

positive suggestions I have made: but I think it symptomatic of our state that we don't have lots of ideas - and activities - going about this. Maybe not everyone in sympathy with the general idea of radical philosophy feels these needs. When I talk about new modes of communicating, this must include more or less regular meetings, preferably, though not only in small groups, where the separation between our lives as persons and as radicals, and our lives as academic philosophers can be overcome, at least to an extent. Lastly, a suggestion that one of the most important areas in which we can intervene philosophically and politically at this point is that of education and the philosophy of education, at present, despite recent good work by Dave Adelstein and Keith Paton (The Great Brain Robbery), dominated by a reactionary ideology emanating largely from the London Institute of Education.

ADDENDUM: A Note about "the Theory of Knowledge"

1. Philosophy departments customarily allot separate courses to epistemology and to moral philosophy. This seems to enshrine a fact value distinction into the very structure of the degree. (In one course we discuss knowledge, in another values.)

2. One of the central questions of 'epistemology' concerns the conditions under which it is possible to acquire knowledge (or in Winch's words, how the mind can have contact with reality). But the knowledge about which this question is asked is usually knowledge of facts about the 'material world'. If the question is understood to include knowledge about oneself, about one's society and one's relationships with others, then the Marxist contention that capitalism is intrinsically a mystifying social formation in which people are systematically prevented from seeing the truth about their lives and their society (and its Freudian, etc. analogues) immediately becomes relevant. The question about knowledge has to be dealt with in the context of the question: what kind of society and social relations would enable a non-mystified view of reality, would replace illusion with knowledge? This transfers the focus of the question from the individual mind to the type of society which makes knowledge possible and accessible. It also raises the question of how this knowledge enters the mind, and the relationship between the person and his knowledge; thus it would involve issues about non-oppressive forms of education, an education which liberates people's capacities to discover and to do things for themselves and with others, which enables them to understand their society. It is a feature of the capitalist system that it cannot allow this to happen, that its nature and operation is obscure to those who work and live under it.

3. Thus the structure of philosophy departments reproduces the fragmentation of understanding which seems to be an essential feature of capitalist society. How, while remaining within the academy can we avoid being agents of this and other forms of oppression? How can we ourselves avoid being screwed up by the false positions and compromises we are forced into (exams, lectures, posing as authorities, being subject to authorities)? Can we get our own heads (and lives) straight while we are subject to its domination, to the disruption it imposes on our own thinking? Should we get out, trying to contribute to the building up of radical culture and thought outside the academy, living in a more integrated, revolutionary manner? Perhaps 'radical philosophy' will help to make the academy more liveable, by placing politics where it should be, at the centre of consciousness, not as a special, peripheral subject: but is this enough?

4. Perhaps, in some way, 'the problem of knowledge', and that of political practice, are one.



THE PROBLEMS OF LIVING IN AN INTERPRETED WORLD

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The following paper was read to the Cambridge Philosophy Festival on March 10th, 1972 (see Cambridge Report). It is intended to raise problems rather than to offer final answers. The last section of the paper ("Discussion") was added after the Cambridge meeting and deals with some of the points raised in the discussion there.



Let us begin by trying to define three different attitudes to the world; the mythological, the rational and the fictive. In the mythological world there is no distinction of kind between the experiences of self, the experience of other human beings, and the experience of the external world. Indeed, the world is not even seen as external in this way. All three categories are underpinned by and articulated along methods of explanation in which the governing power is placed outside in a fourth category - that of the gods - which it is impossible to disentangle from the rest but which is their ultimate support. The experience of self in this world is not necessarily seen as an experiential continuum in terms of which the rest of the world is defined but rather the experiences of the self find their discontinuities reconciled in the continuum of the world ratified by the gods. Indeed these discontinuities are not even seen as such in a continuous common world. The world of dreams, the common sense world of ordinary waking life and the world of mystical or drug-induced states require no existential ordering in the life of the self, their ordering is guaranteed in the life of the tribe.

The rationalistic world view (a view which incidentally is, I think, the predominant one for us here and now, and which daily approaches its timely end) changes the focus from the communally shared world of the tribe to the world individually experiences. That this view can be historically linked with an increasing division of labour is something which should become clear during the course of my argument. Here the emphasis changes from a world which finds its continuity running through itself to a world which finds its continuity in the world of self which perceives the world as out there and which objectifies this world so that it finds its being independently of the perceiving self. This factifying of the world is accompanied by a negation of other areas of experience in which the facticity of the world is not so marked, such as dreams, hallucinations and other similar phenomena. In particular, the area of the world which becomes highly problematic is other people. Experienced both as physical facts of the world and also at another level as beings with direct contact with the conscious perceiving self, other minds become problematic. Thus in the rationalist world we find the world split into two, on the one hand, the world of self, and on the other, the world of fact, and caught uneasily between the two, other minds and those experiences of our own body which we cannot characterize as self or not-self.

Before I attempt to describe the third attitude to the world I would like to make clear what I am doing in offering these descriptions. I do not think I am describing fully the world view of any particular culture at any particular moment in its history. Rather these are theoretical descriptions which will, I hope, prove their usefulness in the inquiry I am

undertaking. I am trying to show how the rationalist view breaks down and gives way to the fictive view, but obviously no one society or one individual has a totally monolithic viewpoint which can be summarised in a few lines. Equally obviously, it does seem to me that the rationalist viewpoint does depict a general view held and lived by a large number of people in our society. However, if one were to apply these categories to the complex situation of our actual society, one would immediately have to begin to alter and modify them. Thus in our present society aspects of the mythological view persist for the majority of the population; the 'gods' who support the reality of their world are the rationalist experts of the ruling class.

When it comes to describing the fictive attitude to the world I encounter great difficulty in the fact that, even now, it only begins to be thought and experienced. Here the world is, for the first time, seen as produced by and producer of the actions of human beings. The world, the reality of ordinary everyday experience, is seen as the result of the community's activity in the world and this activity can still not yet be grasped clearly and transparently by us while economic origins constantly lose themselves in the world of money. In this view, the body is reintegrated as founding source of expression, which source is always canalised and structured by that language offered by history which both determined and is determined by our experience. In the fictive view, that dialogue between phenomenology and history, between the individual body and the society in which it finds itself, might become comprehensible on the stage of a language endlessly responsive to the general needs of a body in the world and the individual passage of each body through the world.

Having established these categories I first want to look at the progress of natural science within that space guaranteed for it by the rationalist view of the world and to point to that area where it first becomes problematic, where as it reaches its own limits it turns back on itself to destroy the space of its own possibility. As man divorces the world from himself and factifies it, he finds himself face to face with a brute reality whose laws he attempts to understand. For the reality to be thus experienced, language must absent itself and become simply a transparent window on the real which is given unproblematically just as it is. On this view, science becomes the activity of finding out how things are, or perhaps it would be more just to say that science becomes the passivity of finding out how things are. The human body becomes merely a passive receiver of the neutral data which mind interprets. Thus one achieves an empiricist history of science in which advance is seen merely as the gathering of more facts which are subsumed again under a more general theory. In recent years, this theory has come under heavy fire from historians and philosophers of science. Basically there has been a growing awareness that the theory one adopts to interpret the world determines the facts that one will discover in the world. Language is no longer seen as a transparent window on the world but rather a constitutive factor in the world. In particular, the idea that because one is using the same expression (let us say, "mass" as it is used in Einsteinian or Newtonian physics, or "memory" as it is used in neuro-physiology and ordinary language) one is guaranteed to be meaning the same thing, is increasingly seen as an article of faiths, as unreliable and as mystifying as the belief that money has real value. Rather, as money finds its use in that space where commodities confront and are exchanged for one another, so meaning finds its reality (its use) in the interplay of expressions. Or as somebody once remarked, the meaning of a word is its use in a language-game. The defining self and the defined world begin to lose their independent reality at that point where language is discovered to define both. If one is dubious of the validity of this argument (and it is essential to admit that the immediate and pressing claims of the physical world constitute a powerful intuitive argument against it), it is necessary to turn to that area where the facticity of the world becomes obviously problematic - the world of the human sciences.

Let us take a particular example of a human science, the psycho-analysis of Sigmund Freud. Now in the following discussion I want to make clear a distinction between Freud's writings on the psyche and his actual practice of analysis, and I would also like to make it clear that I am not talking about the theory or practice of modern day analysis. A rationalist view of Freudian theory, a view taken by Freud himself, goes as follows. There are these objects in the world - human beings - who suffer from various complaints. These specific complaints are caused by various difficulties of development encountered by the human being. The only way to discover these difficulties and their source is through what this object tells you. And with this you, with the insertion of Freud into human situations, the pure facticity of his theory begins to collapse. At once, simply intuitively, the question of objectivity arises, for now the object is also subject, the dispassionate observer of human situations is now in a human situation. Indeed, Freud can be seen as placing himself in a privileged position outside that area in which the patient's troubles arise, and yet it is only within that area that Freud can begin to address himself to the problems and solve them. In fact, and this is absolutely central to Freud, Freud and the patient must talk, but it is difficult on this account to see at what point their languages could meet. For there is a radical division between the language of Freud and

the language of the patient. The patient's language, determined by his experience, offers a false view of the world in which various elements of his experience are ignored: Freud's language, on the other hand, can cover the whole of experience. But, and this is crucial, one of the most significant things we learn from Freud is that the dialectical process of language and experience demands that although experience determines language, language also determines experience. In other words, Freud has to regard his language of theory as special, as somehow able to escape outside the normal play which constitutes any person's idea of the truth. In fact to get outside this theoretical vicious circle, Freud cheats on two levels. He has to regard himself, as a source of unconstituted truth, while at the same time the business of analysis is to reveal to the patient the constitution of his truth, indeed to investigate the process of this constitution. Certainly, Freud investigated the process of the constitution of his own truth but this investigation was one carried out by himself on himself. And here the theoretical sleight of hand can be seen as occurring with the adoption of the scientific attitude and, crucially, a scientific language which guarantees its own truth independently of any human speaking or writing it. Thus if one puts it on a personal level, one can say that in order to generate this objective science of psycho-analysis, Freud has got to make himself the only truly objective man who can arrive at the truth of his own situation. But perhaps the more vital level is the way in which one language guarantees its own production. Every language, be it ordinary, literary or mythical, is susceptible to interpretation in terms of the workings of the psyche except for the language of science, which finds and finds itself independently of these workings of the psyche.

Perhaps I can make this point, which I feel is still extremely obscure, more tellingly by considering the method in which Freud constructs his own theories. Presumably a good empiricist studying some particular set of objects in the world will attempt to discover as many examples of the relations of these sets of objects as possible, and to interpret the phenomena in such a way that he has a theory that explains them. As I have already shown, this view of the collection of facts and creation of theories confronts its own impossibility when one realises that one's perceptions are, as it were, language dependent and this theory dependent. How much more obvious then is the impossibility of an empirical human science, when to a large part one is observing language with language. This is particularly clear when one realises that Freud does not have a theory which he imposes on the language of the patient, but rather that the theory is constructed with the language of the patient. Freud's own work was continually changing and incorporating the results of new analyses, not in the way that the chemist may incorporate a new experiment into a theory; rather, the language of the patient and the language of Freud would meet and construct a new language. Here the most startling example would be the theoretical development of the concept of the super-ego, a phrase taken in the original German (*Über Ich*) from a patient statement that he felt a dog sitting on top of him.

But if Freud's own account of what he was doing can be found incoherent, and if his practice can be shown to be not the imposition of an interpretation but the construction of one, what becomes of Freudian theory? What indeed becomes of any theory which depicts the real in a language which determines the real? This problem, which arises only at the end of the physical sciences, arises right at the beginning of the human ones because of the endlessly different ways in which people describe their fellow men contrasted with the relative unanimity with which they regard physical objects. What if we see each theory merely as a technique of interpretation a particular way of analysing the world? But here the problem simply reduplicates itself - what is the status of these techniques of interpretation, what code do they break down to reveal what reality? As each language offers yet further interpretations, the circle is never closed but spirals inexorably and terrifyingly towards infinity. As Michel Foucault puts it - "There is never an interpretandum which is not already an interpretans, so much so in fact that it is solely by an act that one can only call violent that elucidation can build itself on interpretation." And indeed with Freud one can see this problem all too clearly. He does not discover particular traumas, definite wounds, but rather the symptoms already find their place in an interpretative framework. Fantasies come forth with their charge of anxiety, that is to say a nucleus which is already interpreted. Freud does ground his work in a scientific discourse, a plane of finality which admits no further interpretation, a network of words which cannot be put into psycho-analytic play, a plane that ceases to be self-reflexive, a plane that gives us the real.

We wish to move beyond this fixing, this finality, and yet to resist the temptation to enter a world of idealism in which the concrete finality of the world is lost among the chitter-chatter of intellectuals. I want to offer here a suggestion as to the theoretical framework within which this might be accomplished, while at the same time having grave epistemological doubts about the whole process which will emerge in the course of the suggesting. We have reached a position where the presuppositions of science seem to break down and the objective world eludes for ever our grasp. Does this mean a fall into total relativism, a wandering in the idealised worlds

of the individual imagination? To combat this tendency it is essential to focus our attention where attention is always inevitably recalled - namely, the body. Is it enough to regard the reality of the world as conveyed to us by our bodies, is it here that we will find this certainty so crucially absent from our theoretical reflections? The answer is of course both yes and no, because as we turn towards this unmediated experience which will provide the final realism we find rising to meet us that residue of history which has relativised our thoughts on science, namely language. Here language is seen not simply as verbal, but as that complicated articulation by which we experience the world and thus also our bodies. But it is a mistake to think that this language covers completely, as it were, the experiences of the body. There is always that marginal play provided by those experiences before the learning of the mother tongue, that marginal play which in dreams, if nowhere else, reminds us of other possibilities. But if an attention to what might be called the unreadable text of ourselves is part of what must be done, we must also concentrate on the readable text, the world we know, and investigate the processes of its production. For it does not arrive ex nihilo, but is the result of people working in common in a world about which they must talk to each other. The difficulty we face is the uncovering of that area behind our backs where we construct our own world, with the additional problem that that investigation is conditioned by the world we inhabit. At the moment the determination of our bodies in the world, the activity with which we confront and enter into the world, is a determination decided by the modes of production in our society, those areas in which we must place ourselves in order to live. It is when we realise the crucial factor in this organisation and its changes is the profit motive, and its dependence on surplus value, on the exploitation of man by man, and that this crucial factor is always being hidden because its realisation spells the end of the present organisation, that we can begin to see the way in which the body and history may enter into a productive dialogue; in a situation in which the world will no longer be seen as alien and external to ourselves but the product of our communal activity in it.

And here finally I can start to address myself to that problem which is the title of this paper. "We can no longer feel at home in this interpreted world" writes Rilke, and thus capture that alienation which is so strong a feature of our twentieth century society. But this interpreted world is a world interpreted for us by the methods of production to guarantee their own continuation, an interpretation which depends at all costs on a dehumanizing of the real so that it appears immutable and indifferent to our own actions within it. A rationalist world, in the sense defined, a world which is always other. To make the world our own we must on every level reveal that process by which the socially accepted real is naturalized and the reasons for it. We must, as Burroughs so insistently demands, retake the reality studios. If it be objected that this analysis will fall prey to the epistemological objections already raised, then it must be pointed out that they will be avoided by always insisting that these analyses are grounded in the position of our bodies in history and will never seek to conceal that fact. And they will be proved, not on the grounds of pseudo-objective discussion about the world, but in a physical practice within it. For it is here, in that area where the materiality of the world is most evident, that all sciences find their justification. We must escape from a language which constantly reifies the world independent of human activity in it, and begin to write our sciences, both natural and human, in a reflexive way which always reveals from which body they came and where they will be proved.

DISCUSSION

In the discussion that followed various points were raised, of which I have taken those that seemed the most important to me.

1) One person made the following point. "In your paper you claim that a) language determines experience b) experience determines language and c) the modes of production in a society determine language. a) is silly, b) is false, c) is incoherent, and, taken together, they are contradictory." The best way to answer this is to take an example which shows the truth of all three. Let us take an experience like hallucination. In some societies hallucination is an accepted mode of experience and there is a language for talking about this experience, a mode of articulating it, often in relation to religious beliefs. In our society hallucination is not an accepted mode of experience and there is no language in which to articulate it. Therefore someone who is hallucinating will attempt to ignore this experience, to shut it off by the language we do have, such as "I feel unwell", "I feel tired" etc. This shows the way in which a) can be true.

At the same time, our language is not so monolithic that it can always ignore such experiences. Sometimes the force of the experience, let us say a particularly strong and insistent hallucination, will force us to re-order our language so that such an experience can be articulated. An example of one way in which this might be done is the language and view of the world in William Blake's poetry. Thus the truth of b) can be seen.

Finally, it is not simply an accident that there are societies which do have a language for hallucination and others which do not. The ultimate way in which a language is created is through the activities that occupy people in the world. In a society such as ours, where the emphasis in the methods of production is on standardised working days which require men to perform particularly specialised tasks in a highly competent manner, there is a tendency to ignore various areas of experience which might detract from the ability to perform these tasks and which are not shareable within the common activities of the community. On the other hand, in societies where the division of labour has not progressed so far, and where tasks are not so specialised, these areas of experience may not detract from the society's ability to survive. Indeed, they may be an essential part of the shared world that the society inhabits. Thus c) may also be true.

What I have attempted to do in my paper is to show the way in which a), b) and c) are linked in a living process.

2) Another objection was that, whereas the aim of the paper was to describe various processes, the language which I used was a static and spatial one instead of a dynamic and temporal one. With this objection I am totally in agreement, but I have yet to discover a way of writing which escapes this objection. Indeed one of the aims of the paper is a plea for exactly that kind of writing.

3) Linked to this objection was an objection to the monolithic way in which I used such terms as "language" and "experience". In particular, I made no use of the notion of "contradiction" in my paper. I think that this too is a fair point. Language is not the monolithic whole I suggested here, and experience is likewise a set of different activities. My defence of the paper would rest on the particular position in which it was written, and the need to at least introduce what seems to me to be new approaches.

4) There were several objections to my use of the idea of pre-linguistic experience of the body. Objectors felt that I was either trying to get out of the relativistic spiral by positing an absolute body, or that I was talking in such vague terms that no-one could see what I meant. First, the unreadable text of the body is not meant to provide an absolute reference to ground our knowledge and actions. Secondly, it is not very clear because I do not think one can say very much about it beyond pointing to its existence. The reason I feel it to be important is because of the particular society we live in, where our 'reality' is constantly being naturalised so that it is given as unquestionable. It seems to me that the unreadable text of ourselves is that part of us which provides various 'strange' experiences which tend to refuse this naturalisation. Literature, madness, dreams, hallucinations - all these seem to me to have this element which always resists final naturalisation. As our society is dependent on ensuring our acceptance of the socially given real, it attempts at all times to discount the unreadable text, to make everything readable and thus 'naturally' real. It is for this reason that at least to point to the existence of this 'strangeness' is essential.

5) Finally, a criticism made against this paper was that it was too difficult, unnecessarily unclear and consciously hindered communication. The first point to make about this is that I hope these points do not apply quite so strongly to the written as to the spoken version. Philosophical papers are always much harder to listen to than to read.

But even if these criticisms still stand for the written version, I feel that they raise problems which are not easy to solve. Let us say, for the sake of argument, that this paper is difficult and unclear. Well for most philosophy students it may be, but for students of English or the social sciences I would wager that it is much clearer than the average article in a 'respectable' philosophical magazine. Clarity is always relative, it is not an absolute. Let us presume even further, let us presume that this paper is difficult and unclear for everybody. Well so, to take a few examples, are Marx's "Capital", Nietzsche's "Zarathustra" or Wittgenstein's "Investigations". I am not suggesting that this article is a great work, but it grows out of works which I think are great but are extremely difficult and unclear. As was pointed out in the introduction, it is not a work of originality but an attempt to introduce some thoughts which I have had on reading Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida and Barthes. It is in fact much 'simpler' than the work of these people. If it was made completely 'simple' it would not, I fear, be of any interest, it would simply be a repetition of philosophy already being done in England. Philosophy does not consist of a form 'clear' or 'unclear', and a content, 'right' or 'wrong'. Rather, 'form' and 'content' are inextricably linked, and the problem is to judge whether an article or a book provides a theoretical advance or not. What the criteria are for deciding this question is a problem which I think all radical philosophers should think about, lest we slip back into that sanctification of ordinary language which has for so long impoverished thinking in Britain.

