

## THE IMPOSSIBLE UNIVERSITY 'WE TWO' Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019

After some years of nomadic existence, The Impossible University are taking up residence at Flat Time House from the autumn of 2019. We will continue to gather in the insistent and determined spirit of an anti-institution as a place of exchange and camaraderie that might lead to new ways of working or producing.

### THE IMPOSSIBLE UNIVERSITY

In 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' (1937), Sigmund Freud writes that 'it almost looks as if analysis were the third of those 'impossible' professions in which one can be assured beforehand of achieving unsatisfactory results. The other two, which have been known much longer, are education and government'. Actually, he says this earlier, in 1925, in a preface to August Aichhorn's *Wayward Youth*: 'I have adopted the joke of the three impossible professions as there are: educating, healing and governing'. The impossible, is the point of departure for our university. The activities and studies of the Impossible University have no learning objectives or curriculum and they are unaccountable to any bureaucracy, even our own; they collect no feedback; there is no measurement of efficiency or outcome. In short, they belong to the basic luxury called uselessness, like our reading and our thinking, which escapes the fine calibration of value.

**Faculty:** David Bate, Vincent Dachy, Diana Georgiou, Marc Hulson, Kazimierz Jankowski, Sharon Kivland, Chris Kul-Want, Jack Littell, Joseph Noonan-Ganley, Paul O'Kane, Adrian Rifkin, Paula Smithard, Nina Wakeford, Francis Wasser

**WE ARE NOW OPEN TO APPLICANTS WITH AN INTEREST IN  
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND CULTURE TO COME AND JOIN US.  
ALL ARE WELCOME BUT PLACES ARE LIMITED.**

There will be sessions, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., on:

Monday 14 October

Monday 11 November

Monday 9 December

**To book for the next event on Monday 11 November, please email, with the  
'The Impossible University' in the subject box: [marchulson@hotmail.com](mailto:marchulson@hotmail.com)**

The second session - 'WE TWO' - continues the conversation around the theme of WE begun on 14 October. Below is a brief summary of ideas touched upon in the previous session followed by notes, interventions and provocations from some faculty members, which may inform the discussion.

## Notes from October 14<sup>th</sup> 2019

The Subject of the evening: We / The initial responses centred around what constitutes as We. / Is what we have in common, we? / Who are WE? What are we? / We are the Anthropocene. / Are we the Anthropocene? / Are animals included in We? / Donna Haraway's idea of Kinship in relation to We, animals, and the environment was a suggested definition of We. You can read more here: <http://environmentalhumanities.org/arch/vol6/6.7.pdf> / Ideas around Loyalty and Solidarity in relation to We. / Nina illustrated a suggestion of We as a Statistical Idea in relation to Set Theory or Sets (Mathematics) / What is the co-efficient of the We? / Paul O'Kane brought back into the conversation his original contribution of the Blanchot quote. (See notes from invitation) / We and aspiration (Nina) / Nina passed around a book. (x) / Intra psychic -moment' as in the we of the conscious and the unconscious. (x) / We as a potential energy or as potential (Anna) / Clare told a story about being on a bus. We and technology. The we of the London riots. / The visualisation of we / The aesthetics of the we / The symbolism of we / Us.....Symbol.....Refusal / Imagined Communities / 'If the point is to know what 'we' are, 'we' are talking' (not sure who said this) / The Vocality of we / How the notion of we is co-opted by institutions and authorities...for example / The captain on the plane telling people over the intercom that 'we are running late', are we the same we as the captain of the plane, are we the same we as the bus driver. This idea abstracted itself in a way I couldn't quite follow at the time. / Diana asked how do we 'un-do' we? Which sparked a series of responses. / We Too. The Multiple We. / We and productivity. / We and vocality. / The ability to vibrate in a public sphere. / We as a large group of people. / What is the minimum of we? / Conversely, what is the maximum of we? / The disavowal of We / We and 'The Troubles'. / Rules and Regulations of We / Symbolism of We / We and Exclusion / We and World War 2 in Greece / The Emergency (The name for World War 2 in Irish / The Family as we / The Family not as we / It was suggested that a future subject could be 'They'.

F.W.

*identity, new positive images that put an unreflective 'identity politics'. The challenge to modernity comes in redefining the signifying relation to a disjunctive 'present': staging the past as symbol, myth, memory, history, the ancestral – but a past whose iterative value as sign reinscribes the 'lessons of the past' into the very textuality of the present that determines both the identification with, and the interrogation of, modernity: what is the 'we' that defines the prerogative of my present?<sup>32</sup>*

The 'we' in Bhabha's text is one of those linguistic shifters of language that are always contingent, depending on who is speaking and who is spoken, when and where, precisely the questions engaged in Virginia Nimarkoh's work. Her work displaces binary thought of us/them, black/white by displaying the (historical) ambivalence (not D.D.

## Invention

Mmm, identity.

The we- identity, the you-identity, the I-identity... And who could be the third person-identity?

Well, we prefer the *we* bit - wheel!

Would you believe it but some languages, in particular the [Austronesian languages](#), [Dravidian languages](#), and Chinese varieties such as [Min Nan](#) and some [Mandarin dialects](#), have a distinction in [grammatical person](#) between *inclusive we*, which includes the person being spoken to in the group identified as *we*, and *exclusive we*, which excludes the person being spoken to. Many Native American languages have this grammatical distinction, regardless of the languages' families. [Cherokee](#), for instance, distinguishes between four forms of "we", following an additional distinction between duality and plurality. The four Cherokee forms of "we" are: "you and I (inclusive [dual](#))"; "another and I (exclusive dual)"; "others and I (exclusive plural)"; and "you, another (or others), and I" (inclusive plural). [Fijian](#) goes even further with six words for "we", with three [numbers](#) dual, small group (three or four people), and large group and separate inclusive and exclusive forms for each number. In [English](#) this distinction is not made through grammatically different forms of *we*. The distinction is either evident from the context or can be understood through additional wording.

(From *We*-kipedia)

We meet, and weed, ween and whet, and weasel for good measure - beyond measure sometimes but only on occasion.

Ours,

Buster

V. D.

In *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, Cavarero puts forward an ethics of relation as a way to counteract philosophical and political strategies that work with the idea of a collective/universal subject (often male, white and privileged) at its core. Cavarero proposes that identities are formulated through the reciprocal exchange between a specific *you* and *I*, rather through empathic means of identification.

Extracts from Adriana Cavarero. *Relating Narratives: Storytelling & Selfhood*. Routledge, 2000

'[many 'revolutionary' movements (which range from traditional communism to the feminism of sisterhood) seem to share a curious linguistic code based on the intrinsic morality of pronouns. The *we* is always positive, the *plural you* [voi] is a possible ally, the *they* has the face of an antagonist, the *I* is unseemly, and the *you* [tu] is, of course, superfluous.' [Cavarero, 90]

'What we have called an altruistic ethics of relation does not support empathy, identification, or confusions. Rather this ethic desires a *you* that is truly an other, in her uniqueness and distinction. No matter how much you are similar and consonant, says this ethic, your story is never my story. No matter how much the larger traits of our life-stories are similar, I still do not recognize myself in you and, even less, in the collective *we*. I do not dissolve both into a common identity, nor do I digest your tale in order to construct the meaning of mine. I recognize, on the contrary, that your uniqueness is exposed to my gaze and consists in an unrepeatable story whose tale you desire. This recognition, therefore, has no form that could be defined dialectically; that is, it does not overcome or save finitude through the circular movement of a higher synthesis. The necessary other is indeed here a finitude that remains irremediably an other in all the fragile and unjuggable

insubstitutability of her existing. Put simply, the necessary other corresponds first of all with the *you* whose language is spoken by the shared narrative scene.

Within the horizon of the narratable self, the pronoun of biography is in fact not *he* [egli] but *you* [tu]. The one who tells *us* our story speaks the language of the *you*. Within the shared narrative scene, the addressee of the tale and its presence wins out over the classic role, in the text, of the absent protagonist.' [Cavarero, 92]

D. G.

Just wondering ... We thought at the last meeting that our next might be on Monday 6 June, usual time. If (-) and (-) have not worked on something, then we propose talking about our *Freud arrives in London* project. (-), would you be able to book a room as last time at Bedford Square? / We'll book the room. We cannot make it as we have a Departmental Research Day in Egham, alas! / Thank you, dear (-). So sad not to see you this time. / Thanks. We've not passed away, just busy on the day. We'll see you soon! / There is no room available at Bedford Square nor Senate House (thank you, (-), for asking). As far as we know, those who were planning to come on 6 June: (-), (-), (-), and us. We think (-) can't, and think we have not heard from (-), (-), (-), and (-). So would it be better to leave it for now? / We could make it next Monday but also happy to wait... / Let's leave it, we want to come to one with all of you. / We're cool either way - just let us know. / If it's only four of us, we could meet at our place. / That's kind, (-). We *were* thinking of talking about Freud's arrival in London, and would need a projector. But if we are few, we could meet anyway and chat about something else ... / apologies, all, particularly (-). We've been tucked up in a piece of writing we performed over the weekend. Missed (-)'s talk as a result, we believe, which we really wanted to attend. Hope it was recorded. incidentally, we have in our possession an unused micro projector. And as we couldn't be present either, first time around, we'd very much like to see Freud's arrival in London. / Thank you very much indeed, dear (-). Perhaps we will not need a projector - we could just talk (and read), and we have a few images on paper. (-), what do you think? (-), (-) - are you coming? (-), if we end at 17h, does this allow you time to get to Swedenborg House? (-), if they are, is there room for us if we are seven or eight (we can offer our flat too, as (-) has done, but central London would be easier for all perhaps)? / Hi everyone - we replied yesterday to say we can make it - not sure if message was received? Anyway, we're up for it where and when it happens if there's space...

M. H.

## The virtual-girls of @woaiof 's Twitter as a 'We'?



## THE. I. YOU. WE. NOT-I. SK

MOUTH: . . . out . . . into this world . . . this world . . . tiny little thing . . . before its time . . . in a godfor— . . . what? . . . girl? . . . yes . . . tiny little girl . . . into this . . . out into this . . . before her time . . . godforsaken hole called . . . called . . . no matter . . . parents unknown . . . unheard of . . . he having vanished . . . thin air . . . no sooner buttoned up his breeches . . . she similarly . . . eight months later . . . almost to the tick . . . so no love . . . spared that . . . no love such as normally vented on the . . . speechless infant . . . in the home . . . no . . . nor indeed for that matter any of any kind . . . no love of any kind . . . at any subsequent stage . . . so twpical affair . . . nothing of anv note till coming up to

There was barely room to sit or stand; they could only lie in a tangle, punching each other's bodies to keep the blood flowing in their veins, yet not knowing to whom the arms and legs belonged... The one whose turn it was to stand would jump on the feet of the others to try and keep them from freezing.

Piers Paul Read, *Alive*, 1974.

J. N-G.

The reference to 'WE' that keeps coming back into my head is one that I have often raised before at IU meetings, i.e. the question of who or what or how is the 'WE' that may or may not be implied by Maurice Blanchot's 'The community of those who have no community'.

P. O'K.

WE: Giving what is not possessed to some-one who doesn't exist.

C. K. W.

## W\*E

Let's drop the word and say, what is that? What is that group, if it is a group, of nice people, who can't call themselves this? What is it that this cannot be said? **That** is more inclusive, is it not, than we. I said to myself this, next time I go to this that I will take a guest, I will split and come with my own Levantine half as a

guest. Yes, that is the this for the that in question, after all I never, if ever I filled that section of a form, filled it in as caucasian. Caucasians have the indo-european so-called mother tongue, what Pictet, Saussure's uncle, had disclosed as (racially) superior to the non indo-so-called-european languages such as Hebrew or Arabic, which latter, as it happens, is the the mother-tongue(sic) of my Levantine half, which is not an Other, as such, unless a barely disclosable other to myself, in some round about swap of which is which, a kind of permamanent hyper exploitation of Kristeva's great text. And anyway, if the first language I heard was likely to have been Arabic, the first I spoke was a deep, Sout East Lancashire dialect of my carer(sic), that had to be exorcised to match my mother's acquired English. So what was it that the that shared that allowed Paula's we? No, it's not simple. In his *Deep Time/Dark Times* Paul Wood engages the question of what we is in the anthropocene, just one species, the planetary fauna, a we that is the end of **ecological sovereignty**. No, I don't ask for special treatment, I just say that the matter of we has not even arisen, as yet, and may never.

A. R.

“we are not”

P. S.

These problems are coming to a head at this time because the nature of the movement is necessarily changing. Consciousness-raising as the main function of the women's liberation movement is becoming obsolete. Due to the intense press publicity of the last two years and the numerous overground books and articles now being circulated, women's liberation has become a household word. Its issues are discussed and informal rap groups are formed by people who have no explicit connection with any movement group. The movement must go on to other tasks. It now needs to establish its priorities, articulate its goals, and pursue its objectives in a coordinated fashion. To do this it must get organised locally, regionally, and nationally.

N. W.

W E ‘Two things that come to mind but not We. One, the sentence completes its signification only with its last term’.- (Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* ) and two ‘all the time buzzing . . . so-called . . . in the ears . . . though of course actually . . . not in the ears at all . . . in the skull . . . dull roar in the skull . . .’. (Samuel Beckett, *Not I*), and isn't we impossible as we're impossible.

F. W.