



Picasso's Left Ear

Issue 15



Contents

1. Eamon Yeung
2. Eoin McShane
3. Brian Woods
4. Peter Kiernan

Editor:
Neal Morrin

Is this the Road to Perdition?

Aeons ago, I had the fortune to attend a social event in which I engaged in an amiable conversation with a prejudiced individual and my quasi-deputy editor. We broached the topic of North Korea, laughing ceaselessly about the country's extreme form of leader-worship and various humorous eccentricities. But my callousness only served to haunt me that night because memories of a South Korean documentary, concerning North Korea's next heir, re-surfaced. Bringing with it an eerily uncomfortable interview. A North Korean inhabitant, in a despondent condition, happily welcomed the prospect of war, should it arise, against the USA, China, South Korea, Russia and Japan. It is better to perish, she muttered, than to live one more second of the abject poverty she has found herself entangled in. The documentary of course was filmed against the backdrop of economic sanctions imposed by the UN on North Korea last June, a punishment for conducting underground nuclear tests. Perhaps NK is feeling the pinch of these embargos because on 6th October the administration stated that it would be willing to return to 6 party talks on its nuclear weapons program. One will inevitably ask, just how long is this stalemate going to last?

Well, it will definitely not end any time soon. From the looks of it, NK has reverted back to the stance of negotiation after directly confronting the policies of South Korea and the US. Pyongyang strenuously defends its nuclear weapons program, it claims that this is the only viable way to combat US's tendencies to force regime changes on other countries. NK's gesture for bilateral talks with the US has been warmly welcomed by Washington, as long as they return to the negotiating table. However to exacerbate matters, Pyongyang's complete isolation means that there are little diplomatic ploys available to the US to lure NK into handing over the nuclear toys. The origin of the offer is a cause of suspicion as well. The casual announcement came about during a visit by Premier Wen Jiabao of China. A collapse of the rigidly communist regime is not desirable for a country in which the majority of western commodities are manufactured. Indeed, it is China's nightmare scenario. Should China pull the plug on economic aid to NK, the demise could send an overflow of hundreds of thousands of refugees to Beijing- a deluge China wants to avoid at all costs. Despite China's repeated urgings for refrain, NK proceeded with the tests regardless. This an indication of China's limited sphere of influence on Pyongyang. The unprecedented unanimous vote for UN sanctions on NK may be a signal of the limited patience China reserves for NK. Although South Korea has always flashed the 'Sunshine policy' (A doctrine accentuating non violent co-existence between the two Koreas, short term re-conciliation, and the hopeful conclusion of Korean reunification) the new S. Korean conservative president Lee Myung Bak has drawn up a harsh wall against NK, keeping open dialogue at arm's length. He has severed all unconditional economic aid while pointing out that concessions will only be produced if NK resolves its international brawl with the UN over its nuclear policy. To emphasise his stern position, the president tabled his 'grand bargain' in September- denuclearisation in exchange for security guarantees and assistance- only for NK to rebuff the deal completely with a series of fuming and irritated threats to South Korea. With China's patience running rather thin, this coupled with very strained relations with her Korean neighbour and the economically suffocating UN sanctions, it would appear that NK has few friends to turn to. However it is in a strong bargaining position. NK literally has nothing left to lose, presently she holds still her final ace- a noteworthy factor which may yield to numerous allowances by the 6-party conglomerate.

While all of this has been raging on, one is forced to ask where is the real consideration for those suffering under this standoff? Politics tends to bypass the lives of everyday citizens. In NK there is a food shortage endemic, the normal household products we take for granted are worryingly scarce, while denizens of Pyongyang have fled the capital to the mountains and countryside in order to seek the basic necessities. In the documentary I referenced, when the NK citizen is asked of her opinion on her country, rather than complain about the current state of affairs she says her heart wept when she saw 'the Great Leader' on television in his feeble and sedentary state. The citizen stated she would gladly bear this poverty because it could not compare to the pressure the 'Great Leader' is carrying on his shoulders to run the country. I entreat the reader, whenever he/she is donating to the latest charity to have an African project, please reserve some thought for those occupying the northern half of the Korean Peninsula, who do not have such access to world generosity. Hope that they may someday cast off the shackles of oppression and imprisonment, and carve a path for themselves that may someday lead to freedom and re-unification. I will wait for that day.

By Eamon Yeung

The Beat Generation

“The Beat Generation, that was a vision that we had in the late forties, of a generation of crazy illuminated hipsters suddenly rising and roaming America, serious, bumming and hitchhiking everywhere, ragged, beatific, beautiful in an ugly graceful new way” Jack Kerouac

In its simplest form, the term ‘Beat Generation’ refers to a small group of friends who met in New York in the late 1940’s, wrote poetry, explored spirituality and sought drugs, sex, booze, crazy people and crazy situations. In the wider cultural context, the term ‘Beat Generation’ refers to a new, young, vibrant attitude to life, a challenge to the old stalwart principles on which conservative America was based, and a proverbial ‘starting over’, embodied by the new generation which grew up in the wake of World War Two. Essentially, ‘the beats’ were a literary movement which coincided with, and incorporated the spirit of, a wider cultural renaissance.

The word ‘beat’ was a popular expression in 1940’s New York to mean ‘beaten down’ or ‘tired’. Jack Kerouac seized upon another religious interpretation- that it could be short for ‘beatitude’ or ‘beatific’. ‘The Beat Generation’ was his coinage but was first popularized in an article by his friend John Clellon Holmes, which appeared in the ‘New York Times’ on the 16 November 1952.

The core nucleus of the beat writers was; Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac (self-proclaimed ‘king of the beats’). These first met around the Greenwich Village area of New York in 1948, and formed a friendship which would take them the length and breadth of America on iconic road-trips, in pursuit of ‘kicks’ and, hopefully, some form of self-discovery. Kerouac’s ‘On The Road’ is the seminal novel of the beat movement. Written in 1951, the semi-autobiographical book recounts the frenzied misadventures of the main beat players as they drove from New York to San Francisco. The novel is the most enduring testament to the generation, bringing the movement to national attention and making the stories vivacious, unpredictable main character, ‘Dean Moriarty’ (based on Kerouac’s real-life friend Neal Cassady), a cult hero. ‘On The Road’ is also the first work to showcase Kerouac’s revolutionary ‘spontaneous prose’ style of writing. Inspired by the improvised solos of 1940/50’s jazz music, this free-flowing, unconventional technique involved typing the words as they came to mind (‘write what you want bottomless from bottom of the mind’). Perhaps as significant as the work itself is the story surrounding the manner in which it was written. Kerouac, high on the opiate ‘Benzedrine’, supposedly typed the entire novel on one continuous ream of 120ft tracing paper, in one three-week session. Upon its release in 1957, it was heralded as a ‘major work’ by the New York Times and Jack Kerouac’s status as a truly great American writer was affirmed, being described at the time as ‘a breath of fresh air’ to the literary world.

The city of San Francisco was to become the focal point of the ‘beatniks’ from the mid 50’s onwards. The city embodied the ethos of the movement, and witnessed a flourishing of creativity over the next five or so years. For this reason the Beat Generation is sometimes referred to as the ‘San Francisco Renaissance’. Many notable beat works were first published in San Fran’s legendary City Lights bookstore, the haunt of choice for the aspiring young beat poets of the city. Such works include Allen Ginsberg’s ‘Howl and other poems’ (1956), and William Burroughs’s ‘Naked Lunch’ (1959). Both works proved to be a source of considerable controversy upon publication, both being the focus of ‘obscenity’ trials. The liberal attitudes of the ‘beats’ towards drugs and sexuality, and their rejection of conventional societal behaviour, was too much for the old-time adherents of conservative America to stomach. In fact, to this day the poem ‘Howl’ cannot be read on American daytime radio.

As the ‘beat’ image inclined more and more towards the mainstream, Kerouac and others began disassociating themselves with the movement they had created. The final nail was driven into the coffin of ‘beat’ as a truly underground phenomenon in 1959, with a piece in ‘Life’ magazine which featured models wearing the stereo-typical ‘beatnik’ attire of black turtlenecks, carrying volumes of the appropriate ‘beat’ works. The movement had become a popular trend, and lost its roots. By the late 1960s, the beat generation had all but imploded. Stick-on beatnik beards were being sold in shops, and the hippies had arrived to take on the mantle of the beats.

The legacy of the Beat Generation extends to many aspects of American culture, be it literary, musical, artistic or other. They arrived at a time when the young were breaking free from the old constraints, in response to World War Two, which had just ended. This was a time when old standards were challenged; Marlon Brando and James Dean were ripping through film screens, Jazz musicians such as Charlie Parker and Dizzie Gillespie were playing their music without barriers, and artists such as Jackson Pollock were exploding onto the canvas. The beats slotted into this general movement. Without the ‘Beat Generation’ there would have been no hippie ‘counterculture’ which so defined the 1960’s. They also greatly advanced the liberalisation of American literature. Contemporary examples of beat-influence in the music world include Bob Dylan, The Beatles and Jim Morrison. Their impact on literature is impossible to fathom; they essentially redefined the marker of acceptability in writing, and paved the way for future authors and poets such as Ken Kesey (One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest), Thomas Pynchon (The Crying of Lot 49) and Hunter S. Thompson (Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas).

By Eoin McShane

Wave – Particle Duality

In the last issue we discovered how it had been conclusively proven that light displays all the properties of an electromagnetic wave such as: reflection - light is reflected off mirrors; refraction - seen when light changes angle going from one medium to another; diffraction - light spreads out again after passing through a narrow slit; interference - when two beams of light of the same frequency collide they cancel each other out. But we also discovered that it had been conclusively proved by Einstein in his explanation of the photoelectric effect that light was a particle in the form of a photon.

The only explanation was the **dualistic concept of light**. How could something possibly behave as a wave and a particle at the very same time? It is a baffling idea that seems to make no sense...

In 1924 a French scientist called **Louis De Broglie** suggested that *all* moving particles had a wave motion associated with them. He hypothesised that, like light, *electrons could behave as both waves and particles*. His hypothesis was soon proven when it was shown that electrons underwent diffraction as they passed through a slit in the same way as light.

Another question followed De Broglie's idea. If an electron travelled as a wave then is it possible to locate the precise position of the electron within the wave? **Werner Heisenberg**, a German physicist answered no.

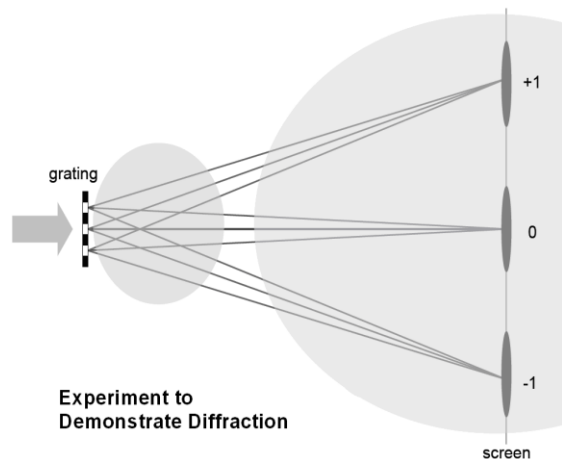
He reasoned as follows: Consider a beam of light being used to detect the presence of an electron. The beam of light acts like a radar signal that bounces off an object. When the beam strikes the electron, the position of the electron can be determined but since the electron has such a small mass, its velocity is immediately changed by the beam of light.

Thus by observing quantum matter, we affect the behaviour of that matter. That is, the more precisely one property is known, the less precisely the other can be known.

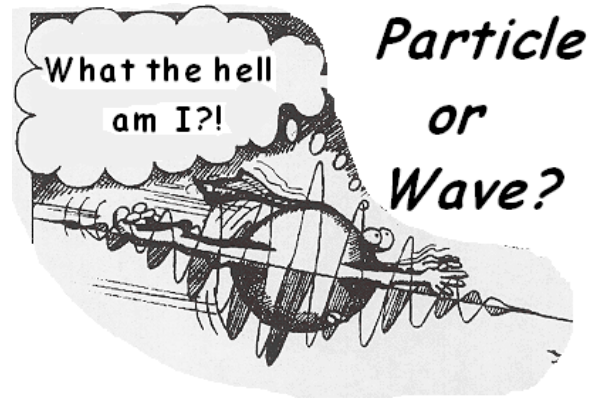
Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle helps to explain why some experimenters showed light behaving as a wave while others showed it behaving as a particle. The more accurately an experiment tries to measure the wave characteristics of light, the less accurately it will measure light's particle characteristics. The opposite is also true. The clearer the particle characteristics of light are shown, the less clear the wave characteristics of light are seen.

Questions then arise: What is an electron? A particle or a wave? What is light? A photon or a wave? The answer to these questions is found in the statement of wave-particle duality: All objects at times exhibit a wave-like nature, and at other times a particle-like nature **depending on how they are observed**.

Now, if you're like me, you'll be wondering why we don't see more examples of this wave-particle duality (that apparently seems to be so easily demonstrated experimentally) in our everyday lives? For example, why don't we see obvious "particles" like footballs, cars and buildings behaving as waves sometimes? The answer is to do with the fact that Planck's constant, the proportionality between the energy of any particle and the frequency of its wave, is so tiny (6.626068×10^{-34} J / s) that the wave-



particle duality is more readily observable at the atomic scale. However, in theory we could illustrate the wave nature of any particle if we set up a suitable diffraction experiment. Unfortunately at the moment we don't have the technology to do this and likely never will. If the ball was travelling at 1m/s we don't have the means to create a slit of the necessary narrowness (roughly 10^{-34} m in width). To use a slit of width 10^{-5} m (as we use to demonstrate the diffraction of light) the ball would have to be slowed down to 10^{-29} m/s which, sadly, would take longer than the age of the universe to pass through! The conclusion is that it **does occur** but we are protected from this nearly-incomprehensible "quantum weirdness" by the minuteness of plank's constant. Wave-particle duality occurs and is readily observable at a tiny, atomic scale. But when it comes to the large-scale everyday world we inhabit we need not panic, it does not affect us.



By Brian Woods

Mr Wittgenstein (part 2)

"There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical"

In the previous edition we spoke of Wittgenstein's theory, a theory that argued that all attempts to translate the deeper experiences of this life into words were futile. Our language he would say, has not the mettle nor the mould for our experiences. He brought this to a point of eloquence when he announced, that it was impossible for him to say a single word about all that music had meant to him in his life. Thus the philosopher is left to define the criteria for logically verifiable statements, and to consistently inform those who attempt to move beyond the realm of science and mathematics, that their endeavors are both pointless and misleading. Quite morose is it not?

I agree with Wittgenstein in that the great fault at the heart of all metaphysics has been the foolish attempt to do mathematics with language, a true prejudice of philosophers implicit in the work of both Plato and Descartes. Their mistake as Wittgenstein points out, was to divorce concepts like love and beauty from their content, to make them as immutable and content-less as the numbers of mathematics, and then to commence to perform logical acrobatics with them. However I am firm in the opinion that Wittgenstein falters both in his belief that language cannot support our deeper feelings, our higher thoughts (for language must be to thought as a cup is to water – its form but not its content), and in his model of propositions. To Wittgenstein I would say, *there is* such a language, one which is designed for the purpose of translating experiences and thoughts, such that move beyond daily life, into the form of word and the mottle of oils. It is called art. I would say to him, art is this language, the language of the soul. Its purpose is to bridge the gap that yawns between persons. To communicate what previously seemed so hopelessly private- an experience, that, as Wittgenstein expressed himself, any attempt to communicate it would end in a futility redolent of Eliot's *"that is not what I meant at all"*. The poet plies language, the use of metaphor and imagery and all the arsenal of techniques available to the bard is an attempt to capture these feelings, such as Wittgenstein seems to feel about music. Daily language, scientific language indeed does pale at the task of such expression, but the language of the artist is forced again and again to rise to the occasion. Let us take an example, if Wittgenstein had stood on Westminster bridge, on the morning of the third of September 1802, and had seen the dawn cast its dim light across the city, he might have noted in his notebook – "saw the dawn today, breathtaking, aroused feelings of joy in me". This sparse language, which states what happened and what was felt as a result would surely have passed into the oblivion of forgotten history. In this case Wittgenstein would have again felt deeply the sense of frustration, that his words contained none of the tranquility he experienced. They could neither convey nor capture what he felt. Who though was present on that September morn? Wordsworth- and he wrote *"Ne'er saw I, never felt a calm so deep! The river glideth at his own sweet will: Dear God! the very houses seem asleep; And all that mighty heart is lying still!"* It is no criticism of Wittgenstein that he could not do as such, but as to his theory that there is no language which can depict the deeper motions of life, I have all the poetry of ages, the paintings, tapestries and tales of centuries to stand as my witnesses.

I used the word *depict*, and this is important. For Wittgenstein has made a great contribution to art-theory without realising it. He stated that what can be shown cannot be said, and yet what is art but a demonstration and a depiction of our emotions and thoughts. Wordsworth makes us relive his experience through his poetry. Art is exactly the demonstration which Wittgenstein had spoken of. Milton rather then put into prose a discussion of *"the ways of God,"* delivers us his thoughts and feelings on the matter through the playing out of a great, cosmic drama. Art itself in its wooing of meaning, is indeed like a demonstration. For Wordsworth does not just *tell* us what he felt, but makes us *feel* it. The artist struggles with his medium in the attempt to make it express what cannot be said in the simple language we are familiar with. That is why good art strikes at us so. It expresses something we have felt, but never found about the roundness of our mouths the right sound for. Art then appears to us, as that which captures the emotions and thoughts which lie beyond the reach of our common means of expression, it is quite literally the medium through which the soul speaks. Art is that which is capable of the expression of the 'mystical' which Wittgenstein rules out as impossible.

My second criticism is leveled on his theory of propositions- that a proposition is formed from a certain relation of facts. Now this indeed covers the propositions made by the natural sciences, and Wittgenstein seems to me to outline exactly those principles which govern the proposition making language of science. However he has not covered the realm of the conceptual in his description. He realises this, for how can he make a conclusion such as philosophy is the analysis of propositions, without attempting to define the conceptual nature of philosophy itself. He has denied rigorously that there can be any fruit or progress in attempting to discuss such a matter., and yet we find him discussing it. The supreme irony is that in order to show up philosophical speculation as futile he must make use of philosophical speculation. Hence his 'throw away my book as a ladder' metaphor. The fundamental flaw in the *tractatus*, which he tries to rectify in *philosophical investigations*, is this conceptual backdoor. We cannot rule out the world of the conceptual, we cannot simply ignore the task of investigating the nature of ideas. Science as Hobbes put it, is the study of consequences, not of the nature of things. Thus Wittgenstein realises that though he has accounted for scientific propositions, he has not accounted for propositions on the nature of concepts, for in making a proposition such as, a teacher has students, we are actually stating something about the nature of the teacher, and of the student. That proposition is strung together not by relating two facts, but two concepts. Here's the beauty of my criticism, for if we attempt to analyse any concept in any proposition at all, be it music or democracy, we automatically make a proposition on its nature. In other words the analysis of a concept *is* a proposition on its nature. So much for Wittgenstein's 'philosopher's don't make propositions'. As to his annoyingly ingenious solution to this criticism, which as I said he well predicted, his game-theory of language, is for some later issue.

By Peter Kiernan