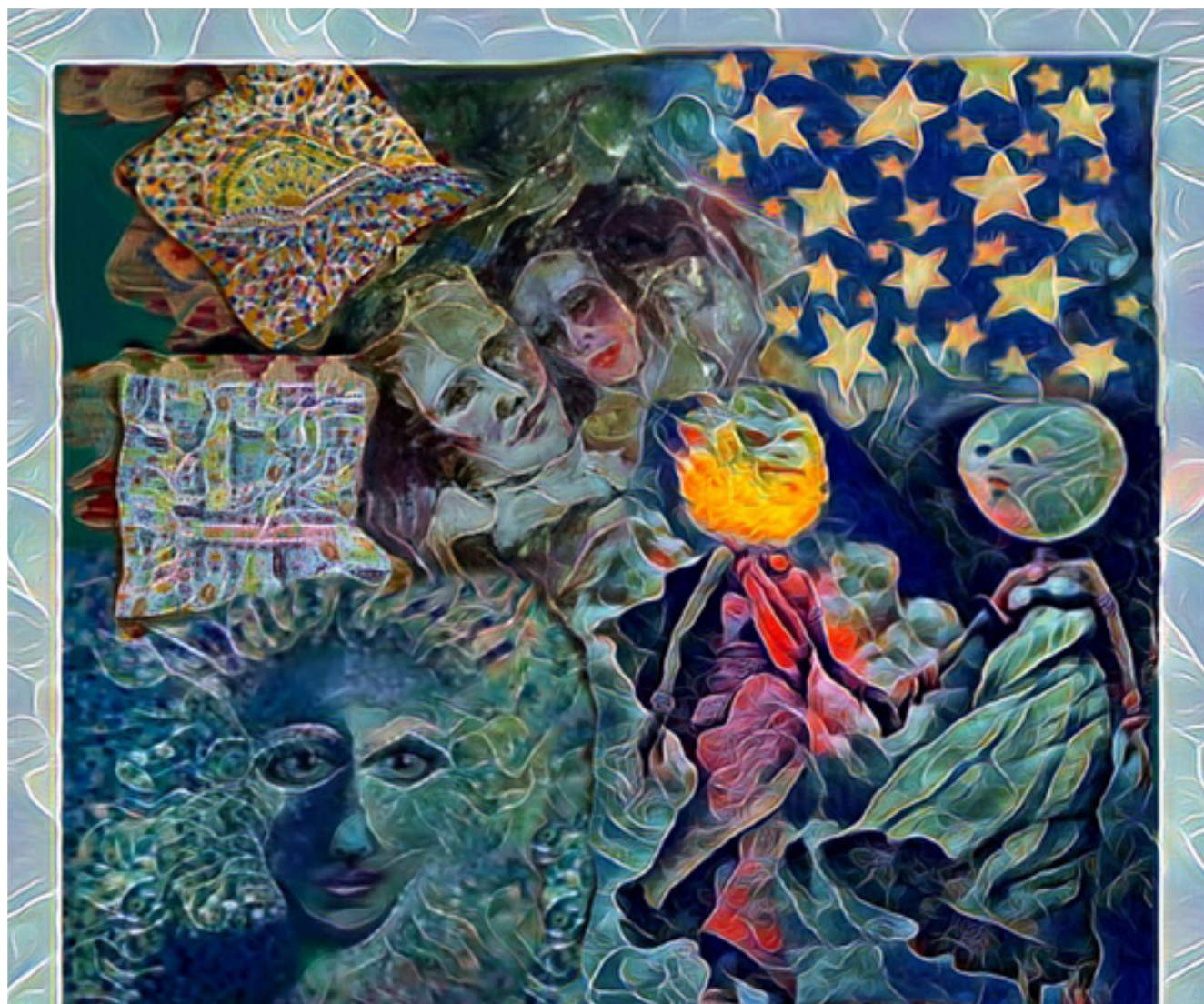
Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

Poetry

Empson to the Reader

CHRIS NORRIS

[The notes to my poems] are meant to be like answers to a crossword puzzle; a sort of puzzle interest is part of the pleasure that you are meant to get from the verse, and that I get myself when I go back to it . . . . And the comparison is not quite a random one; the fashion for obscure poetry, as a recent development, came in at about the same time as the fashion for crossword puzzles; and it seems to me that this revival of puzzle interest in poetry, an old and natural thing, has got a bad name merely by failing to know itself and refusing to publish the answers.

William Empson

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The crossword-puzzle interest gives a clue.
I like to do them when I've time to spare.
The best may prompt invention, set in train
A fresh conceit, throw up a fine *trouvaille*.

Only the cryptic sort will really do,
Not quiz-book browser stuff or *faits divers*,
But proper teasers fit to tax the brain
Since standard algorithms don't apply.

It's when you're still on track, still thinking through
Some riddle, that you're suddenly aware
Of words assembling on a tangent plane
With yet more occult clues to know them by.

Thought rhymes with thought, the singing lines accrue,
And then, in answer to the puzzler's prayer
Or poet's need, a glossator's refrain
May strike the listener's ear, the reader's eye.

The Oxford aesthetes take a different view,
Deplore my 'ingenuity', declare
That riddling poetry has naught to gain
Beyond 'the passing tribute of a sigh'.

Granted: their feeling-throes come right on cue,
From love's first ecstasies to flat despair,
And, unlike mine, need no one to explain,
In endnotes, what occasioned them and why.

Yet if the voice of feeling's to ring true,
Not out-of-tune for want of thinking's share,
Then 'Sherlocking' had better take the strain
Of keeping brain engaged and voltage high.

Call me eccentric, but for me the *coup
De foudre* – start of every love-affair –
And sexual consummation both attain
The state coy poets euphemised with 'die',

That sudden lapse of self that can ensue
As much when pheromones pervade the air
As when the puzzler hits on some arcane
Solution with the old 'Eureka' cry.

Solving equations: that's a big help too,
The kind of mental exercise I dare
Say offers thought-procedures more germane
To poetry than much they classify

As its 'perennial themes', the usual crew
Of lovebirds, late romantics, and armchair
Erotophiles who think they'd best abstain
From thinking lest it give their dreams the lie.

The moderns make end-rhyme their big taboo,
Count meter trashed or tarnished past repair,
And take it as their rule: keep language plain
For fear amphibolies should multiply.

I say: take that on board and you'll eschew
Rhyme-led discoveries as rich and rare
As any made by voyagers on the main
Or those with abstract realms to overfly.

It's what those virtuoso puzzlers knew
Whose poems, like their madrigals, took care
To voice no plea direct, the lover's bane,
But use obliquity as alibi.

It's I who set the puzzles but it's you,
The reader, must discern the root mean square
Of all those math-based figures that enchain
Thought's infinite, like non-repeating *pi*.

Once grant us cryptophiles the credit due
And then you'll give the puzzle-poet's flair
For rhyme, conceit and metaphor free rein
For things the lyric warbler might deny,

Like forms that come, as if by *après coup,*
To show what thought-potential rhymes may bear,
Or how clues seem, once solved, to preordain
The guesswork-trail we followed, try by try.

Empson

The Nativity Crib

Christmas As Cooperation

Dr ALAN XUEREB

I still remember the absolute fascination I felt whenever I was in front of my grandparents' (on both sides) homemade Christmas cribs. The setting up of a nativity crib is a very traditional Mediterranean Christmas custom. So being Maltese at Christmas time it takes on a new meaning. Everything becomes magical in a childlike manner. Indeed, as Jesus is reported to have said, '[t]ruly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Indeed, besides the deep theological and spiritual connotations associated with Advent, there are also the other more Epicurean if not purely hedonistic sides of this period, namely: mince pies, eggnog, mulled wine and other culinary delicacies that differ from country to country.

However, I am not today exclusively interested in the philosophy of food, but in what the Christmas spirit may translate to in actual terms when you have a team of highly trained professionals who are colleagues but not necessarily friends.

Aristotle's works include abundant fodder against today's organisations; he emphasised the value in virtue and simplicity and prioritised the improvement of society over the development of the individual. However, I have to say that according to my understanding of the common good, individual development and the improvement of a group (from family to nation) are not mutually exclusive. Actually, I feel that they go hand in hand; they need to be co-ordinated but are not antithetical to each other.

An example of this happened during my fifth year working at my current place of work. A colleague of mine had this brilliant idea of having a lunch break project involving all those who volunteered. His idea was to start a nativity crib from scratch. He knew my experience with historical military dioramas would come in handy. The two of us managed to persuade our boss that at the end of the project we would have a bonding activity for Christmas – the inauguration of the crib. This would somehow draw more colleagues perhaps from other units and we would collect money like never before for charity, something we do around this time. Little did we know that not only the inauguration would have attracted guests and onlookers but that the whole building-a-crib project became a major attraction.

People to whom I rarely spoke to in my five years there, came over to where we started this lunch-break crafts-project with materials, ideas and eagerness to dirty their hands. Even though some never had picked up a brush in their life.

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Alan working on the project

Mary and Joseph

Some forfeited their lunch break entirely, just to be there, helping with the crib. Others bought sandwiches and coffee for the hardworking crib-volunteers. A subgroup of volunteers were already planning the reception around the inauguration that happened sometime in December. And guess what: productivity increased in those months.

You could see it in their eyes, in their smiles - they became kids again. For as long as they were in that room, even if it was just for twenty minutes they had that joy inside. So, you see besides the project itself, this little simple artistic activity created bonds and a common goal that went beyond the professionalism and formalism of office life. What I take away from this little Christmas story is that aesthetic experience in any of its manifestations is so connected to our emotions that it doesn't need much explaining. I also think that by becoming a bit more similar to our kids we do manage to connect to each other, better more authentically. We manage to break down barriers. Isn't that the Christmas message after all?!

Love

In memory of Georg Simmel who wrote so well on Love

Between the having and the lack
Possession and the not possessed,
The child of penury and yet
Somehow with riches blest.

Felt by the few, the happy few
Who have been singled out by fate,
Love makes a garden far apart
From conflict and debate.

Love stoops to inhale the rose's scent,
And, doing so, forgets the thorn,
It has the kind of nakedness
Which only flowers adorn.

Two beings striving to be one
Must isolated still remain,
As tragically they realise
Their aspiration vain.

Edward Greenwood