PHILOSOPHY
FOR
FIFTEEN YEAR-OLDS

BY
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To

Lizz

on her
fifteenth birthday

With love
from
Dad

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Introduction

The book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the general idea of philosophy as a method of developing new points of view. This method is important since the ability to acquire new points of view or perspectives is what makes it possible to actually think about our lives and start living them with some sense of direction. Most of us, most of the time, and partlicularly when we are young, live in a dream and have very little sense of the possibilities which life offers. Learning how to recognize these possibilities is what you will be learning as you learn to think philosophically. This philosophical thinking will be taught by considering our relationship to the language we speak. We will apply the lessons we learn from this study to various subjects that are usually taught at secondary school.

The second part of the book will deal with some of the more general insights about human beings which philosophy - understood as a method for understanding how the language we speak affects our lives - has to offer.

You can read this book by yourself or with a friend. In many respects it is more fun and more valuable to read this book with someone so that you can talk over the ideas together. This experience will reinforce one of the basic ideas behind the book: that thinking is usually easier and better when it takes the form of a conversation. For instance, thinking about how you would answer the questions at the end of each chapter (before you look up the answers) will be easier and probably more enjoyable if you answer the questions by simply talking the matter over with a fellow reader.

The fundamental approach that I adopt is based on L. Wittgenstein's ideas about the central role of language in philosophy.[1] Unfortunately, Wittgenstein's style of writing makes his ideas inaccessible to the general public, but the ideas themselves are not difficult to understand and I hope to use them to advantage in what follows.

My motivation for writing this book is simple. It took me a long time to find out about the ideas I will be putting forward here, even though they are not very difficult to grasp. I would have liked to have known about them much earlier. When I look back at my former self - in particular myself as a secondary school student - I see someone who was fast asleep most of the

[1] Wittgenstein (pronounce the 'W' as a 'V') is not well-known among the general public but among philosophers he is widely regarded as the most important thinker of the twentieth century. He was born in 1889 and died in 1951. His most famous book is *Philosophical Investigations*, (translated by G.E.M. Anscombe), Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1953.

time. Life is much more fun when you are awake[2] and even more so when your friends are also awake.

[2]"Most people fail in the art of living not because they are inherently bad or so without will that they cannot lead a better life; they fail because they do not wake up and see when they stand at a fork in the road and have to decide. They are not aware when life asks them a question, and when they still have alternative answers. Then with each step along the wrong road it becomes increasingly difficult for them to admit that they *are* on the wrong road, often only because they have to admit that they must go back to the first wrong turn, and must accept the fact that they have wasted time and energy." Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man: Its genius for Good and Evil* ,Harper and Row, New York, 1964, pp. 173-178.

Part One

Chapter One

Being Human and Being Rational

Philosophy is a Greek word which means 'the love of wisdom', but what exactly is wisdom?

If I were lost in a maze, it would be a great advantage to me to be able to climb on to a platform and gain a new point of view - an overview - from which I could discover where I was going and the best way to get there. Typically, a wise person is one who can provide us with such an overview. What wise people do in order to exhibit their wisdom is to help us see our problem from a fresh point of view. By doing so, they put the problem in perspective, they allow us to see where alternative courses of action would lead, and in doing so, they put us in a better position to see which course of action is preferable. In general, philosophers seek wisdom because it provides them with a point of view from which they can see more clearly what the options for living are. They are interested in the general kind of wisdom that can shed light on what it is to live as a *human* being.

Discovering the answer to this question is important because it gives us a knowledge of the options open to us. We need this knowledge in order to be able to lead our lives with some understanding of what human beings are and what they can do. Unless we find this out, life will lead us by the nose and we will spend most of it in the school of hard knocks.

Why is understanding the human condition a challenge?

Why is being human so special? Shakespeare puts the case elegantly in these words of Hamlet:

"What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals." (Act II, Scene 2)

Human beings are exceptional. We are remarkably different from every other creature on the planet. The Greek philosopher Aristotle called us 'rational animals' to mark this difference and though this sounds rather flat

after Shakespeare's description, we shall see, when we have a closer look at what the term 'rational' means, that Aristotle knew what he was talking about.

What is it to be rational?

To be rational is to be able to follow an argument, to be able to see, for example, that if Socrates is a man, and all men are mortal, then Socrates too is mortal.

How are we able to follow arguments? *We are able to follow them because we know what the words in an argument mean.* Knowing what the words mean amounts to knowing how they are normally used. For example:

1) We know that the term 'mortal' is used to apply to anything that is born and eventually dies.

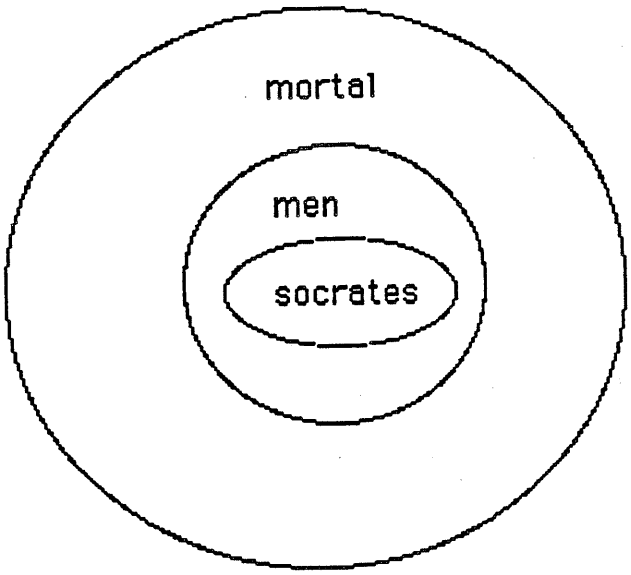
2) We know that that the term 'men' is used to name creatures who - as a matter of fact - are born and eventually die.

And finally:

3) We know - as a matter of fact - that 'Socrates' is a name used to refer to a particular man.

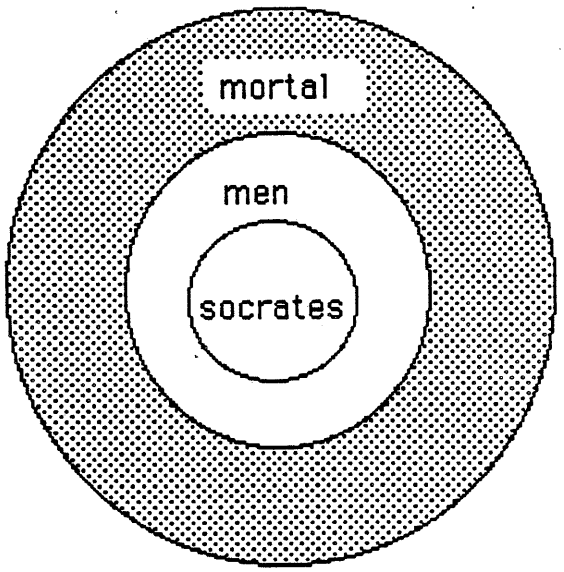
Once we understand the terms in the argument, how is it that we are able to *see* that if all men are mortal, and Socrates is a man, then Socrates (too) is mortal?

When we use the word 'see' here, we are employing a metaphor. We do not actually see anything with our eyes. We use the metaphor to help us to explain how we are able to follow the argument. We use the word 'see' as if the connections between the terms in the argument were in plain view, as they are, for example in this diagram:



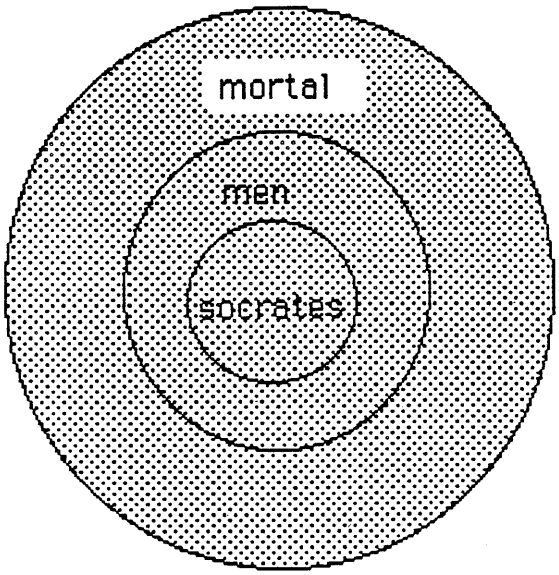
Here we can see with our eyes that the circle marked 'Socrates' is inside the circle marked 'men'. But this means that we can also see that Socrates is also inside the larger circle marked 'mortal'. Here it seems perfectly plain that if Socrates is included in the men-circle then he is also included in the mortal-circle, since the men-circle is clearly included in the mortal-circle.

But even here we are not at the end of our story about how we are able to follow an argument and thus be rational, for the diagram would not help us to see how the argument works unless we *interpreted* it in a certain way.



Thus if we thought that 'mortal' named only those things within the shaded portion, the fact that the rings labelled 'men' and 'Socrates' were inside this ring would not tell us anything about their relationship to the things that are mortal.

If the diagram is to tell us about these relationships we must interpret the concentric circles as follows:



so that the 'mortal' circle includes *everything* inside it (and that the 'men' circle includes everything inside it).

Under this interpretation we can see - in terms of the visible diagram - that both men, and the individual 'Socrates', fall inside the circle which marks the boundary of the class of mortal things.

Now when we spell all this out as we have done, what we see is that *following arguments like the one given is only possible if we can follow the rules that govern the relationships between the words used in the argument.* Without knowing these rules 'nothing follows': we cannot interpret the meaning of the diagram or follow the argument in words.

How are we able to follow arguments so easily? How do we know all the rules?

The fact that we can follow such arguments easily simply reflects the fact that we are able to speak the language which contains these words. Just because we can speak it, we know what the words mean: we know the rules for using them.

So our status as *rational animals* - beings who are capable of following arguments (this is what you are doing right now) - is dependent upon knowing how to speak a language.

Aristotle thought that the distinctive mark of our species is the capacity to reason. From the above argument it follows that an investigation of language (the medium we use when we reason. i.e., argue and think) is essential to understanding what is special about human beings.

In what follows I hope to show that an understanding of what it is to be human[1] is greatly aided once we appreciate the role that language plays in our lives. In the next chapter we will look further at the question of how we are able to follow the rules of our language so easily.

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[1] Human beings also have an emotional nature. A discussion of our feelings will be postponed until Chapter Nineteen: 'Being Free and Responsible'. At this point however I should point out that it is because we have feelings that we can be irrational. Think about the behaviour of Mr. Spock on the television programme *Star Trek.* Other aspects of human nature - our pyschological make-up and our spiritual life - will not be dealt with here. The reader will find an interesting introduction to these dimensions of our lives in M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Travelled* Simon and Schuster, New York, 1978, and *People of the Lie* Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983.

Questions:

1. If you are having an argument with someone (and you think they are not arguing rationally) does this mean that you think that they (or perhaps you) do not properly understand the words they are using?

2. Listen to two people talking (on television, for example). How often do they seem to be arguing? Why do arguments frequently play a part in our conversations?

3. Arguments between people can sometimes be fun but frequently they generate bad feelings. What makes the difference? What is at stake when you get into an argument?

5. How much of what Shakespeare said about human beings in the quotation from Hamlet depends upon their rational nature?

Chapter Two

How do I know the rules that govern my language?

Human beings are rational animals and we have seen that this involves the capacity to follow rules - first and foremost, the rules that govern the use of the words that make up our language. How is it that we know all these rules and can follow them so easily?

If you had to actually write down the rules for using the words that you speak in everyday life you would face a difficult task. For example, consider attempting to write down the rules for the use of the word 'do'. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* lists several dozen uses, but surprisingly, if you read through them, despite the large number of uses listed, you will find you are familiar with almost all of them. Furthermore, *all* of these uses are included, as a matter of course, when we say that we know what the word 'do' means.

This amounts to saying that, as a speaker of English, I must know the correct rules for using literally thousands and thousands of words. Now I only have to consider this fact for a moment to realize that although I know all these rules *in practice*, I certainly do not know them in the sense of having them before my mind as guides when I am actually talking. I instead seem to know these rules instinctively and to use words according to the rules without any conscious effort.

Language as a skill

It seems clear that by learning my native language, I have acquired the *skill* of using words in the same sense as I have acquired the *skill* of riding a bicycle or catching a ball by learning to do these things. In both these latter cases I never think about the rules I follow in order to be able do what I now do so easily: the same thing applies to my language skills.

It is hard[1] to tell someone the rules for catching a ball or riding a bicycle but very easy to show them by example. In the same way, children learn to use words by *imitating* those around them without being told the actual

[1] But it is not impossible. One of the rules for riding a bicycle, for example, is: once you are moving, if you are start to go in a direction you do not want to go (i.e. start to lose your balance), steer in that direction for a moment or two and the bicycle will come back on an even keel.

rules which govern the use of the words they are learning. This ability to imitate is the basic instinct on which we rely when we learn a new skill.

Our skill in speaking is a particularly interesting one because, unlike, for example, riding a bicycle, it is a skill which we all must *share* if this skill is to be of any use to us. This becomes clear if we consider what happens when familiar words start to be used in unfamiliar ways by certain people. Other people *feel* uncomfortable (unskillful) with the word in its new use - their instinct as to how the word should be used (based on their previous training) is at odds with its new use.

Nowadays, for example, almost everyone uses the word 'hopefully' to mean 'I hope that' (or 'we hope that'). Thus they say: "Hopefully, they will arrive on time." to mean: "I (we) hope that they will arrive on time." Everyone is now used to this way of speaking and understands it. A former adverb is being used where we would expect to find a pronoun, a verb and a conjunction, and this is now 'allowed' because practically everyone has adopted this new way of using the term.

To see how odd and 'wrong' it must have sounded at the beginning, try this new use of 'fearfully'. We will propose that it now mean "I (we) fear that . . .'. We try it in a sentence: "Fearfully, the exams are coming soon." It sounds a bit silly but not entirely so because our present use of 'hopefully' has paved the way for this similar use of 'fearfully'.

How about 'thoughtfully': "Thoughtfully, it was John who telephoned." (= "I [we] thought that it was John who telephoned") or "Feelingly, you are mistaken". (I [we] feel you are mistaken") With these examples you can begin to see why many people objected to the new use of 'hopefully'. Where might it all end?

Considering education as the process of learning how to articulate our knowledge

Looking at these examples of our instinctive grasp of English grammar we should note a curious fact about it. People often discover that they never really knew the rules of English grammar until they studied the grammar of a foreign language and discovered how it differed from English grammar. This seems strange because, although they did not know the *rules* of English grammar, they certainly knew how to speak English grammatically. In other words, they had the skill to speak English grammatically, but they did not know, *in any explicit way*, how to formulate the rules that they were following.

In some respects, acquiring an education amounts to learning how to state, in an *explicit* way, what we already know *implicitly* in the form of a skill. To be an educated person is to be able to *articulate* the knowledge that we possess already in the form of an instinctive skill.

In what follows this term 'articulate' will be very important. Sometimes we use *articulate* as a verb to mean: *to pronounce a word distinctly so that each part of it is distinguished* (ar-tic-u-late). More generally, we use this term to mean: to speak distinctly so that each word in the sentence can be clearly heard. By contrast, to be able to articulate a piece of knowledge is to be able to show - through speaking - that you know how to use the vocabulary associated with the subject under discusssion. Someone who can do this is said to be *articulate* with regard to a given subject: such a person can exhibit the different connections that exist between the key terms in that subject and, in doing so, that person exhibits an understanding of the ideas involved.

To sum up: people know how to use words, not by learning rules in any conscious way and then trying to follow them, but through acquiring skills which give them an instinctive knowledge of how to use their language properly. *Acquiring new language skills is what we are doing when we study a subject at school.* Our goal is to be able to articulate the new vocabulary. We will look at some examples of how this should be done in the next few chapters.

Questions:

1. Can you think of any other examples of a new use of language that is like the new use of 'hopefully'? For example is the new use of 'chairperson' instead of 'chairman' similar?

2. Some new uses of words, like 'hopefully' catch on quickly and do not meet too much resistance. Other 'wrong' uses, like saying: "You did *good*" instead of 'well', do meet a lot of resistance. Can you suggest why this should be the case?

3. If you had a friend who regularly made grammatical mistakes should you try to correct such mistakes? Would you appreciate it if this friend corrected your grammar? Would you appreciate it if your friend tried to improve your skill in catching a ball?

Chapter Three

What Should Education Be Like?

How can our knowledge that our ability to speak our language is a *skill* help us to understand what our education should be like?

Our knowledge of our own language is superb which amounts to saying that we all handle our native language with great skill. Furthermore there is no mystery about how we acquired this wonderful skill: we learned our language thanks to our parents who were patient enough to talk to us when we were unable to reply, to delight over our first 'gub gub's', and our first 'no's' and ' more's'. They were willing to listen to our constant chatter and to talk with us throughout the day.

This language-learning situation provides a model of what education should be like if the student is to acquire new skills worth having, like their skill with language. The parent-child situation is the model for learning. The drawback is that it seems hopelessly remote from the actual classroom situation. Thus a natural and productive one-to-one learning situation (parent and child) is replaced by an unnatural and often less than productive thirty-to-one struggle.

How can the classroom situation become a model set-up for learning

There is no reason why the classroom situation cannot become an excellent set-up for learning new skills. *We simply have to bear in mind how learning takes place in the parent-child situation.* It is only when we forget how learning works in this natural setting that we find ourselves in trouble. In effect we need to employ the *fresh perspective* provided by our understanding of how language skills are acquired to understand how classroom education could be carried out effectively.

It is evident that everyone can learn a language (and learn it well) in a parent-child learning situation - after all, everyone does it. So to produce similar levels of skill in other areas we should try to to reproduce the key elements of the parent-child learning situation in the classroom. These are ideas you might talk about with your teacher or try out with your friends .

The one - to - one feature.

This can be reproduced if we think of the classroom as containing thirty people some of whom will, at times, be playing the role of the parent and, at other times, that of the child, with the teacher as the parent-in-chief, so to speak.

The teacher begins the process by displaying some particular aspect of his or her skill with words, for example, the skill of using those special words which are employed when we articulate (display) our knowledge of English literature or mathematics.

Because each of us varies in our speed at picking up new skills in different subjects, those who catch on more quickly to the new terms that the teacher is using in a given area will be able to help those who are a bit slower in this particular case. Their roles will often be reversed in other subjects.

Understanding how useful we can be to each other: trust and patience

It is important that everyone should recognize the fact that we all learn different subjects at different rates. No one should feel shy about asking for help from a classmate. We can all be sure that in some situation these roles will be reversed. Moreover we can feel a general confidence that *everyone* can acquire new skills if properly taught. After all, we know that each of us learned to speak and that we all did so at different rates. *Learning a new subject never amounts to no more than learning how to use a new vocabulary* and is thus only a continuation of the initial successful process of learning our native language. The important thing to remember is that *all of us learned to speak with great skill because of the patient and supportive way in which we were taught.* To reproduce these learning conditions each person must feel free to ask for help when it is needed and to give help when asked.

We should note in passing that teaching someone something is an excellent check on whether you yourself actually understand what you think you know. Being able to pass on some piece of knowledge requires that you be able to *articulate* this knowledge. To be able to articulate what you know, you must be able, for example, to express what you want to tell someone in more than one way; to be able to think up suitable examples to show what you mean; to be able to set the material in different contexts, and so forth. So the one who is being helped need not feel that 'the teacher' is not getting anything out of the relationship. The people who teach will understand the material twice as well after they have made the effort to

articulate it that teaching demands.

From a practical point of view, there may be little opportunity to engage in these 'parent-child' conversations while in the classroom. Time is short and there is a lot of material which the teacher must present. However, once you find out that 'learning your lessons' is much easier if you talk about them with another person, you will find time to do so.

Questions:

1. Helping each other to learn makes sense but this idea could be hindered if people in the class (or you and your friends outside the class) felt that they were in competition with each other. How could this difficulty be overcome?

2. One of the main barriers to learning is not being willing to admit that you don't understand something. How can this problem be removed? Why are tests valuable in this regard?

Chapter Four

The Philosophy of Foreign Languages

When we talk about the *philosophy* of some subject what we are talking about is a general framework that allows us to understand what the subject is actually about and therefore how we might approach it. In the case of learning a foreign language our knowledge of how we learn our own language provides us with a framework within which to think over the problems related to learning a foreign language.

When a child is learning a new expression in its own language, daily experience provides natural opportunities for the parent and child to use it in all sorts of different situations. When this happens the child gradually catches on to the different ways that it can be used. Thus the child learns the many connections this expression has with other words that it knows already.

In doing this the rules governing the new expression are acquired in such a way that that they become integrated with the rest of the rules which the child has already learned. *A child's skill with language grows not in separate parcels but as an integrated whole. Nothing that is learned in this integrated way is easily forgotten.*

When a child learns a new expression in this way, what the mother and child are doing is *articulating* this new expression. This articulation consists in gradually discovering the many ways in which the expression being learned connects with the language-skills the child already possesses. These natural experiments in articulation are the ideal way of acquiring an instinctive grasp of the new expression, and thus making it a part of our working knowledge of the language.

From what we already know about how we learned our native language we can anticipate that we are in for a struggle when we set out to learn a foreign language in a school setting. This is because (even in an immersion programme where all the subjects at a shool are taught in the foreign language) we are not going to have, for example, a French-speaking mother to talk with us - day in and day out - for five years.

However, understanding how we learn our native tongue gives us the advantage of knowing that what we are aiming for is an instinctive grasp of the new language.[1] We know that to achieve this we must begin with a

[1] We are aiming for an instinctive grasp of the rules which govern the foreign language because we cannot actually speak a language unless we can follow its rules instinctively. The

limited vocabulary since this was how we began with our native language.

Mastering the grammar of a core vocabulary

Using a very limited vocabulary, a child can make itself understood in many different situations. Children accomplish this by using the words they know to paraphrase the words they do not know. ("Do you have any of those little square pieces of paper that you stick on envelopes? That's right, a stamp."). This is possible because all the words in a dictionary are defined in terms of other words. We can, therefore, almost always 'talk around' a word that we do not know.

This is something that can also be done with a foreign language that you are beginning to learn. If you practice seeing how far you can get with a limited vocabulary you will find that you are developing an instinctive grasp of the grammar of the language.

Understanding the meaning of a word

The meaning of a word always involves all the different ways in which it can be used with other words. Therefore to understand the meaning of a word involves being able to use it in a variety of ways. This is why it is important to add words to your vocabulary by seeing how they can be used in conjunction with the core vocabulary that you are mastering.

The rule for acquiring new vocabulary is simple: *use it or lose it.* When you find yourself looking up a word in the dictionary for the umpteenth time you will appreciate this point. Once everyone recognizes this basic fact about learning a language there will be lots of motivation to seek out a partner in order to integrate new terms into each other's vocabulary.

An experiment with word order

Different languages employ different word orders. A study of word order is important because the word order which sentences display is a reflection of many of the grammatical rules governing that language One way of developing some skill with different word orders is to find out what the standard word order is, for example, in German. (In German there are two to choose from.) You can then try speaking English using this different word order. Once you can do it in English you can more easily reproduce the

rules that govern languages are far too complicated to follow in a conscious fashion.

appropriate word order when you try to say something in German.

When you can easily reproduce German word order in English, it also makes it much easier to read German because - with your new skill - you are familiar with the 'sound' of this German word order and it no longer seems strange and difficult to follow this same word order in the German language.

Acquiring this knowledge of word order is fairly easy (even fun) if you play this word-order game in English with another person but not easy at all if you have to memorize it as a set of rules on your own. It is most unlikely that a person (who is not 'immersed' in the language for many years) could ever gain an instinctive feel for the word order of a foreign language without first acquiring a feel for it in English.

Appreciating prose and poetry in a foreign language

Another important point about learning the language in this way is connected with our ability to enjoy the prose and poetry of a foreign language. We can appreciate literature (prose and poetry) in our own language because we have an instinctive grasp of the normal or ordinary way of saying things. Because of this we can appreciate those variations from the the usual way of saying things that make literature interesting to read and a potential source of new ideas. This is a point we will explain in more detail in Chapter Five, but it is clear enough that this same rule applies for appreciating the literature of a foreign language: We must be aware of ordinary ways of saying things (in French, German, etc.) before we can enjoy a clever and interesting way of saying the same thing. If we build up our knowledge of a foreign language by building up an instinctive grasp of a core vocabulary - and thus of the ordinary ways of saying things - we have some hope of one day being able to appreciate the *style* - the variation from the normal way of saying things - which each foreign author employs.

Learning a language as a source of insight into other cultures

Knowing a foreign language well enough to order a meal or find your way to the bus station is a useful accomplishment. However, learning another language has a further advantage: it lies in being able to have some sense of what it is *like* to be French or German or Japanese.

John David Morley makes this point nicely in his book *Pictures from the Water Trade*[2]. In the course of learning the Japanese language he came upon a particular word *uchi* which he found was used in the language at many

[2]Andre Deutsch Limited, London, 1985. See especially pp. 117-131.

levels. At first he thought it meant something like 'family', 'home' or 'our house', but as he gradually learned the many ways in which it was used he felt that he had acquired a real insight into the character of the Japanese. What he discoverd about the use of this word cannot be summarized briefly so, in *Appendix Two*, I have reproduced four or five pages of text from *Pictures from the Water Trade* which deal with the concept of *uchi*.

When you have read these pages you will be able to see how knowing a second language can reveal to us that how we think of ourselves and how we conduct our lives is closely tied to the particular language we speak.

The importance of language as a means of national identity

Once we appreciate how closely a language is tied to a culture, we can quickly grasp, for example, why questions of national identity loom large for people who live in English-speaking countries like America, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, but not in England itself. The accents which characterize the English spoken in these former colonies tend to be very important as these accents serve to identify the nationality of the people who speak in this way. But speaking with a certain accent - just by itself - is a pretty thin basis for founding a national identity.

Thus such former colonies of England must depend on some other factors which will serve to give them their national identity. Just what is it to be a Canadian or an Australian? Trying to answer these burning questions can become a national pastime when centennials or bicentennials roll around. The problem does not crop up in the same way for a country whose language is not imported from elsewhere. What makes the French *French* is that they speak French. But Americans are not Americans because they speak English with an American accent.

Question:

1. To learn a language you have to use it and that necessarily involves interaction with another person. How useful are tapes and records in learning a language? Do you need to listen to them with a partner?

Chapter Five

The Philosophy of English Literature.

There are two kinds of fiction. The first kind is interesting because of the content. The storyline relates some adventure or anecdote and it is the unfolding of this storyline that interests us. What happens to the characters[1] is the focal point of such tales. These stories are typified by detective stories: once you know the plots (and 'whodunnit') there is no interest in reading them again.[2]

By contrast we enjoy the second kind of story, not only because of what happens in it, but also because the author tells the story in an interesting way. The author puts together the words with *style* and it is our appreciation of this style which makes the story enjoyable.

Now the interesting thing about style is that we are very seldom aware of it as the thing which makes the story enjoyable. We think that it is the content of the storyline that we are following that makes it interesting, but this is a mistake. We can see this when we notice what happens when we find that we are enjoying a story for the second time. We already know what is going to happen, but we still enjoy the story. Thus our enjoyment must depend - to a considerable degree - on *how* the story is being told, in other words, on the style of the author.

Style is mysterious because we do not usually notice just how the writer is manipulating words to make the story enjoyable. As we close the book we are aware that it had a particular effect on us, but it would be difficult to put into words what it was about the book that produced this effect.

The philosophy of style

How can a philosophical approach to language help us to find some way of coming to grips with an author's style that will enable us to talk about it? If we could get some help here it would be very useful because a study of

[1] We may also enjoy this sort of story because of the way in which we identify with the characters.

[2] Roger Carruthers has pointed out to me that someone who was interested in the structure of decective stories might want to read it again to see how, for example, the author had laid out the clues and tried to puzzle the reader. However, once this had been discovered, there would be no tempation to read the book again (unless it had been written with style).

literature should be as enjoyable as our experience of it. Anyone who has acquired the habit of reading for pleasure knows that there is nothing like a good book. It should be the case that *discussing* good books - which is what the study of literature amounts to - should also be very enjoyable. After all, when we have read a good book we want our friends to read it too and this is partly because we would like to talk to them about it.

The reason that we like reading good books, what makes them *good*, is that they make us think. They do so by providing us with fresh perspectives on our own experience of life. These additional points of view allow us to see things more clearly, we understand more, and we can therefore appreciate our own lives more fully.

We said earlier that good books - what we call *literature* - are written with style. In Chapter Four we noted that because we have an instinctive grasp of how normal or ordinary speech should sound, we can notice and appreciate any variations on the the usual way of saying things. I now want to discuss this idea that an author's *style* is created by such variations.

Let us test this idea of how style is created by considering what Julian Barnes tells us that style meant to the French writer Gustave Flaubert. (I will begin by quoting a short passage and explaining it carefully.)

"Flaubert . . . believed in style; more than anyone. He worked doggedly for beauty, sonority, exactness, perfection — but never the monogrammed perfection of a writer like [Oscar] Wilde. Style is a function of theme. Style is not imposed on subject-matter, but arises from it. Style is truth to thought. The correct word, the true phrase, the perfect sentence are always 'out there' somewhere; the writer's task is to locate them by whatever means he can. . . .The author in his book must be like God in his universe, everywhere present and nowhere visible."[3]

This description tells us what Flaubert thought about the importance of style but it needs to be unpacked a bit at a time if we are to understand it.

1) That Flaubert worked to achieve *beauty,* does not mean much beyond the fact that he hoped that his way of putting things would strike the reader as beautiful. In Chapter Eight we will discuss how the vague but important idea of beauty should be understood.

2) To achieve *sonority* is to have set down sentences which are 'high-

[3] Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot,* Horizon Books, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1985, p. 88.

sounding or imposing' and when we look at some examples of Flaubert's metaphors in the following chapter you can decide to what extent this effect is achieved.

3) To achieve *exactness* may seem to be something that only the author can judge, for only the author knows whether what has been said *exactly* fits the thought that he or she was trying to express. However the reader appreciates exactness if the words used seem 'just right' in relation to the theme or subject which the author is discussing.

4) To achieve *perfection* is simply to write in a style that achieves the above ends.

5) To write in a *monogrammed style* is to use certain tricks which - like a monogram (𝔇𝔈𝔚) - immediately identify the writer. Oscar Wilde, for example, always had to be witty and was fond of a pun and of a clever one-liner. (When asked by a Customs officer if he had anything to declare Wilde replied: "Only my genius.").

Flaubert did not want his style to be obvious in this fashion. This is why Barnes quotes him as saying : *"The author in his book must be like God in his universe, everywhere present and nowhere visible."* In other words he wanted his style to achieve a certain effect (beauty, sonority, etc.) but he did not want his methods for achieving this to be obvious.

6) *Style is a function of theme.* Somehow the author must use style to reflect the theme - or principal idea - he or she is trying to express. We will see how this is done by Flaubert in the next Chapter.

7) *Style is not imposed on subject-matter, but arises from it. Style is truth to thought.* As we will see in the next chapter, one of the most obvious features of a writer's style is the use of metaphors to get across his or her thoughts on a given subject. These metaphors should not be "*imposed on the subject matter but arise from it*". A good metaphor needs to be *true to thought* because our thoughts are often like vague attitudes towards something until they are crystallized by a telling phrase. Often a suitable metaphor helps our thoughts to emerge in a way that strikes us as perfect i.e., *true* to the thought.

In the next chapter we will explain the importance of metaphors and how a philosophical approach to them can show us one way to discuss style in a way that is satisfying.

Question.

1) Think of the last time you tried to recomend a *good* book[4] to someone.

If the friend had asked: "What's so good about it?" what would you have said in reply? Try actually writing out your reply and then see how it compares to what you would say after you have read the next chapter on metaphor.

[4] A good book here means one written with style, a book that you would enjoy reading again.

Chapter Six

The Philosophy Behind The Use Of Metaphors.

In what follows I shall be using the term 'metaphor' quite loosely to include any figure of speech ('the snow blankets the ground', 'the snow was like a blanket covering the ground') in which the author makes use of something familiar and well understood (e.g. the way a blanket covers a bed) to describe something unfamiliar (the way snow covers the ground).[1]

Julian Barnes, in his book *Flaubert's Parrot* collects a few of Gustave Flaubert's metaphors:

Me and my books in the same apartment: like a gherkin in its vinegar.

I am only a literary lizard basking the day away beneath the great sun of Beauty. That's all.

With me friendship is like the camel: once started, there is no way of stopping it.

As you get older, the heart sheds its leaves like a tree. You cannot hold out against certain winds. Each day tears away a few more leaves; and then there are the storms which break off several branches at one go. And while nature's greenery grows back again in the spring, that of the heart never grows back.

When will the book be finished: That's the question. If it is to appear next winter, I haven't a minute to lose between now and then. But there are moments when I'm so tired that I feel I'm liquefying like an old Camembert.

It's true that many things infuriate me. The day I stop being indignant I shall fall flat on my face, like a doll when you take away its prop.

In all of these examples Flaubert uses a metaphor to understand something about himself and his life, something which, for him, could not be grasped or

[1] Here and in what follows I am following Julian Jaynes' analysis of metaphors. See *The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1976, Chapter II.

articulated without using this device. The metaphor provides the perspective which allows Flaubert to connect unfamilar parts of his experience to parts which are familiar. This 'connecting up' helps him to understand his experience and allows us to appreciate its special character.

What can we do to express our own responses to the metaphors which good writers create?

The 'flavour' that a book leaves us with when we have read it is a function of the writer's style. Exploring metaphors is one way of articulating this 'flavour'. The value judgments contained in the metaphors that an author uses will - when we have explored them properly - serve to sharpen and clarify our own views about human life.

The effect that reading a metaphor has on us is generated by comparing two situations. Take for example Flaubert's metaphor about being indignant. One situation we are familiar with and understand well (the doll which is being propped up in a lifelike way). The other is not as familiar (the man and his relation to his indignation). Let us now consider how this works in detail. To do so it will help to consider the logic of the familiar situation. By 'logic' I mean the various assumptions we make about the doll and the prop which allow us to understand what is going on when I prop up a doll, and by doing so, make it seem alive.

Understanding the logic of the doll and the prop involves:

1) considering the fact that a doll is a thing which is, itself, lifeless;

2) considering what happens to it when it is propped up (this involves the notion of pretense, of a game);

3) considering what happens when the prop is removed;

4) considering the fact that the pretense of the doll's being alive (in this particular set-up) depends on its being propped up.

Now by contrast, we are not really familiar with the logic of a man and his indignation.

The metaphor's purpose is to make it clear what that logic is - the use of the metaphor imposes the familiar logic of the doll and its prop onto the man and his indignation - and in this way we get a sense of how Flaubert feels about his life at this stage.

The comparison presents a one-sided and drastic account of what

animates Flaubert - what keeps him going. We seldom think of indignation as the sole animating factor in a person's life, but if we pursue the logic of the doll a little further, the point being made becomes even more striking.

A doll that is propped up is not really alive. It only seems to be. If Indignation is the only prop in Flaubert's life, then (in his own judgment), he too only seems to be alive because of the animation that his indignation gives to him. The metaphor gives us a frightening image of how utterly dependent he felt himself to be on his capacity for feeling indignation.

The metaphor does all this work very elegantly when we first read it and we experience its 'flavour' without, as it were, *knowing the recipe* which produced it. We can now see that in order to talk about this 'flavour' to others we need only expand upon the metaphor following the method suggested.

The study of literature is valuable because it gives you the opportunity to explore metaphors (and other features of style[2]). Such an endeavour is very difficult to do just by yourself outside a literature class. Talk to your teacher about some of these ideas and see what sort of reaction you get. Or talk to your friends: remember, it is easier to appreciate fresh insights, such as those that a metaphor can generate, by talking about them with someone.

Questions:

1. Explore some of Flaubert's metaphors in the way suggested and see what happens.

2. Compare some of the metaphors drawn from two books by different authors which you have enjoyed reading. In what way are their metaphors different? Do these differences account for the different 'flavour' which the books leave you with?

3. Making up metaphors is a matter of allowing the imagination to experiment with various comparisons. Think up some yourself. What makes for a good metaphor?

4. Look at some book reviews. See how often the reviewer illustrates the character of the book under review by quoting some metaphors from it.

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2 There is a general method for discovering and studying other features of style: look for variations on the normal way of saying things. All figures of speech , all rhythms, cadences and rhymes in poetry, are stylish variants on ordinary speech.

Chapter Seven

Beauty

When poets compose their verses they rely on their imagination. Imagination is nothing more than the power we have to take apart things and recombine various parts of them to make new things.

This process of imagining is an interesting one because some of the recombinations it produces turn out to be beautiful and we value them accordingly. Why do we find that one product of the imagination strikes us as beautiful while another fails to move us?

A clue to the answer lies in the discusssion of literature in Chapter Five. There I suggested that good stories were good because of their style and that their style was a function of how the authors told their story. They set forth new ways of looking at things - new comparisons - which described familiar situations in a striking way: 'Me and my books in the same apartment, like a gherkin in its vinegar'.

I focused on metaphors as providing the standard method for producing illuminating comparisons but we do not usually describe metaphors as things which are *beautiful*. We usually characterize them as striking, or apt, or illuminating.

This is because they are being used to add clarity to our understanding of something about which we only have a vague idea. For example, we all know in a vague way, that there is something irrevocable about growing older. Flaubert wants to grasp this idea more firmly and he attempt to do so by comparing Nature's greenery with the human heart (see page 22).

However he does not just say: "Nature's cycle of renewal is not matched by the emotional life of human beings as they grow older." Such a flat statement lacks the poetry of Flaubert's expression. We are not caught up by it because there is no work for us to do to puzzle out what is meant. What is meant is spelled out clearly by the flat statement.

However when it is not spelled out - as in Flaubert's metaphor - the imagination must get to work and play around with the ideas. It must recombine them, fill in the gaps, extend the ideas, until we begin to understand the comparison - i.e., see some pattern in it. It is this interplay between the need to understand, and the imagination trying to interpret the metaphor, which sets our brains to work (or is it to play) in a way that we enjoy and regard as significant. We regard it as significant because - through this play - we arrive at a new perspective on things.

It is when we experience this feeling - caused when the imagination is excited by the metaphor and tries to make some sense out of it - that we experience the feeling of beauty. This is why we characterize metaphors as striking. They are striking insofar as they they activate our minds: they make us think.

In the same way, when a sunset *strikes* us as beautiful, it is because it has set our minds to work. We use the term 'beautiful' to express the fact that the thing we see (the sun going down) is being presented in a way that calls out for recognition. When we look at this sunset, we find ourselves in a situation in which we cannot find words to do justice to what we see and we use the term "beautiful' as a conventional substitute for an adequate description. We could as well say: "Oh!" or "Wow!" or "Far out"[1]

Thus every time we experience something beautiful what we are actually experiencing is our own minds at play. What we feel is a kind of quickening - a feeling of our minds being alive (our imagination and our understanding are interacting with each other). What we want to do when we experience beauty is to communicate this exhilarating feeling to other people. It is somehow important to share our feelings of beauty. It is this urge to communicate our feelings of beauty that also provides the creative spark that moves artists to express themselves in the various media that are available, words, paint, the movements of the dance, etc.

Questions:

1) The next time you experience something beautiful, try to put this feeling into words. See if you find yourself making use of a familiar metaphor or whether you find it necessary to invent a new one.

2) Stories become literature (works of art) when - among other things - they contain striking metaphors. How does a picture of something become a work of art? Are there metaphors in paint? What about the other artistic media?

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[1] Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher, sets out this view in a book called *The Critique of Judgment* translated by James Creed Meredith, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1928. This book was originally published in 1790.

Chapter Eight

The Philosophy of History

History is a subject which seldom has to justify itself in terms of making a contribution to our general education. It seems obvious that a study of what has happened in the past will be of interest to us since many aspects of our present lives are consequences of the what has happened in the past. It will be interesting to look at the study of history from a philosophical point of view and see what basis history has for its confidence in its own worth.

For example it is worth asking historians how they select the facts which they use to tell their tale. Clearly the story told depends on the facts but which facts are to be included and which ones left out? We can safely assume that historians want to include only the significant facts, that is - the ones which serve to *explain* why history took the course it took - but this leaves us asking how we are to judge whether a fact is significant or not.

Historians are well aware of this problem. Thus there are some who emphasize economic factors as the signficant ones. They propose, for example, that it was the high price of spices that caused European powers to colonize the East. Others suppose that individual personality traits determine the course of affairs, as with Napoleon's ambition, or Hitler's vision of a greater Germany. Still others maintain that the moving force of History is the class struggle. And the list goes on.

Each of these perspectives claims to provide the true explanation of why things happened the way they did. Yet it seems clear that these various approaches to history are complementary. There is some truth in all of them. Yet it is necessary when writing history to emphasize one perspective. If instead, you tried to include all the determining factors of history in your account, it would become so complicated that it would cease to provide the reader with any sense of perspective on the story that was being told. *Unless we tell the story from some perspective it ceases to have the form of an explanation.*[1] Events no longer unfold along a storyline which lets us make sense of them. Things just happen. There is no explanation apart from the empty statement that things would not have happened the way they did unless all the things that had gone before had happened the way they did.

[1] Maps are a good illustration of this point: the more we try to include in them (topological features, principal crops, historical changes of boundaries, etc.) the more difficult it is to understand what they are trying to convey. (Roger Carruthers)

No rational historian wants to think that the course of history cannot be understood at all. Being rational animals seems to carry with it an instinctive desire to understand the world, but understanding something necessarily involves regarding any process as being governed by some causal rule (an economic rule, a pyschological rule, a sociological rule, etc.)

Thus when we study history we should be aware that each historian is engaged in a process of interpretation which is designed to provide a explanation of a set of facts which, taken by themselves, might appear to be

. . . a tale,
told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
(Macbeth, Act V, Scene v.)

The study of history is, from a philosophical point of view, a fundamental reflection of the situation human beings find themselves in - the human condition. It is an attempt to understand and therefore find meaning in the human story. Every new interpretation of history deepens our understanding of the strange situation we find ourselves in, living on this planet. We should read history with this in mind.

Questions:

1. To see how complicated writing history can be, try writing an account of your own history over the past week. Remember, as a history, its point will be to explain how it was that you came to do what you did.

2. Find two historians who deal with the same topic and compare their different approaches to it. How would you assess which one was closer to the truth of the matter?

Chapter Nine

The Philosophy of Mathematics

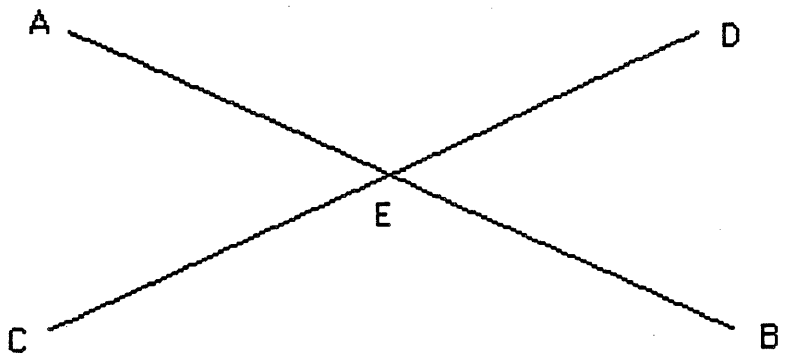
Mathematics is a curious subject, once the arithmetic part of it is over. Arithmetic - adding, substracting, multiplying, and dividing - is a simple skill that we acquire early and use a great deal. Because it is an entirely practical skill there are no problems to solve, only exercises that help you to learn the rules that govern the four related techniques.

But when you start to deal with subjects like Geometry and Algebra, the exercises with which you are faced are presented as problems. Faced with these problems it is not obvious what you are to do to solve them in the way that it is when you are asked to add up a column of figures or divide one number by another. What has happened to create this difference?

There is a clue to the nature of this difficulty in the very word 'problems'. In ordinary life problems are *problems* because there are no straightforward techniques for solving them. We need to play around with the problems we face, try to see them from different points of view, before any solutions will present themselves.

For example, a subject like Euclidian (or Deductive) geometry can present us with problems because the geometrical figures that we deal with have aspects that are related in many different ways, some of which are not obvious. For example, *the square on the hypoteneuse of a right- angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the two opposite sides.* Even if aspects of figures are related in an obvious way , for example, *if two straight lines intersect, the opposite angles are equal,* there is still the question of proof. The opposite angles might look as if they were equal but I would not know how to prove it, if someone said that they weren't sure.

If we now go through a proof of this statement in some detail we can see how proving it really amounts to nothing more than understanding the grammar (or the rules) which govern the vocabulary of the language of geometry.



When we are asked to prove *that if two straight lines intersect, the opposite angles are equal*, we are being asked to prove, e.g., that Angle AEC = Angle DEB.

To do so we must establish what the rules are which govern the use of the various terms involved. First of all we need to establish that CED is a straight line and we do so *by assumption*. This is the first line of our proof.

1) By assumption, CED is a straight line.

Then we bring out one of the features of straight lines, namely that they contain 180 degrees. This is said to be true *by definition*.

2) CED = 180 degrees.

Now if Angle AEC and Angle AED = CED, then Angle AEC + Angle AED must also be equal to l80 degrees, since CED is = 180 degrees.

This step in the proof relies on another rule, the axiom of Equality: *Things equal to the same things are equal to each other.*

The third line of the proof reads:

3) Therefore, Angle AEC + Angle AED = 180 degrees

We then turn our attention to Line AEB. We state that

4) *By assumption*, AEB is a straight line.

Then, the two angles that make up AEB (Angle AED and Angle DEB), must

equal 180 degrees (*by the Axiom of Equality* as before).

Line five of the proof reads:

5) Therefore Angle AED + Angle DEB = 180 degrees

Now if Angle AEC +Angle AED = 180 degrees
and if Angle AED +Angle DEB = 180 Degrees
therefore, *by the axiom of equality*

6) Angle AEC + Angle AED = Angle AED + Angle DEB

We then turn to another axiom or fundamental rule called the axiom of subtraction. It states that *If equals are subtracted from equals, the remainders are equals.*

So if we subtract the same Angle AED from both sides of the above equation we can derive the conclusion that the remainders, Angle AEC and DEB are equal (using the axiom of Substraction). The conclusion of the proof reads:

7) Therefore, Angle AEC = Angle DEB

(and for completeness we add)

Similarly it may be proved that Angle AED = Angle CEB.

And this is what we set out to show, since these angles are the opposite angles which are created by the intersection of two straight lines.

What we have really shown is that if you understand the rules (or axioms) governing the use of terms like 'straight line', 'angle', 'intersect', 'opposite', 'equal to', 'subtract', 'plus', etc., then you will also understand the sentence "If two straight lines intersect, the opposite angles are equal." That is, you will be able to see that this sentence makes sense in exactly the same way as "If a person is robbed they will suffer a loss" can be seen to make sense if you understand what the terms, 'rob', and 'loss' mean.

One further point needs to be made. As you go through the process of learning mathematics the propostions that you prove are used to prove other propositions. You mention them in proofs in order to show that you know how

the terms involved are used. Rigorous proofs - ones which state *all* the rules that you are depending upon to prove the proposition in question - are demanded in mathematics because the various relationships between the rules governing the terms are not obvious at first glance. It is, after all, a new language. As you become more familiar with the rules, proofs may begin to leave out any mention of some of the more obvious rules like the axiom of equality.

To learn the rules of a language and the way they are interrelated is to acquire a skill. This can only be done if the general rules for acquiring a skill are followed. These are now familiar: to learn how to 'speak' geometry skillfully, get together with another person and start talking geometry with them.

Questions:

1. Try setting some problems in mathematics instead of solving them. See if after you have done this for a while you begin to recognize 'the tricks of the trade.' Would an examination that asked you to set problems be harder or easier than one that asked you to solve them?

Chapter Ten

The Philosophy of Science

Can we look to philosophy to tell us something about the nature of science, something which would help us to understand how it should be studied? Philosophy is sensitive to new perspectives and in the case of science it can point out that the rise of science is a result of a shift in the kind of question that people started asking about the world.

At one stage when people asked why things were the way they were, e.g., why the sun shone in the heavens, they were satisfied when they were told that the sun shone in order to provide warmth and light so that human beings would not be cold and would be able to see. Such a reply seemed satisfying and there seemed no good reason to pursue the question any further. Everything had a purpose, and fundamentally that purpose was related to human welfare.

If someone asked questions which could not be explained in this way, e.g., why fire rose up and stones fell down, the short reply was that it was in their nature to do so. Everything that moves does so because it is seeking its natural place in the scheme of things. This comfortable view began with Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, and it held sway for about two thousand years.

To change this attitude there had to be a change in perspective. This came about when people began to ask *how* the sun was able to shine, what kept it going, *how* the fire was able to rise, *how* stones were able to fall. Suddenly it seemed that unless one knew how a process came about, what its cause was, then one simply did not understand why things were the way they were.

Before long it was realized that there were common features which characterized various processes, features which could be recognized as pointing to some underlying common cause which governed all of them. For example, when you drop objects with varying weights from a tower they all accelerate towards the earth at the same rate. It is as if they were all obeying the same law. Furthermore it was discovered that these laws could be formulated using mathematics. Using these mathematical formulations you could predict what would happen under various conditions by substituting particular values into the formula.

The new perspective provided by science revealed the world as a vast interconnected mechanism in which nothing happens without a cause, and in

which all particular cases of cause and effect are instances of Nature abiding by its own laws.

Studying subjects like physics or chemistry presents no special problems so long as we remember, once again, that a physicist or a chemist is only someone who who has learned how to 'speak' physics or chemistry. They know how to articulate the terms involved.

These 'languages' are easy to learn because they have a strict grammar, there are no exceptions to the rule to memorize, no idioms to master, no special accent to imitate. The basic vocabulary and the grammar that prevail in these subjects simply needs to be learned by using it. You should get together with a friend and test each other so that the basics of the new language will be as much at your fingertips as are the multiplication-tables.

You can strengthen your grip on the scientific laws that you learn in these subjects by looking at what is happening around you and deciding whether these events are open to scientific explanation or not. The deciding feature here is whether or not the situation you are considering is subject to experiment.

Take the case of one piece of fruit in a bowl going mouldy and another simply drying up. First of all it is quite clear that we will not be able to experiment on these two particular pieces of fruit to discover why one has gone mouldy and the other has not. We must instead answer the question by performing experiments on similar pieces of fruit. In the second place, we must make guesses or form hypotheses about why, in the one case, fruit develops a mould and in the other, it simply dries out. This is the creative part of science and it requires that we exercise our imagination.

Thus we might suspect that the mould developed only in pieces of fruit from certain trees and not from others. We might wonder whether mould can attack fruit that has no blemishes on the skin. We might ask whether a mould could develop if the fruit were kept cold. We might wonder whether a mould would appear if the fruit were isolated from the environment. etc., etc.

Such hypotheses are useful only if we can devise some means to test them. We can do this by experimenting with pieces of fruit under conditions where we can control what is going on. This is what an *experiment* amounts to: unless we can control all of the factors that might be the cause of the fruit going mouldy, we will not be able to determine which of these many factors is actually responsible for what happens. To control all of these factors we must isolate our experiment from outside influences. We can then introduce various factors, one at a time in a controlled way, and discover which one causes the mould to appear.

Hypotheses are considered to be scientific only if they can be tested experimentally. Thus if I wonder whether the mould is caused by witchcraft I have to admit that I cannot imagine how to perform an experiment which would determine whether this hypothesis is the right one.

To sum up: science can be practiced only if I can test my hypotheses and I can do this only If I can set up suitable experiments. Devising experiments requires imagination as well. Once you have tried forming hypotheses and devising experiments yourself, you will begin to be able to appreciate the role that imagination plays in scientific inquiry. The famous figures in science whose discoveries you learn about should be admired first and foremost for their fertile imaginations. They had to play around with the facts that they had observed - the data - until they could find some perspective from which the facts displayed some pattern or order. They had then to suggest some hypothesis which would explain this order and finally, devise some way of testing this idea. Considering the history of science from this point of view will give you an appreciation of science as a triumph of the imagination.

Questions:

1) Look at some examination papers in the science subjects. To answer the questions would you only need to be able to speak the particular language associated with the subject or would you need to exercise your imagination as well?

Chapter Eleven

Physical Education

'Practice makes pefect'

It is possible at thirteen or fourteen years of age *not* to know something as basic as this: that if you want to be good at some sport you have to practice the various skill associated with it. I certainly did not know it and neither did most of my friends. We all thought that the athletes who played for the school teams were all natural athletes - just born that way. Magic.

The other day I had lunch with some friends and we were discussing this point. Three of us were laughing about the fact that, when we were at school, we had not realized that 'practice makes perfect' and had accepted our lack of skill at various sports as simply our fate. Our fourth companion astounded us by saying that, as a matter of fact, he *had* realized that he would never be any good at basketball unless he practiced hard. He did so and subsequently played for the school. We were all surprised to hear this because we had assumed that he was just a 'natural athlete'. Indeed, the idea that someone could become a good athlete just through practice was thought to be a mark against them. Thus people would say scornfully, "No wonder John is so good, he practices all the time" as if this practicing detracted from the value of the skill that he displayed in his performance.

In the case of other school subjects it is obvious that only a great deal of practice can give us the skill to articulate our knowledge in these areas. Nor do we imagine, even for an instant, that we would be able to possess this skill on the first try. Yet often people seem to think that, because they cannot master some physical skill on their first attempt, they are 'no good at it'. This is nonsense. The people who are 'no good at sports' are simply the ones who do not practice.

Questions.

1. Why do we have a fascination with the idea of the natural athlete?

2. If you take up a musical instrument you soon find out that without practice you get nowhere. Why is this not equally obvious in the case of physical skills?

PART TWO

Chapter Twelve

How our Senses Tell Us About The World (I)

In the first part of this book I discussed how philosophy can be used to obtain some fresh perspectives on the language we speak, and how these perspectives can give us some insight into a good way of approaching different school subjects. The general idea behind this approach was that we are usually quite unaware that our actual knowledge in any field is a function of how well we can articulate the special words that are used in that subject. Once we realize this we know what we must do to have this knowledge at our finger-tips: we simply have to integrate it into the language that we already speak by practicing the new vocabulary with a partner.

I now want to turn to another aspect of being human which provides us with a further insight into the sorts of creatures that we are.

One of the strangest thoughts we can have as human beings, comes when we recognize that the familiar world that we know through our eyes is not what it appears to be. We think that we see the world the way it is because we take it for granted that our eyes are like windows on the world, and that we look through them in much the same way as we look through ordinary windows. But we only have to think about this for a moment in order to realize that this is false.

We know that inside the eye, behind the lens, there is no little person staring out. Instead there is a complex array of tiny cells called the retina. Each of these cells reacts to light falling on it and sends an electrical message to the optic nerve which relays it on to the brain. Then something exceptionally strange happens: somehow the brain interprets these signals and we *see* the tree or street-scene that we are looking at.

If we are looking out of an ordinary window at something we might wonder if the window was distorting our view of it. We might think, for example, that what we saw outside looked an odd colour. However in such cases there is no problem because we have a way of checking up on how something looks through a window by going outside and seeing how it *really* looks.

But we cannot do the same thing with the 'window' that is our eye. We cannot 'step outside' and see if the thing we see with our eyes really looks the way it appears to look.

Now if we think about this puzzle carefully we will notice that it only makes sense to talk of something *appearing* a certain way if we can contrast it with the way it *really* looks. Thus we can talk about appearances quite happily (when we are referring to how things appear through ordinary windows) because we can step outside and experience the contrast between how things appear (as seen through a window) compared to what what they really look like (i.e what they look like when we view them directly). Here we have a clear understanding of the distinction between the way things appear to us and the way they really look.

But clearly no such contrast is available to us when we look at something with our eyes. We can't 'step outside' in this case. So, strictly speaking we cannot say of the things we see that we are seeing them the way they *really are* nor can we say that we are seeing how things *appear* to us. This way of talking is not available to us.

What can we say about what we see? If we are to solve this curious puzzle we need some contrast which will let us compare what we see with our eyes with what we sense in another way. Shakespeare provides a clue in this speech from Macbeth:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

If something is sensible to sight *and* to feeling we can say that it is real and not just something that our brain has made up, a dagger of the mind, a false creation, a mere appearance.

This is how the contrast between appearance and reality works when we are talking about the way we experience the world with our senses.

So we can see that our original 'strange' question: "Do things really look the way they appear to look when we see them with our eyes?" is misleading. It was based on a false comparison: the question assumed that looking through our eyes at something was the same sort of thing as looking through a window at something. And because - in the case of looking through our eyes - we cannot 'step outside', it seemed as if we could not know what things

really look like, that instead we had to be content with how they appear to look.

Now, however, we understand that the way a thing *looks* should not be thought of in terms of the *appearance* that it presents to us. Instead I understand what it means to talk about the way a thing *looks* to me when I understand what it means to talk about the way the same thing *feels* to me (and the way it smells, and what taste it has, and what sound it makes if I tap it.)

Through making these comparisons I understand that the contrast between appearance and reality depends on finding out whether an object can be experienced with more than one sense. If it cannot it is regarded simply as the appearance of an object. Thus when I see an image on the movie screen, it is because I cannot feel it (or smell it, etc.) that I do not think it is real and thus regard it as a mere appearance.

The puzzle about what things really look like only gets off the ground because of the false comparison between seeing something *through* the eyes and seeing something *through* a window. In fact we usually do not talk about seeing things *through* our eyes: we talk instead of seeing things with our eyes, as we feel things with our body, and hear things with our ears. The 'language game'[1] of sense perception which uses the preposition 'with' is very different from the language game that uses 'through' and which concerns itself with looking at things through some medium (like a window, or a telescope, or a pair of glasses).

Here we can see how a misuse of our language can confuse us. A language-game that has to do with seeing things through windows is confused with the language game of sense-perception. In subsequent chapters we will look more closely at some other misuses of language and how they affect our understanding of ourselves as human beings.

Questions:

1) Could people who are born blind also begin to wonder if the way things

[1] 'Language-games' is a term coined by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*,(translated by G.E.M. Anscombe) Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1953, § 7). It refers to the fact that a given cluster of terms mean what they do because they are used in a certain context - what he called a 'form of life' (see §19) These terms can only be properly understood in that context and if they are used in some other context there are likely to breed confusion without our being able to understand what has gone wrong. See, for example, Chapter seventeen, footnote 3, below.

feel to them are just appearances and that there is no way to find out how things really feel?

2) Did you think before you read this Chapter that your eyes were like windows? If you did, how did this affect the way you looked at other peoples' eyes? Did you look *at* them or *into* them? How common is the 'window' metaphor for describing eyes?

Chapter Thirteen

How our Senses Tell Us About The World (II)

In the last chapter we pointed out how confusion can reign if two language-games are mixed up. (This is a tricky point and it is worth reviewing before we take the discussion a little further.) If we confuse two language-games without realizing it, we can think that something like sense-perception presents us with a deep mystery. It can seem to us that the world that we know *through* the senses is hidden from us, that we can never know what the world is really like.

We have seen that this 'deep problem' is based on a false comparison. We see things with our eyes, not through them, and in doing so we know what they look like in the same sense that we know what they feel like when we touch them with our bodies. Since no one who is feeling something with their hands (under normal circumstances) ever says: "I wonder what this really feels like?", so too, no one who is seeing something with their eyes (under normal circumstances) would ever say: "I wonder what this really looks like?"

In short, we have no difficulty making the distinction between the way a thing appears to us and the way it really looks. The sun seen through a piece of exposed film appears to be dim but is really bright. Things are said to *appear* a certain way if the situation under which we experience them is not the normal one. Inside the shop under flourescent lights a blue suit may appear to be a pleasant shade but out in the sunshine we see that it is really a ghastly shade of blue.

So to say that we do not know whether things really look the way they appear to us *when, in fact, we are seeing them under normal circumstances,* is simply to ignore the fact that, under normal circumstances, things do not *appear* to us at all. We can see this by looking at an actual case.

I have tried on a suit in a store with flourescent lighting and - glancing up at the flourescent lighting - I say to the salesman. "Lets see what it looks like outside". We both walk out into the sunshine and I look at the suit. I then say "It now appears to be a different colour, I wonder what colour it really is?" This sounds funny and is something we would never say except for a joke.

In the previous chapter we mentioned the curious fact that we do not see things directly through our eyes, but that instead, our brain interprets

electrical messages (that our nerves convey from our sense organs) and presents us with a picture of the world.

What can we say about this 'picture'? We do not want to ask whether the 'picture' we have of a tree *resembles* the tree in the world that caused it. We do not want to ask this because, if we do, we are assuming that the question makes sense, that it has an answer: that, for example, we could look and see whether there is a resemblance between the 'picture' we have in our minds and the tree in the world of which it is a 'picture'.

We have seen that this cannot be done, so there is no point in thinking of our visual experience of a tree as a picture of it. Pictures are *pictures* because there are originals that they can be seen to *resemble*. Such comparisons cannot be made in the case of visual experiences.

This becomes quite evident once we remember that we do not think that the pain we feel when we stub our toe resembles the brick against which we stubbed it. No one imagines that the smell of a rose is like the molecule which caused it. Nor should we think that the visual experience of a tree resembles the tree that caused it.

So what *is* the relationship between my visual experience of a tree and the tree that caused it? What I can truly say is that my visual experience of a tree is the *effect* that the tree has on me when I experience it with my eyes. Now whereas pictures must bear some resemblance to the things of which they are pictures, effects need not resemble their causes in any respect.

The effects that the world has on our organs of sense - sights, sounds, smells etc. - can be thought of as telling us something about the world and something about ourselves, without resembling either.

What we now need to ask is how we ever came to think that our sense experience of the world was a *picture* of it. We can make some progress in answering this question by considering the fact that people talk to each other about their sense experience.

This in itself is remarkable if you imagine that sense experiences are the brain's interpretations of the world and thus private to each individual: according to this scenario I have my experiences and you have yours, but I do not know what yours are like, nor you, mine. So how can we talk to each other as if our sense experience were something that we shared like the public world we both inhabit.? In the next chapter we will try to answer this question.

Questions:

1) From a distance a square tower appears to be round. Under a microscope a razor's edge appears to be jagged. Is the tower really square? Is the razor's edge really smooth?

Chapter Fourteen

How our Senses Tell Us About The World (III)
Being Colour-Blind

I said in the last chapter that when we experience something in the world this experience tells us something about the world and something about us. This rings true because we have seen that our sense experience is the effect of the world interacting with our sense organs: both the world and our sense organs contribute to the resulting experience.

Despite this we are naturally inclined to project the visual quality of our experience (our brain's interpretation of the light that falls on our retinas) onto the object that caused it and imagine that the colour red permeates the surface of an object like a coat of paint. This is because we are still assuming that the eye is like a clear window and that the things we see through our eyes exist in the world in just the same state as we see them.

We know that this is not true. Our eyes are not windows. So the question remains: how are we able to talk to each other about what the world is like when each of us knows what the world is like only through our own experience? What we now need to ask is how we ever came to think that our sense-experience of the world was a picture of it. We will now see how some progress in answering this question can be made by considering the fact that people can talk to each other about their sense experience.

As we said in the previous chapter, this fact that we can talk to each other about our experience of the world is remarkable - if you keep to the idea that sense experiences are the brain's interpretations of the world and thus *private* to each individual. I have mine and you have yours, but I do not know what yours are like, nor you, mine. So how can we talk to each other as if our sense experience were something that we shared like the public world we both inhabit.?

One possible answer to this question is that we assume that each of us has the same sense experience on the grounds that people we see all have eyes and ears of the same sort. Surely my sense experience of red or of a booming sound is the same as yours given that our sense organs are of the same type?

Why do we feel so confident about this? It is not because we can compare sense experiences. These are private to each of us. Therefore our confidence must be based on something else.

I do not know whether your experience of red is the same as mine but I do know whether you use the word 'red' in the same way as I do. I just have to

see whether the things you call red are also the things I call red. Let us consider for a moment how we learned to use the word 'red'.

We did not learn it by ourselves. Instead we learned to use this word by imitating the way other people were using it. We were encouraged when we used it as they did and discouraged when we made mistakes using it. Thus we learned to use it only in the presence of things that other people called red. We gradually acquired the skill of being able to distinguish between red and other colours, green for example. We learned to see the difference between them.

What was this difference? Was it that looking at one resulted in the experience of *red* and looking at the other resulted in the different experience of *green*?

This looks like the answer and this is what people thought until they discovered - about one hundred years ago - that some people are colour-blind. People who are colour-blind usually go undetected. This is because they have learned how to tell red from green by distinguishing differences between these colours even though these differences are not exactly the same differences that people with normal vision depend upon to distinguish these colours.

Understanding what it means to be colour blind will tell us a great deal about the way we experience the world so it will be worth our while to discuss this matter carefully.

First of all, colour-blind people usually do not know that they are colour-blind. This means that they learned to use the terms 'red' and 'green' by relying on the differences between these colours that they can see. These differences are not the same differences as normal people see, but for the most part they are *coordinated* with the differences that normal people see. This is why colour-blind people do not realize that they are colour-blind.

Thus the colour-blind person may always see certain shades of brown (or grey or some other colour) where normal people see certain shades of green. And they see another set of shades of brown (or grey, etc.) where normal persons see certain shades of red.

So it is by seeing differences between shades of some colour (let us say brown) that they distinguish between red and green. For the colour-blind person there are 'red' shades of brown and 'green' shades of brown - and, of course, 'brown' shades of brown, that are coordinated with the normal persons' use of the terms 'red', 'green' and 'brown'.

Now there must be certain shades of brown which lie at the border line between what the colour-blind person sees as 'red' shades of brown and

'green' shades of brown. The test symbols in the colour-blind test are located at this border-line and when colour-blind people look at them they see no difference between 'red' and 'green' shades of brown. It is possible to create a test symbol in which colour-blind people do not see a difference between, e.g., the colour of the figure 3 and the colour of the background it lies on. They cannot distinguish the red figure three from the green background and so do not see a number in the circle, whereas people with normal vision can distinguish this number.

This test shows us that the colour-blind person must learn how to use the terms 'red' and 'green' without having the same experience of red and green that normal people have. But this means that the intrinsic quality of our sense experience - our actual experience of redness and greenness - is not what we are talking about when we discuss these colours since we could quite happily discuss them with a *colour-blind* person and no one would notice that anything was wrong. Remember that, outside the laboratory, colour-blind people usually go undetected.

In fact we have to face the possibility that people with normal vision might still interpret the quality of redness quite differently from person to person. However, so long as they use the word 'red' and 'green' to talk about a difference between red and green in the same way as everyone else does, they can all be said to see the *same* colour *whatever the actual colour they privately experience might be like.* Indeed we can see from this that there is no way to talk about the *actual* colour that we are privately experiencing. We can only talk to each other about the various colours we see in terms of publicly agreed upon *differences* between various colours.

We can see that this is so if we imagine what would be involved in teaching a foreigner how to use the English words 'red' and 'green'. We assume that this person - we will call her Jean - does not know any English so that we cannot tell her that what we want to talk to her about are the *colours* red and green. All she knows is that we are trying to teach her how to use these two English words which, to her, sound like nonsense syllables.

We might begin the lesson by selecting a variety of red and green objects and then hold them up in turn, saying 'red' and 'green' at the appropriate times. She has to guess at what the difference is between the objects that calls for, in the one case 'red', and in the other 'green'. At first she might suppose it was their size that was in question, or their weight, or their shape, or their smoothness, etc. but these possibilities are eliminated when two things which have the same size, weight, shape or smoothness are still distinguished by the terms 'red' and 'green'. Whatever the difference that 'red' and 'green' are meant to mark, these possibilities are not it. Eventually Jean

seems to catch on. She no longer makes any mistakes using 'red' and 'green' with the objects being used as examples.

To check that she has learned how to use these words correctly we walk around town together and get her to play the 'red'-'green' game with a whole variety of things along the way. In the course of our walk we become confident that she has acquired the skill of using these words as we use them. She now knows what these words mean.

The important point to notice is that throughout this process we have made no reference whatsoever to her sense experience - the visual interpretation of red and green provided by her brain. The particular *quality* of her experience of red and green - in particular whether her experiences of red and green were the same as ours - played no part in teaching her these terms.

This discussion was prompted by the question of how we able to talk to each other about what the world is like when each of us knows what the world is like only through our own private experience. We suggested that one possible answer to this question is that we are able to talk to each other about our sense experience of the world if we assume that each of us has the *same* sense experience - on the grounds that we since we all have eyes and ears of the same sort, they should produce the same private experiences.

But we have now seen - in Jean's case - that learning the meaning of words like 'green' and 'red' does not involve making any reference to private experiences. Therefore we can conclude that the fact that we all have the same kind of sense organs - and that it is therefore pretty likely that we all have the same kinds of private sense experience - does not explain how it is that we can talk to each other about our sense experiences. Indeed it is now becoming clearer that we do not- as a matter of fact - talk to each other about our private sense experiences at all - but rather about various kinds of differences in the world among which our sense-organs are able to discriminate.

Questions.

1. Why should a colour-blind person believe us when we say that there is a difference between certain colours that they cannot see? Suppose that most people were colour-blind and only a few were 'normal'. Would these 'normal' people be believed when they declared that they could see differences where most people could not? What about mediums and psychics?

Chapter Fifteen

Minds

If the inner qualities of our private sense experience play no part in our talk about colours, how are we able to talk about these 'inner' qualities as we pursue these questions? What is this private place in which we have inner experiences? How do we get the idea of this place - our minds - in which the brain's interpretations of the messages sent from the sense organs are displayed to us? And where are *we* as we observe these 'pictures' of the 'outside' world?

It is now time to discuss this curious 'space' inside our heads that we call our minds. This is the place where we do our thinking, where we can feel unhappy or ill-at-ease while perhaps 'smiling on the outside'. One revealing thing about this private place we call our minds is the fact that young children - three and four year-olds - don't appear to have one. They do all their thinking out loud, they all wear their hearts on the sleeves. They cannot lie (they have no place to keep a secret) and you can read them like a book because all of their emotions are displayed on their faces and in the way they behave.

Somehow, between their age and your own, you have acquired a place inside yourself that is private, where you feel your emotions and think your thoughts - things that you need express to other people only if you wish to.

This is a strange 'place' because it is not really a place at all. It has no shape, it is not located at a particular spot inside your head though you may well think of it in a vague way as being 'behind' your eyes. Inside this special 'place' you can 'see images' with your eyes shut, 'hear tunes' without using your ears.

Philosophers have tried to make sense of this 'place' ever since the Frenchman, Rene Descartes, first drew attention to it in the seventeenth century. The discussion concerning sense perception in the last three chapters could only get started if there was some sort of contrast between the way things look to us from the privacy of this 'inside' place - our mind-space - and the way things are in the space of the 'outside' world. Indeed, the very idea of looking *through* our eyes which can cause so many philosophical problems would not even exist as an idea if we were not familiar with the notion of a place 'within ' - a place 'behind' our eyes - from which we could see 'out'.

It is only very recently that we have begun to understand what this inner 'place' actually is and how it comes into existence. In 1976, Julian Jaynes - a psychologist at the University of Princeton - published a book with the catchy title: *The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind.*[1] In this book he provides a fascinating theory of how our mind-space comes into being. This is a new theory and not enough time has gone by since it was published for philosophers and other interested people to assess its truth. However, it is the only theory about the mind that I know of that really seems to shed some light on the subject. I shall outline the theory in this chapter and in the next chapter I will say why I think this theory is true.

The theory is quite simple. Suppose I have been puzzling over a problem. I take it to a friend and as we talk about it, suddenly 'the penny drops'. (In the comic books this sudden experience of understanding is often pictured in the dialogue balloon as a light bulb going on.) What I usually say to express this feeling of having found the solution to my problem is, "Now I see".

When I say 'Now I see' I am using a metaphor. In other words I don't really *see* anything. Instead I use this expression to try to describe my experience of *suddenly understanding something.* I do this by using the words that I would use to describe another common situation in which I see something (with my eyes) that I had been searching for. When I puzzle over a problem and then find the solution it is *as if* I had been searching around in a dark attic with a flashlight for some item and suddenly the beam illuminates the object.

Now when I use a metaphor like 'Now I see' the metaphor carries some baggage with it in the form of the implications of seeing. Thus when I see something with my eyes I see it in some place - say three feet in front of me - and I (who do the seeing) am situated in the same physical situation in which I see the item in question. But at what place do I 'see' the solution to a problem - where is this solution *located*? And where am I located - I who 'see' this solution?

Jaynes' answer to this question is quite surprising: when I use the 'Now I see' metaphor to describe the experience of coming upon the solution to my problem I unconsciously make the assumption that goes with the ordinary idea of idea of seeing something, namely that there is a 'space' in which the solution to the problem is 'located' and a point of view from which 'I' see this solution. This assumed 'space' in which 'I' 'see' solutions to problems is what is called our mind. I cannot prevent myself from making this assumption which creates this mind 'space'. It is just a part of the logical implications

[1] Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1976.

of the description ("Now I see.") which I use to describe the experience of discovering the solution to my problem.

What we have to recognize - if Jaynes is right - is that this private mind-space that we create and 'inhabit', the place where we do our thinking, feel our emotions and make our plans, is the result of *talking* a certain way. This might seem fantastic at first, but remember that this 'place' we 'inhabit' - our minds - is not the same as the workings of our minds. It is rather the result of our attempts to *describe* the workings of our minds.

To see this point more clearly let us return to our original example. We have a problem and we need to solve it. We begin talking to a friend about it, and in the course of this talk 'the penny drops'. How are we to express this? The problem is to think of a way of saying that I now *see* the solution to the problem without using the term 'see' or any other metaphorical expression to describe what has happened. In particular I must not assume a 'place' in which the solution was *found.*

I cannot say "[the solution] . . is now apparent" This means that it has 'appeared' to me. I cannot say "[the solution]. . . has occurred to me" since this means that the solution has come *into* my mind. Try the exercise yourself. It is not easy to find a way of describing the experience of *coming upon* the solution to a problem which does not involve employing a metaphor that involves assuming a 'space' - a mind- in which this 'coming upon' took place.

Jaynes is pointing out that we cannot talk about the workings of the mind without using descriptions which depend on familiar expressions which we use for describing our activities in the physical world. Thus I look for my lost pencil-case and I look for the solution to problems. One kind of looking goes on in the world and involves my eyes. The other kind of looking goes on in my mind and when I begin to think about this - i.e., when I begin to try to describe what this kind of looking amounts to, I find I am stuck (another metaphor) unless I employ a metaphor to describe it.

Certainly when I try to find the solution to some problem I do something (in my mind) - I don't just *sit there* - (another metaphor), but I cannot describe what I do without using some metaphor drawn from my physical behaviour in the world. Try this yourself and you will see the difficulty.

To conclude: Jaynes has discovered something important. My mind's actvities are mysterious things because I have to talk about them with language which is properly used only when describing the bodily activities that I carry out in the world. I do not realize this and so I assume that the problems this raises (what is the nature of that space - 'the mind' - in which I see the solutions to problems?) are peculiar and deep.

In the next chapter we will look at some reasons why we should take

Jaynes' theory seriously.

Questions:

1) If you had been born blind what would your mind space be like? What would it be like, if, as in the case of Helen Keller, you were deprived of both sight and hearing at a very early age?

2) People sometimes find it difficult to imagine dogs and cats having minds in the sense of being able to think about themselves. Is this because they cannot speak a language? When an ape is taught sign language and begins to use it, are we more tempted to think it has a mind or at least that it might be on the way to acquiring one?

Chapter Sixteen

Some Reasons for Taking Jaynes' Theory Seriously

Trying to describe our brain's activities by using metaphors based on bodily activities leads to difficulties because it creates - without our realizing it - a strange metaphorical realm called 'the mind'.

We certainly recognize that the mind is not an ordinary place. Its 'dimensions' are not clearly understood and how we are able 'do' things 'in' it is equally strange. Thus in my mind I can imagine the sound of an orchestra but it is never too loud. I can 'see' what my bedroom looks like but there is no point in looking at this 'image' to see whether the bed has been made, or whether the glass of water on the bedside table is empty or not, or whether the light is on. I can 'see' an open book in my mind's 'eye' but I can't read it.

It seems that the things that I can 'experience' in my mind are unlike the experiences that I have using my senses. What I have in my mind is an *idea* of an orchestra playing or of my bedroom. Such ideas are not pale copies of sense experiences. They are instead constructions that I put together according to rules. Because the rules for imagining my bedroom are not very specific there are plenty of gaps - like the water glass and whether the bed is made or not: filling in these details in the image is like giving a more complete description.

This means that the content of my ideas is very much a function of the set of rules which I normally follow when I use a term like 'bedroom'. Thus my idea of a bedroom includes that of a floor, walls, and a ceiling - with a bed in it. It does not involve water glasses or the state of the bedclothes. This is because the idea or concept of a bedroom, as this is ordinarily used, does not include these details.

The concept of *my* bedroom is more specific. It will certainly locate the bed in a particular position and will include other standard items in their special places but there will still be lots of gaps. And it is clear that the actual image of my bedroom that I summon up in my minds 'eye' is no more than a visual 'list' which follows the rules that make up my concept or idea of 'my bedroom'.

The lesson here is an interesting one: the contents of my mind - my ideas - are limited by the concepts which I possess, or, in other words, by the language I speak. I can not think up anything *new* in the same sense that I can see something new if I visit a place I have never been before. But I can think

up something new in the sense of a new arrangement of things that I already know.

Thus I can think of a giraffe with an elephant's trunk. This is called 'using your imagination' and it really amounts to playing around with language and seeing what happens.

How do you actually engage in this kind of play? Well, what you seem to have to do is suggest (to whom?) that such play commence. You have to say things like: "Let's see how many strange animals we can make up." You say this and then you rely on the skills you possess, skills like dividing things into parts and recombining them, to take over.

When you actually try this, the striking fact emerges that all your 'strange' animals are simply new combinations of familiar parts of animals that you have seen. You cannot come up with a truly *alien* creature. The skills you rely on when you ask your imagination to go to work are not truly creative. They instead are creative only at rearranging the furniture of your mind in fresh ways.

Consider now how unimportant your mind-space is as the setting for this kind of imagining activity. You could do it all 'out loud' as it were, while talking to another person and then you would be simply playing a game - in public - with no mysterious overtones of 'imagining' something 'in your mind'. Certainly no 'pictures' seen by the mind's eye enter into the public game except incidentally[1]. An image of one of your new combinations may occur to you - in your mind - but it is only a side-effect of the 'taking-apart-and-recombining' skill that you have set in play.

What I am trying to emphasize is that our experience of our own minds and what goes on in them are side-effects of using various language-skills. Even our most silent thinking is really just *talking* to ourselves, or - when this thinking is restricted to 'images' or 'sounds' - it amounts to no more than relying on recombining skills in constructing these 'images' or 'sounds'.

[1] This means that the problem that occupied us in the three previous chapters can now be easily solved: for example, my idea of a tree is more like a list than a picture. Items on a list do not resemble the items that are listed. They are simply coordinated with them in a way which is useful to the person compiling the list. The further problem of whether what I see resembles what is 'out there' collapses as soon as we recognize that my 'position' 'in here' from which I observe images conveyed by the senses (of what is 'out there') is misleading. It is based on the notion that what is 'seen' by 'me' (with the 'eye' of the mind') for example, things like solutions to problems, are seen in the same sense as I see trees with my eyes. I don't see tree's 'out there' with my 'inner eye' I simply see them. The language-games of seeing with our eyes and 'seeing with the minds eye' should not be confused.

It is a curious thing that our awareness of a mind-space should be a by-product of using our language metaphorically, as Jaynes suggests. However we should not carry away the impression that because mind-space is a mere by-product of language skills that the mind is an irrelevant illusion, something that has no real existence or useful purpose. Granted, it does not exist the way a table does. Because it is generated by metaphorical talk, it should be thought of as existing in the same way as we think of our experience of poetry as existing.

Poetry is not simply the words on the page, but rather the effect that reading these words generates in us. No one denies the reality of this effect, or imagines that it is simply an illusion, just because it only exists when a language-user reads or listens to poetry.

Moreover, as we shall see the mind-space we inhabit when we think, imagine, plan, consider, regret, anticipate, etc. is essential to our understanding of what it means for a human being to be conscious of itself.

Questions:

1) Could I remember something without a mind-space to do the remembering in? Could something occur to me if I did not have a mind-space?

2) Could I have the idea of something being possible without a mind-space?

Chapter Seventeen

How the Assumption of Mind-space lets us be Self-conscious

To see why your mind space is so important to you and how it works consider for a moment what happens when this space disappears.

This happens everytime you become absorbed in some activity: the most common example is probably becoming absorbed in a book. What gets 'absorbed' in this case is your sense of yourself as occupying a point of view from which you are aware of what is going on and of what you are doing. This perspective is provided by your mind-space which gives you a 'place to be' from which you can observe your own activities - or as we say - be *conscious* of them.

When you become absorbed in a book (or any other activity) you lose that sense of knowing what you are up to. You can see this if you look at what happens when you begin to read. As you pick up the book you know where you are and what you are about to do. You are aware as you read the first two or three sentences that you are reading them; you may even be aware of the physical movement of your eyes as they scan the page from left to right; you will probably be aware of any noises that are going on and whether your seat is comfortable.

Then gradually you cease to be aware of *anything* but the storyline of the plot as it unfolds. Most importantly, you are no longer aware of yourself as reading the book. *You* 'get lost' in the book, or 'disappear' into it. When you are disturbed sufficiently, you come back to yourself and once more become aware of what you are up to. You resume the vantage point of being aware of *yourself* and as such you are also aware of what is going on around you. You become *self*-conscious.

It is interesting to see how nicely Jaynes' simple theory accounts for the 'double' character of self-consciousness. When you are self-conscious you are not only aware of what is going on, you are also *aware of being aware* of what is going on. Now we know that, according to Jaynes, mind-space is created by assuming (without realizing that you are doing so) that certain implications of the metaphors we use (in order to describe mental activities) hold good. Thus If I see a solution to my problem, I must be aware of it as being *before* my mind and by the same token, If *I* am aware of it I must be conscious of my own presence.

So if I am aware of it *before my mind* I must - by implication - be present to it and so be aware of myself as aware of it. I cannot be aware or

conscious of something without being aware that I am. (Rene Descartes expressed this implication by saying "I think , therefore I am")

When I become absorbed in some activity there is a sense in which I lose consciousness. I am no longer aware of what I am up to - if I were, I would not be completely absorbed in what I was doing - so I am no longer conscious of what is going on. To prove this to yourself, try to think of what it is like to be absorbed in a book.

Item:

1) you cease to be aware of what is going on around you;
2) you cease to be aware of your own bodily movements;
3) you will not be aware of being hungry or cold;
4) you will not be aware of the passage of time.

Such a state seems to be closer to being hypnotized than being conscious, and it is certainly difficult to say what it is like, other than the fact that we enjoy being in such states - though of, course, not while we are actually in them. Only when we come back to ourselves do we realize what a good book it is, which is to say, how much we have enjoyed being absorbed in it. For the most part, situations in which our attention is absorbed by something are enjoyable. Being bored is the opposite state, an unpleasant state where nothing seems capable of absorbing our attention

It does not matter much how we describe the absorbed state of mind. What does matter is that when we are in this state, our mind-space disappears and we are rendered incapable of doing all sorts of things - for example we cannot do any planning or feel sorry for ourselves. It is clear that without this mind-space we would be in a much weaker position in terms of our control of our own behaviour. This capacity to control our behaviour is dependent upon our capacity to be aware of what is going on around us *without becoming absorbed in it.* Our mind-space gives us a place to 'stand back' from the action and consider possibilities.

Indeed our status as responsible beings, creatures capable of making choices, is dependent on the existence of this mind-space, a place where possibilities can be considered without acting on them.

I could never blame someone for failing to do something if they were in an absorbed state. If you become absorbed in a book and forget the time, then I know that during the time that you were absorbed you were not *in a position* to decide to stop reading. Your mind space had disappeared and therefore *you* too were absent and therefore not able to think about what you should be doing at that moment.

I might well blame you for deciding to have a 'short' read when you knew

you had an appointment coming up, but I have to recognize that no one can determine in advance that they will become absorbed for only a short period of time. Sometimes the 'alarms bells' ring to bring you out of such a state and sometimes they don't. If you thought of it, before you started reading you could set your wrist watch alarm-clock (if you had one) to solve this problem.

Questions:

1) Emotions are often thought of as being dangerous because, under their influence, we do things which we would not have done if we had remained cool. Do emotions blind us to the consequences of our actions because they absorb our attention?

2) The command that you hear most often at primary school is: "Now, pay attention." It is as if young children were naturally absorbed most of the time and had to be constantly urged to spend time in a conscious state. Is growing up the process of spending more and more time in a conscious state i.e. inhabiting your mind-space so that you will be in a position to consider the options and in this way control your behaviour?

Chapter Eighteen

Being Free and Responsible

Because human beings of a certain age have acquired minds they have a place where they can consider possible courses of action and decide for themselves what to do. This is why they can be held responsible for what they do. This idea is often expressed by saying that people are free, and therefore responsible.

It seems pretty clear from our discussion of the nature of the mind that being free (and therefore responsible) would be impossible if you did not have a mind-space to be free in. It seems equally clear that being free amounts to no more than being in a *position* to consider various possibilities for future action.

Thus *in my mind* I can: 1) set out the possible courses of action; and 2) weigh up the pros and cons of acting one way rather than another. I am free to do this within my mind - which means I have the required skills - and it is generally the case that people are willing to accept responsibility for their action if they have carried out these two steps.

To be free then involves two separate skills. I must know how to *set out* various possibilities in my mind and I must know how to *weigh up* the consequences of acting in these different ways.

The first skill is an interesting one. It involves using your imagination - your 'taking-apart-and-recombining' skill - and this is exercised most easily by talking over what possibilities there are with another person. You will only be happy taking responsibility for what you do if you feel that you have done a thorough job canvassing the possibilities in any given situation. Thinking on your own - talking to yourself - you may not see some obvious possibility that a partner would mention immediately. So to avoid regret, it makes sense to take advantage of another person's perspective on the matter.

There are limits to this: obviously you can't seek advice from everyone and you must exercise your judgment as to how much advice you should seek if you want to behave responsibly. Thus if what you happen to be thinking about is your future career - you will want to talk to lots of people. If your problem is whether to go to a movie or see a play you might just think about it yourself and not feel irresponsible.

The other aspect of being free is weighing up the *pros* and *cons* of various courses of action. To what extent are you responsible for the outcome of this procedure? To what extent are you free to decide how much

you care about the consequences of doing this rather than that. Here you can certainly benefit from talking to other people insofar as they may mention certain consequences which had not occurred to you. However when it comes to the question of how these conseqences actually weigh with you - what you find that you care about - it is not clear that you are free to decide this.

Suppose it is a case where, in order to get something that you want, someone else is going to have to miss out on it. (The alternative is to let the other person have it and miss out yourself.) Suddenly things can get rather complicated: if the other person is a stranger you may not care if they miss out, if it is your sister or a close friend, it may be different. Their happiness may weigh more with you than your own in this case. You have to *discover* how you feel about the matter.

It seems that you are not free to 'just decide' how you feel about the case before you. But if this is so, should you feel responsible for the fact that you actually want to do one thing rather than another? Should you feel responsible for the fact that you prefer to lose out if a friend is involved and prefer to have what you want if the loser is a stranger to you?

It does not seem to make much sense to suppose that you are responsible here because it is clear that people are not free to determine their preferences 'at will' or freely.

This plain fact about human beings - the fact that they cannot decide how they are going to feel about things - raises a serious problem. The problem is that there are all sorts of situations in which the way that we act is not a matter of indifference to the community. For all sorts of obvious reasons people are expected to have certain preferences. For instance, the community wants everyone to be kind to their neighbour, it wants people to actually prefer lending a helping hand and not to feel like hurting others or ignoring their troubles.

As a consequence, all the responsible elements in the community are constantly trying to get people to feel the 'right' feelings. (The 'right' feelings are the ones that lead people to prefer to live harmoniously with their neighbours.) Responsible people do this because they know - through long experience - that unless people are taught to care about the 'right' things, taught to have the 'right' preferences, the community will not be a pleasant place to live in for anyone.

All of this is fantastically obvious but setting out these facts lets us see something important about human beings. Each of us is born with a set of preferences that are directed to serving our own happiness. Since my

happiness is not yours, nor yours mine, conflict is inevitable. Compromise is necessary. To achieve it people have to be able to understand that their happiness alone is not the central concern of the community. We all know how dismal this realization can be.

Nevertheless, it is as clear as the morning sun, that people have to alter their natural preferences if they are to live harmoniously with each other. And it would perhaps be easier for all to do this if these obvious and indisputable facts about ourselves were set out clearly and were regarded as standard intellectual equipment.

Developing a preference for moral (or cooperative) behaviour in people is a simple matter in theory. It is just a matter of *training* people so that they have the right preferences. In practice it is extremely difficult because most of our natural preferences have to be altered by this training. However, if we could clearly recognize how a sense of morality can be developed it would be a great help..

The problem that stands in the way of this recognition is the widely held belief that people can control their preferences *of their own free will.* No one believes this of children and we do our best to train them so that they will have the right feelings. But past a certain age - the so-called 'age of responsibility' - people are regarded as being able to control their preferences. Once *this* belief is in place, then it follows that we can *blame* people for not having the right preferences and punish them for acting in accordance with them.

But this is just silliness. You can see why in an instant by thinking of some person in your class that you happen to prefer as a companion and deciding to change your preference. Now, start disliking this person - just by an act of free will. Nothing happens. The original preference remains intact. Through training your preference for this person could be altered but *only* through training.

Being regarded as free is a terrible curse if it is misunderstood. My actual freedom rests on certain skills that I have, specifically the skill of being able to imagine various possibilities, and this skill is enhanced when I exercise it with another's cooperation. *Imaginary* freedom, my freedom to establish what I shall prefer - through an act of will - does not rest on a skill which I actually possess as we saw in the example above.

There is no 'age of responsibility' at which we magically acquire the power to determine our preferences at will. People whose natural preferences have not been altered through training need more training. Thus no one gives up on a *child* whose preferences are still selfish. We recognize that they need

more training. And no one *blames* a child - as if the child were free to accept the training or not and was just being difficult on purpose. This would be silly. It should be recognized that this is equally silly with older 'children'.

It is almost as if the 'age of responsibilty' were an escape clause that allowed society to legally 'lose its patience' with the children it has failed to train properly. This is certainly a human failing and quite understandable, but it should not be thought of as justified through a belief that children who reach the 'age of responsiblity' suddenly acquire a magical faculty - a free will - which allows us to blame them if they do not have the right preferences and as a result do not behave properly.[1]

Questions:

1) When we blame people we assume that they could have done otherwise, that they were not forced or determined to do what they did. How do you feel when you are blamed? Do you usually feel that you could have done something different? How about when you are praised?

2) If you feel modest about your achievements should you not also feel modest about your failings?

3) Is there a difference between praising and blaming an adult and doing the same with a child? Should there be any difference?

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[1] Richard Rorty discusses this precise point in "Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature" Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1979, p. 187.

Chapter Nineteen

What 'Being an Intellectual' Means.

People value the insight created by seeing things from more than one point of view. As a consequence they come to value the critical thinking that makes such insight possible. They begin to appreciate the fact that they possess an intellect, which is nothing but this capacity for critical thinking. Intellectuals, then, are simply people who have come to enjoy thinking critically.

Being an intellectual does not depend on being particularly clever: it is almost always a function of being lucky. The luck comes when we realize through some experience that there are many different ways of seeing things and that finding a fresh point of view makes the world (and our lives in it) much more interesting than it is without this perspective.

When a person speaks of 'their philosophy' with regard to a certain way of life, they are talking about the attitude they take toward this way of living, and this attitude is dignified by the name of a *philosophy* only when it has been reached through an examination of other points of view.

This examination necessarily involves an appreciation of the relative merits of different points of view. No one can have a philosophy of life without an appreciation of how alternative lives might be led. This appreciation involves comparing alternatives and in this process a sense of value emerges: we judge that x is *better* than y. In pursuing these contrasts we come to realize that other people are valuable to us (and we to them) because they see life differently.

When we alter our point of view of a landscape it takes on a new dimension. We have a broader sense of the landscape as a whole and this movement (from one point of view to another) gives us the additional knowledge that there are yet other points of view which would broaden it further. The same applies metaphorically to philosophical points of view.

With each additional view-point, the possibilities for living our lives in a more interesting way increase and our enjoyment of this fact intensifies our delight in living. It is this delight which provides the motivation for critical thinking. Once you have done some critical thinking, you recognize that this activity is more valuable than any other human endeavour. This is because of the excitment which arises from the process of acquiring new vewpoints. Aristotle called this kind of activity *contemplation* but this suggest a very calm and lofty state of mind. In fact the experience of seeing things from a

new point of view is very exciting.

Consider the alternative to being an intellectual. For such people, new points of view make them feel uneasy. They do not enjoy thinking things over. They like things to remain the same and are happy with their tradition, whatever its source. The difference between the two points of view is nicely expressed in Robert Frost's poem called 'Mending Wall'.[1]

The poem concerns two men who meet each Spring to put back in place the rocks that have fallen from a dry-stone wall during the previous year. This is a good practice and it makes sense, except

There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines. I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbours.'
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'*Why* do they make good neighbours? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But its not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his Father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again,'Good fences make good neighbours.'

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[1] *Selected Poems of Robert Frost,* with introduction by Robert Graves, Holt Rinehart and Winston Inc., New York 1963. p 24.

Questions:

1. Have a look at some book reviews to see to what extent the critics are intellectuals. In other words, do they talk about their responses to the book in terms of the fresh perspectives that it provides on their understanding of the business of living?

2) Perhaps being an intellectual is a matter of temperament. When you think about the two characters in Frost's poem which one do you identify with? Do you identify a bit with both? What is it that is attractive about sticking with the tradition?

Chapter Twenty

Conclusion

The theme of this book reflects the great discovery of twentieth century philosophy, namely that our language is what makes us what we are. Before this discovery the role that language played in our lives went largely unnoticed.

To see how it could go unnoticed think about the difference between listening to a foreign language that you have never heard before, and listening to someone speaking English. With the foreign language, all you hear are noises, meaningless sequences of sounds. With the English speaker you don't hear sounds at all, you hear what the person is saying. The actual language that they are using is quite *transparent* in the sense that you do not notice which particular words are being used or what they sound like. (If the person has an unfamiliar accent, or uses words in an unusual way you will notice these features - but this only proves the point.)

Thus for most of us, most of the time, language is a transparent medium through which we communicate with each other without any awareness of using this medium. Marshall McLuhan pointed out the invisible nature of this medium (and all other media) in his catch phrase: 'The medium is the message'. He meant by this that if we paid some attention to the nature of the medium that we were using (the effects it has on us) we would begin to have a better appreciation of the human condition.[1]

An excellent example of this is the process known as 'consciousness-raising'. We are all familiar with this process as it is currently being applied with reference to the position of women in our society. The chairman of the committee is now referred to as the chairperson, mailmen have become mailcarriers, salesmen, salespersons, etc. By paying attention to how language is used we are becoming aware that using a term like 'chairman' carries the implication that all heads of committees are men. Changing the term to chairperson increases our awareness ('raises our consciousness') of this implication.

Similarly introducing the term Ms. to replace both Miss and Mrs. makes us aware that a women's title (and, by implication, her status in society) should not be dependent on whether she is married. After all, a man is addressed as Mr. and this does not indicate whether he is married or not.

[1] See his *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*,McGraw Hill, New York 1964.

When you change your language habits you change the way you think about things. Instead of letting the language govern your attitudes you change the language in order to reflect the change in your attitudes. By doing this you assume some control over the way you live instead of living blindly in accordance with the assumptions that are built into the way people normally speak.

However, this process of changing the language to reflect our attitudes involves a paradox. The language that we currently speak is what dictates our attitudes towards things and this means that changing our attitudes is not an easy matter. They cannot be changed without a change in the language. How can people break into this circle and change things?

Only with difficulty. Revolutions such as those which have recently taken place in the communities' public attitude towards blacks and women are rare events and it is hard to say why they occur when they do. However we can assert (of these two recent revolutions) that their unstoppable momentum has been a direct product of language reform. Once the language has been changed the hope is that the old attitudes (reflected in the old language) will not return. That people now pay attention to this factor is, I believe, largely a result of the current recognition of language as an important determining element in human affairs.

In the late 19th and early 20th Century women fought hard to achieve the right to vote but this fight was not accompanied by any reforms in the language. As a result not much happened. Women were emancipated but they were still only women. G.K. Chesterton made a joke about it in the Twenties: "Women refused to be dictated to and went out and became secretaries". By contrast, thanks to the reform of language, women are now thought of as full-fledged persons just as men have always been. Arguably, this is because the community now tries to *speak* about both sexes in the same way.

In general then we should be on constant alert with respect to the hidden messages and assumptions that language contains.

The message in Part One of this book amounted to this: acquiring an education (whatever the subject may be) always involves aquiring a new vocabulary and learning how to articulate it. This is quite hard to do by yourself, but fairly easy to accomplish if you cooperate with another person and practice together.

The message of Part Two is that the language that we speak spins a web around us. All our attitudes (and thus our behaviour) reflect the assumptions

built into the language we speak. Only critical thinking can alert us to the assumptions that our language contains and give us some chance of living our lives with that sense of being in control which comes when we are aware of the options before us. In the Appendix I will provide one final example of this sort of thinking as it applies to politics.

Appendix One

Politics

On Madison Avenue, the people who write advertisements are well aware of the power of language. So are politicians. We should be too. Even in sacred places like the the American Declaration of Independence where it is asserted, that *all men are created equal*, there are pitfalls for the unwary.

Let us see what happens when we ask of this ringing phrase: "Equal in what respect?" As we shall see, sorting out the answer to that question can quickly give you an understanding of why there are two political parties ('The Right' and 'The Left') in most Western countries.

The reasons are simple. If by 'equal' you mean that everyone deserves to be treated equally before the law, that is fine. No one argues about that interpretation. But if you think that it means that everyone is equal in abilities and intelligence and that because we all start on an even footing it is only our own fault if we don't succeed, then that is something else again.

The Right Wing view takes the equality of people in this second sense to be fundamental. The values of the Right - self-reliance, individual initiative, and personal independence - thrive when based on the premiss that everyone is equal. Those on the Right believe that the principal difference between people is whether they are willing to try. According to those on the Right, success in life is not a matter of luck but a matter of hard work.

The Left Wing takes the view that people are unequal. By this they mean that their abilities and intelligence vary along a normal distribution curve: i.e., the majority of people have average abilities and intelligence but there are some who are below average and some who are above. The Left Wing believe in instituting programmes which will serve to level out the inequalities that naturally exist. They believe that all men *should* be equal, but because they are not, something ought to be done about it. They therefore believe that those who are fortunate (those who have average or above average abilities) have a duty to help those who are not.

The Right Wing believes in unregulated economies - free competition - and low income taxes - so that those who try harder will be rewarded. The Left Wing believes in plenty of government control (to create full employment) and high income taxes so that wealth can be redistributed to make up for natural inequalities.

The Right are correct when they say that trying - hard work- should be

rewarded, so long as everyone who starts in the race starts on an equal footing. And, of course, the majority of people are more or less equal in abilities and intelligence so the Right's views make good sense to the majority.

The Left too are correct since there is, as a matter of fact, a natural minority which is unable to start the race on an equal footing. (The Left does not have to worry about the minority that is gifted. They will be able to look after themselves whatever happens.) Now since everyone must acknowledge that this inequality exists - if it is drawn to their attention - a natural sympathy for the unfortunate fuels the cause of the Left. On the basis of this sympathy the community wants to even things out so that the less fortunate can live as well as those with average abilities.

Because both parties have a solid basis for their views, parties of the Left and the Right hold office in cycles. A cycle ends when, for example, the Left has been in power long enough so that everyone in the natural minority (the unfortunate) are living as well as those in the natural majority (those with average abilities). At this point the fact that there is an unfortunate minority is no longer obvious and it looks as if everyone can begin the race on an equal footing. Therefore those who try harder should be rewarded. This idea appeals to the new majority which now includes the unfortunate. The Right wing now begins its turn in office.

During their term in office their is no special effort made to help those who have less than average abilities. As a consequence, the natural majority (those who have average abilities) move ahead of the natural minority (those with less than average abiltities). One day the attention of the prosperous majority is drawn to the plight of the unfortunate minority that has now been left behind and they vote the party of the Left into office to correct this inequality.

Political parties of the Right and Left act like a thermostat keeping the temperature of society hovering around normal. But where there is only one party, whether of the Left or the Right, the patient soon starts to run a fever. Think of some examples.

This is an sample of how a critical approach to a single word in a noble phrase ("All men are created *equal*") can be seen as a key to understanding a complex state of affairs. The philosophical approach which recognizes language as the crucial instrument in understanding our lives makes this sort of analysis possible.

Question:

1) Look at some advertising slogans. As an exercise in critical thinking see if you can discover the hidden messages they contain about what our attitudes should be.[1]

[1] Marshall McLuhan was interested in this question. See his *The Mechanical Bride: The Folklore of Industrial Man,* Vangaurd Press, New York, 1951, in which he looks at advertisments and discusses their hidden messages.

Appendix Two

The concept of *Uchi*

In this passage from *Pictures from the Water Trade,* Boon the Englishman, is talking to Kenji, a Japanese who has just returned to Japan after spending three years in England working on a thesis at a university. Kenji begins the conversation:

"You know this so called culture shock." he said. "is something we're supposed to feel when confronted by a strange culture for the first time. Has it ever occurred to you that this feeling is actually much more powerful the other way around, when one returns to one's own?"

"That's not a question I can answer until I get back home myself."

"Well I'm still reeling. And I have the unpleasant suspicion that after three years' stay in a foreign country I have in fact learned much less about its culture than I have about my own. I used to take the underlying consensus in Japanese society for granted, but now, after three years abroad . . . "

"Now?"

"Well, Iv'e woken up to it as something almost miraculous. The food we eat, the houses we live in, what we say and how we behave . . . the basic round of daily life is always the same. I can sympathise with the remark that someone once made to me in England: that he found the Japanese interesting as a people, but as individuals they bored him. There seems to be a quality of sameness, a quality of being Japanese, which goes all the way from the surface to the core. Membership in the same community of thought and feeling, the reassurance that even in the privacy of his thoughts the individual experiences what is common to others, is just as important to us as all formal, outward display of unity. This personal introversion of shared experience is how individuality is understood in Japanese society, in what one could describe as a centripetal society: the movement is always towards the centre."

" Where is the centre? What do you mean by centre?"

"The *uchi* of course."

Kenji was silent for a few moments, collecting his thoughts.

"In the old days it was a matter of course for individuals to subordinate their personal wishes to the interests of the family or clan they served. Unconditional loyalty to the head of the family or clan supplied the lynch-pin

of ethics in feudal society. This could and did lead to a conflict of ethics and the law. For example, those famous *ronin* - leaderless samuri - who committed a collective murder to avenge their lord were praised as the Glory of the age of Genroku for the noble example that they set, but they were sentenced to death by the shogunate notwithstanding. That may strike us as paradoxical today, but it was fully approved of by society at the time."

"But these event took place three hundred years ago."

"Exactly. That's the point I wanted to make. The ideal exemplified by the forty-seven samuri has kept a hold on the Japanese imagination almost in perpetuity; at least until the Second World War, when it was clebrated as *messi-hoko*: selfless patriotic service. In my opinion it's misleading to call it patriotic. Ostensibly those selected for the *tokko-tai* - kamikaze is the word that has become legendary - were dedicating their lives to their emporer and their country, but their private letters and diaries give a rather different impression. From these letters it emerges that the sacrifice has been made on behalf of the members of the *uchi*: fathers, mothers, and sisters. These are the people the heroes were thinking of; it was their protection, not so much the protection of their country which supplied the real motivation of the young suicide pilots."

. . .

"What you said about the *uchi* as centre, and so on - I think that's clear, but how about outside the *uchi*? What provision was made for relations between one *uchi* and another?"

Kenji blinked and started massaging his knee.

"Well, he said, "that's exactly the problem. None at all. The five basic tenets of Confucian ethics, on which feudal society was founded, applied to relationships between master and servant, parent and child, husband and wife, brothers and sisters, and finally to the relationship between friends. There's no mention at all of the relationship between strangers, however; in fuedal society the status or rank of a person was immediately clear from his appearance. One's behaviour towards this person folowed the rules of etiquette prescribed for his particular status. A *moral* code, such as one finds in Christian teachings, applying to the association between strangers, doesn't exist, and doesn't need to exist in a society of this kind."

"The archaic fuedal *uchi* has evolved into the business and industrial concerns of modern Japan. The persistence of the word *uchi* when referring to the organisations to which one belongs is surely the clearest possible

indication of the survival of the *uchi* mentality almost intact. This evolution is often regarded as something of a wonder, but it doesn't seem to me that it should surprise us in the least. Historically, the groundwork for any form of social structure other than the *uchi* was never laid. Anything in the nature of a public morality, even the concept of 'public' itself, has failed to materialise in this country, and we are badly in need of it."

"Surely that's an exaggeration. Some notion of 'public' is indispensable to a modern state. And there are words for it in Japanese, *oyake*, for example."

Kenji smiled.

"Well, yes, *oyake* can sometimes have this meaning, but it's so much more restricted in usage that the word 'public'. Originally it denoted a large building; later it came to mean the imperial palace, the court and thus the government. At no point does it share the original meaning of the word 'public' whose etymology embraces the common people and the idea of franchise. Nowadays, of course, the Japanese have adopted the world 'public'. We have imported the word but not the spirit.

"All right, But there must be some way of solving this problem in practice"

"Well, there are ways round it. Let me give you an example. As you probably know, the *Asahi* newspaper runs a famous column called *tensei jingo*. It also publishes an English translation, which I used to study when I was a student. At that time there were two cases which were very much in the news - the lawsuits on behalf of the victims of mercury pollution, known here as *minamata-byo*, and thalidomide. It 'd be difficult to think of two cases more suited to be described as matters of public concern. And indeed, in the English version it was the word 'public' which most frequently occurred. In the Japanese original, by contrast, our imported word *paburikku* [public] was not used once. There were references to the indignation of the *machi no minshu,* the 'townspeople', and very often to *ware-ware*, which simply means 'we'. Putting it rather harshly, these cases were not matters of public concern, because it is difficult to mobilise support for an opinion when those who support it remain unidentifiable, and this is unavoidably the case so long as you have no established word to address or refer to the general public.

"That's interesting." said Boon, " . . . astonishing, in fact."

. . .

"Coming back," said Boon . . "to your last point. If you have such problems with 'public', how do you handle the idea of private?"

"Kenji pondered awhile . . . .

"We 've also imported the word puraibashi [private]. which seems to have taken much better that *paburikku* . . .the indigenous Japanese expressions for privacy turn on the word *hito*, meaning people: not among people, not in front of the eyes of people, and so on."

"Rather like the Latin *privatus*: withdrawn from public life," put in Boon.

"Quite. But don't let that mislead you into thinking that *hito* corresponds to public. It doesn't. The reason is that the word *hito* has always had extremely negative connotations which the English word 'people', to the best of my knowledge, entirely lacks. You'll probably have come across some of the many Japanese proverbs testifying to the hostility and suspicion which *hito* connotes. Now it strikes me as very remarkable that a word meaning people should so often be used in the much narrower pejorative sense of 'stranger'. When members of an *uchi* refer to non-members - i.e., to the rest of mankind - as *hito*, an awareness of those people as outsiders who don't belong is automatically implict in the use of the word. Naturally the members of the *uchi* in question are themselves referred to as *hito* by everyone else. Objectively everyone constitutes 'People', while subjectively it seems that nobody does."

"In those circumstances it's not so hard to see why anything like the idea of public has failed to emerge in Japanese culture. There are the pair words *uchi-soto*, but these are very different from private-public. The word public, standing in creative opposition to private, has positive meaning, whereas *soto* merely designates what does not belong to the *uchi*: it is a non-concept, a disastrous ommision. In Japan the private-public axis is really an insider -outsider axis. This is the axis on which all the rival *uchi* of politics, business, industry and so on, collectively making up the national interest, negotiate with one another in the hope that the national interest can be served at the same time as their own." (pp. 119-124)

Answers

Chapter One

1. If you are having an argument with someone (and you think they are not arguing rationally) does this mean that you think that they (or perhaps you) do not properly understand the words they are using?

Sometimes we (or the person we are talking with) become a trifle exasperated when someone fails to understand what we are trying to tell them. We sum up our views in a short sentence and then ask (sarcastically), "Which of these words do you not understand?" (We might (following President Reagan or Bush) preface our statement with the injunction, "Read my lips.")

Although we all speak the same language the meanings we attach to the various words we use are derived from the context or situation in which we usually employ them. This context differs slightly from person to person depending on their experience. This means that everyone understands the common language differently though ususally this difference is only slight. Still, everyone marches to a different drummer and understanding what another person means usually involves making an effort to hear their drummer. We hear our own so clearly that it is often difficult to appreciate the fact that another may be quite deaf to its cadence. Changing the metaphor, to understand another person it is necessary to get on their wavelength (to try to 'speak their language') and this always involves plenty of patience. To properly understand what another person is saying involves an appreciation of 'where they are coming from'.

Arguing with another person frequently involves trying to get that person to 'speak your language'. You try to accomplish this by pointing out that the context which gives the words you are using their meaning (a context which includes the various assumptions that you are making as you argue), is also one which that person shares in some important way and that therefore he or she should agree with you since your argument is based on shared assumptions. Equally, when we argue with people we should listen carefully to what they are saying because they are doing precisely the same thing - trying to get us to speak *their* language. It may well be that, if you do listen carefully to what they are saying, you will recognize that you do share some of their assumptions and that consequently what they are saying is something you should agree with. In short, arguments should be conducted as if they

were an effort to promote mutual understanding, rather than a war between a rational person (you) and an irrational one (the other person).

2. Listen to two people talking (on television, for example). How often do they seem to be arguing? Why do arguments frequently play a part in our conversations?

The ideas outlined in the answer to Question One are relevant here. The special point of this question is to draw attention to how much we do argue, often without realizing it. Agreeable conversations between friends are conducted from two different contextual backgrounds but they are usually free of argument because a good part of friendship involves the establishment of a common context worked out in the course of developing the friendship. This is why making friends is usually such a slow process and involves a lot of talk. It also explains why we depend on small talk when we are talking with new acquaintances. Small talk (the weather, family inquiries, the mention (as opposed to the discusssion) of current events or sporting events) usually draws its assumptions from a very limited context that we all share so that misunderstandings are unlikely to crop up.

However, when one begins a real conversation - an exchange of views- then inevitably arguments begin to dominate these exhanges. This is inevitable for the reasons given in answer one. However, once we appreciate what is going on - i.e., that arguments are inevitable when people drop the small talk and have a real conversation, - then we can begin to treat these arguments not as conflicts (which may be won, lost, or drawn) but as mutually beneficial exchanges in which you find out what assumptions are behind your opinions and have the opportunity to compare them with the other person's.

3. Arguments between people can sometimes be fun but frequently they generate bad feelings. What makes the difference? What is at stake when you get into an argument?

The answer to Question Two anticipates this question. If you are unaware that your argument depends upon underlying assumptions (assumptions which you have not examined with a critical eye) then you will tend to identify with these assumptions. Your opinions and the attitudes which reflect them make you the person you are, so that an attack on those opinions is experienced as a personal attack.

Often, an attack on the underlying assumptions (which fuel the line of argument which we taking) is felt to be 'pretty close to the bone' because it reveals the unexamined character of these assumptions. We have not as yet formulated arguments to back up these assumptions so that we feel 'exposed' when we come to defend them. Thus, when an argument deteriorates into a shouting match, this is a clear sign that the parties to it have the wrong idea about what is actually happening when the argument heats up in this way. They think they are involved in a war and resort to force when words fail them, but this is just the point when they should cool down. This is where things get interesting because it is at this point that an opinion which was hitherto unexamined is for the first time revealed as relying on an assumption that needs to be supported in some way. In short, there is always a lot at stake when people find themselves arguing and discover that they are out of their depth, however, there is no danger if you don't thrash about. Stay calm and help each other find some firm footing a little closer to shore.

4. How much of what Shakespeare said about human beings in the quotation from Hamlet depends upon their rational nature?

"What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals."

"How noble in reason": noble because to be able to argue rationally is to be able to discover that opinions that you hold require support; that there are alternative views; that, if we are to act, choices must be made based on a free inquiry into the assumptions behind our opinions; and finally, that we must take responsibility for our judgements and accept the consequences.

" . . . how infinite in faculties,": if we identify the faculties with the powers of the mind then the faculty of reason can be thought of as infinite. This is because we have identified our faculty of reason with our ability to speak a language. (We accept that language is governed by rules and that *having the power* to follow rules is all that is involved in having a rational *faculty*). It follows that insofar as language is infinite - in the sense that there is no limit to the things that can be said - then the faculty of reason is infinite.

Imagination as a faculty is infinite in that it depends on language. Anything that can be imagined can be put into words for it is our skill with words which allow us to exercise our faculty of imagination. Understanding as a faculty is infinite in that it depends on language. If we cannot put

something into words we cannot understand it. Is there anything we cannot put into words? A similar line can be run with the other powers of the mind.

"In action how like an angel.." :For an angel, to think of a deed is to do it. So far as our mental powers are concerned to think of something is to have it appear before the mind.

"in apprehension how like a god..": To apprehend something is to grasp it with the intellect, to understand it and this involves reasoning. The only difference between ourselves and the gods is the time that it takes us to understand things. It took the race a long time to apprehend thanks to Einstein) that $E = MC^2$ but we (or at least those who have taken the time) apprehend it now as well as a god.

"the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals.": but only because of our ability to speak and thus to reason. Occasionally a 'wolf-child' is discovered, a child who has somehow been raised by animals, frequently wolves. Such children cannot speak and are nothing but animals to be pitied and looked after.

Chapter Two

1. Can you think of any other examples of a new use of language that is like the new use of 'hopefully'? For example is the new use of 'chairperson' instead of 'chairman' similar?

No. the term 'chairperson' makes a political point concerning attitudes towords women. The same point is made by new terms like 'salesperson', 'letter carrier', etc. Our attitudes are reflected by the terms we use. Negroes and homosexuals become, respectively, Blacks and Gays, terms which are meant to have positive connotations reflecting society's changing attitudes towards these groups of people. How effective are such changes in our vocabulary?

2. Some new uses of words, like 'hopefully' catch on quickly and do not meet too much resistance. Other 'wrong' uses, like saying: "You did good" instead of 'well', do meet a lot of resistance. Can you suggest why this happens?

Usually a new term like 'hopefully' catches on because it accompishes a task which was not being properly accomplished by the way of speaking which it replaces. 'Hopefully', as it is now used, does not really mean "I hope that . . ." or "we hope that . . .". 'Hopefully' is more impersonal: it means something like "It is to be hoped that . . ." and it carries the connotation that most right-thinking people hope or ought to hope that . . . . It indicates that the point at issue is something that ought to be hoped for by anyone who does not already hope for it because it is an appropiate thing to hope for *if* you are a right thinking person (like the speaker). In other words, When I say,"Hopefully, the congress will vote in favour of the new law." hopefully really means, "It would be a good thing if . . ."

By comparison, "You did good" does not convey something that, "You did well" was failing to convey. There is therefore no reason to adopt this new usage and it has not become accepted.

3. If you had a friend who regularly made mistakes in grammar should you try to correct such mistakes? Would you appreciate it if this friend corrected your grammar? Would you appreciate it if your friend tried to improve your skill in catching a ball?

Correct grammar is 'correct' insofar as it is the grammar employed by the majority of speakers. Within any linguistic community there are subgroups who speak dialects of the standard language and within these groups certain variations on the grammar used by the majority are accepted as normal. A member of the sub-group must use these dialects if they are to communicate easily with people in the subgroup. But when they converse with people in the majority they feel uncomfortable, their instinctive skills with the grammar of the dialect are perceived as unskillful (wrong) with repect to the standard grammar. They feel clumsy trying to match their speech with that of the majority speakers and since these skills they lack are mental skills they feel stupid. This means that they will resent having their lack of skill pointed out to them. They know that they are not stupid: within their own dialect they are as skillful in using their dialect as the majority speakers are in using the 'correct' dialect.

Once these facts are understood, there should be no problem with regard to 'correcting' another person's grammar. If they *want* to alter their skills so as to be in line with the majority they will be grateful for any help. If I *wanted* to learn how to pitch like a major leaguer I would be happy to have my sand-lot skills corrected.

Chapter Three

1. Helping each other to learn makes sense but this idea could be hindered if people in the class (or you and your friends outside the class) felt that they were in competition with each other. How could this difficulty be overcome?

As mentioned in the text the 'teacher' always benefits through helping another person understand the material under discussion. But more importantly, the idea that we are in competition with each other overlooks the fact that we are not in competition when we talk to each other. We need each other to develop our capacity to articulate new areas of language associated with different school subjects. Cooperation quite naturally replaces competition when this is understood.

In any case it is not the case that this cooperative effort will yield a situation in which everyone possesses exactly the same degree of skill in articulating the new vocabulary. Some will be able to do this better than others just as someone must win a race even though everyone knows how to run. Education is not meant to eliminate differences between people but to allow each person to develop their capacity to become skilful as far as he or she can. Competition should be thought of as a way of discovering what you are best at not as a trial in which you succeed or fail because someone else is better or worse than you at doing something.

2. One of the main barriers to learning is not being willing to admit that you don't understand something. How can this problem be removed? Why are tests valuable in this regard?

Part of the problem here is that by the time a person reaches high school they already possess considerable skills in articulating their vocabulary. Encountering new subjects (new vocabulary and some new rules for using it) makes a person feel clumsy (when they are mental skills this clumsiness feels like stupidity). New skills (needed to handle the new vocabulary) have to be acquired through practice and this is frequently not realized. This is because students fresh from elementary school have forgotten that the mental skills they already possess are skills which were acquired through long years of practice. In elementary school new vocabulary was added vary gradually so that the shock of being confronted with the new vocabulary of a

high school subject has not been felt before.

if this is understood the embarrassment associated with admitting that you do not understand something will not seem embarrasing any longer. It will seem foolish and pointless. With this realization tests will be regarded as a valuable way of finding out how your grasp of the new skills (required to handle the new vocabulary) are developing.

Chapter Four

1) To learn a language you have to use it and that necessarily involves interaction with another person. How useful are tapes and records in learning a language? Do you need to listen to them with a partner?

Tapes and records provide you with dialogues on particular topics and introduce you to the relevant vocabulary and grammatical idioms. However just listening to the dialogue and trying to parrot the material is of limited value. You should instead listen to this material, write down the new vocabulary, and the various bits of idiomatic grammar involved and then begin to practice using this material together with a partner. Take turns playing the different roles in the dialogue and try using the new grammer with vocabulary you have already mastered. Remember the object of the enterprise is to try to acquire an instinctive grasp of the material and this can only be done by practicing with it until you no longer have to think about the rules (the grammar) governing the use of the words you are using. Learning a language is learning a skill and only through *practice* can skills be acquired. Practicing on your own is difficult, practicing with another person is, by comparison, fun.

Chapter Five

1) Think of the last time you tried to recomend a good book to someone. If the friend had asked: "What's so good about it?" what would you have said in reply? Try actually writing out your reply and then see how it compares to what you would say after you have read the next chapter on metaphor.

It might be interesting to assign this question as an exercise to be completed *before* reading this chapter (Chapter Five) since this discusssion of how to approach English literature will have more impact if the student has already attempted to articulate their ideas about this subject beforehand.

The idea behind this question is to illustrate to the student that our aesthetic response to a good book, the delight we take in it, is difficult to articulate. Just repeating the storyline does not convey what it was about the book that delighted you. One obvious way of conveying the delight which you take in a good book is to select some passages which particularly appealed to you and read them aloud to another person. With luck the other person will share your delight but that still leaves the question of why these passages produces delight in the reader. To solve this puzzle an attempt must be made to articulate the style - to talk about the particular way that the story is told - in a fashion that will go some way towards *explaining* our aesthetic response to it.

The question asks students to attempt to articulate their aesthetic response before and after reading Chapter Six where I have suggested one method which may be helpful in dealing with this problem. It would also be useful to bring in the material discussed in the chapter on Beauty since the explanation of aesthetic response given there will be helpful in explaining why the analysis of metaphors can be helpful when we are trying to articulate the mysteries of style.

Chapter Six

1. Explore some of Flaubert's metaphors in the way suggested and see what happens.

The example given in the text should provide sufficient guidance for anwering this question.

2. Compare some of the metaphors drawn from two books by different authors which you have enjoyed reading. In what way are their metaphors different? Do these differences account for the different 'flavour' which the books leave you with?

Again this question is quite straighforward. Apply the technique suggested and see what happens.

3. Making up metaphors is a matter of allowing the imagination to experiment with various comparisons. Think up some yourself. What makes for a good metaphor?

The language we speak is already well supplied with metaphors which others have invented and which have become standard ways of expressing our reactions to familiar situations. The motive for inventing a metaphor is that our language happens to contain no ready-made expression which adequately expresses our response to some situation which we are have experienced. This motive will actually move us to try to find an adequate metaphor if it seems important to us to convey to someone the experience which we are trying to describe.

For writers this motive is important because this motive to write is closely tied to their wish to communicate the special nature of their experience of life to others. Often this is important to them because, unless they can capture their experience in a metaphor, they will not be able to get a grip on it for themselves. The desire of writers to write is often characterized in terms of a desire to *express themselves*. This is because until their reactions to what has happened in their lives have been expressed in some adequate fashion (often in terms of a good metaphor) they feel frustrated.

Good metaphors are good insofar as the familiar experience which they use in their comparison touches on many aspects of the unfamiliar experience which it is being used to illuminate. For example, a new experience for most of us is the experience of doing some work on a computer and then finding out later that, through some mischance, we have not saved it. This is a most unpleasant experience. The work that has been lost is gone in a spectacularly *final* way. There is absolutely no hope of regaining it. In the face of this fact we experience a sense of resignation which is particularly striking because - as a rule - there is absolutely no one to blame but ourselves. What is needed here is a good metaphor, one which will capture these feelings adequately.

The absolute character of the loss may make us think that it is like the death of a person. But this is not quite right. After all we *can* redo the work though it will probably not be quite the same as that which was lost. This is not the case with loss associated with the death of someone. They cannot be made to live again. What we want to capture is the sense of wasted effort along with the recognition that this effort must be repeated because, usually, we cannot just 'give up'.

Computer losses now begin to look like those golf-shots that are known as 'character-builders': one sort of 'character-builder' is that shot on the golf-course that looks like a beauty but one which we can't find when we walk up to where we think it landed. In such cases: we can't find the ball; it is most unlikely that we will be able to repeat the shot exactly (and even if we could, a further effort is required), we have to accept the situation, we have to continue, we still remember the first shot and how good it was, there is no one to blame. Consequently, we have to call upon our inner resources in order to continue (the 'character-building part).

So to someone who is a golfer, I can say, of a computer loss, that it was a 'character-builder ' and the golfer will have an adequate sense of my feelings about it through the use of this metaphor.

4. Look at some book reviews. See how often the reviewer illustrates the character of the book under review by quoting some metaphors from it.

This exercise would work equally well with movie or television reviews. Part of the point of the question is to illustrate the difference between a book review as a piece of criticism and a book review as a piece of information. As information a review gives the plot and compares it with other similar books (movies, etc.) to let the reader know what the story is about and into what broad category it falls (Comedy , Romance etc.). As criticism, a review is an assessment of the worth of the book, whether it is good or bad (whatever its plot may be and whatever other books it may be like (a thriller, a peice of science fiction, etc).

When the reviewer writes *criticism* we should expect some comments on the style with which the book is written and some reasons should be given as to whether this style is employed successfully or not. Often a reviewer will quote passages to illustrate his or her judgement concerning the style of the book . Question Four asks the student to note how often the reviewer's quotations centre on metaphors because this would be a clue that the reviewer is writing criticism and is interested in assessing the quality of the book. (They may also centre on some other stylistic device. The point to note is that these examples of style are quoted because they are recognized

as the means that the reviewer must use to back up his or her assessment of the quality of the book. Without such evidence how could reviewers support their judgements?)

Chapter Seven

1) The next time you experience something beautiful, try to put this feeling into words. See if you find yourself making use of a familiar metaphor or whether you find it necessary to invent a new one.

The point here is to see the difference between fresh and frozen metaphors. Frozen metaphors are the cliches of our language, 'pretty as a picture', 'sweet as sugar', 'tons of fun', 'feeling blue', 'lower than a snake in a wagon track', etc. There are thousands of them clogging up the language. Good writers *never* use them. Bad writers use them constantly.

We use these handy cliches in our ordinary converstion because they are handy. If we had to invent new ones all the time, communication would be cumbersome for most of us. However, sometimes we feel that a fresh metaphor is necessary. We feel this every time we experience beauty. 'Beautiful' is the word we use when words fail us, and it serves as a kind of promissory note. When we use it we, in effect, acknowledge that we lack an expression which would adequately capture our reaction to the experience we are having, and we half-promise that 'had we world enough and time', we would find the words to capture our experience adequately simply because it is so impressive and delightful. 'Beautiful' is a disappointing word to have to fall back on but if we understand what it means, it use lets us know that we are alive to the uniqueness of our experience and conscious of our powers of appreciation, and of the obligation these powers place upon us to express this sense of appreciation.

2) Stories become literature when they contain striking metaphors. How does a painting of something become a work of art? Are there metaphors in paint? What about the other artistic media?

If variations from the norm - literal speech - are the signs of style and hence of literature, then this is a clue which can be followed up with repect to the media of other art forms. There are plenty of examples. A painting has style insofar as the scene it depicts varies from the normal scene as we would see it with the eye. It lacks a third dimension for a start. Its

perspective will therefore be open to manipulation and variations on perspective are one of the great stylistic devices of representational painting. Abstract painting can dispense with perspective altogether to produce a radical break with the norm of visual experience.

In the Dance ordinary movements are speeded up or slowed down. Communication between dancers relies on gestures instead of words (and gestures) as in the normal situation. In the Movies there are jump cuts, fadeouts, etc., which are variations on the norm and give movies their peculiar flavour.

When some familiar object from our daily experience is depicted in paint we see the familiar object in a new light. Something about, e.g. a chair, which we had not noticed now comes to the fore. Our ordinary experience of that thing is now changed.

Metaphors (in words) which *we* make up, help us to express some aspect of our experience that strikes us as interesting and worth expressing. The artist (using paint instead of words) is doing the same thing. Something about a chair strikes the artist as worth expressing and he or she paints a picture of the chair in order to express that special feature of the chair. The painted chair is a metaphor for the painter: it adequately expresses the special feature of the chair that he or she noticed and wished to communicate. For we who see the painting the metaphor in paint may strikes us as conveying something quite new about chairs. We, in turn, might have to invent a metaphor to express our new insight (into the nature of chairs). The art critic's job is to do just this.

Chapter Eight

1. To see how complicated writing history can be try writing an account of your own history over the past week/month. Remember, as a history, its point will be to explain how it was that you came to do what you did.

To write a chapter of your own history that is more than a mere chronicle you would have to begin by focusing on some event which *required* an explanation. An event requires an explanation because it marks some turning point in your life: no explanation is usually required for why John went to school each morning or ate cornflakes for breakfast on Tuesday simply becasue the explanation is obvious. It might therefore be necessary to broaden the time-frame so that it will include some interesting development in John's life which calls for an explanation.

Suppose for, example that John has had a quarrel with one of his friends.

Was it inevitable, given their respective character types, or did some third party intervene who soured their relationship? Were there economic and social factors involved? Is John well-off compared to his friend, do they belong to different social groups? Did one of them outgrow the other? When an explanation is offered, does it depend on some generalization about people's behaviour? How reliable is this generalization?

2. Find two historians who deal with the same topic and compare their different approaches to it. How would you assess which one was closer to the truth of the matter?

This is a question that would require a good deal of research and it is included to cater to the interests of a student who has become intrigued by the whole business of how historians operate and what settling a quarrel between historians would involve.

Chapter Nine

1. Try setting some problems in mathematics instead of solving them. See if after you have set a few problems you begin to recognize 'the tricks of the trade'. Would an examination that asked you to set problems be harder or easier than one that asked you to solve them?

Each problem in mathematics is an attempt to elicit an answer which makes explicit some of the 'grammar' associated with the subject. A simple way to discover what this grammar is is to do a typical problem found in your text and then devise a similar problem which will call for a knowledge of the same grammar. It should gradually become clear as you try setting problems that the ability to do this makes solving problems you have not set much easier. You begin to develop the knack of detecting the particular bit of 'grammar' towards which the problem is directed. Developing this skill will make examination papers much less daunting.

Chapter Ten

1) Look at some examination papers in the science subjects. To answer the questions would you only need to be able to speak the language associated with the particular subject or would you need to exercise your imagination as well?

Examination questions in science, like problems in mathematics, are intended to elicit from the student, their knowledge of a particular bit of grammar. Sometimes the questions will be straightforward requests to reproduce this grammar, but others will involves - as in mathematics - a request to show how that grammar can be applied to some novel case. In this case imagination is required in order to see that the novel case is analogous to the case with which you are familiar - the textbook case.

Chapter Eleven

1. Why do we have a fascination with the idea of the natural athlete?

This has to do - in part - with the fact that what athletes do are simply extensions of physical skills which we all possess. When we watch them

perform we can see what they are doing and we can easily imagine ourselves doing these things. However, when we actually try to perform some of these activities we find that our imitations are slow and clumsy. We therefore suppose that when the athletes perform these movements they are able to do so because of some natural talent that we lack. Athletes thus appear as demi-gods, special people with special powers, people who somehow have a measure of *control* over their bodily movements which we ordinary mortals simply do not possess. The truth is that we ordinary mortal do not possess these skill because we never took the trouble to acquire them through long practice.

There is probably something to the idea of the natural athlete in that though everyone can attain to a high level of skill in a given sport if they practice hard enough, some people have the ability to rise that little bit higher because of their physical gifts. All the players in the National Hockey League are highly skilled athletes but there is only one Wayne Gretzky. The esteem and awe which surround him reflects the fact that practice can only take you so far: beyond that point natural talent is required if you are to scale the heights. The point to remember, however, is that practice can take you a long way

2. If you take up a musical instrument you soon find out that without practice you get nowhere. Why isn't this equally obvious in the case of physical skills?

This has something to do with the fact that the physical skills we do possess (runnning, jumping, dodging, catching, throwing) are developed through play. When we are children and are playing all the time all the practicing that goes on during this play is not regarded as practicing, but simply as of playing. We are having fun. But when we get to Secondary School and encounter new sports, we simply lack the time to play them enough to aquire the skills that they require. If we are going to learn how to play these games in the time at our disposal we have to practice individual skills, abstracted from the game. This is like practicing scales on the piano. When we practice our scales we are not *playing* the piano and it is not fun.

The reason that we accept the fact that we have to practice the piano in order to play it is that we do not play games with musical instruments before we begin learning a musical instrument. We have no musical skills derived from such play and it is therefore obvious that we will have to practice if we are to play. With new sports it is different. We already have a set of physical

skills so we think we ought to be able to play the new games using our old skills. But this is like imagining that because you can play the piano you should be able to play the flute. Certainly being able to play the piano is some help but a lot of practice will be necessary to develop the new skills needed to play the flute.

Chapter Twelve

1) Could people who are born blind also begin to wonder if the way things feel to them are just appearances and that there is no way to find out how things really feel?

Puzzles about whether we know the world as it really is by means of our senses, do not seem plausible as problems when we look at other sense modalities, i.e., other ways of sensing things, e.g.. our sense of touch. Thus it strikes us as odd to suggest that by touching things with our body we can find out what things feel like *to us* but not what they really feel like. This question simply doesn't sound sensible because it has no natural analog that would lend it plausibility. Thus, for example, in Chapter twelve we saw that looking at things through our eyes had, as an analog, seeing the appearances of things through windows or telescopes. Because of the existence of this analog we can easily draw an analogy and think of the eye as a window and this permits the philosphical problem ('What do things really look like?') to seem plausible).

Are there any analogs available for the sense of touch which would play the role that windows or telescopes do for the sense of sight? The window analogy can confuse us because we can be fooled (by the fact that the lens of the eye is like a little window) into imagining that we see the world *through* it. We can thus be led to wonder what the world would look like if we could see it without looking through the lens in our eye (on the analogy of seeing a streetscene though a window and then stepping outdoors to see what it really looks like). There is no such temptation in the case of feeling something with our hand. If we are not wearing gloves we know that there is nothing between our hand and the thing we feel with it, whereas (because of the natural comparison between the lens of the eye and a window) we can easily imagine the lens of our eye as being *between* the thing we see and its appearance as seen through the lens.

Thus it would be hard for a blind person even to begin to wonder if things *really* feel the way they seem to feel through the sense of touch. The misleading comparison between two language games which is present in the case of seeing (looking through windows /looking through the eyes) is not available to confuse us in the case of the sense of touch.

2) Did you think before you read this Chapter that your eyes were like windows? If you did, how did this affect the way you looked at other

peoples' eyes? Did you look at them or into them? How common is the 'window' metaphor for describing eyes?

This question points to the fact the 'the eyes as windows' (on the world, on the soul within) metaphor is quite pervasive in our language. Note, for instance, how the metaphor of eyes as windows on the soul affects us to the extent that we feel uncomfortable if we look merely at the surface of the eye of the person to whom we are talking (or if the person is wearing dark glasses). We have to look *into* their eyes if we are to have a sense of communicating with them. If we look at the surface of the eye its operations begin to look mechanical and we lose our sense of talking with the 'person within'. Try it and see. If it were not for the analogy between windows (and seeing through them) and the lens of the eye (thought of as a window though which we see the world and through which we can be seen), it would be hard to understand why the idea of looking *into* someone's eyes is thought to be so important. After all, it makes no literal sense: only the opthalmologist looks into peoples eyes in a literal sense and the opthalmologist never spies anyone behind the lens looking out. We only look into each others eyes in a metaphorical sense.

Chapter Thirteen

1) From a distance a square tower appears to be round. Under a microscope a razor's edge appears to be jagged. Is the tower really square? Is the razor's edge really smooth?

To answer this question you simply have to look at what people actually say, because the question of whether something is *really* smooth or square is a function of what people take to be the normal (or optimum) circumstances for experiencing the object. One is thought to get a normal view of a tower, and thus to be able to say what shape it is, from about twenty yards distance. You can tell that this is the case by the fact that no one would ask - from this distance - what shape the tower is (it would be obvious). However they might well seek this information if they were a mile from it (*whatever* shape it appeared to be to them from that distance). This is because 'square' and 'round'. are 'middle distance' adjectives. The conditions for applying them do not obtain at a considerable distance or if you are right up close to the tower.

The razor's edge is an interesting case because here we are inclined to say

that although it looks smooth to the naked or unaided eye it is really jagged. The notion that under magnification we see what the razor's edge really looks like is due, perhaps, to a public acknowledgement of a remarkable peice of technology (optical magnification) which impressed people so much when it was first introduced that it became the standard means of determining what things (like razor blade edges or the stinger of a bee) are really like. People began to think that the way objects look under moderate magnification accurately represented the way the way they really looked. Under very high magnifications (such as are possible using the new electron microscopes) there is little temptation to say that the look of a razor's edge under such magnifications is what the razor's edge *really* looks like. Instead we would say that of it that this is what it looks like *with the aid of an electron microspope*, and not be in the least tempted to suppose that this representation of the razor was a represention that gave us a true picture of what the razor's edge *really* looks like.

In short, the word 'really' is an honorific term. Its use signals either the *normal* look of a thing under standard natural conditions or it is used as an indication that the thing seen is seen *properly/correctly/without illusion*only under certain conditions (e.g. the razor's edge under medium power magnification, the moon through a telescope).

Chapter Fourteen

1. Why should a colour-blind person believe us when we say that there is a difference between certain colours that they cannot see? Suppose that most people were colour-blind and only a few were 'normal'. Would these 'normal' people be believed when they declared that they could see differences where most people could not? What about mediums and psychics?

Here the question points to the fact that what is regarded as standard or normal perception of colours depends upon what colours, as a matter of fact, the majority are able to discriminate. If most people were red-green colour-blind and only some were (what we now regard as) 'normal' it would be hard for the 'normal' people to discover that they could make red-green colour discriminations which colour-blind people were not able to make. They would not be taught the words which mark the differences between colours that they can see, and so they would not have any occasion to realize that their colour vision was capable of greater discriminations than those of the colour-blind majority.

This is in exact parallel to the case of colour-blind poeple having no

occasion to realize that they were not able to distinguish between certain colours - except under test conditions.

This illustrates the quandry we face when we hear reports that certain psychics are able to see auras (fringes of colours around various parts of people's bodies). They may well be telling the truth but it is as difficult to believe them as it is to believe that you are colour-blind when this fact about you is first discovered. Seeing is believing, but equally, not seeing is not believing. In general then, the normal capacities of the majority determine the limits of what we acknowledge to be real.

Chapter Fifteen

1) If you had been born blind what would your mind space be like? What would it be like, if, as in the case of Helen Keller, you were deprived of both sight and hearing at a very early age?

It is very hard to imagine what it would be like to have an acoustic mind-space rather than a visual one, or what it would be like to have a tactile mind-space as was the case with Helen Keller. In the case of Helen Keller we do have some evidence of what her inner experience was like for her *before* her teacher broke through to her by teaching her how to talk. Bear in mind while reading this passage from her book that, according to Jaynes, someone who could not talk *would not have a mind* (a 'place' to think and wonder) since minds are generated by using metaphorical language.

"Before my teacher came to me, I did not know that I am. I lived in a world that was a no-world. I cannot hope to describe adequately that unconscious, yet conscious time of nothingness. I did not know that I knew aught, or that I lived or acted or desired. I had neither will nor intellect. I was carried along to objects and acts by a certain blind natural impetus. I had a mind which caused me to feel anger, satisfaction, desire. These two facts led those about me to suppose that I willed and thought. I can remember all this, not because I knew that it was so, but because I have tactual memory. It enables me to remember that I never contracted my forehead in the act of thought. I never viewed anything beforehand or chose it. I also recall tactually the fact that never in a start of the body or a heartbeat did I feel that I loved or cared for anything. My inner life, then, was a blank without past, present, or future, without hope or anticipation, without wonder or joy or faith." [1]

[1] *The World I Live In,* Helen Keller; Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1904, p.141

We can interpret this passage as indicating that Helen Keller was blind to her own inner life until she learned to talk, at which point, perhaps through tactile metaphors, she developed a mind-space. At this time the philosophy of mind is a very speculative area and we can only indicate here some of the puzzles that it presents to us. For instance, was Helen Keller's mind-space in her fingers? There are intriguing bits of evidence in her writings as when she describes her encounter with one of the famous actors of her day, a Mr. Jefferson. Backstage, Mr. Jefferson allowed Helen to touch his face as he went through the part of Rip Van Winkle for here benefit. She remarks: "Mr. Jefferson's beautiful, pathetic representation quite carried me away with delight. I have a picture of Old Rip in my fingers which they will never lose." (*The Story of my Life,* Hodder and Stoughton, London 1951, p.108)

2) People sometimes find it difficult to imagine dogs and cats having minds in the sense of being able to think about themselves. Is this because they cannot speak a language? When an ape is taught sign language and begins to use it, are we more tempted to think it has a mind or at least that it might be on the way to acquiring one?

It is easy enough to imagine a cat feeling hungry or exhausted but very hard to imagine it making a wish or thinking about what it is going to do tomorrow. When we deny this ability to animals in some repects we assume that their inner life is a blank. We certainly believe that they feel things, that they can be hurt or experience pleasure, but we never imaginine them *commenting* on their own experiences - realizing what is happening to them - because, without a language we cannot envisage this possibility. Thinking involves the mastery of a language. and only language-users can think about themselves and their experiences in that peculiar fashion which allows them to become conscious of themselves.

Recently apes have been taught sign-language and as their skill with the language has increased there has been some feeling on the part of their human teachers that these animals are developing a concept of themselves. Again this is an area where only the initial explorations have been made but it is intriguing how willing we are to ascribe consciousness as soon as language is present in a creature and how unwilling we are to ascribe an inner life to creatures who cannot speak.

Chapter Sixteen

1) Could I remember something without a mind-space to do the remembering in? Could something occur to me if I did not have a mind-space?

Remembering something, for example, someone's name, is something that often happens to you *within* your mind. You remember it, as it were silently, to yourself. But you also sometimes just blurt out the name you have been trying to remember. So you certainly could do all your remembering 'out loud', as it were.

But what about the image that occurs to you of where you left your keys? Could this kind of remembering occur without a mind-space in which visual images could be 'seen' by the 'eye' of the mind? You can remember a tune by either humming it out loud or to yourself. Can you remember a smell by sniffing the air or by sniffing 'to yourself'? That certainly sounds odd.

What about feeling something with your mind's 'hand'? You can certainly form an image of this process. Do you 'feel' anything with the mind's hand when you do so?

These comparison's are meant to draw attention to the fact that, according to Jayne's theory, the mind is, from a metaphorical point of view, a visual space which is a analog of ordinary visual space. Thus it is simple to imagine sounds in your mind because sounds seem to us to be located in our ordinary visual space. They come from the left or right, and they have a temporal structure. They occur regularly or intermittently, have a certain rythm etc. All of these features mean that they are easy to imagine. It is more difficult with smells. They often seem to be everywhere at once and have no spatial or temporal structure. This makes it more difficult to construct an idea of them in our minds though we can do so. So too with feelings caused by touching things. These experiences do not have a spatial or temporal structure so that they are difficult to construct within our visual mind-space.

The general lesson here is that if it is difficult to talk about an experience in terms of spatial or temporal structures it will be difficult to imagine it in one's mind.

2) Could I have the idea of something being possible without a mind-space?

This question is simply a variant on Question One. It is certainly the case that I can envisage possibilities out loud - for example different names a child could be called or different nick-names, and indeed, when young

children exercise their imaginations it is done by exercising their skill with words. As you devlop a mind-space, however this can be done silently/to yourself/in your mind. Again it is more difficult to think how you could imagine a different arrangement of furniture without a visual mind-space to 'arrange' it in. The visual mind-space is not suitable for imagining different tastes as when you try to imagine the taste of strawberries fried in butter. You can easily imagine what they would look like but not what their taste would be. Our visual mind-space is necessary for envisaging certain kinds of possibilities but is of no use to us if these possibilites cannot be structured in visual space.

Chapter Seventeen

1) Emotions are often thought of as being dangerous because, under their influence, we do things which we would not have done if we had remained cool. Do emotions blind us to the consequences of our actions because they absorb our attention?

It is a common bit of advice to count to ten if you are angry. The idea behind this advice is something like this: anger absorbs your attention. You cannot think about what you should do while your attention is absorbed. Therefore, get into the habit of counting to ten when you start to feel angry. This will prevent your anger from absorbing your attention and you will be able to think about how you should act rather than simply being driven by you anger to lash out in some way. Staying cool allows you to master your emotions rather than being mastered by them.

2) The command that you hear most often at primary school is "Now, pay attention." It is as if young children were naturally absorbed most of the time and had to be constantly urged to spend time in a self-conscious state. Is growing up the process of spending more and more time in a self-conscious state i.e. inhabiting your mind-space so that you will be in a position to consider the options and in this way control your behaviour?

This fits in well with the idea in Jayne's theory that the capacity to be self-consciousness is a capacity that develops along with our language skills. Learning to obey the command 'Pay attention' is learning to focus the 'eye' of the mind along with the eyes in our heads. When we are paying attention to something we are aware of the fact that we are in control of our behaviour,

we are not simply absorbed in what is going on. In such a state we can make judgements, for example, we can compare what is being said with what we already know about the subject. Paying attention is a kind of mental balancing act in which we attempt to follow the train of thought we are attending to without becoming completely absorbed by it. It is difficult because we are naturally inclined to become completely absorbed in what is being said (we like being fascinated) but we cannot assess what is being said if we are fascinated by it. Hitler's oratory fascinated his audiences and deprived them of the power to assess what he was saying. They ceased to *pay* attention. Their attention was instead captured.

Chapter Eighteen

1) When we blame people we assume that they could have done otherwise, that they were not forced or determined to do what they did. How do you feel when you are blamed? Do you usually feel that you could have done something different? How about when you are praised?

When we are praised we often feel a sense of modesty. We may feel a justifiable pride in having thoroughly canvassed the possibilities facing us before we acted but we also feel that the fact that we preferred to opt for the line of action for which we are being praised is not something for which we are responsible. We simply happen to have the preferences which we have due to our training and past experience and this is why we feel a sense of modesty when we act in accordance with them.

In the same way it is easy to accept blame when we have acted thoughtlessly. We know that we have the capacity to consider the possibilities carefully (we have done this on other occasions) and that on this occasion we did not. However it is more difficult if we have considered the possibilities and chosen what to do in accordance with a set of preferences which most people do not share. Suppose for instance we have acted selfishly. We perhaps wish that we were not selfish and feel helpless or perhaps defiant when faced with this character fault. What we want from those who blame us is help and understanding because we feel that our preferences (which have led us to be blamed) are not alterable at will.

2) If you feel modest about your achievements should you not also feel modest about your failings?

The difficulty in the case of failings, is that social pressures (the

pressures that coerce us in the direction of cooperative behaviour) do not allow us to be modest about our failings. It matters to other people if we do not have the right preferences and have not developed the habit of thinking over the consequences of our actions. We therefore cannot simply shrug our shoulders. What we need is help but we should seek it with the understanding that what is wrong with us can only be set right through the cooperation of our fellows. If this is openly acknowledged on both sides then there is hope.

3) Is there a difference between praising and blaming an adult and doing the same with a child? Should there be any difference?

In praising and blaming a child we normally do so with the understanding that it is a simply a way of training the child by encouraging good habits and preferences and discouraging bad ones. We do not really think that children have the capacity to consider possibilities and weigh up the *pros* and *cons* of acting in certain ways. Their behaviour is relatively spontaneous and so we take the opportunity (when we praise or blame) to reinforce good behaviour and discourage bad behaviour. We do not really praise or blame the children themselves. We praise or blame with the clear purpose of encouraging or discouraging certain kinds of behaviour.

With an adult we might imagine that the application of praise and blame are rather different. Adults should have acquired good habits and preferences in the course of growing up and when we praise them this can only be an acknowledgment of the success of their training (athough we conventionally give them the credit rather than their parents/teachers/peers).

However when we blame them it is a more serious business. In a sense to blame an adult is to demote him or her to the status of a child, someone whose character is still in need of further training. This is why adult misbehaviour is such a sad thing. We feel that the adults concerned are not really responsible for their thoughtlessness and their anti-social preferences. Somewhere along the line their training was neglected and it is extremely difficult to retrain a misbehaving adult. Such an adult needs a chance to be retrained with the help of a loving family and friends who care about them but creating such retraining conditions is difficult to say the least. It is so much simpler to avoid the company of misbehaving adults or put them in prison. Do you think it would be a good idea if parents had to take a course in parenting before being granted a license to have (and raise or train) children?

Chapter Nineteen

1. Have a look at some book reviews to see to what extent the critics are intellectuals. In other words, do they talk about their responses to the book in terms of the fresh perspectives that it provides on their understanding of the business of living?

This question is straightforward.

2) Perhaps being an intellectual is a matter of temperament. When you think about the two characters in Frost's poem which one do you identify with? Do you identify a bit with both? What is it that is attractive about sticking with the tradition?

The advantage of sticking with the tradition is that, generally speaking, a tradition is able to gain and hold adherents because its has been tested over time and found to be the key to a successful life. The disadvantage is that times change. Traditions need to be tested continuously to see if they are still relevant to the new conditions facing us. To embrace a tradition without critically assessing it is an act of faith which is never admirable. Traditions are, however, atractive because their advice on how to live and what values to hold are readily accessible. Parents, teachers, religious communities, the state, are all anxious to perpetuate their traditions. Assessing these traditions may possibly lead us away from them - and the people that adhere to them - and this is often painful. The possiblity of such a painful break must be weighed against Socrates' warning: the unexamined life is not worth living.

Appendix

1) Look at some advertising slogans. As an exercise in critical thinking see if you can discover the hidden messages they contain about what our attitudes should be.

This question is straightforward.