

Ontological
Sounds

Gerda Wever - Rabehl

Ontological Sounds

"Gerda Wever-Rabehl writes philosophy through a poet's eye and in a poet's voice. Her poetic prose loses neither rigor in presenting constructs nor precision of analysis while garnering the insight of a philosophic vision. Her deeply moving essays have the power to impel us to social action—a rare gift in philosophical writings."

—*Dr. Heesoon Bai*

ONTOLOGICAL SOUNDS

Gerda Wever-Rabehl

ABHIJEET PUBLICATIONS

DELHI 110 094

ABHIJEET PUBLICATIONS

2/46 Tukhmeerpur Extension

Delhi-110 094

Phone: 2218 1492

e-mails: abhijeet_singh@vsnl.net

abhijeet_singh1@indiatimes.com

ONTOLOGICAL SOUNDS

First Published 2003

© Gerda Wever-Rabehl

ISBN 81-88683-17-5

[All rights reserved, no part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, or printed by any means, whether electronic or manual, without the prior permission from the author or publisher.]

PRINTED IN INDIA

Published by J.K. Singh for Abhijeet Publications, Delhi 110 094;
Lasertypeset by Abhijeet Typesetters, Delhi, and Printed at Tarun Offset
Press, Delhi.

For Kai, according to whom

“Everything came out of a cave. First came the moon, who turned into an asteroid. Then there came more asteroids and they made the light. Then there came waves and stuff.” (April, 2003)

Foreword

Why Prose?

This collection of musings on some central ontological and ethical questions can be seen as an attempt to add to our understanding of the world and of ourselves as being part of that world. I have contemplated these questions in what I would like to call philosophical prose, as, while I am a realist in the sense that I am interested in problems and theories of the world, I am also, with Parmenides and Plato, an idealist. Leaving the empirical alone and seeking the primordial instead, I have found myself inevitably in "agony for words" to use the words of a despairing Plotinus. However, the desire for *immortalia mortali sermone notantes*¹, expressing immortal things in mortal words, the inclination to express that which is beyond description, indicates something, something of importance. In using the words of St. Augustine: "What, you swine you want not to talk nonsense! Go ahead and talk nonsense, it does not matter!"²

Understanding Being involves understanding the world in which we live, and consequently, it involves putting ones own existence and ones self in question. In doing so, no logic, no argument or analyses can give

us words to express the astonishing, that what is beyond description. Intuition, intellectual sensibility and love for the experience—that what Einstein called *Einführung*—and the illogical power rooted in imagination may assist us, may enable us to speak of the unspeakable. Modern behaviorist and analytic philosophy's attempt to analyze moral metaphors in a neutral manner is misguided. Moral metaphors carry moral charge, and as moral philosophy concerns the recommendation of an ethical system, it cannot but take sides—it cannot but commend an ideal, and this should be a worthy ideal, which moreover, takes into consideration the frailty of human nature. In contrast to contemporary epistemology, which, deeply influenced by the Baconian myth, holds that knowledge and theory start with observation, both science and literature originated in the imaginative explanatory story. Stories capture the world and enable us ways to examine our roles and relations in it, it reveals ideas in action³. One way to understand the force of stories, of prose is to understand it as an 'occasion'⁴. Prose presents 'an occasion' in that it offers an opportunity for the reader to re-create as it were, the experience told of in the story. It is in this act of re-creation, that the reader can experience and discover a sense of "otherness"⁵, an experience that allows us to recognize otherness in ourselves. The reader learns from the re-created other in the text, through the extension of experiences, through reflection, and through feeling and seeing features of a social reality that may otherwise have gone unnoticed. We can find meaning that is similar and different or new. Prose has thus the potential to transform and deepen one's interpretive sense.

Why Ancient Thought?

So as I see it as part of our epistemological to understand the various ways we can represent our ideas and the connection between form and content that it

represents, I deliberately chose to weave the important themes of Being and Good for philosophy into the fabric of prose. One may be reminded that Western science did not start with observations about particulars but instead with very bold and visionary narratives about the world and the universe⁶. Hence it has been a natural move for me to look to the uniquely imaginary thought of the Greek world, the Eleatic world of Being and that of Indian thought and philosophy for a philosophical and visionary foundation to these philosophical essays. I am a novice in using some of these ideas and will be out of my depth when experts might argue on particular phrases or words Parmenides or Xenophanes might have used, meant or implied. However, as philosophers too often replace beautiful stories by others which do not make sense, even a novice may stand up to defend an old tradition, and I am thus joining Karl Popper in speaking primarily as a lover of the beautiful story of the Ancient Greeks⁷. The way Greek as well as Indian Ancient thought may contribute to our contemporary understanding of Being, of the world in which we live, and consequently, of the way we shape our own role in the world, is multifaceted.

Firstly, early Greek and ancient Indian cosmological stories of the beginning and unfolding of all of existence are amongst the most crucial metaphorical stories to explain the structure of the world we live in. Some of the deliberations in this collection will fall into this category of cosmological stories, as, in order to add to our understanding of the world we live in, philosophy must return to cosmology⁸. Or rather, in that of the broader category of cosmogony, speculative stories of the creation, origin and evolution of the universe, speculations which made up much of early Greek and ancient Indian as well as twentieth century cosmology. These speculations on the nature and origins of Being are not dogmatic universals but need to be understood metaphorically, as in the domains of which we speak in

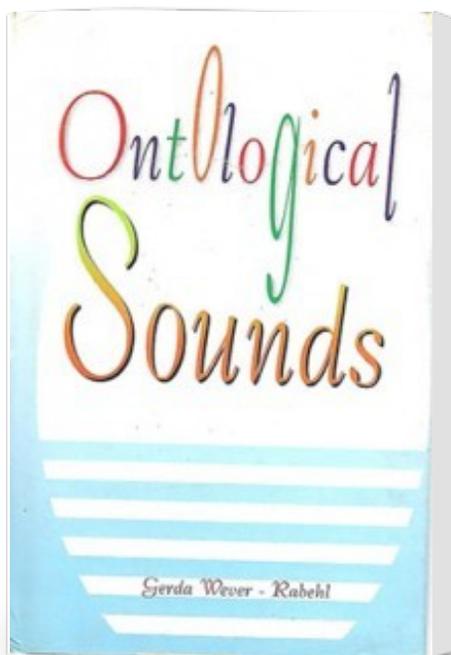
this collection, the domains of Being and of Good, no firm knowledge is to be had. In the words of Xenophanes, even if by chance, I were to utter the perfect truth, I would myself not know it, for all is but a woven web of guesses⁹.

A Metaphor of Good

Nevertheless, the Ancient Greek and Indian metaphors of the origins and unfolding of all of existence may assist us in what in my view is one of the most crucial challenges of contemporary philosophy—the further development of one of our most important images, that of the Good. Metaphors are a mode of understanding and consequently, of acting upon our condition. The way in which we understand Being and our understanding of the world in which we live is closely linked with the way we understand our own role in it, a role, which is also shaped by metaphors of Good. The way we picture, or imagine the Good is often in and through the remembrance of good people, who themselves were more often than not unable to express what they knew. The sensuous, imaged forms and metaphors of Good and of Being are not external, artificial forms, but the very essence of thought. We will have to be content with images, and in the attempt to answer the question as to how we may make ourselves better, philosophy has an important task in the further development of an image, a persuasive metaphor if you will, of a pure and non-anthropomorphic Good.

Before I will elaborate on the importance of a further development of a metaphor of Being and of Good, let me outline the two foremost assumptions underlying my work. My first assumption concerns my earlier remarks on the task of ethics—to uphold a worthy ideal, which is grounded in a realistic consideration of the frailty of human nature. Human beings are selfish creatures. For this assumption there is ample evidence wherever one

Ontological Sounds



Publisher : Abhijeet Publications ISBN : 9788188683175

Author : Gerda Wever-
Rabehl

Type the URL : <http://www.kopykitab.com/product/9123>



Get this eBook