

Foreword

Philosophy in the Technological Age

One of the major debates that we held in The Wednesday group this year was centred on Artificial Intelligence (AI). It turned out to be of high interest to the group. Various other groups then extended the debate with lectures and courses on the topic. You find two opposing views throughout these debates: one believes that there is great potential for AI and that it is an inevitable development; the other view is more conservative and sees many dangers lurking on the horizon. Both views were justified and supported by detailed arguments.

For now, I wish to apply these views to the basic technology used in our weekly meetings. We use the Zoom programme to join our members inside and outside the United Kingdom. We have members joining from Oxfordshire, London, Brecon, Swansea, Cornwall, Canterbury, and abroad from Spain and Germany. Recently we had a speaker from China and previously we have had someone from Japan. We could not all meet, regularly and with ease, without the development of technology. Members look forward to these meetings with a lot of enthusiasm and anticipation. The weekly paper is normally circulated by e-mail to all members in advance, and sometimes the debate starts online before the meeting has even commenced. The debate is conducted in the spirit of friendship and love of wisdom. This is all enabled by technology.

On the other hand, we have members who dread online meetings, and have a great nostalgia for the days when we met face to face in Albion Beatnik Bookstore (sadly no longer in existence) and Opera Café. We would then enjoy tea and oriental sweets and lots of discussion. This might be presented as an argument against technology. It has been argued that it has led to a loss of the warm friendship and the participation in a direct debate when a lot more than just words count.

Some members, confidently, point to the advantage of AI extending intelligence to thinking and writing. The ChatGPT seems to produce very convincing pieces of writing, and probably it could fill a magazine issue with articles, poetry and artwork. But if it can do all this, can it really replace the lively debate and the wit that members of The Wednesday group show every week, or the emotional engagement and the passion felt in supporting a particular view, agreeing or disagreeing? I will let the reader be the judge, after looking at all the articles, poetry and artwork inside this volume.

The Editor