Google recently announced that they have built goggles which allow human beings to hook their brains up to an online feed, giving them constant bursts of information. Like a smart phone for your mind, these ‘augmented reality glasses’ respond to your voice commands and fill your field of vision with constant reminders, directions and suggestions about where to have lunch. It is not far from the scenario depicted in M.T. Anderson’s satirical novel Feed in which just about everybody has a chip installed in their brain which is permanently hooked up to the Internet. Many people find such technologies disturbing because they blur the line between reality and make-believe. But the line has never been as clear as we might like to think. Many philosophers and scientists have long pointed out that, for the most part, the tapestry of sensual experience which we call ‘life’ takes place within the mind. It is easy to assume that when you look at something, you are just seeing what is there – but in fact your mind generates an image of the thing based on data provided to it by the eyes. In many cases the mind generates images which do not correlate to anything in the physical world; imagination or hallucination for example. But how do we can we distinguish between them? How do we know that anything our mind takes in actually correlates to something ‘out there’ in physical reality? Perhaps what we experience is just an incredibly convincing virtual reality. This unsettling and boat-rocking idea comes up in many philosophies and more recently in popular culture. However, despite being exposed to uncertainty about how valid our experiences are we tend to trust the way it all seem to ‘hang together’. There are a so many predictable laws that seem to govern how it plays out. Trial and error tells me that the experience of cutting open my finger is likely to result in the experience of exquisite pain. Or, like Descartes, some might say that God is the architect of our experience and would never lead us into falsehood.

Many philosophers have long thought that the way in which the world appears to us is different from what it actually is. One of the earliest Greek philosophers, Parmenides, argued that reality must be totally unchangeable and everywhere the same – features which do not apply to what we normally label as reality. Why do philosophers get so worked up about whether what we experience is actually real? When conducting discussion groups with young people on this kind of topic, I started out expecting them to find the idea of ‘living in the Matrix’ disturbing. But a surprising number of them indicated they are more concerned with the quality of their experiences than how real they are. They would prefer a comfortable illusion to a harsh reality. Test your own intuitions about this. Imagine that you could walk into a virtual reality chamber so convincing that it was able to simulate every taste, sight or sensation – with virtual mangoes that taste just like the real thing, and soft beaches of sand that you can feel with your toes. While in this virtual world your physical needs are met, allowing you to freely enjoy a computer generated life that you could control. I suspect that there are many people who would say ‘yes’ to living in the chamber. However, I would see this as detestable and I think it has something to do with being philosophically inclined.

My own bias tells me that the philosophical spirit is one which tries to shed as many layers of unreality as possible, rather than adding them on and thereby tightening the coil of illusion. The philosopher wants to know what is, and not merely what seems. Given that our mind already generates part of what we take to be ‘real life’, to plunge deeper into a completely artificial life would be to miss something deeply important. However I must admit I am sometimes at a loss to explain why truth and reality are more valuable than an artificial happiness. And in fact there are many circumstances, particularly the arts, where we value the fruits of imagination over ‘real life’. However, I agree with Joseph Campbell when he says that stories or myth (which is typically what art tries to convey) actually reveal deeper truths about the human condition even if the content of the story is not factual.

A range of thoughtful articles around the theme of reality and appearance have been assembled in this issue for you to consider, reflect and enjoy. We hope you benefit from this edition of Café Philosophy, and keep thinking deeply.

Tom McGuire
Colour only starts to exist when our perception systems produce the impression of ‘colour’: light is perceived on the retina as a stimulus and is processed into a perception of colour in our brain. In substance, colors are already illusions in themselves...

For the ancient Greeks, colours were the attributes of Iris, the goddess of the rainbow. ‘Iris glided down to earth along her many-colored bow…’, wrote the Latin author, Ovid, poetically.

Colour is immaterial and evocative, but above all, color is energy. It is actually an electromagnetic phenomenon, which depends on the way light is reflected from objects. Every object absorbs part of the light that hits it and deflects the rest towards our eyes. Our brain interprets this reflected light as a particular color. However, we see color just as we perceive taste. When we enjoy a good meal, our taste buds sense four attributes: sweet, salty, sour and bitter. Likewise, when we look at a scene, our visual nerves register color in terms of color attributes. These are the amount of green/red, the amount of blue/yellow and the brightness. Color attributes are opposites, like hot and cold. Our visual system senses green or red, and blue or yellow — but never both of these at the same time. This is the reason why we never see bluish-yellow or reddish-green colors. In fact color opposition forms the basis of our color vision.

Colour can be very deceptive. To the eye, color is measured partly on the basis of the frequency of light that hits it, but mostly in relation to colors nearby. A color is perceived to be brighter, for example, if it is surrounded by a complementary color (two colors are said to be complementary if the sum of their light radiation equals or gives white), or lighter if the background color is darker. This is mainly due to a mechanism that enhances the contrast of the outline of an object relative to its background. This is called ‘lateral inhibition’, as each group of photoreceptors tends to inhibit the response of the one next to it. The ‘outputs’ of this system signal to the brain the location where strong changes in brightness occur even when there are unexpected changes in external light, such as sunlight or day to night transition.

Colors depend strongly on context and also on cognitive factors, like acquired knowledge about the appearance of objects. The concept of colour itself is confusing for most people, and whether black and white are actually colours at all remains one of the most debated issues. From a scientist you will get a reply based on physics: ‘Black is not a colour, white is!’, while from an artist you will get another, based on empirical experience: ‘Black is a colour, white is not!’ To represent all the visible colors, the ‘color wheel’ is used. Unfortunately, this model is not an accurate representation of reality: a color spectrum cannot actually be laid out in a circle, because it has a clear beginning (red) and end (violet). In the color wheel, the red transforms smoothly and continuously to violet, creating an in-between purplish red colour called magenta, which is a physical contradiction: such a colour is missing from the real colour spectrum.

Colours are an illusory subjective sensation, not an external reality. They change according to their surroundings, so that colors which are identical may appear to be different under certain conditions, and colors that are different may look the same. This effect is called ‘color induction’, of which there are two main types. Of these, ‘simultaneous color contrast’ occurs when the difference between colors that are opposite on the wheel is enhanced by their juxtaposition — for example, greens look greener when placed against red or violet. On the same basis, a grey area tends to look greenish when set against a red background, but will appear reddish against a green background. ‘Color assimilation’ is the opposite of color contrast: colors take on the hue of the surrounding colours. For instance, small blue areas tend to look greenish against a yellow background. While the mechanisms of colour contrast phenomena are well understood, how and when colour assimilation occurs is still not completely explained.

In our everyday life, colour influences how we dress, what we eat and the rooms we live in, so it is very important for us to perceive its quality as constant even under changing conditions. For instance, someone traveling in a vehicle with blue-tinted windows will at first see the landscape as suffused with a blue cast, but as the eye quickly desensitizes itself to blue the view will soon reassume its normal coloration. This tendency of the eye to adapt in seconds to most prevailing light sources is called ‘color adaptation’. Thanks to this effect, the eye can accurately identify the colours of objects under changing lighting conditions. For example, a white T-shirt will subjectively look the same whether it is brightly lit on a sunny day or dimly lit on an overcast day, despite the fact that the wavelength of light that reaches the retinas in each case is different. This color constancy is explained by the fact that the brightness of an object’s surroundings usually changes in proportion to the change in brightness of the object itself. Colour constancy is thought to involve specialized neurons in the primary visual cortex.

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Archimedes’ Lab

http://www.archimedes-lab.org/presentation.html
Any belief about the external world rests upon two foundations: The appearances constituting the sensory core of that appearance and one’s previously acquired information

When we perceive or see physical things they may be referred to as:
* sense impressions, ideas or appearances.

as well as appearances, we also rely upon knowledge we already know about physical things.

Therefore what I learned by sight alone pertained only to ‘sense data’ or appearance. 

Appearances are the sensory core of experience. The rest is information previously acquired, in other words, subjective experience or qualia, the way things appear to us.

Pictured below are Courtenay and Anna. I met them at the De Post Belgian Beer Café (formerly the Mt. Eden Post Office) at 466 Mt. Eden Road, on Monday 9th April 2012.

I asked them if they’d mind participating in a short question and answer debate about the theory of naïve realism. They agreed, and I joined them at the table. When I asked Anna whether she believed a chair at the table was exactly as she perceived it, she replied, yes it is a chair but not the same as Courtenay’s interpretation in which he had earlier confirmed his belief as being, that the chair was exactly as seen. Anna went on to describe that for her, there was a split between the signifier and the signified. She said that, “everything you read in front of you, perception of the outside world, was combined with complex internal processes,” and that, “the internal processing was greatly influenced by one’s background and history.”

Thanks to Courtenay and Anna for their comments, involvement and participation!

Rob Mason

Naïve Realism

A theory of perception that holds that our ordinary perception of physical objects is direct, unmediated by awareness of subjective entities, and that, in normal perceptual conditions, these objects have the properties they appear to have. If a feijoa tastes sour, the sun looks orange, and the water feels hot, then, if conditions are normal, the feijoa is sour, the sun orange, and the water hot. Tastes, sounds, and colours are not in the heads of perceivers; they are qualities of the external objects that are perceived. This theory bears the name of ‘naïve’ and is often said to be the view of the ‘person on the street.’


Things Depend on Us for Their Existence

Things may appear differently to us depending in part upon our psychological and physiological condition as well as our needs and desires.

Things do not appear in any way at all unless they appear in some way to someone. Therefore the appearances we are aware of depend for their existence upon ourselves. If there were no perceivers then there would be no appearances.

For example although a tree is something in itself apart from perception; that, by its luminous emanations, it impresses our mind and is then perceived; the perception being an effect and the unperceived tree i.e. the one that exists outside of perception, the cause.
The Momentary Man Theory

Ninety seven years ago philosopher: BERTRAND RUSSELL gave a lecture at the Philosophical Society of Manchester on the ultimate constituents of matter. During this lecture he referred to an analogy that Henri Bergson had made to the changing state of things. The following details about the belief that what is physical must be persistent, are discussed below:

"My meaning in regard to the impermanence of physical entities may perhaps be made clearer by the use of Bergson’s favourite illustration of the cinematograph. When I first read Bergson’s statement that the mathematician conceives the world after the analogy of a cinematograph, I had never seen a cinematograph, and my first visit to one was determined by the desire to verify Bergson’s statement, which I found to be completely true. When in the picture palace, we see a man rolling down hill, or running away from police we know that there is not really one man moving, but a succession of films, each with a different momentary man. The illusion of persistence arises only through the approach to continuity in the series of momentary man. Now what I wish to suggest is that in this respect the cinema is a better metaphysician than common sense, physics or philosophy. The real man too, I believe, however the police may swear to his identity, is really a series of momentary men, each different one from the other, and bound together, not by a numerical identity, but by continuity and certain intrinsic causal laws. And what applies to men applies equally to tables and chairs, the sun, moon and stars. Each of these is to be regarded, not as one single persistent entity, but as a series of entities, succeeding each other in time, each lasting for a brief period, though probably not for a mere mathematical instant.

The world may be conceived as consisting of a multitude of entities arranged in a certain pattern. The entities which are arranged I shall call ‘particulars.’ The arrangement of pattern results from relations among particulars. Classes or series of ‘particulars,’ collected together on account of some property which makes it convenient to be able to speak of them as wholes, are what I call logical constructions or symbolic fictions. The particulars are to be conceived, not on the analogy of bricks in a building, but rather on the analogy of notes in a symphony. The ultimate constituents of a symphony (apart) from relations) are the notes, each of which lasts only for a very short time. We may collect together all the notes played by one instrument: these may be regarded as analogues of the successive particulars which common sense would regard as successive states of one ‘thing.’ But the ‘thing’ ought to be regarded as no more ‘real’ or ‘substantial’ than, for example the role of the trombone. As soon as ‘things’ are conceived in this manner it will be found that the difficulties in the way of regarding immediate objects of sense as physical have largely disappeared."  Bertrand Russell (18 May 1872 – 2 February 1970)
Dr. Shenkman writes a letter saying “Please Philosophers, tell me how we can survive in such a hostile environment as our universe”. He asks philosophers to tell him ‘what we are’ and ‘how we should behave towards others’. He describes what he has seen of philosophy so far as the “behaviour of a headless chicken” referring I suspect to the fragmented and specialised nature of the subject as it is practised today. It might be just to accuse modern analytic philosophy, unlike philosophy in other periods of history, of having lost sight of a common goal and lost touch which its original questions. Nor would it be far off the mark to say it has become mesmerized by technicalities and perhaps blinded by science.

Some will argue, in its defence, that specialization is the price for rigour and careful analysis. They will say the small steps that are being taken and the level of consensus concerning some issues in Anglo-American philosophy have been well worth this price. In saying this a comparison is usually drawn with the allegedly sloppy thinking of German and French philosophy, which although it keeps the general aim of philosophy in sight, fails to convince because it produces no rigorous arguments. Or so it is said.

But this finger pointing is of no help to our friend. He is not interested in cross-channel squabbles. When Dr. Shenkman quotes the Concise Oxford Dictionary he is trying to remind philosophers that they have a task to perform – one which they seem to have lost sight of. Perhaps this analogy will help.

Imagine philosophers as burglars trying to break into the house of knowledge. Concede also that this is not an easy job. We can picture them scuttling about trying to find the best way in. A few of these burglars settle on the idea of breaking the lock on the back door, but discover after a time that there are insuperable problems in getting in by this method. Nevertheless, these stout-hearted professionals are not going to be beaten by a simple lock. They have a noble task to accomplish. More and more sophisticated methods are employed and yet none can break the lock. Debates ensue until someone comes along with a more promising lock-breaking proposal. Naturally, the more sceptical burglars just mock at the futility of the whole business while the others wait with baited breathe only to be further disappointed.

It is at this point that an onlooker (Dr. Shenkman) asks “What are you doing?” – The strained response of the typical burglar, after having invested so much time and effort, is “We’re trying to get this lock open”. Are we Linguistic beings or simply biological machines? Daniel D. Hutto believes it’s; A JOB FOR PHILOSOPHY
But what our burglar has forgotten, is why he is trying to get the lock open. His answer betrays him, the goal has shifted. When he began he wanted to get into the house, now all he can think about is opening the lock on the back door.

There are obvious and telling parallels to draw with the quest to understand human nature in modern analytic philosophy. When Dr. Shenkman asks “…tell us what we are” he is reminding us of the nature of our philosophical task. He is asking us not to be too long diverted in playing with our precious new tools.

For it is a consequence of such play that led J.L.H. Thomas to observe of the 1991 Joint Session that “The range of topics discussed was rather narrower than before, their precise nature and importance was less immediately apparent, and it was often difficult to see the wood for the trees.” (Phil Now, no.3, p.34)

This evident lack of concern with the important issues in analytic philosophy, thinks Mike Fuller, grants New Age thinking some legitimacy due to “…a possibly justified feeling that it [New Age philosophy] has more to do with ‘real philosophy’ and ‘things that really matter’ than its more academically respectable rivals” (Phil Now, no.3 p.40)

These reactions do not cheer me. Where has modern philosophy gone wrong? I think, quite perceptively, Dr. Shenkman puts his finger on it by suggesting that the ultimately real, even for most philosophers, is defined in modern times by what science tells us about the basic stuff of the universe and how it behaves. Shenkman writes:

Our knowledge of ultimate reality consists of;
• Einstein’s theory of relativity
• The Quantum theory
• Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle
• The Chaos Theory
• The Big Bang and continuous creation theories

No wonder Dr. Shenkman’s patients are lost. Philosophy is left to the task of cleaning up the messy bits like language, human nature, aesthetics, ethics and so on – but it must do so in a scientifically convincing way.

I tried to do my part in issue no.2 of Philosophy Now by showing that our ordinary view of ourselves was not threatened by science. I now think I conceded far too much to the scientific realist. I would like to press home some reasons for adopting the pragmatic, as opposed to the realist, conception of the nature of modern science in such a way that might help Dr. Shenkman.

I believe the source of the problem faced by Dr. Shenkman, the difficulty of finding a place for humanity in our world, can be traced back to the birth of modern science in the Renaissance. That is where the foundation was laid for the view that a science of the impersonal, the inanimate, defines all there really is and also tells us why what there is behaves as it does.

In modern dress this thought underlies a very influential metaphysical doctrine which is much at work both in lay and professional thinking about human nature. The doctrine is called physicalism – and one of its central articles of faith is expressed by the Principle of Autonomy (hereafter referred to as Prince Auto).

(Physicalism is a philosophical position holding that everything which exists is no more extensive than its physical properties; that is, that there are no kinds of things other than physical things.)

Who is this Prince Auto who has ruled modern thinking of late? He is a slippery character who appears in many different guises in Anglo- American philosophical literature. His central decree is that when engaging in serious psychology we should be concerned only with the efficient or proximate causes of behaviour. Put another way, it is Prince Auto’s view that in the ultimate sense, man, like all else, must be explicable in terms of mechanical laws. Although we have moved on from deterministic laws with advancements in modern physics I am certain the Renaissance view of science underpins Dr. Shenkman’s thought that the universe is a ‘hostile’, and perhaps inhuman, environment.

Let me quickly sketch the line of descent of our illustrious monarch. Prince Auto succeeded to the explanatory throne during the seventeenth century when he replaced the aging monarch Prince Telos (the Principle of Teleology). Prince Telos’ decree was that in understanding the behaviour of things we should look for the purpose or end of the behaviour. This method was applied to what we now distinguish as animate and inanimate entities, alike. For example, a stone falling to the ground was explained by its love...
of the Earth. The universe of the scholastics was, for this reason, much more lively and meaningful.

And, not surprisingly, it was these scholastics who became the principle opponents of Renaissance science due to the conflict between the teleological and mechanical accounts of physics and cosmology. The first damaging blow to Prince Telos came in 1543 when the Copernican cosmological theory was first published, even though it took Kepler to make it influential. And when the scholastics lost the duel with Galileo in the debate over the nature of falling bodies a general disgrace was brought on the teleological conception of the world.

Prince Telos fell to the might of Prince Auto who insisted that the basic stuff of the universe acted without purpose. Historically, this much is well established. But, you may ask, what has this snippet in the history of science to do with our view of human nature? It has everything to do with that issue.

We must realise that “...a new type of man was born out of the Renaissance: harder, sharper, more incisively rational and sceptical, devoted no longer to God and society, but to knowledge and discovery” (Becker, BA, p.5). Enlightenment man set a standard of inquiry which would take us wherever reason and science led – in an important sense nothing is sacred to such thinkers.

I wish to make one further, and highly relevant point about the rise of mechanical science. This point concerns the appointed father of modern analytic philosophy; Descartes.

Although Descartes is a prominent figure in the history of philosophy we must not forget his standing in the history of modern science. Most of us are familiar with Descartes’ cogito (‘I think, therefore I am’) but it is crucial to an understanding of today’s problems that we do not forget that while Descartes was laying down the foundations for talk of mental phenomena he was also contributing to the development of classical physics. That is why, for Descartes and most thinkers of the seventeenth century, all matter was to be treated alike and all explanations of change and motion had to be described in purely mathematical terms. Descartes, under the sway of Prince Auto and thought of animals and all biological entities including human bodies, as wholly mechanical in nature. For him, what separated humans beings from the machines was to be found in their thinking essences.

Modern physicalists are not very different from Descartes in this regard. They differ only, but crucially, in having abandoned the thesis that there are separated entities, or substances, called minds. If there are such things as mental events they must be physical in nature. It is only in casting off its ectoplasm that the mental can maintain any reality rights – and it is doubtful that our understanding of ourselves as rational, thinking agents is compatible with a mechanical view of human beings. So, whereas Descartes made some room for humanity, the descendants of Enlightenment man threaten to squeeze us out altogether.

One must ask, is it any wonder that a philosophical tradition which names Descartes as its father and whose family members include such figures as Ayer, Russell, Frege and more recently Chomsky, Fodor, Stich and Churchland has little comfort to offer those who want to ask real philosophical questions about who we are and how we should live?

It is, I believe appropriate, that the most extreme form of physicalism (as advocated by Churchland) has taken the stance that there is no room for persons in the pristine scientific universe. This startling, and counter-intuitive, result might worry Dr. Shenkman’s patients. But it is, I think, good news.

Rather than criticise Paul Churchland we should praise him for having explored the outer limits of analytic philosophy. His work is the culmination of the Enlightenment dream. He draws the harsh conclusions ‘conservative’ philosophers refuse to draw. He is the burglar who opened the door by burning down the house. And this is good because it may help us to realise, at least, that in following Prince Auto’s metaphysical orchestrations we may have been heading in the wrong direction.

I agree with Churchland that an understanding of human nature in everyday terms (what he calls the person theory of humans) is incompatible with a view that the
ultimate physics (whatever it turn out to be) describes The Real. If this is right it simply means we must not treat science as defining ‘ultimate reality’. We had better not adhere to scientific realism exclusively.

But is defending our view of ourselves as persons just mere sentimentality? I do not think so. As Putnam says, “what the universe of physics leaves out is the very thing that makes the universe possible for us...the intentional, valuational, referential work of ‘synthesis’” (Putnam, RHF, p. 141). Put more simply and less eloquently, without human thinking there would be no physics. And without the language of physics there is no sense in holding that the entities it describes exist (as we define them). That is not to say the universe itself is wholly dependent upon us – it is only to say that for there to be science there needs to be human beings and human language.

Someone will object: surely the world would be there with or without us. But this prompts the response ‘Which world?’. Is there any sense in talking about the ‘the world’ without recourse to a language or a scheme in which to define it?

A timely reminder from Nietzsche may help us to see that the entities, even of physics, are dependent in part on our ability to conceive them. “Only as creators. This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that what things are called is incomparably more important than what they are...But let us not forget this either; it is enough to create new names and new estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new things” (Nietzsche, GS, sec.58).

But doesn’t this mean we are prisoners of some form of cultural relativism or linguistic idealism? What I have said makes it sound as if I believe that what we think determines what there is – in a sense this may be right. For example, someone says “There is a chair” (for a scientific example replace ‘chair’ with ‘electron’) – what makes this statement true? Is it not an appeal to our conventions about what we call chairs? As Quine made clear – ‘that there is a chair present,’ would not be true in a culture which defined chairs differently or had no conception of chairs at all.

What does the truth of the statement depend on, then? For one thing it depends on a certain agreement on how we use our language. But is that all? Surely it isn’t just that. It must also depend on the way the world is. There has to be something that allows us to agree or disagree about the presence of the chair. What is important to the truth or falsity of the statement is both the way in which we use our language and the way the world is – but neither element can be separated from the other. What makes something true or false, there or not there, and this includes scientific discoveries, is how things stand from our human (not an impersonal) perspective.

This is what Putnam was driving at in saying “Of course, our concepts are culturally relative; but it does not follow that the truth or falsity of what we say using those concepts is simply ‘determined’ by the culture.” (Putnam, RHF, p.98).

In freeing ourselves from a naive, realist view of science we will depose the tyrannical despot who has ruined our philosophical crops for the past three centuries. We must dethrone Prince Auto. And in his place I would urge that we do not put another monarch. It is time for a more democratic philosophical society – one which recognises autonomous contexts of inquiry. We might join with Putnam in saying “…I want to defend the view that there are whole domains of fact with respect to which present-day science tells us nothing at all…” (Putnam, RHF, p.143).

We might even speak of human contexts of inquiry to remind ourselves that even the sciences depend on human culture and society. Our scientific and philosophical foundations are cultural – not physical. Human society is our inescapable starting point. This may help to give us a ‘sense of direction’ and remind us that we are human beings after all.

To maintain our view of humanity we are forced to surrender the metaphysics of modern science (or tomorrow’s physics) as exclusively determining the constituents and nature of ultimate reality. Having said that, we need not react against science or deny it a prominent place in our thinking. It simply cannot lead or restrict philosophical inquiry. Relative to a particular context of inquiry we can expect physics, the biological sciences,
or even cognitive science to play important and useful roles. But they cannot succeed in giving us an untainted, objective account of how things really stand and they cannot solve questions about how we should live or, in an important sense, tell us what we are.

There are some analytic philosophers who will view this suggestion, that we cannot reduce man's nature to something more basic, with suspicion on the grounds that it is an a priori stance and they claim the jury is still out. I now believe however that Churchland's conclusion will be the unavoidable consequence of such a quest — and I think that his conclusion is impossible for the reasons given. Others may fear my stance will lead us toward woolly and wild thinking. I think such fears are unwarranted.

Gadamer, who supports such a view in his essay “Man and Language”, far from sending us into a woolly world of pseudo-philosophy, suggests that we make use of an Aristotelian insight to help us to understand human nature. “... language is the real medium of human being...the realm of common understanding of ever-replenished common agreement — a realm as indispensable to human life as the air we breathe. As Aristotle said, man is truly the being who has language.” (Gadamer, 1976, p.68) Aristotle's thought is that our essence is located in our linguistic, and thereby social, nature.

Davidson, who certainly cannot be accused of woolly thinking, also tells us “A community of minds is the basis of knowledge; it provides the measure of all things. It makes no sense to question the measure of that standard, or to seek a more ultimate one.” (Davidson, 1991, p. 164)

I, for one, still think there is a promise of a fruitful alliance between the rigour of analytic philosophy and the vision of some continental thinkers, particularly given some of the recent turns in analytic philosophy of mind, language and science. Such an alliance also holds out the further promise of a more orderly, yet purposeful, approach to important philosophical questions. I believe that only our own prejudices and insecurities will stand in the way of such a union.

To conclude, if we are linguistic beings and not simply biological machines — moreover if our identity as human beings is linked with our social and cultural nature — we may still wonder how does this help us answer the questions ‘How should I live?’ and ‘How should I treat others?’. These are perhaps the most difficult of all questions. But if we drop the view that we are simply survival mechanisms and see ourselves as essentially social then perhaps we can take heart from the work of some philosophers of antiquity who shared that vision of humanity.

For instance, we might look to Cicero (Roman philosopher, 106 BC—43 BC). For in his work one finds a very readable, pragmatic and practical guide to the ethical. There are few more influential or useful guides which give ‘advice on lifestyles’. But to find Cicero's words credible we must share with him the thought that to be human is to be both reasonable and social. As he says “...bonding consists of reason and speech, which reconcile men to one another, through teaching, learning, communicating, debating and making judgements and unite them in a kind of natural fellowship. It is this that most distinguishes us from the nature of other animals.” (Cicero, OD, sec. 49).

If we come to see ourselves in this light, as humans not just machines or worse, we need not be tempted by New Age thinking, we need not abandon our science, and most importantly we, as philosophers, can get back to our proper work. We need not be scolded by our Roman friend for having bestowed “excessive devotion and effort on matters that are both abstruse and difficult, and unnecessary” (Cicero, OD, sec. 18).

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When he said “Imagination is more important than knowledge”, Albert Einstein implied a contrast between fact and possibility. I should like to suggest that there is no distinction in kind between the two, but that many people mistakenly accord too much importance to the idea of reality, that is, to what they think we can know for certain. Let us begin, then, with something that seems to combine the real and the unreal: fictional drama.

In discussing drama with students, I have found that many of them, to start with, invoke realism as the yardstick. The more like real life, they say, the better the play must be. You can sow doubts by suggesting that going to the theatre is therefore an unnecessary expense, as you can watch real life for nothing. You would also have to count The Tempest as inferior to Coronation Street. In the end you might agree that, even if you still preferred realistic drama, what you would want is not just a resemblance to real life but a better understanding of it, and that unrealistic drama could do that just as well.

Even so, most people in Western European culture put their trust in the concept of reality, believing that what you can know must be more important than what you can only imagine. For them the perceptible and verifiable things in life, like back gardens and bank balances, are the serious ones.

The relationship between thought and reality has been an abiding concern of philosophy. Even when philosophy and common sense agree that there is a physical reality independent of our thinking about it, the common-sense view equates it with our physical perception. Most philosophers and neurophysiologists, however, are pretty certain that our sense-experiences do not correspond with the reality that they relate to; that, for example, our experience of seeing something is not a pictorial or optical one and likewise for the other senses. That is to say, the brain does not see the image in the eye in the way that the eye sees the visible object. Rather, there is a neural activity that is no different in kind from those that occur with experiences we would describe as purely internal ones, such as logical reasoning or feeling delight.
philosophical problem is whether to draw a distinction between the neural activity and our awareness of the world. Certainly, there is no correspondence between the neural events and our internal experience. Presented with an image or film of some neural events in my brain, I would not be able to say “Oh, yes, that is obviously my thoughts about the football match yesterday.”

Interpreting reality

In the modern world our knowledge comes in two ways: on the one hand, our everyday experiences and, on the other, logic, philosophy and the observation of scientific instruments. If human intelligence were no more than a conscious scientific instrument, we would have only an awareness of what we perceive. The reality of an railway engine would be for us no more than its size, sound, smell and so forth. The human situation is not like that, though: the engine affects different people differently. You only have to look at train-spotters.

What an object means to you, then, rather than your knowledge of what it is, is particularly telling when, unlike the railway engine, it is a medium of conceptual, rather than locomotive, communication. If a Frenchman says “Bonjour!”, you may know and be able to repeat what he has said, but to no purpose if, not understanding French, you have no idea what he meant. And when the communication is not principally factual, as when you listen to a poem or a piece of music, you can feel puzzled or frustrated that someone else has remained indifferent while you have been deeply moved, even though you both heard exactly the same words or notes. It would not be hard to explain what “Bonjour!” meant, if you understood it, but not being able to explain in words what a piece of music means to you does not mean it was meaningless: that was why it was music.

Your understanding of a piece of music does not consist of a knowledge of its notes or sounds; it is the consequence of your experience of it.

**Seas and sausages**

In an age of scientific self-consciousness the two ways of understanding the facts of the world — by instinct and reflection — can lead to a sort of double life. If you sail across the Atlantic, a calm sea may seem flat, but most of us, I think, would not be instinctively aware that we were travelling over a curve. We would need self-consciously to remind ourselves of the shape of the earth first. The philosopher, Wittgenstein, remarked that, if you told someone who had always thought that the sun circled the earth that the reverse was true, it would still be right for that person to continue thinking of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west. As Wittgenstein put it in his Tractatus, “Ich bin meine Welt” (I am my world). There can be that sort of distinction, therefore, between fact and truth.

If I eat a sausage, the reality of that experience for me is usually one of ‘sausageness’, but if I were a biochemist, I might think about the protein-structure of the sausage or, if a physicist, its sub-atomic composition. What would our reality be like, I wonder, if we naturally perceived things at the sub-atomic level? The scientific approach is not limited to our natural experience of the world, but the quest of science to discover the basic constituents of the universe, that is, to gain ultimate factual knowledge, still would not qualify that knowledge as being more fundamental or more important than other types of understanding.

**Political realism**

In politics, the falseness of objectivity dehumanizes people. Political rivals prefer to argue with numbers, as if it would be embarrassing to think the future could be decided by a vision of human behaviour rather than by the lowering of interest rates. Politics, to be sure, needs realism. The system should offer citizens security, liberties that are not licences, and the possibility of a sophisticated culture. But, whereas the destination of human success should be people themselves, modern political discussion places it in the impersonal consequences of their actions and it is symbolized by objects or, even worse, by the abstraction of objects in statistics.

**Art and other people**

In the arts, factual knowledge has dominated arguments about what is socially desirable. This goes back at least to Plato, whose ideal society would have been free from the corrupting influence of the arts. Recent criteria have not been so stringent as Plato’s, but they still rest on the content of the work rather than its meaning. Nor could it be otherwise when it comes to censorship. You cannot produce any solid evidence for ‘artistic values’ or ‘cultural seriousness’, whereas you can say precisely what actions took place on the stage or what scene was depicted in the photograph.

**Art and the individual**

What place then, should we give imagination, if that is what matters in art? To return to the drama students I began with, most will have acquired the opinion that plays are fantasy and entertainment, desirable to distract us from the serious things in life, but not in themselves serious. Yet, if what I have said is true, then to define literature, music and the visual arts as part of the leisure industry, in which the industry is the serious part, is not a reasonable attitude. For if, as I have suggested, our individual reality consists of our imagination, then we can decide rationally what matters more
and what matters less. There will be no distinction in kind between what we imagine and what we know. By this, I am not advocating a life based on fantasy: the imprisoned man is not living well if he persuades himself he is in fact free.

To exemplify this, let me take two works of drama, Bertolucci's film La Luna and the television series The Cosby Show.

The plot of La Luna includes teenagers' addiction to heroin and incestuous lust, with no overt condemnation of either. I find it a beautiful and moving film. The Cosby Show portrays a secure family in which minor difficulties of teenage immaturity are resolved by the loving concern of the parents. Those who call for censorship in the arts would no doubt censure Bertolucci and commend The Cosby Show. If I, like Plato, were imagining the conditions for the morally good society, it would be more likely one in which resided the values of Bertolucci's film than one embalmed in the spirit of The Cosby Show. My decision rests on my attempt to share the imagination of the creator of the film, but if it rested solely on my knowledge of the content of the works, then, of course, a world of happy families is preferable to one with drugs and incest.

Art and the individual

What place then, should we give imagination, if that is what matters in art? To return to the drama students I began with, most will have acquired the opinion that plays are fantasy and entertainment, desirable to distract us from the serious things in life, but not in themselves serious. Yet, if what I have said is true, then to define literature, music and the visual arts as part of the leisure industry, in which the industry is the serious part, is not a reasonable attitude. For if, as I have suggested, our individual reality consists of our imagination, then we can decide rationally what matters more and what matters less. There will be no distinction in kind between what we imagine and what we know. By this, I am not advocating a life based on fantasy: the imprisoned man is not living well if he persuades himself he is in fact free.

"Ich bin meine Welt" — I am my world. And that world is all the influences on it and all you sense it to be, not only those things you could express as your knowledge of the facts of the world, but all the moral, aesthetic, emotional and inventive feelings you have, and there is no justification for setting one above the other as being more real: they are all in the imagination. What your world is and what your life is depends on how varied, intense and refined, those sensations are.

The work of art is an object and, when you perceive it, some intellectual consequences are produced, however slight. If the object is an egg-slicer, it might mean something to you, but it was intended rather to act upon the egg, not on your imagination. It changes your view of the world by changing the egg. Works of art, by contrast, are designed to act more directly on your imagination and seem likely, from what we can surmise about the labour and intentions of their authors, to add more ways of seeing the world, so that we can have more chance of discovering, even if only by indistinct intuition, what is important in it. The frequent mix of art and pleasure, even gloomy art, should induce us to guess that pleasure, unconnected with material gain, is serious too.

Many people nowadays, despite the historical evidence for the inconstancy of popular opinion, hold to a down-to-earth philosophy of knowledge. They pride themselves on living in a world of facts, in the ‘real world’. In that world, human nature is held to have unchanging limitations and anything that does not seem verifiable by tangible experience is dismissed as unrealistic. Feelings, which seem insubstantial and unsupported by the external world, even feelings for other people, are dismissed as less important. For art, the false security of that world is inhuman and the transition away from it has sometimes been the theme of art. In Michael Tippett's opera The Knot Garden, the character Faber, who starts off as someone for whom factual knowledge and practical advantage are all that matters, is gradually transformed, and at the end he speaks the final words: “I am all imagination.”

This is a revised version of an article that first appeared in the journal *Philosophy Now*}
Flossarian, a research postgraduate in philosophy at Rio Tinto University, had a problem, a dilemma. He hesitated in the corridor, listening to the bursts of manic laughter that came from Lionel Cashcard’s room. He waited for the student counsellor to pause for breath before knocking.

“Come in!” said Cashcard, looking up from his expenses form and creaking in his leather jeans. “What can I do for you?”

“I’ve got a problem, a dilemma,” said Flossarian. The counsellor, writing furiously, gestured to a plastic seat with his head. “You’d better sit down.”

Flossarian did so and waited for him to finish writing noughts in the Hospitality column. When he seemed to have stopped, the student took a deep breath and spilled his troubled beans.

“I’m thinking about becoming a philosophical counsellor,” he began, “but I’m not sure if it’s ethical.”

There was ominous pause; silence except for the sound of Cashcard wiping drool off the desk with his Stetson.

“Go on,” he said finally, raising an eyebrow that looked suspiciously like it has been plucked.

“Well, for starters I’m concerned about my lack of psychological training. How for instance, will I be able to spot a case – a schizophrenic say – who’s better suited to a different form of treatment? And for seconds, seeing as most philosophical counsellors have rejected a programme of certification, how will I know I’m even competent to handle people who can legitimately be helped by talking cure? Thirdly, I’m still bothered by the question “should truth have a price?”; and added to all this I share a general worry about the status of all forms of counselling in a world where short-sighted governments lick the feet of multi-nationals and wash their hands of the very social problems their own policy of turning citizens into consumers, individuals into commodities and systematically wiping out all traces of grass-roots, non-financially motivated, non-materialistic community has created.
thereby denying the individual the self-esteem and security required for healthy mental functioning, and then institutioning a counselling-culture to brain-launder the casualties and plaster over the holes they’ve dug for us.”

When Flossarian had finished Cashcard continued to stare into space for a few minutes, then turning to look at him, said evenly, “sounds like you need to see a philosophical counsellor.”

The philosophical trained Flossarian instinctively flinched, his brow kitting tighter than a cheap Shetland jumper after a machine wash. “But wouldn’t that render the whole enquiry redundant, be viciously circular, self-negating, defeat the object and set up an infinite regress?” he blurted, now on a roll.

“How so?” mumbled Cashcard, looking irritated and biting the end off a cigar.

“Well, if I take this problem to a philosophical counsellor that already assumes I’m prepared to listen to one of the very people whose opinion, legitimacy and competence I’m calling into question.”

“I see. Well, what about seeing another kind of counsellor?”

The postgraduate eyed the counsellor quizzically for a few moments expecting more to follow, but Cashcard just struck a Swan Vesta on some sandpaper cellotaped to the side of his boot and said nothing. “But, um, that’s what I’m doing isn’t it?” he finally prompted.

“Oh yes, I am indeed a counsellor,” said Cashcard through a cloud of smoke, “but if I’m not a Philosophical counsellor then I’m not in a position to deal with clearly philosophical dilemmas such as this one am I?”

Flossarian’s forehead was now so deeply lined he resembled a Klingon. “So my position is…” He began. “My position is that if I seek guidance from a philosophical counsellor I’ll find myself caught in an intractable circularity, but if I consult another kind of counsellor they won’t be equipped to deal with the question?”

“Pretty much.” Cashcard shrugged. “If you decide to go to one or the other it implies you’ve already made your decision about the merits of philosophical counselling. You can’t win.”

Flossarian’s vision took on a vague reddish hue around the edges. “But it’s absurd!” He spat, shaking slightly, pressing his knuckles into his forehead.

With something that could be mistaken for professionalism the counsellor waited for the young man to calm himself, and went back to his expenses.

Flossarian drew breath and thought for a second or two. He looked at Cashcard, and then at the expenses form that now had more Os than a Bulgarian World Cup squad. An idea came to him. “So, what kind of counsellor are you exactly?” He asked, not bothering to hide his suspicion.

“I’m an “Ironic Counsellor’.” Cashcard confessed.

“A what?”

Cashcard stood up and began pacing the room revealing a pair of cowboy boots complete with spurs. “Look son,” he lectured, “if you’re thinking about being a counsellor, the ‘Philosophical’ kind is more yesterday than catching gonorrhea. Facts of the matter are: the philosophers didn’t consider Existential psychologists rigorous or learned enough; but then lo and behold a faction of Rationalist Counsellors didn’t consider the Socratic-minded Philosophical Counsellors to be fulfilling their claims to objectivity and flexibility; and then Empiricist Counsellors pooh-poohed the Rationalists’ foundationalist-reasoning cure for creating a society of schizoid solipsists, not to mention the inadvertent promoting of megalomania as a lifestyle choice by the Absolute Idealist Counsellors. Half a decade later the stiff (and frankly repressed) Logical Positive Thinkers ‘on yer bike’ policies nearly drove the whole profession under and this wasn’t exactly helped by the Pragma-therapists ‘whatever floats your body but if you ask
me therapy’s for pussies’ approach. The Hermeneuticists Circle were the most paranoid bastards you’re ever likely to meet and fell foul of the backlash against recovered memories, and after a brief but barmy excursion into Post Structuralist Counselling where the counsellee is counselled indirectly by a process of apophrades [supplement] which basically means that they counsel the counsellor, we’re back where we started, more or less.

“So you’re an Existential Counsellor?”

“I prefer ‘Ironic’ counsellor.”

“What’s the difference?”

“Well, whereas Sartre would send hapless students on their way telling them they’d already made their choice, we prefer to confuse the crap out of them first.”

“Okay. So let’s see if I have this right. I came here to find out if philosophical counselling is ethical and you led me to believe I could never discover this for sure. But now you tell me that you’re not a philosophical counsellor but that you are well versed in the complexities of philosophy, in which case you should surely be able to tell me if philosophical counselling is ethical or not.”

“True. But you’re forgetting one thing – there is no more ‘Philosophical Counselling’: it’s as dead stay-pressed trousers. You’d have as much chance getting into the counselling profession under that banner as a Hawaiian shirt would have of getting into the Queen’s funeral.”

“But this is crazy, there must still be an answer!” Flossarian pleaded, but Cashcard suddenly grew angry, strode across the room like a slightly camp John Wayne, and grabbed him by the lapels.

“It’s not a question of ethics or truth my friend,” he throffed, “it’s a question of fashion and it’s a question of MONEY – this is not some do-gooding, pure of heart, truth-or-die, no-strings charity for Christ’s sake, this is philosophy! And philosophy is for once in its miserable existence making a buck so don’t bollocks things up by asking questions like “is it ethical? Okay!”

The counsellor let go of Flossarian who fell against the door wondering if this was all part of the treatment. Might Cashcard be a Post Structuralist after all? But he knew enough about French philosophy to realize there was no way of finding out for certain. It was all a mess. He had come in good faith, with a simple question and he’d ended up being mentally and physically assaulted. It was worse than a viva.

Reaching for the door handle Flossarian edged backwards out of the office and walked swiftly away on jellified legs. Cashcard’s voice crying “Is it ethical!?, “Is it ethical!? That was it”. He chuckled through an explosion of feathers.

Dr Stuart Hanscomb
University of Glasgow

An earlier version of this story first appeared in the postgraduate journal Philosophical Writings in autumn 1998.
M. G Simmel’s book develops within an intellectual framework wider than that in which historical-critical studies of this kind usually move. For the author it’s not a question of studying Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s work in detail, but of drawing up a balance sheet of modern culture by taking as typical examples of this culture the two great philosophical figures who sum up its essential oppositions. In other words, M. Simmel’s goal is to study Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in function of modern culture.

In the first chapter the author formulates the respective positions of the two thinkers confronting this culture. The two philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are the perfect expression of our state of civilization. The characteristic of all advanced societies – which as a result of this are both differentiated and complicated – is the need for unity, for a final end (Endzweck) capable of conferring a meaning on it. For a long time Christianity satisfied this need for unity. Today it has lost its hold over souls, but the need for unity survives.

Schopenhauer’s philosophy expresses that nostalgia for a final and total unity. The Schopenhauerian will-to-life, dominated by the law of the insatiability of desire, and incapable of resting on a final goal, is the symbol of this. The consideration of a universe propelled by the will for a goal and yet deprived of a goal is also Nietzsche’s point of departure. But between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche there is Darwin. While Schopenhauer stops at the negation of a final goal and concludes at the negation of the will-to-life, Nietzsche finds in mankind’s evolution the possibility of a goal that permits life to affirm itself. In Schopenhauer it is the horror of life that is affirmed, in Nietzsche it’s the sentiment of life’s magnificence. The Superman is the formula of life’s ascension, which always surpasses itself, in opposition to the eternal monotony of the Schopenhauerian universe.

In a remarkable parallel between the two thinkers M. Simmel remarks that Nietzsche better answers than Schopenhauer the aspirations of the modern spirit. “This ascendance of life is the great and imperishable consolation which, thanks to Nietzsche, has become the light of our modern intellectual landscape. This fundamental concept makes us forget the anti-social form which it clothes itself in in Nietzsche, so that despite this anti-social tendency Nietzsche appears, compared to Schopenhauer, as a much more fitting expression of the modern life feeling. And it is the tragic side of Schopenhauer’s destiny that with superior forces he defended the lesser cause. Schopenhauer is an incomparably more profound thinker than Nietzsche, a brilliant metaphysician, hearing in the depths of his soul the mysterious sounds of universal existence. It is not the metaphysical instinct that inspires Nietzsche: it’s the genius of the psychologist and the moralist that dominate in him. But he lacks the grand style of Schopenhauer, which bursts from tension of the thinker towards the mystery of things, and not only of man and his value; this grand style that seems to be refused in the most singular fashion to men of the greatest psychological finesse.”

Of the seven chapters that follow, five are dedicated to Schopenhauer and two to Nietzsche. As concerns Schopenhauer, we should note the penetrating critique to which M. Simmel submits pessimism. He notes that Schopenhauer’s pessimism is not based on the amount of suffering, but on this statement of principle: evil is an a priori of life. It is a function of desire, the essence of life. To a system based on the psychological observation that desire is accompanied by pain and its satisfaction by pleasure, must be opposed a psychological refutation. In the will Schopenhauer only considers the obstacle or the departure and arrival points. He forgets the trajectory between the two end points, a trajectory each step of which is accompanied by pleasure, be it only the pleasure of anticipation. This refutation is identical to that of Guyau, who is not quoted by M. Simmel. Schopenhauer’s successors wanted to add empirical proofs to the metaphysical proof of evil: the sum of the evil surpasses the sum of the good. Again like Guyau, M. Simmel remarks that the comparison isn’t possible. And Schopenhauer, faithful to
his principle of the metaphysical unity of the will and consequently of universal suffering, doesn't linger over the question of the distribution of good and evil among individuals. To the contrary, any system resting on the differentiation of individuals and their absolute reality is especially attached to the question of distribution. An example: socialism.

Of the two chapters on Nietzsche one is called “Human Values and Decadence,” and the other “The Morality of Distinction.” Schopenhauer recognizes only one value, non-life. Nietzsche glorifies life. Nietzsche attacks Christianity, which sacrifices the strong to the weak and, because of this, is a decadence. But there is a misunderstanding in the thought of Nietzsche: he looks only at the moral side of Christianity and not at its transcendental value. In reality Christianity and Nietzsche exalt the individual. But while for Nietzsche it reaches its apex in this life, for Christianity it only reaches it in the Kingdom of God. Nietzsche doesn’t see in Christianity the intensive cultivation of the soul, he only sees its practical altruism. He only sees the act of charity, he doesn’t see the intense state that precedes it. He only sees the centrifugal force and not the centripetal. Nietzsche denies God: the opposition between God and the I demands this. Only Schleiermacher was able to reconcile the two by absorbing the one in the other. To the Kingdom of God Nietzsche substitutes the idea of a humanity realized by individuals of the elite, which he opposes to that of society. Goethe too had isolated “das allgemein-menschliche.” Nietzsche says: humanity only lives in individuals and not in society. The progress of the individual is the progress of society. From the point of view of the social concept the individual is a point of intersection of social threads. From the Nietzschean point of view the individual is a reality: he sums up a line of man that exited up to his arrival. And if this line is an ascending line the individual incarnates humanity’s progress. M. Simmel opposes Nietzschean individualism to liberalism.

A propos of Nietzschean aristocracy M. Simmel cleverly compares Nietzsche and M. Maeterlinck. Nietzsche places the value of life in a few elite individuals and a few heroic hours, culminating points of individual existence, “rupture of the equilibrium of our pendulum between heaven and earth.” M. Maeterlinck places the values of life in daily existence and in each of its moments. There is no need of the heroic, the catastrophic, the exceptional. “Learn to venerate the small hours of life.” This is the same idea as that expressed in the worker aesthetic of the sculptor Meunier: the individual, aristocratic, and esthetic value and charm of the individual, but who only counts as an equal drawn from a crowd of his peers. Maeterlinck makes the democratic evaluation descend into the infinite of the individual soul.

The final chapter, “The Morality of Distinction,” contains many ideas no less subtle and ingenious. Thus the remark that it is not the act but being that gives a man his rank. Society only respects what a man does; humanity, on the other hand, only profits from what a man is. M. Simmel recalls here the phrase of Schiller: “Noble natures count for what they are; common natures for what they do.”

We have gone on at length on this book that deserves a special place in Nietzschean literature, a book fertile in ingenious connections, penetrating criticisms, and subtle psychological and sociological observations. In summary the two essential points to be noted are: the refutation of Schopenhauerian pessimism through Guyau’s concepts, and the refutation of Nietzschean aristocracy through the moral democratism of Maeterlinck. M. Simmel reproaches Schopenhauer for only taking into account extreme states, pain and pleasure, and neglecting transitional states. He reproaches Nietzsche for only paying attention to the summits of life and heroic hours, and neglecting daily life and anonymous hours, that continuity that forms the uninterrupted and solid course of our destiny.


www.marxists.org/archive/palante/1907/simmel.htm

Georges Palante
“By my existence I am nothing more than an empty place, an outline, that is reserved within being in general. Given with it, though, is the duty to fill in this empty place. That is my life.”

Georg Simmel (1858 - 1918) is known for his contributions to sociology and philosophy.

He was a virtuoso on the platform, punctuating the air with abrupt gestures and stabs, dramatically halting, and then releasing a torrent of dazzling ideas. His students and the wider, non-academic audience he attracted to his lectures were enthralled by him. Simmel's enormous success as a lecturer, enabled him to achieve his academic goal, a full professorship at the University of Strasbourg in 1914.

In The Philosophy of Money, Georg Simmel puts money on the couch. He provides us with a classic analysis of the social, psychological and philosophical aspects of the money economy, full of brilliant insights into the forms that social relationships take. He analyzes the relationships of money to exchange, human personality, the position of women, and individual freedom. Simmel also offers us prophetic insights into the consequences of the modern money economy and the division of labour, in particular the processes of alienation and reification in work and urban life.

An immense and profound piece of work it demands to be read today and for years to come as a stunning account of the meaning, use and culture of money.

Georg Simmel (1858-1918) was born in Berlin, the youngest of seven children. He studied philosophy and history at the University of Berlin and was one of the first generation of great German sociologists that included Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Auguste Comte, and Karl Marx.

Money is a reality, a permanent feature of our everyday lives. It gives our lives a particular rhythm, a particular «charm», a particular perception of the world and our place in it. Alla Sheptun
MUSIC FEELS

Tamara Al-Om

Happiness, laughter
Pain, silence
In, out
Love, anger
Sacrifice, hope
Feelings travel, change, reverse, forward
Backwards, upside in, downside out
Confusion, adoration
Passion, devotion
Inconsistency, change, reverse, forward, backward
Love, Lust