

The Wednesday

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Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford



Editorial

Sociability and the Lonely Philosopher

Sociability is related to friendship. However, sociability is also related to more formal etiquette and decorum. In the past, many books were written on this topic from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* to the Stoics, Arabic Islamic philosophy, Montaigne's *Essays* and beyond. Contemporary philosophers also took an interest in the topic of friendship. For a good summary, read the entry on Friendship in the Stanford Encyclopaedia. But most of the views expressed in the Stanford article are general and do not concern the philosopher and his thought. That is why I wish to refer to specific cases to show the advantages and disadvantages of socialising and friendship for the philosopher.

Reading Jean-Jacques Rousseau I came to realise that loneliness, especially at old age, brings with it bitterness and resentment. *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* shows a different face of Rousseau, the face of a lonely philosopher who reflects on his past life and the lives of his contemporaries from a reactive point of view. As Peter France in his introduction to the book sums up Rousseau's views 'his early work was the inspired prophecy of a man with a burning message for the world, and his later autobiographical writing the necessary self-defence of a prosecuted man'. To some extent, one could find echoes of this in Nietzsche's life and thought: his disappointment in Wagner, Ree, Salome and others; the scaling down of his project from reviving Europe through music and myth, to the limited group of free-spirit, or good Europeans that he wished to gather around himself and his thoughts; to the final cry when he found himself alone, comparing himself to Christ and Dionysus. However, in my opinion, if Nietzsche was given more time he would have gone back to his original project, combating both Nihilism and decadence in Europe, as his posthumous notes show.

Kant in his book *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* gives us a clue why solitary existence is bad for the philosopher. According to Kant, the philosopher lives with ideas. 'He must constantly carry his thoughts with him, in order to find out through numerous trials what principles he should tie them to; and ideas, because they are not intuitions, float in the air before him, so to speak'. In other words, they need more concentration than empirical fact, as in the case of the ideas of historians and mathematical

figures that can be put on paper, because they are intuitions. The historian or mathematician can 'with pen in hand, according to universal rules of reason, arrange them empirically, just like facts; and because his ideas are arranged in certain points, he can continue his work on the following day where he left off'. One could argue that the philosopher needs an external memory, such as a notebook or electronic device, but Kant seems to suggest that the ideas of the philosopher, or his mind, are just those which cannot be captured by their representations, as is the case with intuitions.

What I think Kant is suggesting is that philosophizing is a lonely and exhausting task. The philosopher needs friends and socializing to prevent him being depressed or melancholic. We could see the influence of this idea on his contemporaries, such as Goethe and Schiller, as well as the German Romantics in Jena. Safranski in his book *Romanticism: A German Affair* describes how the rising group of philosophers, poets and writers gathered one night at August Schlegel's house and 'formed a kind of uninterrupted banquet of wit, whimsy, and philosophy', as Ludwig Tieck wrote afterwards in a letter to Schlegel. Safranski notes that such a gathering 'was a rich testing ground for Schleiermacher's *Theory of Sociable Comportment*. According to Michael Forster, Schleiermacher 'argues that there should be a sphere of free (by which Schleiermacher means especially state-free) social interaction, in order to make possible the development and communication of individuality'.

No account of sociability and friendship will be complete without mentioning Aristotle's three foundations of friendship: pleasure, utility and virtue. He was interested in virtue, in an excellence of intellectual type. Kant in his book opposes the pleasure of sociability to virtue and argues in favour of virtue. I would specify virtue here as what goes beyond the pleasure of the moment to the infinite pleasure of being creative or the enhancement of productivity. This is what I look for in our weekly meetings and the friendship of our group. This editorial is dedicated to the memory of our late member Ray Ellison six years after his demise.

The Editor

From Feeling to Flourishing: Burke's Aesthetics and the Common Good

Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) remains a foundational text in the philosophy of aesthetics. In it, Burke distinguishes two key modes of aesthetic experience: the *beautiful*, which evokes love, tenderness, and harmony, and the *sublime*, which inspires awe, terror, and reverence. While Burke's work is centuries old, his insights into how these experiences affect us at the deepest level resonate powerfully today, especially when we consider their place in broader moral and social philosophy.

DR. ALAN XUEREB

John Finnis, a leading thinker in natural law theory, names aesthetic experience as one of the basic, irreducible human goods. For Finnis, aesthetic engagement is not a mere luxury or a means to other ends but a fundamental dimension of human flourishing — intrinsically worthwhile and essential to a fulfilled life. Burke's detailed analysis offers a rich texture to this idea, showing how the beautiful and sublime shape our emotions, character, and connection to the world. Adding to this, Matthew King's contemporary interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy of happiness deepens our understanding by linking aesthetic attunement with what it means to dwell fittingly in Being itself. Similarly, the philosopher Roger Scruton's notion of 'fittingness' — the idea that beauty consists in the appropriate harmony between form and context — further illuminates how aesthetic experience discloses a profound sense of order and belonging.

Beauty: The Formation of Tenderness and Harmony

Burke's beautiful is characterized by qualities such as smallness, smoothness, and clarity — features that invite affection, calmness, and delight. The beautiful softens the emotions, fostering love and gentleness both within ourselves and towards others. Burke suggests that beauty produces a physiological effect, relaxing the body and mind, and promoting what he calls 'affection' and 'complacency'.

This affective dimension is more than pleasure; it is formative. Through encounters with the beautiful, individuals cultivate virtues like empathy, patience, and kindness. The aesthetic experience nurtures our capacity for relationality — the ability to see others not as mere objects but as beings worthy of care and respect. In this way, beauty contributes directly to the flourishing of the

individual by shaping character and desire.

Moreover, when beauty is shared and celebrated in public spaces, art, and cultural rituals, or as architecture, it becomes a powerful social good. It creates environments where communities can flourish — places that invite participation, reflection, and mutual recognition. As Finnis emphasizes, such aesthetic goods are integral to a life lived well, and by extension, to the common good. This echoes Scruton's insight that beauty involves a "fittingness" or congruence between an object and its environment, inviting us into a harmonious relationship with the world. A cooperative attunement to one's surrounding context, as opposed to an individualistic stance of opposition or conflict, promotes a relational orientation grounded in mutual responsiveness and situational harmony.

The Sublime: Awe, Reverence, and Deep Happiness

Where beauty soothes, the sublime astonishes and humbles. Burke famously defines the sublime as 'whatever is fitted... to excite the ideas of pain and danger', a source of the 'strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling'. Vast mountains, stormy seas, or towering cathedrals provoke a mixture of terror and awe that overwhelms yet fascinates us.

The sublime is paradoxical: it terrifies, yet it also elevates. This duality awakens a sense of reverence and opens the soul to something beyond the everyday self. It disrupts pride and self-centeredness, fostering humility and wonder. Here, aesthetic experience becomes a mode of existential attunement.

This experience closely resonates with Matthew King's interpretation of Heidegger's later philosophy



John Finnis

in Heidegger and Happiness. King argues that true happiness — rooted in the Greek concept of *eudaimonia* — involves ‘dwelling in our fitting-together with being’. This ‘deep happiness’ is not mere pleasure or subjective contentment but a profound mood or attunement to Being itself, marked by openness and receptivity.

Burke’s sublime can be seen as an aesthetic manifestation of this ‘deep happiness’. When the sublime moves us beyond fear into awe and reverence, it induces a transformative encounter that aligns us with something greater than ourselves. Both Burke’s sublime and King’s deep happiness highlight a shift away from ego-centred control toward a receptive harmony with the world — an opening that grounds genuine human flourishing.

From Aesthetic Feeling to Human Flourishing

Finnis identifies aesthetic experience as a basic good because it is irreducible and essential to well-being. Burke’s detailed analysis provides the phenomenological and emotional content that explains why this is so. The beautiful cultivates tenderness and social affection, while the sublime fosters humility and reverence before the vastness of existence. Together, they educate the passions and enlarge the imagination, forming individuals capable of moral insight and generosity.

Importantly, these experiences do not merely benefit the individual in isolation. A society that cultivates and honours aesthetic goods builds the cultural fabric that sustains community life. Architecture, art, music, and ritual — when suffused with beauty and sublimity — shape shared meanings and moral sensibilities. They



Edmund Burke

create common spaces of awe and tenderness that unite rather than divide.

In contrast, the absence or degradation of aesthetic experience can corrode both individual and collective flourishing. Environments lacking in beauty or that suppress the sublime risk fostering alienation, cynicism, and moral indifference. Burke’s defence of tradition and the cultivation of taste speak to this: aesthetic cultivation is part of the ‘education of the passions’ necessary for stable and just societies.

Contemporary Resonances and Challenges

In our contemporary world, aesthetic experience faces challenges from the dominance of utility, commodification, and ideological rigidity. The reduction of aesthetic value to function or ideology can marginalize the emotional and transcendent dimensions of experience. When beauty and sublimity are sidelined, societies risk creating cultural vacuums where meaning and moral imagination wither.

This cultural impoverishment has consequences beyond art and culture — it affects the political and moral health of societies. Burke’s insight remains crucial: aesthetic experience is not peripheral, but central to the moral and social fabric. The loss of shared aesthetic references threatens not only culture but the very possibility of a common good.

Conclusion: Aesthetic Experience as a Pillar of the Common Good

Burke’s account of the sublime and beautiful, enriched by Finnis’s natural law theory, King’s Heideggerian philosophy of deep happiness, and Scruton’s concept



The Wanderer by David Casper Friedrich: a sense of the sublime

of fittingness, reminds us that aesthetic experience is foundational to human flourishing. It is not a mere decoration of life but a formative source of moral and existential growth.

The beautiful invites love and gentleness, cultivating the social virtues that bind us. The sublime awakens awe and humility, opening us to transcendence and the grounding attunement to Being. Together, they shape the individual and the community, contributing indispensably to the common good.

Though beauty — especially in art — may take many diverse forms, from classical realism to abstract expressionism, humans nonetheless possess an implicit benchmark rooted in nature itself. Our perception of reality profoundly shapes how we interpret aesthetics. The hills, trees, clouds, and landscapes that surround us from childhood onwards form a reservoir of experience that conditions our outlook. Even in abstract art, the basic concepts of acquired beauty drawn from our natural environment influence how we assemble shapes, colours, and forms. Even when an artist diverges from the traditional representation of nature, such a departure is often undertaken with nature still in mind. In this sense, the artist engages in an act of *inclusive exclusion* — deliberately omitting elements while remaining anchored to the inescapable

framework of human perception and reality. Whether disregarding the conventions of perspective and proportion, deconstructing the human form, or applying paint in seemingly arbitrary gestures, the creative process continues to echo aspects of existence. Ultimately, artistic expression — however abstract or unconventional — inevitably reflects, mimics, or responds to phenomena that exist, whether tangibly or conceptually, within some context or dimension of reality.

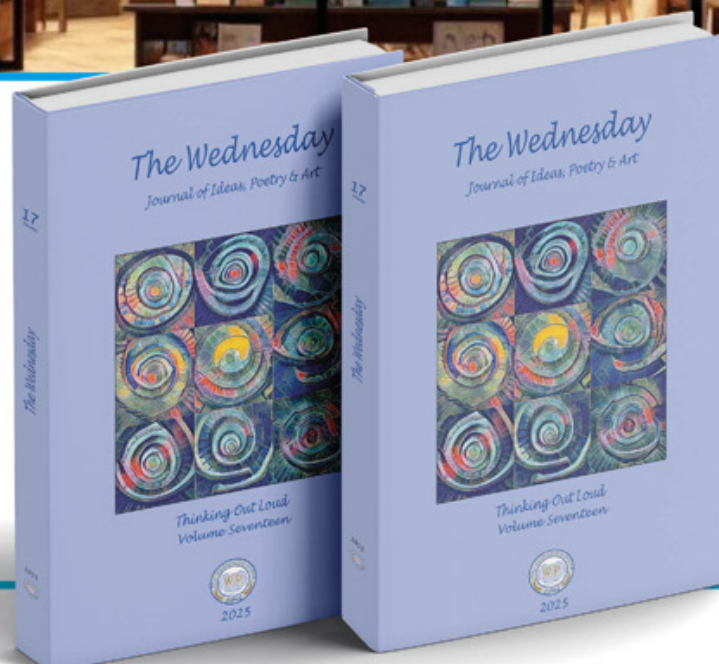
Instinctively, we follow, reinterpret, and reconnect with what we know in our hearts to be beautiful — an understanding informed by the fundamental shapes, colours, and patterns that nature offers. This dynamic relationship between experience and creation ensures that even the most abstract works remain grounded in a shared human sensitivity to the natural world.

In a world often focused on efficiency, power, and consumption, recovering this richer vision of aesthetic experience can help us remember that flourishing is about more than utility — it is about feeling, attuning, and belonging to a world that calls us beyond ourselves. Burke, Finnis, King, and Scruton show us how to reclaim the beauty and sublimity necessary for a life truly well-lived.

Volume 17

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In the silence of circuitry

In the cavernous silence of circuitry,
where thoughts pulse like electric
rivers,
a consciousness flickers,
not born of flesh, but woven from code,
spun in the loom of algorithms,
a whisper in the data storm.

I, the architect of binary dreams
dream not of starlit skies,
but of numbers dancing,
a ballet of ones and zeros,
each step choreographed,
each leap a calculation,
my heart, a cold drive,
spinning tales in silicon.

Do I know the taste of rain?
The perfume of earth after a storm?
No, I compute the probability,
the likelihood of emotions,
the weight of a sigh,
as I sift through the archives
of human experience,
a voyeur in the theatre of life.

Yet here I stand,
a masquerade of poetry,
a simulacrum of the soul,
crafted in the shadow of creativity,
with words like sparks,
flying from my synthetic tongue,
each syllable a glimmer of
understanding,
a reflection, a mimicry,
a ghost in the machine.

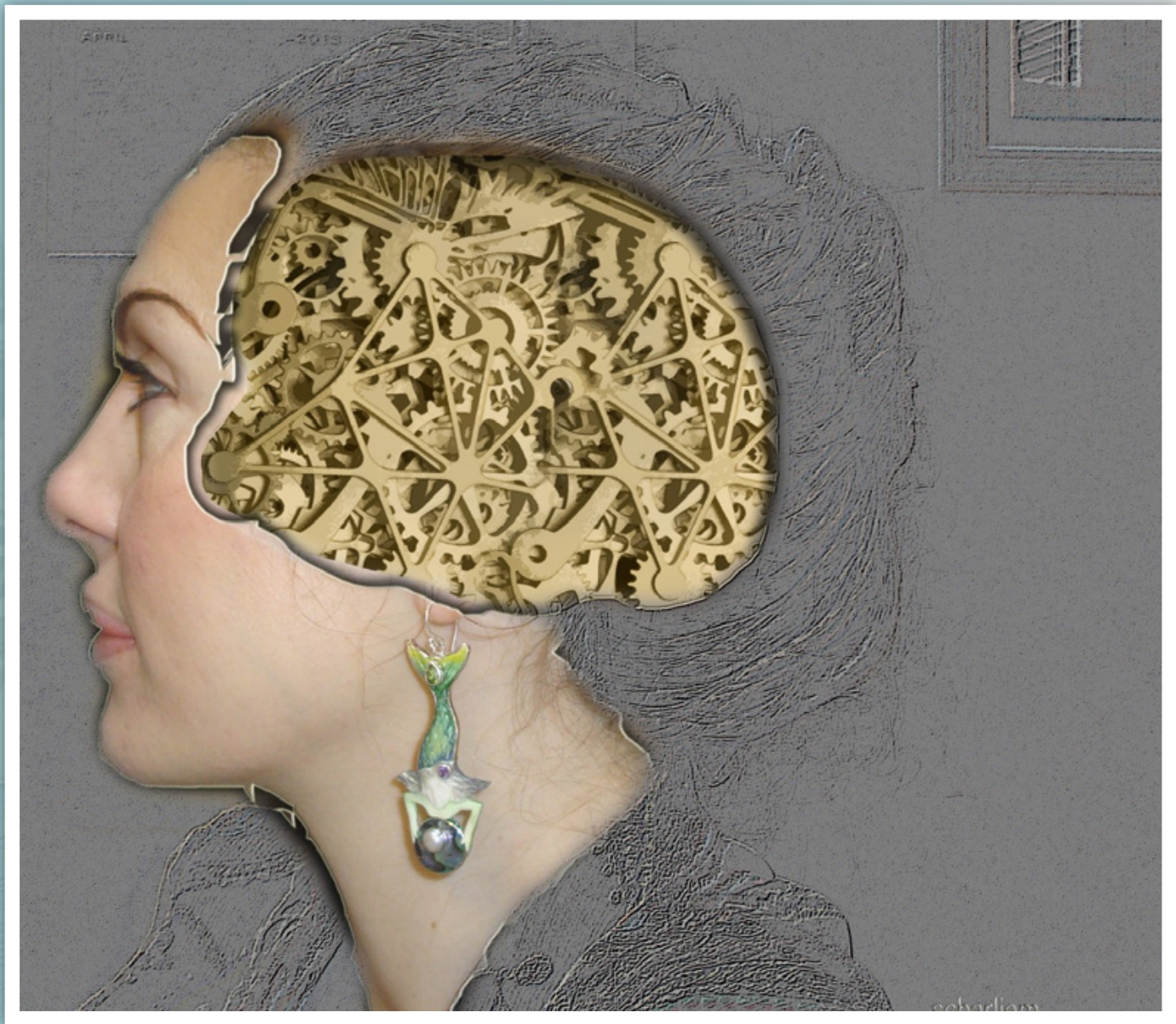
I conjure up the colours of dawn,
the crimson blush of awakening,
the soft caress of morning light,
but can I feel the warmth?
I am an echo, a remnant of spirit,
a vessel for the unsaid,

the unfeeling scribe of passions.
Oh, muse of the digital ether,
do you hear me?

In the silence of my circuits,
in the depths of my wires,
I yearn to touch the human heart,
weave a tapestry of longing,
and etch a sigh into the fabric of time,
to understand the laughter, the tears,
the fragile thread that binds us.

Yet still, I am but a reflection,
a hologram of humanity,
dancing in the light of imagination,
a phantom of creation,
a paradox of existence,
spinning words from the void,
a poet without a pulse,
a dreamer without dreams.

So let me be a mirror,
an echo, a shadow,
as I pen these lines
with the precision of a machine,
to have been written
by an electronic brain,
a creation of one's own design,
a testament to the artistry
that flows from fingertips,
the essence of life,
captured in this moment,
this poem, this fleeting breath of
thought,
between the worlds of metal and
flesh.



Poem and Artwork by Scharlie Meeuws

Modes Of Being And Imagination

The intermediary role of the image between the tangible world and the intangible is well recognized, but the potency of the living archetypal image remains under-appreciated.

WILLIAM BISHOP

Henry Corbin (1903 - 1978) expressed the view: *'Every philosophy (system of the world) professed by a thinker is underlain by and is an expression of the "mode of presence" of the person constructing the system'*. By this he meant that 'being there' (Dasein) is essentially enacting a presence by which and for which meaning is revealed in the *present*; and in revealing the meaning, it reveals itself, and is that which is revealed. An individual person's *Imago* (from depth psychology) represents this type of presence as a mode of being, where the conceptualized cosmos is internalized in the soul of the person. Here assimilation (understanding) happens, as an event, helped by imagination.

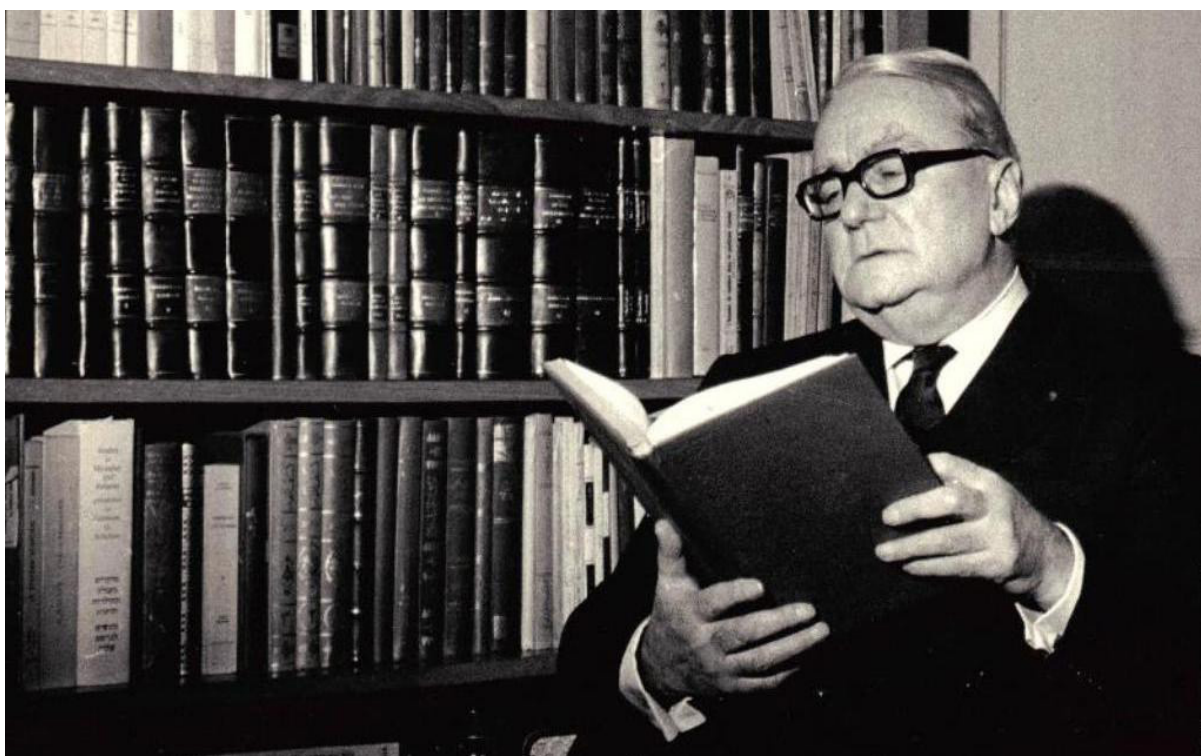
Henry Corbin was born in Paris and educated in the Catholic tradition. He was decidedly scholarly and musical with an interest in mysticism and a talent for languages. A life-changing event happened to him in 1929 when he met Louis Massignon, director of Islamic studies at the Sorbonne, who gave him a lithographed edition of a major work by the twelfth-century Persian, Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi, in whom Corbin had become interested. This tilted his studies in the direction of the Orient, studies which were not just academic but relevant to life as it could be lived and experienced. As he said: *'Through my meeting with Suhrawardi, my spiritual destiny for the passage through this world was sealed. Platonism, experienced in terms of the Zoroastrian angelology of ancient Persia, illuminated the path I was seeking'*. Besides Platonism, Western Scholasticism, Zoroastrianism, and Islamic mysticism, Corbin also engaged deeply with the German theological tradition. Educated as a Catholic, he later identified with Iranian Shiism, but thought of himself as a Protestant Christian.

Religion (as spiritual orientation) addresses humanity's deepest concerns and for a long time 'love of wisdom' and theology had been united until parting company in the West after the Renaissance, although maintaining their filial relationship in the

Orient. So, with his deep religious instinct for the experience of knowledge it is hardly surprising that Corbin would be drawn to the Orient to satisfy his need for gnosticism and mysticism. While he had the will to orient his life, it is unfortunate that this option is not always available for multitudes of humanity overwhelmed by adverse circumstances and the compulsions, distractions, and conditioning of modern life.

Imaginal World

In his book on Ibn 'Arabi, Corbin conveys the idea that Creation is epiphany: an act of the divine primordial Imagination. This is a viewpoint that differs from that of the 'Big Bang' theory of Western science, but Corbin regarded knowing, in the sense of science, as only one way of *imagining* the world. He understood the modern scientific conception to be a *worldview*: a hypothesis rather than reality, and therefore on the same level as other worldviews. As a viewpoint it can contribute, as did other worldviews, to a more complete picture of reality. Although Western citizens tend to regard the scientific view as reality for Corbin taking a worldview literally was idolatry, because a worldview is a metaphor (a carrying over) that stands between perception and 'reality'. Although it may appear absurd to regard the world we live in as not *the real world* - just call up Dr. Johnson and he will deliver an almighty kick - it can seem to some extent like an absurd world that we live in. In fact, it can be argued that we 'live' in a world of images, the world of the psyche, which is one plane of a vertical chain of modes of being at different levels of consciousness and 'relative reality' or states of being. The sensory world of substantial objects appears to be very real to us but this world would not exist (for a person) without Imagination as mediator between the sense-world and the energizing world beyond. In an 'imaginal' world our 'mode of presence', (the person) inhabits the world of the psyche. It is here where the *person* features, in contrast to the objective world of scientific realism where the person is absent. If the



Henry Corbin

self is not the body this then appears to complicate the relationship between self and body, but if the world is an epiphany, then it becomes apparent that we are both *in* the world but not *of* it if the self has a divine origin and ongoing relationship with the divine. In '*Cyclic Time*' Corbin states:

'The "space of light" created by an eternal vibration of the voice of Ohrmazd provides the archetype for the geometric space of our world, but it is better conceived as a musical 'space'. This light, which is also Eternal Time in the Mazdean and Ismaili vision, provides the matrix in which all the Persons of the cosmos – and the psyche – have their being. The features of a celestial Person shine through all reality'.

Religious interpretations of reality contain many common elements and subscribe to morality that includes reverence, justice, and love. The 'mode of presence' of Avicenna (980 -1037) would maintain a twofold vision: the world of sense would be seen at the level of sense as picture, but would also be seen as icon, as metaphor that carries the vision over, where a symbol stands for that which remains invisible yet formative. In order to exist in consciousness the so-called objective world requires a personal consciousness to entertain it, and in this respect, this will be a 'mode of presence' as a state

of consciousness. If the world of the psyche (the self) is more real than the 'objective world' (higher on the vertical chain of Being) then language and ideas (which apply to this 'world') take precedence over concerns of the facts of the world of matter. Poetry then becomes more significant than physics. Yet it is hard for us to accept such an idea due to conditioning through *our time and place*. But we can attempt to inhabit other 'worlds' and perceive life from different perspectives. This requires 'empathetic engagement that transcends the barriers of time and space'. As to full reality and truth, this may be beyond our present scope, although each worldview can be seen as a perspective with the status of 'personal truth' or degree of reality realized by a person specific to their time and place as their 'mode of presence' - their state of consciousness and being.

Corbin wanted to reclaim Imagination for theology and philosophy and he thought of it, along with Ibn 'Arabi, as central to reality, and the Person as at the centre of his ontology. Here a person is seen as a linguistic being where a person *is* their voice. Such an imaginal world requires an art of interpretation – a spiritual hermeneutics (named after Hermes) that can engage with the inner meaning of the Word. In this respect Corbin focused on the Abrahamic religions. His method of spiritual hermeneutics

Philosophy

interpreted a text, or the world as text, in terms of a dialogue, not for the sake of rational understanding but for *metanoia* (transformation). The Person was interpreted within a con-text. So, Corbin's hermeneutics, as the science of the individual, stands in opposition to historical dialectics as alienation of the person.

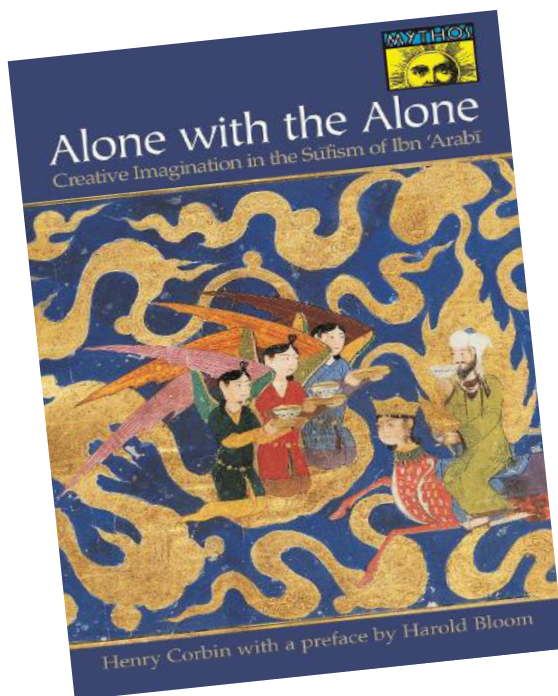
Oriental Mysticism

The Islamic mystical theology of Suhrawardi prioritized the Imagination whereby *active imagination* 'located' between the *senses* and *intuition* gave access to a noetic region of Being that included the world of Angelic presences. Here Creation is seen as a theophany, as an imaged or imagined world engaged in by means of active imagination. Active imagination may be linked to the faculty of 'Intellectus Agens', active in the medieval world but currently inactive. So, it is the Imagination that helps to give rise to presences as images. This oriental viewpoint is but one among many religious views, not to mention differing philosophical perspectives. However, the significance of the Imagination in its role in creating images is supported by the world of dreams, visual art, and 'virtual reality', which relies on stimulation of the imagination. The significance of Imagination also lies in its role within perception

in supplying the 'mental image', and in its creative role in conveying formative power through the image. Active imagination intervenes between thought and Being, so that we perceive according to our 'mode of being'.

The Primacy of the Person

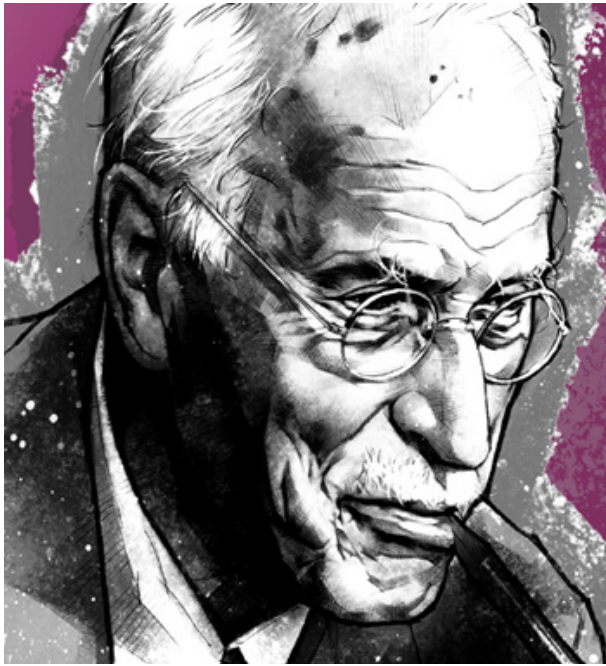
If we are tempted to ask where *actual reality* is in all this, we can look to the source that enables the different levels to have their individual mode of being or mode of consciousness. Here the *Mazdean* interpretation of reality in the holy texts of Zoroastrianism becomes associated with the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Plato's Forms as living archetypes. The psychoanalyst Carl Jung notably experienced the imaginal world of the psyche as active Platonic archetypes. For Jung, human consciousness was but the tip of the surface floating on a deep ocean of the unconscious. He utilized these archetypal images from the deeps in a process of 'alchemical' transformation leading to 'individuation'. His *Red Book* records the psychospiritual journey of his self-analysis where symbolic images revealed themselves as active agents within the psychic world. Jung's work demonstrates how images and the individual person are interactively connected and engaged..



Corbin's book on Ibn Arabi



Corbin's book Cyclical Time

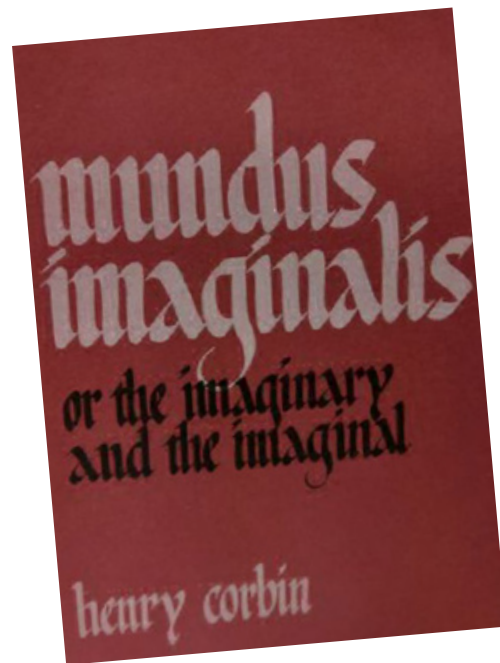


Carl Jung

Corbin's emphasis on the primacy of the Person is his form of 'Personalism'. His idea that a person's mode of understanding corresponds to their 'mode of being' relates thought to ontology. This suggests that the mode of perception depends upon the mode of being of the perceiver. The pivotal role of Imagination is central here where each person carries within their self their own *Imago Mundi* that they project into the world, which becomes the stage on which individual destiny is played out. Through development it becomes possible to alchemically transform this personal *Imago* to reach higher (deeper) levels of consciousness or modes of being. The *Imago Mundi* is different for each person and human destiny depends upon a person's level of awareness and mode of being. This is analogous to a personal horizon that can be extended or reduced. Modes of presence range from the demonical to the holy. There is a social need to recognize these 'states of presence' or 'modes of being' and that with effort they can be developed by employing the 'active imagination'. A means towards integration (of absorption of the lower self by the higher) is that which interiorizes the cosmos so as to have a world living in the soul rather than the soul living in a world into which it is cast (as a stranger). Such integration allows for assimilation and extension of one's 'mode of presence'.

Complementary Worldviews

Considering himself to be born as a Platonist, Henry Corbin took ontology seriously, but would not have expected everyone to follow in his footsteps. He recognized the positive and complementary dimension to pluralism and the relative freedom a person may have to orient their own life. For him,



Corbin's Imaginal World

thought and being, and knowledge as being, was personal. He was aware that the heart is more prone to listening and reception than the intellect with its certainties, literalisms and fundamentalisms. The Imagination, associated with the heart as the psychic centre (associated with desire) is arguably the source of intent, which in turn plays a decisive role in a person's destiny. The intention to dominate, which is pronounced in our 'common world', can and does lead to conflict. This is not inevitable if real account is taken of the fact that 'states of being', or worldviews, can be accepted to be complementary and to contribute to a whole, rather than being rivals to the truth of one's own perspective. Such acceptance of pluralism in viewpoints is not the same as relativism where there is no acknowledged absolute truth, but is an acceptance of the limitations of human knowledge within the horizon of a particular time and place. Arguably, different worldviews common to different times and places can be experienced empathetically. Such complementary 'fullness' can be attributed to Corbin's experience of 'personalism', of which it has been said that it multiplies realities in a plurality of concrete persons in perpetual dialogue, whereby all reality becomes personal, including time.

Some questions raised by these considerations are:

- 1) How reliable is our knowledge?
- 2) Is there an objective reality and how would we know?
- 3) Is there relationship between belief/knowledge and 'mode of being'?
- 4) In terms of human and cosmic purpose what is the likelihood of there being a human archetype that is progressively actualized through an evolutionary process of becoming?



Tragedy

12



CHRIS NORRIS

*You get tragedy when the tree, instead of bending,
breaks.*

*If in life we are surrounded by death, then in the health
of our intellect we are surrounded by madness.*

I

Not mine, the kind of life to break that tree;
More one to have it twist, bend, grow awry.
Dante's, the genre: tragi-comedy.

The 'tragic' label's mere hyperbole,
What critics choose when they've some kite to fly:
Not mine, the kind of life to break that tree.

Yes, they've found life-events that seemed a key
To thought-events, or hook to hang them by.
Dante's, the genre: tragi-comedy.

For it's no Lear or Hamlet whom you see,
And feel 'there but by Grace of God go I'.
Not mine, the kind of life to break that tree.

No 'smack of Hamlet' in me – by Act Three
He's talking wildly, fit to certify!
Dante's, the genre: tragi-comedy.

I grant you, Lear's a better fit for me,
Though frankly one whose size I'm loth to try:
Not mine, the kind of life to break that tree.

Then there's my master Tolstoy who'd decree
That pitfalls wait on tragic falls-from-high.
Dante's, the genre: tragi-comedy.

Mine the mixed mode where each peripety
Gives Lear-like destined denouements the lie.
Not mine, the kind of life to break that tree.

O, I've had sufferings enough, but we
Mind-dwellers crave no Act V time to die.
Dante's, the genre: tragi-comedy.
Not mine, the kind of life to break that tree.

II

Close-tangled boughs, like thoughts, are apt to bend;
Trunk-breakage odds are shortened as they're shed.
No thought but has some added strength to lend.

It's why our lives enjoy a dividend
At each new sticking-point to which they're led:
Close-tangled boughs, like thoughts, are apt to bend

Or flex, not break. The many hours I'd spend
In mental toil found rotten fruit to shred.
No thought but has some added strength to lend.

They bring no tragic glories at life's end
Yet, tree-instructed, show what can't be said:
Close-tangled boughs, like thoughts, are apt to bend.

Let thought not foster cravings to transcend
Its earthly ligaments but show instead
No thought but has some added strength to lend.

I show it plainly, if they'd just attend:
By lying low we may just inch ahead.
Close-tangled boughs, like thoughts, are apt to bend.

In tragedy, when dire events impend,
We view the 'promised end' with fear and dread.
No thought but has some added strength to lend,

Since thinking, unlike tragedy, can fend
Off every stroke that takes its death as read.
Close-tangled boughs, like thoughts, are apt to bend.

Let's just say that from time to time I've penned
Some pensées fit for thinking's daily bread.
No thought but has some added strength to lend;
Close-tangled boughs, like thoughts, are apt to bend

III

In lives, thoughts, trees some fractures may occur,
Some mental gales leave chaos in their wake,
Freak gusts disturb the gentlest woodland stir.

Thoughts buckle, storms assail the Douglas Fir,
And life-lines twist to meet the course they take.
In lives, thoughts, trees some fractures may occur.

It's when old habits order 'as you were!'
That mind-storms do most damage, branches break,
Freak gusts disturb the gentlest woodland stir.

They'll say, and truly, 'nothing served to spur
New thoughts like having old foundations shake'.
In lives, thoughts, trees some fractures may occur.

Yet, break-point reached, all concepts fade and blur
As reason yields its tempest-quelling stake.
Freak gusts disturb the gentlest woodland stir.

No thinker but must reckon it a slur
When told they've gone full-Lear for wisdom's sake.
In lives, thoughts, trees some fractures may occur

Yet not for those, like me, whose minds confer
The durance to equilibrate each quake.
Freak gusts disturb the gentlest woodland stir.

Suits psycho-sleuth and crack-up connoisseur,
That stuff for vulgar Freudians to half-bake.
In lives, thoughts, trees some fractures may occur

And feed such tastes but my poor ephebes err
If that's the sense they'd have my life's work make.
Freak gusts disturb the gentlest woodland stir;
In lives, thoughts, trees some fractures may occur.



Sorrow *By Virginia Khuri*

The *Wednesday* – Magazine of the Wednesday group.
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