

A  
WALL  
PART 3

NEAN'S WRITINGS  
on  
NeanSite

## Dialogue I

WIMZ - How are things, Turlom\*?  
 MTOP - Not bad. You?  
 WIMZ - Good, actually. You know...  
 MTOP - Yes?  
 WIMZ - You said, Song dynasty jades are less valuable than Ming.  
 MTOP - True.  
 WIMZ - So, I thought...  
 MTOP - You thought?  
 WIMZ - Yes. Remember that Transitional blue and white dish you sold me?  
 MTOP - Very nice piece.  
 WIMZ - Well, I'll give you some more money and you could take it back against the Song jade. It's grey, not a popular colour, and the dish is easier to sell, surely.  
 MTOP - You've done that before, you can't just bring something you bought a while ago and exchange it. I'm not a pawn shop.  
 WIMZ - Just a thought, you know.  
 MTOP - It's bad for my business.  
 WIMZ - What about the snuff bottle?  
 MTOP - I didn't know you were interested in snuff bottles. You've always bought early dynasties, always asking about Waring States and Liao, why that sudden change? [Pause] Which one?  
 WIMZ - The mutton-fat one. Mid nineteenth century or later.  
 MTOP - I think 1900. Pure white is very sought after.  
 WIMZ - Chinese taste.  
 MTOP - Why do you like Chinese taste!? You're not Chinese [pause].  
 WIMZ - We're friends though.  
 MTOP - [No pause] When I tell my Chinese friends, we're friends, they all say it's impossible [spontaneous laughter].  
 WIMZ - They like my *Imperial*\*\* stories.  
 MTOP - When I tell them your *Imperial* stories, they laugh a lot.  
 WIMZ - I can imagine. What's the best price?  
 MTOP - It's not for sale.  
 WIMZ - I could pay by monthly instalments.  
 MTOP - £2000. That's a lot of money.  
 WIMZ - Yes, it's a lot of money [embarrassed chuckle].

## Notes

\* Turlom is the Chinese first name of the Beijing born Chinese antiques dealer Chris  
 \*\*\*\*\* . For security reasons, his surname will not be revealed in this text.



\*\* Wolfgang Ink Mark Ziegler named a second hand canary yellow Ford Fiesta he drove to go to work *Imperial*, with reference to the once forbidden yellow colour which only The Chinese Emperor and members of his Court were allowed to wear. The small car had been bought cheaply because of its age, its colour and, as it transpired after the purchase, a worn valve in the oil tank. When the engine was turned off, or when it had to wait for more than a minute at a traffic light, this defect caused the vehicle to stall. Starting the car again often proved difficult, and when this happened at a major crossing, Police intervention was needed to push *Imperial* onto the pavement, and free the gridlocked traffic. Subsequently, a neighbour of Wolfgang, incidentally an English antique dealer in Chinese furniture, sold him her white Volkswagen Polo at a favourable price. The car which Amanda Leader had baptised *Percy*, was in excellent condition and Wolfgang was relieved to drive a vehicle without having to stress over mechanical problems. However, he never called it *Percy* or gave it another name. For more secondhand thrills, read the Boulevard Green Skoda story in Wolfgang's unpublished philosophical novel: *An Inquiry Into The Existence & Nature Of Paradise On Earth*.

## Dialogue II

MTOP - I remember.

WIMZ - Honestly, it was late at night and a black cat suddenly crossed the road from the left, right in front of *Imperial*.

MTOP - *Imperial* stories are always entertaining [chuckle].

WIMZ - I had to apply the breaks at once. The Transitional dish lying on the floor flew up and fell back on the late Ming jade hair-pin underneath. It did not break it, but there is a one-centimeter-long fissure. Both items had multiple layers of packaging, at least the impact was reduced.

MTOP - You're angry because the dish broke the hairpin, I can understand that. I'll take it back for that reason. But seriously, [pause] buy from other dealers, not from me. You're welcome to visit and have a chat, but don't buy [chuckle].

WIMZ - [Silence].

MTOP - Don't buy from me, you're damaging my business. [Small pause] You know, the jade protected you, it took the bad luck for you. You didn't get injured, the jade got injured .

WIMZ - [Pretending to be interested]. True. But because of the purity of the stone, the fissure does not look like a mineral hairline. It looks new [facial expression of disgust].

MTOP - It's not worth £1500 now [chuckle]!

## Dialogue III

MTOP - I've had it for a long time. You've never noticed it?

WIMZ - No. Can I look at it?

MTOP - [Carefully takes the object from an upper shelf.]  
 WIMZ - [Carefully handles and examines the object.] What period would you say?  
 MTOP - That's for you to know. You should know what you buy. I am not telling you. One can't always tell exactly anyway, and then you'll take it to Christies' and if they gave you a later date and a lower estimate, you'd ask for a refund. But if they gave you a higher one, you won't.  
 WIMZ - [Carefully handles and examines the object.] 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century.  
 MTOP - That's right.  
 WIMZ - How much?  
 MTOP - £900.  
 WIMZ - Soft wood, but I'll take it.  
 MTOP - Sculptures of that type do not exist in hardwood. They would have been too precious. The owner would have been killed and the goods stolen.  
 WIMZ - That's fine. I take it.

#### Dialogue IV

WIMZ - [Unwrapping the object and handling it over for examination] Rather than showing you a photo, I brought the framed original. [Fairly long pause] The frame is designed to be hung from any of its four sides, so that you can look at a movement of the fish.  
 MTOP - [Fairly small pause] It's not about a fish. You're interested in the feeling of the fish swimming in water, not in the fish.  
 WIMZ - [Fairly small pause] How do you know that?  
 MTOP - You like the feeling.  
 WIMZ - It's exactly what I had in mind! The ease with which fish moves is more evident than the sensation of freedom felt by a person walking or running.  
 MTOP - That's right! [Fairly small pause] You know Yo-Yo Ma?  
 WIMZ - Yeah, I know Yo-Yo Ma.  
 MTOP - [Fairly small pause] He's a good artist.  
 WIMZ - Yeah. He's a good cellist. And the fact that he's American-Chinese does not stop him from playing Bach better than most Germans. And the fact that I am European does not stop me from having a Chinese scholar's taste, and from understanding Chinese scholar's taste in depth, and better than many Chinese.  
 MTOP - [Fairly small, disconnected pause] Business is getting worse at Portobello. People are not buying; they're just looking and asking questions. Many tourists... They haven't got a clue about art. No point in keeping a stand for much longer and paying rent with no income.  
 WIMZ - Sorry to hear that.  
 MTOP - That's how it is. It's already one o'clock. No one is going to buy now. Fancy going to the pub?  
 WIMZ - My turn. Pint of lager?  
 MTOP - Yes, please.  
 16.

Remember that haunting hesitation regarding Ludovica Albertoni? Should a pathological or spiritual interpretation account for her tormented state of her writhing body? To avoid an anachronistic understanding of the word “daimon” which translates as demon, and soul or spirit, “eu-daimon” literally meaning good demon, we need to show that the notion of soul or spirit in the antique world did not have the same resonance as in the Common Era. Our guide to reveal to what extent ancient Greek polytheism is incompatible with common era theology is Mr. Shallow, a.k.a. Lucian of Samosata. Lucian who came from a family of sculptors used a conceit to glorify the written use of language, and to vilify manual work. In his *Dream*, the author who was destined to an artistic profession but opted for a literary path, tells of his vision of two goddesses who fought for his career choice. The so-called dream happened at the beginning of his apprenticeship, after he had broken an expensive piece of marble from lack of experience in using a chisel. Lucian was castigated for his mistake, which he badly resented. Hence the dream, where a first goddess recommends him to persevere in his artistic pursuit, assuring the apprentice he could become the equal of Phydias and thus would be remembered and honoured by humankind, an alluring prospect. Unfortunately, the second goddess also promises him fame if he turned to study and became a writer, and in addition money and a higher social status. After all, even as a talented sculptor, he would never be acclaimed as respectfully as a scholar. He may even be frowned upon as a manual worker, somehow a lower kind of person. Logocentrism has complex roots in the history of philosophy, but in Lucian’s case, it is plain sailing. The higher reality he bestowed on the power of words rests on bluntly conceded career-mindedness. Lucian’s logocentrism was opportunistic; how he made use of literature tallies with his aspiration to fame and fortune. An anachronism that makes this point, and tells us as much about Lucian as about commercial publishing, is when we compare his genre of writing to tabloids. Tabloids stir curiosity and play on feelings such as envy, anger and Schadenfreude to make big sales. These characteristics apply to Lucian’s gossipy tales about the Gods’ adventures, and their quarrels among themselves and with mortals. Even when below the belt innuendos are dropped and philosophers are taking part in his *Conversations*, greed and stubbornness keep the exchange of thoughts at a level that excludes constructive reflection, and be it on Earth, in Hades or Heaven, remains petty.

Bibliographical reference: *Die Hauptwerke des Lukian*, herausgegeben und übersetzt von Karl Mras, Griechisch und Deutsch, München, 1954.

By way of an introduction to Heraclitus’ philosophy, we have drawn attention to the problematic lexis frequent in ancient texts containing the term “demon”, which nowadays has new and obsolete meanings, and which rely on a notion of gods relatable to types of human behaviour and personality. Whereas Lucian makes it clear through a populist approach that gods are more powerful, yet no better and no worse than mortals, Heraclitus reflects on their notorious powers at a speculative level and keeps trivial psychology at bay. Be the gods Hephaestus, Hestia and Artemis, or XYZ, if the divine ability to perceive and reflect is, as rumoured, widely beyond human comprehension, humans are wasting their efforts, when they try to grasp any aspect of that superior ability. However, the postulate that divine perception and reflection

pass human understanding is graspable and should be inspirational to humans. Typically, humans wish for the goods they prioritise; they pursue health, well-being, and a satisfied and peaceful life, while resenting or at best accommodating misfortunes. This tendency to complain, be it assuaged by a positive form of acceptance: such as a combination of tolerance and relativism, or a less positive one: embittered resignation, is or is not at all, according to opinion, part and parcel of eudaemonism. Nonetheless, it does not take long to discover that these relativised routes cut corners to negotiate an ambiguous, if not contradictory argumentation. Reluctant to separate mortals from gods through an absolute categorical segregation, and therefore part-connecting the two notions though juggling them as opposites, eudaemonic theories place separation on an infinitely dividable scale. We have entered and left Lucianan territory, where both mortals and gods are imperfect, in that they are hopelessly subjected to foibles, a worldview that discards both human and divine eudaemonism, to contemplate afresh eudaemonism as impossible. In the Christian creativity myth, god is the good demon described as infinitely perfect and therefore bound to experience and share perfect eudaemonia. However, even in that absolute scenario, a divine and near divine analogy also tilts the balance, in the tale that narrates that the purest angel who aspired to full divinity was expelled from heaven and became the devil. If divinity exists, then divine happiness, which would be neither intelligible to nor experienceable by mortals, exists for gods only, not for mortals, as intelligible and experienceable. Strictly speaking, it also exists for mortals as a non-applicable concept of unreachable perfect bliss. And conversely, if divinity does not exist, the divine happiness ascribed to mythical entities and their followers cannot exist either and, since it does not and cannot exist, near divine happiness is a misleading and unsafe fantasy to pursue. This sheds a less rosy light on the Aristotelian focus on a wide range of eudaemonic definitions. Most mortals are likely to agree that happiness is the highest good, though no consensus can be obtained on one type of universal happiness that could satisfy all. As a result, those agreeing with that disagreement will seek a compromise on, or a workable configuration of types of happiness necessitated by the idea that perfect happiness, be it argued as existing or non-existent, is out of reach. The necessary nature of philosophical eudaemonism consists of universal disagreement, and an accessibility (or range of practical applications) determined by the irrelevance of its existence and/or non-existence.

Notable configurations include Eckhart's relational ontology formulating a creator-created double dependency, and Nietzsche's sublime transmutation that debunked divine glory into rebunked heroic mental instability. Gods are an idealised projection dreamed by a weak humankind that finds it hard to stop dreaming. Yet, against the odds, hero at heart humans should be able to bring the most desirable attributes conceptualised in divinity out of the oppressing religious realm, and carefully filter them into a superior search for happiness. Elevated philosophical eudaemonism plans to achieve with other means the same goal that ordinary versions of eudaemonism ambition: to turn dreams into reality. Ordinary and elevated dreams may well be stored in completely different boxes on different shelves, they share a parallel determination to replace a dissatisfied lived reality with a living dream. The Nietzschean method plans

to extract mystical visions from their institutional moulds and to incorporate them into an admirable quest that is assured to fail, hence a game of rebunked heroism against debunked sheepish devotions. The Eckhartian method plans to accomplish a retroactive integration. Worldly corrupted creatures do not demand redemption from their "Creator" but faithfully hope that they shall be invited to rejoin "Him" in the cleansing purity of its pre-creational self. Should this reunion be possible, God's glory would be truly infinite, since the divinely granted process of an imperfect creature fully perfected by rejoining its perfect creator makes both creator and creature as complete as can be. Nietzsche and Eckhart constructed a parallel *Kritik* of the near divine in favour of an unbridled determination to reach divine bliss at any cost; the humbled devout by living God, the rebellious hero by killing and replacing him.

Bearing in mind that the notions of creature and creator, and human and superhuman are, though opposites, comparable regressive and progressive articulations, we may wonder what needs to be discussed with the utmost urgency, the eudaemonic foundation or the disparate range of eudaemonic pursuits on which it rests. Setting a divine/near divine analogy as ontological legitimation implies that the happiness striven for on the basis of that analogy, has to be approximate and needs to elude precise definition. Even for those in the past who believed, and those in the present who still believe, in Gods or God, Man or Superman, the divine/near divine analogy sets vagueness at the core of their eudaemonic foundation. Furthermore, they cannot aspire to more than vagueness as they progress towards their goal. What rubbish is that? As for the "as humanly divine as divinely human" equations in the tragic Nietzschean and ecstatic Eckhartian visions, they can concern no more than a minority of believers and atheists on accounts of their elitist demands. Since eudaemonism endorses dreams of perfection, it cannot be concrete. A dream come true cannot remain a dream for long, it will eventually pale into insignificance compared with yet to come onirical updates. And since the most desirable dreaminess can ill be concrete, dreamers shall be calmed down to a soothing debate on responsibility. They shall be summoned to act responsibly, especially when moderate and exacerbated searches for happiness spread confusion and confusion unleashes chaos. By then, muddled and bludgeoned, they may for a while act sensibly, having blocked out what myth took them to their latest mess. Eudaemonism is a monotheistic cornerstone, a true pillar of Western individualism; it is also complete and utter nonsense. The conceptualisation of the gods as more powerful, but not otherwise different from mortals, links mortal prospects to divinely mixed-up paradigms of strife and happiness. Conversely, a near divine state of happiness is not doubted by Greek philosophers as vague, fanciful or logically unsound, but presented as a laudable goal compatible with the prevailing polytheistic ideology. Mythological accounts of dramatic changes which extol heroic mortals and semi-divine figures are congruent with the Aristotelian glorification of eudaemonism, in that they make humans hopeful that their lives could and should be fulfilled. An assortment of all sorts, especially when the myths are critical of the gods, the Titan Prometheus' rebellion in favour of humans or the nymph Daphne's resistance to divine lust for example, eudaemonism strengthens its articulation onto the polytheistic world with varied versions and endings of the same

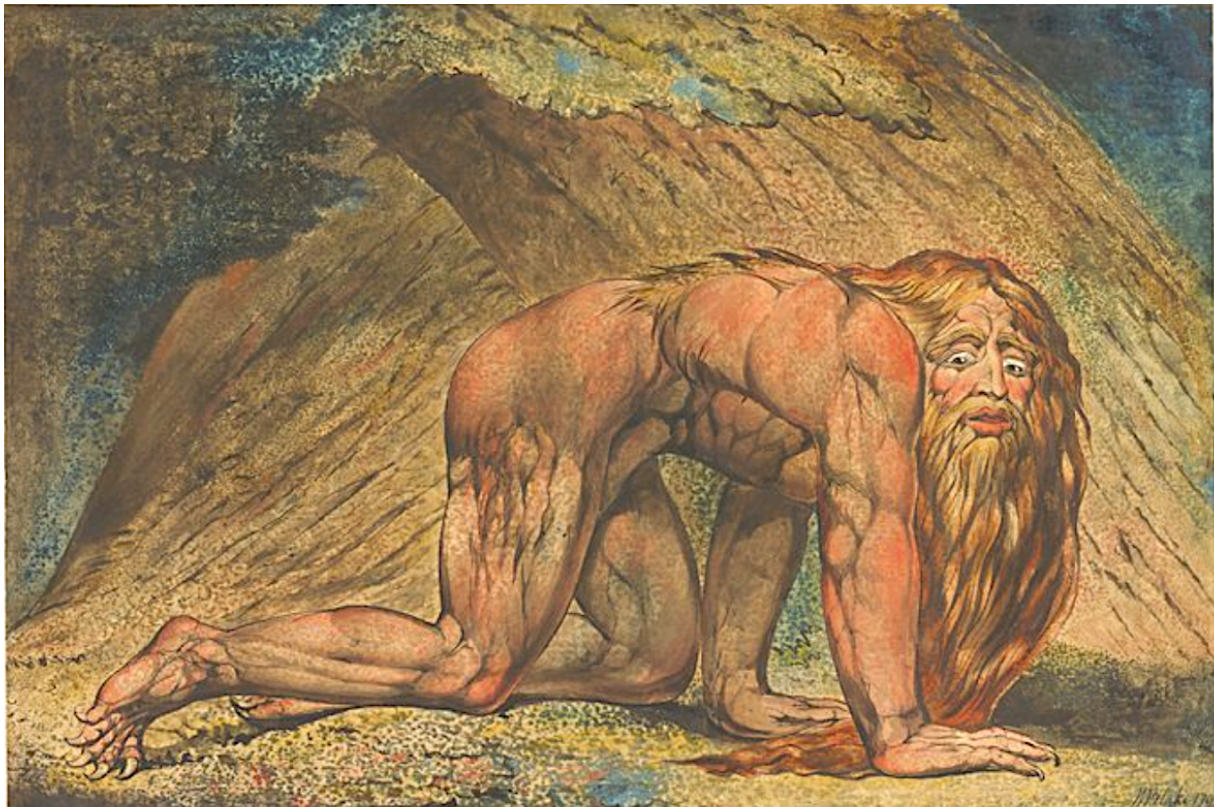
tales. It gains credibility through a faceted complexity that amplifies an instituted divine/near divine confusion as the broad and lively palette of existence. Against them, “as humanly divine as divinely human” analogies offer non-, para- and anti-institutional alternatives with scant prospect of success and therefore with scant appeal to a public.

Not intending to refute the divine/near divine ideology, but resolute to examine it quietly from a perspicacious angle, Heraclitus hones on the generically human eudaemonic Achilles’ heel. Being immortal does not relieve the gods from grounds to complain, for example Hera being cuckolded by her husband Zeus and remonstrating to him; nonetheless, immortality allows them to overcome ways of thinking and feeling heavily influenced by frustration. If I have infinity to know and find what I want, the chances are that a good portion of my wishes are likely to be granted, or else become irrelevant. On the other hand, if my life is finite, these chances are reduced. Fragment 102 suggests a completely abstract scale between those two extremes: *To gods all things are fair and just, whereas humans have supposed that some things are unjust, other things just.* At any near divine point of the scale, eudaemonism is striven for by mortals; nonetheless, at the purely divine upper end, the concept becomes inapt. It has no reason to subsist because of eternity replacing the time factor that conditions eudaemonic aspirations. The scale’s lower end suggests that human ideas of necessity are individually distorted by subjectivity; even though objective efforts tackle individual distortions to some extent, those can only be altered, not eradicated, due to limitations in human knowledge. Distorted perceptions of necessity (human condition), inflated ideas of objectivity (anthropocentrism) and resolute searches for happiness (eudaemonism) cannot but overlap; they are one and the same phenomenon. Indeed, humans are self-critical, but their self-criticism is like their hearing: selective. Like the criticism of the gods inherent to the ancient Greek polytheistic narrative, eudaemonic aspirations ply analogical ideas that reform self-criticism to a self-indulging relational exercise. In the antique world, hybrid creatures such as chimeras and centaurs were supposed to interrelate animal, human and divine forms of existence. Prominent public figures such as populist politicians, tax avoiding philanthropists, entertainers and influencers, our Common Era’s hybrids, relate ordinary humans to admired role-models of modern near divine privileged living. Even though he also resorted to a divine and near divine scale that measures analogical units, Heraclitus stands out of the confused crowd. The abstract quality of his thinking distances his use of the scale from its obligatory psychological aura by tackling the polytheistic background of his time as a cold logical premise, away from warm, caring anthropocentric correctness. Heraclitus had no choice but to refer to the divine/near divine comparative parameter so engrained in the thinking of his time. Ignoring or dismissing it would have been as futile and counterproductive as contesting democracy, the rule of law and human rights today. On one hand, democracy, the rule of law and human rights are measuring sticks that are ignored on a daily basis, precisely when they should be used and would be pertinent. On the other hand, they are misused in acts of self-celebration that stop humans from recognising planet’s rights.

Happiness outside the human sphere of self-indulgence was then, as it now still is, barely conceivable. Where would it flourish? What else could beat the current offers?

A powerful example, this time monotheistic, is delivered by the story of King Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylonia. Represented in Biblical texts as a proud monarch reluctant to recognise supreme divine might, he was punished for his arrogance by being turned into an animal forced to live in the wilderness. The demotion inflicted onto the regal heretic dovetails into the divine/ near divine parallelism and makes it abundantly clear that non-human natural life forms are judged lower than human, and thus relegated to the bottom of the monotheist hierarchical scheme; from right at the top: god > to < pope < emperor or king < empress or queen < vassals and clergy < man < woman < child < animal < all the way down to > devil. William Blake depicted the punished misbeliever with mane and claws, creeping on all fours in a state of bestial regression. In the *Book of Daniel*, the eponymous prophet revealed to the king the meaning of the dreams that plagued him, which the wise men of Babylon, even when threatened with the loss of their lives, had not dared explain. Daniel's interpretation couches in diplomatic language a warning which the King underestimates, his pride preventing him to see himself as symbolic clay, and his Kingdom subjected to a higher one, not to one on this earth. By ignoring an admonition from the uppermost instance, the "God of Gods" (an interestingly pyramidal hyperbole), Nebuchadnezzar falls from grace. Like gold degraded all the way down from silver, brass and iron into helpless mud, Nebuchadnezzar is eventually transformed from king to quadruped.

*William Blake, Nebuchadnezzar, colour monotype in tempera, finished with pen, black ink and watercolour on cream paper, 1795, credit: The Miscellaneous Works of Art Purchase Fund, 1957, accession Number P.12,581, MIA (Minneapolis Institute of Art)*





*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

*Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

Daniel 2, 44 and 45, King James version

An early medieval illumination dated around 1000-1050 shows almost the same depiction of the creeping king as in the various versions of the subject by William Blake. The image reproduced below is the lower half of the one reproduced in Timothy Husband's book. The striking resemblance between Blake's print(s) and the considerably earlier manuscript illumination is due to the draughtsmen's graphic rendering of exactly the same Biblical passage, even though not in the same translation!

*The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.*

Daniel 2, 33, King James version



*Above plate (Fig. 8): Timothy Husband with the assistance of Gloria Gilmore-House, The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1980, page 8.*

*Full manuscript page, folio 65 v, illuminated parchment. Songe de Nabuchodonosor voyant l'arbre (1er registre); Daniel expliquant le songe et Nabuchodonosor chassé du trône (2e registre); Nabuchodonosor changé en bête (3e registre), Roda Bible, Catalonia, dated circa 1050-1075. Collection: Saint-Pierre de Roda, maréchal de Noailles, BNF, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris*





According to Timothy Husband, the wild man iconography represents a counter image to socially refined humans, who in the late Middle Ages were influenced by both religious creed and superstitious beliefs to such an extent that they could no longer draw a line between the two. The *Wild Man*, therefore, and by extension the *Wild Family* consisting of *Wild Dad*, *Wild Mum* and *Wild Children* symbolised, in an era where *Wild Step Siblings* and *Wild Divorced or Adoptive Parents* were not yet all the rage, a reassuring but mostly witty buffer zone between primitive and civilised societal stages. Basel's Museum of History owns a mid 15<sup>th</sup> century wall hanging whose subject matter grandly and deliberately confuses wood and castle dwellers. Dressed with an ornamental sash holding a hunting horn and carrying a spear on his right shoulder, a barefoot wildman otherwise traditionally clad with sheep skin, his brow adorned with a crown of vine or twigs, holds a bloodhound on leash. The pair follows two other hounds pursuing a chased stag. Unmistakably, the depicted wildman engages in a privileged pastime reserved to nobility: stag hunting. Therefore, the tapestry did and did not provide a counter image to socially refined humans, since its depicted wildman is socially refined in his attire and manner of hunting. Which throws the question, whether the nobleman refined and cultured enough to have commissioned and enjoyed this customised wall hanging was not, when he contemplated the woven scene, satisfying a hunger for *wild* thrills well below his lofty position. On the one hand, the amusing representation of a *Noble Wild Man* befits a commission aiming to please a cultured patron with luxury *wild* thrills. On the other hand, it anticipates the serious *Noble Savage* ideology advocated by Montaigne and Rousseau. As a power holder, the nobleman could do what he pleased in public. Others who could not, but also craved to admire *wild* pictures, did it in secret. In the Middle Ages, monks stood in choir stalls when they sang the liturgy; they were not allowed to sit down. To relieve the strain of standing, a trick was devised. While the folding seats were pushed up against the stall's backs for the choir singers to perform standing, a ledge underneath them allowed partial sitting in the form of leaning. Called misericords for the small mercy they offered, the smaller underseats also catered for a less immediate need, they were carved with "naughty" secular images from pagan mythology, one of them being the head of a wildman. Like the *Wildmen on a Stag Hunt* tapestry, *The Wild Man from Wells Cathedral* is a work of accomplished craftsmanship, a serious artistic undertaking. Looking at the pained face with knotted brow and full hair and beard, it is impossible to miss the similarity between this neckless portrait and representations of the severed Head of John the Baptist. Raising from an oak plank to support the merciful ledge, the face might as well lay on a silver salver. Its symmetrical and regular features lend it dignity, indeed a profundity customarily denied to images of *wild people*. In the case of a 14<sup>th</sup> century choir stall carving and of a 15<sup>th</sup> century wall hanging, we find comparably qualitative treatments of the *Wild Man* iconography that evidence a longing for the repressed primitive side of human nature.

*Wilde Leute auf der Hirschjagd (Wildmen on a Stag Hunt)*, wall hanging, wool tapestry in two sections, each with a height of 123 to 128.5 cm, and width of 253 cm, Basel, circa 1468, Inventory number 1981.88 © Historisches Museum Basel, Peter Portner. The illustration below shows the first section.





*The Wild Man from Wells Cathedral*, misericord, carved oak with traces of gilding, Somerset, England, early 14th century. Gift of the Architectural League of New York, collection record: 1912-1-1-b, © Cooper Hewitt, New York



Using the modern notions of fake, kitsch and comfort zone, we could interpret the *Wild Humans* iconography as a means of spreading a large number of made-up images meant to occupy idle communities, like today's pictures of trolls and yetis, banners, profile avatars and emoticons. Late mediaeval images disseminated immediately recognisable stereotypes that flattered viewers with a representation of lesser "natural humans" based on imagination, not on observation, research or discovery. Whether the concepts of "wild man" or "natural human" ever had any logical or factual relevance, what kind of "wild humans" had existed, and when and where, and whether images of

*Wild People* caricatured an early anthropological reality or accrued the Greco-Roman mythological lore with another fabulous creature type, are all appropriate questions to a modern, but definitely not to a mediaeval mind. The *Wild Man* myth inculcated illiterate and literate Bible taught populations, who had learned from sermons and scenes of the Old Testament to mistrust nature, with the unfitting appearance humans would have had, had they remained close to their natural environment. Husband refers to the second and third sections of the Ronda Bible to confirm an ideological and visual affiliation between Nebuchadnezzar narratives and *Wild Man* iconographies. Nebuchadnezzar's insurgent pride is crushed by almighty Creator, whereas law abiding mediaeval citizens pride themselves not to be or at least not to look like *Wild People*, and celebrate a laudable sense of civilising accomplishment. Although we no longer nail bats' wings on barn doors for Satanic allegiance, we still burn domestic animals for spreading disease. Brutal offhand attitudes towards the natural world have not vanished with discarded superstitions; that tendency has been reversed since the later phase of the Enlightenment with some, but not with complete success.

Contemplating the whole manuscript page from the *Roda Bible*, we notice how a programmatic composition unfolds from the Creator's hand at the centre of the Tree of Life, in the upper tier, down to the creature's claws at the bottom of the lowest. In the first tier, the illumination shows humans and fauna in Paradise, where recognisable species and mythical animals peacefully live alongside. Only humans populate the second tier which represents Nebuchadnezzar's dethronement. However, in the third tier, humans and fauna share a communal space, as in the first. In both tiers, no contact is depicted. The domestic animals at the bottom, an ox and a dog no more take heed of Nebuchadnezzar than he does of them. As in the Paradise scene, they are spatially close to one another, but give us the impression they have little in common, like indifferent colleagues who happen to work at the same place. Albeit, even in the most enduring patriarchal anthropocentrism, where "Man" has been given rightful sole possession of the Earth, that domination can only take place with non-human interaction. The illuminated page allows eye contact neither between animals and humans nor between humans and animals. Nonetheless, the calm cohabitation of a varied assortment of animals and indeed the tree at the centre, recall the garden of Eden. In the early scriptures, Daniel is not far from Genesis. Flora and fauna cannot be dissociated from one of the earliest anthropocentric messages that had to be delivered through non-human connections. How else? We are told that forbidden divine knowledge, to which one species of fruit symbolically gave access, was located in flora (a tree), and that fauna (a snake) induced the first mortals to eat from an apple. Ignoring the ultimate warning which was addressed to them, not to the flora and fauna which, in the absence of other available actors had to deliver *temptation*, the first two human archetypes kicked nature and themselves out of paradise. At a symbolical and ideological level, human and non-human knowledge may not recognise one another although they are intertwined; no divine power without creation, no divine interdiction without forbidden tree, no devil's apparition without tempting snake. Beyond Antiquity and the Middle Ages, does the *Wild Man* myth persist in our cultures of culture, and their intermittent repressed celebrations of nature? Like the *Wild People* iconography

that presented speculative representations of their natural selves to viewers of the same race, human zoos exhibited in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century non-Europeans “specimens” in cages, Buffalo Bill’s native Americans for instance. What Caucasian visitors admired and/or dreaded in those spectacles compares to the iconography we have discussed: “curiosities”. Starting afresh with the question whether non-human knowledge exists in the form of inter-species communication, making reference to Nebuchadnezzar narratives and *Wild Man* iconographies, we came across a one-way system that far from pertaining to a specific culture can be found overall in societal constructs: the idea that knowledge is essentially human. If treatment of information constitutes knowledge, be it numerical or linguistic or otherwise, then, for example, chemically processed information released from bacterial DNA inside the human microbiome communicates with human cells just as soil microbiome communicates with the plants that depend on the nutritive constituents it releases. Similarly, the food and the medicine we digest contain information that is decoded by the organs that transform absorbed matter. We could even say “interpret” or “translate” nutritional and chemical intakes. A person’s liver will identify alcohol as a toxic substance and will filter it to avoid its spread throughout the whole body, while another person’s liver will delegate that task to other organs and avoid cirrhosis, but not alcohol poisoning. Anthropocentrism and logocentrism are one and the same aberration, as long as we reduce thought and knowledge to a linguistic filter and remit, our understanding of live matter excludes inter-species communication. By ignoring the role of less obviously manifestable and/or manifested communication and perpetuating that exclusion to our convenience, we act like a liver reluctant to damage itself that gives the green light to general organic destruction. Granted, the Earth will not choose international English to sing to us simple tips on how to spare vital resources and it will not tell us to recite ten Ave Marias to solve our climate crisis and feel squeaky clean, but it will quietly increase temperatures and the frequency of natural disasters. If we try to understand that message and act accordingly, we acknowledge inter-species knowledge. If we neither see nor reason on historically documented evidence and argue that we cannot know, we shall “be told” in other ways and we shall know belatedly. Sarcastically, the word materialism that denotes an excessive consumption of material goods has also a philosophical meaning. Philosophical materialism implies that everything is matter, ideas, feelings as well as more concretely perceptible phenomena. In that perspective, communication cannot be limited to the use of articulated language, and critical thought cannot be defined as an insubstantial attribute reserved to one species and denied to all others. Besides, when AI, still in its infancy, becomes an unruly child that grows into an argumentative teenager, the synthetic instrument elevated to an opinion sharing partner may make some of us feel incompetent. Whether or not, AI will affect the feeling of human superiority that is responsible for the Wild Man iconography is very plausible; in what ways it will, is controversial. What is certain, is that AI is a eudaemonic machine.

Detail from Albrecht Dürer’s print: *Die Buße des Heiligen Chrysostomus*, middle section. Albrecht Dürer, *The Penance of Saint John Chrysostom*, circa 1496, engraving on paper, 18.1 x 11.8 cm, credit: gift of Henry Walters, 1917, accession number: 17.37.28, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York







Several photographs of costumed groups of men (*Kläuse-Schuppel*) celebrating the Julian New Year (*Alter Silvester*) in Waldstatt, Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden, CH, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023, Photos Ziegler

With particular reference to the latest *Alter Silvester* celebrations in the Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden (which oxymoronically translates as *Old New Year*), Timothy Husband's interpretation of the *Wild Man*, as indeed the 1988 MET exhibition, stand out in their exploration of a theme dedicated to and enshrined within the cut-off past. Contrary to that approach, the *Wild Man* tradition is not over, it endureth. Even if we dated the topic's mid to late developments around 1496 and considered a Renaissance rendering of the antique legend of Saint John Chrysostom within that periodisation, the theme's modernity cannot easily stay unnoticed. Whether we look at the whole plate or a detail makes no difference, through an extreme contrast of scale Dürer's print sets two outcasts apart and yet also together in the same wilderness. In relation to the central figure dominating the composition, the Saint appears diminutive and marginal. The central figure, a young and healthy mother stilling her child, exudes maternal happiness. Since a halo adorning the Saint's head intimates that the print is not primarily a landscape but a religious image, associating the mother and child group with a variation on the theme of the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus in the wilderness is congruent with other scenes pertaining to that popular genre, for example the so-called *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. In contradistinction to her figural counterpart, the quadrupede bearded creeper, the woman's action and posture strike as natural. To boot, they also tally with the iconography of The Virgin Mary breastfeeding Her Son. As a consequence, her nudity appears appropriately natural, not wild. The sitter performs a customary lactating act expressed by her normal anatomical features and posture. One could even argue that the maternal status this image shares with images of The Virgin Mary breastfeeding Her Son sanctifies her appearance, certainly not the rendering of a lost looking John Chrysostom, even though her free flowing unkempt strands of curly hair typify a *Wild Woman*.

To use the title of one of Terence's comedies in connection with the Jungian concept of archetype, John Chrysostom's self-punishing and self-torturing demeanour relates to the *heautontīmōrūmenos* (ἐαυτὸν τιμωρούμενος) disposition: a person inflicting self-punishment. An anchorite who internalised a Christian, more specifically Paulian interpretation of sexuality, John Chrysostom was not condemned to creep on all four for having had intercourse outside the sanctity of wedlock, he condemned himself to this form of chastisement. With particular reference to Dürer's *Penance of Saint John Chrysostom*, the *Wild Man* theme divides into wild versus natural and wild versus civilised and wild versus sanctified and holy. The Wild Man does not stand against civilisation in automated counter-identification mode. To be sure, many well-heeled parishioners able to afford a print, a painting or a tapestry representing a "wild" person or "wild" people, would have felt gratified to stand in front of such an image enabling them to relish the contrasting comfort and privilege of their secure position. But as Dürer's provocative treatment of a hagiographic legend makes it plain, they may also have toyed with other thoughts. One of them being a moral and sexual permissiveness



and a lack of social constraints and etiquette which even pillars of the Establishment cannot afford without taking risks and facing potentially unpleasant consequences. As long as *Wild People* are perceived to miss out on the comforts brought by civilisation, they may be reduced to a laughingstock. Yet, as soon as we turn the tables and ask ourselves which of their entitlements eludes us most, we may wonder whether urban repression deprives us of many, most or few of them. Are moral and sexual permissiveness, and a lack of social constraints and etiquette, worth having at the cost of foregoing technological convenience? Superficially considered, the *Wild People's* assumed struggle to sustain themselves at the mercy of weather and erratic food supply may cause physiologically weaker city-dwellers to gloat with Schadenfreude.



Since we have not experienced them, we imagine harsh and precarious life conditions which we associate with the earliest and earlier stages of our species' evolution, pre- and early agrarian and tribal societies, and by extension with the *Wild Man* myth and iconographies. These imaginings need not be induced by dread. Enough city-dwellers practise sport or train in a gym, to be able to realise that a fit condition provides the mental and physical equilibrium that eschews sedentary lifestyles, whereby notions of health and comfort will always be relative and debatable. For instance, eating palatable food after seven hours walk gives a pleasure unknowable to an overfed gourmet whose diet is dictated by appetite, not hunger. The gourmet's fine taste does not hinge on hunger, therefore gourmets, not to mention gourmands, cannot discover and enjoy the taste and benefit of food in the way a hungry person does. Gourmets and gourmands



let their gastronomic aesthetics depend on appetite confused with, or built up independently of hunger. The same applies to sexual appetite, the constant freedom to make the most of opportunistic encounters yields less urge to maintain an ongoing intercourse frequency based on a stable partnership. For sure, permissiveness grants a spiral of fantasies, unrelieved or acted out, that can be inflamed or tamed anywhere, in the country or in towns. But do not cities exacerbate all manner of wishes and desires trusted to procure fulfilment? Country people lead a life surrounded by natural needs, that on the whole neither excludes nor glorifies desires. Busy, pressed and repressed townies are seen indulging in food and alcohol or tablet binges. Country bumpkins watch them on television, in dramatic films and series where they grow fixated on relationships in terms of could-be committed and/or casual gratifications. City dwellers lead a life dominated by created needs and psychosexualised desires that threaten to distort their inherited instinctive drives but can earn them stardom in the film industry or its introspective upshot: the personalised Kopfkino. They may well dream of escaping to the countryside, but do they interpret their dreams and act upon them when they script yet another televised novella? To what extent, assuming that someone could answer the question, can an anthropological compatibility between reason and instincts be probed, and its findings cross-examined and used in philosophical, socio-economic and cultural investigations? To what extent does anyone comparing country and city folk give answers applicable to both and/or clichés helpful to none? Don't ask me.



In Waldstatt, I talked to the father of the two boys who, once adult performers had completed their dance and moved to another open venue to repeat the ritual, sang a well-rehearsed yodel. Though he lived and worked in the Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden, distinctive like the neighbouring Canton Appenzell Innerrhoden for centuries of agrarian high culture, the man was no farmer. Had he been one, his sons would have been under considerable pressure to perpetuate a major local tradition. They were under no pressure. Patiently they waited for their turn, no nervous giggling, no loud overexcitement. And what is even more uncommon among children, they behaved unblemished by shyness or self-importance. And so did their senior viewers, whose use of mobile phone camera and outspoken praise revealed no embarrassment but stayed restrained and understated. Most marvellous was the children's level of concentration before, during and after the coordinated singing.

It felt as if they did the thing for its own sake in an ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) -freed universe, where reward had become superfluous to incentivise self-discipline and attainment. Later in the afternoon, they remained composed as they removed their costume and answered the paternal query whether all had gone well. He explained that he left it to them to participate; they had started last year and had enjoyed their contribution to the festival so far. Look at the face of someone reading, or playing an instrument or accomplishing a precise task. See the javelin throwers eyeing their target and lifting their arm. Watch the computer gamers clicking at the console, feel the intense concentration they apply. To what extent can an anthropological compatibility between reason and instincts be probed and its findings cross-examined and used in philosophical, socio-economic and cultural investigations? Unlike Urnäsch, Waldstatt does not feature on tourists' maps. Friends from Urnäsch, which really is not far from Waldstatt, but then they've never been there, assumed when I phoned them to report on my visit, that the town was drowned under snooping visitors. Maybe because of its museum which documents local *Alter Silvester* traditions and offers an all-year display of antique *Alter Silvester* masks, and for further commercial reasons, Urnäsch consciously advertises the event and attracts a huge influx of seasonal tourists. Some of them, I am told, try to barge into private houses and farms outside which the events are held. Why did I not come to Urnäsch for the occasion? Because I prefer Urnäsch before and after that occasion. From 16:00 till late in the night, in the massive Waldstatter municipal assembly hall large enough to accommodate every family in the village, performers tirelessly resumed the song and dance acts they had started at the crack of dawn on grazing fields and by cow sheds in front of herds, their prime audience. Puberting youths and volunteers from the local fire brigade served food and drink to a colourful mix of generations sitting on long benches at long tables, where they sampled Appenzeller beer, boiled meat, chips or bread and barley soup. Waldstatt celebrates its Year's first but never to be last communal supper. For year after year it upholds the pagan values that bless us. In religio we bind under the spell of the collective unconscious that grants us what we always have owned, and what can under no circumstances be taken away from us: absolute satisfaction. We are the collective unconscious, we are absolute satisfaction, a confident manifestation of unrepentant transience. The peace that reigns in the hall



will not hold forever; no peace does. It will for a while still burn out of ceased fire like broken ceasefires penned on calendars. No peace should be asked to deliver what peacefulness cannot provide. Hours of anguish melt into moments of joy, minutes of astonishment build up years of achievement sanctioned by the utmost futility: eternity measured between renewals and inventions. What's that got to do with *A WALL*, the installation? With understanding without explanation? With finding answers without asking questions? *What the fuck that's got to do with reveling under a constellation?* Not to mention the pursuit of an apposite material philosophy.



Both Rita and Marcus come from Canton Zürich, but they've been living in Urnäsch for a long time and are unlikely to move anywhere else. Their children speak the local dialect. In Waldstatt and Urnäsch, and no doubt in both Appenzeller Cantons, opinions are divided. Some argue that destitution inspired the need to make masks and wear them to beg profitably when parading on *Old New Year's Day*. Others see the masks as defiance against Church authority, while a third opinion defends the ritual as pagan practice that the established denominations threatened to break, but could not eradicate. Rita believes that these three interpretations do not exclude but complement one another, and for once I agree with her. But I disagree with the tourists flocking to Urnäsch and with Rita, that the masks make the celebration. Three main *Schuppel* (groups of 6 to 8 men) wear different costumes, but perform similar movements and sing a similar *natural yodel* (a yodel without words). In Waldstatt and Urnäsch, the *Wüeschte* ("Wild People") wear fir tree branches with or without straw and rabbit or fox fur; the *Schöne* ("Beautiful People") wear elaborate dresses and a heavy headgear modelling a local landscape with farms and other buildings; while the in-between groups *Schö-Wüeschte*, (half "Wild", half "Beautiful") combine selected conventions. In Waldstatt the *Wüeschte* do not wear a mask (*Larve*). In Urnäsch, they and the



*Halbwüeschte* do. It did not matter from which angle I photographed the Waldstatt's *Wüeschte* their individual faces disappeared under the green needles; they could not be captured. As if the woods asserted their biological right to belong to themselves when humans intercede on their behalf. The Waldstatter *Schö-Wüeschte* wear austere masks in form, function and materials. Nose shape, eye and nose holes denote a human impersonation of the forest, bark and fir-cones the forest being impersonated. No fun and glance in the guise of a witch face with carbuncles on her nose, or other comic convention's popular caricatures. Townies are watching a quaint documentary on the latest *Alter Silvester* celebrations in Urnäsch, on the telly.

The belief that life originates from matter should not be discussed with sole or preferential reference to philosophical texts, insofar as material philosophy advocates the important idea of non- and pre-linguistic origins. *Wüeschte* who act out a walking and dancing forest are not the forest and do not own a forest, while the forest they impersonate shelters people and provides them with timber in their agrarian as well as in their ritual modes of existence. *Wüeschte* therefore symbolically represent people living in and from the forest, as well as the forest. As in prehistoric and primitive societies where the clear divide between animal and human and natural and cultural that stultifies civilisation, did not exist, being in the forest develops to being forest and non-forest. Pagan logic articulates being and non-being associatively, whereas civilisation promotes disassociative logics that postulate differentiation within classification: divide and conquer. Singing and dancing are non-forest actions carried out by the *Kläuse-Schuppel*. When still (i.e. not dancing or singing), the *wüeschte Schuppel* are the near silent forest recognisable through and manifested by tree branches, when moving and making noise, they are inside the forest. Being in the forest and the forest articulates to being silent and noisy, mobile and immobile, active and inactive, communicative and meditative. Civilised logic, with the exception of early Daoism which we shall fleetingly examine in this essay, opposes action to inaction, work to rest and leisure, noise to silence, and so on and so forth. In wild as well as Daoist logic, non-action provides the core part of action and determines its worth. For example, animal as well as human hunters successfully seize their prey because they have observed and tracked it silently; the hunt's forceful part is the shortest and last. Work and rest, thought and deed are on that basis relative and meaningfully interchangeable. Not so when civilisation, that grotesquely magnifies the importance of work, compensates the labouring masses it subjugates, with recreational rewards. *Panes et ludes* did not have to wait until the post-surrealist age of multi-media expansion to multiply globally; they had an imperial start which is here to stay. Like types of work, choice of entertainment defines sections of a community among others and then divides them within themselves and against others. A higher income or gentler work conditions, more exclusive preferences or products reward competing game players for their efforts; leftovers befall the rest. So much for solidarity. Public ties tighten and loosen, until slackened sections subdivide into long lists of loners glaring at their laptop or phone screen that glares back at them. The lists compile the electronic addresses of those who visited the same websites; they are sold to firms that thrive thanks to these personal data enlarging their client base and turnover

potential. When one person watches a series or porn or shops online, there is another person somewhere else, perhaps very different, yet doing exactly the same thing. Various people who are on their own when information about their online activities is gathered, are thus virtually brought together by sites' cookies harvesting lists of users. To them an unfelt existence in numerically coded sequences pales into insignificance, since it does not jeopardise the overwhelming perception, that they do what they want and what they like. Nonetheless, the lists keep refining the range of searched and accessed sites. And the lists cannot provide and do not replace social cohesion. Amusement isolates and isolation amuses. We may regard the people who shop or watch porn or a series online, as loneliness cases. If so, we would underrate the feeling of privacy and independence that enriches their unique experience. And when we (perhaps occasionally rather than frequently) shop or watch porn or a series online, we may enjoy the fine privilege of not being addicted. Yet, that sense of self-control compares to less restrained levels of consumption and even to critical ones, in that it imparts a feeling of rightful privacy that mushrooms into relaxing illusions, all culminating in the silly thought of freedom. Needless to say that freedom is the most valuable good a prisoner could want, and money the most sensible commodity the poor require. By the same token, freedom and money cannot have the same meaning and relevance to those who are well-off and avail themselves of countless opportunities. A better life, comfort, happiness and freedom are not only principles and notions that mean different things and a different reality to different people, they also are principles and notions that are distilled into the most abstract concepts whose universality confuses philosophers and creates havoc in politics. A better life, comfort, happiness and freedom, be they expressed in outwardly legal, cultural or commercial terms, build the deceptive foundation on which unrelenting capitalism forever relies.

Of course, to some extent *Schuppel* are entertaining; nonetheless, they first and foremost bind their community. Maskless *Wüeschte* who experience and radiate the religious (bonding) feeling that forest and land feed them and should therefore be respected and celebrated, defer to the forest, not to the Christian principle that nature was created to be dominated and exploited by "Man". Such attitude and traditions have philosophical implications. The maskless *Wüeschte* and their audience are and are not the forest and are and are not people, in that they ritually and habitually define themselves as people (mostly but certainly not always) living in harmony with nature. Like them I am and am not, I have and do not have. Although I am not from an Appenzeller Canton, locals welcome my outsider's presence that approves of their regional identity. Because I am not from an Appenzeller Canton, but enjoy and partake of their folklore, locals benefit from my outsider's presence that supports their regional identity beyond provincial confines. For hours, I spoke to quite a few Waldstatter and sat and ate at the same table with people I had never met before; nonetheless, no one asked me the loaded question: *Where do you come from?* This would have immediately distracted us from our ongoing topic of conversation: the *Alter Silvester* celebrations in the Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden with particular reference to Waldstatt and Urnäsch, while propelling specific and related developments with ad libidem interruptions. Either the festival was made by locals for locals and external

intrusions threaten to disturb the celebrations or, the festival was made by locals for locals and visitors can respect, and in so doing strengthen, traditional proceedings. Unavoidably, the *Alter Silvester* celebrations have changed over the centuries. Yet, they have not changed to salvage an interest they could no longer generate. One of the festival's strengths, its resilience that we call tradition, spares us the anxiety it might be better run and could have more to offer. The *Kläuse-Schuppel* are not judged by an audience evaluating their respective merits; each performance constructs a day cemented by their similarities. As to the giant hall that houses a whole village feasting under the same roof, it sets a mood of contentment expressing that guests, irrespective of look and outlook, are all there at the right place and at the right time. Beware of interfering novelty! Consumerist strategies obsessed with the ploy of *the New* constantly interrupt. We are told to part with the old and to put our trust in replacements. We are prompted to surrender to the slightest sign of boredom or dissatisfaction so that we dump what has endured, and make place for Ersatz-proliferation. Away with hand copied manuscripts, print books! Away with printed books, store digitised tomes! *The New(!)* alleges that upgrades of any ilk make earlier versions obsolete as if, from that starting point, their ultimate purpose had always been to be replaced. Even though my take on the Waldstatter *Alter Silvester*, my accent(s), sense of dress and other signals indicated that I did not belong to their corner of the wood, we carried on the conversation without being sidetracked, as our broached topic was relevant to us: to them as the custodians and practioners of the Waldstatter *Alter Silvester*, and to me as an interested visitor. Whereby, they divided into locally matching roles: performers and supporters, and I joined them in an extra co-acting cameo. Think of musicians playing to an audience; the last tuning, whispering and coughing sounds abate as the concert is about to begin. The auditorium doors are being softly closed, silence becomes palpable. Now, imagine an audience attending a concert without orchestra, a pointless exercise. If the orchestra expects an audience, but no one shows, they can practise and pretend to themselves that the scheduled concert was in fact a rehearsal. But if the auditorium remains empty for the subsequent scheduled performances, for which they would have further prepared themselves in vain, there would no longer be a justified reason to rehearse. To some extent, musicians play to and for themselves, and to some extent, they play to and for others. Only playing to and for others would deprive them of rehearsal, only playing to and for themselves would reduce their practice to a rehearsal; oddly, for the sake of no performance. As the well rehearsed two boys performed, an audience supported them with the silence they needed, the same intense silence that a discerning public affords a full symphonic orchestra, saturating a shared space with blended accords. We are not talking here about testosterone fired fans straining their vocal chords towards a so-called national team composed of obscenely expensive players from any other countries, because no one local can play football well enough. We are not talking about crowds of gregarious cowards who struggle to like themselves, whom no one really likes, and whose gleeful fascistic chant unsuspectingly confirms the law of physics that empty vessels make the most noise. We are talking about liked and skilled people whose opinions and tastes, should they be at variance with visitors who interact with them, do not make them less likeable. Does *A WALL* evoke defensive and assertive interpretations of a closed lived-



in place? Artefacts populating a vertical surface turn it into a collection of heterogeneous ideas that hang together. Any or each or many or a few or all of the artefacts that might entice the viewer do it as part of an assortment of diverse items that cohesively harmonise. A *WALL* is a collection of small sculptures whose sum total delivers a visual and notional image, visually and notionally as significant as its constituent parts. Similarities in colour and form offset differences in tone and composition. Similarities and differences are equally attractive and engaging. Attractive similarities and differences engage the viewer; the viewer interacts with open balances of power. Balances of power are seldom described as fair, enjoyable and interesting. Could equally attractive similarities and differences strike a fair, enjoyable and worthwhile balance of power? If you don't know, why should I?

If our thoughts were the same, examining them could not be exciting. That they appear different when they are similar, and are similar when they feel different, prompts a debate whose conclusion does not have to be reached through agreement. Already in his first sermon, identity and power are central themes. And there is “more” to it. The Dominican preacher writing about incomparable divine goodness stands, by ancient and modern standards, all tests of tolerance when he judges, but nonetheless qualifies the merchants’ intentions as “good”. Eckhart interprets the expulsion of the merchants from the temple as a restitution of legitimate ownership, and the temple itself as a symbol of the human soul and divine will: *dâ got inne hêrschen wil gewalticliche nâch sînem willen, daz ist des menschen sêle*. The creationist argument is logical; because they owe “Him” everything they are and have, the merchants are in no position to handle with “their Maker”. That they may thrive in bestowed divine peace and light therefore defines the creatures’ true identity, and relates them to god’s identity who is and has divine peace and light, through being, having, but also bestowing these attributes. The creationist argument is not only circular but reciprocal, no creature can exist without creator and no creator without creatures; power therefore has to be shared through a mutual bond and when power is shared, not imposed, so is identity. To dismiss this idea of power-share based on existential acceptance and understanding on account of its religious character would be foolish, since it also makes sense from atheist perspectives. For one, because it relates to pre-Christian philosophers, such as Epicurus who set the pleasure principle *hedone* (ἡδονή) against a compensating principle called *ataraxia* (ἀταραξία), that sought to moderate pleasure for the sake of peace of mind, and Democritus whose search for inner peace is encapsulated in the idea of *euthymia* (εὐθυμία), translatable as controlled passions, tempered spirit, serenity or equanimity, not to quote the Aristotelian and pre-Aristotelian concepts of *eudaemonia* (εὐδαιμονία) already mentioned. Furthermore, if Democrit developed a concept of the material soul and Pythagoras’ school amply qualified as a religious sect, we should not easily allow ourselves to be put off by Eckhart’s mysticism or assume that rationalist philosophers were and are not mystics. Not to be mistaken with the High German word *Gelassenheit* which refers to a state of being calm and relaxed, Eckhart’s *gelâzenheit* does not drop or dismisses anything that might perturb personal wellbeing so that “anything goes” well. Instead, it vows to discard interferences between creature and creator and to let go of what stands

between them. For sure, *gelâzenheit* is neither *eudaemonia* nor *ataraxia* or *euthymia*, or for that matter *wuwei*. Yet, without confusing philosophies that bear similarities, or storing them in the same box because they address corresponding aspirations from overlapping standpoints, we should not rely on a conceptual divide between rational and mystical to establish on either side what can and cannot be analytically related. Be they rational or mystical, definitions of the “*highest good*” balance ambiguous aspects of the problem, for instance sober contentment, elated blissfulness, personal satisfaction, moral vindication, etc. Yet are not these ambiguous aspects complementary at the risk of contradicting themselves? In the Platonic dialogues *Protagoras* (Πρωταγόρας) and *Meno* (Μένων), Socrates expounds an idea of moral strength underpinning all types of virtue: *phronesis* (φρόνησις). In the former dialogue “he” allegedly (since Socrates spoke, but did not write his philosophy) advocates that moral responsibility can be taught; in the latter, that it is innate, and therefore not teachable.

Going back to the merchants in the temple... In the sermon, vulgar material possessions and noble spiritual wealth stand at opposite ends, in a discourse with a clear agenda. Nevertheless, and that discursive feature is one that makes Eckhartian philosophy fascinating to read, whatever the ideology it serves, they do not contradict one another. The traders’ wealth is actual and its lived reality impacts on society at large, even though it cannot possess more reality than life itself, whether we understand life as nature or relegate it to a subsumed relation within an entity above nature. On one hand, Pagan and Christian traditions oppose one another. On the other hand, though they both insist that something is greater than “Man”, they thereby glorify the dubious concept of “Man” quite sneakily. Two points. 1. Eckhart follows the Scriptures and praises Jesus for telling the merchants in no uncertain terms, that there are values above money. However, instead of hiding behind the almighty Messianic warning to repeat it and, like a religious sheep rushing to follow a lead, bleat what he has read to be on the right side, not to understand it further, he shows compassion towards the merchants. 2. Dwelling on the thought that there are values above money, instead of taking it for granted, involved in this analysis not kicking the merchants when they lay on the ground (cowardly domination), but defending their intent which was “good”, yet not a patch on the “Lord’s goodness”. How do domination and defense differ? Evolutionarily speaking, self-defense and domination rank as survival instincts; self-defense retains power and domination secures its spread. The point is that they are not our only instincts and that their justifiable degree of application varies. When there are enough resources to share, why should we fight for them? If most resources are not shared but reserved for retentive and preemptive purposes, fights between dominating powers are unavoidable. Where a gap yawns between self defence and sharing instincts, distortions take over distinctions. Greed is confused with self-interest and caritative guilt is mistaken for openmindedness. Even when such confusions and mistakes do not cloud the relationship between power and identity, even when those of different persuasions share the same urge to be freed from self-obsession, a consensus is challenging to achieve. I can’t help it, I see in Eckhart a pure heart and a noble love. *Und vrî und ensuochet des sînen niht*: they who find freedom

know better than to seek themselves. All the more reasons, when his longing to return to the divine origin parallels the pagan urge to reconnect to nature and live for and with her, not from and against her, not to bark at theology when stuck in literal readings. Ideologies direct us to spheres of coherence where we give in to the idea that what keeps us apart defines us and empowers us. The Dominican friar's vision of beingness at once originally initial and final, and in its core unique simplicity attracting all beyond difference, like a pure magnet: *Die weseliche isticheit nâch einvaltiger einicheit âne einigen underscheit*, contains an intriguing close. After all, there is only one nature. Gold spurning donkeys, mud loving pigs and accessorized tarted-up humans belong to related species that belong to one nature. And materialists, in a worldly, not a philosophical sense, belong just as those in search of the unio mystica to the same species, that also belongs to one nature. The merchants in the temple did not grasp values that all of a sudden had been forcibly imposed on them, this does not mean that they could never understand them, or would better understand them when submitting to a higher force. Eckhart says what the Clergy finds hard to swallow. The merchants are not the baddies and we the goodies, to some extent we all are merchants who have to ply a trade to compete and survive. Pardon me for praising his pure heart and noble love, but I am reluctant to be distracted and fooled by labels designating schools of thought against others. Similarities detected between Pre-Socratic thinkers of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, mediaeval theologians of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and the Daoist movement that thrived between the third century BCE and third century CE fracture into many contrasts, which in their variances could turn more perplexing than enlightening. Nonetheless, intersecting points where common concerns prevail open doors onto refreshing vistas. Difference is interesting, lack of difference is fascinating. Eckhart von Hochheim, baby, I love you.

For my part, I only go part of the way. Apart from the Hochheimer Master, I also love nature but am too ignorant to be one with her. Never mind, provided that I do not resent or am upset by my ignorance. Why should I? Death will put an end to it. Given that living up to my reducible ignorance is a lot of fun, in death I trust and shall rejoice. Talking about fun, dead serious, the second sermon's sexual politics are not for the fainthearted. Attach your belts and sit tight for take off. Advising that "Man" in order to receive Jesus' grace should like "Him" be virginal, that is to say *ledic* (free from egotistical conceptions), Eckhart unmistakably qualifies that metaphorical state of virginity, for Jesus as well as for "man" as female, not once, but twice: *juncvrouwe* and *megetlich* (virgin and untouched maiden). To make themselves ready for and worthy of Jesus' gift of faith, women and men should emulate Jesus and in that sense be like a girl. Moreover, they should fully open up to the Word. And like Jesus who became pregnant from "His Father's" wisdom, they shall be fructified by "The Son's" sweet love. Yes, a pornographic version of *Sermon Nr. 2 Uncensored* could become a blue hit going viral with sissy boy and potent dad drooling over themselves and scores of rapturous followers in a tribute to pansexual rampage. Regrettably, I do not have the essential connections wanted to start scripting the certificate 18+ slapstick. Shame. To use a recent label in sexual politics, Eckhart's innocent metaphors dare possess non-binary qualities. The state of openness and absence of moral and physical corruption

eloquently associated to a female adolescent is not gender-specific, but equally relevant to both genders and non-gender specifications. Not bad for 13<sup>th</sup> century thinking! Fear of vulnerability is out, depth of disposition is in.

In the 63rd sermon, another surprise, he resorts to a grammatical explanation to bond the idea of one god to the matching idea of one love. There are so many types of love, but only one is divine. Doing away with the definite article, the Middle High German word for love: *die mynn(e)* becomes as generic and unique as the word for God: *der got*, which unlike all other substantives is mentioned without article; *got ist mynn*, not: *got ist die mynn* or: *der got ist die mynn*. The word *mynn* therefore receives the same accolade as the word god. Eckhart, who also talks about nobility in a figurative sense, borrowed a term embedded in a courtly tradition that paid idealised reverence to the chaste *noble lady*. To grasp the Eckhartian concept: *got = mynn*, it helps to consider the earlier and later meanings of the word, not only its roots. Whereas the mediaeval denotations of *mynne* are chastity and valour, that lofty definition disappears in the early Renaissance, when it falls prey to vulgar and crude derision, *mynnen* then only meant: to fornicate, a far cry from its Sanskrit origin: मन्यते (*manyatê*) = to hold as good in one's thoughts, to approve of something or someone highly, not to mention the Greek and Latin derivatives that gave us: mind, meaning, mood and memory. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm connected *mynnen* to *meinen* (= to mean, to signify) in their *Dictionary of the German Language (Deutsches Wörterbuch)*. In its mediaeval and Eckhartian acceptance, *mynn* is also close to: ಮಾನ್ಯತೆ (*mānyate*) in the modern South

Indian language Kannada, a word that expresses respect for a person or esteem for an institution. Eckhart von Hochheim tells us of his deep respect for god, but not of his high esteem for divine institutions. And because he did not preach to or for an institution, as Pope John XXII angrily realised, his word choice reveals more intention than caution. Like Freud who must have known that defining sexuality as a life affirming principle was bound to be caricatured as a reductive physiological prank by those struggling to decipher his analysis of the Eros and Thanatos instincts, Eckhart knew and conceded to his readers, he may not be understood. In a further attempt to describe divine love, he compares the mutual relation to a lustful hunt, the creator enjoys hunting and being hunted by "his" creatures who also lustfully yearn for "him": *also lüstlich ist got, das er geiagert wirt von den creaturen*. The Eckarthian pleasure principle brings philosophy neck and neck with art. Truth that we discover through art emanates from a search guided by aesthetic pleasures. No pleasure, no truth, no truth, no art, as long as we realistically recall that most art has little to do with truth, and most aesthetic pleasures are far too coded to be truly enjoyable. The Eckarthian divine love is pure thinking, which is always positive and always pleasurable and always thought-provoking. How could I fail to agree to disagree with Eckhart von Hochheim when disagreement inspires me more than agreement? Or should I set my priorities right, go back to work first, agree with colleagues on jobs to be done and new targets to be defined, then go home and agree with the wife and the kids on fun activity dates to enter in the family calendar, and then appraise how inspired I feel after we've agreed on Chinese or pizza? Concretely, what chances has a lived philosophical approach to



prosper, if it strives to build up communication without focusing on difference (*âne underscheit*), instead of accommodating differences? OK, we'll order one Margerita for both of you, and the rest of us will order sweet and sour from another shop and when both orders are delivered and we eat them together, they shall all be stone cold.

#### Bibliographical note

Meister Eckhart, *Werke in zwei Bänden, Deutsche Werke I: Predigten, Deutsche Werke II: Predigten, Traktate und lateinische Werke*, Texte und Übersetzungen, herausgeben von Nikolaus Largier, Frankfurt am Main 1993

The Daoists and Stoics tell us to beware of success and failure. Both can be exaggerated, either may be underestimated. And since they are frequently mistaken for one another and do all of a sudden change from one into the other, questioning their lack of difference institutes a sensible query. Especially as so much importance is attached to being or at least appearing to be successful, and so much disapproval is attached to failure, or at least to telling signs of failure. The task of grasping a lack of difference between failure and success can therefore be aligned to the pursuit of a more ambitious understanding of these concepts, as long as conceding failure or managing success does not imply an obligatory positive or negative reaction that stultifies non-categorical assessments. Whereas the apostles of *Differenz*, Heidegger and Derrida, lure us towards the radiance of a promising philosophy, Daoists beware of promises that cannot be kept. Wang Pi quoting and expanding on Lao Tse: *Reversion is the action of Tao. "The low is the foundation of the high; humble station is the basis of honour." Nonbeing is the function of being. This is its reversion. However we act, if we know that there is nonbeing, all things will interpenetrate. Therefore, it is said, "Reversion is the action of Tao." Weakness is the function of Tao. Weakness and gentleness interpenetrate and cannot be exhausted. All things in the world come from being, and the origin of being comes from nonbeing. all things in the world came from being, and the origin of being is based on nonbeing. To have being in total, it is necessary to return to nonbeing.* (Chapter 40, p.123)

There are undeniable similarities between the Eckhartian concept of the creature reintegrating into the creator's pre-creational stage, so that both fully reunite, and the Daoist return to non-being without which being could not be complete, and the Heraclitian balances of perceived opposites, where one is, but also is not the other. Days continue into nights, illness reverses into health; being only contradicts nonbeing if it tries to suppress it, and thereby only suppresses itself. Failure can no more contradict success than learning be possible without mistakes. A lot of learning is possible, though it won't make us wiser than we could be. We can learn about similarities between nonbeing and nonart initiated by Dada practices revolving around found objects and readymades and become more informed, without pretending that we are wiser.

Concrete questions concerning success and failure seen as variables, not opposites, involve taking a stance about social standing. Unless homelessness were embraced as an adequate means to find one's place in society, even though the idea of a career

may not otherwise motivate a person willing to having an address, a bank account and a job, some form of “career” is unavoidable. Would it therefore have made a difference if I had studied Fine Arts or Philosophy, rather than History of Art and Archaeology and later German Language and Literature, considering that, like most people, I agree to having an address, a bank account and a job for practical, not personal reasons? An overview of early Greek and Chinese thinkers and Mediaeval theologians may well be included in General Philosophical syllabi; nonetheless, beyond that overview, theologians, sinologists and classicists are those likely to be directed towards an in-depth approach of lesser-read authors, not philosophy students granted two lectures on Parmenides and Heraclitus, and one on Thales with perfunctory mention of Anaximander and Anaximenes, but fed a whole Trimester on Immanuel Kant. Translation issues are not the only reason why major early texts traditionally held as Classics by Chinese Faculties do not make it to the West, older translations from Ancient Greek into English or German are as distorted and blurred as dusty translations from Chinese and Sanskrit. We always need new ones. As if a correct interpretation were not demanding enough, the layers of added meaning which old-fashioned renderings of an ancient language into a badly aging modern one sprinkle all over texts already obscure in their own times, add further chances of mistakes. Point taken. There also are geographical and geopolitical, institutional and convenient reasons, why Wang Pi is read in Honolulu and Anselm of Canterbury in Heidelberg. So, no regrets, not to have enrolled on a Philosophy course.

As to a coached artistic practice in an art school, technical training may have helped or hindered experiments on painting and sculpture. At any rate, Fine Arts lecturers do not suggest needle and thread, and collecting antique and vintage textiles to recycle them. Since I do not regret having discarded the two study options mentioned above, am I contented with the educational jobs I landed, instead of the curatorial or lecturing positions I had envisaged? Yes. Who would not want to become a Teacher? Months of freedom to do what one pleases in the summer, weeks at Easter and a Winter break to write or draw or stitch without the pressure of career agendas. My vocation was indeed holidaymaking. Term time occasionally distracted me from my main interests, even though I enjoyed going back to work to recover from creative exhaustion. I have not erroneously typed vocation for vacation, my holiday-maker’s career thrived on an interdisciplinary basis, especially in international schools where teaching a language through other curricular areas such as Literature, History, History of Art, Technique, Aesthetics, Epistemology and General Philosophy is recommended in comprehensive programmes of study, and to some extent even systematically applied.

A wintery daytrip to Waldstatt reminds me of a unit I wrote with connections to this Canton, whose title translates: “*A Potted History of World Yodeling in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*”. I like yodeling, so why should my students not benefit from my musical discernment? When they throw a party, don’t they share their taste with neighbours without consulting them? Great, I can share too. Key to a popular unit is a detailed explanation of the way in which it will be assessed: when, how, and possibly why. Secondly, to negotiate on dates, format and grading system also gives the students a sense of empowerment.

Once they have been consulted on these trivial aspects of the unit and have agreed to them, no effort is required to inform them further. They spontaneously ask what the unit is about and how it should be completed. Students like to express themselves informally, therefore they can use dialects. Students enjoy watching videos, hence they should be directed to a sensible choice of audio-visual material, such as the full length 1988 version of Jodelkönig Franzl Lang's *Auf und auf voll Lebenslust*, not to mention Takeo Ischi's 1983 classical hit: *Mein Vater ist ein Appenzeller*. Orthodontic treatment was not popular in the 1980s. Compare Franzl Lang's dentition to his yodeling virtuosity. Discuss how each tooth has grown in a different direction and how each note overlaps on the others in sped-up polyphonic cascades. OR: Make a model of a brace that would have fitted Franzl Lang and argue whether a less frantic rendering of his songs could have been more or less melodious. Diversity before the diversity hype. Tokyo born Takeo Ischi heard recordings of Franzl Lang in Japan and practised yodeling until he rivaled his German idol. Yet, far from resenting the competition, when Takeo moved to Europe, Langl and indeed Langl's audience welcomed him warmly. What actually appealed to the Bavarian public when Takeo Ischl sang "*My dad comes from Apenzell and he eats cheese on a plate and the plate with it*"? To complete my answer to the question what makes a good unit: thirdly, give and take. Part of the assessment's unseen essay titles and materials included Takeo's *Chicken Attack*, a late commercial work which, being sung in English and comprising the notorious Anglo-Saxon expletive, turned into an international winner. Something to think about while being amused! Did the noble patron pleasantly bewildered by the *Wildly Noble* and *Nobly Wild* Hunting scene he had commissioned take himself seriously or the luxury good he could afford, or the tapestry's subject matter? The English language and the Nr.1 English expletive sold a Yodel song to millions of teenagers worldwide. What did it correct, which otherwise would have been so "boring"? To what extent do the nobleman's enjoyment of a tapestry representing *Wild People* hunting, and the global enjoyment of a once taboo but popular swearword both reveal *wild* tastes that have nothing to do with nature?

Like a pure diamond letting light stream through its facets, the bling word rings hollow, uncluttered by a residual significance that would tame its transparently explicit *wildness*. What wildness? Its alleged evocation of a natural act, called by psychoanalysts the *primal scene*, does not express pleasure. It articulates anger, frustration or helplessness in four letters that sound more like an inchoate cry than a word. In his 1918 essay *Aus der Geschichte einer infantilen Neurose (From the History of an Infantile Neurosis)*, Freud attributed perceptions of the human sexual intercourse as a hostile act to a child's inability to make sense of a witnessed parental coitus. Whether a child generally imagines the *Urszene (primal scene)*, for instance from noises in a nearby bedroom, or hears groans and catches sight of an explicit position remained undecided in that essay and subsequent psychoanalytical discussions. At any rate, even if the scene had been observed, since it could not have been accurately interpreted by a young child in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, its immaturely perceived elements would have been constructed into a fantasy. This fits with the *four-letter word*. The simplistic monosyllable is uttered in situations unrelated to sexual pleasure. *Fuck off*

means: I don't want to have anything to do with you, go away. *Fuck you*: I hope something bad happens to you, serves you right. As to the imperative followed by an exclamation mark, it vents surprise, amazement or disbelief. In spite of its ancient etymology referring to a sexual act, the Anglo-Saxon verb seldom alludes to intimacy. *I'm fucked* means that I am exhausted, betrayed or defeated. *You fucked me* has a figurative, not a literal meaning: you took advantage, you tricked and swindled me, etc. In its present participial adverbial use, *fucking* stresses the description conveyed by an adjective. *Fucking good* means little else than very good in a demotic register, with or without offensive intent. So what does it say about the British Isles? Fuck, Brexit! It says that the most popular English exclamation actually means: we can't cope with small residues of past greatness. We know that you can't cope, why do you have to make it so fucking obvious? Fuck you. Fuck off. Summary: the four-letter word connects to the *primal scene* in that it shows immaturity, limited reasoning powers and a feeling of being lost and overwhelmed in a daunting world. In that sense, it compares to a stressed infant misunderstanding a partly natural and largely cultural phenomenon beyond its comprehension. Sexual inferences articulated by the four letters word are backward, boastful and patriarchal. *I fucked her*, or: *she's a good fuck*, wishes to say: she's a slut, but clearly expresses disregard of someone supposed to conform to a submissive sinful role painted by male fantasies. *She fucked me* could, but is unlikely to mean: she sat on top and made me reach an orgasm while pretending to have one herself. A plausible rendering might sound like: she took my money, or: she ditched me for my best friend. To be fair, like the American and International variants of British English, the four lettered words has gained currency worldwide. Its uninhibited directness abets puerile regression for those, of all ages, in possession of a minimal vocabulary and assorted conceptual arsenal. Good luck to them, my students did well in their exam. While one of the audio-visual sources was in English, even though I neither read nor corrected their answers to that section before estimating a final grade out of the others, they still had to write their whole paper in German. And anyway, I quite like *Chicken Attack*. Even though this essay prioritises the topic: inter-connections, it still has to deal with disconnects. More disturbing than vulgar vocabulary, the four lettered words points at the ultimate human madness: to be shocked and disturbed by nature. That infants could be scared of procreation and believe that their parents are hurting one another when they aren't, does not augur well for our forthcoming evolutionary process. Infant donkeys do not suffer from such aberrations. Like their elders, they effortlessly disdain gold and humbly concentrate on grass. Why is it impossible for us to approach their wisdom? This question was not in the Yodel-paper (but it is in this essay).

Music of course is enjoyable to students. So, why should they be deprived of listening to it during lessons? For the unit *Wiener Moderne (Viennese Society and Culture from 1880 to 1910)*, students were clearly informed about revising relative clauses and tenses in the subjunctive mood, as well as a mandatory component to their oral assessment. Strictly following Josef Matthias Hauer's twelve-tone technique, students had to write and perform a one-minute serialist composition before making a slides aided spoken presentation about any aspect of their new topic, for example the impact



of tramway technology on urban planning (die Ringstraße), antisemitism and municipal governance (Karl Lueger), or management style and the social values of the Vienna Workshop (die Wiener Werkstätte). Even someone who cannot read music, play an instrument or sing, can rise to that challenge. The rule is so dogmatic that it can be mathematically followed: play any of the twelve tones in any order that you want without repeating any one of them. Once all twelve tones have been played in any order without a single repetition, start another series, and Bob is your uncle. I asked Bob, our avuncular Director of Music to explain the system, and demonstrate it on the piano to the class. He obliged, and in his own embarrassed words, conceded that, since it shunned harmony, serialism was a type of music that most people would call “ugly”. Pinch me if you can, but no one asked, what is the point of doing ugly? Or said: in your dreams, or: fuck you for a start. Or more to the point, the invention of serialism dates back to 1919 or 1921 and our unit stops in 1910. The answer to that one would have been: do you want to study WW1? How was silence until a hand was raised in a bid to elucidate the mandatory component? Thick, ponderous, palpable, insufferable. – *Can we record our composition before we play it to the class? – All right then.* The friendly and conscientious girl who went first must have felt the whole class was behind her when she asked; they were grateful that she had “volunteered”. It came as no surprise that her recording, which was cheered to rapturous applause, sounded as muddled and “random” (a word much loved by young learners) as for instance: “b0\$`\*nv ig%βze3xX†¶Døb̄□žàöl%o£ζμ•, ys5u6 9>.\$!7”. How was silence when she played her composition? Intrigued, tense, teased, charmed, poised to burst into uncontrolled laughter. I can pretend that this had been planned. It is not difficult. It was planned in my scheme of work under the criteria: “intentionality”, guided use of technology and independent learning. Thanks to AI, SOWs can now be planned fast and in pedantic detail. That SOW though, was planned enough. Since every lesson started with an assessed oral presentation at the front of the class, it did not take long for everyone in the class to work out: a) who was next, b) when they were next, c) that whoever came next was required to play something “ugly” or else they would be failed by the Teacher. I think the lessons went well, under whatever fucking SOW criterion it had been prepared, annotated and reviewed (apologies for knowing and using the Greek singular of criteria). That the class bonded together was written on page 11, enjoyment of learning on page 12. What shit I wrote on page 13, I recollect not. Taking advantage of the positive momentum, I organised grammar workshops well laid with on and offline interactive what-have-yous, while playing hardcore Arnold Schönberg from the beginning to the end of the first session. Though the class had enjoyed Schönberg’s *Verklärte Nacht* (mostly because of the story of a girl cheating on a guy and getting pregnant from another guy and he forgives her and he says he will adopt the child from the other guy and he will always love her and the child), I sensed that I had got away with serial music as background once. At the end of the lesson, the girl who first volunteered to play a twelve-tone composition spoke to me in a polite, supportive and mature manner. “Don’t overdo it”. *“Learning more than those they teach while they teach them is a Teacher’s fate; learning from those they have taught, a Teacher’s privilege”*. Wolfgang Ink Mark Ziegler, Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 08. 08.

2008, at 00:08. Do I wish to pile on educational anecdotes? Unfortunately, I have to, until I can make my point. Or so I imagine. The point is not for rushing.

Did I overdo it, when I taught an anthology of German poetry from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century to a small A-Level group which, like all the other groups, needed to get enough points to apply to university and chose their subjects on the basis of that parental expectation? English people are normally good at German. Mastering the language helps them to understand that the only decent Royals they've ever had were Germans: George the first, George the second, and even George the third who lost his wits near the end. The first months were arduous: *What does it mean? I don't understand, it's too hard*, and so on and so forth. But the next months were a lot harder, plodding on, asking for Teacher's support, more plodding, more support. Until one day, a ray of sunshine beamed onto a page of the anthology where one poem magically appeared to be more understandable than the others. Sir! Is this a pathetic fallacy? Yes, it's pathetic. They even had an opinion about the poem. So, I thought it would be a good idea to play a recording of Robert Schumann's musical setting of that poem. "But" it went well. I mean, it went a little too well. Having understood the poem, the class understood the music that explained the poem in a different language and in an unknown manner. The problem was that the understanding, largely because at long last it was shared by the students, kept growing. Firstly, from literal to analytical, then from verbal to musical, and last but not least from emotional to existential. It just would not stop until tears started to flow down one face and then the next and then the whole class was crying, and even I struggled to close the taps. Just as well an Ofsted inspector did not barge into that lesson or those about my survey of the *Young British Artists*. Teaching about the movement in the 1990s, when it was still active, added an exciting relevance to the topic. At the peak of their fame, the *Royal Academy* staged an exhibition that made pots of money. Its commercially hyped title lured a public that would never have visited Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin's *Shop* in Shoreditch, yet flocked to Piccadilly to see: *Sensation!* The School let me take a class of Six Formers there, very gracious of them. Projecting a slide of one of Emin's textiles, a union jack she had embroidered with the arch Anglo-Saxon classic in massive capital letters, I asked why we should talk about someone who hated school and always arrived late to class, out of all places in a classroom. Why did we recognise a visual artist who found learning in casual sex, when we do not intend to replace literacy (and numeracy) with casual sex in classrooms? What did Emin actually write on that flag that was so interesting and new, so meaningful, that we should pay attention to it? Would anyone like to read what is stitched on that flag? As no one volunteered, I did. I yelled the word *FUCK* across the classroom and it became eerily quiet. Very quiet... Old man reminiscing: *It made an impression then, wouldn't now!* Those who regularly turn up to places of worship, be they thinly or tightly attended, with their big wish to listen to a kind of silence they can't quite hear anywhere else, should have come to my course. I called for Emptiness to come upon us and a Void unfurled. Agreed, there lies in the depth of silence an infinite and unfathomable beauty. Nice one. Like my colleagues, I occasionally received a complaint from a parent, usually about a critical comment in a report or a low predicted grade or someone who did not understand my instructions,

but never about my most outrageous lessons. We don't often have really good lessons. When they are good, the Teacher no longer needs to talk, he or she pays attention to students who listen to one another, do not interrupt one another, and exchange views in grammatically constructed sentences.

Although I would rather summarise than develop the biographical elements that have to be included in this essay, I fear that a few more educational anecdotes are skulking their way onto this page. Sorry, I didn't mean to... The reason is pretty straightforward. Or was it so? Not all Sophists were prepared to defend any cause and to impart their clients with amoral or iniquitous applications of rhetorical skills in exchange for money, but those who did antedate the modern lawyers without whose backing organised criminality could not extend worldwide. On the other hand, philosophers staying aloof when summoned by worldly considerations may rank as impervious to corrupting influences. Yet, like the Sophists they receive payment for their services, namely for teaching prescribed curricular areas, texts and topics by means of an approved or tolerated methodology subjected to inspection. Furthermore, a secured academic niche spares their occupiers the uncomfortable task of sustaining adopted lines of argumentation beyond the validation of cogent discourse. Therefore, we may ask how can Socrates' plea be heard within education, and outside academia? Within education, the Socratic ideal: to examine one's life in order to give it meaning raises practical questions. Has everyone the urge and the ability to engage in philosophical musing? If not, why bother? Outside academia, the pursuit of a philosophical way of life can still link to or blissfully ignore the history of philosophy, either position does not vouch for necessary gains in consistency. Before I started teaching, I asked myself what usually interests or does not interest students, what they are supposed to be taught and why, and what range of learning experience are they allowed or disallowed by educational systems. My Teaching College was very, very clear. *We do not do philosophy here, this is not what we do. Your essay is not acceptable, you have to rewrite it or it will be failed. And if this essay is failed, the consequences are...* Fair enough. However, for our last placement, Christ Church College Canterbury, University of Kent, gave its Trainee Teachers a chance, which very few accepted, to spend a whole month in a London Inner City School. The Head of Modern Languages who welcomed me at Stepney Green had recently been stabbed by one of two fighting junkies he tried to separate on the school yard. Thanks to a thick notebook he carried in his coat's breast pocket, the blade went through cover and pages and only grazed his skin. Opening the wrong classroom door, I saw students walking on tables while their Indian Teacher, unselfconsciously sat at his desk, was trading in shares over the phone, which he also did during breaks, also in Hindi, in the Staffroom. Stepney was officially a notoriously difficult school, sporting an English minority of disaffected adolescents confused by the success of migrants perceived as coping better with accommodation and employment than local families. On Friday mornings, Teachers fought for the School's copy of the Times Educational Supplement in a frantic bid to apply for another job. In order to recruit Staff, attractive job offers were made in distant English-speaking countries, so that it was no surprise that a Supply Teacher came from New Zealand, whereas Supply Teachers from Whitechapel or Islington never

came anywhere near the place. Fancy working at the heart of London within a supportive and stimulating environment? Wearing immaculate suits and beautiful hand-sewn shoes, the School Head, an Oxford graduate who must have been quite well paid for his position, was supportive indeed. No one listened to his caring words. Unlike other places in the East End of London, where ethnic minorities had long settled and become integrated, Stepney did not only feel like but was somewhere and nowhere, an international enclave fluctuating with swift departures and arrivals. After a full week observing my Italian ex-cook turned stabbed Head of Modern Languages, I was more than prepared to teach my first lesson for which I had written a simple and helpful worksheet, or so I thought. That all my students to whom I personally handed a copy of that worksheet immediately turned their gaze away from me and wordlessly dropped it on the floor surprised me. *Ma non è stata una grande sorpresa per il mio capo di Dipartimento.* For the first time in my life, I could not pause and use reason in order to survive. *It's all right.* I had to find from a dark corner right at the back of my mind a means of establishing the authority that I had stupidly jettisoned, in less than a minute. *It's all right.* The instructions which I then gave bypassed my consciousness. Blank. To retrieve them from memory, I have to recall my second set of instructions and then work out a way back to what had to be the first. Because the first instruction had been followed, I had sufficient respite to calculate, not unlike a professional chess player, my potential four to six next moves. *Write the title in the middle of the page and underline it.* Grateful to do something completely pointless, everyone had complied. *It's all right.* Eton, Oxbridge and a sense of entitlement and proficiency; Stepney and the panicked urge to spurn academic knowledge. *It's all right.* So, the first instruction had to be: *Open your books and copy the date from the board on the left-hand side of a new page.* Lo! Entrenched fears donning the cloak and dagger of aggression are allayed by enticing mindlessness. For what greater joy could there be than giving up on thought, and wholly embracing mindlessness at any cost?

Which profound thinker could have ever taught me, on that day when I discovered Stepney's hidden glee, a more direct approach to philosophy? Teachers can cheat. For example, a cloze sheet presents a text containing gaps. At the bottom of the sheet, answers are provided in a jumbled order. However, if some of the gaps are long and others short, and all the answers as long or short as the gaps, those can be filled according to the matching lengths. Jason did not attempt to fill out the gaps, he copied the whole cloze exercise on a blank sheet from his own initiative, quietly and attentively, with his tongue hanging out from a corner of his mouth. To say that I was terrified by Jason, a young strong tall white boy with ice-blue eyes, is not true. Anytime he stared at me and made his way to my desk, I shat myself. – *Sir! You're not afraid of me, are you? – Of course not, Jason, I'm not! What makes you think so? – Look at what I've done for you. Are you proud of me? Yes, I am. This is very neat.* Jason was the first to teach me a principle that I hadn't read in Karl Marx' *Das Kapital*, the idea that communication between conflicting class interests can be more productive than the defence of respective interests. Today, I am privileged to think that communication between conflicting species, or outside the conflicting sphere of interests that hinders inter-species communication, can be more significant than the defence of human



interests. From Stepney I took up my first position at Carshalton High School for Boys on the premise that I would handle a fairly difficult school, having endured a tough one. This worked for a while, before I moved on to a grammar school. Which in turn worked for a while before I moved on to international schools, which worked well till I retired. One of my thuggish-looking junior students at Carshalton High was Neil. Neil came to my desk at the end of the day and spoke. – *Sir, why do you always want us to learn? It's boring, we don't like it. You should joke with us or say something funny and maybe we'd want to learn something.* – *I'll think about it.* I did think about it after a while. Not that he'd come to the conclusion, he knew better and he and his friends could advise me, I know better than them and I advise. A month later, or so, I tried Neil's way. He hadn't forgotten: – *Sir! You've changed!* Would I have changed had I pursued the more prestigious career I had initially envisaged? (Wait for the link.) Without being challenged by Niels and Jasons, I would have continued to think that a poem is worth writing even if no one reads it. (Wait and thou shalt not suffer further biographical anecdotes.) Thanks to some of the Niels and Jasons of this world, I have even stronger reasons to hold the view that a poem is worth writing, even if no one reads it. A *WALL* (*oh my Goodness! Link, link!*) stands between me and dangerous threats from hearts in right places that want to make this world a better one. It protects me against them.

At the last cosmic minute before the human species destroys itself after having adulterated the climate and annihilated most of the other species, the question: *What exactly went wrong with eudaemonia?* will not be worth asking. Why was a near-divine system of happiness striven for, not a natural one? Because natural and mere human were associated by humans to imperfection, and the near-divine aspiration defined as a means to overcome the limits imposed by perceived crude natural and human imperfections. If we replace the word divine with natural, all life forms should have to be included in the proposition. Eudaemonia as the pursuit of near-natural happiness would mean for humans to come as close to nature as they can, by respecting natural resources and species instead of abusing them. This would imply a proper recognition of the planet's rights in lieu of a stubborn approval and defense of human rights. Near-natural in the sense of: as close as possible to what is natural, is not an idea confined to philosophy and pagan religions. The intertextual and intermediatic inclusion of the 1964 lyrics *I'm Feeling Good* placed next to the third century BCE *Zhuangzi* excerpt, in the 2022 Pictogrammed Comic: *Inside The River Hao*, highlights evidence of inter-species concerns across cultures and ways of thinking. Dreams in the *Zhuangzi* as well as, and no less than feelings expressed in the Jazz song *I'm Feeling Good* especially as rendered by Nina Simone, are forms of spontaneous action (called: *Ziran*) and non-action (*Wuwei*). *Ziran* and *Wuwei* were regarded in Laozi's classical Daoism as effortlessly and harmoniously moving within life's flow. These principles were valued higher than the determination to intervene through language, knowledge, method and organisation in order to change courses of events and make them better. Millennia of making things better have taken their toll. Can we stop? Does it not invariably get worse? Both the *Taotejing* and the *Zhuangzi* are amoral philosophies that ridicule civilisation. Taoism pokes fun at the validity of human knowledge, whereas logical manualism is sick of self-awareness and conscience culture.

*emergency exit* مخرج طوارئ *emergency exit* salida de  
*emergencia* *emergency exit* запасный выход *leave...*  
*tawm qhov xwm txheej ceev... the emergency exit*

*How could a Hmong translation of words designating a technology unknown to speakers of Hmongic languages make any sense? Words purport to convey meaning because they exist. So much fuss talking about existence.*



Wolfgang Ink Mark Ziegler, *Takeo Ischi's Full Name In Japanese Characters Electronically Cresting The Waldstatt Emma Kunz Pavilion On A Rainy Day*, e-postcardy kind of essay-illustrating type of photomontage stuff, snapshot Ziegler 2023

Talking about flow or flux and reverting to Heraclitus' fragment 102 before examining others, we notice his outright dismissal of the Parmenidian ontological *either-or* dogma: either being or non-being. Humans perceive their fate as just or unjust, but such a dichotomy ceases to exist at divine level, where gods live far above the human remit of happiness. Heraclitus replaces the divine level's mythological component with logic. If logic can demonstrate that opposites are mere matters of perception, and if their

fixed characteristics can be proven unreliable, then at a divine and at a non-divine logical level, any dichotomy between happiness and misfortune would not be grounded into reality but tainted by opinion. Opposites are stabilised by flawed thinking, contrasts balanced by investigative logic. Another fragment disputes the idea of health in the same way as the idea of happiness. Fragment 111 states: *Disease makes health pleasant and good, hunger satiety, weariness rest*. What things are is not a matter of opinion or fact, but of context and correlation. Day gradually turns into night, states of health vary and may have to come close to illness, for example in the case of vaccination. For things to be what they are would require them to exist as autonomous entities; fragment 111 suggests that light cannot exist without darkness, nor states of health without impairment. But can we see it? Routine checks are made, for instance by taking a patient's fever or blood samples sent for analysis. For instance, a laboratory may not detect an infection though the patient may have some temperature; on the strength of these data and other symptoms, a medical person will order rest and moderate medication. This patient would be, say 80% healthy and 20% ill. Whatever the exact or estimated health to disease ratio, however accurately or approximately it can be diagnosed and measured, empirical data justify the diagnosis. Complete health as a state of being that, by being bereft of illness is the opposite of illness, does not exist. However, states of health and illness are not always visible, as in the case of failed diagnoses, whereby illness exists within health and vice versa, whether we detect them or not. When we stare at the sun at noon, previous experiences of daylight turning into night are stronger than anxiety about a resulting disappearance of the moon. Perception of strong light and no darkness does not precipitate or vouch for the unlikely event. Furthermore, perceptions of a strong contrast that resists a simplified reading of opposites are common occurrence, levels of language proficiency, for example. In his painting, *L'empire des lumières*, Magritte exposes the clichés of night as dark and day as bright under a luminescence that shimmer beyond opposites.

Left above: René Magritte, *L'empire des lumières*, oil on canvas signed on the lower right handside: magritte, 146 cm x 114 cm; title, signature and date on the back of the canvas, 1954, bought from the artist in the same year, inventory number: 6715, Musée magritte, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles / photo : J. Geleyns - Art Photography, © Ch. Herscovici courtesy of SABAM Belgium.

Left below: René Magritte, *Empire of Light*, oil on canvas, 1953 to 54, 195.4 cm x 131.2 cm, purchased by The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, 1976, accession number 76.2553.102, © 2023 C. Herscovici, London/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Right above and below: *Renés à la Roni*, the same copied photographic reproductions, but WIMZically redefined with -20% brightness and -40% contrast above, and -40% brightness and -20% contrast, below.



