

# Philosophy that is Mindful

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In a previous article I mentioned that one might measure the pulse of nation with the bar of a song. I had thought of moving on here to touch on the meaning of music. But I find myself driven back to the more general question of meaning.

I would dearly like to start a national row about meaning. Take the language question: this is above all else a question of the cultivation of a phonemic funnel for rich regional meaning. Now one would expect that those labouring for the restoration of the Irish language would be moved by some appreciation of this rich meaning? Otherwise it would be a case of frenzy over phonemes: sound and symbol signifying nothing.

Yet oddly enough one does not regularly find that appreciation. One finds rather the attitude expressed in such a statement as “I feel that if someone has something worthwhile to say they should be able to say it simply.” What an obscene view of meaning: that depth of human meaning can trickle through a page-thin line of print.

Still, I should not have said “oddly enough” but “obviously enough.” It is obvious – in a far from obvious sense – because the great God of our times is the Obvious. And there is nothing as obvious as economic expansion, piles of productivity; nothing less obvious than the contraction of rich-veined human meaning. That contraction goes on steadily, day by day, in communal commercials. What, indeed, is the point of writing about the meaning of music, when the daily

tune is liable to be some new-brand song? And what the use of writing of meaning in general when the writing cuts no deeper than *The Evening Print*, and my words, myriad-meaning for me, warp under the tellytrained eye? “Students of mixed hydrostatics and pneumodipsies will after some difficulties grapple with my meinungs” (*Finnegans Wake*, 151). But how many are there of those willing to grapple with meaning?

More power to Joyce who has foxed the nations for thirty years with that multiple-single endless – beginningless world called *Finnegans Wake*. “What has gone? How it ends? Begin to forget it. It will remember itself from every side, with all gesture, in each our word. Today’s truth, tomorrow’s trend” (*Finnegans Wake*, 614). “So you need hardly spell me how every word will be bound to carry three score and ten toptypical readings throughout the book of *Doublelends Jined*” (*Finnegans Wake*, 20).

Joycefoxes, and feeling or fashion frustrates the plea that it be simplified. But when the meaning runs in richer vaster vein, inclusive of Joyce’s meaning, then the fox is hounded for nominalistic simplicity. There is no tolerance of a lair of meaning in a near nominal dead nation, where “sufficient for the day is the newspaper thereof” (*Ulysses*, 129).

So I would like to start a national row about meaning. But don’t write to me! Write to the daily editors or to our Evening Headlines. And perhaps if we could slow up the mindrain we could get round to reaching for the meaning of music. “Music, me ouldstrow, please! We’ll have a brand rehearsal. Fing! One must simple laugh.” (*Finnegans Wake*, 617)