

Inspired by the writing of MARTIN HEIDEGGER, FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, and LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

The Romantic

Lecture / Open Discussion • Facilitated by JUSTIN CARMEN • Hosted by SPINDERIHALLERNE



*BUT THEN
THE GIRLS
STARTED
TOSSING THEIR
LITTLE
POISONED
DARTS AT ME,
SO TO
SPEAK...*



The Romantic, v.01

1. Tonight I want to talk about romance—not in the sense of dating/courtship—in the sense in which one can *romanticize* something. The sense in which one creates a story or a narrative—and not only as a reconciling of historical events. Romance requires some projection of the future too. There must be something forever, or *eternal*, in a romantic story. In fact, if I hadn't wanted to carry over the romance comic book motif from my previous salon I could have approached this differently—under the language of *the eternal* instead.
2. Now, to get an idea of this story writing spirit, consider the following statements.
3. “She told me what I needed to hear.”
4. “I came full circle.”
5. “There was only one true love for me.”
6. “This is my punishment.”
7. “I made a mistake”—and what does this particular story tell the listener? Well, to say “I made a mistake” makes no claim to understanding ‘the mistaken’ *originarily*. That is to say, it does not make a claim to understanding the event in its origin. Instead, the understanding remarked upon is the ‘interpretation’ as *mistake*. Of course, included in this present understanding is a story of an original understanding which allowed for the mistake. But this ‘original’ understanding is only part of the story and it can only ever go to make up the present understanding as *mistake*.
8. Now, if anyone feels like they are getting hung up on the fact that you could, of course, hold open both an original understanding and a current understanding, then think on the idea that the world is flat. Today, I think most of us tell a different story. But does this then mean that we are holding open two understandings—one which we understand as false and another we understand as true? Or is it instead that we have a singular understanding of the case, and that the false and true are two parts of it?
9. I mean, how could one today consider the earth flat? I guess it would mean that if you kept digging below you, earth would go on infinitely. Or maybe there exists some end and flipside. Would understanding the earth as flat mean understanding it as a rectangle?—but then how does gravity work? How would we reconcile the photographs from space?—a conspiracy? None of this seems to make sense to us today. So, in fact, we aren't in possession of two understandings—only one which accounts for both descriptions of the shape of the earth, flat and round. This must be analogous to the case with the mistake of a person. We must have a singular understanding, which allows us to feel negatively about ‘the mistaken’ and positively about our current understanding.
10. Now, throughout this evening's salon I want to develop this romantic spirit—and this should also relate back to some of the themes from my previous salon on love. Particularly a recurrent theme will be grounding the various ‘hard’ sciences within human life and activity.
11. Next, I want to read two passages from philosophic literature in order to develop this romantic spirit. The first translation is of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the second is of Friedrich Nietzsche.
12. “In Freudian analysis a dream is dismantled, as it were. It loses its original sense *completely*. We might think of it as of a play enacted on the stage, with a plot that's pretty incomprehensible at times, but at times too quite intelligible, or apparently so; we might then suppose this plot torn

into little fragments and each of these given a completely new sense. Or we might think of it in the following way: a picture is drawn on a big sheet of paper which is then so folded that pieces which don't belong together at all in the original picture now appear side by side to form a new picture, which may or may not make sense. (This latter would correspond to the manifest dream, the original picture to the 'latent dream thought'.)

Now I could imagine that someone seeing the unfolded picture might exclaim 'Yes, that's the solution, that's what I dreamed, minus the gaps and distortion'. This would then be the solution precisely by virtue of his acknowledging it as such. It's like searching for a word when you are writing and then saying: 'That's it, *that* expresses what I intended!'—Your acceptance certifies the word as having been found and hence as being the one you were looking for. (In this instance we could really say: we don't know what we are looking for until we have found it—...)"¹

13. What is important here? I would like us to take notice of the *qualification* or *certification* of the interpretation: "This would then be the solution precisely by virtue of his acknowledging it as such." The passage continues.
14. "What is intriguing about a dream is not its *causal* connection with events in my life, etc., but rather the impression it gives of being a fragment of a story—a very *vivid* fragment to be sure—the rest of which remains obscure. (We feel like asking: 'where did this figure come from then and what became of it?') What's more, if someone now shows me that this story is not the right one; that in reality it was based on quite a different story, so that I want to exclaim disappointedly 'Oh, *that's* how it was?', it really is as though I have been deprived of something. The original story

certainly disintegrates now, as the paper is unfolded; the man I saw was taken from over *here*, his words from over *there*, the surroundings in the dream from somewhere else again; but all the same the dream story has a charm of its own, like a painting that attracts and inspires us."²

15. Consider the sentence, "I found true love." One finds true love because one has made it so. It is the case, only by virtue of the current understanding—no other criteria could qualify the statement. I would expect that often, someone has said this, only to revoke it later—saying something like, "I *thought* that was true love, but I was mistaken."
16. Next I want to read a similar passage from a translation of Nietzsche's *Daybreak*.
17. "...Why was the dream of yesterday full of tenderness and tears, that of the day before yesterday humorous and exuberant, an earlier dream adventurous and involved in a continuous gloomy searching?...These inventions...are interpretations of nervous stimuli we receive while we are asleep, *very free*, very arbitrary interpretations of the motions of the blood and intestines, of the pressure of the arm and the bedclothes, of the sounds made by church bells...That this text, which is in general much the same on one night as on another, is commented on in such varying ways, that the inventive reasoning faculty *imagines* today a *cause* for the nervous stimuli so very different from the cause it imagined yesterday, though the stimuli are the same: the explanation of this is that today's prompter of the reasoning faculty was different from yesterday's—a different *drive* wanted to gratify itself, to be active, to exercise itself, to refresh itself, to discharge itself—..."³

¹From Peter Winch's translation of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value*, page 68e.

²From Peter Winch's translation of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value*, page 68e.

³From R.J. Hollingdale's translation of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Daybreak*, section 119, page 75.

18. I want to draw attention to the understanding in this passage, which presupposes a physiological grounding. And in this, it is clear that the critique is directed toward moral judgments. And this should come as no surprise, since morality is usually the object of critique in the translations of Nietzsche. The passage continues.
19. "...Waking life does not have this *freedom* of interpretation possessed by the life of dreams, it is less inventive and unbridled—but do I have to add that when we are awake our drives likewise do nothing but interpret nervous stimuli and, according to their requirements, posit there 'causes'?" that there is no *essential* difference between waking and dreaming?...that our moral judgments and evaluations too are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us, a kind of acquired language for designating certain nervous stimuli? that all our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text?—..."⁴
20. Consider the direction our thoughts take when reflecting on the lack of an "essential difference between waking and dreaming?"
21. Next, I want us to consider a second translation of Nietzsche which tempts me to extend the interpretation during waking life beyond moral judgments. This passage has become the single most important piece of philosophic writing for me—and it stands at the beginning of all subsequent thoughts in my philosophic activity. It is so carefully worded.
22. "...the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into

being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a becoming master; and all subduing and *becoming master* involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated."⁵

23. The example which the translation generalizes on is punishment—which is taken up as an interpretation of a natural and observable phenomenon—a physical phenomenon. The translation builds upon several meanings of punishment, creating a story or history of punishment, so-to-speak. Yet, the passage asks for an origin of this historical entity ("somehow") and cannot answer it. The passage leaves open the mystery of how a 'thing' first comes to *be* at all.
24. A side note. When you read "obscured or obliterated" think on the interpretation as 'the mistaken' and the understanding of the mistake at its origin.
25. Now, I would guess that up to this point my argument goes quiet unchallenged by most of you. However, following the philosophic literature, I'm about to make a drastic move. I want to present an argument in which this romantic spirit not only grounds the story of our lives, but even entities—scientific, material, objective, or otherwise.
26. But why do I say *drastic*? Well, because it challenges *common cosmology*. When reflecting on the cosmos the popular way of talking about the world is one in which an objective and material world is the foundation for our bodies, including our mind, mental processes, or 'mental' dispositions. Under this *atomistic cosmology* one might say

⁴From R.J. Hollingdale's translation of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Daybreak*, section 119, page 75.

⁵From Walter Kaufmann's translation of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, section 12, page 77.

that we are all composed of some substances, and those substances combined in such a way to create the objects of our environment (chairs, arms, heads, brains)—and that those substances also combined in some way to produce a mind or consciousness.

27. However, when reading translations of Martin Heidegger this understanding is challenged—and whether it takes a year to read *Being and Time* (as my first reading did) or a month (my most recent reading) my *everyday* and *common* way of thinking is suspended for the entirety of that read. During that time I live in an alternative which goes further, *below* a common understanding, with a more holistic ground which governs both the ‘hard’ sciences and, to use Richard Dawkins’ language, the “warmer perceptions.”
28. And what are our most common ways of taking about the world anyway—the languages of the *common cosmologies*, as I have named it? Consider science and religion—both seek to explain the world similar to one another. Either it is with God or the Big Bang—both explain by means of a catalyst at the beginning of sequential time. However, after studying translations of Heidegger I am tempted to consider that which is not only prior to time and space, but prior to *anything* which we can mean. And the fact that those books are so contrary to what is common makes the temptation all the more exciting.
29. Note: I do not mean “common” pejoratively. I mean entities which are ‘common’ to us—within a *common world*.
30. I am now ready to present the argument. And in preparing for the salon I searched for the perfect quotes to present this argument. The obvious choice is to refer to John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson’s translation of Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. That book is so deeply interesting. Interesting in that is such a nuanced text—which makes possible subtle and articulate moves in its

descriptions. *Being and Time* takes the example of a hammer and describes the coming into its *being objective*.⁶ However, the precision in the language of that work demands heavy terminology.

31. I also considered presenting quotes from David Farrel Krell’s translation of Heidegger’s four volume *Nietzsche*. The four volume *Nietzsche* is so fun. Most of the enjoyment comes from judging how far the understanding from *Being and Time* can be mapped onto the old language—that from Friedrich Nietzsche. And further, to see the breaking point where the mapping just becomes too much to believe. Yet even then, after the breaking point, that text is still entertaining—entertaining to see the limits which the artistic spirit runs up against.
32. I also found a poetic description of a coming into being in a translation of one of Heidegger’s later lectures, *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*.⁷ That text is driven by describing the coming into being of ‘pure’ space through the example of a bridge.
33. However, while all of these particular texts take up particular languages which make them immensely entertaining, at the same time, I find those languages very difficult to work in abstract. A salon would have to *teach* one of those works—diving straight into the particular language of that text. In the end, I decided that I don’t need quotes anyway. I prefer the visualization of the bridge, and I prefer a description of the coming into being of material. So, that is what I will attempt now, in my own words.
34. To do so, we first need to imagine ourselves as explorers,

⁶See John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson’s translation of Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Division II, section 69b, page 412.

⁷See Albert Hofstadter’s translation of Martin Heidegger’s *Building Dwelling Thinking* printed in *Poetry, Language Thought*.

perhaps pre-historic humans, not acquainted with our terrain. We are not acquainted with bridges or maybe we have used a bridge before—a fallen tree. But, if so, this use was merely a background event for us. Imagine that we have never yet *meant* bridge.

35. Remember that *bridge* does not mean some material. A bridge is not something which is wooden, stone, or metal. *Bridge* is something besides these things. In meaning *bridge* I mean *that which bridges somewhere to another*.
36. But let's go back, imagine a condition in which I need to communicate "Bridge!" to another by shouting—perhaps I have spotted food or a predator? At the moment of meaning *bridge to bridge* becomes a thing. The thing *to bridge* comes together as a whole system of things in a condition which allows for them. There is an obstacle *to overcome*. The bank of the river is the beginning of the obstacle. The fallen tree as *bridge* is the overcoming of the obstacle.
37. Now, imagine me saying, "No, not *this* bridge. *That* bridge!" And I mean *to bridge*. But here, pointing modifies the meaning. *This* and *that* 'bridge' becomes a location. I no longer mean *to bridge*, but mean "bridge" as *this* or *that which bridges somewhere to another*.
38. Now, taken further, imagine standing far from these two bridges. I may still have need to draw attention to them. Yet, I have two specific bridges, 'this' and 'that', and they still demand pointing to. How can I point to them?
39. Well, to answer that I need to think on what I meant to point to—why *this* bridge over *that*? Well, something else was meant besides *that which bridges somewhere to another*—let's say one of these bridges was more suited to the task of bridging. Perhaps I meant the more suited bridge by speaking a word, either "near" or "stone". The suitability here being either *distance* or *stability*. Remember to not get hung up on the word itself. It really could be

any word, the sound and written characters are arbitrary. Instead, think about *meaning*.

40. Now, consider another task. We wish to make more suitable the lesser bridge, or at least have an explanation of its less suitability. We investigate and 'discover'—but what we honestly do is *describe*. Perhaps in our explanation we now take up another possibly arbitrary word, *wood*.
41. And in doing this, we have come upon a theme under which we are already investigating—*material*. It is here that material comes to be. We *mean* something other than *any specific material, wood or stone*, and we mean something altogether beside *that which bridges somewhere to another*.
42. What I am tempting us to consider here is that the human goal (to cross the river), purpose (to bridge) and value (suitability) are there first. They have priority—that is, they are *prior*—to material.
43. This "priority" and "prior" should provoke thoughts about time. This is intentional.
44. *Being and Time* offers a similar exercise on not only spatial things, but temporal, and audible too. As already remarked on, that book is difficult to quote. But there is one passage which works well outside of its context.
45. "What we 'first' hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking wagon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling. It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to 'hear' a 'pure noise'."⁸
46. In the above passage the 'pure noise' may be made objective with a standardized scale, for example. And I don't mean

⁸From John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson's translation of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Division I, section 34, page 207.

‘objective reality’ as that which is truly real, but *objective reality* only as a certain way of understanding—a certain way of talking.

47. Let’s think on this in another way—coming back to the romantic story writing character. Let’s move forward away from pre-history and explore this story writing character on a ‘more scientific’ ‘discovery’, like a virus. Consider you are in a lab, recording observations. You call your observations *virus*. *Virus* could mean either the recorded data or it could mean your expectation of future observations. However, it could mean the *observation itself*. And if you remove the *observation* from the *itself* your observation becomes objective. And once your meaning is objective the *virus* is eternal. What you want to say is, “I have simply discovered nature!” Then you read your *virus* backward into all of history.
48. Next, consider atomism as addressed in a translation of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*.
49. “When I say, ‘My broom is in the corner’, is this really a statement about the broomstick and the brush? Well, it could at any rate be replaced by a statement giving the position of the stick and the position of the brush. And this statement is surely a further analysed form of the first one.—but why do I call it ‘further analysed’?—Well, if the broom is there, that surely means that the stick and brush must be there, and in a particular relation to one another; and previously this was, as it were, hidden in the sense of the first sentence, and is *articulated* in the analysed sentence. Then does someone who says that the broom is in the corner really mean: the broomstick is there, and so is the brush, and the broomstick is fixed in the brush?—If we were to ask anyone if he meant this, he would probably say that he had not specially thought of either the broomstick or the brush. And that would be the right answer, for he did not mean to speak either of the stick or of the brush

in particular. Suppose that, instead of telling someone ‘Bring me the broom!’, you said ‘Bring me the broomstick and the brush which is fitted on to it!’—Isn’t the answer: ‘Do you want the broom? Why do you put it so oddly?’—Is he going to understand the further analysed sentence better?—This sentence, one might say, comes to the same thing as the ordinary one, but in a more roundabout way.”⁹

50. Think on the applicability of meaning. It may be inappropriate to use a language which makes use of scientific, material, or objective entities—a further analyzed language. Consider how the entity *brush* could ‘die out’ if it was no longer useful. Then consider how a scientific entity could ‘die out’.
51. However, maybe you are thinking, “Yes, but the shape of the earth and a virus are so convincing that those stories could never be unwritten”—and a new story is quite inconceivable. But consider the positive approach which goes alongside the scientific method coupled with a *descriptive understanding*.
52. To do so, you only have to think on a contemporary scientific theory. In 1905 a theory unifying Newtonian Mechanics and Special Relativity was proposed. *General Relativity*. With this theory a calculation was proposed and accounted for observable phenomena, the irregular rotation of Mercury around the sun. This prediction was confirmed, giving the theory weight. However, the theory also demanded for something which was later named *black hole*—a mathematically defined region of spacetime with such a strong gravitational pull that no particle can escape it.
53. Now, imagine that in the not too far future observations are made which corresponded to the calculations for a

⁹From G.E.M. Anscombe’s translation of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, section 60, page 33e.

black hole. We might say, “This collected data—this we identify as black hole.” But in 100 years from then might not this identification be laughed at? It’s not to say that that specific phenomena could not be test with the same tools to record the same results. It’s just that we might find it odd to call *that* measurement a black hole. That is, maybe the theory of black holes could become outdated. We might have a different word for that phenomena.

54. Or another case. We might still use that word, black hole, and we might say “Isn’t it funny that that is what we thought black holes were. Now we understand them differently.” And in that case, we will use a different tool to measure. The black hole will look different to us through the new tools. The observation will be different—but this only means that the phenomena is actually different phenomena.
55. In conclusion, let me come back to that romantic spirit. I have presented an argument in which this spirit not only grounds the stories of our lives, but allows for consideration of a descriptive understanding which grounds more holistically the entirety of entities, whether, *bridge, stone, the color grey, or that bridge, stone and grey.*
56. Of course this descriptive understanding provokes the consideration of a new cosmology—that is, if atomism is not the most fundamental ground of experience then what is? Does descriptive understanding bring along with it an idealism?—solipsism, or some form of qualified realism—an intersubjective realism?—whatever that could mean. But here I want to say that descriptive understanding is not yet ready to make a cosmological claim.
57. And this question only touches the surface of possible other frustrations. Think on what this does to entities. Entities are redefined—constituted merely as the *meaning which they have within a certain understanding.* In a sense, they become free-floating, prepared to be thrown away,

usurped at any time by a new way of speaking about the world and the new entities which follow from that new understanding.

Yet there is something more, this evening I have not even alluded to what a descriptive understanding might do to any friend, colleague, or lover—the entities dearest to us become threatened. Of course, *Being and Time* addresses this concern. Better put, I read this ‘concern’ as part of the solution of the larger task of that work. That is, others are not even addressed as a problem. Yet, I am not convinced of the argument. *Being and Time* appears to reduce any particular friend, colleague, or lover to that which was never the concern to begin with.

Open Discussion

WHEN THE NEW BOY MOVED INTO
THE NEIGHBORHOOD, SUDDENLY...

ALL THE GIRLS Fell in LOVE!

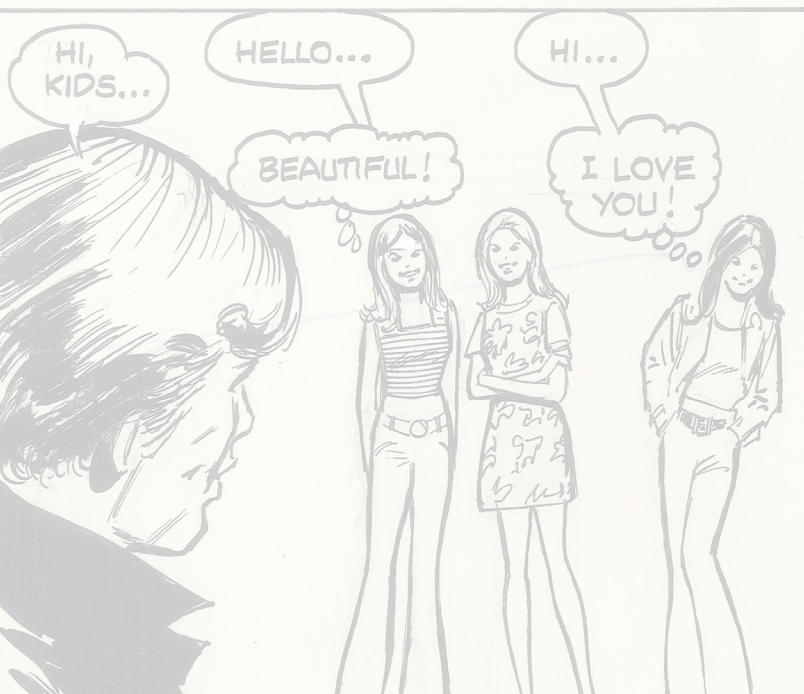


JS-210

HE'S GORGEOUS!

OH, WOW! HE
MUST BE AT
LEAST TWENTY!

I ALWAYS
WANTED TO
GO WITH AN
OLDER
MAN!



HI,
KIDS...

HELLO...

HI...

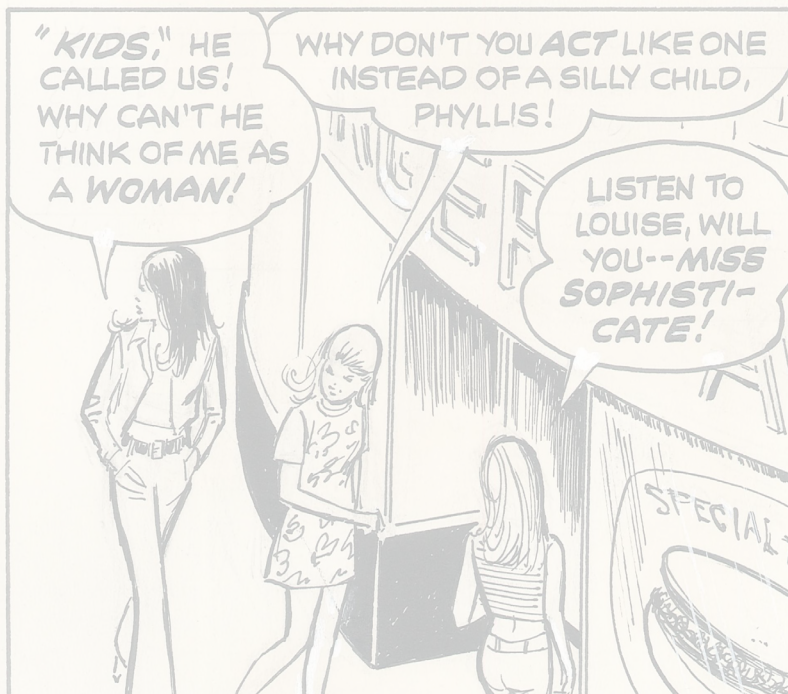
BEAUTIFUL!

I LOVE
YOU!

"KIDS," HE
CALLED US!
WHY CAN'T HE
THINK OF ME AS
A WOMAN!

WHY DON'T YOU ACT LIKE ONE
INSTEAD OF A SILLY CHILD,
PHYLLIS!

LISTEN TO
LOUISE, WILL
YOU--MISS
SOPHISTI-
CATE!



SPECIAL-

Appendix: Reflections on the Romantic Spirit: Bad Memory, Tragedy, and Humility

Think on the romantic spirit as that which can occur in degree. In what person would you theme an extreme degree of expression of the romantic spirit? Surely, this person would write with unwavering commitment—as if no further evidence could convince them otherwise. Perhaps their extremity might appear delusional if it does not map onto the logic of a science—perhaps as the behavior of the Abraham of *Fear and Trembling*.^{A1} That is to say, their behavior might seem “beyond human calculation”. This degree of commitment should be admired. Today, I dare say, there is hardly any tolerance for a ‘delusion’ which equals the ‘faith in the absurd’ found in Kierkegaard’s Abraham.

Think on the story which one writes about “my one true love”—this could be considered quite extreme. And while, this story cannot be refuted (after all, it is *their* story) I could question the integrity of the author. Consider a passage from a translation of Nietzsche’s *Human, All Too Human*,

“The advantage of a bad memory is that one can enjoy the same good things for the first time *several* times.”^{A2}

And here, I want say that it is possible to hold open admiration, the truthfulness of their story, and my suspicion of their integrity without any reconciliation. I don’t find any trouble in doing so, since in each case the object of the admiration, truth, and integrity is different.

Next, consider the novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Consider the character which Oscar Wilde has written—Dorian, a naïve

youth persuaded into vain pleasures. However, I do not theme the novel so shallowly. In fact, it is remarkably deep.

Consider the moment when Dorian is suffering following the incident which left his first love with a broken heart. Consider Dorian in his gloom. He finds the weather unfavorable, his time too short, and every distance which he travels too long. And not only that—he *feels* a change in the expression of his portrait. As he looks in the ‘mirror’ he reads an expression of the suffering of guilt: the look of indifference and numbing pain—perhaps a look of weariness or forfeit.

Following this, what I want for Dorian is to, that very night, hide the portrait. And the next morning?—upon a hint of reflection, I want him to say to himself, “That mood is best left forgotten!” with a childish indifference. Now, with the portrait hidden, and with no cause to see it again, Dorian would never question his lack of pain over guilt—he simply would not know that feeling could be felt.

This would then be the tragedy: never again would Dorian suffer from the pain of guilt as felt in that first sin.

As is the case, Dorian in flesh does not change. The painting absorbs the consequence of each sin. Yet, with the absorption of emotional distress, **the portrait would steal the opportunity of reflection.** In this story, Dorian would be cursed with a *bad memory*. He would never become indifferent, numb, weary or forfeit. And surely he would never make the leap into enjoying the sins, as Wilde has written.

If this were the story of Dorian Gray, I could not theme in him a horrible monster of seduction—there would have been no opportunity of decision for Dorian. In this story, there is no one who is guilty. Instead, doubly cursed with youthful handsomeness and charm, and now with his suspended innocence, Dorian would be opportune to sin, again and again.

It is hardly conceivable to me, but imagine, night after night, the experience equal to that of the breaking of Sibyl’s heart. Imagine the torment of enduring *that* degree of pain night after night—never becoming numb or indifferent. Never weary or forfeit. I would have to say that to endure the persistence of

^{A1}See Alastair Hannay’s translation of Søren Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*.

^{A2}From R.J. Hollingdale’s translation of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Human, All Too Human*, section 69, number 580, page 188.

pain to this degree is not possible, and this novel would tease us with the absurdity of such a situation.

Perhaps in this tragedy, the absurdity is magnified. Dorian might be the origin sin, passing his corruption to others. Still, I would find it hard to hold him accountable as the origin of corruption. Surely, I would not consider him guilty of each account of sin, whether his or one of his victims.

Of course, what this version loses is any commentary on morality (which I believe was Wilde's intention.) With this version, we would be astonished at the circumstance—but we would not find ourselves in disgust. And we would not be tempted with the thought that, given the same circumstance, we might do the same as Dorian—that we are not as moral as we think we are. In this version there is a different moral in focus.

This story of Dorian Gray embodies a certain type of tragedy. But there is subtlety. With this tragedy the reader overlooks sympathy and instead gazes straight into astonishment—or a certain 'humility before the universe.' In *my Dorian* this astonishment manifests in absurdity. However, consider *The Arabian Nights*, which pictures a fantastic world in which its protagonists are subject to the devastation of the character of Time. Consider the tale of the third dervish within the tale of the porter and the young girls.^{A3} Consider as the dervish relates the story of the loss of his right eye. I get the feeling that the author is a mere puppet to Time—tossed from one *misadventure* into the next.

In this tragedy, the protagonist is a mere device—that is, the *person* of the protagonist is inconsequential. Instead, the 'character' of the story is the *personal experience*—love, curiosity, guilt, or despair.

Of course, it cannot be denied, this type of tragedy can amuse in another way. It can appeal to my sense of justice if the

character is punished—losing an eye or, in the case of Dorian, death. However, when there is punishment it is not only my sense of justice which is flattered. The story also becomes a warning—to beware of a bad memory. Yet this is surely not the primary source of my entertainment. There is yet something below the tragedy.

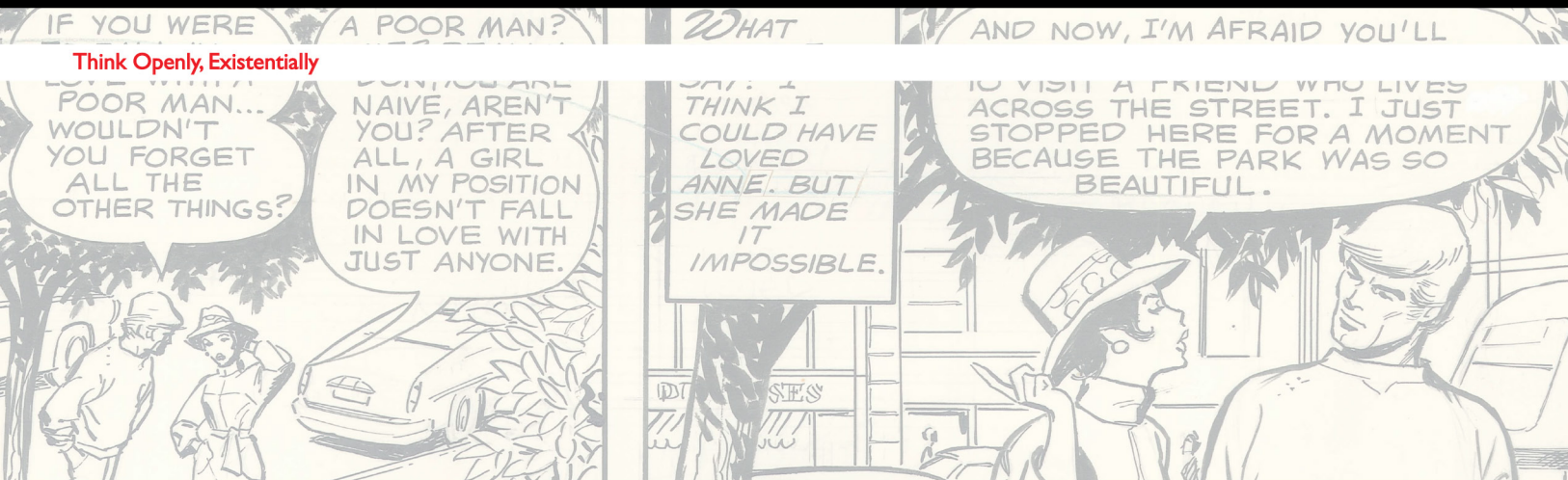
What I mean is, in *my Dorian*, as well as the *Arabian Nights*, I am not made to feel bad about a seduction by curiosity or enjoyment—whether at the hand of the devil or not. This type of tragedy allows for an enjoyment of the pleasures and at the same time admits, "Yes, I did it. And given the same circumstance I would do it again." There is no story of mistake here. And I can even entertain a story of 'punishment'.

Think on it this way, I am not made to feel sympathetic to the protagonist, but am made to feel the personal experience. I take it on as my own, or better, it already was my own—in that I take from the story what I have already put in it. *The degree of the experience is my experience*, authentically.

And one last closing reflection. Because I find this type of story so entertaining—that I find it one of the most pleasing stories which the romantic spirit can write—I cannot help but feel a certain distance from the morality of Christianity. I do not expect any protagonist, even myself—in the case of my life's story, to be forgiven. Think of the story, "This is my punishment"—this is a romantic story. And in turn, both languages of *sin* and *forgiveness* are completely absent from this certain type of tragedy.

Open Discussion

^{A3}See Hussain Haddwy's translation of *The Arabian Nights*, Fifty-Third Night, page 138.



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