

Welcome, Mister Schlemiel - A Little Tomato?

The 20th century invites a reversal of sorts: Thought is not prior to language; language is prior to thought.

Wittgenstein (1953): “When I think in language, there aren’t ‘meanings’ going through my mind in addition to the verbal expressions: the language is itself the vehicle of thought” (329).

“Thinking is not an incorporeal process which lends life and sense to speaking, and which it would be possible to detach from speaking, rather as the Devil took the shadow of Schlemiel from the ground.” (339).

Language is also essentially public, grounded in forms of life. Romanticizing the inner-life of someone – express yourself! – is thus misguided. There is no privileged inner-experience to express. Sorry.

Baldrick: “[I]t’s vomit ... you told me to paint whatever comes from within, so I did my breakfast. Look, there’s a little tomato”.

Better to play the fool than to be a fool/Schlemiel. But tread lightly – how to express oneself thus (without losing one’s shadow)? Paint? Dance around a point with quotes?

Mitch Hedburg: “I’m against picketing, but I don’t know how to show it”.

A similar tension is touched upon by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972). They recommend schizoanalysis. (What is schizoanalysis? It does not matter! It does). What it does is reveal cracks and fissures through (black) humour.

Deleuze & Guattari: “[T]he schizophrenic escape itself does not merely consist in withdrawing from the social, in living on the fringe: it causes the social to take flight through the multiplicity of holes that eat away at it and penetrate it, always coupled directly to it, everywhere setting the molecular charges that will explode what must explode, make full what must fall, make escape what must escape, at each point ensuring the conversion of schizophrenia as a process into an effectively revolutionary force.” (ch. 4, §5).

Spot on. Don’t withdraw - eat, penetrate, explode! One should not stop there though. There is a further positive task, but one that must be undertaken carefully. Remember the peril of Communism, the progression from Marx to Lenin to Brezhnev.

Deleuze & Guattari: “‘Welcome, Mister Brezhnev’. Is this a case of revolutionaries speaking to another revolutionary, or rather a village clamouring for a new prefect?” (ch.4, §5).

So go on, play the fool; joke; explode; reveal cracks and fissures. But be careful, lest you elect a new prefect.

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