

In Memory of Fred at Christmas 2012

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Fred and I first met at a conference in Holland on the philosophy of action. He gave a paper that drew on aspects of Bert Dreyfus' work of which I was critical. Fred's response to my criticisms was typical. Rather than immediately leap to the defence of the position he had just set out, he seemed more interested in hearing my alternative account, and we immediately got to talking about the matters at hand. I was completely disarmed by Fred's open and relaxed approach, and by how keen he was to hear views and approaches different from his own. Later, we discovered that we had a common connection with Uppsala, and it was a great pleasure to discover that the place in Scandinavia with which I was then most familiar was also the place at which Fred became 'Permanent Visiting Professor'.

We used to meet either in Sweden or else at some of the regular conferences we both attended, and on occasion we would manage to fit in some extra-curricular activities along with the conference – one time spending a wonderful few days driving together around Provence. At that same meeting, we gave papers as part of a joint session, chaired by another Australian, and all three of us introducing ourselves, with homage to Monty Python, as 'Bruce', 'Bruce', and 'Bruce' (Don Davidson asked the first question, directing it quite specifically: "I would like to ask Bruce").

I greatly valued Fred's friendship, both personal and philosophical. He was a warm and generous person, with a gentle humour that was almost always present even if sometimes below the surface. He was an open and careful thinker who was nevertheless not afraid to say what he thought or to occupy positions, if he judged they were right, that others might think mistaken. He was always ready to acknowledge his own fallibility and to correct himself when he thought he had got something wrong. He was a great friend, and one of the truest philosophers I have known.

There are some people to whom one can be very close, but one sees only occasionally. That was, I think, true of the relation between Fred and I. That means, however, that when one of the partners in such a relationship goes, one is nevertheless left with the feeling that this is just one of those intervals between meetings, and that before too long the two of you will be meeting up again. This is a very long interval, however, and the longer it goes on the more I miss Fred's presence, even if it was often electronic or occasional. Fred's death deprives us of a singular presence, philosophical and personal, but we can be grateful for the memories we have of him, and the contributions he made, and that will continue to have an influence.