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# The Wednesday

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## Editorial

# *A Bright Light in Dark Times*

This issue of *The Wednesday* Magazine marks nine years of its publication. It has been a long journey, but it was made easy and rewarding by the participation of a constellation of thinkers, poets and artists who have made it a considerable intellectual forum for debating ideas and presenting creative works. Many of our members have books published by well-known publishers. Christopher Norris is our leading intellectual and academic, credited with a long list of publications. Since his retirement, he has concentrated on writing a new kind of poetry, he calls 'verse-essays'. His latest this year *The Real Thing Strange: verse-essays after William Empson* , and *Titian's Blue: verse-essays on paintings and painters*.

Kathleen Kerr-Koch publishes with Bloomsbury Academic a book on *Romancing Fascism: Modernity and Allegory in Benjamin, de Man, Shelley,* and she gave the Wednesday group two talks based on her book. Edward Greenwood is prolific poet and speaker at our Wednesday weekly meetings. He published last year his second poetry collection *The Words Still Come*, and a book on *The Nature of Tragedy*. Scharlie Meeuws is a remarkable poet and artist. Her poems and artworks have adorned every issue of the magazine since its early days. Her latest book of poems and paintings is *The Path of Stillness*.

Alan Xuereb has just finished his second PhD. His doctoral research, *Architecture for the Common Good*, introduces concepts such as (d)well-being to analyse how architecture can either support or undermine individuals and collective flourishing. The thesis is about the philosophy of architecture bringing political philosophy and phenomenology of dwelling together, analysing how aesthetic experience fits in this complex interaction. Alan is also an artist. His last exhibition was over a year ago.

I am also pleased to mention the achievement of other members. I will start with the original work of our logician Chris Seddon. Chris summarised his logical thinking as follows: 'I have developed my logical ideas over fifty years, to examine the foundations of logic as they are used in both mathematical and ordinary language and thought. My method has been to surface and minimise assumptions. I replace symbolic axioms with explicit grammatical conditions, definitions and inherited ideas embedded in the propositions in which they are used. These methods provide more coherent accounts of meaning, truth, vagueness, and logical incompleteness than more conventional formal systems. Although much of my work is technical, most of my articles attempt to apply the resultant insights to clarify philosophical themes that arise in Wednesday discussions without unnecessary jargon'.

Ruud Schuurman has a daring thesis of Consciousnism: 'It can be summed up in the slogan: "I am not a human being having a conscious experience, but consciousness having a human experience". It sits at the crossroads of philosophy, psychology, and religion. Consciousnism is important because it is totally satisfying – rationally, emotionally, and even spiritually'.

Peter Stibrany has expertise in both engineering and philosophy. This allowed him to have a different take on philosophical issues. Peter says: 'My philosophical interest appears centred in epistemology, likely sparked by my day-job of designing complex, novel technical systems in which human theories sometimes collide with how the world really behaves. Ideas for talks seem frequently to be triggered when someone claims to understand an aspect of the world definitively, yet I feel there is room to test the limits of this understanding and maybe present alternatives'.

Nearly all other members of the group focus on one area of philosophy or another. For example, Jeanne Warren is an authority on the thoughts of the philosopher John Macmurray. Jeanne gave the group many talks based on Macmurray's philosophy. William Bishop has a deep knowledge of the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. He is concerned with the 'comprehension of the self in relation to the world in its external and internal constitution. This involves engagement with ontology, epistemology, psychology, language, anthropology, spiritual science, and subjectivity, all seen within the perspective of an evolution of consciousness'.

Elizabeth Pask wrote a doctoral thesis on ethics, and she always gives an ethical dimension to her comments and talks in our Wednesday meetings. David Fogg has in-depth knowledge of a vast range of philosophical thinking. He is also a poet and a musician. Mike England is a painter and has a mind full of compassion and respect for natural and social life. His comments are always a breath of fresh air when debate gets heated. Virginia Khuri is an accomplished photographer and has published a number of books.

Finally, Dan McArdle has an interest in ancient history and political philosophy, among other topics. He sums up his concerns by saying: 'In an era where much of the world is focused on the what, I find the why far more interesting. Why do certain things happen to a certain people at a certain time? Why did someone choose to do this instead of that? Why did we respond to a given technology in the way we did? And so on. Inherent to the why is a combination of explanation and justification… thus in many ways, the questions hidden in the known past can become a guide to navigating the unknown future'.

I hope this gives the readers some idea of the group of which I am proud. My apologies to members I overlooked due to the limitations of space. On this ninth anniversary, my thanks go to the members who make this magazine possible, and to our readers who have stayed loyal throughout.

***The Editor***

The Peripheral

# Creatures Great

**Are we, our creations, and our institutions the biggest, most complex entities with agency in the world? Or are we subject to larger entities we do not control?**

PETER STIBRANY

This rumination on the nature of entities larger than us began with two separate experiences. The first is this imagined cityscape of 22nd century London from a streaming series called 'The Peripheral', based on a novel by William Gibson.

The second was a tantalising mention of the word 'egregore' in a half-heard interview. My AI helpfully commented that: 'An egregore is a concept in Western esotericism referring to a non-physical entity or thoughtform that emerges from the collective thoughts and emotions of a group of individuals. It can be seen as a "group mind" that influences its creators and can have an independent existence'. Definitely interesting. If esotericists investigated egregores as entities with agency, I wondered how we might understand egregores in cause-and-effect terms.

## How Big is an Individual?

Individual creatures appear to exist in many sizes, from smaller than amoebas to larger than humans. We all know an individual when we see one, but the term is vague. The reason to be more precise is that when we get to an 'egregore' that encompasses many people, it would be handy to know whether calling this an entity make sense.

We have no trouble seeing ourselves as individual entities. That said, we host various microorganisms without whom we would die. So, it seems we cannot precisely delineate ourselves by reference to our DNA components. We could define ourselves as being all the things of which we are phenomenally aware but unfortunately, we are not aware of many of our parts or processes. So that definition does not work either.

We could define an individual entity as all the physical bits moved by common control. If I decide to walk to the shop, all the bits that come with me are part of me as an individual. Except the clothes, I guess.

Moving to a scale beyond individual persons, we are all part of something larger; we organise into groups, tribes, regions, nations, and so on connected by oaths, relationships, and belief systems; connected by ideas. These ideas constitute a control system; they create

coordinated action. Under this conception, a group of people so coordinated would seem to qualify as an individual entity.

**Organisations**
Many-personed entities such as companies and societies have governance structures – a CEO, MD, President, Governor, or law-making organ. They are constructed to operate according to explicit rules. So that is one type of organisational entity. We even have a legal fiction that treats some of these as individual persons.

Then there are large groups brought together in a less controlled way, by collective feeling or intuited need to coordinate, groups sharing faith, worldview, ethics, esprit de corps, ideology, culture, etiquette, and so on.

This second type of organisation is driven by an idea (or complex of ideas) common to its participants.

- The idea may be held or understood somewhat differently by individual participants, but is well enough defined to lead to collective action
- The originator of the idea, or primary organiser, is no longer active, is mythical, or may be unknown
- It seems to the participants the idea is so big it cannot be changed by individuals
- The leader, if there is one, is bound just as tightly by the idea as are the followers
- It causes individuals sometimes to act against their interests or violate their sense of right and wrong
- The members of the group expect themselves and others to act according to the idea

I find the second type to be of particular interest because we do not create it; it seems in some sense to exist above us and to drive us. We are drawn to certain groups of people based on beliefs, biases, feelings or reactions we do not choose.

**Where do these Beliefs Exist, the Ones we do not Choose?**
The psychological approach is to say these ideas are within us; they comprise multiple competing subconscious currents that carry our conscious 'self'. Our common humanity means these ideas somehow span individuals and connect groups.

A different, older metaphor pictures these forcing ideas to have their own, separate existence. In this metaphor, our 'self' is impinged upon or even invaded by external psychic forces such as angels or demons. These psychic

**William Gibson**

forces are evidently not physical. And because we feel them as a pressure to act in a certain way, they are not properly of the 'self' either. They are therefore imagined existing on a separate plane.

Recently, I came across the idea of physical, mental, and astral planes of existence. I do not come to a definition of what an 'astral plane' might be, but reading the literature, it seems to me we can define these forces to be on the astral plane in this metaphor.

So, I would like to explore these larger-than-the-individual-person forces first as emerging from law-governed interactions of non-living entities, and second to explore the mythic metaphor that these ideas are independent entities with motivations and agency to decide and act.

## The Scientific Approach

How is it that some ideas stick with people and spread widely, while others do not? And why do some ideas that propagate subsequently die out while others stay? And how and when do these ideas lead to action?

One way to think about these questions is to imagine that ideas are like little organisms that reside in our minds. If they are in the right environment, they thrive and propagate to other people. If the conditions change, they may adapt or die out. Just as we have gut bacteria that help us benefit from the food we eat, ideas thought of as organisms might be symbiotic with us. They help us live our lives and we keep them alive in our minds.

**Giant Egyptian Statues**

Richard Dawkins proposed this way of thinking about individual ideas, and because of their similarity to genes, referred to them as memes. And he referred to the larger organisms these memes create as meme complexes. The hosts of these ideas are living creatures - that is people - but the ideas are patterns and thus not living, just as genes are hosted in living creatures but are not themselves living.

But this approach quickly multiplies into combinatorial chaos. Just as we cannot use quantum mechanics to predict how a butterfly will behave, it may never be possible to know a person's mind well enough to predict whether a meme complex will take hold or what action it will spur. Intractable complexity is a sign we might benefit from changing the level of description in our model.

Interestingly, modern social media have created a laboratory to study this problem. The term 'meme' has become associated with an image, phrase, or other media artefact that spreads quickly. But these are isolated memes, not meme complexes. Nevertheless, now that a large portion of human thought is available online and accessible to extremely powerful pattern-detection algorithms, researchers may track the full life cycle of meme complexes more generally. Such tracking offers an outside-in view of the human mind, looking only at social media interactions as its products.

Then there is the emerging neuroscientific exploration, an inside-out approach to understanding the human brain and human mind. We have begun to explain some extremes of human behaviour in terms of causal chains involving nature and nurture, using the language of neurotransmitters, chemical triggers, and traumatic experiences.

You can see how connecting these outside-in and inside-out explorations, each abominably complex on its own, might spin out of our ability to grasp.

## Bigger Entities

Is it possible to understand generally the actions of groups of people seized by the same ideas without reference to the specific workings of individuals, just as we can understand generally the behaviour of a butterfly without digging into its biochemistry? The ancients had the same need to understand the behaviour of groups of people as we have, so this question has been pondered for thousands of years, as we might expect.

Getting back to one of the triggers for this discussion, the introduction of "egregores" into modern esoteric thought seems to have been achieved by Eliphas Lévi, a late 19th century esotericist, who found them in the Book of Enoch.

## Enoch and the Egregores

Wikipedia says this Book of Enoch is not canon except in the Ethiopian church, so it is not Biblical as such. But Enoch is mentioned several times in the Bible and is characterised as the great-grandfather of Noah via Methuselah and Lamech. The relevant part of Enoch is part 1, written sometime 300-200 BCE.

The story tells of a second fall of humankind, this time with a larger cast of characters. Instead of just Adam, Eve, and the serpent, the story starts with two hundred Angels descending to Mount Hermon. These Angels then made a pact among themselves and did two things, each disastrous:

- They had children with human women. These children became the giant Nephilim.
- They taught humanity forbidden knowledge:

**Group ritual**

weapons, metallurgy, cosmetics, jewellery, sorcery, astrology, divination, and herbology.

This transmission of forbidden knowledge corrupted human civilisation and led to widespread violence, vanity, and ungodliness. As the Nephilim multiplied and the forbidden knowledge spread, the Earth became filled with violence and corruption.

Four archangels - Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel - brought the situation before God's throne.
God decreed severe punishment for the rebellious Angels:

- They would be bound in darkness until the final judgment
- They would witness their children, the Nephilim, turned against each other in mutual destruction
- The forbidden knowledge they taught would be erased from the Earth.

According to Enoch, this was the purpose of the great flood – to undo the work of the rebel Angels:

'And then [God] spoke, and sent Arsyalalyur to the son of Lamech [that is, to Noah], and said to him: "Say to him, in My Name; hide yourself! And reveal to him the end, which is coming, because the whole Earth will be destroyed. A deluge is about to come on all the Earth; and what is in it will be destroyed. And now teach him, so that he may escape, and his offspring may survive for the whole Earth". Then God said: "And the Earth will be cleansed from all corruption, and from all sin, and from all wrath, and from all torment; and I will not again send a flood upon it, for all generations, for ever"'.

I had always imagined the flood had to do with the sins of the flesh, but this story has a lot more to do with the personal and environmental consequences of know-how, of techne, running rampant.

**Angels, Watchers, Egregores**
Enoch describes how practical knowledge came into human minds and of the disastrous consequences that followed; not the knowledge of good and evil as in the first fall, but technical knowledge.

In this telling, Angels are non-corporeal and yet able to act in the world. The connection made by Eliphas Lévi was that this is how ideas work. His insight was to interpret Angels as entities created by human thoughts. In Dawkins's scientific metaphor, Angels are meme complexes.

Wilhelm Gesenius in the early 19th century traced the word 'angel' in the Book of Enoch to be equivalent to the ancient Greek 'egregor'. This term then became used normally among occultists to indicate thoughtforms that transcend the individual person and that take on an existence and agency of their own, including the ability to enslave humans in turn.

## Secular Egregores More Generally

*'There is no such thing as good or evil, only ideas and their consequences'. Egregores are utilised by people every day, they just do not call them by that name. Instead, they call them by the name of a sports team, a political party, a political leader, a church/temple/spiritual group, by the name of an entertainer, or activity, or by an ideal as broad as justice. Egregores can have positive, negative, or neutral impacts. These*

**Memes**

*psychic entities can be positively used by individuals when they are seeking change or specific results that a particular group can help them attain.* [The Power of Egregores/ An Interview with Mark Stavish - New Dawn]

For example, when the New Zealand All-Blacks do a Haka before a rugby match, they are invoking an egregore to strengthen their side.

I find the connection between the modern and ancient view of angels fascinating. I am looking forward to seeing what difference it makes to my reading of canonical angels in the Bible.

## How Real are Egregores?

In the Book of Enoch, egregores are angels; this suggests that if you do not believe in angels you do not have to believe in egregores. But the occultist interpretation suggests that there is no escape from egregores. For example, Slavoj Žižek (not an occultist) points out there is no escape from ideology. Thinking you have escaped it simply means you are no longer aware of it, but it is still driving you. In this sense, ideology is a form or egregore – not corporeal and yet with power over human beings.

## Are Egregores Always Bad?

We experience the agency of an egregor when we participate in something over which we have no control and that dictates what we must do. For example, when we wear a certain type of clothing that is required for

Slavoj Žižek

**Noah's Ark**

an occasion, but that we find uncomfortable. To oppose an egregore, we must aggregate an opposing group with an alternative set of principles. We must create an opposing egregore - in other words, we must set a different fashion.

Clashes between egregores are violent affairs. And as happens in revolutions, people who are not ready to do the bidding of their egregores become expendable in the service of victory. Lévi described egregores as 'terrible beings' that 'crush us without pity because they are unaware of our existence'.

I believe we can reframe the Surrealist and Dadaist movements after World War One as attempting to break people out of the conventional interpretation of symbols and narratives - that is, to break the spell of the egregores - that led to the Great War. And similarly, the existentialist admonition after World War Two to *live authentically* was a reaction to the barbaric clash of egregores in that war. We loosen the grip and sap the strength of egregores by avoiding the trap set by symbols and by thinking for ourselves; by not participating mindlessly in patterns woven unknowingly by groups of people.

The pessimistic view is that there will always evolve strong egregores that will say 'who is not with us is against us'; not contributing to such egregores does not shield us from them. We may not control the evolution and conflict among egregores any more or less than our liver cells control our politics. We may have no choice but to participate.

## A Closing Image

It is not a stretch to say the giant sculptures in the first image represent egregores. William Gibson, on whose novel the image was based, only referred in his book to large towers dotted over the London cityscape. But in the sequel novel, he included a corporation called Tulpagenics. 'Tulpa' is a Tibetan Buddhist concept related to egregores.

This idea that the large entities that we believe rule over us are creations of our own minds by which we unwittingly control ourselves in groups goes back further in time than Enoch. *The Bribad Aranyakopanishad, which is regarded as prior to Buddhism, says: 'Whosoever worships a deity with the thought in his mind: he is another, another am I, does not know; like a beast, he is used by the gods. As verily many beasts maintain a man, so every man maintains the gods'.*

Two years after the first image in this paper, Francis Ford Coppola used similar visual language in his film Megalopolis; large statues representing morality and justice are seen crumbling. But this crumbling of egregores is presented as an opportunity. Instead of building new statues, the protagonist creates new buildings in which people can live, arguing for a process view. He asks: 'Is this society, this way we are living, the only one that is available to us? When we ask these questions, when there is a dialogue about them, that basically is a utopia'.

## Book Review

# A Feast for the Eye and Food for Thought

RAHIM HASSAN

I feel overjoyed and proud to have received the electronic copy of Scharlie Meeuws' new poetry collection *The Path to Stillness: The Moon rolled up behind the door*, published by Mouette Press, in a limited edition (15 copies), May 2026. It is a feast for the eye and food for thought, because all poems were illustrated by very imaginative paintings. The illustrations depict the essence of the poems and carry with them more symbols to be interpreted by the reader, in the light of the issues raised by the poems. However, the paintings are numerous and they deserve study beyond the current article.

Scharlie refers to this collection as 'poems and meditative fragments'. It is divided into several sections, or chapters. These different chapters, or sub-collections, within the whole book are prefaced by Scharlie with the poet's perspective on the significance of each section. These guidelines are a very helpful device to help the reader along, although sometimes they themselves need some explanation. The poems, paintings and guidelines entice the reader to engage at a deeper level, moving from the personal to the cosmic picture. Borrowing Heidegger's language, we may say moving from the ontic to the ontological.

The divisions and sub-divisions of the book interrupt the mind and may distract from the message, but the table of contents gives the reader an integrated overview and helps in following the general plan. One can see the movement from the macrocosm of the universe to the microcosm of the heart. In the section on Turmoil, Scharlie says: 'Turmoil, in this collection, is not a passing emotion. It is structural collapse. It is the moment when the sky no longer holds'. This is not just a poetic image nor an abstract thought, but a reality of human emotions in situations where one feels that 'The debris of affection becomes "sky-high junk" scattered across the inner landscape'. But when you begin to think that there is no way out, Scharlie says: 'Turmoil is the breaking of form, but it is also the revelation that something beneath the form survives'. I think this is what in this case gives rise to the poetic experience.

'It is one of those mornings,
when the sun is in hiding,
when green lights take flight
and all the red roses
remain unread'.

But Scharlie goes a level further by moving from the human to the machine level or what she calls 'The Synthetic Soul' - the new developments in the AI. She is testing the synthetic mind for an emotional response. The heart seems to reflect the cosmos and its turmoil, but the synthetic mind is still lagging behind on this front. Perhaps it is a matter of time before the gap closes between the human heart and the machine heart.

But all three levels are moments in one journey, and they are open to the future. It is not the collapse that Eliot predicted: 'This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper'. On the contrary Scharlie says 'collapse is not annihilation' and 'Before stillness can be built, the ruins must be seen clearly. The sky must fall before the ground can be rediscovered'. It is only after looking at the abyss of a tragic situation that you can affirm life and reach a moment of stillness, the path of conflict reaches its final resting point, which could be in turn a moment on the way to a new cycle, but one that can now can approached safely and with confidence.

Scharlie thinks that the emergence of a synthetic soul is helpful to the human, 'what emerges is not a triumph of technology, but a quiet recognition of the enduring mystery at the heart of being'. I would say, new questions to be considered in a new age: can machines fall in love? Will they be loyal lovers or deceitful devils? Will they swing

between dark despair and bright hope?

‘Maybe someday its fledgling tries
in dances full of bits and bytes
to sense the joy or cry the tears –
and will not stop till it appears
all different with shining eyes...’.

Here is a sample of what Scharlie is saying about a difficult love ‘When love disintegrates, gravity shifts. Stars tumble. The moon is rolled up behind the door, like something wounded, hidden away in order to survive’:

> ‘Their sky came down at night, and with the moon
>
> tumbled their happy stars, outshone by sun,
>
> leaving a void, a darkness out of tune,
>
> with burnt-out stones and everything undone’.

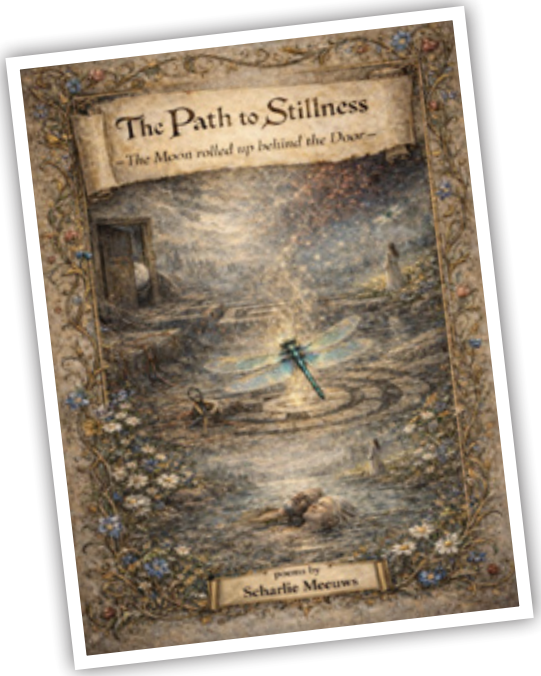
All the poems in this section all speak of a failure of intimacy. In this situation ‘the self, ... is forced into concealment’.

‘Being nude was rude. No bare statues, none
of any exposed part, no fleshy art
or rudeness on the wall. All doom and gloom,
A latent chill filled every single room’.

In the second chapter on Processing where ‘The heart becomes a labyrinth of rooms where keys have been lost. Grief is not singular but layered. Different levels of pain must be walked at length before their dimensions can be understood’. With processing we get clarity - ‘It is the bridge between collapse and change’. Here is a poem I liked in this section:

**Steps**
Wind chimes tick off the hours
Melodic sounds wind you to sleep
With tentacles of passion flowers…

The blue nigellas, ladies in the mist
veil filigree while waving grasses weep –
Some dancers in my eyes!
I seek to lead but caught –




I fall headlong into a stride
with spinful, swaying branches
of the twisted black locust tree –
nothing to see.

But hollow tunnels harmonize
and find
long and forgotten fairy strings
that tap and span where time began
and rise
to reach and fan
my breathless mind.

The image of a dragonfly recurs throughout the book. ‘The dragonfly becomes emblematic: a creature of water and air, of stillness and sudden flight. What once crawled now lifts’. The point Scharlie makes is that ‘The imagery of buoyancy replaces the earlier language of collapse’. And so, the journey carries on through several paths, including the synthetic soul and surrealism, and they are essential for expressing deep experiences: ‘Surrealism, in my work, is not an ornament. It is structure. I do not use dream imagery to escape reality; I use it to approach reality more truthfully. When I say that the sky fell, or that the moon was rolled up behind a door, I am not being decorative. I am describing emotional events that literal language cannot carry without collapsing under their weight’. There is a lot more to be said about this, the painting, other poems and all Scharlie’s work, which every reader of *The Wednesday* finds interesting and which demands careful thought. I congratulate Scharlie, and hope to write more on another occasion.

# My Soldier Father's Body Brush

**Mind's secret tool. Sole that has ceased to work**
**for decades now, but in the past**
**received impressions of dark war paths,**
**overcast skies**
**of Russian winters -**

**when out wandering in the hand of my soldier father -**
**so young still - it learns to brush his cold skin,**
**revives frostbitten arms and legs**
**on ever new sights, always on the move, never**
**to arrive in this vastness of things…**

**yet a durable tool for personal health**
**always anew in his hands, yet unchanged**
**(stiff-bristled body brushes are essential for cleaning,**
**in field conditions when water for bathing is scarce)**



**in his hands, again and again, it helps**
**remove dirt, sweat and dead skin,**
**transforms his being into ongoing landscapes,**
**for me, his daughter he never knew.**

**It travels with him and arrives with him**

**appears into my hands now.**

**Made of pale natural wood,**

**with his name engraved on it,**

**though faded, but I wrote it again**

**in black ink,**

**easy to grip, with hard enough bristles**

**to redden my arms and my legs, brushing me**

**with his thoughts, (he only saw me once, as a new-born)**

**I feel him wandering, far, away, on a small island in the Dnieper,**

**in his last dawn - now filling me with his constant arrival.**

***Poem and Artwork by Scharlie Meeuws***

# Between Chopsticks and Forks

**Philosophy has long been preoccupied with the grand - with metaphysics, ethics, political systems, and the nature of reality itself. Yet there is something quietly misleading in the assumption that philosophical insight must emerge from abstraction. Some of the most revealing contrasts are found not in treatises but in gestures; not in doctrines, but in habits. We consider here the simple act of eating - more precisely, the difference between holding a fork and knife and a pair of chopsticks.**

DR. ALAN XUEREB

At first glance, this contrast seems trivial. Utensils are tools, nothing more. Yet tools are never neutral. They both reflect and reinforce ways of relating to the world. In the Western tradition, the presence of the knife at the table is telling. Food is often served in larger, unsegmented portions - a steak, a fillet, a roast. The diner is expected to cut, divide, and shape what lies before them. Consumption becomes, in part, an act of intervention. One does not simply receive the meal; one completes it.

This mundane detail gestures toward a broader cultural disposition. Western thought has long exhibited confidence in human agency and a willingness to transform what is given. Nature is not merely encountered but worked upon, analysed, divided, and, where necessary, mastered. The knife at the table becomes a miniature echo of this orientation: it allows the individual to assert form upon matter even at the point of consumption. Closely related to this is the persistence of individualism. The diner is not merely eating but deciding how the meat is cooked, what accompaniments are chosen, how elements are combined. Even within the structured environment of a restaurant, preference is foregrounded. It is therefore unsurprising that cuisines transplanted into Western contexts often adapt accordingly: the buffet, for instance, maximises choice and allows the individual to compose the meal according to personal inclination.

By contrast, the use of chopsticks in many East Asian contexts, Japan being a particularly refined example, suggests a different posture. Food is typically prepared in advance into small, manageable pieces, often close to a single bite. The diner does not cut or reshape but selects and receives. Chopsticks are not instruments of division but of precision. They do not impose form; they respond to it.

Here, preparation precedes consumption in a more complete sense. The chef, rather than the diner, determines the appropriate size, balance, and composition of each element. What arrives at the table is not raw material awaiting transformation but a finished arrangement. The diner's task is to enter into that arrangement attentively. There is, in other words, a shift from intervention to attunement. One might say that technē - craft and skilled making - and even epistēmē - structured, disciplined knowledge - are exercised prior to the moment of consumption. Expertise is front-loaded; taste is encountered rather than imposed.

This difference becomes clearer when viewed through the anthropological distinction between the raw and the cooked. Cooking is not merely technical but symbolic: it marks the transformation of nature into culture. In Western contexts, this transformation often remains partially open. The presence of the knife suggests that the passage from raw to cooked is not entirely complete until the diner participates in it. The meal retains a degree of indeterminacy.

In many Eastern traditions, however, the notion of the 'raw' carries an additional resonance. It is frequently associated with the preservation of qi - a vital force or life energy. To leave elements less altered is, in this view, to retain something of their original vitality. There is, interestingly, a partial convergence here with modern nutritional insights: certain nutrients are diminished through cooking. Yet this perspective invites a counterpoint. Cooking also eliminates parasites and harmful bacteria, and in some cases enhances digestibility. What emerges is not a simple opposition between raw and cooked, but a more complex valuation of vitality, safety, and transformation. The philosophical point remains: the 'raw' is not merely uncooked; it is understood as closer to life itself.

Even when dishes appear comparable across cultures, the mode of engagement diverges in revealing ways. A plate of spaghetti and a bowl of ramen, for instance, share structural similarities: elongated strands, often richly composed. Yet spaghetti is typically gathered and controlled with a fork, while ramen is lifted with

**Eating with Chopsticks**

chopsticks in a manner that follows the form already given. The distinction is subtle but consistent: one leans toward reconfiguration, the other toward guided reception.

A similar contrast emerges in something as universal as tea. In the British tradition, tea is frequently modified, milk and sugar are added, adjusted, personalised. The drink becomes, in part, the product of the drinker's preferences. In the Japanese context, by contrast, particularly in formal settings such as the tea ceremony, the composition of the tea is largely fixed prior to consumption, yet surrounded by a highly developed ritual. The emphasis shifts from altering the substance at the point of use to deepening the manner of encounter. Attention, gesture, and sequence take precedence over modification.

At this point, however, the contrast between 'Western' and 'Eastern' risks becoming overly schematic. Within the Mediterranean tradition, one finds a compelling synthesis of these orientations. The culture of shared plates - meze, tapas, antipasti, and platters of cheeses and cured meats - presents food already prepared into small, varied portions, yet invites active selection and combination.

Here, the diner is neither passive nor fully sovereign. Instead, one navigates a field of possibilities. A piece of bread may be paired with cheese, meat, or a spread; flavours are assembled through juxtaposition rather than cutting. The meal unfolds dialogically between what is given and what is chosen.

This is especially evident in social settings, where finger foods circulate. Small bites with different toppings or fillings, sometimes appetizers, sometimes substitutes for a full meal, create an environment of shared participation. Notably, these are often consumed without utensils at all. The hand itself becomes the medium of engagement, introducing a direct and immediate contact with what is eaten. The act is neither one of transformation nor pure reception, but of participation.

What emerges, then, is not a rigid opposition but a spectrum. On one end, the Western emphasis on intervention and individual choice; on the other, the East Asian emphasis on attunement and pre-determined form; and, in between, the Mediterranean practice of participatory composition.

This brings us to a broader philosophical question: what is the proper relationship between human beings and the world they inhabit? Are we primarily agents who shape and transform what is given? Or participants who receive and respond to forms already imbued with meaning? Or, perhaps, co-creators who work within a shared field of givenness, assembling without dominating?

The fork and knife, the chopsticks, and the shared platter do not resolve this question. But they render it visible. Philosophy, it turns out, is not confined to abstraction. It resides in the ordinary, in the way we prepare, present, and partake. And perhaps that is precisely the point. The ordinary, when observed carefully, is never merely ordinary.

Today, however, globalisation and technological modernity have increasingly dissolved these once-distinct cultural dispositions into hybrid forms, producing what Martin Heidegger might recognise as a broader process of homogenisation in which diverse ways of dwelling, preparing, and encountering the world are gradually absorbed into a universal framework of efficiency, choice, and consumption.

# *The Being that is Yet to Be*

CHRIS **NORRIS**

## 1

**The being that is yet to be**
**Waits midway on the stair,**
**While, sensing that co-presence, we**
**Pause just a moment there,**

**Then pass ahead and turn the key**
**To Being's portal, where**
**New worlds of possibility**
**Fulfil some silent prayer,**

**Or, maybe, an unspoken plea**
**That Being deign to share**
**Some portion of its panoply**
**With one who might just bear,**

**Should late fruit grace the family tree,**
**The recompense for their**
**Long sojourn on that spectral quay,**
**Non-being's Finisterre.**

Charon and the condemned souls by William Blake

## 2

**Some there are think it better not**
**To have been born at all,**
**Or soon vacate your natal slot**
**And o'er-leap life's long haul.**

**Silenus to King Midas: tot**
**Things up, how griefs befall**
**A golden life, then tell us what**
**But death could lift the pall?**

**How else construe a Beckett plot**
**But as one endless call**
**For non-existence on the dot**
**Lest life hold us in thrall?**

**Lear too: those daughters he begot**
**Cast him out in the squall**
**To pray that gods or nature blot**
**Them out, that vile cabal.**

## 3

Yet still the inexistent wait
And see, beyond the door,
How their life-prospects alternate
On the mist-shrouded shore

Where Lethe's waters agitate
For unborn souls to more
Intently strive across the strait
Where Charon stays his oar.

Naught but precludes all change of state,
No oar-strokes but restore
A silence such as must negate
All but non-being's roar.

Ask then how fate might allocate
What Being clamours for,
And sense, as echoes dissipate
In clouds of mythic lore,

What odds must yield to compensate
The oarsman's one-way law,
And contra-flows not turbulate
Lest his loth vessel yaw.

## 4

Non-being's stock may briefly dip
When res potentia takes
Its chance to actualise and skip
The watch for lucky breaks.

**Then like as not they'll re-equip,**
**Partake in Being's stakes,**
**And not have its negation grip**
**The soul as it awakes.**

**Yet some there are whose brinkmanship**
**Still haunts the stagnant lakes**
**Of choice deferred till aught should tip**
**Their game of ducks and drakes,**

**As we, stair-halted, might just flip**
**A dud for all their sakes,**
**Those future beings that outstrip**
**What odds our foresight makes.**

## 5

**For how shall thought presume to tell**
**Those odds when fate kicks in**
**With the first prophase of a cell**
**In whose each chancy spin**

**Of that meiotic dice we spell**
**The runes and so begin,**
**Like disjoined helices, to quell**
**The restless voice within**

**That had us, briefly, brave the swell**
**In foolish hopes to win –**
**As if six-up the gene-dice fell**
**From point of origin –**

**Clean through the purgatory or hell**
**That makes of future kin**
**An unknown prospect we'd do well**
**To unwind, twin from twin.**

# A Robust Old Countryman

A robust old countryman
Leaned over a hedge and said:
'If I'd not grown this fine wheat here
Then you would have no bread.'

Straight in the eye I looked him then
And this was my reply:
'If folks like me had not been born
Then nobody would buy.'

I met a brewer on the road
And he said loud and clear,
'If I never went to work
Then you would have no beer.'
An undertaker then appeared
And, looking at me said:
'But here you are and one fine day
When you are lying dead

I'll bring black horses to your house
I'll bring a carriage fine,
And you'll have done with eating then,
While friends still living dine'.

Farmer, brewer, undertaker,
Each of them was heard,
But, when the last one spoke to me,
I could not say a word.

*Edward Greenwood*

# A Tribute to Rahim Hassan

SCHARLIE MEEUWS

The ninth anniversary of *The Wednesday* offers a fitting moment not only to celebrate the magazine itself, but also to acknowledge the quiet and remarkable work of its editor, Rahim Hassan.

Some people write books, some paint pictures, and some compose music. Others create the conditions in which such things can exist at all. The work of an editor often belongs to this second, quieter category.

Through his dedication to *The Wednesday*, Rahim Hassan has built far more than a magazine. He has created a meeting place where poets, philosophers, artists and independent thinkers can exchange ideas without the constraints of academic institutions or commercial pressures. In an age when thoughtful conversation is often fragmented or hurried, he has patiently nurtured a space where reflection still matters.

What is especially remarkable is the modesty with which he carries out this work. His editorials are never self-promoting; instead, they shine a light on the achievements of others. He recognises talent, encourages new work, and gives established and emerging voices an equal sense of belonging. Such generosity is one of the rarest qualities in the literary world.

A publication like *The Wednesday* does not continue for nine years by chance. It survives because someone is willing to devote countless unseen hours to editing, organising, corresponding, encouraging contributors, and maintaining a sense of community. Much of this labour remains invisible to the reader, yet without it the magazine would simply not exist.

In a world that often values competition over companionship, Rahim Hassan has quietly created something rarer: a home for independent minds. Many of those who write for and read *The Wednesday* feel less like contributors to a magazine than members of an extended family, united by a shared love of ideas, art and friendship.

A magazine may publish articles, but only a generous spirit can create a home. Over nine years, Rahim Hassan has done exactly that. He has brought together people of different backgrounds, disciplines and generations, not by seeking the spotlight for himself, but by encouraging others to find their own voice and to share it with confidence.

His achievement lies not only in producing a magazine, but in fostering a living community of thought and creativity. He reminds us that culture is not created solely by individual genius but also by those who quietly gather people together, preserve dialogue, and ensure that ideas and art continue to find a home.

On this ninth anniversary, it seems only right to offer him our gratitude and admiration. For his dedication, generosity, humility and kindness, and for the many years he has given to sustaining this remarkable venture, he deserves the heartfelt thanks of all who have been fortunate enough to be part of the community he has created.

Long may *The Wednesday* continue to flourish, and long may it remain what Rahim Hassan has helped it become: a bright light in dark times and a welcoming home for all who believe that art, poetry and thoughtful conversation still matter.

**Some members of The Wednesday group (Rahim is third from the left, top row)**

# Nine Years *of* The Wednesday

## A Literary and Philosophical Tapestry

### NINE YEARS OF CONTINUOUS THOUGHT

**9 YEARS *of* Continuous Thought**

From Oxford and beyond,
voices have gathered—
to reflect, to question, to create.
Week by week, year by year.

**A MEETING OF MINDS.**
A conversation without end.
A place where ideas are welcomed and explored.

**ACROSS DISTANCE AND TIME,**
the dialogue continues—
expanding, evolving, connecting.

### THEMES OF THOUGHT AND IMAGINATION

Philosophy • Poetry • Art • Reflection
Human insight in conversation with the world.

*To question is to begin understanding.*

*Poetry speaks where words alone cannot.*

*Art reveals the depth behind the surface.*

*Reflection turns experience into wisdom.*

### COMMUNITY AND CONTINUITY

*Ideas are the threads that weave us together.*

Nine years of shared curiosity,
friendship, and intellectual companionship.

One conversation. Many voices. Still ongoing.