

DEREK ANTONY PARFIT

11 December 1942 – 1 January 2017

ALL SOULS COLLEGE CHAPEL

Thursday, 9 February at 2 o'clock

The Choir of The Queen's College
directed by Owen Rees

Music Before The Service

Sopra la lontananza del fratello diletissimo by J. S. Bach
played by Dr Jonathan Katz

Music for the funeral of Queen Mary 1695 **by Henry Purcell (Z.780 and Z.58C)**

The congregation stands at the sound of the drum while the urn holding Derek Parfit's ashes is brought into the chapel, and remains standing for

Introduction by the Warden

The congregation sits.

At the end of the day, Derek would often ask Janet to recite Tennyson's famous poem, *Crossing the Bar*, to him:

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

Addresses by Jonathan Glover and Jeff McMahan

Cello Solo played by Sophie Cheng
Prelude from Bach's Suite no.2 in D minor

From Derek Parfit's *Reasons and Persons*, pp. 281-2

Read by Edward Mortimer

On the Reductionist view [of personal identity] each person's existence just involves the exercise of a brain and body, the doing of certain deeds, the thinking of certain thoughts, the occurrence of certain experiences, and so on...

Is the truth [of Reductionism] depressing? Some may find it so. But I find it liberating, and consoling. When I believed that my existence was such a further fact, I seemed imprisoned in myself. My life seemed like a glass tunnel, through which I was moving faster every year, and at the end of which there was darkness. When I changed my view, the walls of my glass tunnel disappeared. I now live in the open air. There is still a difference between my life and the lives of other people. But the difference is less. Other people are closer. I am less concerned about the rest of my own life, and more concerned about the lives of others.

When I believed the Non-Reductionist View, I also cared more about my inevitable death. After my death, there will no one living who will be me. I can now redescribe this fact. Though there will later be many experiences, none of these experiences will be connected to my present experiences by chains of such direct connections as those involved in experience-memory, or in the carrying out of an earlier intention. Some of these future experiences may be related to my present experiences in less direct ways. There will later be some memories about my life. And there may later be thoughts that are influenced by mine, or things done as the result of my advice. My death will break the more direct relations between my present experiences and future experiences, but it will not break various other relations. This is all there is to the fact that there will be no one living who will be me. Now that I have seen this, my death seems to me less bad.

Instead of saying, 'I shall be dead', I should say, 'There will be no future experiences that will be related, in certain ways, to these present experiences'. Because it reminds me what this fact involves, this redescription makes this fact less depressing.

In a footnote in *On What Matters II* p. 768 Derek quoted extensively from a letter written by Henry Sidgwick to Tennyson's son.

Read by Larry Temkin

Sidgwick wrote:

'Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature was one that, so to say, left Science unregarded...But for your father the physical world is always the world as known to us through physical science: the scientific view of it dominates his thoughts about it; and his general acceptance of this view is real and sincere, even when he utters the intensest feeling of its inadequacies to satisfy our deepest needs. Had it been otherwise, had he met the atheistic tendency of modern Science with more confident defiance, more confident assertion of

an Intuitive Faculty of theological knowledge, overriding the result laboriously reached by empirical science, I think his antagonism to these tendencies would have been far less impressive.

I always feel this strongly in reading the memorable lines:

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more',
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered 'I have felt'.

At this point, if the stanzas stopped here, we should have shaken our heads and said 'Feeling must not usurp the function of Reason. Feeling is not knowing. It is the duty of a rational being to follow truth wherever it leads'.

But the poet's instinct knows this; he knows that this usurpation by Feeling of the function of Reason is too bold and confident; accordingly in the next stanza he gives the turn to humility in the protest of Feeling which is required (I think) to win the assent of the 'man in men' at this stage of human thought:

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamour made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again,
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach through nature, moulding men.

These lines I can never read without tears. I feel in them the indestructible and inalienable minimum of faith which humanity cannot give up because it is necessary for life; and which I know that I, at least so far as the man in me is deeper than the methodical thinker, cannot give up'.

Derek added: These lines I can seldom read without being close to tears.

Farewell by Janet Radcliffe Richards

A prayer of Benjamin Whichcote (1609 – 1683)

Let the light of truth, and the help of grace, be vital principles of action in us; that we may, in the time of life, attain the ends for which we live; and that our religion, which begins in knowledge, may proceed in action, settle in temper, and end in happiness: that we may make it the work and business of our lives, to reconcile the temper of our spirits to the rule of righteousness; and to incorporate the principles of our religion into the complexion of our minds; that what has been attributed to God, as his moral excellencies and perfections, we may propose to our selves, as matter of practice and imitation. Amen.

The choir sings the last chorus from Bach's St John Passion:

Ruht wohl, ihr heiligen Gebeine,
Die ich nun weiter nicht beweine,
Ruht wohl und bringt auch mich zur Ruh!
Das Grab, so euch bestimmt ist
Und ferner keine Not umschließt,
Macht mir den Himmel auf und schließt die Hölle zu.

The congregation stands while the urn is taken out of the chapel and the choir sings the final chorale from Bach's St John's Passion:

Ach Herr, lass dein lieb Engelein
Am letzten End die Seele mein
In Abrahams Schoß tragen,
Den Leib in seim Schlafkämmerlein
Gar sanft ohn eigne Qual und Pein
Ruhn bis am jüngsten Tage!
Alsdenn vom Tod erwecke mich,
Dass meine Augen sehen dich
In aller Freud, o Gottes Sohn,
Mein Heiland und Genadenthron!
Herr Jesu Christ, erhöre mich,
Ich will dich preisen ewiglich!

*Contrapunctus I (from 'The Art of Fugue') &
Chromatic Fantasy in D Minor BWV 903 by J.S. Bach
played by Dr Jonathan Katz*

Everyone is warmly invited to tea in the Hall.

*There will be a commemoration of Derek Parfit's life and work in the
Codrington Library, All Souls, on Saturday, 3 June.*

