

From: Shoko Miura

Thank you, Brian, for your quick reply. I apologize for not being so quick with mine. Thinking of questions to ask Akiko and Zoran took a lot of reading and research. But this symposium gave me a chance to get back to serious studying and exposure to the unfamiliar field of analytic philosophy. I find it fascinating. I am very grateful for your very clear answers to my three questions. I have two questions to ask.

Your reply to my first question about the soul and the hereafter brought me back to *The Gift*, which I must reread again. I have another, broader question for you. As you remember, in Nabokov 101 in St. Petersburg, you and Sasha Dolinin exchanged exciting arguments on *Ada* and *The Gift*. There is a gap of 31 years and two languages between these novels. Rereading *The Gift* after rereading *Ada*, as you must have done many times, do you see changes in Nabokov's philosophical conjectures about time?

In your reply to my Question 2, you quoted Nabokov's delightful passage about the Past. I agree that Nabokov's *Ada* weaves "the texture of timelessness," as you brilliantly phrased it, through motifs occurring in memorable scenes of the past. I feel that by recurring throughout the book, like Wassily Kandinsky's colors and shapes in his abstract paintings, Nabokov's motifs rise out of chronological succession and resonate with each other outside time, forming another world of perception in the reader's mind. And this leads to my new second question, which is also linked to your reply to my previous Question 3.

According to Popper and Eccles, neuropsychological experiments proved that there exists "pure memory" in the human brain, but it is prevented from our awareness by what is called a "Bergsonian filter." Only a select few, if at all, can have a glimpse of memory which can be "re-experienced." (I hope this is an accurate summary of your citation from their book, *The Self and the Brain*, 1977.) If you agree that Nabokov's pursuit of truth about time involves creating another world of perception through recurring motifs, is there not a parallel between Popper and Eccles' assertion and Nabokov's writing of *Ada*? Nabokov died in 1977, so he could not have read the book, and I do not intend to see any influence, but as you said, "memory is subjectively central" for Nabokov. If so, can Terra, in short, be seen as "pure memory" for Van?

From: Brian Boyd

Thanks again, Shoko, for your responses and questions.

I think Nabokov's attitude to time was remarkably consistent from before *The Gift* to after *Ada*, indeed, all through his mature years (say, from 1925 on). There is the same sense of the inexhaustibility of the past, the bountiful immensity and yet the cruel confinement of the present, and the unpredictability and openness of the future; and simultaneously, an intuition that some richer mode of or access to time lies surrounding human consciousness, although unimaginable and even logically contradictory to human reason.

That said, *Ada* is different because Nabokov through Van is also trying here to express a philosophy of time in which the phenomenology of time, the subjective experience of time in the present, is central, and in which time is rigorously severed from space (perhaps this last part is a reflection of Nabokov's meditations on time and space for *Speak, Memory*, including that "triadic" series in 1951 that I quoted in my original paper).

I'm not sure I quite understand your second question-cluster. I think both Popper and Eccles are reluctant to suggest that experience is perfectly preserved, *even if* brain stimulation in epileptic patients seems to give them a sense of reliving a past experience.

In *Ada*, especially, Nabokov does try to show the infinitely rich patterns in experience, or in the personal past (the storehouse of experience), where it's the storing—and therefore the possible collocation of—different parts of the past, rather than the succession between past moments, that matters more.

No, I wouldn't say that Terra is "pure memory" for Van. Terra seems objectively out there, even if dimly perceived through the vagaries and visions of the insane. Terra doesn't, for Van, contain his past with Ada, it's something quite different. I've been working hard on *Ada* for half a century (the rough distance in time between events in Terra and Antiterra, according to the novel!) and while I enjoy the discrepancies and the disjunctions between the two planets, I'm far from saying I *understand* what they mean.

From: Shoko Miura

Brian, thank you for your reply to my second batch of questions. I am sorry my questions were sometimes muddled. Philosophy of time was a difficult subject for me. As always, your comprehensive and accurate understanding of Nabokov and his works is amazing. I am learning so much from your replies. Though I have attended the Kyoto Reading Circle on *Ada* both in person and online for ten years or more (but far shorter than your half a century!), Terra is still a bottomless mystery to me. Your comments this time on Popper and Nabokov, however, brought me closer to what life, death and time meant for Nabokov. Now I feel I can read with a more vibrant framework in which to read *Ada*, *Speak*, *Memory*, and other works.

Best wishes for your future writing projects. In the meantime, I might think up more questions to ask you. This is such a precious opportunity.