

The *Wednesday*

www.thewednesdayoxford.com

Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford



Editorial

Why Philosophy?

A question was posed to the members of *The Wednesday* meeting about what could philosophy do for a person. There were many answers, but what I wish to contribute is the idea that there are two aspects to philosophy. There is the objective side of philosophy that is supposed to give us knowledge about the world and reality in general and there is the subjective side of philosophy which enables us to have knowledge of ourselves. Philosophy starts with wondering about the world and ends up asking about knowing the self.

Considering the objective side, philosophy is the source of all branches of science. Were the pre-Socratics proto-scientists or philosophers? I think they were both at a time when science and philosophy were not sharply distinguished. Later science and philosophy became more formally organised. Some philosophers, such as Aristotle, studied natural science. However, a new fascination with the position of the human being in the world appeared on the scene and interests turned towards metaphysics and ethics. Ethics then moved from the objective side of society and state, to concern for the self. With this turn, the early Greeks made it possible for humanity to figure out a whole metaphysics that has influenced the rest of history.

Philosophy's engagement with science had another revival in the 20th century, and to a large extent it is still occupied with scientific questions, especially in the philosophy of mind. Philosophy has also moved from personal ethics to the state of society and politics and has fought ideological wars, both in theory and in practice.

However, my interest is in the subjective side. It is the feeling one has that a certain philosophy is closer to one's interest than another type of philosophy or that a certain philosopher is speaking for one's concerns better than another. I always wonder why I, or others,

are drawn to a particular philosophy or philosopher. It has been suggested by some philosophers that philosophy is based on one's temperament. Others have suggested that it is based in the body and rooted in one's instincts and drives. Another take on the question is that one's philosophical inclinations come from the realm of the imagination, which makes philosophy closer to poetry and art. But is this convincing? Is philosophy a matter of feeling or imagination?

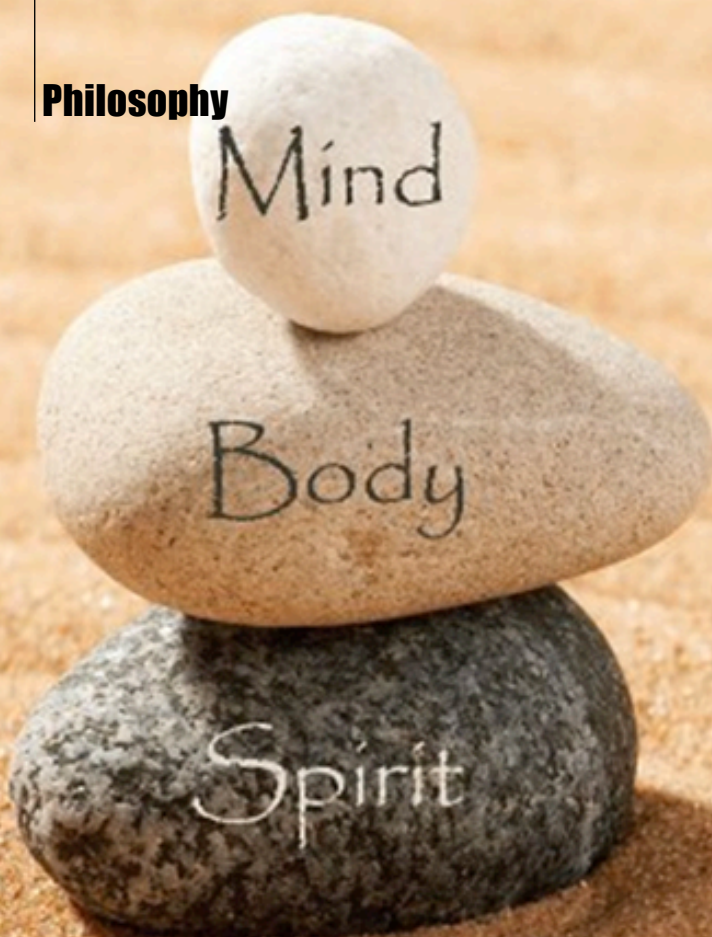
I can see an obvious objection to the subjective thesis because we may feel a need for a stronger basis for philosophy. We also need philosophy to be shared and universalised. But I don't dismiss the feeling thesis, because we can share and universalise a philosophy based on feeling. There are two ways of universalising it: there is the objective technical sense in which a skill, including logical skills, can be universalised, but there is also a way of seeing the world that we wish to see universalised. It is this vision that we wish to share with others, and we want to see them taking it seriously. We have within us a receptive faculty for ideas and ways of seeing the world that makes us favour certain philosophies and philosophers. It may also make us demand that others respond in a similar way. Philosophy is in total agreement with what Kant described as an aesthetic judgment. It is a subjective judgment that can be universalised.

I think that both the objective, technical side of philosophy and the subjective, feeling side of philosophy have a role to play, depending on the task at hand. One needs both a reasonable training in the technical side of philosophy, but one also needs the vision, a sense of commitment and the strength of feeling that is necessary to carry it forward. It is this holistic picture that *The Wednesday* aspires to present through the magazine and the weekly meetings.

The Editor

Being Matters

Is the world as a whole best comprehended in terms of Monism or Dualism and if so, how can Monism seamlessly connect the poles conceptualized by Dualism?



WILLIAM BISHOP

'As soon as one's purpose is the attainment of the maximum possible insight into the world as a whole, the metaphysical puzzles become the most urgent ones of all.' – William James.

2 We habitually tend to think from a materialist perspective (even if we are religious) because this is the pervasive viewpoint into which society has conditioned us. Even when wanting to express a spiritual viewpoint there is a tendency to rely on materialist concepts. So, any attempt to express a cosmology founded on spiritual principles that could uproot received notions of materialist science, seems foolhardy were it not for the fact that it is desperately needed. Even so a challenge to one's inherited worldview is likely to receive a reaction of denial (the shock of the new), but this is not what this article is essentially about. However, it does require reference to a different cosmology in order to support a more comprehensive monism than that of materialism.

Plato is often assumed to have supported dualism (the world of ideas and the physical world as two

separate spheres), yet this interpretation is arguably mistaken due to ambiguity inherent in its dialogue form. The duality of body and mind is usually attributed, at the beginning of modern philosophy, to Descartes in the 17th century. Subsequently the connection between body and mind has become a 'hard problem' for philosophy. Arguably, as a pervasive worldview, scientific materialism has its limitations, particularly in relation to Being, and from its perspective the connection between mind and body remains a 'hard problem', but this 'gap' can be satisfactorily closed from another perspective, which, by definition, would be impermissible from the point of view of Positivism. However, advances in science tend to undermine science's materialist foundations, while Scientism clings on to its reductionist and exclusive beliefs. But in the interest of the whole, consideration has to be given to different complementary approaches to investigating reality. This also means extending the parameters of science to make it more comprehensive. This is no easy question to consider but the state of physics in particular calls for refreshed ideas to 'make sense' of reality. So,

is it not time to seriously re-examine the idea that the material world of matter is enfolded within a mantle of spirit? If so, it may be possible to uncover a graspable relationship between mind, soul, and matter.

Supersensible Experience

If such a perspective is to extend epistemology this must be based on *experience* rather than supposition or speculation, because established science is apparently based on evidence, calculation and reason. However, suppose this different approach is to be supported by *supersensible experience* and reason. This may not ‘make sense’, but the point is that the super-sensible incorporates the sensible. A similar view was expressed by the quantum physicist, David Bohm, who conceptualized an *explicate* order emerging from an *implicate* order. Supersensible experience is undoubtedly controversial in our present historical moment therefore this approach should be judged by its fruit. The reason for raising awareness of this perspective (which adheres to scientific principles) is because, by restricting itself to the sphere of mechanism, materialist science leaves *being* out of account. It cannot therefore produce the ‘maximum possible insight into the world as a whole’, because Being matters. Of course, it can be argued that the whole point of modern science is to restrict itself to what can be weighed, measured and counted, and that is why the human world of being is excluded. That is fine and logical, but such a viewpoint limits human awareness by its limited paradigm, which fails to account for the whole while conveying the illusion that it does.

This different approach has ancient roots to which fine detail has been added by Rudolf Steiner’s supersensible research, some of whose ideas relevant here can be found in three lectures published under the English title: *The Bridge Between Universal Spirituality and the Physical Constitution of Man*, 1920 (rsarchive.org). The title points to resolution of the supposed gap between mind and body, but to discover this bridge it is necessary to introduce its metaphysical context.

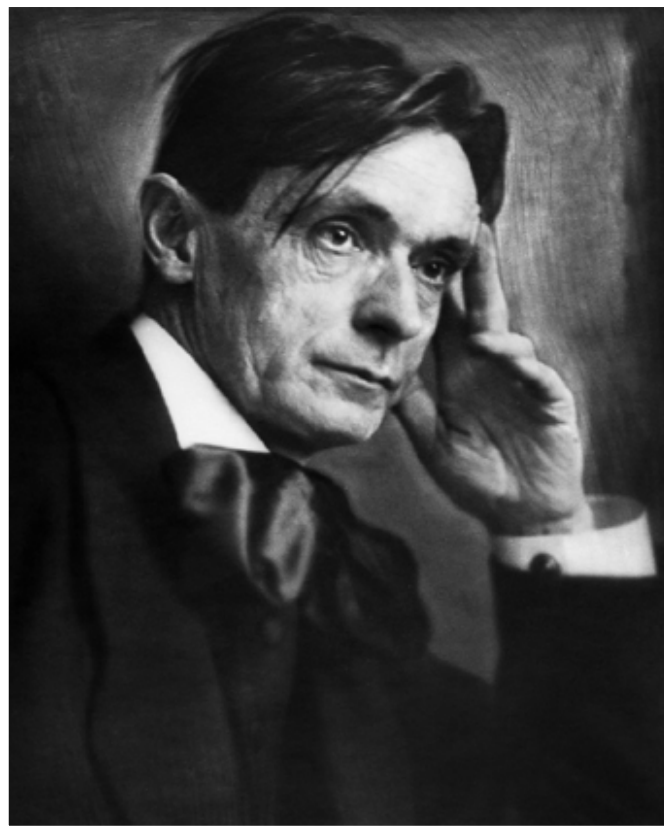
The view of the physical world held by Aristotle and ancient Greek philosophy was that it is constituted of four states of matter plus quintessence (ether).



William Bishop

These states of matter were called the elements: Fire, Air, Water, and Earth. Accepting this as reality and seeing them as arising over four evolutionary stages, Rudolf Steiner added the details of four types of ether coupled to the ‘elements’, as well as some physical forces, arranged in such a way that the ‘elements’ are sandwiched between the ethers above and the physical forces below. The ethers have properties of creative organization and integration and are characterized by levitation, while the physical forces have properties of inertia and disintegration, characterized by gravity. So ‘elements’, ethers and physical forces constitute interactive triads, and this constitutes Nature (physis) which is bound within time and space created by light.

In terms of Being, Nature is sandwiched between super-nature above and sub-nature below. Super-nature is characterized by the light of Being, and sub-nature is characterized by negation and darkness. Super-nature comprises an astral (soul) level and higher levels of spirit, while sub-nature comprises electricity, magnetism, and the nuclear force. These are all dimensionless and “eternal” - past, present and future combined. Spiritual entity is associated with the super and sub regions, and these interconnect through portals with the middle domain of Nature. This makes it all one world rather than three separated regions. This resembles the three-decker universe of heaven-earth-hell, but this is not a picture of separate spheres but of an interconnected unity. Life itself is based on interaction between opposing forces, yet rather than representing duality, an intervening midpoint



Rudolf Steiner

establishes a trinity to maintain harmony at the *mean* where interaction takes place.

Having set the context, it is now time to describe the specific connection between mind as consciousness and body constituted by the four 'elements'. The etheric-spiritual forces that penetrate the four 'elements' are *life* (a forming force); *number-tone* (a chemical and differentiation force); *light* (linked with space); and *warmth*. These connect the spirit (super-nature) with Nature. The mineral body is the foundation for three other 'bodies': the liquid organism that supports the ethers or life-body (a major proportion of the body is liquid); the air-breath system (soul); and warmth (ego). The totality of the human being (physical, etheric, astral-soul, and ego) is formed and informed by these four etheric 'fields'. They enliven the physical body, while the soul incorporates the faculties of thought, feeling and the will, and the ego (individual 'I') connects with the world of spirit.

The brain is a receiving agent that mirrors

thought, and like the eye, which is the organ for perceiving visual phenomena, the brain is an organ for perceiving thoughts and ideas. A thought directed from the ego ('I') through the warmth system acts on the will by means of the air system (soul), which can then act directly on matter or act through the etheric body via the liquid system (through a sound-chemical ether signal to the muscles). The individual ego therefore, by means of warmth, connects through the breath (air system) and the blood (liquid organism) to the solid matter. Connection between spirit-soul and body is accomplished at the point where the spiritual meets the physical in *warmth* (the most rarefied form of matter). So, the connection between mind (conscious thought) and body is the spirit-soul which perceives, feels and reasons through the agency of the body with its senses and incorporation of etheric forces within the incarnated human being. The connection between the spirit-soul and the brain is indeed remarkable in that it is the spirit-soul that builds the body (with aid from the ethers, matter, and the physical forces), so that the brain is moulded by the functioning spirit and soul to be an appropriate mirror of consciousness with bodily connection. Of course at the point of physical death this connection is severed. The enlivening etheric body departs and disperses, leaving the mineral body to the physical forces of decay. Then the spirit-soul is no longer earthbound.

The Great Chain of Being

Appreciation of the 'whole' is also provided by theology in the idea of the *Great Chain of Being* where highest Being interrelates through links to the lowliest state of existence. When Plato described creation of the world, he introduced a Demiurge to perform the task, implying a source of Being beyond creation and Being involved with creation. This is mysterious territory, yet there is logic in the reality of a staircase of levels from high Being successively down through the recognized nine hierarchies of angels through to the human, animal, plant, and mineral, each with their own extent of consciousness. But the possibility of awareness in a world of time and space requires a physical foundation and specifically a nervous system culminating in a brain. So if there are degrees or different extents of



consciousness then the level that a being has will depend on the level of consciousness that informs it. Consciousness assumes Being, and *Being* is understood here as the motive power behind the four states of matter via the four ethers. Aristotle's notion of the 'Unmoved Mover' becomes relevant here. In its totality the universe consists of the physical, psychological, and spiritual; and the moral sphere is also not restricted to a world of its own, but, stemming from the spirit, it represents the other side of the coin to the physical world where connection is made between the moral and the physical through the medium of the human being. An example of this is when enthusiasm for a moral ideal generates inner *warmth*. This becomes a positive life-creating force (acting on the will), in contrast to abstract thinking's cooling, life-debilitating physiological effect. Here mind and matter meet. The relationship between the self ('I') and the immune system is also interesting as a physical system designed to support and protect the incarnated *self*.

An impression of dualism may be conveyed by the principle of inversion and polarity, but as with the coin metaphor, connection is made at the *mean* point of inversion. This is similar to the relationship between 'inside' and 'outside' where inversion happens at the point of cognition; on one side is mind and on the other external phenomena and consciousness connects them. It is as if the inside is turned outside and vice versa, yet there is a seamless connection through consciousness between spirit and material phenomena, between

Being and matter.

For the sake of clarity in accounting for the whole, *matter* is a phenomenon of point-centred movement that can support life. It is open to Being and light on one side, and on the other to a centralizing dark force. Warmth arising from Being precedes time (and space) in the process of evolution. It is therefore all-pervasive and intensive, as opposed to extensive (requiring space). The warmth ether is concerned with coming into being and passing away, and warmth in space strives to bring matter into being. The relationship between energy, mass and the movement of light offered by Albert Einstein is relevant here ($E = M c^2$). Sadly, limited by its mechanistic understanding, materialist science cannot comprehend life although it is very capable of mechanistically manipulating it.

Now the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle was an attempt to gain 'the maximum possible insight into the whole world', but since their day individual topics have separated out from philosophy and become specialisms to the extent that this division of knowledge in itself frustrates awareness of interrelationship within the whole. Science resting on materialist foundations is an example of a separate specialism. However it is because the world of *being* and the world of *becoming* form a whole that spirit and matter relate in a continuum. The separation is apparent and merely perceptual within our present state of human evolution. So arguably Being (in the form of consciousness) and Material Substance are not separate worlds, but form a single dynamic and evolutionary process

Reports of The Wednesday Meetings Held During February 2022

Written by RAHIM HASSAN

The Relationship between Science and Philosophy

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 2nd February.

A question that has been frequently asked: What is the relation between science and philosophy? Peter Stibrany gave a very interesting paper on this topic to The Wednesday meeting. Peter who is a former engineer and now a philosopher is well situated to discuss this topic.

Peter thinks that science and philosophy are two rational ways of forming and changing beliefs. But how do these two ways differ? According to Peter, they differ by their standard of rationality. Science answers the demands for reliability and utility. To be useful, science must offer reasonable predictions, and this ability to predict has been its strongest point. 'Firstly, accurate useful predictions mean that an effect will work as predicted independently of who does it, where, when, why, how many times, and what their existing beliefs are. Secondly, the demand for repeatability pushes scientists to find timeless regularities. Only things that don't change can be projected into the future, or for that matter, into the past. And finally, scientific prediction must be as solid as a logical deduction, albeit some of whose steps - the physical effects - take place outside human minds. Just as a logical deduction is not time-bound, a scientifically derived regularity is also not time-bound.'

But there is a major difference between science and philosophy. Science involves a fact of the matter, which is not always the case in philosophy, particularly in ethics. Ethical decisions are conducted, for the most part, on common-sense. Philosophers have attempted to derive ethical rules, but these attempts are generally viewed as failures. Some suggested pragmatism and proposed to lean on democratic consensus. But this is also not enough.

Peter then asked: Does this mean philosophy is doomed to be irrelevant to everyday life? Well, considering the obvious failure in ethics and in building useful philosophical systems the answer might be yes. But Peter saw an essential need for philosophy. In his opinion, 'the consistently most valuable outputs of philosophy are new ways of seeing and interpreting the world and ourselves. Rationality offers us the ability to see more possibilities and more of the implications of our decisions, however dimly, before we make them.'

But does philosophy help science? Peter said that scientists should be doing philosophy all the time to avoid becoming doctrinaire and stuck in 'paradigms'. He also referred the famous article 'Against Philosophy'

in 1993 by Stephen Weinberg. Weinberg 'attacked what he considered bad philosophy of science. He was worried about post-modern philosophers who argued that science produces only socially constructed truths and dismissible opinions rather than hard facts. Weinberg particularly railed against positivist ideas because of their malign influence on working scientists. He concluded that the best use of good philosophers is to protect scientists from bad philosophers.' However, Peter thought that 'there is no reason why scientists need to listen to bad philosophers, or indeed any philosophers at all. What scientists need to be protected from is themselves being bad philosophers. Not everything a scientist does is science. Some of it is philosophy, and it should be good philosophy.'

What about the beliefs that were mentioned at the start of the article? Science and philosophy will help rationally change beliefs. But Peter said that such changes are a difficult matter even for scientists or philosophers. They don't think rationally much of the time due to their biases. But 'is the common sense we've been granted by evolution more sophisticated than anything we could devise rationally?' Maybe. However, it seems at last that science has one advantage over philosophy. Peter concluded that 'the limited domain of science makes the implementation of rationality relatively easy. This leaves philosophers the harder problem. But it's the only way forward.'



Can science tell us everything we need?

Matthew Arnold and His Idea Of Culture

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 16th February.

Arnold was an important intellectual figure of nineteenth century England, although he was only a minor poet his book *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) gave him immortality and lasting influence on culture and politics. He was born in 1822, educated at Balliol College Oxford before becoming a fellow of Oriel College in 1845 and in 1858 he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford. He died in 1888.

Edward Greenwood gave *The Wednesday* meeting a good review of his main book on culture but also some of his poems and his religious views. Edward said that although Arnold felt a growing sense of the untenability of Christianity in its traditional form in the nineteenth century, he thought Christianity could and should survive if it adapted to modernity. But Arnold's main concern is with culture rather than religion. He was accused by some of trying to replace religion with culture. In philosophy, Arnold clashed with philosophers of his time such as Bradley and Sidgwick.

His idea of culture was stated in the preface of his book *Culture and Anarchy*: 'The whole scope of this essay is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free

thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly, but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically. This, and this alone, is the scope of the following essay. And the culture we recommend is, above all, an inward operation.' Culture, for Arnold, brings harmony to society and aims at 'general' perfection. It must avoid 'provinciality'. Edward said for Arnold this entails 'a national establishment of religion' which is why he saw nonconformism as the enemy.

Edward then gave a review of *Culture and Anarchy* chapter by chapter noting Arnold's salient points. Arnold supported the state as embodying the 'higher reason' of the people as a whole and he equated individualism with anarchy. But he was against the aristocracy because its culture is 'an exterior culture mainly'. It lacks a 'soul'.

Arnold saw the good aspects of the ancient Greek culture, but also the Christian heritage and called for a harmony and a synthesis of the two. The Greeks, in his view, put emphasis on knowledge; Christianity emphasized action and strictness of conscience. Edward made the point that Arnold recognizes that we have gone beyond antiquity in the natural sciences, but in culture claims that the ancients are both our models and superiors.

Oxford at the time gave both Greek and Latin an important place in the education system and valued them highly. That is why the rising science in the second half of the nineteenth century was felt as a challenge to the humanities. Arnold thought that science helps us 'to see things as they really are' but culture aspires beyond this to perfection.

Arnold debated the place of science and humanities in the education system with T. H. Huxley the propagator of Darwinism. Arnold used the German concept of 'science' as an organized systematic, body of knowledge to claim that 'a genuine humanism is scientific.' But he agreed with Huxley that every educated person should know the results of the modern scientific study of nature. He also emphasized that the humanities are indispensable.



Matthew Arnold

Reincarnation and Personal Identity

Notes of The Wednesday Meeting Held on 9th February.

We were saddened by death of Dr. Laurence Peddle before the end of January. He joined the group shortly before his death, when he was at an advanced stage of a long terminal illness. But he was a brave man and kept thinking to the end. He sent the group his last paper and asked for it to be discussed in his absence if the end came. Sadly, that is what happened. The group honoured the death of Laurence by having a meeting to discuss his paper. The paper was on Reincarnation, and it took issues with theories of personal identity, mainly a discussion of Bernard Williams' *Problems of the Self*. After careful consideration and thinking that it is a possibility on theoretical grounds, Laurence rejected it on practical grounds, that it is not a possibility that is confirmed in experience.

Understandably, if one is in the thralls of death, as Laurence was, one would think of the possibility of a continuity in a different state. This possibility Laurence discussed in relation to personal identity. The debate centres around personal continuity, whether bodily or psychological. Williams argued that bodily continuity is a condition of personal survival after death. Psychological continuity is not sufficient. Take the example of two brothers who claim that they were Guy Fawkes in a previous life, and they produce credible, or undisputed, historical details of the life and time of Fawkes. Does that make them Guy Fawkes? Of course, not because one person cannot simultaneously be in two bodies. The two brothers cannot be the same historical person at the same time. Perhaps others will have similar claims and all these people cannot be Guy Fawkes because they lack bodily continuity. Bodily continuity is a third person account.

Will psychological continuity fair better? Laurence seems to accept this. Part of his reason, which works against Williams, is that memory is part of a system connected to all aspects of the person. We have to assume the existence of the person and take his first person account of himself, his absolute certainty about who he is. Take the linguistic aspect, would the people in Williams' example claim to be both Guy and Charles or his



Laurence Peddle

brother? Surely if Charles is continuous with Guy he would feel that he is Guy and not Charles as people call him. He must feel psychologically that he is exactly Guy and not just knowing about the life of Guy. This is only possible on the hypothesis of psychological continuity.

According to psychological continuity, if Laurence comes back to life into another body, let us say the body of a young person called Harry, he will notice a bodily change, but he will not doubt that he is Laurence. His memory and his personal feelings, his view of the world, all tell him that he is Laurence. Laurence calls this the 'system'. It is all the preconditions for the existence of a person, the network of internal psychological connections that make a person the person that he takes himself to be. Continuity of a person on this account is possible but unfortunately it does not hold in practice. We don't often hear people claiming such reincarnation.

In support of Laurence's argument in favour of psychological continuity one could say that the body is accidental to a person, not in the sense that the body is not connected to the person but in the sense that parts of the body are replaceable or even detachable without the person losing his personal identity. It also leaves the door open for an existence in a different realm in a different body but with psychological continuity.

Poetry

Rainer Maria Rilke

Intimation of Reality

trans. CHRIS NORRIS

(In memory of Laurence Peddle)

We've no least inkling how it goes with them.
Death tells us nothing and the living need
In no way marvel at, hate, or condemn
Its lack of tragic sense and proper heed

To pity, fear, or suchlike perquisites.
Yet life goes on, it's full of roles to play.
While we, the cast, still fret about it – hits
Or misses? – death's not bothered either way.

Yet with your death there broke upon the stage
A flash of that reality straight through
Your own departure-point - green foliage,

Pure sunshine, woods in leaf each year anew.

We play on. Now and then we cast aside
Some act that had us burn the midnight oil,
Despite which, from beyond the great divide
That fell between you and our daily toil,

Your presence sometimes visits us, affords
Us fleeting intimations of the real,
So that, transformed, we mime the acts and words
No more but live and shun the crowd-appeal.





Laurence Peddle

An Appreciation

By: CHRIS NORRIS

Laurence Peddle, who died on the 27th January 2022, was a late comer to our group and had time to attend only a few meetings but made a large and much-valued contribution during that time. He studied philosophy as an undergraduate at Cardiff university and then took up a teaching career before he resumed his studies and obtained a Ph.D. from the same university under the supervision of Professor Chris Norris 14 years ago. His thesis was on probability theory and made extensive use of his mathematical expertise. It was a highly technical yet also a wide-ranging and, at times, highly speculative work which later became the basis for some main lines of argument in his two published books, both of which were completed and appeared in print from Cambria Press during the last two months of his sadly foreshortened life. Some of the points that came up during the *viva voce* examination preoccupied Laurence for years afterwards. He then took a break from these matters and busied himself, rather like Wittgenstein (whose thinking he mostly rejected), with a variety of interests including gardening, dance, and hands-on creative/inventive engineering.

Laurence was an extraordinary man. He had a keenly analytic mind allied – unusually – to a speculative temper, a gift for the exploratory uses of metaphor and analogy, and (even more unusually) a genius for combining philosophical argument with creative writing of the highest order. His books were produced under great joint pressure of suffering and inspiration during his fifteen months of mainly palliative treatment for oesophageal cancer. He decided not to publish his thesis but to write a new work and divide it into two separate volumes, *The Mystery Beyond Knowledge* and *Self, System and the Non-Conscious*. They contain some of the most rigorous thinking with some of the most deeply imaginative and sheerly beautiful writing in modern British philosophy. One is aware throughout them of a mind well versed in the discourse and technicalities of recent analytic philosophy but also of an intellect sturdily independent of prevailing fads and fashions.

OBITUARY

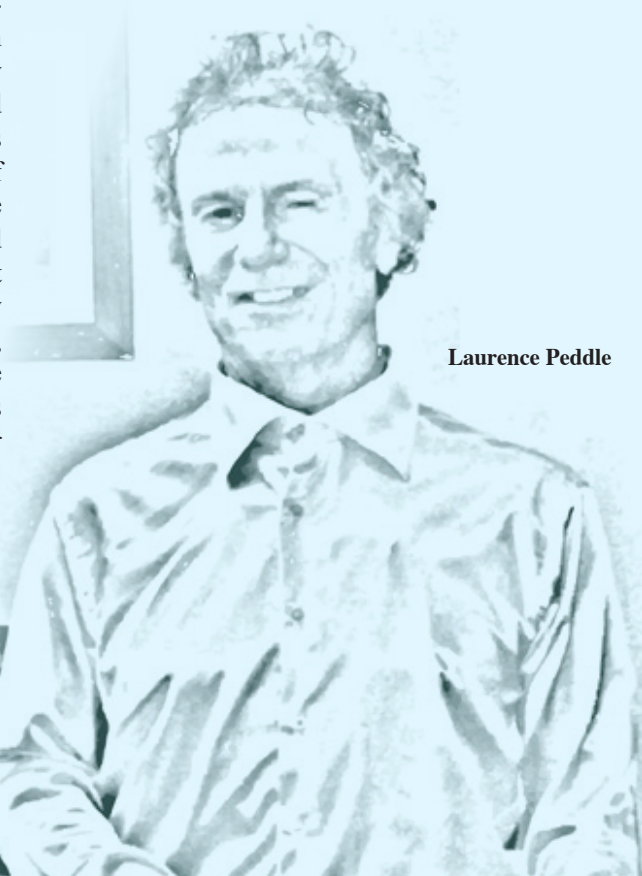
His central thesis is that there is a deep mystery about knowledge and human identity. But he is not 'mysterian' or downright mystifying, in the Colin McGinn manner. According to Laurence, we humans are not clever enough to intuit, cognise, or comprehend personal identity or consciousness, but it is possible to establish the existence – indeed the necessity – of a system which is beyond conscious reflection. He thought there must be such a system in order to account for the continuity of conscious reflective awareness. System, mystery, and the non-conscious: these are the basic elements of his thinking, a triad that turns out remarkably revealing, fertile, and far-reaching. He could have used 'structure' instead of 'system' but he thought such a term had too many unwanted and overly restrictive philosophical associations.

Laurence's books are notable for their literary qualities but deal in a highly professional manner with eminent philosophers such as David Hume, Ludwig Wittgenstein, A.J. Ayer, Bernard Williams, and Derek Parfit. There is a good deal of close-focused, hard-pressed argument taking issue with these and other thinkers. But there are also highly evocative passages, especially towards the end of both books, which involve memories of his childhood, early relationships, and deep love of dancing, gardening and walking. They derive very often from reflections on time, change and mortality which have their source in the thought of his own impending death. But he rejects any resort to consoling fictions such as life after death, reincarnation, immortality of the soul, or – here engaging with Parfit – the possibility of minds being somehow tele-transported to other (younger or healthier) bodies. Rarely can a mind have been so powerfully and productively concentrated by the imminent approach of death.

That he still felt the pull of these arguments as a matter of human psychology gives his arguments against them even more impact and philosophical bite. His intellect seemed to fight what would otherwise perhaps have been a set of easier, more desirable options. This all makes him sound very

serious and humourless but that is not at all the case, as anyone will know who has looked into his books. Humour may have been one means among others – like philosophy, gardening, and fabulous mechanical constructions – of averting his mind from a horrible disease. But the joking went on to the very end and lost nothing of its wit, subtlety, or apotropaic force. E.M. Forster once said of a friend that he somehow 'walked at a slight angle to the universe'. This was likewise true of Laurence, and comes out to great effect in his writings, but also emerged – as I often witnessed – in his dancing. He would start to dance in a fairly restrained, gently and loosely rhythmic way but then, over the next half-hour or so, accelerate and build to a dervish-like frenzy which seemed to slow other dancers to a kind of mesmerised state. He was a splendid philosopher, a uniquely gifted thinker, and a thoroughly good man.

(Laurence Peddle's humanist farewell event took place in Pontypridd on February 16th 2022).



Laurence Peddle

Enslaved

“no one is more a slave than he who thinks himself free of being one” J.W. von Goethe

Count us over and over, cut us
into so many shapes at any time,
but always into the fear of death
and control by others-

Let the light of evidence bring out the contours of fear,
for animals never ponder about the loss of freedom,
neither the trees, surrounded by guns, will bear more fruit,
or fields, when challenged by fire, will grow additional wheat.
Also hens cannot be forced to lay more eggs,
nor will flowers bloom under threats.

But when we enter all waters
under the waterfall of menace,
we are held in check or lose our freedoms.
Wanting to trust the ones above us,
we believe in goodness.

But think:
farmers also care for their cattle, feed and protect them
in order to ultimately kill them for profit -

We, the chameleons, adapt freedom to ever increasing taxes
and learn that protection comes at a cost.
We, the high-riders and drifters, cannot withdraw
and let the sun distribute wealth, but are charged
year-in, year-out,
for pitching camp and the cost of water and fire.



Poem and Artwork by
Scharlie Meeuws

‘Dwarves’ Cavern’
mixed media relief on canvas
(24cmx30cm)



Tolkien and His Dwarfs

Dr ALAN **XUEREB**

There is little doubt in my mind that J.R. Tolkien was a genius. He like others during his time were concerned about new technologies and self-evidently how evil can they be a threat to humanity. He was a patriot with a strong sense of identity but definitely not a racist. He created a mythological world with incredible detail ranging from architecture to language. The beautiful architecture reflecting the cultural and social traits of each of the Middle-Earth races is fantastic.

My mixed media relief done a few years back during my ‘bronze period’, is inspired by one generally underrated race in Tolkien’s mythology: the Dwarfs. The dwarfs or ‘Dwarves’ as he calls them, are a race inhabiting Middle-Earth, the central continent of Arda. They are

most certainly based on the dwarfs of Germanic myths: small humanoids that dwell in mountains, associated with mining, metallurgy, blacksmithing and jewellery. They do remind me of two other mythological alien races in Star Trek ‘the Ferengi’ and the ‘Klingons’. Tolkien’s dwarves have the love for commerce of the Ferengi and the love for battle of the Klingons. Dwarves mined and worked precious metals throughout the mountains of Middle-earth. They were unrivalled in smithing, crafting, metalworking, and masonry, even among the Elves.

This relief of mine is a total submersion into Tolkien’s Dwarvish caverns. I know it is not a beautiful relief, it is not meant to be beautiful in the traditional sense, that

would rather be an Elvish type of beauty. It is indeed a descent into the caves where the dwarfs dwelt. I think this work may be better described through the 'Dwarven Song About Old Wealth':

'Far over the misty mountains cold
To dungeons deep and caverns old
We must away ere break of day
To seek the pale enchanted gold.
The dwarves of yore made mighty spells,
While hammers fell like ringing bells
In places deep, where dark things sleep,
In hollow halls beneath the fells.
For ancient king and elvish lord
There many a gleaming golden hoard
They shaped and wrought, and light they caught
To hide in gems on hilt of sword.
On silver necklaces they strung
The flowering stars, on crowns they hung
The dragon-fire, in twisted wire
They meshed the light of moon and sun.
Far over the misty mountains cold
To dungeons deep and caverns old
We must away, ere break of day,
To claim our long-forgotten gold.
Goblets they carved there for themselves
And harps of gold; where no man delves
There lay they long, and many a song
Was sung unheard by men or elves.
The pines were roaring on the height,
The winds were moaning in the night,
The fire was red, it flaming spread;
The trees like torches blazed with light.
The bells were ringing in the dale
And men looked up with faces pale;
The dragon's ire more fierce than fire
Laid low their towers and houses frail.
The mountain smoked beneath the moon;
The dwarves, they heard the tramp of doom.
They fled their hall to dying fall
Beneath his feet, beneath the moon.
Far over the misty mountains grim
To dungeons deep and caverns dim
We must away, ere break of day,
To win our harps and gold from him!
Far over the misty mountains cold
To dungeons deep and caverns old
We must away, ere break of day,
To find our long-forgotten gold.'

This artistic relief painted in bronze and copper represents in my view the Dwarves' cultural landscape. There is so much to say about Tolkien's fantasy world – where literature, architecture and philosophy are creatively intertwined.

The Wednesday

Editor: Dr. Rahim Hassan

Contact Us:

rahimhassan@hotmail.co.uk

Copyright © Rahim Hassan

Website:

www.thewednesdayoxford.com

Published by:

The Wednesday Press, Oxford

Editorial Board

Barbara Vellacott

Paul Cockburn

Chris Seddon

Correspondences & buying The *Wednesday* books:

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

*We have published twelve
cumulative volumes of the
weekly issues. To obtain
your copy of any one of the
cumulative volumes, please
send a signed cheque with your
name and address on the back
£15 for each volume
inside the UK*

*or £18 for readers
outside the UK:*

*Please make your cheque out to
'The *Wednesday Magazine*'*

or pay online

Account Number:

24042417

Sort Code:

09-01-29

How Pitiful



The beating heart must cease to beat,
The lungs cease to dilate,
Yes, there is something we must meet,
Something we all await.

We do not like to talk of it
Though it is always there,
Some treat it with irreverent wit
And some make it their care.

La Rochefoucauld used to compare
It to the sun's bright light
From which we must avert our stare
Or we will lose our sight.

And it does not console to learn
Caesar, who conquered Gaul,
Shrank to the contents of an urn
Once Brutus ended all.

'This is a worn out theme', you claim,
Long sung by poets dead:
'But we'll enjoy posthumous fame'
That cheered them, so they said.

How pitiful are our attempts
To come to terms with fate,
There is no power that pre-empt
What we must all await.

Edward Greenwood

La Rochefoucauld