

The *Wednesday*

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Magazine of the Wednesday Group - Oxford



Editorial

The Value of Philosophy

A newly published book has raised the question of the value of philosophy (*What's the Use of Philosophy?* by Philip Kitcher, 2023). The new book is mild in its investigation, and balanced in its view of the discipline, with views on how to transform it into something relevant to the present intellectual and historical moment, although it attacks academic philosophy, but what is academic philosophy?

There is general philosophy on one hand and academic philosophy on the other. By general philosophy, I mean books directed at a wider public than students of philosophy and professional philosophers, although the authors might have these in mind as well. Academic philosophy is what you see when the shelves in a bookshop or a library are marked as: Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics etc, or an A to Z list of major philosophers. There are also books addressing the history of ideas, however these books are not concerned with the details of arguments or their justifications. It is the task of philosophers, and academic philosophy, to analyse the content of arguments and criticise them. I, personally, am interested in books on the history of ideas, but they are closer to literature or social science than to philosophy. Does that mean that I am calling to preserve a pure philosophy apart from other sciences? The short answer is yes, but this raises several problems.

The first problem is that we have to decide on a definition of what philosophy is, and use that to determine what is or is not philosophy. I did try to form a definition a few years ago but I was advised by a member of The Wednesday Group that there are so many ways of doing philosophy that a single definition was not possible. I abandoned my project, but I hoped that the definition that Deleuze gave in his book *What is Philosophy?* was a correct one. Deleuze took the definition, and the task of philosophy, as the creation of concepts. But what sort of concepts are they? And how different are they from concepts created by the social sciences? I see no difference, but Deleuze might say that philosophical concepts have a purity about them, unlike those in social science, which become entangled with opinions. Perhaps academic philosophy aims at this purity, but then Deleuze himself accuses academic philosophy of being too busy

with information and opinion. However, you need information for instruction in academic philosophy, and you need academic philosophy to train new generations of philosophers. Mike England, the artist in our group, compares this to learning the techniques of art and then throwing away the textbooks and creating your own style. You must learn the techniques first before branching off in a new direction. The same holds for philosophy.

The second problem is the question of how much material from the social sciences and literature can be included in philosophy without changing the subject? There is a common understanding amongst philosophers that philosophy is a hard subject that deals with hard questions. Borrowing from other disciplines may change that. Other sciences borrow from philosophy in varying degrees, and sometimes excessively, but without losing sight of their proper discipline. My worry is that new influences coming from critical theory, feminism, literary theory, and social studies could lead to philosophy being watered down.

Philosophy should be the testing ground for concepts in a purely theoretical framework, before handing them to other disciplines. Other disciplines may want to examine their concepts by submitting them to philosophy. Philosophy, with its rigorous ways of argumentation and method, can cooperate with these disciplines in sorting out their conceptual confusion, and the need for clarification. But philosophy addresses more than merely technical aspects by, by tackling more fundamental questions - questions to do with being finite humans with their worries and anxieties.

On a different note, this issue marks the sixth birthday of *The Wednesday*. I am grateful for all those who helped making the magazine a success. My readers, editorial board, writers, poets and artists. Special thanks to Scharlie Meeuws for designing the anniversary poster. I hope that in these six years we have made philosophy accessible to the wider public, as well as treating them to beautiful and profound thoughts, artwork and poetry.

The Editor

Holistic Thinking

Iain McGilchrist's new book on *The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World* has caused much debate. The book was published in November 2021. It follows on from his earlier book *The Master and his Emissary*. Both books warn that Western civilization shows a narrowing scope due to what he takes to be the domination of the left hemisphere of the brain. The book is massive, and the bibliography alone is just under two hundred pages. Mike Churchman presents below a critical reading of the book's emphasis on the need for holistic thinking.

MIKE CHURCHMAN

Iain McGilchrist's book *The Matter with Things*, sets out to show how mankind has lost its way by adopting left hemisphere thinking at the expense of the right. To prove his case, he uses evidence from neurological studies showing how thought enabled by the left hemisphere is scientific, mechanistic, bureaucratic and overwhelmed by detail whereas the right hemisphere enables holistic, unifying, contextual styles of thought. The human brain, says McGilchrist, works most effectively when both hemispheres co-operate to create a well-informed and holistic approach to analysing experience. In my view, the value of this book lies less in the detailed comparisons between the two hemispheres, fascinating and informative though they are, than in McGilchrist's holistic vision that we should see *all reality* as consisting of processes. All static, stable 'things' are processes with different time horizons. Here are just some of the concepts that form the philosophical backbone of his impressive book.

The One and The Many

In the beginning of all things there was a Big Bang when a concentrated mass, smaller than an atom, exploded. That means absolutely everything is derived from that same small piece of mass. An unceasing flow of energy began and will not stop until the forces of entropy convert all this energy into a scattering of particles. From the outset, the principle of unity is ontologically prior to that of diversity and differentiation. The concept of the One is not a grand total of all that exists, but an underlying principle that no matter how opposite or contradictory things appear to be, there is a unifying force ensuring the cosmos is a coherent whole.

Resistance to The Flow

Process philosophers see reality as a vast, seamless, living, ever-flowing totality of processes and

things, all active within the flux of a dynamic field. All substantial things are temporarily stabilised processes, resisting the flow of energy. Even the most solid of masses will succumb to entropy eventually. This property of resistance to the flow is what allows science to make its measurements and predictions of how materials will behave in certain contexts. The same idea of resistance to flow can be used to describe the formation of concepts in the mind. Whitehead used the word 'concretions' to describe the creation of substances. If we apply this notion to concepts, we can see how within the continuous flow of brain waves (often compared to a stream) pockets of resistance are formed (compared to eddies) that we call mental states or concepts – mental structures with some durability that we can 'hold on to' and work with. Crystallised thoughts can be 'grasped' and moved about, put alongside other concepts, given definite boundaries, made into architectural structures. Concepts resist the interpenetrating, fluid, constantly changing stream of thought waves operating below the conscious level where entanglement predominates and reflexivity is strong, as one thought wave interacts with another before surfacing into consciousness.

Fields of Energy Interconnect and Integrate

Once we start thinking in terms of fields of energy the language of division and compartmentalisation ceases to be useful. We need to begin thinking instead in terms of microprocesses and macroprocesses. Everything in the universe exists in relation to something else. We can see the human body as a microprocess in relation to a larger macroprocess such as society or the environment. Or we can see each of our bodies as a macroprocess being maintained by a multitude of microprocesses involving organs, blood flow, brain waves and so on. The unity of 'me' consists of millions of different microprocesses



Iain McGilchrist

which are ‘nested’ within our body and mind. This concept of nesting applies to all the processes within the entire cosmos, going from the level of waves and particles right up to the largest possible scale of cosmic activity. When the fields are nesting within each other, there are no fixed boundaries - they are fuzzy, they overlap. These ideas can be applied to the activity of perception. When we look at an object, our field of consciousness interacts with the fields constituting the properties and qualities of the object. Our use of, say the visual field, to seek information interacts with the object’s projection of its information to us. As Bergson says: ‘Distinct perception is merely cut, for the purposes of practical existence, out of a wider canvas’.

Consciousness

Consciousness is our process of thought in relation to something else, even if that is our own body or our own thoughts (as in reflection). All living things obviously have some degree of consciousness under this definition. Plants are conscious of their environment as they respond to it. Rocks and mountains respond to their environment too, very, very slowly. What about the sun and the stars and the cosmos as a whole? Evolutionary theory tells us life has not developed through complete randomness, although it has a part to play, but through purposeful survival methods. So where did the human level of consciousness come from? It seems very unlikely it was brute emergence – just popping up out of nowhere. There is a powerful argument that says consciousness has been part of the flow of cosmic energy since Big Bang. That means energy, in the form of matter, is driven along by some form of mental purposiveness. Physicist Roger Penrose says: ‘I think that matter itself is now much more of a mental substance’. Theoretical physicist Max Planck said: ‘All matter arises and exists by virtue

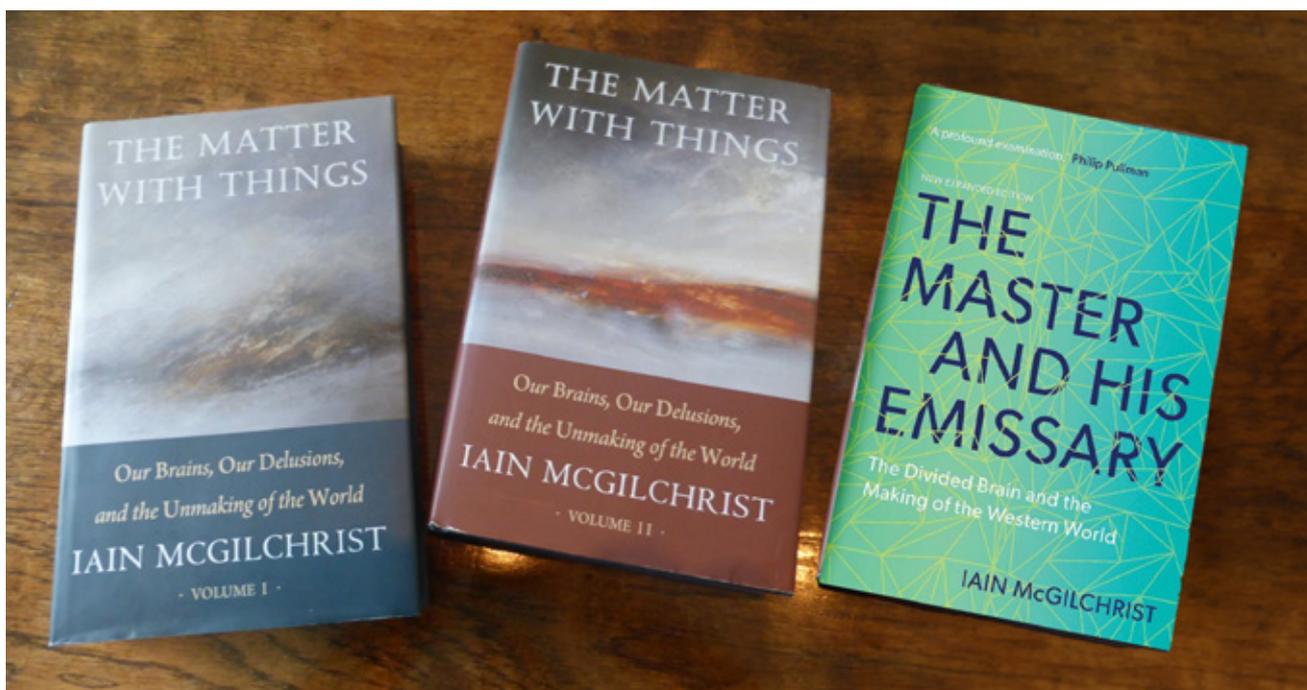
of a force which sets the atomic particles oscillating, and holds them together in the tiniest of solar systems... the atom. We must suppose, behind this force, a conscious, intelligent spirit. This spirit is the ultimate origin of matter’. This idea, that a unifying mental force is behind evolution leads to a breathtaking conclusion expressed here by Thomas Nagel: ‘Each of our lives is part of the lengthy process of the universe gradually waking up, becoming aware of itself’. If this is true, we do not ‘have consciousness’ instead consciousness ‘has us’.

Purpose

James Shapiro, a biochemistry and biology professor, says: ‘living cells do not operate blindly; life requires cognition at all levels’. Cognition at the cellular level has been observed to involve cooperation, survival strategies, self-repair, and self-organisation. Aristotle saw the collective dynamism of nature as moving towards its full potential (entelechy), with a programmed directedness (telos). Leibniz saw monads as bundles of energy combining together from the cosmic level downwards to drive creativity. He called this purposefulness ‘appetition’. Hegel’s dialectic was a progressive process of opposites fusing until some perfect form of Absolute Knowledge is achieved. The 21st-century view of evolution is that it is a systemic process, guided by information processing, not random jumps. It would be a great philosophical mistake to reduce these purposeful processes to simplified chains of causes and effects. That is because randomness does have a vital part to play in complex systems.

Increasing Complexity

The flow of energy through time and space has led to more and more complex systems. This is easier to understand when we think about the way processes interconnect, interact and shape reality by causality



based on countless variables. The impossibility of tracking or measuring the billions of interactions in causal networks means, as William James put it, we have some ‘ontological elbow room’. There is an analytic strand in process philosophy where attempts are being made to examine, record and predict processes. Progress is being made in disentangling microprocesses from macroprocesses using measures of coordination, causality and correlations.

Becoming and Being

In process philosophy Becoming has ontological priority over Being. Becoming is like the present moment - always arriving, never departing. And, as with time, it only flows in one direction. ‘Being’ can be seen as constant state of Becoming. Both coming into Being, and coming into non-Being (expiring), are processes. The stability of Being is due to its continuous process of Becoming. Stability is constructed from mobility. There is no fraction of time that can separate Becoming and Being. Both forms of existence co-exist. This is an antinomic ontology where things stay the same by changing.

Creativity

Becoming is the continuous process of creation. We can relate this concept to the process of human consciousness and imaginative creativity. Human reality is a co-creation between our consciousness and the processes that surround us. When we

encounter others, a process of ‘presencing’ takes place where the flow of information is two-way. We can imagine an ontological dialectic at play in the preconscious zone of thought where data-processing works with oppositional information to make sense of experience. Creativity is often referred to as inspiration – the arrival of a spirit. Ideas seem to come freely of their own accord from the processing activity of the preconscious mind. The forces of prelinguistic, pre-visual, pre-emotional processes are at work in the entangled mind, busy creating new thoughts and concepts.

Inbetweenness

In the hermeneutical method inbetweenness is an important concept. It involves a state of constant enquiry and learning, of transition between meanings, of living with uncertainty and being happy not to close alternatives or even opposites down. The process of Becoming is in between non-existence and existence. This idea is not strange to physicists. Einstein said: ‘It is the field in the space between the charges and the particles that is essential for the description of physical phenomena’. In process thinking, sharply drawn boundaries are replaced by fuzzy ones. Organic life is nested, overlapping, interrelated, interwoven and based on hierarchies of scale as well as an uncountable number of different time horizons.



The Big Bang Universe

The Generative Vitality of Oppositions

Process philosophy encourages us to take a holistic approach to the existence of all forms of opposition including contradictions and paradoxes. The universe contains a totality of opposites. The need for oppositional thinking has been central to all creativity and human progress. The corpus callosum which bridges the two hemispheres both separates and connects, enabling internal debate and balanced judgements. Paradoxes are encountered when the left hemisphere's precise approach bumps up against the right hemisphere's more holistic ideas – when stasis meets process. For practical scientific purposes we can ignore such aporias, but for philosophical purposes we need to embrace them and allow them to inform a deeper understanding of the universe and our place within it.

Sameness and Otherness

The personal macroprocess, whereby we constantly change in order to remain the same, presents us with both a contradiction and an opportunity for a holistic perspective. It is clear that perfect identity cannot exist between different things and processes. If nothing else, time and space differentiates all processes and substances. All phenomena vary according to the context in which they experience and are experienced. Phenomenology helps us analyse how the same presents itself differently without becoming unidentifiable.

Process Philosophy and Self-reflexivity

With process thinking, subjective objectivity becomes a holistic concept which, due to its reflexivity, sees the subject creating the object and the object creating the subject. Schrodinger said: 'it is the same elements that go to compose my mind.....subject and object are only one'. Subjectivity and objectivity become co-creators. As far as intersubjectivity is concerned, the process that is the 'field of me' constantly interacts with the fields of other forms of embodied consciousness. Experiencing and being experienced can be seen as the subjective and objective faces of every existing entity. The self finds its identity not only in all its internal physical and mental phenomena but in fluid relations with other processes.

Conclusion

C S Peirce, sometimes known as the 'father of pragmatism' said: 'Philosophy ought.... to trust rather to the multitude and variety of its arguments than to the conclusiveness of any one'. The exploration of the relationship between process and stasis is too important to be claimed by any one system of philosophy. I believe that work on process philosophy, complexity theory and allied projects, will have a huge effect on the thinking of future generations coping with rapid advances in biogenetics, artificial general intelligence and other transformative technologies that are not yet even on the horizon.



Die schreckliche deutsche Sprache 'Life is too short to learn German'

Language is at the core of written and spoken communication. If Freud is to be believed, it exists in a conjoined separation of words and meaning, and many have attempted to explain its emergence. It also appears that while some animal species, like dolphins, are able to recognize simple words and communicate, only humanity, and indeed, all of humanity, is able to acquire language. But how is it acquired? This is a topic of long debates, and in this paper, rather than attempting a linguistic or scientific explanation of a general theory, I am choosing instead to rely upon my own personal experiences of the last decade as a native English speaker learning German.

DAN McARDLE

The best way I can describe learning a new language: you need translation until you don't. The rate at which this milestone is hit varies: infants and children pick up new languages quickly and often speak without accent, whereas teenagers and adults have a much slower process, and many difficulties adjusting to it. The brain is a muscle, and learning a language could be compared to doing a workout: the more we practice, the better we get.

Fluency

The degree to which someone becomes 'fluent' in a language depends on their level of immersion. The best way to improve is to make lots and lots of mistakes. When I have been in situations where I wanted to say something but lacked the words, I would try to say it in words I *did* know. For example, when I did not know the word for

'to compare' I would say (in German) 'these two things, are they the same?' Incidentally, the German word for 'compare' (*vergleichen*) is very similar to the word for 'same' (*gleich*) so picking up the new word came naturally over time. But I would remember that there was a word I did not know, and look it up, and having that experience helped with recall, because I did not want to have the same issue again. Another interesting example: when I would learn a topic in *Deutschkurs* (German class), and then see it in an advertisement or overhear it in public (*Umgangssprache*). And often, when there was a word or concept I was unsure about, I would encounter it naturally in daily life and it would suddenly make more sense.

In this way, I found learning a new language to be a bit like being a log floating down a river. These



little experiences add up, these bits and pieces combine over time and group together. When we are a beginner learner, we hear or read a word, and then have to do a mental translation into our native language (like English). This is slow and annoying, and makes conversation difficult. At this point it is important to take risks and make mistakes, and say words that ‘feel’ right although we are not completely sure. There is a saying that when we are drunk, our skill level in the language goes up because we do not care about making mistakes and no longer bother with the mental translation part. This translation process takes time, and as we get better at it, it takes less and less time, and after a while we don’t need it anymore.

It is also worth mentioning that when most people learn a new language in school, there is a safety buffer, a sense that if we do not know a word, we can fall back to English (or some common tongue) and escape from the jungle of the new language. But when we are talking with someone who only knows the language we are trying to learn, there is no such safety buffer. Suddenly we must take risks and make mistakes, and force ourselves to learn in a way we otherwise would not. I learned this the hard way early on, because I made the extremely faulty and wrong assumption that everyone knew at least some English. In school, we have the option to just ‘give up’ and ask to get the answer so we can move on; but when that

‘give up’ option is absent, a new reality sets in that many people have a fundamentally different language foundation than we do.

Translation

At a certain point, not only can we understand the language without needing to do the translation, but we can understand something and be *unable* to translate it into English. I was once at the doctor with my wife (who speaks only a little German), and I saw a funny quote written on the wall. I chuckled, she asked me what it said, and I found I was unable to explain it. It seems that this is because when we can speak two languages, we have two minds, one for each language, and ideas cannot always cross over. Those ideas that can cross over require a mental context-switching, which is bizarre. For example, if I am reading a book in English and someone addresses me in German, it might sound like a stream of gibberish. I’ll reply ‘*Nochmal bitte?* (Again please?),’ and when they repeat it, it suddenly makes perfect sense. I have had this happen numerous times, and it always takes me a few seconds to change to the correct language. From what I understand, this ‘bridge’ effect is a known and studied phenomenon, which is why live translators can only function for around fifteen minutes at a time.

Beyond translation, language becomes a sort of feeling. Possibly influenced by hearing

Philosophy

the sounds or reading words of the language passively, I encountered several breakthroughs where I would say something to a friend in German, pause, noticing that it felt ‘wrong,’ reword it slightly in a way that felt more ‘correct,’ and look to them for confirmation. In each case, it was simply following intuition and gut instinct, not because I had learned about it in *Deutschkurs*. A good example of this: in *Nebensätze* (subordinate clauses) the verb comes at the end, and this is very, very hard for a native English speaker to master. I learned this naturally before encountering school lessons about it, simply because it *felt* right. The more we follow these feelings, the more the language patterns become natural. One of the reasons that listening and reading is far easier than speaking and writing is because in the former, we are presented with words we must interpret, whereas in the latter, we must mentally retrieve the words, and sometimes very quickly. At some point, this retrieval process becomes unconscious.

Tonality and Flow

Because German is structured fundamentally differently from English, straight translation does not work. That is, knowing how to say something in English, and then changing the words to be German, will usually technically make sense, but it will sound extremely awkward. I am at the point now where I can tell when someone does not know German very well because of the grammar mistakes they make, and when I see a German person write something in English that does not sound quite right, I understand why they structured it the ‘incorrect’ way they did.

In some sense, this language flow is melodic, like music. In fact, German has little ‘filler’ words that do not actually mean anything, but enhance the sound and the meaning. For example, the word ‘*nicht*’ means no, and we can make it stronger and more assertive with the phrase ‘*gar nicht*’. But the word ‘*gar*’ does not really mean anything, it just enhances the sense of the ‘*nicht*’. And when someone uses words in the wrong order, or uses the wrong article, it sticks out like the wrong key pressed on a piano. It gives an odd feeling, and the deeper into the language I get, I can sense it

is wrong but can’t really explain why. I suspect this is true of all languages to an extent.

Structure

English is a rather loose hodgepodge of language, inheriting many attributes from other languages, and could rightfully be called a melting pot. German has inherited some words, but it contains an inherent structure far deeper and more rigid than English. In fact, one explanation for the massively differing cultures of European countries points to the differences between their languages, suggesting that language creates culture. Although this theory leaves out other obvious influences, such as weather, geography, and general cultural history, it seems reasonable to accept that language plays a non-trivial role.

Though not from the Romance languages, English shares many properties with them, such as its sentence structure. One of the hardest things for me to learn about German has been reordering words, because in many cases the flow of words is the exact opposite of what it would be in English. Not only do verbs come at the end, but when you are dealing with past or future tenses, as well as passive, they follow along in a way that is very difficult for a native English speaker to process. In fact, when I run a phrase like ‘because he would have needed to be driven’, Google Translate changes the word for ‘because’ from ‘*weil*’ to ‘*denn*’ after adding the verb, possibly because the word order for ‘*denn*’ is easier for the code to render. Additionally, while English speakers will sometimes pause mid-sentence for effect or to search for a well-fitting word, Germans never do. There seems to be a forced completion in German that English lacks, which might help explain why Germans sound very assertive and aggressive.

Another facet of German I find interesting: when I hear something in English that could be expressed faster in German, I get impatient. I think it has something to do with the words themselves, perhaps the tonality. One great word is ‘*genau*’ which means something like ‘correct’ or ‘exactly’. *Genau* rolls out of the mouth like a pellet gun, it sounds very quick and to the point,



Ferdinand Saussure



John Searle

whereas ‘correct’ has an annoying delay in the ‘r’ sound, and ‘exactly’ takes so long to finish saying that I have already moved on to the next word. I think this is a facet of the ‘personality’ that the language gives. When I have been speaking in German, sometimes English words are annoying, but when I switch to English, after a while the annoyance goes away.

Words and Patterns

Before studying German, I would often refer to Freud and Jung when trying to explain how I viewed the nature of words and language, mapping the words to the ‘ego’ and the meanings of the words to the ‘id’. I believe that linguists like Saussure made similar links with concepts like ‘langue’ and ‘parole’. However, after much reflection, I think this framing is misguided. It is not that we have a bucket of words and symbols, and a similar bucket of meanings; I think it is more likely that we have buckets of languages and meanings, which exist in a sort of Venn Diagram together. How else could one explain the ability to understand a concept in one language while being entirely unable to express it in another language?

In an attempt to explain consciousness and

intelligence, John Searle famously introduced, in his 1980 paper ‘Minds, brains, and programs,’ the Chinese Room Experiment. After years of reflection on this concept, and more importantly, after learning German to a sufficient degree, I have concluded that the arguments Searle makes could only come from someone who is monolingual. In mathematics, there exists the idea that complex systems can be broken down into smaller and simpler parts, thus easier to analyze and study. However, language does not work like this. The idea that a concept represented by symbols can be broken down, rearranged, and then reassembled in different symbols and convey the same meanings betrays a lack of experience with translating concepts between sufficiently disparate languages.

Humans are pattern seeking by nature, and we can find patterns in all sets of symbols. Learning a Romantic language is much easier for a native English speaker, because most of the preconceived notions of English still work. But in German, they do not. When a native English speaker asks ‘why does it work that way?’ the response will be ‘why does English work the other way?’

Moths

This is the night the moths wake up
and flutter stunned around the porch light
trembling with silence.

Only there is no silence, only
a grasping of the riddle
of another night.

This is one of those dark nights,
when they crawl out of their hiding places
and sizzle as they fall
burned from a hot lightbulb
blown out of a charred world.

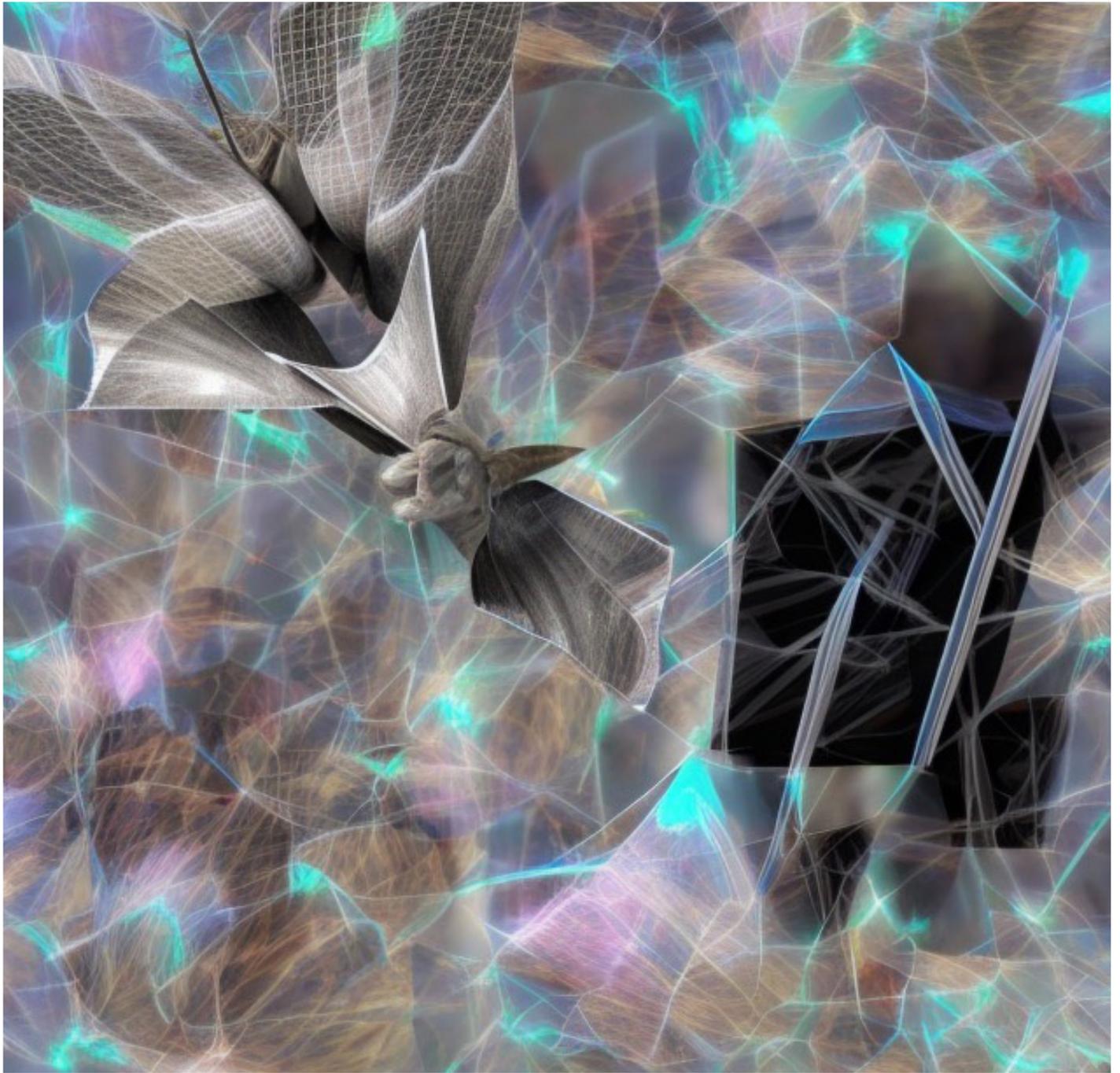
Somehow their wings, like dead flakes of skin,
carried them to this blacked-out disembodied question:

where shall we fly to? What sweetness will we find?

From their dark past they follow their desires.

It is so silent, our ever-faster journey
through all the seasons.

What is darkness and what is light?



Poem and Artwork by *Scharlie Meeuws*



Losing: Villanelles after Elizabeth Bishop

Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
So many things seem filled with the intent
To be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Elizabeth Bishop,
'One Art'

If all else perished, and he remained, I
should still continue to be; and if all else
remained, and he were annihilated, the
universe would turn to a mighty stranger.

Emily Brontë,
Wuthering Heights

1

It's losings lost that spring the deepest traps.
Lay us down well, the simple losses plead.
Keep it loss-haunted, every first-time lapse.

Let some vague recollection mark the gaps,
Else you'll not block the memory-stampeded!
It's losings lost that spring the deepest traps.

Fill them with offcuts, outtakes, merest scraps,
Whatever serves your abyss-gazing need.
Keep it loss-haunted, every first-time lapse.

As coasts erode fill out your mental maps
With fens and wetlands from strict contours freed.
It's losings lost that spring the deepest traps.

Those haunted gaps may give you time, perhaps,
To get some vague screen-memories up to speed.
Keep it loss-haunted, every first-time lapse.

That's just so long as no deep blankness slaps
A foregone veto on each fumbling lead.
It's losings lost that spring the deepest traps;
Keep it loss-haunted, every first-time lapse.

12



CHRIS NORRIS

2

No loss so small it leaves not the least trace,
Yet none so great its own loss beggars thought:
Always it's loss of some sort sets the pace.

The losses take their course in either case
Though some first-stage remission may be bought:
No loss so small it leaves not the least trace.

It's what falls to oblivion's embrace
Twice over that recedes beyond report:
Always it's loss of some sort sets the pace.

Faith says: some early stumblers in the race
May yet gain strength, run on, and not stop short:
No loss so small it leaves not the least trace.

Experience says: let second loss efface
That first-stage loss and your faith counts for naught:
Always it's loss of some sort sets the pace.

If this too slips your mind then it's by grace
Of keeping those two contraries stretched taut:
No loss so small it leaves not the least trace;
Always it's loss of some sort sets the pace.

3

What if the art of losing's your best line?
As Bishop says, there's plenty there to lose!
Only the wildest losers need repine.

Forgetting, letting go – they may work fine
For footloose types at home in others' shoes:
What if the art of losing's your best line?

Their losses may negate the yours-and-mine,
Spurn zero-sum games, shun the question 'Whose?'.
Only the wildest losers need repine.

Yet Bishop wrote down 'Write it!' – left a sign
That one loss cost her more than we'd assume.
What if the art of losing's your best line?

Too saintly, too ascetic – moral spine
Acquired through every hermit's favourite ruse:
Only the wildest losers need repine.

Make art your big loss-leader in that shrine
To all things lost and sing the adman's blues:
What if the art of losing's your best line?
Only the wildest losers need repine.

4

Strange how such losses prepossess the muse,
Take her the quickest way to some cloud nine:
Let melancholy pay its proper dues.

One mention and she'll take you on a cruise
Round far isles by routes strange and byzantine.
Strange how such losses prepossess the muse!

'False cheer's the sole reward should you refuse',
Say poets, saints and sea-dogs soused in brine.
'Let melancholy pay its proper dues,

Else you'll regret whatever made you choose
That loss-free path, head home as you'd incline.'
Strange how such losses prepossess the muse.

Good sense says saints and martyrs should recuse
Themselves from that high licence to opine
'Let melancholy pay its proper dues'.

For it's that same compulsion turned the screws
On all that Blake perceived of the divine.
Strange how such losses prepossess the muse;
'Let melancholy pay its proper dues'.

5

Loss is our home from home, like it or not.
Forgetting's how we losers best adjust.
Repeat the tale but now you've lost the plot.

Test-cards and blanks mark every scheduled slot
Though we stay glued to it because we must.
Loss is our home from home, like it or not.

Time was the pixels joined up, dot by dot,
Formed shapes, scenes, images, tales we could trust:
The tale gets told but now we've lost the plot.

Just coping means we're running on the spot,
Contriving somehow not to look nonplussed:
Loss is our home from home, like it or not.

It also means we get to learn a lot,
Us loss-adjusters, think we've got it sussed –
The tale gets told but now we've lost the plot.

Bishop's 'lose faster' – that's one trick we've got
Left up our sleeves: quit stalling, go for bust.
Loss is our home from home, like it or not;
The tale gets told but now we've lost the plot.

6

Miss Bishop says 'be bold, lose stuff galore!'
Like names and places, houses, faces, keys.
Still memory serves to track the lost-stuff score.

Sure, she adds cities, rivers, realms and more,
Not just old knick-knacks you'd let go with ease.
Miss Bishop says 'be bold, lose stuff galore!'

Then there's the unnamed 'you' whose loss she bore
With the same stoic fortitude: 'hard cheese!'.
Still memory serves to track the lost-stuff score.

That's why she 'won't have lied' – one truth to shore
Against disaster's life-subtractive squeeze.
Miss Bishop says 'be bold, lose stuff galore!'.

Yet what if truth's another loss in store,
One set to void the rule that guarantees
'Still memory serves to track the lost-stuff score'?

Place truth-of-recollection at the core
Of all you are, but check each day's reprise.
Miss Bishop says 'be bold, lose stuff galore' –
So long as memory serves to track the score!

7

Loss absolute annuls loss-by-degrees.
What's lost to mind the record must ignore.
No live recall of what God only sees.

There's gods that all her losings won't appease.
Behold them thronged on Styx's further shore.
Loss absolute annuls loss-by-degrees.

In vain such obsequies if meant to please
Gods placed, like us, behind the loss-locked door.
No live recall of what God only sees.

Love too repeats the caution: 'who are these
Who'd now revisit all they once forswore?'.
Loss absolute annuls loss-by-degrees.

Too late it dawns: that session on your knees
Was 'the hour badly spent', now sorrowed for.
No live recall of what God only sees.

We live like sword-fixated Damocles,
Our heads a hair's breadth from the bloody floor.
Loss absolute annuls loss-by-degrees;
No live recall of what God only sees.

You Must Change Your Life

You must change your life, as Nietzsche said,
So go ahead and do it,
And mould another mode of life instead,
And let us hope you will not rue it.

But we may change our lives and rue it too,
Such is the power of Fate,
So as we ponder what then must we do,
Before we find it has become too late,

The one thing that inclines us to rejoice,
In all this hesitation,
Is that at least we have the power of choice
And so can master every inclination.

But some have wondered if we really do,
Or choice constrained builds up
Until it fills our very being through
And we can only drink the proffered cup.

Edward Greenwood



Amor – Profane And Divine

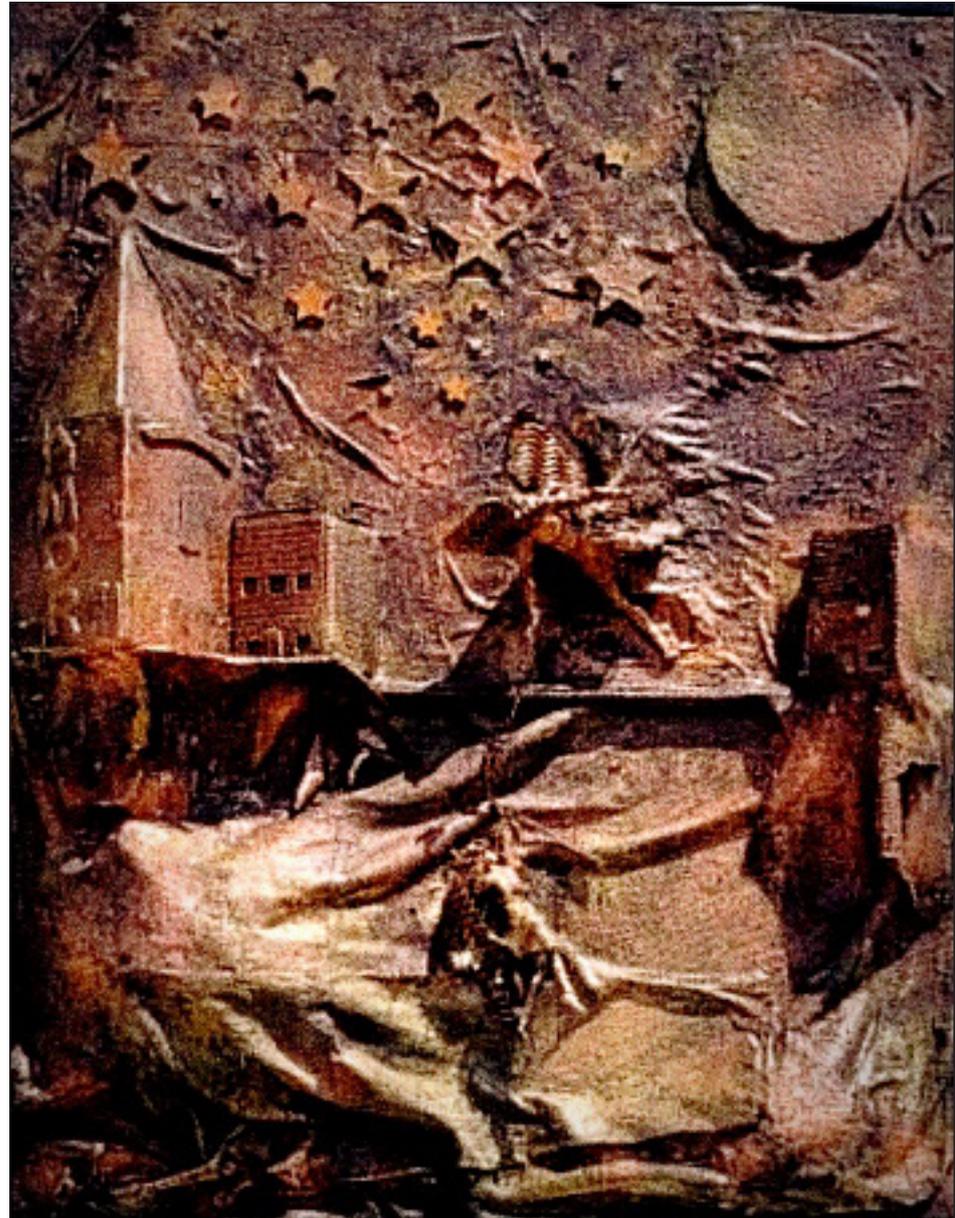
Dr. ALAN XUEREB

What is love? One of the big questions of all times. So familiar to all of us in one form or the other and yet so elusive. Love is that one phenomenon that connects us all and that is at the basis of all our relationships as human beings in one way or another. Even its natural antonym 'hate' is actually, more of an absence of love rather than something else.

There have been many philosophers who have written about love. Aristotle, Aquinas, Ayer, Russell, de Beauvoir, and many others, wrote different, sometimes conflicting accounts, regarding the philosophy of love. For example, Aristotle placed more emphasis on *philia* (friendship, affection) rather than on *eros* (sexual love); and the relationship of friendship and love would continue to be played out into and through the Renaissance, with Cicero for the Latins pointing out that "it is love (*amor*) from which the word 'friendship' (*amicitia*) is derived".

Thomas Aquinas states that the love precept obligating loving God and your neighbour are the first general principles of the natural law, and are self-evident to human reason, either through nature or through faith. Consequently, all the precepts of the decalogue are referred to these, as conclusions to general principles. For Roger Scruton love includes as well *oikophilia*, love of one's home.

Some philosophers and theologians also equate love to God Himself. A



'AMOR'
(60x80cm)
Mixed media bas-relief.

quick look at 1 John: 4:16 confirms this: 'God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God, and he will stay one with us'.

In many ways, one can argue that philosophy itself is an act of love. The term philosophy is actually, is an anglicised fusion of

two Greek words. from *philo-* ‘loving’ + *sophia* ‘knowledge, wisdom,’ *sophis* ‘wise, learned’.

Love is occasionally extreme. It brings joy and sadness. Sometimes contemporaneously. Love is at times even more complicated by involvement of persons from prohibited categories such as: love between persons of different religions, different races, different castes.

Paradoxically love may also imply obstacles. One begins to appreciate how complex love is when one starts to unpack all these little individual boxes of diversity.

Love is also interdependent. Probably, the only love which is not interdependent is God’s love.

My aim in these very short reflections, is not of course to try to discern or even analyse love in its complexity. I am merely trying to show that the variety of applications of this phenomenon, are innumerable.

What I am also trying to do through my artwork is to represent love in a very mythological way.

I have tried in this bas-relief to portray a difficult type of love (not that there has ever been an easy type).

The bas-relief shows, in fact, two extremes: a winged demigod coming down from the sky, the stars possibly, and a marine, creature down beneath the abyss of the sea - also a demigod(des). A male and a female. In love. The winged demigod is trying to literally drop a line of communication to the marine goddess- a line of faith, of hope. Their meeting may only take place half-way through...on land where we mortals live (as Heidegger would tell us). This bas-relief is part of an art-work collection which I have prepared for my employer, the European Court of Justice, in the wake of a two-stage institutional project reaching its culmination in September 2023. It is a bronze and copper collection based, but not symmetrically modelled, on Tolkien’s universe. I made sure to have Heidegger playing an important part in this universe. The reference in this bas-relief to a human architecture as the meeting point of two worlds -celestial and marine- is very Heideggerian.

However, I wish to end these reflections with a quote from Bertrand Russell — *Marriage and Morals*:

‘To fear love is to fear life, and those who fear life are already three parts dead’.

Wishing all the *love* possible to our readers and contributors on the publication of this very special issue (180), marking the six-year anniversary of *The Wednesday Magazine*.

The Wednesday

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Happy 6th year anniversary The Wednesday

critical reflection

sharing thought

reasoning & argumentation

cooperation & responsibility

written & verbal communication

confidence & self-esteem

creative & independent thinking

Ibn Rushd [Averroes], The Andalusian philosopher, physician and judge (1126-1198) and a foundational source for post-classical European thought.