Issue No. 195 02/10/2024

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

The *Wednesday*

www.thewednesdayoxford.com

Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford

Editorial

The Limits of Open-mindedness

I wrote in a recent editorial 'what is important is that the content of philosophy should answer new questions, venture in new directions, and explore new fields'. What I meant is that philosophy or any intellectual activity should be open-minded to include a new search in an unexplored area or revise a previous search, accepting new ideas and considering new questions. My reasons for saying this is that reality is larger than what can be captured in and one perspective or single view. Any conceptual scheme to understand reality will be lagging behind changes in reality, especially social and human reality. Concepts are ways of coping with reality, but they are not total (inclusive of all reality) and not eternal. They are open to revisions and may demand a new creation.

I do not believe that there is a one single question that philosophy has to come back to and answer. There might be an important question that is worthwhile considering or a new attempt at answering an old question, but that will be one of the questions and not the only one, that philosophy treats as very relevant to the meaning of human life. In other words, I believe there is a plurality of questions relating to humans, as individuals and as society. It is in this sense that we can talk about, knowledge, morality, politics and aesthetics. These are summed up as truth, goodness and beauty. It is not only the plurality of questions that philosophy asks, but also the variety of approaches it demands, from the semi-scientific search of the Pre-Socratics to modern phenomenology and existentialism.

Philosophy was once represented as a tree by Descartes. He wrote that: '… all Philosophy is like a tree, of which Metaphysics is the root, Physics the trunk, and all the other sciences the branches that grow out of this trunk, which are reduced to three principals, namely, Medicine, Mechanics, and Ethics. By the science of Morals, I understand the highest and most perfect which, presupposing an entire knowledge of the other sciences, is the last degree of wisdom'. Many other schemes representing philosophy, or what philosophy is, were proposed long before Descartes. The difference between Descartes and the older schemes, is the emphasis Descartes put on science, rather than metaphysics and religion. In more recent philosophy, Marxism emphasises ideology and critique.

So, if we agree that philosophy cannot, dogmatically, concentrate on a single question to the exclusion of others, can it be open-minded in its answers? My critic says: 'being open-minded is a necessity in science. In science, certainty is impossible, so scientific theories are forever falsified and replaced by better theories, so one has to remain open-minded. But if you apply open-mindedness generally and dogmatically, it comes down to a refusal to accept anything as certain. If so, it defeats the purpose of philosophy, that is, to attain wisdom, because to be wise is to know, and to know is to be certain'. I do agree, but I will add more. I think that a hasty conclusion that one has the truth and every other view as wrong, is both wrong and dogmatic. Fanatical atheistic and theistic views are wrong for this reason, quite apart from their content. On the other hand, to deny the existence of truth in general is nihilistic. It will be the opposite of wisdom. Part of wisdom is to consider things carefully and not to jump to any extreme views. Science may work according to falsification principles, but it is not nihilistic. It aims at discovering new facts about reality. It believes that there is a reality out there that goes beyond the range of present science. It is open to new questions, new formulations and new discoveries.

But open-mindedness is not superficial or hypocritical. I agree with my critic that 'Being open-minded, at least in public, may seem kind, socially desirable, politically correct, and the mark of maturity and class,' I also agree that being generally and dogmatically open-minded is 'dishonest ... (and feigns) ignorance'. because open-mindedness is an intrinsic value to any valid intellectual activity and philosophy. It is the sign of an intellectual honesty and not a pretence.

Finally, I agree with my critic's statement 'Wisdom is not a worthwhile but unattainable goal, but simply to distinguish between the little you can be certain of and all that you cannot be certain of'.

The Editor

What Is The Language Using Us For?

Language helps us think in particular ways of particular 'things'. It has a mysterious depth, like the sea, upon which we can navigate towards knowledge. But what can language tell us?

WILLIAM BISHOP

The poet R.S. Graham, noted for 'The Nightfishing', asked the probing question: 'What is the language using us for?' This is a question posed by a poet whose material is words and yet it is difficult to know exactly what Graham had in mind since this question can be interpreted in a number of ways. Implied is the concept that words have their own voice, and certainly Graham thought poetry should be read aloud because sound associations and rhythm body forth the poem.

Language pre-exists the person born into it as their 'mother tongue', but a living language is not static and evolves over time. As a 'mother tongue' it is a repository of wisdom accrued over the ages, yet it also limits what a speaker can say or even think. Another language will have words for phenomena and concepts unknown in one's native tongue, yet nevertheless a living language embraces the addition of new words.

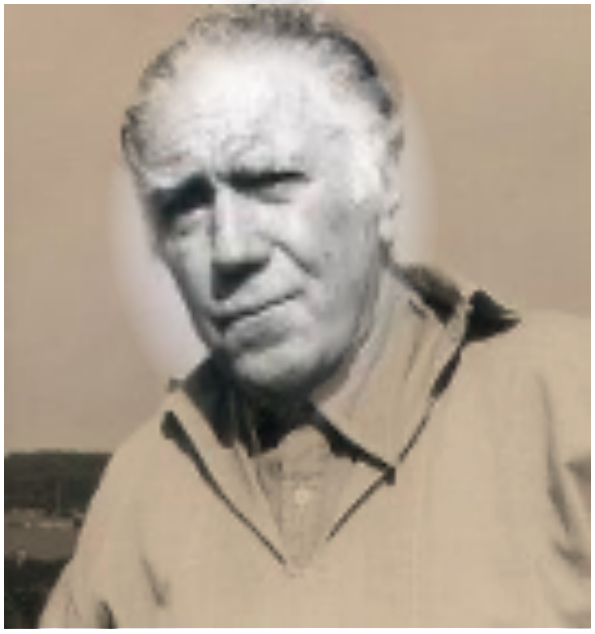
Although we use language, there is a sense in which language uses us. From my personal experience, having undergone some years of academic study, when released from the institutional environment I discovered that I was bound within a particular use of language suited to a particular way of thinking. This felt like an imposition and it took about two years before feeling ease from this perceived bondage. Another person might happily bond with the language of an academic specialty, but what is liberation for one person may be bondage for another. I felt that I was being used by the special language to think in a particular way, which meant seeing the world in a particular and limited way. This channelling of vision or 'reductionism' can apply within many professions.

There is a traditional belief that the poet is inspired, whereby words ground and express the inspired content. But inspiration implies a source associated with breath (spirit) or breathing. This potentially points to a source or 'place' such as a heaven populated by gods. In fact the mindscape or world of reality of the Ancient Greeks did include belief in such a heaven, along with earth and an underworld. It may well be that R.S. Graham, figuratively out at sea in the twentieth century, was 'nightfishing' for the Muse by wondering what it is that language wanted him to say, should the Muse nudge him or the spirit move over the waters of his mind.

In the opinion of the poet and critic Peter Russell, poetry in its most sublime conception is the language of the Spirit and even if expressed in words and a particular language, its true nature or essence is ultra-linguistic, a transcendence of language. He draws attention to the fact that in Indian languages 'spirit' (atman) serves equally for the reflexive pronoun, 'self', so that ultimately spirit and self are the same concept. So to '*know thyself*' is the higher Self or Atman or Nous, which is God or the One beyond Being in Plato's *Parmenides*. This is an example of the genius of language.

Admittedly Russell is speaking of 'language in its most sublime conception', and our Western culture today seems to have lost sight of such sublimity. Indeed, 'spirit' is an embarrassing word to *use* these days in spite of it providing focus for a world of meaning. 'Intelligent awareness' might be a more acceptable replacement in a contemporary conception of the world. However from our present human position in history it is possible to say that we participate in spirit, or have intelligent awareness in proportion to our evolutionary development. In a Hegelian sense spirit can be said to act creatively in a state of knowledge unified with action. Movement here is key to life, and Spirit provides the impulse for movement.

Martin Heidegger spoke of a receptive and



R.S. Graham

René Guénon

contemplative mode of thinking which altered around the time of Aristotle when Logos (as reason) became conceived as logic (a grasping form of apprehension). This is germane to what language is asking of us because this is the turning point that might prompt language to enquire what we are using it for. Heidegger understood language as the dwelling place of the human (in which to be at home), where language speaks, and he saw the introduction of logic as initiating forgetfulness of Being, by the departure from poetic thinking.

It is important to realize that Heidegger tried to recover the spirit of this old poetic and meditative reasoning which is a different *mode* of thinking than analytical and propositional thinking. It is poetic in the sense of synthesis and openness to what is: a gathering together of what shows itself. According to Heidegger, dwelling between Sky and Earth the poet measures their self by the standard of the Godhead, that is to say by the unknown God concealed in appearances but revealed qualitatively and not quantitatively. In this way Being presences in the receptivity of the poet. So 'the poetic is the basic capacity for human dwelling', requiring imagination and receptivity. Heidegger endorses ideas in poems by Hölderlin, such as 'poetically man dwells', and we might say that is the sort of thing that a poet would say. But for Heidegger: 'When the poetic appropriately comes to light, then man dwells humanly on this earth'. Homelessness from Being's house of language leads to destitution.

We all use language which uses us, but dwelling poetically calls for imagination and openness to Being. At a fundamental level language uses us for the Good, or its contrary, for the civilizing forces of Truth and Beauty, or their opposite. What we use the language for reflects our direction of travel in life, poetically speaking. If we take language to be bound up with Being, then it is Logos in its living quality, where 'saying', as the spoken word, retains the ability to make an impression on the soul. According to Plato such internalization constitutes real knowledge. Yet from our perspective today there is occlusion of the Platonic realm of Forms and Logos, which justifies the view of René Guénon that in our Western civilization the *above* has been brought *below* and *quantity* confused with *transcendence* and *unity* confused with *uniformity*.

Where language programs of artificial intelligence are concerned, a contrast is evident between the *living* dimension of an embodied mind and a program that gathers data and manipulates units of language but lacks life with its capacity for imagination and intuition in real time. An organically embodied intelligence is categorically different from a so-called 'intelligence' based on digital technology. An organically embodied intelligence is aware, and so has the capacity for *knowledge*, while the artificial intelligence merely has 'information'. At present

Peter Russell

Heidegger

language-based artificial intelligence lacks life, which it mimics, and this highlights the relevance of the living (and spoken) dimension of language for an organically-based speaker. Here the emphasis is on 'spirit' and 'self'.

Considering further the question: 'What is the language using us for?' we can interpret this as, 'What does language want to say?' since we are its mouthpiece and lend it our ear. Indeed, as a child progressively enters into its 'mother tongue', storytelling takes on importance, and culturally the storytelling facility of language is of enormous relevance in crafting a sense of meaning within the world. The story, as spoken word, creates a powerful sense of presence. In relation to Heidegger's language as 'saying' and his concern with 'Being' and the comportment of beings to Being, here the human being is *'there'* in responsible relationship to Being. This implies a metaphysical dimension in relation to the terrestrial, but the contemporary human mind is largely confined to the ground view. So in a way the voices of Graham, Heidegger and Hölderlin are out of season in today's contemporary climate. They hark back to an enlightenment that preceded the so-called 'Enlightenment' in Europe that has left us today somewhat in the dark, flushed as we are with information but ignorant, as language intimates, when speaking of 'dark matter' and 'dark energy'.

The introduction of writing to a previous oral culture advantaged the transmission of a largely inherited world conception for Plato, since it is by virtue of the written text that we can access his thought and the way in which he combined the oral tradition with the written, in spite of their different character. Plato's presentation of dialectic as dialogue clearly demonstrates the interplay and transition between the spoken and written word. For example in '*Cratylus'*, Socrates says: 'You know that speech makes all things known and always makes them circulate and move about, and is twofold, true and false'. Socrates then suggests that evil is that which impedes movement of the Good. (Plato agreed with Heraclitus that all was in motion in the world of time and space.)

Working in the tradition of Plato, Plotinus spoke of a divine transcendent source: a metaphysical triad governed by the principle of hierarchical emanation where the Triad consists of the *One*, the *Intellectual Principle*, and *the all-Soul*. Nature arose from this, and the human being participates in nature and partakes of an aspect of, or is an *image* of, the divine. This hierarchical arrangement for reality allows for connection between the human being and the divine Triad. In this scheme the highest connection is at the level of the noetic, or pure intuition, (Russell's 'transcendence of language'). Language is generated from the divine region where 'forms' and archetypes have their being: the region of the creative force (Logos). Here language participates as an intermediary between Being and beings (spirit and nature). Plotinus distinguishes between

Hölderlin

an *'intelligible'* realm and a *'sense realm'*, and this correlates with the biblical distinction between heaven and earth. But while the Triad in the system of Plotinus echoes the Christian Trinity it is not identical. The 'One' is unknowable, but through the *action* of thought gives rise to 'Divine Mind', from which is derived 'All-Soul'. Then if the language is asking us to give voice to the 'Intelligible', this confers an especially high vocation on the poet. For Heidegger this is the *true* role of the human being.

The proposal here is that an essential function of language is to facilitate participation in the Spirit as expressed in the One (which can also be thought of as the Father, and the Good). Myth, scriptures, and prayer at one time commonly served this purpose, but over the passage of time language has been reduced from the richness of its metaphoric and poetic qualities towards a more utilitarian usage appropriate to a civilization adapted to a materialism that has distanced itself from the possibility of transcendence. When Heidegger quotes Hölderlin as saying 'poetically man dwells', this is in distinction to dwelling 'scientifically', or 'technologically'. And yet it appears that today Western 'Man' does largely dwell scientifically and technologically. There are good reasons for this of course, but the problem is that if dwelling poetically is essential to the human being's relationship to Being, and civilization brushes this aside, this creates imbalance, which could potentially lead to spiritual emasculation and existential crisis. Prose is needed for mundane practical life, but *it is said* that Man cannot live by bread alone.

Since language has an essential relationship to what is, it reflects the changes in the tone of human consciousness. Etymology is language's memory that harbours the history and associations of words from their derivation to their current usage. In their passage through time some words change into the opposite of their original meaning while others fade from general use. George Orwell was particularly familiar with the power of words and his novels 'Animal Farm' and '1984' reflect the power of language usage upon society, where for example, the 'Ministry of Truth' could not be further from the truth. Indeed the prevalence of the lie today (particularly in public life) highlights a divergence from the Good and from unity (what unifies in terms of community) towards separation and chaos where the centre (spirit?) cannot hold. In the light of language usage, falsity creates a world of 'alternative facts', uncertainty, doublethink, and illusions supported by 'artificial intelligence'. The question of what the language wants to use us for is therefore highly relevant.

If the human umbilical cord to Being is ever severed then we might well wonder what kind of cosmos of homelessness will come to greet us. At present the connection remains intact though neglected. Yet it is thanks to language that such thoughts can be formulated and 'spoken'; so, all is not yet lost, hope remains.

What is Mind?

There is a lack of clarity about mind. This results in a lack of clarity about consciousness. The terms are even used interchangeably. This paper sets out to overcome the confusion by clarifying what mind is, and thereby clarifying what consciousness is. If the clarification is successful, it will allow us to study consciousness, uncontaminated by issues pertaining to mind, and to study mind, uncontaminated by issues pertaining to consciousness. It will also allow us to make some immediate progress in the study of consciousness.

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There is a lack of clarity about mind. It seems that even philosophers of mind do not really know what they mean by 'mind'. I have asked several philosophers personally, and many more via mailing lists, but to no avail. For example, David Chalmers, one of the leading philosophers of mind, readily admitted - to his credit - that he did not have a definition of 'mind'; not even a working definition. The lack of clarity about mind results in a lack of clarity about consciousness. For example, the fact that David Chalmers does not have a definition of 'mind', does not stop him from exclaiming that consciousness is mental - that is, an aspect of mind. In fact, the terms, 'mind' and 'consciousness', are often conflated and even used interchangeably. For example, panpsychists tend to claim that some or all 'stuff' in the universe is somehow mental and that this explains why and how consciousness can arise. Thus, the lack of clarity about mind confuses the study of mind as well as the study of consciousness. I will try, in what follows, to clarify what mind is, and, thus, indirectly, what consciousness is. If successful, this will allow us to study consciousness, as such, uncontaminated by issues pertaining to mind, and to study mind, as such, uncontaminated by issues pertaining to consciousness. This will allow us to make real progress, for example, by noting that the so-called easy problems of consciousness are actually problems of mind, by (dis)solving some of the notorious problems of consciousness, and by freeing philosophers and neuroscientists from unrealistic expectations.

What is Mind?

Let us start from the conventional view on mind. On the conventional view, 'mind' is the capacity to think and feel. Where 'think and feel' are used in a broad sense - as including remembering, learning, willing, imagining, interpreting sense data from the other senses, taking decisions, and

so on - and the brain may even do more than just that. Also, mind is taken to be the functioning of the brain or, more accurately perhaps, the result of the functioning of the brain.

Making Sense Of Mind

If mind is the capacity to think and feel, then it is like vision, which is the capacity to see; and like audition, which is the capacity to hear; and like olfaction, which is the capacity to smell; and like gustation, which is the capacity to taste; and like somatosensation, which is the capacity to feel texture, temperature, pressure, and bodily sensations. Likewise, if mind is the functioning of the brain, then it is like vision, which is the functioning of the eye; and like audition, which is the functioning of the ear; and so on. And if mind has the brain as its organ, then it is like vision, which has the eye as its organ; and like audition, which has the ear as its organ; and so on. So, mind is like the other sense faculties, even though all sense faculties are obviously equipped for sensing different types of phenomena, each sense faculty is associated with a different organ, each sense faculty has its own peculiarities, and each sense faculty may be more than just a sense faculty.

That mind is like the other sense faculties, suggests that mind is in fact a sense faculty: the sense faculty for sensing mental phenomena such as thoughts and feelings, so let us treat that suggestion as our hypothesis and check if it is not falsified by other, scientific views on mind and brain.

A Biological View

Biologists tend to think of the sense faculties more broadly. For example, when they think of vision, they do not just think of the eyes, but of the whole visual apparatus. This includes the eyes, the optic nerves, the primary visual cortex, two to four other visual cortices - which are integral pasts of the brain - and other parts of the nervous system. Any attempt to separate the sense organs from the rest of the nervous system fails, if only because separating the various sense cortices from the brain would leave little of what we consider to be the brain. Thus, according to the biological view, the eyes (or at least the retinas) are mere protrusions of the nervous system. The same goes for the other sense organs, including the brain. The brain, too, is considered to be a protrusion of the nervous system. All supposedly different sense organs, including the brain, are inseparable parts of one and the same organ: the nervous system. Therefore, according to

David Chalmers

the biological view, all sense faculties, including the brain, have but one organ, namely, the nervous system (Mai, Paxinos, 2012).

Does the biological view challenge the hypothesis that mind is a sense faculty? No, on the contrary. According to the biological view, mind and the other sense faculties are even more similar: Instead of each sense faculty having its own organ, all sense faculties have one and the same organ.

Next is yet another view, a medical view. It is not exactly mainstream, but it is particularly relevant to the discussion.

A Medical View

After-Death Experiences are accounts of people who were temporarily dead - that is, medically dead without measurable activity such as brain activity. When they were brought back to life, it turned out that they could recount events that occurred while they were dead. They had continued to see, hear, think, remember, and so on. So, their mind and other sense faculties had continued to work, even though their bodies - including their brains - were dead. This suggests that our mind and other sense faculties function independently of our brains (Parnia, et al., 2001) (Van Lommel, et al., 2001) (Lichfield, 2015).

Does this challenge the hypothesis that mind is a sense faculty? No, again, on the contrary. After-Death Experiences suggest that all sense faculties,

After-Death Experience

mind as well as the others, function independently of their organs. After all,such experiences do not only suggest that we can continue to think and feel while our bodies are dead, but also that we can continue to see, hear, smell, and so on. So, also according to this view, mind is just like the other sense faculties.

As we have seen, neither the biological view nor the medical view falsifies the hypothesis. On the contrary, they support the hypothesis that mind is a sense faculty.

What Is A Sense Faculty?

From the above, it follows that a sense faculty is the capacity for sensing particular types of phenomena. But that is circular in that it defines a sense faculty in terms of sensing. We can remove the circularity by noticing that 'to sense something' is 'to be conscious of something' and reformulate the definition accordingly: a sense faculty is the capacity to be conscious of particular phenomena.

What Is Consciousness?

We have multiple sense faculties, but only one consciousness. This suggests that the sense faculties 'borrow' their capacity to be conscious from consciousness,in other words, that consciousness is the one, central capacity to be conscious that gives all sense faculties 'their' capacity to be conscious. Metaphorically, it suggests that consciousness is like a light that shines through different holes; the holes - that is, the senses - differ, while the light - that is, consciousness - is the same.

There are many implications:

Firstly, if mind is a sense faculty, then we have no more reason to believe that consciousness is mental - that is, an aspect of mind, an aspect of the functioning of the brain - than to believe that consciousness is visual - that is, an aspect of vision, an aspect of the functioning of the eyes - or auditory - that is, an aspect of audition, an aspect of the functioning of the ears - and so on.

Secondly, if mind is a sense faculty, then we have no more reason to believe that consciousness depends on the brain that consciousness arises from physical processes in the brain) than to believe that consciousness depends on the eyes (that consciousness arises from physical processes in the eyes), or that consciousness depends on the ears (that consciousness arises from physical processes in the ear), and so on.

Thirdly, if mind is a sense faculty, then it makes no sense to speak of *the* mind (as if it were an entity), any more than to speak of *the* vision, of *the* audition, and so on. Mind is just a name for the functioning of the brain or the results of that functioning just like vision and audition are names for the results of the functioning of the eye and ear, respectively. To speak of *the* mind is to commit the fallacy known as reification, where something - in this case, the results of the functioning of the brain

The analogy of mind and vision

- are abstracted from the things that possess them - in this case, brains - and then taken to be a thing in itself.

Fourthly, if mind is a sense faculty, then we have no more reason to believe that mind is the seat of consciousness than to believe that vision is the seat of consciousness, or that audition is the seat of consciousness, and so on.

Fifthly, if consciousness is not mental, then the philosophy of consciousness does not belong in the philosophy of mind (or it would have to be renamed to 'the philosophy of consciousness'.

What Is The Relation Between Consciousness And Mind?

The relation between consciousness and mind is like the relation between consciousness and any other sense faculty: consciousness gives each sense faculty, including mind, the capacity to be conscious.

What Is The Relevance?

If the above analysis is correct, it allows us to study mind, uncontaminated by issues pertaining to consciousness, and to study consciousness, uncontaminated by issues pertaining to mind. Here are two examples of how this may help:

First, it turns out that the so-called easy problems of consciousness regarding learning, memory, perceptual integration, verbal report, and so on are actually problems of mind or, more generally, of the sense faculties. Mind, its organ (that is, the brain or nervous system), its functioning (such as neurons firing away), the results of its functioning (such as thinking, feeling, and willing) and its objects (such as thoughts, feelings, and intentions) are natural phenomena which can be studied in the usual way. Thus, the easy problems can and undoubtably will be solved by the natural sciences such as neuroscience and psychology. The very fact that these problems are solvable makes them comparatively easy.

Second, the so-called hard problems are indeed problems of consciousness. They seem hard because consciousness - that is, the subject of experience - cannot be studied in the usual way - that is, as an object of experience. Consciousness is not mental, and thus cannot be studied by studying the brain or mind. Consciousness transcends all sense faculties and their phenomena, and thus transcends the domain of the natural sciences. The study of consciousness as such, as opposed to the study of the content of consciousness) is equivalent to the study of being as such, as opposed to the study of beings, which Aristotle called 'first philosophy' rather than 'metaphysics', and is *on a par* with the study of God, as opposed to the study of the creation. In short, the study of consciousness is a completely different ballgame than the study of natural phenomena like mind and the other sense faculties.

Art and the Meaning of Life

Following the debate on art in last issue, below is one more response to the question: What does art mean to you?

CHRIS GAAL

My first reaction to being asked to consider 'What does art mean to you?' was 'This is such a vast "canvas" question!' In its potential scope it is almost like asking 'What does life mean to you?' Indeed, one aspect of art's meaning, is to express and reflect on the nature and meaning of a human life, an aspect exemplified most strongly in the art form of the novel. It is what a great novel does supremely in my view. A detective story by contrast offers a completely different set of meanings such as entertainment, the intellectual challenge of getting to grips with a complex situation and trying to work out the salient clues to what is going on. In terms of the meaning and value of a life, the detective story has nothing to say, that is not the kind of meaning it seeks or has. For this reason, there is much less emphasis on the depiction and development of human character in a detective story, just enough to 'flesh out' and make engaging and believable the 'sleuth' investigator, and to add colour and interest to the supporting cast and to provide the necessary mix of alibis and motives for murder, to create the complex puzzle that needs to be solved.

What art means, to me, to anyone, is also going to vary from one form to another. Novels offer one range of potential meanings to the reader, poetry a different set, visual art another, music another. And within each of these genres, huge differences between, for example, a classical symphony and a pop or folk song, or Michelangelo and Pop Art.

Perhaps one general thought I can offer is that I see art as seeking to create and express meaningful patterns. People need to find meaning in life, and meaning requires pattern and structure that we can recognise and find valuable. One of the difficulties of contemporary life is the sheer bedlam and confusion we encounter through our over-exposure to so much discordant and transitory, episodic variety, and the absence of a shared stable cultural and ideological pattern. Within this bedlam, we need even more our personal islands of meaningful pattern.

Some of these patterns may be representational ones, as when a visual artist seeks to capture in images a selected pattern of landscape or architecture. Others, as in abstract art, may be the creating of imaginary patterns. A novel can give us, in a few hours of reading, a sense of the pattern of a human life, something we can have trouble discerning in the day to day living out of our own lives. Such patterns can also offer for us a liberation from the limitations of our own life patterns.

What counts as 'meaningful' in a pattern, is again a vast and complex subject. In the visual and musical arts, our visceral emotional response to certain patterns and juxtapositions of sounds and colours and images, is part of what makes such patterns meaningful and discernible as such. There can also be symbolic and conceptual associations which convey meaningful structure. The more we get to know a great work of art, the more complex our awareness of its structural patterns becomes, and this is part of the meaning for us of such art, the increasing awareness of these structural patterns.

I am aware that such a framing of art does not distinguish it from other cultural pursuits such as the scientific disciplines or history, or even games and sport. But that is fine by me. I think all these things do share a value partly through our need to discover and generate meaning through structure and pattern. One can understand the entire cosmos as an evolving articulation of structure and pattern. Our biology is this. And I think our psychology is too, reflecting and extending beyond the biological base on which it rests. To the extent we are rational animals, as Aristotle perhaps rather one-sidedly and optimistically defined us, we are

Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo

also explorers and creators of meaningful patterns, extending these beyond what in the rest of the animal kingdom happen by instinct. It is what we exist to do. Maybe art is simply life after all. As simple and huge as that.

Ways of Seeing

However, I wish to make a distinction between simple acts such as seeing a landscape, which anyone with normal human vision can do in much the same way as anyone else because we all pretty well share the same structure of human brain, eyes, nervous system, and so on, and issues of aesthetic interpretation and sensibility, which are more culturally driven and which go beyond this. If for example we take an Impressionist painting of a landscape, this is a very different presentation to that which a photograph will give. The photograph is closer to how our eyes would normally see the landscape, but the painting translates this into a different mode of presentation to stress and highlight aspects of our experience of light and colour which the artist selectively registers within the landscape and wishes to draw our attention to more intensely. People who 'get this' find both beauty and truth of presentation in the Impressionist portrayal, which reveals to them aspects of nature which they recognise but might not have seen for themselves without the aid of the artist's sensibility and skill. Not everyone 'gets it'. When Impressionism first hit the public, a lot of people could not see its value because of the way it departed from more conventional and literal ways of presenting landscape in painting. Visual art has of course got more abstract since then, and often leaves the natural world behind altogether, raising more complex questions still over how we are to interpret and make sense of these patterns of shape and colour.

I do not think the appreciation of art necessarily involves complex sophisticated meta-analysis of interpretation - although the production of art is often informed by some very conscious and sophisticated analysis by the artist, if only in the choice of technical materials and approaches to their subject matter. The experience of art - whether in painting or music- can be and indeed should be I think, quite immediate and visceral. If it stays too much purely in the head, in the realm of thoughts and ideas, I think one is rather missing the point - a reservation I have over conceptual art. But I think art does require an openness to new ways of seeing, hearing and feeling. When I first encountered classical music, I had to learn to hear its structures before I could fully experience them - not as theoretical understanding, but as something heard and felt in an understanding and appreciative way. I do not quite know how I made that transition. I did it through repeated exposure. Perhaps in much the same way as children learn a language, not through formal instruction but through repeated exposure. New forms of art slowly get accepted in a culture in a similar way I guess - what originally seems strange and incomprehensible, becomes slowly assimilated and understood.

Perhaps the value of art partly lies in taking us from

Pierre-Auguste Renoir - Impressionist style

routine 'taking experience for granted' functioning, to more conscious and intense awareness. From this point of view, it links to spiritual practices and the idea that we can experience life at different levels of depth of understanding and experience, from a superficial and preoccupied 'rushing about' on the surface of life, to a deeper engagement. The creation and appreciation of art is one way in which we can seek to connect with life in that deeper way.

Pattern as Connectedness

Framing art as a way of connecting with life in a deeper way, brings home to me the connection between pattern and connectivity. In creating and discerning patterns, we are discerning 'how things fit together' and connect in meaningful ways. Human beings have a very profound need for connection with others and the world around them. We are inextricably bound up with our wider environment, and indeed with the entire history of the cosmos, which is an interconnected whole without which none of us would be here. Physically and biologically, this is obvious, which is why trying to base an epistemology on the idea of an isolated disembodied ego *a la* Descartes, is simply absurd - taking away the air he breathed while pondering his cogito would have put a quick end to his speculations. From this point of view art is simply one way of practising and experiencing a wider and deeper connection with the world around us.

Art and the Human Brain

I am not qualified to speak in any authoritative or even informed way on the human brain, but perhaps it is worth flagging a link of potentially considerable interest here. One of the important things art can do is to bring together in one experience a range of human capacities: physical skill; conceptual understanding; our sensory capacities of seeing, hearing, and touching; our imagination; and our capacities for emotional responses to life. From what little I know of neuroscience, studies of brain wave patterns suggest that we are at our most creative and harmonious and fulfilled when the various parts of our brain are in synchronous integration and responding to life in this integrated way. If this is so, this may be an important biological factor in why we have such a need for art, as a way of helping us into such an integrated state of experiencing and functioning.

As for the difference between art and other human activities which may also offer methods of integration of this kind, I was not trying to offer any thoughts on how to differentiate them or demarcate them. I do not think anything I have said casts any light on that.

***Mike England*: 'Being There'**
Oil on canvas, 188 x 144 cm.

In a Quaint English Town

In a quaint English town
with cobblestone streets
and a pub like The Crown
strange things occurred,
as if out on their own...

A surreal streak, contorted lines
swept through the houses
and blurred all confines
straightness got twisted
in scenes that aroused us.

On the left of the street
a wagon with horses
emerged like a cheat
engaging the mind
to adjust and confuse us.

Two swirls in the skies
suggested some moon,
two heavenly eyes
half waxing half waning
to disappear soon.

Townspeople appeared
in a haze, in a dream.
A strangeness incurred.
Nothing containable,
something unheard...

Familiar streets grew into a riddle.
A canvas of dreams
emerged little by little
into wonders and visions
of long-ago themes.

Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*

The Unseen Layers of Beauty

DR. ALAN XUEREB

Art serves as a powerful medium for the exploration of beauty, often using the human form - especially the female body - as its subject. Throughout history, the female form has been depicted in myriad ways, from idealised classical figures to contemporary interpretations that challenge and redefine traditional beauty standards. The sculpture presented here, crafted from plasticine, evokes such contemplation. It is a statement on beauty, but not just the kind of beauty that is immediate and visible. Rather, it asks us to probe the layers of meaning and emotion embedded in both form and material.

Drawing on Martin Heidegger's reflections on art and being, we can explore how this sculpture does more than represent an object of aesthetic pleasure; it becomes a revealing of truth, an engagement with the world. As we examine the figure's texture, expression, and form, we are invited into a deeper meditation on beauty - one that transcends the physical and ventures into the existential.

Heidegger's Aletheia and Truth in Unveiling

To understand beauty in art, particularly from a philosophical standpoint, it is useful to consider the works of thinkers like Plato, Kant, and Heidegger. While Plato spoke of beauty as an ideal form, Kant, in his *Critique of Judgment* explored the subjective experience of beauty:

'The judgment of taste is therefore not a judgment of cognition, and is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that whose determining ground can be no other than subjective. Every reference of representations, even that of sensations, may be objective (and then it signifies the real [element] of an empirical representation), save only the reference to the feeling of pleasure and pain, by which nothing in the object is signified, but through which there is a feeling in the subject as it is affected by the representation'.

Heidegger offers a more profound engagement with art, truth, and existence. He says in his lectures on Nietzsche:

'Aesthetics is that kind of meditation on art in which humanity's state of feeling in relation to the beautiful represented in art is the point of departure and the goal that sets the standard for all its definitions and explanations'.

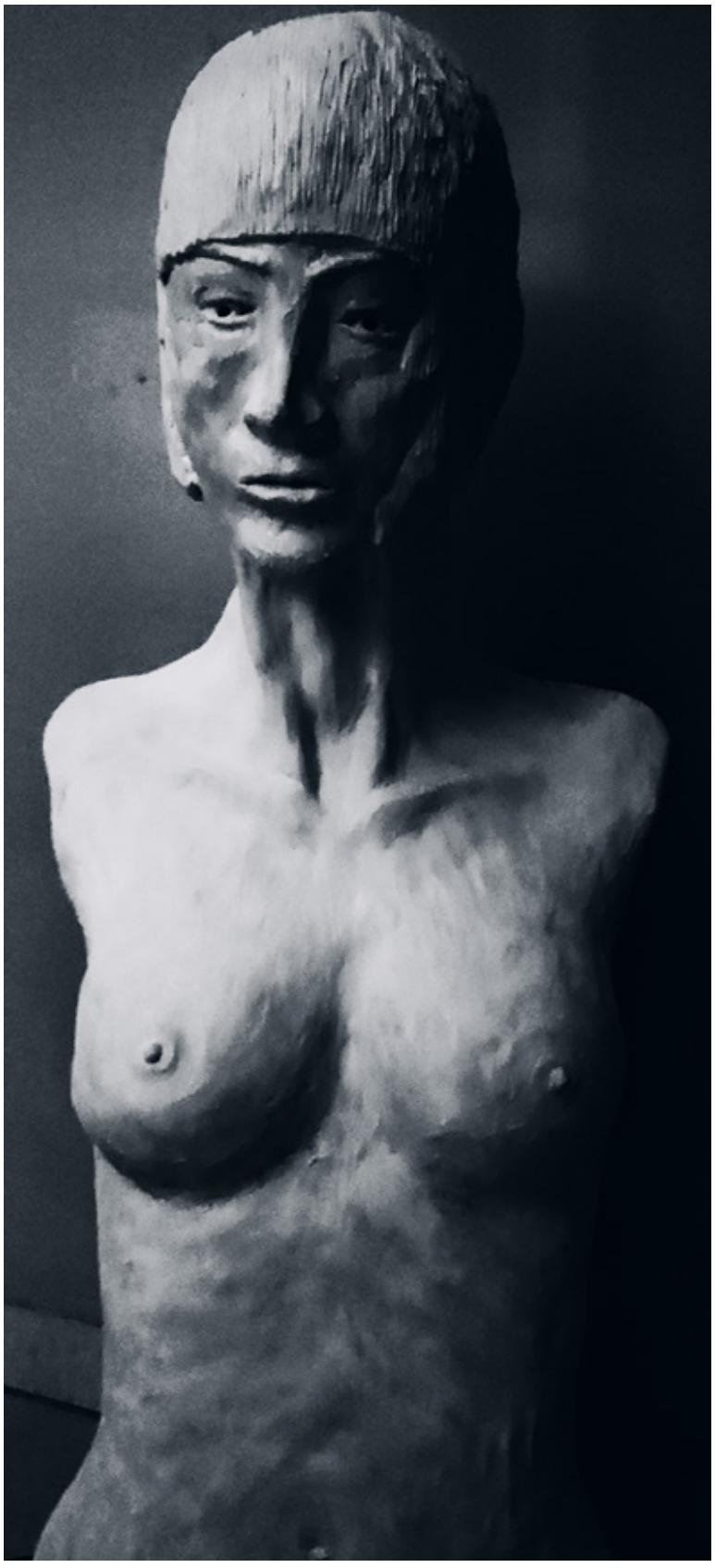
For Heidegger, art is not just a representation but a 'happening of truth', something that brings forth meaning by revealing aspects of being previously concealed. He says that '*art is the becoming and happening of truth*'. (in his *Poetry, Language, Thought*).

This sculpture, then, is not simply a depiction of female beauty - it is a process of unveiling, or what Heidegger refers to as *aletheia* (Greek for 'truth' as 'unconcealment'). The act of sculpting mirrors the uncovering of hidden beauty from raw material, much like how Heidegger views art as revealing deeper truths about existence. In shaping the oil-based modelling clay, the artist participates in this revealing, bringing forth an expression that goes beyond superficial beauty and reaches into the essence of being.

The Female Form as Artistic Subject

The female body has often been the subject of art, serving as a symbol of fertility, beauty, and grace throughout history. But it has also been subject to objectification, rendered as an idealised object for visual pleasure rather than as a complex subject with depth and meaning. Feminist critiques have long challenged this portrayal, advocating for representations that embrace the complexity of womanhood. I assure my readers that my rendering of womanhood stems from a deep and unconditional respect towards all that is female. A celebration of that incredible creation.

Heidegger's notion of authenticity - the idea of being true to one's own existence rather than conforming to societal roles - can be applied



'Valkyrie' 2024

here. This sculpture resists the objectifying tendencies of traditional art by allowing the female form to be both imperfect and profound. The texture of the oil-based modelling oil-based modelling clay, its rough and uneven surface, hints at a narrative of imperfection and humanity, rather than an unattainable ideal. This aligns with Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world - the idea that our existence is always embedded in a specific context, shaped by time, history, and experience.

In this sculpture, the female form is not an abstract ideal, but something situated in reality, shaped by both the artist's hand and the weight of existence. The figure, through its subtle details and emotional depth, embodies the tension between the visible and the invisible, the superficial and the authentic.

The Role of Material

Oil - based modelling clay, as the medium for this sculpture, holds significant philosophical implications. Heidegger spoke of *poiesis* - the bringing-forth of something into presence, a creative process that discloses truth. Working with clay is an act of *poiesis*; it is the transformation of raw, malleable material into a lasting form. The sculptor's engagement with the material is not just an act of creation but of revealing the hidden potential within the clay, much as Heidegger describes the artist's role in bringing forth truth from the material of the world.

In this way, the materiality of the sculpture becomes central to its philosophical meaning. The clay's malleability and eventual hardening can be seen as symbolic of the tension between the fluidity and the

permanence of beauty. The rough texture of the figure suggests a rejection of smooth perfection, offering instead a more lived-in, authentic beauty. This beauty, like truth, is not easily grasped or superficial but requires contemplation and engagement.

Beauty Beyond the Physical

While beauty is often understood through the lens of physical form, this sculpture invites us to look beyond the surface and into the emotional and existential depths it suggests. The figure's expression is not overtly glamorous or inviting, but rather contemplative - perhaps even melancholic. In this way, the sculpture gestures toward a deeper dimension of beauty, one that is tied to the complexity of *Dasein*, or human existence, a key concept in Heidegger's philosophy.

For Heidegger, *Dasein* refers to the human experience of being. It is through Dasein that we encounter the world and uncover meaning. The beauty of this sculpture, then, is not just in the form itself but in the way it encourages the viewer to reflect on the inner world of the figure—the emotions, thoughts, and experiences that lie beneath the surface. The beauty is not just aesthetic but existential, inviting the viewer to contemplate the being of the subject as well as their own.

The Subjectivity of Beauty

Beauty, in modern philosophy, has often been understood as subjective - shaped by cultural standards, individual preferences, and personal experiences. Heidegger, however, offers a more nuanced view: while beauty is indeed encountered subjectively, it is also a revealing of deeper truths about the world. Beauty is not a static ideal but something that emerges through engagement, through the happening of truth that occurs when we encounter a work of art.

In this sculpture, the roughness of the surface, the asymmetry of the form, and the subtlety of the expression invite a deeper engagement with the work. The viewer is asked to consider not only the external form but also the underlying processes that brought it into being - the artist's interaction with the material, the figure's quiet contemplation, and the existential depths at which the work hints. In this way, the sculpture challenges traditional standards of beauty, offering a more fluid and inclusive understanding. By refusing to present an idealised, flawless figure, the work opens up a space for different kinds of beauty - beauty that is imperfect, layered, and subject to the contingencies of life and existence.

Sculpture as a Revealing of Truth

This sculpture serves not only as an aesthetic object but also as a profound meditation on beauty, existence, and the nature of being. Through its form, material, and expression, it invites us into a deeper engagement with the philosophical dimensions of art. Drawing on Heidegger's insights, we can understand this sculpture as a revealing of truth - an act of *aletheia* that brings forth hidden layers of meaning and beauty. Heidegger does this for example by imagining the farmer shoes painted by Van Gogh as belonging to a woman, despite the fact that the shoes in Van Gogh's painting appear rather masculine to our contemporary aesthetic sensibilities. It is possible that Heidegger might simply have assumed that the shoes belonged to a female farmer because the exhibition in which he originally saw Van Gogh's 1886 painting of 'A pair of shoes' was probably populated with some of Van Gogh's many paintings from 1885 of women engaged in farm work as we are told by Iain Thomson. According to the latter, the shoes disclose the world of a *farmer* which is important for Heidegger precisely because the farmer's world is deeply attuned to the struggle with the earth; the farming woman works the earth daily, caring for, struggling with, and ultimately depending on the earth to nurture and bring forth her harvest. Contrary to what Shapiro insinuates - probably because his Marxian presuppositions lead him to assume that Heidegger's argument throughout refers to the shoes of a *class* of persons.

Beauty, as understood here, is not simply a polished surface or an idealised form. It is something that emerges through engagement, through the interaction between the artist, the material, and the viewer. In contemplating this work, we are reminded that true beauty, like truth itself, is always in the process of being uncovered, shaped, and revealed. It is both fragile and enduring, visible and hidden, and always tied to the deeper currents of human existence.

‘Autumn Equinox Sun, Shelter Island 2024’
By Virginia Khuri

Renunciations: Three Double Sonnets

CHRIS **NORRIS**

In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself.

'Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia

Once at least in each book a cry of loneliness goes up from Alice at the oddity beyond sympathy or communication of the world she has entered – whether that in which the child is shut by weakness, or the adult by the renunciations necessary both for the ideal and the worldly way of life (the strength of the snobbery is to imply that these are the same).

William Empson, 'Alice in Wonderland', in Some Versions of Pastoral

1

Once in a while they send it up, a cry
Of sorrow, grief, or utter loneliness
Whose distant sound affects us none the less
For seeing them amongst us or close by.
They live, work, talk, seem busy, gently sigh
At times, yet show no sign of the distress
That, suddenly, a far cry will express
As theirs alone though we may catch their eye,
Converse, attempt to draw them out, and try,
As workmates or good neighbours, to assess
The cause against whatever scale of stress
Or sorrow might give licence to apply
The standard local salves and not deny
Us strict propinquitists this chance to bless
That far-off keening just as we'd address
Such woes as rise to our familiar sky.

Yet why suppose it's one we locals share,
Or could, had we the will to leave our own
Locale and common sky to cross the line,
Hear cries ascend, and seek the criers there,
In that remote, unhomely psychic zone
Whose dwellers strive as vainly to divine
How we cismontane folk get on just fine
Together, mostly, but, when left alone
Too long, find solitude so hard to bear
That we crave company and so combine
To stave it off while they, from depths unknown,
Raise silent cries of ultimate despair.

2

Still the cismontane therapists suppose
Their work cut out, their task a job to do,
A matter of, at some point, being through
With even such hard nuts to crack as those
Psychotic types whose long case-history shows
Not that their sign-off date is never due,
As Freud first doubted, then acknowledged true,
But that the talking cure is just what goes
To still such doubts. That every case should close
On that note – patient cured, as if it's flu
Or whooping-cough in question, right on cue –
Is the assurance each clinician owes
An anxious patient but, to her who knows
The later Freud's dark message, one that grew
Less tenable with every case-review
As counter-truths piled up like hammer-blows.

‘Analysis interminable’: Freud
Inclines to think it so and duly heed
Those cries sent up to give some brief respite
To suffering souls, released into a void,
So far as they can tell, not guaranteed
Or even likely to provide what might,
For a shrewd analyst, soon bring to light
The verbal clues she and the patient need
If it, the talking cure, can be deployed,
The errant signifying chain set right,
And one more cured analysand be freed
To live again the life they once enjoyed.

3

Still the far cries go up, and still they fall
On ears sufficiently attuned to know
The accents of such deep despair although,
Long trained in answering the civil call
Of those for whom apt words may lift its pall
At least in some degree, those ears forego
Admission to whatever lies below
The stage where *vouloir-dire* contrives to haul
Words up from grief’s mute realm. Think then how small
The chance that they’ll detect it in the flow
Of talk whose secondary-process undertow
Informs the therapist: yes, we’ll play ball
With you so long as you’ll then reinstall
Our broken social ties and help us grow,
Once talking-cured, aware of what we owe
To those same bonds we thought held us in thrall.

Yet turn an ear detuned from that refrain
Of analysts, analysands, and friends
Of the existing social order, and
You may just, by aphasic licence, gain
Some brief outsider’s access to what sends
Those cries out far and wide on every hand
Yet pre-ensures that none may understand
Their import save by misery that bends
Speech back to such deep-rooted sounds of pain
That they, like Noah’s dove, can find dry land
Or a receptive ear just where land ends
And grief extends its inchoate domain.

Weeping Woman by Van Gogh

Evening

Evening is coming with its subtle charm
Even the birds now are too tired to call,
From here to the horizon all is calm,
And shorter shadows from the mountains fall.

Tranquility all round now meets my gaze,
Both land and sea at peace, free of concern,
The air is clear, there is no autumn haze,
The summer sun has had all day to burn.

This is the time when meditation reigns
And takes me where it will deep in the past,
A summing up of pleasures and of pains,
Till only quietude's maintained at last.

Far far away the troubles that beset
Our human life. These now I can forget…

Edward Greenwood