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Paul Valéry, *Cahiers/Notebooks*, trans. Norma Rinsler, Paul Ryan, Brian Stimpson. Frankfurt am Main and New York: Peter Lang, 2007. Volume 3 out of 5, 621 pp. Figures, notes, and two indices. (hb). ISBN 978-3-631-36764-3.

Review by Natasha Grigorian, Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge.

This English translation of Valéry's *Cahiers/Notebooks*, the third volume out of the anticipated five, is an indispensable reference work for any English-speaking reader interested in the writing and thought of Paul Valéry. Valéry (1871-1945), famous as a poet, essayist, and political figure, certainly occupies a special place in French culture. He was remarkable as a literary phenomenon linking the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, with their disparate artistic movements, such as Parnassianism, Symbolism, and Surrealism, among others; and he was also exceptional as a polymath who was equally interested in the arts and the sciences. Valéry's personal notebooks have been translated into English rather selectively to date, so the new five-volume translation project is definitely a breakthrough, not least due to the critical intensity with which it focuses on this particular aspect of the poet's *œuvre*. The *Cahiers*, which constitute Valéry's intellectual diary, were meticulously composed day after day in the course of over fifty years. Fragmentary and aphoristic in nature, Valéry's notes are sometimes illustrated with drawings and diagrams and contain his often very original insights into a wide range of subjects, from literature and aesthetics to philosophy, psychology, politics, and mathematics, just to name a few. Highly illuminating for any critical reading of Valéry's literary production, the *Cahiers* are also of great interest in their own right, as a self-contained work of twentieth-century thought, in dialogue with key philosophers, theoreticians, artists, scientists, politicians, and other masterminds of the period.

The facsimile edition of the *Cahiers* (Paris: C.N.R.S., 1957-1961) contains a staggering total of twenty-nine volumes. Any working edition of the original French text must therefore be selective, as is Judith Robinson-Valéry's two-volume Pléiade edition of 1973-1974, which has been used as the basis for the present English translation. The latter also has a significant value as an independent scholarly work thanks to its inclusion of additional texts and thoroughly updated critical apparatus. Volume three of the translation comprises six chapters, which correspond to Valéry's thematic classification of his notes, while being presented in a somewhat different order in comparison to the Pléiade edition: Psychology; Soma and CEM; Attention; Sensibility; Memory; and Dream. Chapters one and five are translated by Brian Stimpson; chapters two and three are by Paul Ryan and Brian Stimpson; and chapters four and six by Norma Rinsler.

The translated chapters are preceded by a critical introduction, "The Present Volume", which provides a concise and illuminating overview of Valéry's personal writings focusing on psychology, as grouped together in volume three. The emphasis on Valéry's *holistic* approach to human consciousness is especially valuable as it is pointed out that he considered mind and body, conscious and unconscious responses, to be mutually interdependent and inextricably intertwined, contrary to the popular myth of Valéry as the poet of the intellect. The six chapters of the volume are very helpfully summarized in the context of Valéry's polemical and/or dialectical relationship with the ideas of Descartes, psychoanalysis (Freud and Lacan), and Surrealism. The complex links between Valéry and psychoanalysis in particular

are refreshingly brought into focus with the support of statements by Malcolm Bowie and Jacques Lacan. Each chapter is then discussed in greater detail in the respective subsections that follow, providing an essential practical and theoretical guide to the volume. There is furthermore a separate preliminary note on the manuscript and the three existing French editions of the *Cahiers*, with special thanks in the Acknowledgements to the latest research carried out by the editorial team of the twelve-volume Gallimard edition, from which the present translation has “benefited greatly” (p. 23).

Each passage in the six translated chapters is meticulously provided with the date and full details of the original notebook, as in the Pléiade edition. The translation is very readable and follows the original text expertly and sensitively, which is a major achievement, especially given the difficulty of Valéry’s often unorthodox poetic prose. A major bonus is the inclusion of Valéry’s drawings, both in color and in black and white.

The chapter-by-chapter summary that follows below is based on Valéry’s text in translation, with reference to the volume’s critical introduction as appropriate. “Psychology” is constituted by the notes in which Valéry attempts to come up with his very own theory of psychological processes, still using some terms current in psychology studies of the nineteenth century, such as the categories of “will” or “perception”, but also innovatively applying conceptual frameworks borrowed from the more rigorous sciences, such as mathematics and physics (this method will be applied in the later chapters as well). A series of overlapping and alternative theories of the mind can be seen side by side and in interaction with real examples of psychological responses, partly drawn from Valéry’s personal experience.

The passages of “Soma and CEM” are concerned with the physical and sensory responses of the human body, in so far as the latter are inextricably intertwined with the mind and the surrounding world. Soma (□) is the Greek term used by Valéry to refer to the body, which features as part of the crucial triad on which he focuses his attention: Corps – Esprit – Monde (Body – Mind – World), abbreviated in French as C E M. Mind and World are also sometimes referred to as Psyche (□) and Kosmos (K) respectively. According to Valéry, human experience is made up of these three variables, which constantly interact with each other.

“Attention” explores attentive consideration of an object or phenomenon as a common state of a healthy human psyche. Valéry is especially interested in attention as a mode of interaction between the self and its environment. Inner attention, which focuses on the self, is a notable exception. Attention is perceived as the “gaze of the mind” (p. 283), along with other possibilities, and perhaps not surprisingly, visual attention is something that Valéry discusses in particular detail. Overall, attention is characteristically tied in with the broader functioning of the human mind, as reflected by a translation that fits the original like a glove: “Well-considered thought proceeds by trial and error between clarity and vagueness. Focuses and loses the object. Attention is the effort to prolong, to continue in the realm of clarity” (p. 293).

“Sensibility” is a thematic and analytical category within which the French term, “sensibilité”, allows a greater range of meanings than the corresponding English term, as noted by the translators themselves (p. 16). While the English mainly refers to the human capacity for emotional responses, the French encompasses feelings, sensations, and even sensuality. Accordingly, Valéry probes all the latter possibilities, with a fair amount of ambiguity whenever the boundaries between the emotional and the physical are fluid. The discussion involves a detailed consideration of the human senses and of the ways in which sense impressions are organized and processed by the mind. The emotions referred to are closely tied in with the senses and include love as the most intense of affective responses, implicitly compared to toothache by virtue of the disproportionate “intellectual disorder” that it produces (pp. 307-308).

The chapter on “Memory” analyzes the dialectical tensions between remembering and forgetting. Sensations are the raw material of memory, but they are filtered by the mind so that only essential details are retained: “*What once existed, is a minimum*” (p. 390). Memory is presented as a virtual construct that selectively uses material from the past to create new potential for the present and the future: “‘Memory’ is a form of notation which makes it possible to designate a relation between ‘past’ and ‘potential’” (p. 397).

The volume concludes with Valéry’s thoughts on the nature of dreams in the “Dream” chapter. Similar to the interrelations between body and mind, remembering and forgetting, the past and the future, as discussed above, dreaming is analyzed with close reference to wakefulness and the moment of awakening. Valéry uses some of his own dreams as examples of the non-rational coherence and distortion of reality that characterize the dreaming state. He goes on to argue that it is impossible to render dreams accurately in language, due to the intrinsic rationality of the latter. This argument forms the basis for Valéry’s rejection of Freudian psychoanalysis and its attempts to identify repressed desires by analyzing dreams. For Valéry, dreams have no retrievable meaning, but rather represent an irrational realm that is both a threat and a challenge to the intellect. If anything, “Dream teaches us the true value of our waking state” (p. 555). It is perhaps this recognition of a paradoxical connection between the waking consciousness and the dreaming self that Valéry shares with psychoanalysis.

The Notes that accompany each chapter are exhaustive. Difficult terms taken from a wide range of disciplines are elucidated, erudite references are explained, biographical and other background information is provided, and variants and additions present in the manuscript are painstakingly translated into English and included as a valuable component of the text. Finally, the volume is generously supplied with two Indices, both very thorough and useful: an Index of Proper Names and Works, which lists works by Valéry and personal names; and an Analytical Index, which incorporates a broad range of analytical terms and thematic categories that occur in the six chapters.

Overall, this volume holds a central position in relation to the other four in the present translation, not only structurally, but also because the six chapters above are perhaps most directly concerned with the inner workings of the human mind. This focus on psychology as the study of consciousness ties together the first two volumes, which consider the self as the agent of writing and cultural creativity, and the final two volumes, which are to deal with the mind’s attempts to comprehend the wider world, investigating diverse fields from science and politics to theology and philosophy.

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