

1 WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

What philosophy *is* has always been -- and hopefully always will be -- a much debated question. Some expect from philosophy profound answers to life's deepest questions, while others simply ignore it as meaningless drivel. We can reverently approach it as the most important of human endeavors, or dismisses it as idle speculation about the most problematic of concerns. Many consider it to be a subject that, since it *concerns everyone*, must be a simple matter and thus comprehensible to all, whereas others consider philosophy so difficult that it is pointless even to attempt to understand it. And indeed, what has often been presented in the past as philosophy provides ample evidence to warrant such contradictory ideas about its nature.

In today's culture it could appear that philosophy is what philosophers do at universities and colleges: engage in a field of scholarly study that has the character of a science, which we can study and learn just like the science of biology. In this view, philosophy is one type of science among many, with its own unique scope of problems, and its own set of logical methods that generate new philosophical knowledge. But is this an accurate portrayal of philosophy as it has been practiced for thousands of years? Perhaps, but then again, perhaps not.

What is the use of philosophy, if all it does is enable you to talk... about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., and if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life?

- Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)

We all philosophize. We always have and hopefully always will engage in philosophy. As children we philosophized when we asked those questions adults hesitate to answer. Questions such as 'where does the earth come from?' 'What happens when I die?' 'Why are we here?' Or 'what is the meaning of my life?'

Unfortunately, however, that inevitable process of ossification we call 'becoming mature' often seems to lead us away from considering the bigger questions of our existence. As the years pass these larger questions are eclipsed by the growing concern with the day-to-day issues of simple survival. To ask 'is there a purpose to my life' appears to be insignificant when faced with such questions as 'what career should I choose?' As we become adults we seldom allow ourselves to ponder such questions that came to us naturally as children.

But if these questions do arise, most often it is as the result of some crisis in our life, when some event disrupts the predictable world of our routine existence. When this happens life makes certain questions unavoidable, since the world and our existence within it have suddenly lost their coherence, and have themselves become problematic. Such questions are not about a particular problem: they are not about *this* or *that* situation. They are instead general questions that cry out for a response different from the ones provided by other fields of inquiry. When we read of an act of genocide, and ask how and why our fellow human can commit such atrocities, we are asking a type of question

very different from a question about the biological composition of humans. When we ask if justice has been done in a particular legal proceeding our answer depends on how we understand justice itself. But what is justice? Is justice simply what each sovereign state on this planet decides it should be? Or is there another, higher sense of justice that is the same for all humanity, regardless of national, religious or ethnic allegiance?

These questions -- questions philosophy has asked for thousands of years -- directly touch all of us. For this reason everyone considers themselves capable and competent to answer such questions. Our own experience, our own life, seems to provide and fulfill the necessary conditions and requirements for having a philosophy. Everyone knows that they are qualified to join in the discussion since everyone knows that the shape of one's life is dependent upon how he or she answers these questions. We are not spectators in this philosophical game of questioning. We are active participants. And this is why questions of this nature are inescapable and absolutely necessary.

Is it possible not to have a philosophy? Granted, a person can shut their eyes and live as if these questions are irrelevant. But isn't even this a response to the questioning of philosophy? In order to pose the questions of philosophy -- much less answer them -- we have to have already considered them. Thus in refusing to have a philosophy you acknowledge that you do in fact have a philosophy. As the German philosopher J.G. Fichte (1762-1814) argued, our philosophy manifests itself in the type of life we lead. As long as we live, act and make decisions about the direction of our life, we engage in philosophy. Indeed, it is almost as if we humans are sentenced at birth to engage in philosophy.

What Philosophy is

the practical is personal, the theoretical is historical

The practical and the theoretical, the personal and the historical: each is one side of the same coin of philosophy. While philosophy is fundamentally about you and the life you choose to lead -- and therefore practical and personal -- the knowledge which informs the choices you make about your philosophy can only be found in the study of philosophers who have gone before you. Just as an artist studies the history of art to develop their own unique style, we as philosophers must pay equal attention to past thinkers while we develop our own ideas about what philosophy is. Following a very old tradition in philosophy, we will begin with what we know best in our own personal and practical world of concerns, and then move on into the more foreign waters of theory and historical ideas.

Philosophy as What We Believe

Our preliminary definition is that philosophy is about our system of beliefs. In stating this we make the distinction between *knowledge* and *belief*. Knowledge is the product and result of questions that allow for clear answers, such as ‘what is the sum of 2+2?’ or the *matters of fact* decided by the natural sciences, such as the rate at which the universe is expanding.

The natural sciences pass judgment on matters of fact, which in philosophy we refer to as *empirical truth*. Something is empirical if it refers to experience, that is, if it is *publicly observable*. Indeed, the noun empiricism derives from the Greek term *emperia*, which simply means ‘experience’.

Etymology

G. *etymos*, the true literal sense of the word, and *logos*, description, from *legein*, to speak.
The origin and development of a word; tracing a word back as far as possible, generally by the methods of comparative linguistics.

In contrast, beliefs are **convictions** that are our response to questions which do not allow for clear and simple questions. Questions such as ‘what is the purpose of my existence?’ or ‘why is there evil in the world?’ This type of question cannot be clearly answered by an appeal to matters of fact, and therefore cannot be answered by a simple appeal to empirical truths. By default then, to ‘answer’ such questions we must consider aspects of our experience that, because they cannot be publicly observed, cannot be reduced to simple matters of fact. The ‘answers’ to such questions are ***under-determined*** by the facts.

But although what we believe is a private and individual matter, our beliefs determine what type of person we are and how we lead our lives. Taken collectively, shared beliefs shape what type of society we live in. No one ever participates in acts of civil disobedience or goes to war over a question that can be settled by an appeal to empirical facts. Protests, rebellions and other significant acts always seem to be motivated by beliefs or, more often than not, by ***differences*** in beliefs.

At its core philosophy is a very personal endeavor. Although it is caricatured and sometimes justifiably attacked for being too abstract and obtuse, philosophy does not have its roots in the ethereal clouds of theory and speculation. On the contrary: philosophy is the most intensely personal and concrete activity we can engage in. The French existentialist philosopher Albert Camus (1913-1960) captures this dimension of philosophy brilliantly when he writes:

Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest — whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories — come afterwards. These are games....I have never seen anyone die for the ontological argument....the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions (*Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, (1955) pp. 3-4).

We all have a philosophy. That is, we all have a belief system which we have passively absorbed during our upbringing from our family, society and the media. Having a philosophy is in this sense a *reactive* state of ignorance: of ignoring, of not taking notice of what we believe and why we have these beliefs.

Ignorance

L. ignorare, to take no notice, [root verb of substantive *ignoramus*], lack of education.

One of the questions we will be asking ourselves repeatedly through the course of this semester is how do we become who we are? Are we the products of nature? Or of nurture? Of hereditary? Or environmental factors? Some of us believe that we are the products of our environment, that we are passive sponge-like creatures that absorb whatever our surroundings have to offer us. Others may represent the opposing position and believe that we are controlled by the laws of nature. That we are passive creatures programmed by our DNA, whose genetic code has already written the script of our lives. But in either scenario, *if* we are aware of these forces, we want to know whether we have any control over them, and to what extent we are free of their influences.

Most of us typically lead our lives on AUTO-PILOT: we allow ourselves to be guided by tactical considerations, by day-to-day immediate concerns that often keep us from noticing the forest from the trees. As long as we proceed sleep-walking through life we fail to wake up to the possibility that there might be another way of orientating

ourselves in this existence. But if by some chance we could snap out of our habitual way of existing, we might discover a new way of seeing the world.

The Genesis of Doing Philosophy

The urge to philosophize, the genesis of philosophical questioning, begins when our world of experience loses its coherence and familiarity. According to the existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), this typically happens in what he calls a ‘boundary experience.’ The most common boundary experience is our first brush with the reality of death. Such an experience pushes us to the limit of our ability to understand and fathom the *meaning and purpose of our existence*. Other boundary experiences can arise out of the terrifying experiences of intense sickness, pain and suffering, or of anxiety or guilt. Conversely, such limit experiences can also be brought on by positive experiences, such as the absolute feeling of stillness and peace found in intense moments of joy and happiness, or the feeling of awe that one often finds in experiencing the world of nature. What is common to all these different experiences is that, being grounded in our own individual experience, each is intensely personal, and as a boundary experience, all of them push us out of and beyond our everyday habits of living.

Wonder

the source of philosophy

We have suggested that in order to engage in philosophy we must first awake from the slumber of our habitual ways of thinking about our lives. In the history of philosophy,

we find two experiences responsible for generating the urge to philosophize: wonder and doubt. For example, the Greek philosopher Plato (428-348 bce) writes in his *Theaetetus*:

Wonder is the posture of a man who truly loves wisdom; indeed, there is no other beginning for Philosophy than this, and whomever said that Iris [Hesiod's, *Theology*. 780: Iris is the messenger of heaven who manifests herself in the rainbow] was the child of Thaumas [Plato's construal of the Greek term for wonder: *Thauma*] made a good genealogy (155d).

Catching sight of a rainbow is the perfect example for this type of experience. It produces within us the wonder and awe that Plato here suggests is the beginning and creative source from which all philosophy flows. In the following passage from his *Metaphysics*, Plato's student Aristotle (384-322) continues this tradition of thinking about the source of philosophy, and makes explicit the connection between this initial wonder and the ensuing moment of ignorance and doubt that follows:

It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters too, e.g. about the changes of the moon and the sun, about the stars and the origin of the universe. **N**ow he who wonders and is perplexed feels that he is ignorant, thus the myth-lover is in a sense a philosopher, since myths are composed of wonders; therefore it was to escape ignorance that man began to study Philosophy (*Metaphysics* I, 2, 982b).

Our everyday way of operating in the world shows itself in our experience of wonder to be inadequate. The experience of wonder shows our normal way of knowing to really be a form of not-knowing, or of ignorance: it is impossible to experience wonder in the face of something which we do in fact understand. Wonder thus forces us to experience the limits of our understanding. When we experience the limits of our understanding we encounter proof of our ignorance presented by that which we do not

understand. As one of the most influential philosophers of this century, Ludwig Wittgenstein, put it:

Man has to awaken to wonder — and so perhaps do peoples. Science is a way of sending him to sleep again.

In wonder our customary trust in our everyday experience is shattered by the realization that our habitual way of understanding is an incomplete way of understanding. For the ancient Greek thinkers philosophy could only begin once one had attained to the knowledge that one doesn't know everything. But this not-knowing, this consciousness of ignorance, forced philosophers to seek an understanding that was of a higher quality, and thus more reliable than what we employ in our everyday experience.

Doubt

the first moment of actively doing philosophy

The loss of confidence provoked by wonder leads us to doubt and to question what we have been taught to accept as true. When we begin to call into question what we have been taught to believe, we begin to do philosophy.

But to doubt and to call into question is not *an end in itself*. That is, doubt is always parasitic on truth: it is impossible to doubt unless we have some idea of what the truth is. In order to doubt the authenticity of twenty dollar bill we must have some idea of what a true and authentic twenty dollar bill looks like. To doubt whether someone is telling us the truth we must have some idea of what it would be like to actually hear the truth. Productive doubt is not an end in itself, but a means to attaining the end, namely truth. This is the only type of doubt that we are actually capable of incorporating into our life: it is a doubting carried out in the name of a truth that enables us to doubt.

Consequently, in order to doubt what we have been taught to believe we must have some idea of what it might mean to have a more trustworthy system of beliefs.

What is truth? Three schools of thought:

- 1) Dogmatic: there is an absolute truth, of which we can have complete knowledge, that will in turn justify us in claiming that no other position matters.
- 2) Relativistic: there is no absolute truth, only arbitrary positions hampered by their own historical limits.
- 3) Regulative: there is an absolute truth that leads us as the horizon guides the explorer: on a never-ending journey towards it.

To doubt is to be *skeptical*. Historically, the skeptic's doubts were directed towards our inability to trust our senses to provide certain evidence for our everyday beliefs. Radical skeptics are those who doubt only for the sake of doubting. Such thinkers believe that nothing in the world can be believed to be true. The problem with this argument however, is that it refutes itself: if we can believe that nothing is true, then this very belief itself is false. The ancient philosopher and theologian Augustine (354-430), who was himself a skeptic in his youth, advanced the following argument against such a radical skepticism:

But who can doubt that he lives, remembers, realizes, wants, thinks, knows and judges? Even when someone doubts, he lives; when he doubts, he remembers that which doubts; **when he doubts he realizes that he doubts**; when he doubts, he wants to be certain; when he doubts, he thinks; when he doubts, he knows that he doesn't know something; when he doubts, he judges that he should not give his assent lightly. Whatever someone wishes to doubt, on all this he should not doubt. **For if all this were not so, he would not be capable of doubting anything at all** (*Trin. X*, 10).

One of the most famous philosophers of the early Enlightenment, Rene Descartes (1596-1650), presented a similar argument on behalf of a truth which he believed

could provide us with a convincing criterion for determining the true from the false. He writes in the *Second Meditation*:

Even though there may be a deceiver of some sort, very powerful and very tricky, who bends all his efforts to keep me perpetually deceived, **there can be no slightest doubt that I exist**, since he deceives me; and let him deceive me as much as he will, he can never make me be nothing as long as I think that I am something. Thus, after having thought well on this matter, and after examining all things with care, I must finally conclude and maintain that this proposition: / **I am, I exist, is necessarily true** every time that I pronounce it or conceive it in my mind (*Meditations*, 25).

These arguments of Augustine and Descartes illustrate how doubt is the point of departure for philosophy. But it is a starting point from which we set out to discover what cannot be doubted, and is therefore true. The search provoked by wonder, which leads through doubt and aims towards certain truth: this is the journey of philosophy.

The Difference between **Having a Philosophy** and **Doing Philosophy**

We all have a philosophy. That is, we all have a system of beliefs that has shaped us more than we have shaped it. Just as we don't get to choose our parents, we don't get to choose the belief system we are raised in. Until we begin to doubt and question we are the products of our environment. We *have* a philosophy, but we do not *do* philosophy.

Once we take the first step in the journey of philosophy, and wake to the possibility of wonder, we begin to make the transition from being passive consumers of information, to becoming active investigators of the world around us. The essential distinction

between these two ways of relating to our world shows itself in the difference between being a passive observer of life, and an active participant in life.

When we are a passive observer we remain *reactive* to outside influences. In doing this we abdicate our freedom to choose, to decide, and to create. In contrast, when we become an active participant we become *proactive*, and thereby initiate a course of action in our lives. In doing this we exercise our freedom to decide, to initiate, and to create. Ask yourself: if life were a game of pool, what role would you find yourself in? Would you be the cue ball, or the other balls being knocked around by the cue ball?

REVOLT Jiddu Krishnamurti

Now, society is always trying to control, to shape, to mold the thinking of the young. From the moment you are born and begin to receive impressions, your father and mother are constantly telling you what to do and what not to do, what to believe and what not to believe; you are told that there is God, or that there is no God but the State and that some dictator is its prophet. From childhood these things are poured into you, which means that your mind—which is very young, impressionable, inquisitive, curious to know, wanting to find out—is gradually being encased, conditioned, shaped so that you will fit into the pattern of a particular society and not be a revolutionary. Since the habit of patterned thinking has already been established in you, even if you do 'revolt' it is within the pattern. It is like prisoners revolting in order to have better food, more conveniences—but always within the prison. When you seek God, or try to find out what is right government, it is always within the pattern of society, which says, 'This is true and that is false, this is good and that is bad, this is the right leader and these are the saints.' So your revolt, like the so-called revolution brought about by ambitious or very clever people, is always limited in the past. That is not revolt, that is not revolution: it is merely heightened activity, a more valiant struggle within the pattern. Real revolt, true revolution is to break away from the pattern and to inquire outside of it.

From *Think on These Things*, 1964.

Education is not a spectator sport. If we are to become educated individuals we must become active participants in the process of learning. Indoctrination requires that the indoctrinated remain passive consumers of a set body of information. Education on the other hand requires that we engage ourselves in the strenuous yet rewarding process of learning. And of all the

disciplines of the Humanities, philosophy requires our most active engagement, since its subject matter is primarily the system of beliefs that make us who we are.

The Difference between Knowing *That* and Knowing *Why*

More than two thousand years ago Aristotle argued that philosophy distinguished itself from everyday ways of thinking by inquiring into the reasons *why* we believe what we do. In everyday life it is sufficient for us to simply know *that* we believe something to be true. But to do philosophy Aristotle insisted that we must move beyond simple recall, and be able to state the reasons *why* we have our beliefs.

When we say we know *that* reading a book is a better use of our free time than watching three hours of prime time television we express an opinion. This expression of an opinion presents our understanding of how we should use our leisure. When we express an opinion we do not provide any *reasons* for our position. Quite the contrary however, if we make the *statement* that we know *why* it is better to read a book than watch television. In doing this we make the *claim* that we can provide reasons *why* reading is more productive than watching television. The key difference between expressing an opinion and making a statement has to do with this idea of *providing reasons* for our beliefs. And only when we provide reasons for *why* we believe something is true do we open the door to *evaluating* our beliefs.

For example, it is often times claimed that everyone has the right to their own opinion. But does it follow from this that *every opinion is right?* Suppose we are flying to Paris and the guy beside us says that, although he has never flown a plane, he is of the opinion that he should take over the controls of our 747. He tells us that his father was a fighter pilot in World War

II and that, as his son, he has inherited his father's 'flying gene.' While we would have to concede that he does have a right to his own opinion, we would also have to point out that he enjoys this right only so long as his opinion doesn't threaten the bodily health of other human beings. And in light of the practical consequences of his 'opinion,' we would have every reason to suggest to this man that his opinion is unfounded, and thus dangerous.

Explicit

L. *ex*, out, from, *-plicare*, to fold, to fold out, to unfold, to make clear or explicit something obscure or implicit; to explain.

When doing philosophy we begin by asking ourselves why we believe the things we do. Most of us have never done this. We are unaware of the reasons or evidence upon which our beliefs rest. In order to discover what our beliefs are based on, we have to actively engage in the process of explicating our beliefs -- of making our beliefs explicit -- so that we can then decide whether they are justified or not.

Philosophy: Descriptive or Prescriptive?

We could say that 'knowing that' and 'knowing why' are two different ways of relating to our experience. The first way, of knowing that, is reflective of a passive attitude that simply *describes* the way things are. The second way, that of knowing why, reflects a more active engagement with our world. An active stance that cultivates our ability to question and *prescribe* the way things could and should be.

All of us are personally familiar with the difference between the way things ARE, and the way things SHOULD be. For most of us, not a day goes by in which we don't consider that we *should* have done something differently than we had. This discrepancy between IS and SHOULD is of fundamental importance to doing philosophy. It is a difference between the descriptive and prescriptive ways of dealing with experience.

Describe

L. *de*, from, -*scribere*, to write, to write from, to write down.

To describe is to write from. A description copies and presents what IS, it takes place after the fact, after the event, and replicates what is in the past as faithfully as possible.

Prescribe

L. *pre*, before, -*scribere*, to write, to write before.

To prescribe is to set down beforehand. A prescriptive attitude is an active and creative stance that attempts to create an order or directive, envisioning what SHOULD happen in the future, or what SHOULD HAVE happened in the past.

To decide if our beliefs are justified we need a criterion for determining what is, or is not, a justified belief. To develop such a criterion is to engage in a fundamentally prescriptive activity.

Each of us knows of the gap that exists in our lives between what we ACTUALLY DO and what we SHOULD DO. The creative tension that arises from the discrepancy between these two positions is the motivating force that drives philosophy. Indeed, by all accounts it appears that philosophy is born in, and emerges out of, this gap between what is and what should be.

What is Philosophy

(take two) History and The Case of Socrates

At the beginning of this chapter we suggested that although philosophy is fundamentally about the life we choose to lead -- and therefore practical and personal -- the knowledge that informs the choices we make about our philosophy is to be found only through the study of philosophers who have gone before us. Accordingly, we now shift to consider the historical case of the ancient Athenian philosopher Socrates (470-399), whose life and philosophy we know of thanks to his pupil, Plato. For strict philosophical reasons Socrates did not commit his philosophy to writing. It was only after his forced death -- at the hands of the rulers of Athens — that his pupil Plato began to integrate Socrates' philosophy into his timeless series of what we now refer to as the Platonic Dialogues.

Philosophy as the Love of Wisdom

Our term ‘philosophy’ finds its place of origin in the language of ancient Greece. The verb ‘*philein*’ means ‘to love’, whereas the substantive ‘*sophia*’ designates that form of knowing -- both practical and theoretical -- that encompasses virtue and the art of living the good life. The word philosophy is thus translated as ‘love of wisdom.’

According to ancient sources, the philosopher Pythagoras (580-500) used the term philosophy in the sixth century BCE, while Heraclitus (540-480) followed his use of this term in the next century. But it was ultimately Socrates that provided the term with the meaning which it has retained for the past 2400 years. In Plato's *Symposium* (427-347) we find a dialogue between Socrates and the wise Diotima, in which philosophy, personified by the Daimon Eros, is characterized as love of wisdom:

Diotima: On the day of Aphrodite's birth the gods were making merry, and among them was Resource, the son of Craft. And when they had supped, Need came begging at the door because there was good cheer inside. Now it happened that Resource, having drunk deeply of the heavenly nectar wandered out into the garden of Zeus and sank into a deep sleep, and Need, thinking to get a child by Resource would mitigate her poverty, lay down beside him, and

in time conceived Eros. So Eros became the follower and servant of Aphrodite because he was begotten on the same day that Aphrodite was born, and further, Eros was born to love the beautiful since Aphrodite is beautiful herself.

Then again, as the son of Resource and Need, it has been his fate to be always needy; nor is he delicate and lovely as most of us believe, but harsh and arid, barefoot and homeless, sleeping on the naked earth, in doorways or in the very streets beneath the stars of heaven, and always partaking of his mother's poverty. But, secondly, Eros brings his father's resourcefulness to his designs upon the beautiful and the good, for he is gallant, impetuous, and energetic, a mighty hunter, and a master of device and artifice -- at once desirous and full of wisdom, a lifelong seeker after truth, an adept in sorcery, enchantment and seduction.

He is neither mortal nor immortal, for in the space of a day he will be now, when all goes well with him, alive and blooming, and now dying, to be born again by virtue of his father's nature, while what he gains will always ebb away as fast. So Eros is never altogether in or out of need, and stands, moreover, midway between ignorance and wisdom. You must understand that none of the gods are seekers after truth. They do not long for wisdom, because they are wise -- and why should the wise be seeking the wisdom that is already theirs? Nor, for that matter, do the ignorant seek the truth or crave to be made wise. And indeed, what makes their case so hopeless is that, having neither beauty, nor goodness, nor intelligence, they are satisfied with what they are, and do not long for the virtues they have never missed.

Socrates: Then tell me, Diotima, who are these seekers after truth, if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant?

Diotima: Why a child could have told you that, after what I've just been saying. They are those that come between the two, and one of them is Eros. For wisdom is concerned with the loveliest of things, and Eros is the love of what is lovely. And so it follows that Eros is a lover of wisdom, and, being such, he is placed between wisdom and ignorance -- for which his parentage also is responsible, in that his father is full of wisdom and resource, while his mother is devoid of either (*Symposium*, 203-204).

Eros is the personification of the lover of wisdom, of the philosopher. In this penetrating account of the nature of desire -- of Eros -- Plato writes that it is the offspring of need and resource, of want and abundance. It thus exists halfway between either extreme, 'never altogether in or out of need.' From this halfway house of unfulfilled desire the lover of wisdom must, by definition, stand 'midway between ignorance and wisdom.' It

is only from this position of *knowing ignorance* that the philosopher is capable of maintaining the critical attitude required to do philosophy. In contrast, if we think that we have the ‘true answer’ to all our questions, we not only become unbearably arrogant, but we also become dogmatic in our relationship to other people. Far from being a lover of wisdom, we become a cold accountant of stale platitudes and clichés.

If we remain true to Plato’s conception of the lover of wisdom, we should never fall victim to thinking that we know all things. And it was for this very reason that the oracle at the temple in Delphi declared Socrates to be the wisest man in the land: because he was the only one in Athens who was aware of his ignorance.

The Examined Life

That Socrates was aware of his ignorance was the result of his commitment to critical inquiry. His method in this inquiry is dialogical: it depends on his talent for asking the right questions. The goal of philosophy for Socrates is not to find the ‘right’ answer to our questions, but to find the right questions that will upset our habitual answers. In the Platonic Dialogues we find Socrates cross-examining someone over the meaning of a philosophical term, such as truth or justice, until his respondent begins to realize how ‘unexamined’ his understanding of that term is. This Socratic method of inquiry and teaching assumes that each of us has a dim, implicit grasp of the truth that can be made explicit, but only if we ask the right questions. In the following exchange on Justice, found in Plato’s dialogue *Gorgias*, we see just how intense Socrates’ method of cross-examination is, and how effective it can be in uncovering the truth about how most people think about philosophical values and ideas:

NATURAL JUSTICE VERSUS WISDOM

Socrates. Then according to you, one wise man may often be superior to ten thousand fools, and he ought them, and they ought to be his subjects, and he ought to have more than they should. This is what I

believe that you mean (and you must not suppose that I am word-catching), if you allow that the one is superior to the ten thousand?

Calicles. Yes; that is what I mean, and that is what I conceive to be natural justice -- that the better and wiser should rule and have more than the inferior.

Socrates. Stop there, and let me ask you what you would say in this case: Let us suppose that we are all together as we are now; there are several of us, and we have a large common store of meats and drinks, and there are all sorts of persons in our company having various degrees of strength and weakness, and one of us, being physician, is wiser in the matter of food than all the rest, and he is probably stronger than some and not so strong as others of us -- will he not, being wiser, be also better than we are, and our superior in this matter of food?

Calicles. Certainly.

Socrates. Either, then, he will have a larger share of the meats and drinks, because he is better, or he will have the distribution of all of them by reason of his authority, but he will not expend or make use of a larger share of them on his own person, or if he does, he will be punished -- his share will exceed that of some, and be less than that of others, and if he be the weakest of all, he being the best of all will have the smallest share of all, Calicles: -- am I not right, my friend?

Calicles. You talk about meats and drinks and physicians and other nonsense; I am not speaking of them.

Socrates. Well, but do you admit that the wiser is the better? Answer 'Yes' or 'No.'

Calicles. Yes.

Socrates. And ought not the better to have a larger share?

Calicles. Not of meats and drinks.

Socrates. I understand: then, perhaps, of coats -- the most skillful weaver ought to have the largest coat, and the greatest number of them, and go about clothed in the best and finest of them?

Calicles. Fudge about coats!

Socrates. Then the most skillful and best in making shoes ought to have the advantage in shoes; the shoemaker, clearly, should walk about in the largest shoes, and have the greatest number of them?

Calicles. Fudge about shoes! What nonsense are you talking?

Socrates. Or, if this is not your meaning, perhaps you would say that the wise and good and true husbandman should actually have a larger share of seeds, and have as much seed as possible for his own land?

Calicles. How you go on, always talking in the same way, Socrates!

Socrates. Yes, Calicles, and also about the same things.

Calicles. Yes, by the Gods, you are literally always talking of cobblers and weavers and cooks and doctors, as if this had to do with our argument.

Socrates. But why will you not tell me in what a man must be superior and wiser in order to claim a larger share; will you neither accept a suggestion, nor offer one?

Calicles. I have already told you. In the first place, I mean by superiors not cobblers or cooks, but wise politicians who understand the administration of a state, and who are not only wise, but also valiant and able to carry out their designs, and not the men to faint from want of soul.

Socrates. See now, most excellent Calicles, how different my charge against you is from that which you bring against me, for you reproach me with always saying the same; but I reproach you with never saying the same about the same things, for at one time you were defining the better and the superior to be the stronger, then again as the wiser, and now you bring forward a new notion; the superior and the better are now declared by you to be the more courageous: I wish, my good friend, that you would tell me once for all, whom you affirm to be the better and superior, and in what they are better?

Calicles. I have already told you that I mean those who are wise and courageous in the administration of a state -- they ought to be the rulers of their states, and justice consists in their having more than their subjects.

Socrates. But whether rulers or subjects will they or will they not have more than themselves, my friend?

Calicles. What do you mean?

Socrates. I mean that every man is his own ruler; but perhaps you think that there is no necessity for him to rule himself; he is only required to rule others?

Calicles. What do you mean by his 'ruling over himself'?

Socrates. A simple thing enough; just what is commonly said, that a man should be temperate and master of himself, and ruler of his own pleasures and passions.

Calicles. What innocence! you mean those fools -- the temperate?

Socrates. Certainly: -- any one may know that to be my meaning.

Calicles. Quite so, Socrates; and they are really fools, for how can a man be happy who is the servant of anything? On the contrary, I plainly assert, that he who would truly live ought to allow his desires to wax to the uttermost, and not to chastise them; but when they have grown to their greatest he should have courage and intelligence to minister to them and to satisfy all his longings. And this I affirm to be natural justice and nobility. To this however the many cannot attain; and they blame the strong man because they are ashamed of their own weakness, which they desire to conceal, and hence they say that intemperance is base. As I have remarked already, they enslave the nobler natures, and being unable to satisfy their pleasures, they praise temperance and justice out of their own cowardice. For if a man had been originally the son of a king, or had a nature capable of acquiring an empire or a tyranny or sovereignty, what could be more truly base or evil than temperance- -- to a man like him, I say, who might freely be enjoying every good, and has no one to stand in his way, and yet has admitted custom and reason and the opinion of other men to be lords over him? -- must not he be in a miserable plight whom the reputation of justice and temperance hinders from giving more to his friends than to his enemies, even though he be a ruler in his city? Nay, Socrates, for you profess to be a votary of the truth, and

the truth is this: -- that luxury and intemperance and license, if they be provided with means, are virtue and happiness -- all the rest is a mere bauble, arguments contrary to nature, foolish talk of men, worth nothing.

Socrates. There is a noble freedom, Callicles, in your way of approaching the argument; for what you say is what the rest of the world think, but do not like to say.

(*Gorgias* 490-492E).

The intensity and intellectual integrity displayed in this passage testifies to Socrates unending and relentless questioning of both his own and others' ideas and beliefs. The goal of Socrates' relentless questioning is to uncover and expose what we really think, so that we can then critically examine the reasons why we have such thoughts. Callicles endorses the ancient doctrine of natural justice -- a doctrine still very much alive today, having been revived by the German philosopher Nietzsche (1844-1900). Socrates found this doctrine of 'might makes right' to be incapable of producing true justice, nobility or happiness. And in calling this doctrine into question Socrates called into question the legitimacy of Athens' rulers. His fate was sealed when he allegedly called into question the traditional gods of Athens' state religion. In his account of Socrates trial Plato has his teacher compare himself to a 'stinging fly' that never stops disturbing and challenging the citizens of Athens. And as all of us know, the annoying fly is not long to this world:

Socrates. Well, supposing, as I said, that you should offer to acquit me on these terms, I should reply, Gentleman, I am your very grateful and devoted servant, but I owe a greater obedience to God than to you, and so long as I draw breath and have my faculties, I shall never stop practicing philosophy and exhorting you and elucidating the truth for everyone I meet. I shall go on saying that ... you are an Athenian and belong to a city which is the greatest and most famous in the world for its wisdom and strength. Are you not ashamed that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible, and similarly with reputation and honor, and give no attention or thought to truth and understanding and the perfection of your soul?

....Now if I corrupt the young by this message, the message would seem to be harmful, but if anyone says that my message is different from this, he is talking nonsense.....

....If you put me to death, you will not easily find anyone to take my place. It is literally true, even if it sounds rather comical, that God has specially appointed me to this city, as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly. It seems to me that God has attached me to this city to perform the office of such a fly, and all day long I never cease to settle here, there, and everywhere, rousing, persuading, and reproving every one of you. You will not easily find another one like me, and if you take my advice you will spare me my life. I suspect however, that before long you will awake from your drowsing, and in your annoyance you will take Anytus' advice and finish me off with a single slap, and then you will go on sleeping till the end of your days, unless God in his care for you sends someone to take my place (*Apology*, 29D-31).

Even this brief passage gives us ample evidence of why the figure of Socrates has come to be regarded as a symbol of the philosophical life. But as is the case with the saints and holy men of religious traditions, it is a rare person who can actually live up to the grueling standards allegedly maintained by Socrates. But try we must if we seek to do philosophy. Towards the end of the *Apology*, when it is clear that his life will not be spared, Socrates once again exhorts his listeners with what has become the most famous line ever uttered by a philosopher:

I tell you to let no day pass without discussing goodness and all the other subjects about which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others is really the very best thing that a man can do, and that life without this sort of examination is not worth living (38A).

Yet as Socrates' fate so clearly illustrates there are dangers to leading such a life of open and critical inquiry. Although the charges brought against him were most likely fabricated, the very fact that his accusers chose to charge him with corrupting the minds of the youth of Athens -- by teaching them to question all that both their political and religious traditions held sacred -- this very fact demonstrates the risks involved in taking the discipline of philosophy seriously. Even if we don't find ourselves critiquing our society's political and religious traditions, we still run the risks inherent when we begin to call into question everything that we have been taught

to believe is true. As the American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) wrote:

God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose; take whichever you please — you can never have both.

So why do philosophy if all it has to offer is the promise of uncertainty and discomfort? The response is simple yet problematic: philosophy, as the love of wisdom, offers us the possibility of genuine freedom. Because philosophy strives to cultivate wisdom, it offers us the possibility of learning something about what it means to be wise. And it is wisdom that is required if we are ever to live as truly free individuals in a truly free society.

READINGS *The Myth of Sisyphus*, by Albert Camus (1913-1960)

An argument for how the realization of the absurdity of human existence can lead to insight.

“THERE IS BUT ONE TRULY SERIOUS PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM, AND THAT IS SUICIDE. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest--whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories--comes afterwards. These are games; one must first answer. And if it is true, as Nietzsche claims, that a philosopher, to deserve our respect, must preach by example, you can appreciate the importance of that reply, for it will precede the definitive act. These are facts the heart can feel; yet they call for careful study before they become clear to the intellect.

If I ask myself how to judge that this question is more urgent than that, I reply that one judges by the actions it entails. I have never seen anyone die for the ontological argument.

Galileo, who held a scientific truth of great importance, abjured it with the greatest ease as soon as it endangered his life. In a certain sense, he did right.' That truth was not worth the stake. Whether the earth or the sun revolves around the other is a matter of profound indifference. To tell the truth, it is a futile question. On the other hand, I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living. I see others paradoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living (what is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying). I therefore conclude that the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions. How to answer it, On all essential problems (I mean thereby those that run the risk of leading to death or those that intensify the passion of living) there are probably but two methods of thought: the method of La Palisse and the method of Don Quixote. Solely the balance between evidence and lyricism can allow us to achieve simultaneously emotion and lucidity. In a subject at once so humble and so heavy with emotion, the learned and classical dialectic must yield, one can see, to a more modest attitude of mind deriving at one and the same time from common sense and understanding. ...

All great deeds and all great thoughts have a ridiculous beginning. Great works are often born on a street corner or in a restaurant's revolving door. So it is with absurdity. The absurd world more than others derives its nobility from that abject birth. In certain situations, replying "nothing" when asked what one is thinking about may be pretense in a man. Those who are loved are well aware of this. But if that reply is sincere, if it symbolizes that odd state of soul in which the void becomes eloquent, in which the chain of daily gestures is broken, in which the heart vainly seeks the link that will connect it again, then it is as it were the first sign of absurdity.

It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm --this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the "why" arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with

amazement. "Begins"--this is important. Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows. What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definitive awakening. At the end of the awakening comes, in time, the consequence: suicide or recovery. In itself weariness has something sickening about it. Here, I must conclude that it is good. For everything begins with consciousness and nothing is worth anything except through it. There is nothing original about these remarks. But they are obvious; that is enough for a while, during a sketchy reconnaissance in the origins of the absurd. Mere "anxiety," as Heidegger says, is at the source of everything.

Likewise and during every day of an unillustrious life, time carries us. But a moment always comes when we have to carry it. We live on the future: L'tomorrow," "later on," "when you have made your way," "you will understand when you are old enough." Such irrelevancies are wonderful, for, after all, it's a matter of dying. Yet a day comes when a man notices or says that he is thirty. Thus he asserts his youth. But simultaneously he situates himself in relation to time. He takes his place in it. He admits that he stands at a certain point on a curve that he acknowledges having to travel to its end. He belongs to time, and by the horror that seizes him, he recognizes his worst enemy. Tomorrow, he was longing for tomorrow, whereas everything in him ought to reject it. That revolt of the flesh is the absurd.

A step lower and strangeness creeps in: perceiving that the world is "dense," sensing to what a degree a stone is foreign and irreducible to us, with what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us. At the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman, and these hills, the softness of the sky, the outline of these trees at this very minute lose the illusory meaning with which we had clothed them, henceforth more remote than a lost paradise. The primitive hostility of the world rises up to face us across millennia. For a second we cease to understand it because for centuries we have understood in it solely the images and designs that we had attributed to it beforehand, because henceforth we lack the power to make use of that artifice.

The world evades us because it becomes itself again. That stage scenery masked by habit becomes again what it is. It withdraws at a distance from us. Just as there are days when under the familiar face of a woman, we see as a stranger her we have loved months or years ago, perhaps we shall come even to desire what suddenly leaves us so alone. But the time has not yet come. Just one thing: that denseness and that strangeness of the world is the absurd.

Men, too, secrete the inhuman. At certain moments of lucidity, the mechanical aspect of their gestures, their meaningless pantomime makes silly everything that surrounds them. A man is talking on the telephone behind a glass partition; you cannot hear him, but you see his incomprehensible dumb show: you wonder why he is alive. This discomfort in the face of man's own inhumanity, this incalculable tumble before the image of what we are, this "nausea," as a writer of today calls it, is also the absurd. Likewise the stranger who at certain seconds comes to meet us in a mirror, the familiar and yet alarming brother we encounter in our own photographs is also the absurd.

I come at last to death and to the attitude we have toward it. On this point everything has been said and it is only proper to avoid pathos. Yet one will never be sufficiently surprised that everyone lives as if no one "knew." This is because in reality there is no experience of death. Properly speaking, nothing has been experienced but what has been lived and made conscious. Here, it is barely possible to speak of the experience of others' deaths. It is a substitute, an illusion, and it never quite convinces us. That melancholy convention cannot be persuasive. The horror comes in reality from the mathematical aspect of the event. If time frightens us, this is because it works out the problem and the solution comes after ward. All the pretty speeches about the soul will have their contrary convincingly proved, at least for a time. From this inert body on which a slap makes no mark the soul has disappeared. This elementary and definitive aspect of the adventure constitutes the absurd feeling. Under the fatal lighting of that destiny, its uselessness becomes evident. No code of ethics and no effort are justifiable a priori ill the face of the cruel mathematics that command our condition.

Let me repeat: all this has been said over and over. I am limiting myself here to making a rapid classification and to pointing out these obvious themes. They run through all literatures and all philosophies. Everyday conversation feeds on them. There is no question of reinventing them. But it is essential to be sure of these facts in order to be able to question oneself subsequently on the primordial question. I am interested--let me repeat again--not so much in absurd discoveries as in their consequences. If one is assured of these facts, what is one to conclude, how far is one to go to elude nothing? Is one to die voluntarily or to hope in spite of everything?

Of whom and of what indeed can I say: "I know that!" This heart within me I can feel, and I judge that it exists. This world I can touch, and I likewise judge that it exists. There ends all my knowledge, and the rest is construction. For if I try to seize this self of which I feel sure, if I try to define and to summarize it, it is nothing but water slipping through my fingers. I can sketch one by one all the aspects it is able to assume, all those likewise that have been attributed to it, this upbringing, this origin, this ardor or these silences, this nobility or this vileness. But aspects cannot be added up. This very heart which is mine will forever remain indefinable to me. Between the certainty I have of my existence and the content I try to give to that assurance, the gap will never be filled. Forever I shall be a stranger to myself. In psychology as in logic, there are truths but no truth. Socrates' "Know thyself" has as much value as the "Be virtuous" of our confessionalists. They reveal a nostalgia at the same time as an ignorance. They are sterile exercises on great subjects. They are legitimate only in precisely so far as they are approximate.

And here are trees and I know their gnarled surface, water and I feel its taste. These scents of grass and stars at night, certain evenings when the heart relaxes--how shall I negate this world whose power and strength I feel.' Yet all the knowledge on earth will give me nothing to assure me that this world is mine. You describe it to me and you teach me to classify it. You enumerate its laws and in my thirst for knowledge I admit that they are true. You take apart

its mechanism and my hope increases. As the final stage you teach me that this wondrous and multicolored universe can be reduced to the atom and that the atom itself can be reduced to the electron.

All this is good and I wait for you to continue. But you tell me of an invisible planetary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this world to me with an image. I realize then that you have been reduced to poetry: I shall never know. Have I the time to become indignant, You have already changed theories. So that science that was to teach me everything ends up in a hypothesis, that lucidity founders in metaphor, that uncertainty is resolved in a work of art. What need had I of so many efforts? The soft lines of these hills and the hand of evening on this troubled heart teach me much more. I have re turned to my beginning. I realize that if through science I can see phenomena and enumerate them, I cannot, for all that, apprehend the world. Were I to trace its entire relief with my finger, I should not know any more. And you give me the choice between a description that is sure but that teaches me nothing and hypotheses that claim to teach me but that are not sure. A stranger to myself and to the world, armed solely with a thought that negates itself as soon as it asserts, what is this condition in which I can have peace only by refusing to know and to live, in which the appetite for conquest bumps into walls that defy its assaults! To will is to stir up paradoxes. Everything is ordered in such a way as to bring into being that poisoned peace produced by thoughtlessness, lack of heart, or fatal renunciations.

Hence the intelligence, too, tells me in its way that this world is absurd. Its contrary, blind reason, may well claim that all is clear; I was waiting for proof and longing for it to be right. But despite so many pretentious centuries and over the heads of so many eloquent and persuasive men, I know that is false. On this plane, at least, there is no happiness if I cannot know. That universal reason, practical or ethical, that determinism, those categories that explain everything are enough to make a decent man laugh. They have nothing to do with the mind. They negate its profound truth, which is to be enchainèd. In this unintelligible and limited

universe, man's fate henceforth assumes its meaning. A horde of irrationals has sprung up and surrounds him until his ultimate end. In his recovered and now studied lucidity, the feeling of the absurd becomes clear and definite. I said that the world is absurd, but I was too hasty. This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For the moment it is all that links them together. It binds them one to the other as only hatred can weld two creatures together.

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”On Education” By Jiddu Krishnamurti

Jiddu Krishnamurti writes in the following passage, taken from his *Think on These Things*, about the function of education and the role it should play in our lives:

“I wonder if we have ever asked ourselves what education means. Why do we go to school, why do we learn various subjects, why do we pass examinations and compete with each other for better grades., What does this so-called education mean, and what is it all about, This is really a very important question, not only for the students, but also for the parents, for the teachers, and for everyone who loves this earth. Why do we go through the struggle to be educated! Is it merely in order to pass some examinations and get a job?’ Or is it the function of education to prepare us while we are young to understand the whole process of life! Having a job and earning one's livelihood is necessary--but is that all? Are we being educated only for that? Surely, life is not merely a job, an occupation; life is something extraordinarily wide and profound, it is a great mystery, a vast realm in which we function as human beings. If we merely prepare ourselves to earn a livelihood, we shall miss the whole point of life; and to understand life is much more important than merely to prepare for examinations and become very proficient in mathematics, physics, or what you will.

So, whether we are teachers or students, is it not important to ask ourselves why we are educating or being educated! And what does life mean? Is not life an extraordinary thing! The birds, the flowers, the flourishing trees, the heavens, the stars, the rivers and the fish therein--all this is life. Life is the poor and the rich; life is the constant battle between groups, races and nations; life is meditation; life is what we call religion, and it is also the subtle, hidden things of the mind--the envies, the ambitions, the passions, the fears, fulfillments and anxieties. All this and much more is life. But we generally prepare ourselves to understand only one small corner of it. We pass certain examinations, find a job, get married, have children, and then become more and more like machines. We remain fearful, anxious, frightened of life. So, is it the function of education to help us understand the whole process of life, or is it merely to prepare us for a vocation, for the best job we can get?

What is going to happen to all of us when we grow to be men and women? Have you ever asked yourselves what you are going to do when you grow up? In all likelihood you will get married, and before you know where you are you will be mothers and fathers; and you will then be tied to a job, or to the kitchen, in which you will gradually wither away. Is that all that your life is going to be? Have you ever asked yourselves this question? Should you not ask it? If your family is wealthy you may have a fairly good position already assured, your father may give you a comfortable job, or you may get richly married; but there also you will decay, deteriorate. Do you see?

Surely, education has no meaning unless it helps you to understand the vast expanse of life with all its subtleties, with its extraordinary beauty, its sorrows and joys. You may earn degrees; you may have a series of letters after your name and land a very good job; but then what? What is the point of it all if in the process your mind becomes dull, weary, stupid! So, while you are young, must you not seek to find out what life is all about? And is it not the true function of education to cultivate in you the intelligence which will try to find the answer to all these problems? Do you know what intelligence is? It is the capacity, surely, to think freely, without fear, without a formula, so that you begin to discover for yourself what is real, what is true; but if you are frightened you will never be intelligent. Any form of ambition, spiritual or

mundane, breeds anxiety, fear; therefore ambition does not help to bring about a mind that is clear, simple, direct, and hence intelligent.

You know, it is really very important while you are young to live in an environment in which there is no fear. Most of us, as we grow older, become frightened; we are afraid of living, afraid of losing a job, afraid of tradition, afraid of what the neighbors, or what the wife or husband would say, afraid of death. Most of us have fear in one form or another; and where there is fear there is no intelligence. And is it not possible for all of us, while we are young, to be in an environment where there is no fear but rather an atmosphere of freedom, not just to do what we like, but to understand the whole process of living? Life is really very beautiful, it is not this ugly thing that we have made of it; and you can appreciate its richness, its depth, its extraordinary loveliness only when you revolt against every thing--against organized religion, against tradition, against the present rotten society--so that you as a human being find out for yourself what is true. Not to imitate but to discover-- that is education, is it not! It is very easy to conform to what your society or your parents and teachers tell you. That is a safe and easy way of existing; but that is not living, because in it there is fear, decay, death. To live is to find out for yourself what is true, and you can do this only when there is freedom, when there is continuous revolution inwardly, within yourself.

But you are not encouraged to do this; no one tells you to question, to find out for yourself..., because if you were to rebel you would become a danger to all that is false. Your parents and society want you to live safely, and you also want to live safely. Living safely generally means living in imitation and therefore in fear. Surely, the function of education is to help each one of us to live freely and without fear, is it not.) And to create an atmosphere in which there is no fear requires a great deal of thinking on your part as well as on the part of the teacher, the educator.

Do you know what this means--what an extraordinary thing it would be to create an atmosphere in which there is no fear! And we must create it, because we see that the world is caught up in endless wars; it is guided by politicians who are always seeking power; it is a world of lawyers, policemen and soldiers, of ambitious men and women all wanting position

and all fighting each other to get it. Then there are the so-called saints, the religious gurus with their followers; they also want power, position, here or in the next life. It is a mad world, completely confused, in which the communist is fighting the capitalist, the socialist is resisting both, and everybody is against somebody, struggling to arrive at a safe place, a position of power or comfort. The world is torn by conflicting beliefs, by caste and class distinctions, by separative nationalities, by every form of stupidity and cruelty--and this is the world you are being educated to fit into. You are encouraged to fit into the framework of this disastrous society; your parents want you to do that, and you also want to fit in.

Now, is it the function of education merely to help you to conform to the pattern of this rotten social order, or is it to give you freedom--complete freedom to grow and create a different society, a new world! We want to have this freedom, not in the future, but now, otherwise we may all be destroyed. We must create immediately an atmosphere of freedom so that you can live and find out for yourselves what is true, so that you become intelligent, so that you are able to face the world and understand it, not just conform to it, so that inwardly, deeply, psychologically you are in constant revolt; because it is only those who are in constant revolt that discover what is true, not the man who conforms, who follows some tradition....

... The question is: if all individuals were in revolt, would not the world be in chaos? But is the present society in such perfect order that chaos would result if everyone revolted against it? Is there not chaos now? Is everything beautiful, uncorrupted! Is everyone living happily, fully, richly? Is man not against man? Is there not ambition, ruthless competition? So the world is already in chaos, that is the first thing to realize. Don't take it for granted that this is an orderly society; don't mesmerize yourself with words. Whether, here in Europe, in America or Russia, the world is in a process of decay. If you see the decay, you have a challenge: you are challenged to find a way of solving this urgent problem. And how you respond to the challenge is important, is it not? If you respond as a Hindu or a Buddhist, a Christian or a communist, then your response is very limited--which is no response at all. You can respond fully, adequately only if there is no fear in you, only if you don't think as a Hindu, a communist or a capitalist, but as a total human being who is trying to solve this problem; and you cannot

solve it unless you yourself are in revolt against the whole thing, against the ambitious acquisitiveness on which society is based. When you yourself are not ambitious, not acquisitive, not clinging to your own security -- only then can you respond to the challenge and create a new world. ...

Do you know what it means to learn! When you are really learning you are learning throughout your life and there is no one special teacher to learn from. Then everything teaches you -- a dead leaf, a bird in flight, a smell, a tear, the rich and the poor, those who are crying, the smile of a woman, the haughtiness of a man. You learn from everything, therefore there is no guide, no philosopher, no guru. Life itself is your teacher, and you are in a state of constant learning. ...

Do you know what attention is? Let us find out. In a class room, when you stare out of the window or pull somebody's hair, the teacher tells you to pay attention. Which means what? That you are not interested in what you are studying and so the teacher compels you to pay attention--which is not attention at all. Attention comes when you are deeply interested in something, for then you love to find out all about it; then your whole mind, your whole being is there. ... When you are doing something with your whole being, not because you want to get somewhere, or have more profit, or greater results, but simply because you love to do it--in that there is no ambition, is there? In that there is no competition; you are not struggling with anyone for first place. And should not education help you to find out what you really love to do so that from the beginning to the end of your life you are working at something which you feel is worthwhile and which for you has deep significance! Otherwise, for the rest of your days, you will be miserable. Not knowing what you really want to do, your mind falls into a routine in which there is only boredom, decay and death. That is why it is very important to find out while you are young what it is you really love to do; and this is the only way to create a new society... “

2

A Philosophy Work-Out: Getting in Shape

In the last chapter we discussed the difference between having a philosophy and doing philosophy. In this chapter we investigate in more detail how we actually do philosophy. To understand how we do philosophy, we must first be completely clear about the difference between studying philosophy and actually doing philosophy -- a difference just as vast as the one between studying basketball and actually playing basketball. This difference exists because the goal of doing philosophy is not simply to memorize a body of information as if they were the 50 states of America. The goal of doing philosophy is something much more *individual* and thus requires your active participation. Doing philosophy requires a specific type of conditioning, of habituating yourself to a new way of thinking and speaking, so that you become critically aware of what *you believe*, and *why* you believe it.

No Pain No Gain

When we want to play a sport seriously we must first condition and train. And as anyone who has ever made the attempt to get in shape knows, this is not an easy process. At first we experience considerable pain because our muscles aren't used to stretching that way or working for that long with such intensity. The same is true for learning how to do philosophy. But instead of training the body, in philosophy we condition our mind to think in new ways, and at a much higher degree of intensity.

What is the point of doing push-ups or wind sprints when you really just want to be shooting baskets or playing the game itself? There is a connection, but it is indirect: your body has to be in shape in order for you to play to your potential. What is the connection between doing logic or analyzing arguments when you really just want to be talking about the meaning of life? There is a connection, but it is indirect: your mind has to be in shape in order to perform to your potential.

So rest assured: just as getting your body in shape can be painful and a challenge, getting your mind in shape to do philosophy will also produce some pain and discomfort. But whereas its possible to sprain your ankle while training to play soccer, its impossible to sprain your brain while doing philosophy.

Our first exercise is to consider how language shapes the way we experience and think about the world.

Language and Reality

Is it possible to think without using words? Can we somehow make ourselves think something without using language as the medium of our thought? If we can, then language must differ from thinking as the feeling of pain differs from a scream: just as it is possible to feel pain without expressing it in a scream, it is possible to think without expressing your thoughts in language. But is this a good comparison? Is thinking that similar to pain? Or is thinking something very different from feeling?

Try the following experiment: close your eyes and sit still for a minute. Clear your mind of any distractive images or thoughts. Now think of something. Are you using words to think? Or are you visualizing images? And if you are just visualizing images, does it make sense to say you are thinking?

The decisive factor in determining whether you are thinking is whether you can communicate your thoughts to someone else. Communication requires more than one person – indeed, it requires a community. And whereas a dance may communicate a certain feeling of joy, but thoughts can only be communicated in the medium of words and language.

The impossibility of thinking without words illustrates to what degree words not only express our reality, but actually help shape it. As anyone who has ever learned a second language knows, *the breadth and depth of your vocabulary expands or limits your ability to meaningfully experience the world*. Like the *dpi* of a computer monitor ,the more words you know, the clearer and more focused your account of reality will be.

The limits of our vocabulary limit the scope of our experience. If everything is ‘cool’ then nothing is cool. That is, if everything is cool then everything is the same -- a fact that defeats the original purpose of developing the superlative in the first place. Homogeneity of language homogenizes experience. Each day blurs into the next as each loses its uniqueness, becoming an unrelenting repetition of the same thing over and over again. But language is the key to unlocking the various different dimensions and regions of the world: each new word is like the taste or smell of a new food or drink. Coffee is not just coffee: there are hundreds of types of coffee. Wine is not just wine: there are thousands of different wines. The same holds true for words and language. Limited ability to construct and understand extended narratives and arguments also limits your ability to experience reality.

It is important to distinguish here between *meaningful experience* and *simple existence*. A meaningful experience is an event which occurs that stays with you and continues to play a significant part in your life, whereas simple existence covers a range of experiences that generate a temporary and passing emotional state. To be capable of finding meaning in an experience, we must be capable of integrating that experience into our life. To do this we require words. If we have

a limited vocabulary, this will limit our ability to understand and assimilate significant experiences.

Language is essential to doing philosophy. If all thinking must be done in words, then to do philosophy by thinking critically requires that we become very sensitive and aware of how we use language.

Linguistic Bad Posture

Think of language as posture, that is, as linguistic posture. Is your posture good, or bad? Are you aware of the way you comport yourself, the way you sit, stand and walk? Do you do these in an affected, self-conscious manner, or in a natural manner? Now consider how you use words. Are you aware of how you use language, the way you speak, formulate sentences, and communicate ideas? Do you use language in a clear and concise manner, paying attention to how you turn a phrase? Or do you fly on auto-pilot, ‘slouching’ perhaps, exhibiting what could be called linguistic bad posture?

Linguistic bad posture shows itself in the frequent use of words and expressions such as ‘like’, ‘I mean’, ‘you know’, ‘uh,’ etc. Words that sound like they should mean something, but don’t. For example, what does the expression ‘you know’ communicate? What linguistic work does the word ‘like’ actually perform? For the most part these words are merely filler, sounds we make with our mouth when the engine is idling, and we’re not sure of what we are saying.

Language is a tool we use for understanding experience. Like any tool it can be used poorly or effectively. How well we use it is usually dependent on how often we use it. And how well we develop our skill at wielding this tool determines how we will understand our experience.

Two goals we strive for in philosophy is CLARITY and PRECISION in our use of language. If we misuse language, or use it in a sloppy or confused way, then we will fail to grasp all that our experience has to offer.

There are two dangers of language and meaning that we try to avoid when doing philosophy: **ambiguity** and **vagueness**.

Ambiguity

L. *ambi* about, around and *agere* meaning to drive, to drive around the point without ever getting there

There are times when we want and need to use language in an ambiguous manner. For example, when we need to be diplomatic. But we do not want, or need, ambiguity in our use of language when we do philosophy.

Vagueness

F. *vagus*, meaning to wander : a vagrant, vagabond, not clearly or definitely stated, out of focus, hazy, obscure

There are times when we want and need to use language in a vague manner. For example when writing laws or making political speeches. But again, not when doing philosophy.

One other linguistic danger is emotive meaning -- a danger usually encountered in the minefield of interpersonal relations. It seems that we frequently misunderstand or are misunderstood when having an intense 'conversation' with a close personal relation. A strange fact when we consider that such failures to communicate occur with the people -- our family and loved ones -- for whom we care the most, and with whom we spend the most time. In these intense exchanges -- when we find ourselves screaming 'That's not what I meant!' or 'I didn't mean it that way!' -- we discover that the connection between a word and its meaning is never that simple or clear.

An excellent example of how words and language can confuse and bewitch us is found in chapter seven of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. In this passage the White King, searching for his messengers, tells Alice,

'Just look along the road, and tell me if you can see either of them.'

'I see nobody on the road,' said Alice

'I only wish I had such eyes,' the King remarked in a fretful tone. 'To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why, it's as much as I can do to see real people, by this light.'

Later the Messenger appears, and the following dialogue ensues:

'Who did you pass on the road?' the King went on, holding out his hand to the Messenger for some more hay.

'Nobody,' said the Messenger.

'Quite right,' said the King: 'this young lady saw him too. So of course Nobody walks slower than you.'

'I do my best,' the Messenger said in a sullen tone. 'I'm sure nobody walks much faster than I do!'

'He can't do that,' said the King, 'or else he'd have been here first.'

Lewis is having fun with the power our language has to lead us astray. The question Lewis plays with has to do with the status of language and its relationship to the world: is the White King arguing about a word, or a **fact** in the world? Obviously, the White King is operating with a mistaken assumption regarding the meaning of the word 'Nobody' and 'nothing.' A mistake that raises the question of whether there is only one meaning of a word, or whether the meaning of a word depends on its context.

Some people argue that the meaning of a word is more similar to a person's face than to a person's fingerprint: there is no clear and determinate meaning to a word, since it changes and grows just as a person's face. Others would argue the exact opposite: the meaning of a word must be definite, since if it is not, then it would be impossible for us to communicate with one another. Since we can and do communicate with each other, it follows that words must have a definite meaning.

These questions are of course central to doing philosophy, since it is philosophy that deals with what are perhaps the most ambiguous, vague and emotionally charged words known to humans: *Truth, Justice, Freedom, and God*. If we are serious about doing philosophy we will have to develop a strategy for dealing with such terms and attempting to define what they mean.

The Literal and the Figurative Meaning of Words

The first step in addressing this perennial problem of philosophy is to make the distinction between two fundamentally different ways we use language: between the *literal* and the *figurative* use of language.

The literal use of a word DENOTES one precise meaning for that word, whereas the figurative use of a word CONNOTES several possible meanings of a term.

When we look at a dictionary entry, the first definition of a word is usually its literal meaning. This is the most basic meaning the word has. When we learn another language we always begin by learning this first and literal meaning of a word. The second, third, and following definitions of a word are its more figurative meanings. These are usually meanings of a word that depend on the context in which the word is used. When we learn another language these secondary meanings are extremely difficult to master. But master them we must, since it is this figurative strata of language that usually yields the richest treasure of literary gold.

For example, the literal meaning of the word *fox* denotes a species of carnivorous quadrupeds, of the genus *canis* or canine. But a figurative use of the word *fox* can be used to connote all types of behavior when the term is applied figuratively to a person. In this sense, we could refer to the metaphor *foxy lady*, or we could use the term in a simile such as *sly like a fox*.

Metaphor

The juxtaposition of two words whose literal meanings contradict. But in the proper context, somehow, this contradiction proves illustrative, and thereby discloses to us something new about the world.

Simile

A figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, dissimilar thing, by the use of the adverb *like*. A simile is distinguished from metaphor in that it makes the comparison between these two things *explicit*.

These two modalities of language can also be distinguished from each other in terms of the way we use them: the literal use is philosophic or *argumentative*, whereas the figural use of language is rhetorical or *persuasive*.

To address the use of literal and figurative language we must take a look at what each of these modalities of language appeals to, and what their respective goals or aims are. The argumentative, literal use of language derives its power from *reason*, and aims to *liberate*. To liberate is to set free, and the aim of philosophy is just that: to free us from ignorance. The rhetorical, figurative use of language derives its strength from its appeal to the *emotions*, and aims to *manipulate*. And to manipulate is not to *educate*, but rather to *indoctrinate*.

Philosophy seeks to *convince* by means of an appeal to reason, and in the name of seeking truth. Rhetoric seeks to persuade by means of an appeal to emotion, and in the name of power. Put another way, philosophy argues to discover the truth, whereas rhetoric argues to win the argument.

Reason and Emotion

The difference between an account (*ratio*) and agitation.

The word reason derives from the Latin term *ratio*, which means to account, to calculate, or to explain. *Ratio* is also the substantive root for rationality, an all important concept in philosophy. The appeal to reason which philosophy makes is an appeal to our common capacity to calculate. This appeal requires that other people can judge the trustworthiness of our account, just as we do when we calculate with numbers. In making this appeal we seek to convince others by means of a common and shared standard of accounting – a shared standard of accounting agreed upon by those parties involved in a debate or conversation.

That an appeal to reason can liberate follows from the fact that we choose whether or not we will participate in the shared standard of accounting. Reason is subject to our will. That is, we can decide whether or not we want to be reasonable. We are free to choose to participate in a conversation or debate. In choosing to participate, and thus to be reasonable, we become active participants in the process of dialogue required to hammer out agreement and consensus in a community.

An appeal to emotion on the other hand involves a completely different dynamic. The word itself derives from the Latin prefix ‘*e*’, meaning out or from, and the verb ‘*movere*’, which means to move. Taken together we find a verb that means to move out, to stir up, or to *agitate*. The appeal to our emotions which rhetoric makes is thus an appeal to our feelings that are, as such, beyond our control. In the same sense that we are powerless to control our moods — we never decide to be in a bad or good mood — in this same sense we

are also powerless to control our emotions. If the rhetorician succeeds in appealing to and thereby stirring up our emotions, we lose the capacity to choose. The voice of reason is shouted down by the rising tide of our feelings. In this process we abdicate our freedom and cede control to whomever it is that has hijacked our emotive faculty. Anyone who has participated in or observed a mass demonstration or political rally understands how the appeal to anger or hatred is usually the most effective means of rallying the faithful to do battle. When the successful demagogue addresses a crowd, he or she never appeals to our sense of reasonableness, since he or she does not want you to reason. Like an effective advertising campaign, the goal is to bypass our reason by an appeal to our emotions. If you reason, you retain control; if you feel, they gain control. And in losing control we becomes susceptible to being manipulated.

The Media Business: Advertising by Patricia Winters Lauro

Strong art and design is taking the front seat as companies try to cut through tat growing enemy of advertising: media clutter. A properly designed visual can provide an instantaneous message and feeling. And it can capture the attention of the consumer quickly.

“No. 1 is that the consumer is on to us,” Bill Oberlander, executive creative director of Kirschenbaum Bond & Partners and President of the Art Directors Club, said. “They know advertising 100 miles off and when they see it coming they’re programmed to shoot it down.

“Art direction,” he said, “offers a **faster**, deeper and **more emotional connection**.”

Not surprisingly, in a media-cluttered world, the look everyone is after is to not look like advertising. The trend is towards minimalist, with clean lines, not as much copy, a strong visual element and often a clever message. The look is designed to catch the consumer off guard – like one print ad that shows a photograph of feet, with just the toes sunburned. The ad is for Wonderbra.

“The ideas – sometimes you have to search and think about it before you get it and there’s often a sense of humor,” said Myrna Davis, executive director of the Art Director’s Club in New York. “It’s not about the product anymore, it’s really about things around the product that engage you, almost like guerilla marketing – **the product is noticed after the feeling**” (*NYTimes*, July, 9, 1999, C6).

A Branding Revolution

Finished Marketplace Ideas, Not Concepts

We develop each idea to the finished state of a real advertisement because of two fundamental beliefs: First, that an idea is simply not an idea until it reaches this stage. And second, the client must have the opportunity to judge each idea just as it would appear in the marketplace, **where the**

consumer reacts emotionally and intuitively much more than logically (Advertisement, *NYTimes*, 8/5/99, B5, Viverito & Altman, Brandmaker Express).

Rational Debate and Emotional Rhetoric

Reason differs primarily from emotion in that reason is something we do, whereas emotion is something that is done to us. When we reason we become proactive and prescribe a course of action to ourselves. In contrast, when we allow emotion to dictate our course of action we find ourselves in the reactive position of using our reason to fulfill the commands of our desires.

When we reason we use language in its plain and literal mode, seeking to appeal to 'common sense' (literally, the sense which is common to all of us). Perhaps the clearest example of such discussion would be found in the traditional model of a debate as found in our adversarial form of trials in our courts of law. Every trial debate begins from a common point of agreement, which is then argued from two opposing sides. Consequently, all parties involved in the discussion participate as equals. The goal of the exercise is to communicate different ideas by means of a common and shared set of ideas -- that is, by *an appeal to reason*.

Figurative language seeks to stir up or agitate our emotions. If successful, the effective use of figurative language can gain control over our thought process. When our emotions are successfully awakened our reasoning powers have a tendency to shut down. The clearest example of this is advertising. Right from the start the advertisement assumes the upper hand since it has been designed to change your behavior: an advertisement works only if it makes you do something that you would not have done before you saw the ad. The predominant means of circumventing your reason is an appeal to carefully researched weakness or anxiety, most often having to do with feelings of inadequacy in regards to sexual attractiveness or status in the eyes of other people. In political 'advertising' the preferred appeal is to fear and latent hatreds. In both instances, the goal is to gain control of your behavior, so that you become conditioned to act in a manner not of your own choosing.

Starbucks and the Power of Emotion

Customization is important, said Scott Bedbury, vice president for marketing at the **Starbucks Coffee** Company, because all too often "consumers don't truly believe there's a huge difference between products."

The solution, said Mr. Bedbury, a former worldwide advertising director of Nike -Inc., who describes himself as "a bit of a brand nut," is to "establish emotional ties" between brands and consumers because "people's hearts are far more powerful than their brains."

For instance, Mr. Bedbury described how Starbucks coddles "what we call our early customers, our pre-caffeinated customers," who often "come into our stores in Manhattan at 6:30 before they even shave or shower."

"We have a great product," Mr. Bedbury said, "but we don't stop there. We offer a 'value proposition' based in large part on how it feels when you walk into a store."

To deepen those feelings, Mr. Bedbury said, Starbucks plans a "major drive" for the coming holiday season, to seek donations from customers "to put a book in the hands of a needy child." The goal, he added, will be one million books (*NYTimes*, 10/21/97, D8).

Education and Indoctrination

Like reason, education strives to provide us with the intellectual tools and habits required to make our own decisions, free of external manipulation. Like rhetoric, indoctrination is designed to train and condition us to act and think in predictable fashion. If truly successful, those who have been conditioned to behave predictably won't even be aware of the fact that they are being manipulated.

As we saw above, philosophy seeks to convince by means of an appeal to reason, and in the name of seeking truth, whereas rhetoric seeks to persuade by means of an appeal to emotion, and in the name of power. In the following passage from Plato's *Republic*, Socrates examines how the apparent truth of the *Sophists* more often than not eclipses the power of the philosopher's use of reason in the pursuit of truth. The Sophists title derives from the same root as the *Sophia* of the philosophers, but their prescriptive goal is not a love of wisdom, but rather an infatuation with power: whereas the philosopher may be *wise*, the Sophist is simply *clever*. Accordingly, the Sophist seeks power by persuading and manipulating his audience and students. An appeal that is always based on an argument that appeals to emotion while cloaked in a thin veil of apparent truth:

And let us ask and answer in turn, first going back to the description of the gentle and noble nature.

Truth, as you will remember, was his leader, whom he followed always and in all things; failing in this, he was an impostor, and had no part or lot in true philosophy.

Yes, that was said.

Well, and is not this one quality, to mention no others, greatly at variance with present notions of him?

Certainly, he said.

And have we not a right to say in his defense, that the true lover of knowledge is always striving after being --that is his nature; he will not rest in the multiplicity of individuals which is an appearance only, but will go on --the keen edge will not be blunted, nor the force of his desire abate until he have attained the knowledge of the true nature of every essence by a sympathetic and kindred power in the soul, and by that power drawing near and mingling and becoming incorporate with very being, having begotten mind and truth, he will have knowledge and will live and grow truly, and then, and not till then, will he cease from his travail. Nothing, he said, can be more just than such a description of him.

And will the love of a lie be any part of a philosopher's nature? Will he not utterly hate a lie?

He will.

And when truth is the captain, we cannot suspect any evil of the band which he leads?

Impossible.

Justice and health of mind will be of the company, and temperance will follow after?

True, he replied.

And our philosopher ... is like a plant which, having proper nurture, must necessarily grow and mature into all virtue, but, if sown and planted in an alien soil, becomes the most noxious of all weeds, unless he be preserved by some divine power. Do you really think, as people so often say, that our youth are corrupted by Sophists, or that private teachers of the art corrupt them in any degree worth speaking of? Are not the public who say these things the greatest of all Sophists? And do they not educate to perfection young and old, men and women alike, and fashion them after their own hearts?

When is this accomplished? he said.

When they meet together, and the world sits down at an assembly, or in a court of law, or a theatre, or a camp, or in any other popular resort, and there is a great uproar, and they praise some things which are being said or done, and blame other things, equally exaggerating both, shouting and clapping their hands, and the echo of the rocks and the place in which they are assembled redoubles the sound of the praise or blame --at such a time will not a young man's heart, as they say, leap within him? Will any private training enable him to stand firm against the overwhelming flood of popular opinion? or will he be carried away by the stream? Will he not have the notions of good and evil which the public in general have --he will do as they do, and as they are, such will he be?

Yes, Socrates; necessity will compel him.

Then let me crave your assent also to a further observation.

What are you going to say?

Why, that all those mercenary individuals, whom the many call Sophists and whom they deem to be their adversaries, do, in fact, teach nothing but the opinion of the many, that is to say, the opinions of their assemblies; and this is their wisdom. I might compare them to a man who should study the tempers and desires of a mighty strong beast who is fed by him—he would learn how to approach and handle him, also at what times and from what causes he is dangerous or the reverse, and what is the meaning of his several cries, and by what sounds, when another utters them, he is soothed or infuriated; and you may suppose further, that when, by continually attending upon him, he has become perfect in all this, he calls his knowledge wisdom, and makes of it a system or art, which he proceeds to teach, although he has no real notion of what he means by the principles or passions of which he is speaking, but calls this honorable and that dishonorable, or good or evil, or just or unjust, all in accordance with the tastes and tempers of the great brute. Good he pronounces to be that in which the beast delights and evil to be that which he dislikes; and he can give no other account of them except that the just and noble are the necessary, having never himself seen, and having no power of explaining to others the nature of either, or the difference between them, which is immense. By heaven, would not such an one be a rare educator?

Indeed, he would. (*Republic*, 492ff).

The Sophists were those intellectuals who taught the politicians of Ancient Greece how to persuade both their fellow senators, and the general populace. Are there similar individuals at work today in our own society?

Reason and Emotion take 2

But are reason and emotion really so different from each other? To a certain degree they do relate to one another like oil and water. With good reason people still use the old saying that ‘the heart has its reasons that the head cannot know.’ But are reason and emotion mutually exclusive? Or do they constitute two extremes of one common continuum of our experience? That is, do they form a *dichotomy*, or a *continuum*?

dichotomy

G. *dicha*, in two parts, *temnein*, to cut: to cut in two

A dichotomy is a division. In logic it is a division of a class into two opposed or mutually exclusive subclasses. For example the *real* as opposed to *unreal*. Significantly, each of the subclasses can exist in their own right, independent of their opposite.

continuum

L. *com*, together, *-tenere*, to hold: to hold together

A continuum is a continuous series that stretches from one extreme to an opposing extreme, yet whose parts cannot be separated or separately discerned. An example of this would be the light spectrum, in which none of the frequencies of light -- even pure white and pure black -- can be totally separated from the whole.

Now let us return to our question about the relationship between reason and emotion. If reason and emotion form a dichotomy, they will have nothing to do with each other. If they form a continuum, it will be impossible to completely separate the one from the other. Once again: are there reasons for our emotions? Or are there emotions for which there are no reasons?

Think of giving money to a panhandler: he looks so down and out and, even though we know he's going to use the money to buy a fifth or a quart bottle, we still give our money. Which one wins out here: reason or emotion? Sometimes the empathetic emotion of pity can dictate to reason a course of action.

Think of a person involved in an abusive relationship. If you have ever come into contact with someone in this terrible situation, you will know all of the different 'reasons' the abused can formulate to 'justify' staying with the abuser. But actually, we might suggest, the controlling forces are the emotions of love and dependency that are forcing the abused to create reasons to stay. Which is just another way of stating that the abused is allowing their emotion to create reasons, that is, to *rationalize* what is by all objective standards a destructive and dangerous relationship. In this case the reasons being formulated are controlled by emotion, and therefore do not provide a justification, but rather a rationalization of destructive behavior.

Finally, consider how people in our consumer society are trained and conditioned to view buying consumer goods as a sort of pleasurable experience. How many times have you heard someone say 'I felt depressed, so I went shopping. I bought some great things, spent way too much money, but hey, I really felt better afterwards.' Once again: emotional response dictates to reason what it should do.

The Dialectic of Reason and Emotion

In order to address the question of how reason and emotion relate, perhaps we should first recall the distinction we introduced in the last chapter between the descriptive IS and the prescriptive SHOULD. If we do this, we could then suggest that there is a descriptive account of how they do - or don't - relate, and a prescriptive account of how the two should relate. From the descriptive standpoint it is fairly clear that too often in our society reason and emotion do appear to relate like water to oil. But from a prescriptive standpoint, how should these two all important forces relate?

A possible answer is that the two should coexist in a *dialectical relationship*, in which each influences and balances out the other.

Dialectic

G. *dialektikos*, dialectic, a method of thinking based on the productive contradiction of opposites (*thesis* and *antithesis*), and their continual resolution (*synthesis*).

The idea of a dialectic arises from the idea that what we know and experience is always the result or synthesis of the interaction of opposing forces, neither of which has an existence independent of its

opposite. The generation of electricity provides the clearest example of a dialectic: neither the positive nor negative poles of electricity can produce a charge on their own. Only when set into opposition can there be the generation of the third element, namely electricity. Yet to explain the generation of this electricity, we must posit two opposing poles or forces, each of which however, has no existence independent of the other. The interaction of two opposing forces generates the third element, which is the only element we experience, namely electricity.

If we posit a dialectical relationship between reason and emotion, then neither of the two should ever gain complete mastery over the other. Similarly, such a relationship would provide the recipe for a philosophy that is both rational yet persuasive, and liberating yet binding.

Thinking and Intuition

Parallel to the distinction between reason and emotion is the distinction between thinking and intuition. In both cases we are concerned, as always, with Aristotle's distinction between 'knowing that' and 'knowing why.' When we say 'I think that....' we mean that we can *provide reasons* for why we think that way. But when we say 'I feel that....' we usually cannot provide any reasons. And when pressed further for reasons or justification, we unfortunately respond with a meek 'That's just the way I feel,' or 'That's just my opinion' -- or worse, 'That's what I was taught to believe.'

We suggested earlier that it is impossible for us to think without using language and words. Most of us at first believe that we can think without words. We speak of some image or picture that seems to float before our mind's eye, and then want to say that seeing this image or picture is thinking. It is this type of thinking, we want to argue, that is non-linguistic. But if to intuit is to engage in a type of internal perception or insight, then what we are really talking about in this example of visualizing an image is actually an instance of intuition and not thinking.

If we accept this distinction we can then suggest that when we first confront a question or a problem, its as if our mind is a camera, taking aim on an object that at first is out of focus, but as we contemplate the problem slowly comes into focus. Or perhaps the solution to the problem slowly begins to 'dawn' on us, and its as if we slowly refine a rough piece of stone into a beautiful piece of sculpture. In both instances, the process we are experiencing is one of moving from the initial intuitive grasp of the issue to the stage of actually thinking about it. And in doing this, we make what was implicit in the intuition explicit in our thinking. We move from blurred vision to clear and distinct focus.

In this scenario, thinking denotes a rational process, a *sequence* of explicit 'moves' made by your mind. Intuition on the other hand, is a type of *looking inside oneself* to *instantaneously* apprehend something. Intuition is thus characterized by an immediacy, by a directness that bypasses the process or sequence of rational thinking.

The difference between thinking and intuition also shows itself in the way we speak. As a process of linking together several ideas, thinking shows itself in the structure we use to form our sentences. As an immediate apprehension of an idea, intuition usually manifests itself in the sudden and sometimes seemingly uncontrollable bursts of speech some of us make when we think we ‘have the answer.’ An intuitive way of communicating also shows itself in the ‘sound-bite’ use of language so common in today’s media driven society. Thinking on the other hand shows itself in the use of complex sentence structures which link together ideas in a definite sequence and order.

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Thinking | A ‘So what do you think about the Knicks’ chances this year?’ |
| | B ‘If they finally get a strong center who can score some points, I think they’ve got a shot at the title.’ |
| Intuiting | A ‘So what do you think about the Knicks’ chances this year?’ |
| | B ‘Going all the way.’ |

In our everyday activities we usually only say as much as we need to get done whatever it is we’re doing. That is, we function on *auto-pilot*, flying by habit and intuition. But as we have suggested, the process of doing philosophy is the process of breaking with habit, of becoming conscious of what we believe and how those beliefs guide and impact our life.

We all have a philosophy. That is, we all have a system of beliefs. For most of us, our belief system forms the implicit backdrop against which we go through our daily lives. We have suggested that the transition from having a philosophy to actually doing a philosophy is characterized by making that *implicit* backdrop of *inherited beliefs explicit*. And this process of making the implicit belief system explicit is that of moving from a state of ignorance to that of being educated.

We earlier noted that ignorance is a cognate of the verb to ignore, that is, to not pay attention to. By ignoring our system of beliefs -- by never calling into question what we believe or why we believe it -- our beliefs remain implicit and unexamined.

To educate originally derives from the Latin *educere*, which means to bring or draw out. Education, as it impacts and relates to our own philosophy, is thus a bringing or drawing out, a making explicit, an unfolding of what we believe.

Let’s get extreme: most of us do not *think*. We are creatures of habit who have been trained by our society to act in predictable ways. We use the phrase ‘I feel that...’ more often than we say ‘I think that....’ And in an image driven society, we seem to be relying more and more on intuition than on thinking to help us navigate our way through life.

To *do philosophy* we must learn how *to think* in the strict sense of the word.

This means that we must learn to make what is implicit in our beliefs and opinions explicit, so that we may become capable of understanding what and why we believe the way we do.

To think means to engage your mind rationally, to move in a sequence of reasoned steps from one idea to the next. We begin with intuition. But we move from its immediacy to the intermediary sequences of thinking that aim at reaching a reasoned or justifiable conclusion. The rules whereby we execute this process of rational thinking are the rules of logic, the topic of our next chapter.

READINGS George Orwell's *1984* and **Newspeak**

The following text is taken from the appendix to George Orwell's *1984*. Written after World War II, *1984* describes life in a totalitarian country of the then distant future of the 1980s. In this dystopia Orwell presents us with a society whose ruling class has figured out the key to absolute power: an uneducated electorate. Standing Thomas Jefferson's ideal of an 'enlightened electorate' on its head, the rulers of Oceania make sure that 'the proles' of their society are as ignorant as possible. To achieve this goal the rulers -- Big Brother -- provide the proles with plenty of alcohol to cloud their minds, and an ever changing supply of 'pop music' to keep them distracted and entertained. But the most effective tool Big Brother uses to control the proles is language: through the use of 'Newspeak' Big Brother restricts the vocabulary and inverts the logic of 'Oldspeak' into a 'newspeak' that effectively removes the possibility of free thinking. As you read this excerpt consider whether our society shows any use of 'newspeak.'

(Bold and alternating typeface are added to the original text format.)

PRINCIPLES OF NEWSPEAK From the Appendix of George Orwell's *1984*

NEWSPEAK WAS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF OCEANIA and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism. In the year 1984 there was not as yet anyone who used Newspeak as his sole means of communication, either in speech or writing. The leading articles in the *Times* were written in it, but this was a tour de force which could only be carried out by a specialist. It was expected that Newspeak would have finally superseded Oldspeak (or Standard English, as we should call it) by about the year 2050. Meanwhile it gained ground steadily, all Party members tending to use Newspeak words and grammatical constructions more and more in their everyday speech. The version in use in 1984, and embodied in the Ninth and Tenth Editions of the Newspeak dictionary, was a provisional one, and contained many superfluous words and archaic formations which were due to be suppressed later.

It is with the final, perfected version, as embodied in the Eleventh Edition of the dictionary, that we are concerned here.

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, **but to make all other-modes of thought impossible**. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought—that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc—should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words. Its vocabulary was so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could properly wish to express, while excluding all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods. This was done partly by the invention of new words, but chiefly by **eliminating undesirable words** and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatever. To give a single example. The word *free* still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as "This dog is free from lice" or "This field is free from weeds." It could not be used in its old sense of "politically free" or "intellectually free," **since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed even as concepts**, and were therefore of necessity, nameless. Quite apart from the suppression of definitely heretical words, reduction of vocabulary was regarded as an end in itself, and no word that could be dispensed with was allowed to survive. Newspeak was designed not to extend but to *diminish* the range of thought, and this purpose was directly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum.

Newspeak was founded on the English language as we now know it, though many Newspeak sentences, even when not containing newly created words, would be barely intelligible to an English-speaker of our own day. Newspeak words were divided into three distinct classes, known as the A vocabulary, the B vocabulary (also called compound words), and the C vocabulary. It will be simpler to discuss each class separately, but the grammatical peculiarities of the language can be dealt with in the section devoted to the A vocabulary, since the same rules held good for all three categories.

The A vocabulary. The A vocabulary consisted of words needed for the business of everyday life—for such things as eating, drinking, working, putting on one's clothes, going up and down stairs, riding in vehicles, gardening, cooking, and the like. It was composed almost entirely of words that we already possess—words like *hit, run, dog, tree, sugar, house*, but in comparison with the present-day English vocabulary, their number was extremely small, while their meanings were far more rigidly defined. All ambiguities and shades of meaning had been purged out of them. So far as it could be achieved, a Newspeak word of this class was simply a staccato sound expressing one clearly understood concept. It would have been quite **impossible** to use the A vocabulary for literary purposes or for **political or philosophical discussion**. It was intended only to express simple, purposive thoughts, usually involving **concrete objects or physical actions**.

The grammar of Newspeak had two outstanding peculiarities. The first of these was an almost complete interchangeability between different parts of speech. Any word in the language (in principle this applied even to very abstract words such as *if* or *when*) could be used either as verb, noun, adjective, or adverb. Between the verb and the noun form, when they were of the same root, there was never any variation, this

rule of itself involving the destruction of many archaic forms. The word *thought*, for example, did not exist in Newspeak. Its place was taken by *think*, which did duty for both noun and verb. No etymological principle was involved here; in some cases it was the original noun that was chosen for retention, in other cases the verb. Even where a noun and verb of kindred meaning were not etymologically connected, one or other of them was frequently suppressed. There was, for example, no such word as *cut*, its meaning being sufficiently covered by the noun-verb *knife*. Adjectives were formed by adding the suffix *-ful* to the noun-verb, and adverbs by adding *-wise*. Thus, for example, *speedful* meant "rapid" and *speedwise* meant "quickly." Certain of our present-day adjectives, such as *good*, *strong*, *big*, *black*, *soft*, were retained, but their total number was very small. There was little need for them, since almost any adjectival meaning could be arrived at by adding *-ful* to a noun-verb. None of the now-existing adverbs was retained, except for a very few already ending in *-wise*, the *-wise* termination was invariable. The word *well*, for example, was replaced by *goodwise*....

The second distinguishing mark of Newspeak grammar was its regularity. Subject to a few exceptions which are mentioned below, all inflections followed the same rules. Thus, in all verbs the preterite and- the past participle were the same and ended in *-ed*. The preterite of *steal* was *steeled*, the preterite of *think* was *thanked*, and so on throughout the language, all such forms as *swam*, *gave*, *brought*, *spoke*, *taken*, etc., being abolished. All plurals were made by adding *-s* or *-es* as the case might be. The plurals of *man*, *ox*, *life* were *mans*, *oxes*, *lifes*. Comparison of adjectives was invariably made by adding *-er*, *-est* (*good*, *gooder*, *goodest*), irregular forms and the *more*, *most* formation being suppressed....

The B vocabulary. The B vocabulary consisted of words which had been deliberately constructed for **political purposes**: words, that is to say, which not only had in every case a political implication, but were **intended to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them**. Without a full understanding of the principles of Ingsoc it was difficult to use these words correctly. In some cases they could be translated into Oldspeak, or even into words taken from the A vocabulary, but this usually demanded a long paraphrase and always involved the loss of certain overtones. The B words were a sort of verbal shorthand, often packing whole ranges of ideas into a few syllables, and at the same time more accurate and forcible than ordinary language.

The B words were in all cases compound words.¹ They consisted of two or more words, or portions of words, welded together in an easily pronounceable form. The resulting amalgam was always a noun-verb, and inflected according to the ordinary rules. To take a single example: the word *goodthink*, meaning, very roughly, "orthodoxy," or, if one chose to regard it as a verb, "to think in an orthodox manner." This inflected as follows: noun-verb, *goodthink*; past tense and past participle, *goodthinked*, present participle, *goodthinking*; adjective, *goodthinkful*; adverb, *goodthinkwise*; verbal noun, *goodthinker*....

Some of the B words had highly subtilized meanings, barely intelligible to anyone who had not mastered the language as a whole. Consider, for example, such a typical sentence from a *Times* leading article as *Oldthinkers unbellyfeel Ingsoc*. The shortest rendering that one could make of this in Oldspeak

¹ Compound words, such as *speakwrite*, were of course to be found in the A vocabulary, but these were merely convenient abbreviations and had no special ideological color.

would be: "Those whose ideas were formed before the Revolution cannot have a **full emotional understanding** of the principles of English Socialism." But this is not an adequate translation: To begin with, in order to grasp the full meaning of the Newspeak sentence quoted above, one would have to have a clear idea of what is meant by Ingsoc. And, in addition, only a person thoroughly grounded in Ingsoc could appreciate the full force of the word *bellyfeel*, which implied a **blind, enthusiastic acceptance** difficult to imagine today; or of the word *oldthink*, which was inextricably mixed up with the idea of wickedness and decadence. But the special function of certain Newspeak words, of which *oldthink* was one, was not so much to express meanings as to destroy them. These words, necessarily few in number, had had their meanings extended until they contained within themselves whole batteries of words which, as they were sufficiently covered by a single comprehensive term, could now be scrapped and forgotten. The greatest difficulty facing the compilers of the Newspeak Dictionary was not to invent new words, but, having invented them, to make sure what they meant: **to make sure, that is to say, what ranges of words they canceled by their existence.**

As we have already seen in the case of the word *free*, words which had once borne a heretical meaning were sometimes retained for the sake of convenience, but only with the undesirable meanings purged out of them. **Countless other words such as honor, justice, morality, internationalism, democracy, science, and religion had simply ceased to exist.** A few blanket words covered them, and, in covering them, abolished them. All words grouping themselves round the concepts of liberty and equality, for instance, were contained in the single word *crimethink*, while all words grouping themselves round the concepts of objectivity and rationalism were contained in the single word *oldthink*. Greater precision would have been dangerous....

No word in the B Vocabulary was ideologically neutral. A great many were euphemisms. Such words, for instance, as *joycamp* (forced-labor camp) or *Minipax* (Ministry of Peace, i.e., Ministry of War) meant almost the exact opposite of what they appeared to mean. Some words, on the other hand, displayed a frank and contemptuous understanding of the real nature of Oceanic society. **An example was prolefeed, meaning the rubbishy entertainment and spurious news which the Party handed out to the masses.** Other words, again, were ambivalent, having the connotation "good" when applied to the Party and "bad" when applied to its enemies. But in addition there were great numbers of words which at first sight appeared to be mere abbreviations and which derived their ideological color not from their meaning but from their structure.

So far as it could be contrived, everything that had or might have political significance of any kind was fitted into the B vocabulary. The name of every organization, or body of people, or doctrine, or country, or institution, or public building, was invariably cut down into the familiar shape; that is, a single easily pronounced word with the smallest number of syllables that would preserve the original derivation. In the Ministry of Truth, for example, the Records Department, in which Winston Smith worked, was called *Recdep*, the Fiction Department was called *Ficdep*, the Teleprograms Department was called *Teledep*, and so on. This was not done solely with the object of saving time... In the beginning the practice had been adopted as it were instinctively, but in Newspeak it was used with a conscious purpose. **It was perceived that in thus abbreviating a name one narrowed and subtly altered its meaning, by cutting out most of the associations that would otherwise cling-to it.** The words *Communist International*, for instance, call

up a composite picture of universal human brotherhood, red flags, barricades, Karl Marx, and the Paris Commune. The word Comintern, on the other hand, suggests merely a tightly knit organization and a well-defined body of doctrine. It refers to something almost as easily recognized, and as limited in purpose, as a chair or a table.... In the same way, the associations called up by a word like *Minitrue* are fewer and more controllable than those called up by *Ministry of Truth*. This accounted not only for the habit of abbreviating whenever possible, but also for the almost exaggerated care that was taken to make every word easily pronounceable....

So did the fact of having very few words to choose from. **Relative to our own, the Newspeak vocabulary was tiny, and new ways of reducing it were constantly being devised.** Newspeak, indeed, differed from almost all other languages in that its vocabulary grew smaller instead of larger every year. Each reduction was a gain, since the smaller the area of choice, the smaller the temptation to take thought. **Ultimately it was hoped to make articulate speech issue from the larynx without involving the higher brain centers at all.** This aim was frankly admitted in the Newspeak word *duckspeak*, meaning "to quack like a duck." Like various other words in the B vocabulary, *duckspeak* was ambivalent in meaning. Provided that the opinions which were quacked out were orthodox ones, it implied nothing but praise, and when the *Times* referred to one of the orators of the Party as a *doubleplusgood duckspeaker* it was paying a warm and valued compliment.

The C vocabulary. The C vocabulary was supplementary to the others and consisted entirely of scientific and technical terms. These resembled the scientific terms in use today, and were constructed from the same roots, but the usual care was taken to define them rigidly and strip them of undesirable meanings. They followed the same grammatical rules as the words in the other two vocabularies. Very few of the C words had any currency either in everyday speech or in political speech. Any scientific worker or technician could find all the words he needed in the list devoted to his own specialty, but he seldom had more than a smattering of the words occurring in the other lists. Only a very few words were common to all lists, and there was no vocabulary expressing the function of Science as a habit of mind, or a method of thought, irrespective of its particular branches. There was, indeed, no word for "Science," any meaning that it could possibly bear being already sufficiently covered by the word *Ingsoc*.

From the foregoing account it will be seen that in Newspeak the expression of unorthodox opinions, above a very low level, was well-nigh impossible. It was of course possible to utter heresies of a very crude kind, a species of blasphemy. It would have been possible, for example, to say *Big Brother is ungood*. But this statement, which to an orthodox ear merely conveyed a self-evident absurdity, could not have been sustained by reasoned argument, because the necessary words were not available. Ideas inimical to Ingsoc could only be entertained in a vague wordless form, and could only be named in very broad terms which lumped together and condemned whole groups of heresies without defining them in doing so. One could, in fact, only use Newspeak for unorthodox purposes by illegitimately translating some of the words back into Oldspeak. For example, *All men are equal* was a possible Newspeak sentence, but only in the same sense in which *All men are redhaired* is a possible Oldspeak sentence. It did not contain a grammatical error, but it expressed a palpable untruth, i.e., that all men are of equal size, weight, or strength. **The concept of political equality no longer existed, and this secondary meaning had accordingly been purged out of the word equal.** In 1984, when Oldspeak was still the normal means of communication, the danger theoretically existed that in using Newspeak

words one might remember their original meanings. In practice it was not difficult for any person well grounded in *doublethink* to avoid doing this, but within a couple of generations even the possibility of such a lapse would have vanished. **A person growing up with Newspeak as his sole language would no more know that *equal* had once had the secondary meaning of "politically equal," or that *free* had once meant "intellectually free," than, for instance, a person who had never heard of chess would be aware of the secondary meanings attaching to *queen* and *rook*.** There would be many crimes and errors which it would be beyond his power to commit, simply because they were nameless and therefore unimaginable. And it was to be foreseen that with the passage of time the distinguishing characteristics of Newspeak would become more and more pronounced--its words growing fewer and fewer, their meanings more and more rigid, and the chance of putting them to improper uses always diminishing.

When Oldspeak had been once and for all superseded, the last link with the past would have been severed. History had already been rewritten, but fragments of the literature of the past survived here and there, imperfectly censored, and so long as one retained one's knowledge of Oldspeak it was possible to read them. In the future such fragments, even if they chanced to survive, would be unintelligible and untranslatable. It was impossible to translate any passage of Oldspeak into Newspeak unless it either referred to some technical process or some very simple everyday action, or was already orthodox (*good-thinkful* would be the Newspeak expression) in tendency. In practice this meant that no book written before approximately 1960 could be translated as a whole. Pre-revolutionary literature could only be subjected to ideological translation--that is, alteration in sense as well as language. Take for example the well-known passage from the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government . . .

It would have been quite impossible to render this into Newspeak while keeping to the sense of the original. The nearest one could come to doing so would be to swallow the whole passage up in the single word *crimethink*. A full translation could only be an ideological translation, whereby Jefferson's words would be changed into a panegyric on absolute government.

A good deal of the literature of the past was, indeed, already being transformed in this way. Considerations of prestige made it desirable to preserve the memory of certain historical figures, while at the same time bringing their achievements into line with the philosophy of Ingloc. Various writers, such as Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, Byron, Dickens and some others were therefore in process of translation; when the task had been completed, their original writings, with all else that survived of the literature of the past, would be destroyed. These translations were a slow and difficult business, and it was not expected that they would be finished before the first or second decade of the twenty-first century. There were also large quantities of merely utilitarian literature--indispensable technical manuals and the like--that had to be treated in the same way. It was chiefly in order to allow time for the preliminary work of translation that the final adoption of Newspeak had been fixed for so late a date as 2050.

The Arts of Selling by Aldous Huxley

From the 'other' classic dystopia of this century, *Brave New World*, a book first published in 1932. This essay is included in the updated edition from 1956, in which Huxley adds an extended postscript entitled *Brave New World Revisited*. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the unchallenged rise of consumerism, it would appear that Huxley's vision of the future was more prophetic than Orwell's. Or was it?

THE SURVIVAL OF DEMOCRACY DEPENDS ON THE ABILITY OF LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE TO MAKE REALISTIC CHOICES IN THE LIGHT OF ADEQUATE INFORMATION. A dictatorship, on the other hand, maintains itself by censoring or distorting the facts, and by appealing, not to reason, not to enlightened self-interest, but to passion and prejudice, to the powerful "hidden forces," as Hitler called them, present in the unconscious depths of every human mind.

In the West, democratic principles are proclaimed and many able and conscientious publicists do their best to supply electors with adequate information and to persuade them, by rational argument, to make realistic choices in the light of that information. All this is greatly to the good. But unfortunately propaganda in the Western democracies, above all in America, has two faces and a divided personality. In charge of the editorial department there is often a democratic Dr. Jekyll—a propagandist who would be very happy to prove that John Dewey had been right about the ability of human nature to respond to truth and reason. But this worthy man controls only a part of the machinery of mass communication. In charge of advertising we find an anti-democratic, because anti-rational, Mr. Hyde or rather a Dr. Hyde, for Hyde is now a Ph.D. in psychology and has a master's degree as well in the social sciences. This Dr. Hyde would be very unhappy indeed if everybody always lived up to John Dewey's faith in human nature. Truth and reason are Jekyll's affair, not his. Hyde is a motivation analyst, and his business is to study human weaknesses and failings, to investigate those unconscious desires and fears by which so much of men's conscious thinking and overt doing is determined. And he does this, not in the spirit of the moralist who would like to make people better, or of the physician who would like to improve their health, but simply in order to find out the best way to take advantage of their ignorance and to exploit their irrationality for the pecuniary benefit of his employers. But after all, it may be argued, "capitalism is dead, consumerism is king"—and consumerism requires the services of expert salesmen versed in all the arts (including the more insidious arts) of persuasion. Under a free enterprise system commercial propaganda by any and every means is absolutely indispensable. But the indispensable is not necessarily the desirable. What is demonstrably good in the sphere of economics may be far from good for men and women as voters or even as human beings. An earlier, more moralistic generation would have been profoundly shocked by the bland cynicism of the motivation analysts. Today we read a book like Mr. Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*, and are more amused than horrified, more resigned than indignant. Given Freud, given Behaviorism, given the mass producer's chronic-ally desperate need for mass consumption, this is the sort of thing that is only to be expected. But what, we may ask, is the sort of thing that is to be expected in the future? Are Hyde's activities compatible in the long run with Jekyll's? Can a campaign in favor of rationality be successful in the teeth of another and even more vigorous campaign in favor of irrationality? These are questions which, for the moment, I shall not attempt to answer, but shall leave hanging, so to speak, as a backdrop to our discussion of the methods of mass persuasion in a technologically advanced democratic society.

The task of the commercial propagandist in a democracy is in some ways easier and in some ways more difficult than that of a political propagandist employed by an established dictator or a dictator in the making. It is easier inasmuch as almost everyone starts out with a prejudice in favor of beer cigarettes and iceboxes, whereas almost nobody starts on with a prejudice in favor of tyrants. It is more difficult inasmuch as the commercial propagandist is not permitted, by the rules of his particular game, to appeal to the more savage instincts of his public. The advertiser of dairy products would dearly love to tell his readers and listeners that all their troubles are caused by the machinations of a gang of godless international margarine manufacturers, and that it is their patriotic duty to march out and burn the oppressors' factories. This sort of thing, however, is ruled out, and he must be content with a milder approach. But the mild approach is less exciting than the approach through verbal or physical violence. In the long run, anger and hatred are self-defeating emotions. But in the short run they pay high dividends in the form of psychological and even (since they release large quantities of adrenalin and noradrenalin) physiological satisfaction. People may start out with an initial prejudice against tyrants; but when tyrants or would-be tyrants treat them to adrenalin releasing propaganda about the wickedness of their enemies -particularly of enemies weak enough to be persecuted they are ready to follow him with enthusiasm. in his speeches Hitler kept repeating such words as 'hatred,' "force," "ruthless," "crush," "smash"; and he would accompany these violent words with even more violent gestures. He would yell, he would scream, his veins would swell, his face would turn purple. Strong emotion (as every actor and dramatist knows) is in the highest degree contagious)Infected by the malignant frenzy of the orator, the audience would groan and sob and scream in an orgy of uninhibited passion. And these orgies were so enjoyable that most of those who had experienced them eagerly came back for more. Almost all of us long for peace and freedom; but very few of us have much enthusiasm for the thoughts, feelings and actions that make for peace and freedom. Conversely almost nobody wants war or tyranny; se pleasure in the but a great many people find an intense pleasure in the thoughts, feelings and actions that make for war and tyranny. These thoughts, feelings and actions are too dangerous to be I purposes. Accepting this handicap exploited for commercial purposes. Accepting this handicap, the advertising man must do the best he can with the less intoxicating emotions, the quieter forms of irrationality.

Effective rational propaganda becomes possible only when there is a clear understanding, on the part of all concerned, of the nature of symbols and of their relations to the things and events symbolized. Irrational propaganda depends for its effectiveness on a general failure to understand the nature of symbols. Simple-minded people tend to equate the symbol with what it stands for) to attribute to things and events some of the qualities expressed by the words in terms of which the propagandist has chosen, for his own purposes, to talk about them. Consider a simple example. Most cosmetics are made of lanolin, which is a mixture of purified wool fat and water beaten up into an emulsion. This emulsion has many valuable properties: it penetrates the skin, it does not become rancid, it is mildly antiseptic and so forth. But the commercial propagandists do not speak about the genuine virtues of the emulsion. They give it some picturesquely voluptuous name, talk ecstatically and misleadingly about feminine beauty and show pictures of gorgeous blondes nourishing their tissues with skin food. "The cosmetic manufacturers," one of their number has written, "are not selling lanolin, they are selling hope." For this hope, this fraudulent implication of a promise that they will be transfigured, women will pay ten or twenty times the

value of the emulsion which the propagandists have so skillfully related, by means of misleading symbols, to a deep-seated and almost universal feminine wish—the wish to be more attractive to members of the opposite sex. The principles underlying this kind of propaganda are extremely simple. Find some common desire, some widespread unconscious fear or anxiety; think out some way to relate this wish or fear to the product you have to sell; then build a bridge of verbal or pictorial symbols over which your customer can pass from fact to compensatory dream, and from the dream to the illusion that your product, when purchased, will make the dream come true. "We no longer buy oranges, we buy vitality. We do not buy just an auto, we buy prestige." And so with all the rest. In toothpaste, for example, we buy, not a mere cleanser and antiseptic, but release from the fear of being sexually repulsive. In vodka and whisky we are not buying a protoplasmic poison which, in small doses, may depress the nervous system in a psychologically valuable way; we are buying friendliness and good fellowship, the warmth of Dingley Dell and the brilliance of the Mermaid Tavern. With our laxatives we buy the health of a Greek god, the radiance of one of Diana's nymphs. With the monthly best seller we acquire culture, the envy of our less literate neighbors and the respect of the sophisticated. In every case the motivation analyst has found some deep-seated wish or fear, whose energy can be used to move the consumer to part with cash and so, indirectly, to turn the wheels of industry. Stored in the minds and bodies of countless individuals, this potential energy is released by, and transmitted along, a line of symbols carefully laid out so as to bypass rationality and obscure the real issue.

Sometimes the symbols take effect by being disproportionately impressive, haunting and fascinating in their own right. Of this kind are the rites and pomps of religion. These "beauties of holiness" strengthen faith where it already exists and, where there is no faith, contribute to conversion. Appealing, as they do, only to the aesthetic sense, they guarantee neither the truth nor the ethical value of the doctrines with which they have been, quite arbitrarily, associated. As a matter of plain historical fact, the beauties of holiness have often been matched and indeed surpassed by the beauties of unholiness. Under Hitler, for example, the yearly Nuremberg rallies were masterpieces of ritual and theatrical art. "I had spent six years in St. Petersburg before the war in the best days of the old Russian ballet," writes Sir Neville Henderson, the British ambassador to Hitler's Germany, "but for grandiose beauty I have never seen any ballet to compare with the Nuremberg rally. One thinks of Keats—"beauty is truth, truth beauty." Alas, the identity exists only on some ultimate, supramundane level. On the levels of politics and theology, beauty is perfectly compatible with nonsense and tyranny. Which is very fortunate; for if beauty were incompatible with nonsense and tyranny, there would be precious little art in the world. The masterpieces of painting, sculpture and architecture were produced as religious or political propaganda, for the greater glory of a god, a government or a priesthood. But most kings and priests have been s have been despotic and all religions have been riddled with superstition. Genius has been the servant of tyranny and art has advertised the merits of the local cult. Time, as it passes, separates the good art from the bad metaphysics. Can we learn to make this separation, not after the event, but while it is actually taking place? That is the question.

In commercial propaganda the principle of the disproportionately fascinating symbol is clearly understood. Every propagandist has his Art Department, and attempts are constantly being made to beautify the billboards with striking posters, the advertising pages of magazines with lively drawings and photographs. There are no masterpieces; for masterpieces appeal only to a limited audience, and the commercial propagandist is out to captivate the majority. For him, the ideal is a

moderate excellence. Those who like this not too good, but sufficiently striking, art may be expected to like the products with which it has been associated and for which it symbolically stands.

Another disproportionately fascinating symbol is the Singing Commercial. Singing Commercials are a recent invention; but the Singing Theological and the Singing Devotional-the hymn and the psalm-are as old as religion itself. Singing Militaries, or marching songs, are coeval with war, and Singing Patriotics, the precursors of our national anthems, were doubtless used to promote group solidarity, to emphasize the distinction between "us" and them," by the wandering bands of paleolithic hunters and food gatherers. To most people music is intrinsically attractive. Moreover, melo tend to ingrain themselves in the listener's mind. A tune will haunt the memory during the whole of a lifetime. Here, for example, is a quite uninteresting statement or value judgment. As it stands nobody will pay attention to it. But now set the words to a catchy and easily remembered tune. Immediately they become words of power. Moreover, the words will tend automatically to repeat themselves every time the melody is heard or spontaneously remembered. Orpheus has entered into an alliance with Pavlov - the power of sound with the conditioned reflex. For the commercial propagandist, as for his colleagues in the fields of politics and religion, music possesses yet another advantage. Nonsense which it would be shameful for a reasonable being to write, speak or hear spoken can be sung or listened to by that same rational being with pleasure and even with a kind of intellectual conviction. Can we learn to separate the pleasure of singing or of listening to song from the all too human tendency to believe in the Propaganda which the song is putting over? That again is the question.

Thanks to compulsory education and the rotary press, the propagandist has been able, for many years past, to convey his messages to virtually every adult in every civilized country. Today, thanks to radio and television, he is in the happy position of being able to communicate even with unschooled adults and not yet literate children.

Children, as might be expected, are highly susceptible to propaganda. They are ignorant of the world and its ways, and therefore completely unsuspecting. Their critical faculties are undeveloped. The youngest of them have not yet reached the age of reason and the older ones lack the experience on which their new-found rationality can effectively work. In Europe, conscripts used to be playfully referred to as 'cannon fodder.' Their little brothers and sisters have now become radio fodder and television fodder. In my childhood we were taught to sing nursery rhymes and, in pious households, hymns. Today the little ones warble the Singing Commercials. Which is better—"Rheingold is my beer, the dry beer," or "Hey diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle"? "Abide with me" or "You'll wonder where the yellow went, when you brush your teeth with Pepsodent"? Who knows?

"I don't say that children should be forced to harass their parents into buying products they've seen advertised on television, but at the same time I cannot close my eyes to the fact that it's being done every day." So writes the star of one of the many programs beamed to a juvenile audience. "Children," he adds, "are living, talking records of what we tell them every day." And in due course these living, talking records of television commercials will grow up, earn money and buy the products of industry. "Think," writes Mr. Clyde Miller ecstatically, "think of what it can mean to your firm in profits if you can condition a million or ten million children, who will grow up into adults trained to buy your product, as soldiers are trained in advance when they hear the trigger words, Forward March!" Yes, just think of it! And at the same time remember that the dictators

and the would-be dictators have been thinking about this sort of thing for years, and that millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions of children are in process of growing up to buy the local despot's ideological product and, like well-trained soldiers, to respond with appropriate behavior to the trigger words implanted in those young minds by the despot's propagandists.

Self-government is in inverse ratio to numbers. The larger the constituency, the less the value of any particular vote. When he is merely one of millions, the individual elector feels himself to be impotent, a negligible quantity. The candidates he has voted into office are far away, at the top of the pyramid of power. Theoretically they are the servants of the people; but in fact it is the servants who give orders and the people, far off at the base of the great pyramid, who must obey. Increasing population and advancing technology have resulted in an increase in the number and complexity of organizations, an increase in the amount of power concentrated in the hands of officials and a corresponding decrease in the amount of control exercised by electors, coupled with a decrease in the public's regard for democratic procedures. Already weakened by the vast impersonal forces at work in the modern world, democratic institutions are now being undermined from within by the politicians and their propagandists.

Human beings act in a great variety of irrational ways, but all of them seem to be capable, if given a fair chance, of making a reasonable choice in the light of available evidence. Democratic institutions can be made to work only if all concerned do their best to impart knowledge and to encourage rationality. But today, in the world's most powerful democracy, the politicians and their propagandists prefer to make nonsense of democratic procedures by appealing almost exclusively to the ignorance and irrationality of the electors. "Both parties," we were told in 1956 by the editor of a leading business journal, "will merchandise their candidates and issues by the same methods that business has developed to sell goods. These include scientific selection of appeals and planned repetition. . . . Radio spot announcements and ads will repeat phrases with a planned intensity. Billboards will push slogans of proven power. . . . Candidates need, in addition to rich voices and good diction, to be able to look sincerely at the TV camera."

The political merchandisers appeal only to the weaknesses of voters, never to their potential strength. They make no attempt to educate the masses into becoming fit for self-government; they are content merely to manipulate and exploit them. For this purpose all the resources of psychology and the social sciences are mobilized and set to work. Carefully selected samples of the electorate are given "interviews in depth." These interviews in depth reveal the unconscious fears and wishes most prevalent in a given society at the time of an election. Phrases and images aimed at allaying or, if necessary, enhancing these fears, at satisfying these wishes, at least symbolically, are then chosen by the experts, tried out on readers and audiences, changed or improved in the light of the information thus obtained. After which the political campaign is ready for the mass communicators. All that is now needed is money and a candidate who can be coached to look sincere." Under the new dispensation, political principles and plans for specific action have come to lose most of their importance. The personality of the candidate and the way he is projected by the advertising experts are the things that really matter.

In one way or another, as vigorous he-man or kindly father, the candidate must be glamorous. He must also be an entertainer who never bores his audience. Inured to television and radio, that audience is accustomed to being distracted and does not like to be asked to concentrate or make a prolonged intellectual effort. All speeches by the entertainer-candidate must therefore be short and snappy. The great issues of the day must be dealt with in five minutes at the most—and preferably (since the audience will be eager to pass on to something a little livelier

than inflation or the H-bomb) in sixty seconds flat. The nature of oratory is such that there has always been a tendency among politicians and clergymen to over-simplify complex issues. From a pulpit or a platform even the most conscientious of speakers finds it very difficult to tell the whole truth. The methods now being used to merchandise the political candidate as though he were a deodorant positively guarantee the electorate against ever hearing the truth about anything.

3 Logic

Gk. *logike*, logic, pertaining to speech, reason; from Gk. *logos*, articulate speech, reason. The general study of the correct rules of reasoning which includes 1) the study of the formal and objective correctness of the structure of arguments, and 2) the study of the strength of the evidential link between premises and conclusions of arguments.

Axiomatic Laws of Logic

The Law of Non-Contradiction

Nothing can both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect.

A thing either is or is not.

A thing is what it is.

The Law of the Excluded Middle

The Law of Identity

These three laws of logic form the foundation of all rational thought by stating how the things of our world can or cannot *be*; a prescription which requires that the things of our world be determinate. This prescription, however, is not just about the nature of the things of our world; each law could also be recast as an epistemological law that states what can or cannot be *true* in statements about the world. Accordingly, the Law of Non-Contradiction would read ‘No statement can both be true and false at the same time and in the same respect.’ The Law of the Excluded Middle would read ‘A statement is either true or false,’ from which we can infer that if a statement is true, then its negative is false.

As fundamental tenets of correct reasoning, these laws are themselves incapable of being proved. Just as a proof in geometry depends on axioms that cannot be proved to be true, all rational thinking ultimately follows from these axiomatic laws of logic which,

as the basis of proof, cannot at the same time function as the conclusion of a proof. Consequently, their truth cannot be directly proved. Rather their truth can only be demonstrated by showing what fallacious consequences would follow if we were to deny their truth.

For example, consider that the etymologocal root of logic is the Greek term logos, which originally meant articulate speech. The axiomatic laws of logic are then the laws of articulate speech. Since we cannot prove the truth of this contention directly, we are forced to demonstrate their truth indirectly. That is, if we deny the truth of these three laws, then what would follow? Would we be capable of engaging in articulate speech if the objects of our words could both be said to exist and not to exist at the same time? Or that a word could have two contradictory meanings at the same time? As Plato argued in his *Parmenides*, the denial of these laws of articulate speech would reduce language to meaningless babble:

“...if there is someone who in turn will not allow that there are forms of things, paying attention to all these problems, not allowing even some idea defining one particular thing, he will then have nothing to turn his thinking to, have nothing on which to fix his thought, and thus not allowing ideas of each of the things to always be the same, he will thoroughly destroy the capacity for significant discourse”
(Parmenides, 136d).

What Plato means by ‘significant discourse’ is speech that clearly and precisely articulates our thoughts. Significant discourse would then exclude the two dangers of language and meaning mentioned in the last chapter: ambiguity and vagueness. We can cultivate habits of mind and language that contribute to significant discourse by examining *arguments*.

Argument

L. *argurere*, to make clear, to prove; from the same root as Gk. *argos*, white, clear. A group of propositions, one of which is claimed to follow from the evidence supplied by the others.

Colloquially we speak of argument as a synonym for fight or dispute. In philosophy however, arguments are the very means whereby we philosophize. As its etymology suggests, the goal of an argument is not to vanquish an opponent, but to attain clarity regarding an idea or belief. Consider the following argument about the perennial debate between nature and nurture:

Identical twins almost always score differently on IQ tests. This in spite of the fact that they come from the same gene pool. In some way then, environment must influence intelligence.

Considered as a whole, these three propositions form an argument. The first two propositions are called premises, and offer reasons to justify the claim made by the third proposition, the conclusion. What makes a good argument is how its premises support its conclusion. If there is a vague or ambiguous relation between the premises and the conclusion then the conclusion of the argument is not justified. But if there is a clear and precise connection between these three propositions, then we are compelled to accept an argument's conclusion. Why? Because in the strongest form of argument -- that of deduction -- the relation between the premises and the conclusion is so clear we say that it follows necessarily: there can be no other possible conclusion. In a deductive argument clarity and precision win out over vagueness and ambiguity.

Argument distinguished from Explanation

Explaining why a person is insane is not the same thing as arguing that the person is insane. Arguments provide reasons for accepting the conclusion that an individual is insane, whereas explanations assume the truth of that conclusion and then provide an account of how the person became insane. For example, if we were to argue that someone is insane we would provide reasons that would support that conclusion, such as the fact that this individual refuses to leave his room because he is convinced that aliens are waiting outside the door to abduct him. But if we were to explain how that individual became crazy, we may suggest that perhaps his fascination with the Star Trek has gotten the better of her.

Deduction

L. *deducere*, to lead or draw down, to bring away; *de*, down away, and *ducere*, to lead. A form of reasoning whose correctness does not refer to empirical truth, but rather to logical validity. Correct deductive thinking is characterized by a necessary relationship between the premises and the conclusion of an argument; a relationship called an ‘inference’, whereby we mean that the conclusion of an argument necessarily ‘follows’ from the premises. A correct deductive argument demonstrates an inference that is necessarily correct, and thus valid. Accordingly, we say that *a conclusion necessarily follows from the premises*.

As the etymology suggests, deductive reasoning draws a conclusion out of its premises. A deductive argument can do this since in this form of reasoning the premises of an argument supply all the evidence needed for the conclusion. Deductive argumentation is thus a closed system: additional evidence cannot affect its correctness, and it can never advance beyond the scope of its premises.

An example of a deductive argument is the syllogism. First introduced by Aristotle thousands of years ago, a syllogism is a simple yet rigorous form of argument that always has just two premises and one conclusion. The deductive argument’s strength derives from its limited scope. It always begins with a major premise that presents a universal proposition. Next is the minor premise that instantiates a particular instance of the major premise. From the relation between these two premises emerges the final claim of the conclusion:

Example of an argument in syllogistic form

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Major premise | It is immoral to kill persons. |
| Minor premise | <u>Abortion is the killing of persons.</u> |
| Conclusion | . . . Therefore, abortion is immoral. |

From Aristotle’s Prior Analytics:

“A syllogism is a form of words in which, when certain assumptions are made, something other than what has been assumed necessarily follows from the fact that the assumptions are such. By ‘from the fact that they are such’ I mean that it is because of them that the conclusion follows; and by

this I mean that there is no need of any further term to render the conclusion necessary" (Pr.Ana. 24b19-23).

We will briefly examine two types of syllogisms, whose names derive from their respective premise: the categorical and the hypothetical.

Categorical Syllogism

The categorical syllogism consists of three categorical statements. Each statement has only two terms which relate a subject (one class of things) to a predicate (another class of things). All three statements of the syllogism provide exactly three terms, each of which appears only twice in the argument:

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| Major premise | P1 | All bike messengers are crazy. |
| Minor premise | <u>P2</u> | <u>Naomi is a bike messenger.</u> |
| Conclusion | C | ∴ Naomi is crazy. |

This is a valid deductive syllogism since its premises necessitate its conclusion: the final proposition follows necessarily from the relation of the minor to the major premise. Only three terms, each appearing twice, are used in the same sense throughout the argument. Let me repeat: Only three terms:

- 1) bike messengers
- 2) crazy
- 3) Naomi

REMEMBER: EACH TERM APPEARS ONLY TWICE.

Each valid syllogism we consider will follow this pattern: three terms, each of which appears twice. Why? Because it's logical.

Hypothetical Syllogism

A Hypothetical syllogism is expressed conditionally using an 'if-then' construction in the major premise.

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|---|
| Major premise | P1 | If a person is a bike messenger, then that person is crazy. |
| Minor premise | <u>P2</u> | <u>Naomi is a bike messenger.</u> |
| Conclusion | C | ∴ Naomi is crazy. |

The major premise is a compound sentence that connects two clauses in a conditional ‘if-then’ relationship. The first of these clauses is called the **antecedent** (‘if a person is a bike messenger’), while the second clause is called the **consequent** (then that person is crazy). The minor premise introduces a third term (Naomi), and specifies its relation to one of the terms in the first premise.

| | ANTECEDENT | | CONSEQUENT |
|----|---------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| P1 | If a person is a bike messenger | | then that person is crazy. |
| P2 | Naomi | is | a bike messenger. |
| C | ∴ Then Naomi | is | crazy. |

The proposition that does the heavy lifting in deductive syllogisms is the **minor premise**. Here, the minor premise affirms that Naomi falls under the scope of the ANTECEDENT of the major premise. And it is this that then determines the relation that the conclusion will have to both of these premises: it will or will not follow necessarily. That is, the conclusion will or will not be ambiguous.

TIP

In a given syllogism, the first premise NEVER CHANGES. The order of the ANTECEDENT and the CONSEQUENT remains constant: the order of the terms is, by definition, set in stone. The ANTECEDENT, as the prior, always comes before the CONSEQUENT, that is, the term that follows.

The third term introduced in the minor premise can either *AFFIRM* or *NEGATE* one of the major premises’ two terms. Above, the minor premise affirms the antecedent of the major premise: Naomi is a bike messenger.

The correctness or incorrectness of a syllogism is always determined by the way the terms in the second premise relate to the terms in the first premise. The third term introduced in the second premise can either *AFFIRM* or *NEGATE* one of the first premises' two terms. For example, in the above example, the second premise (P2) affirms the antecedent of the first premise (P1): Naomi is a bike messenger.

REMEMBER: deductive logic is a only question of conforming to logical form; it pays attention and evaluates only the form of an argument, not the content or substance. For example, all of the following arguments are correct:

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| X is Y. | All bips are bops. | All dogs are cats. |
| <u>Z is X.</u> | <u>Skip is a bip.</u> | <u>Dagmar is a dog.</u> |
| . . Z is Y. | . . Skip is a bop. | . . Dagmar is a cat. |

These are all valid deductive arguments. But are their conclusions true? That is, do they correspond to an empirical fact? Of course not. Questions of empirical fact are questions of the content or substance of an argument; questions that deductive logic is not -- for the moment -- directly concerned with.

As you have probably already noticed, these forms of deductive reasoning are really just very precise and formalized translations of our normal ways of using language. We normally speak in simple sentences that express one thought, such as "I love logic." Sometimes we make our sentences more complex, forming *compound sentences* that express two thoughts connected by the conjunction 'and', such as "I love logic and hate TV." Two other forms of compound sentences that parallel two deductive arguments we just examined are *conditional sentences*, which follow the 'if-then' form, and *disjunctive sentences*, which follow some version of the 'either-or' form.

Disjunctive Argument

Either A or B.

Either I should take the subway or I should walk.

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <u>Not A.</u> | <u>I should not walk.</u> |
| ∴ B. | ∴ I should take the subway. |
| Conditional Argument | |
| If A, then B. | If I pay in cash, then I'll save on interest charges. |
| <u>If B, then C.</u> | <u>If I save on interest charges, then I'll have more money later.</u> |
| ∴ If A, then C. | ∴ If I pay in cash, then I'll have more money later. |

Validity

L. *validus*, strong, powerful; from *valere*, to be strong, to have power.

The term valid describes a correct deductive argument in which the conclusion legitimately derives from its premises. This ‘derivation’ is technically speaking an inference, which means that the conclusion logically ‘follows’ from its premises:

X is Z.

Y is X.

∴ Y is Z.

In a valid deductive argument, if the premises are true, then the conclusion must be true; or conversely, it is impossible for the premises of a valid argument to be true and its conclusion false. If the premises of an argument do not necessitate its conclusion, then the argument is invalid.

Validity describes THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROPOSITIONS: how one proposition FOLLOWS from a preceding proposition.

An argument is valid = the relationship between the three propositions of a syllogism are correct.

The issue of the validity of an argument must be distinguished from the question of the empirical truth of an argument’s premises and conclusion, since the validity of an inference is separate and unconnected to the question of whether the statements of the

premise actually refer to a true state of affairs in the world. In the above deductive syllogism, are the terms of the first premise true? Do they actually relate to state of affairs in the world? By all indications, no. Validity is a quality of the *logical form* of a deductive argument, whereas truth is the quality of the *empirical content* of the premises and conclusions of an argument. Deductive arguments are either valid or invalid; premises and conclusions are either true or false. But a deductive argument is never true or false, and a premise or a conclusion is never valid or invalid.

Deductive

Arguments => *valid* or *invalid*

Deductive

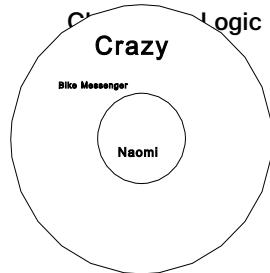
Arguments => never *true* or *false*

Propositions (premises, conclusions)

=> *true* or *false*

Propositions (premises, conclusions) =>

never *valid* or *invalid*



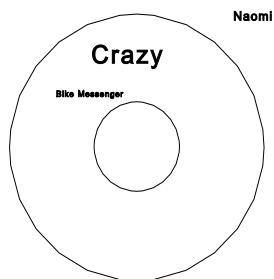
Valid Deductive Arguments THE CLARITY OF NECESSITY

- 1 Modus Ponens, in which the second premise affirms the antecedent in the conditional:

If a person is a bike messenger, then that person is crazy.

Naomi is a bike messenger.

∴ Then Naomi is crazy.



As the diagram demonstrates, this is a valid deductive argument. Why? Because the second premise forces one and only one conclusion from the first premise: the conclusion is thus a necessary one. There is no other possible conclusion to be inferred.

- 2 Modus Tolens, in which the second premise denies the consequent in the conditional:

If a person is a bike messenger, then that person is crazy.

Naomi is not crazy.

∴ Then Naomi is not a bike messenger.



As the diagram demonstrates, this is also a valid deductive argument. Why? Because the second premise forces one and only one conclusion from the first premise: the conclusion is thus a necessary one. There is no other possible conclusion to be inferred.

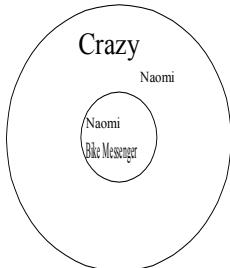
Invalid Deductive Arguments: THE PERILS OF AMBIGUITY

- 1 Deny the Antecedent, in which the second premise denies the antecedent in the conditional.

If a person is a bike messenger, then that person is crazy.

Naomi is not a bike messenger.

∴ Then Naomi is not crazy.



As the diagram demonstrates, this is an invalid deductive argument. Why? Because the second premise does not force one and only one conclusion from the first premise. Rather, there are two possible conclusions, neither of course are necessary. Consequently, the argument is invalid.

2 **Affirm the Consequent**, in which the second premise

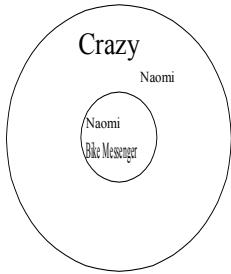
affirms the consequent in the conditional:

If a person is a bike messenger, then that person is crazy.

Naomi is crazy.

∴ Then Naomi is a bike messenger.

As the diagram demonstrates, this is also an invalid deductive argument. Why? Because the second premise does not force one and only one conclusion from the first premise. Rather, there are two possible conclusions, neither of course are necessary. Consequently, the argument is invalid.



Exercise: Complete and Diagram the Syllogisms

Complete the conclusion for the following categorical syllogism. Write out all four forms of this syllogisms, identifying whether it is valid or invalid. Include a diagram of the four possible forms so that your drawing demonstrates its validity or invalidity graphically. Make sure that you indicate for each graph a) which one of the four forms it is, and b) whether the form is valid or invalid. These will be collected.

1) Syllogism: All skydivers are insane.

Dagmar is a skydiver.

∴

Induction

L. *inductio*, a leading or bringing into, an introducing.

Induction is the method of drawing conclusions from observable and thus empirical evidence. It operates from the premise that the substantive content of our thinking is just as important as its formal correctness. Not only must our arguments be valid, but the statements that comprise them must also be true; that is, the content of the argument must correspond to the empirical facts of our world. Induction displays the logical form of reasoning that lies at the heart of the law of cause and effect and is the form of logic used most often in the Natural Sciences, and enshrined in what we call the scientific method. There are two kinds of inductive arguments we need to examine: those by enumeration and those by analogy.

Induction by Enumeration

The most common form of this type of reasoning is induction by enumeration. The form of this type of inductive argument is that of an enumeration: it lists a series of

observations of a particular event and then, on the basis of this limited evidence, generalizes to a universal conclusion:

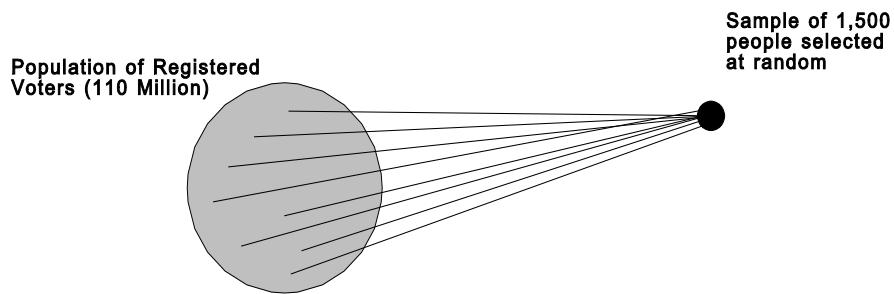
- P1 Five days ago I observed that when water is heated to 100° it boils .
P2 Four days ago I observed that when water is heated to 100° it boils .
P3 Three days ago I observed that when water is heated to 100° it boils .
P4 Two days ago I observed that when water is heated to 100° it boils .
∴ All water when heated to 100° boils.

As we can see, the conclusion reached in this argument states a general truth which both predicts what will happen in the future, and accounts for what has happened in the past. In both instances, induction by enumeration reaches a conclusion that goes beyond the evidence supplied in the premises. This form of inductive argumentation is thus an open system: it goes beyond the scope of the facts supplied by the premises and additional evidence can always call into question the truth of its conclusion.

Because it goes beyond the scope of the evidence supplied by its premises, the conclusions of an inductive argument can only be what we call “CONTINGENT TRUTHS.” A contingent truth is dependent on empirical facts which are not presently capable of being observed. Thus there is always the POSSIBILITY that the event predicted by a conclusion will not actually occur. In contrast to the necessary certainty of deductive reasoning’s conclusion, it is always possible for the conclusion of an inductive argument to turn out different than expected. Thus the greatest certainty an inductive argument can deliver is PROBABILITY.

Sampling

Another example of inductive reasoning is used in the widespread practice of sampling, which is the basis of all the polls and marketing surveys that drive our society. The movement of thought is once again from the particular to the general: the evidence about an observed sample is generalized to a larger population.



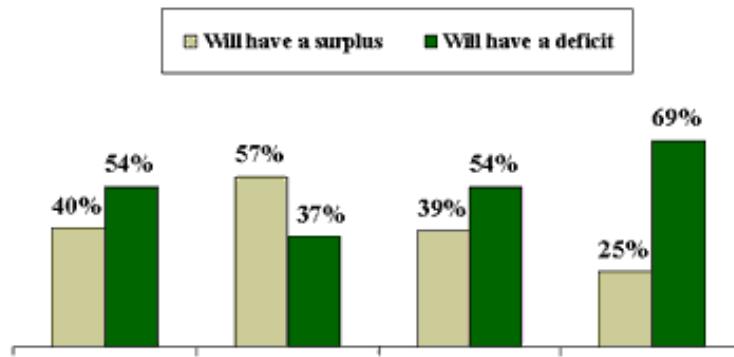
The relative strength of this generalization depends on whether the sample is representative of the larger population which it seeks to characterize. The two most important factors in determining this are: the size of the sample and whether it was selected in an unbiased manner. Consider the following examples

"The nationwide telephone poll of 1,225 adults, including 979 registered voters, was conducted Saturday through Monday. The entire sample has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points. Because of its broad national scope, this survey is not a reliable measure of the Republican contest in South Carolina" (2/17/2001, NYTimes).

Gallop Poll from August 28, 2001: Americans Predict Return to Budget Deficits

When asked what they think is likely to happen to the budget by next year, 54% expect a deficit, and 40% predict a surplus. Responses on this item are strongly related to party affiliation -- Republicans believe there will be a surplus next year, by a 57% to 37%

margin. Democrats see things very differently, as 69% say there will be a deficit next year, while just 25% say there will be a surplus. By a 54% to 39% margin, a majority of independents think there will be a deficit next year.



Survey Methods

These results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 814 adults, 18 years and older, conducted August 24-26, 2001. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the maximum error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls (<http://www.gallup.com/Poll/releases/pr010828.asp>).

Because of the uncertainties of reasoning from the particular to the general, we use the adjectives “STRONG” and “WEAK” to characterize the relative probability of the conclusion made by induction. A strong conclusion has a very high statistical probability of being true, whereas a weak argument produces a conclusion which has a relatively low probability.

There are two factors that determine whether an inductive argument is strong or weak: 1) the truth of the premises upon which the conclusion rests, and 2) the type of connection which exists between the premises and the conclusion. Of these two factors determining the truth of the premises is a relatively straightforward matter. In contrast, determining the type of connection which exists between the premises and the

conclusion is a more complicated affair, and is thus often times more important in determining the relative strength of an inductive arguments. There are two types of connections that can exist between premises and conclusions: those of strict causation, and those of mere correlation.

Causation

From L. *causa*, a cause, reason. A causing or being caused; a causal agency, anything producing an effect.

THE LAW OF CAUSATION: Every event or phenomenon results from an antecedent cause.

Conditional sentences and some forms of inductive arguments display a logic that seems to parallel the form of the Law of Causation. At first glance, the simple ‘if-then’ construction of a conditional sentence suggests a cause-effect relation. For example, the premises of some inductive arguments enumerate causes or conditions, whereas the conclusion specifies the effect generated by those causes or conditions. When a direct causal relation exists, the presence or action of the cause A will always bring about changes in the effect B: a burning flame will always ignite gasoline.

The direct causal relation between a flame and a flammable substance must be distinguished from mere correlation. Whereas the causal relation is always between two variables, correlation always occurs with at least three variables: changes in A and B occur due to third variable, C. Consequently, we cannot say that there is a direct relation between A and B: if we change A, we will not necessarily change B.

The causal relation between phenomena is often complex. For example, while the decrease in the national debt correlates with the decrease in the murder rate, few of us would dare to suggest that there is a causal relation between the two. The correlation is clearly coincidental. An increase in sex education might lead to increased sexual activity, and thus to an increase in the cases of chlamydia. But conversely,

increases in the cases of sexually transmitted diseases might have simultaneously provoked more expanded programs of sex education.

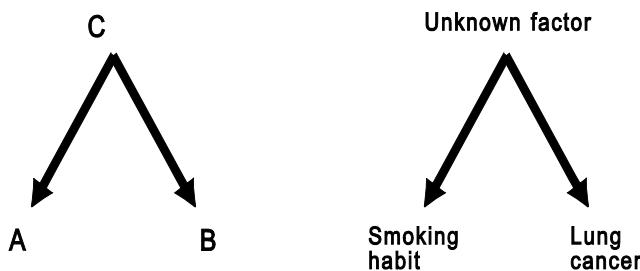
To say there is a correlation between heavy consumption of coffee and heart attacks *is not* to say that coffee drinking *causes* heart attacks. After all, some heavy coffee drinkers have no heart problems. Ditto for the relation that exists between cigarette smoking and lung cancer: if there were a direct causal relation between smoking cigarettes and lung cancer, then everyone who smoked cigarettes would contract lung cancer. But as the cigarette companies have pointed out for decades, there are many smokers who never contract lung cancer. Instead of a direct causal relation, the tobacco companies argue that there is only a correlation between smoking cigarettes and lung cancer: there must be a third variable that only sometimes links cigarette smoke with lung cancer.

There are two different forms of causal relations: necessary and sufficient.

Causal: Change in A changes B.



Noncausal Correlation: Change in A does not change B, but change in C affects both A and B.



A necessary cause must be present if the predicted effect is to occur. In other words, a necessary cause is one in whose absence the predicted effect will not take place. From this it does not follow that if a necessary cause is present that the predicted effect must occur, for there may be several other causes which are also necessary for that one effect to take place.

A sufficient cause on the other hand, is a type of cause which, when present, forces its associated effect to occur: if a sufficient cause is present, the predicted effect must occur.

NECESSARY CAUSE: rain is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for plants to grow. Sunshine, nutrients in the soil and other conditions are also required for productive plant growth. But without rain a plant is incapable of living, let alone growing. Likewise with oxygen: it is only a necessary cause of life.

SUFFICIENT CAUSE: fire is a sufficient cause of death to organic life. In its presence death must occur. Similarly, the lack of oxygen is a sufficient cause of death.

TABLE 3.0 COMPARISON OF DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE FORMS OF REASONING

| | DEDUCTIVE REASONING | INDUCTIVE REASONING |
|-------------|---|---|
| SYSTEM | Closed | Open |
| CONFORMS | To Rules of Logic | To Empirical Facts |
| METHOD | Analytic: Expository separates given concepts into a more clear and articulate arrangement information is already contained in the premise does not produce and increase in the scope of knowledge | Synthetic: Productive amplifies content of given concepts and experiences information specified by conclusion exceeds the information contained in the premises produces an increase in the scope of knowledge |
| | DEDUCTIVE REASONING | INDUCTIVE REASONING |
| CORRECTNESS | Necessary impossible for the conclusion of a valid argument to be other than it is validity is independent of matters of empirical fact | Contingent possible for the conclusion of a strong argument to be other than it is truth of conclusion is dependent on matters of empirical fact |
| CERTAINTY | Absolute Certainty conclusion is valid if it conforms to logical form logical form cannot change, therefore the certainty is unconditional | Probable Certainty statistically, probably certain, since it is always a question of the conclusion conforming to facts |

Deduction and Induction Combined

Although we don't know it, although we are not consciously aware that we are doing it, each of us uses induction and deduction every minute of every hour of every day. Every decision we make is the result of both deductive and inductive forms of reasoning working together in a type of unconscious and habitual collaboration.

For example: In a rush you run to cross Lexington Avenue at the Southwest corner of 68th Street. Thinking about how late you are for class, you fail to notice that the traffic light has turned green for southbound traffic on Lexington. Luckily, right as your foot hits the pavement you look north and see a tow truck flying right towards you in the west most lane. Without missing a beat, you plant your foot, pivot, and cut back to the curb just as the tow truck breezes by. Now: what were you thinking?

- P1 All heavy objects cause pain when they hit you (empirically true premise, result of previous induction).
- P2 I see a heavy object (tow truck) speeding around the corner (sense perception).
- Conclusion: ∴ The tow truck will hurt me if it hits me (deductive inference).

But just as all of us have a philosophy, and only some of us actually do philosophy, the vast majority of people never stop to examine the way they think. The forms of deductive and inductive reasoning are implicit in every common sense decision we make, yet these forms remain confused and out of focus. As a result, we sometimes draw the wrong conclusion when faced with a certain body of evidence or set of premises.

For example: Early one morning I stumble out to my car, turn the ignition, and all I hear is the sound of the starter futilely trying to get the engine to turn over. Since as a philosopher I don't make a lot of money, and cannot therefore afford a car with a working gas gauge, I don't know whether or not there's any gas in the tank. Now I know that if the car is out of fuel it won't start. Since neither my mind nor my car is starting, I guess that my car must be out of gas. After having spent two hours finding an loaner gas can and getting the fuel back to my car, I discover that even with the gas in the tank that my car still won't start. Where did I go wrong?

P1 If my car is out of fuel, then it won't start.

P2 My car won't start.

C ∴ My car must be, out of fuel.

As you can see, once we've formalized my thought process, its obvious that I have drawn an invalid conclusion by affirming the consequent of the major premise. I mistakenly accepted a vague and ambiguous conclusion as necessary, although an invalid inference can never produce a necessary conclusion. This fallacious inference also shows us the difference between a necessary and a sufficient condition: gasoline is only a necessary, but not sufficient condition for a car to start.

Argument by Analogy

*Gk. analogia, proportion, equality of ratios, from *analogos*, according to a due ration.*

“You can get a large audience together for a strip-tease act – that is, to watch a girl undress on the stage. Now suppose you came to a country where you could fill a theatre simply by bringing a covered plate onto the stage and then slowly lifting the cover so as to let everyone see, just before the lights went out, that it contained a mutton chop or a bit of bacon, would you not think that in that country something had gone wrong with the appetite for food?” – C.S. Lewis

Arguments by analogy are perhaps the most common form of arguments that we use in our everyday routines. Indeed, some thinkers have argued that all our reasoning is in a loose sense fundamentally analogical. But in the strict sense in which we speak of argument by analogy in logic, we must define such an argument as follows:

ANALOGY: A form of inductive reasoning whereby similarities between one set of familiar entities are advanced as implying probable further similarities between another less familiar set of entities.

An argument by analogy aims at drawing a conclusion about one class of usually unfamiliar entities by comparing it with a more familiar class of entities. That is, it uses known relations and similarities to shed light on what is unfamiliar or unknown.

The clearest and oldest examples of analogical reasoning derive from our species attempts to speak about our relation to a deity or the divine. When we do this, we are faced with the impossible task of thinking about that which is -- by definition -- not capable of being completely known. For how can a finite being comprehend the infinite source of our limited universe? Any attempt to do comprehend the incomprehensible can only be made through our human, and therefore limited, categories of understanding. Consider the traditional monotheistic analogy that employs anthropomorphic categories of language:

God is to humankind as Parent is to children.

As we can see, an analogy consists of two sets of terms, the familiar set of terms whose relation is known, and a set of terms whose relation we are attempting to determine by

means of the analogy. The set of terms which are known we call the *analogue*; the set of terms which constitute the conclusion of the argument we call the *primary subject*.

The explicit sequence of thought that lies implicit in the above analogy can be summarized in the following 4 steps:

- P1 The analogue (Parent) displays the characteristics of creator, care-provider and love.
- P2 The primary subject (God) is alleged to display the characteristics of creator, care-provider and love.
- P3 It is on the basis of these common characteristics of creator, care-provider and love that the primary subject (God) can be further described in these terms.
- C ∴ The primary subject (God) ought to also be described as a familial relation.

A classic example of an argument from analogy is found in William Paley's (1743-1805) version of the teleological argument for the existence of God, sometime referred to as the argument from Design. All teleological arguments for the existence of God contend that the world exhibits an intelligent purpose as demonstrated in nature's order, unity, coherency, design and complexity. Hence, there must be an intelligent designer to account for the intelligent purpose and order that we observe in creation. Paley's teleological argument is based on an analogy:

Just as a watch must have a maker, so too must creation have a creator.

The similarity between a watch and creation is the basis for this analogy. Both a watch and creation show us an amazing and complex work of artistry in which each part seems to fit seamlessly into a greater whole. A greater whole that can only be explained if we accept the hypothesis that there is a purpose to the entire arrangement. Reasoning

from the known to the unknown, we can say that just as the purpose of a watch only arises from the intent of the watchmaker, then so too must the purpose of creation be the result of the intent of the creator of the world.

Everyday Language

- P1 The watch is a recognized case of something made by someone with intent
- P2 The world displays many similarities to a watch.
- C ∴ The world is also a (likely) case of something made by someone -- God -- with intent

Formal Notation

- P1 Analogue is a recognized case of X.
- P2 Primary subject displays many similarities to the analogue.
- C ∴ Primary subject is also a (likely) case of X.

When we use analogies in everyday speech we often fail to make every aspect of our comparison explicit. Sometimes, we fail to make any similarity explicit, assuming that they will be obvious. Consequently, our strategy for evaluating the strength of an argument by analogy makes these implicit similarities explicit, with the intent of discovering if there are A) enough similarities to justify the argument's conclusion, or B) enough dissimilarities to justify denying the argument's conclusion.

Consider the analogy we just examined – *Just as a watch must have a maker, so too must creation have a creator.* In this formulation our argument by analogy assumes that the comparison of the analogue and the primary object is obvious. The result: a suggestive but vague argument. To clarify the comparison we translated it into the form:

- P1 The watch is a recognized case of something made by someone with intent
- P2 The world displays many similarities to a watch.
- C ∴ The world is also a (likely) case of something made by someone -- God -- with intent

But even this formulation, while being more clear than the first, still fails to provide a precise account of the comparison between the analogue and the primary subject. That is, it makes explicit the similarity of the one common feature shared by both, namely intent. But this one category of comparison is insufficient to properly evaluate the merits of the argument. To fully examine our analogy, we must further refine it argument by listing several of the common features. In formal notation:

- P1 The analogue has features A, B, and C.
- P2 The primary subject has features A, B, and C.
- P3 It is by virtue of features A, B, and C that the analogue is justifiably classified as a D.
- C ∴ The primary subject is justifiably classified as a D.

A critical stage in evaluating the strength of an analogy is searching for relevant differences between its analogue and the primary subject. To use the vernacular, are we comparing apples to oranges? Since if we are, the strength of our argument will be seriously weakened. Consequently, if one or more relevant difference is found, we must then ask if they provide enough evidence against the conclusion of the analogy to render its argument unjustified.

And with this we make the transition to the subject of our next chapter, Judging Arguments.

Exercises

Identify which of the following passages that contain arguments based on analogy. In such arguments, identify the analogue and the primary object, and evaluate the strengths

and weaknesses of the comparison. Account for both the similarities and dissimilarities between the two objects of the analogy. Are the dissimilarities relevant to how the author employs the analogy to justify his or her conclusion? If so, do these dissimilarities provide evidence for rejecting the argument?

1) William Paley's Argument from Design

'Suppose you were walking down a beach and you happened to find a watch. Maybe you were feeling inquisitive and you opened the watch (it was one of those old-fashioned pocket watches). You would see all the gears and coils and springs- all of the mechanical "guts" that make up the internal workings of the watch. Maybe you would wind up the watch and observe the design of the watch at work as it sprang into action. Considering the way all of the mechanical parts worked together towards the end/goal of telling time, you would be reluctant to say that the watch was not created by a designer. After all, every time we have observed design, it has been the product of a designer.'

Now consider another object, say, the human eye. Most of us marvel at the complexity of the inner workings of the eye. The design of the eye has yet to be matched by human engineering. Thus, if we can suppose a watchmaker for the watch (due to the design of the watch) we must be able to suppose a designer for the eye. For that matter, we must suppose a designer for all of the things we observe in nature that exhibit order. Considering the complexity and grandeur of design found in the world around us, the designer must be a Divine designer. That is, there must be a God, a Divine Designer, whom is the architect responsible for all of the design we observe in nature. Even if you have never heard of either argument, you are probably familiar with the central idea of the argument, i.e. there exists so much intricate detail, design , and purpose in the world that we must suppose a creator. All of the sophistication and incredible detail we observe in nature could not have occurred by chance.'

2) Background:

In the spring of 1985, a controversy arose about placing an anti-semitic book in the collection of the University of Calgary Library. The book, titled *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, claimed that the murder of six million Jews in World War II did not occur. The university administration claimed that even though

the book contained a false view of history, it was important for the library to have it on file. A letter to an alumni magazine expressed a dissenting opinion:

‘The director of the University Library defended placing *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* in the stacks with this comment: ‘Why not both sides of this issue as well?’

The Holocaust is NOT an issue and there are NOT two sides. We have physical evidence, eyewitness accounts from guards, prisoners and liberators, and film evidence from both German and underground sources. This is more than we have for more historical facts and certainly more than we have for criminal trials. While a university library should present all points of view, this does NOT apply to a tract based neither on evidence nor on logical thought. If a student wishes to know what was of interest during a particular time, does the library offer an equal choice between microfilm of the Times of London and bound copies of the National Enquirer? For geography, is there a choice between a globe and the clever drawings put out by the Flat Earth society?’

(Letter by A.T., Calgary Alumni Magazine, summer 1985.)

(Hint: there are actually two analogies here.)

3) ‘It is a common myth that each person is a unity, a kind of unitary organization with a will of its own. Quite the contrary, a person is an amalgamation of many sub-persons, all with a will of their own. The ‘sub-persons’ are considerably less complex than the overall person, and consequently they have much less of a problem with internal discipline. If they are themselves split, probably their component parts are so simple that they are of a single mind – and if not, you can continue down the line. This hierarchical organization of personality is something that does not much please our sense of dignity, but there is much evidence for it.’

(Douglas Hofstadter, “Reflections,” in *The Mind’s I*, ed. D. Hofstadter and D.C. Dennet (New York: Basic Books, 1981).)

4) Background: In the winter of 1986, Ferdinand Marcos was unseated as leader in the Philippines and replaced by Corazon Aquino. The new government exhibited the excessive luxuries of the Marcos, including thousands of pairs of shoes owned by Marcos wife, Imelda. U.S. Congressman Stephan J. Solarz was quoted as saying: ‘Compared to Imelda, Maria Antoinette was a bag lady.’

5) ‘With public support comes public accountability. CUNY administrators and faculty need to explain to the public our educational philosophy and standards and our successes and failures in achieving our goals. We also need to explain how we spend public money. In return, we expect elected officials and their appointees to leave educational decisions to educators. Just as we would not expect hospital trustees to tell doctors how to perform an operation or what drugs to prescribe, we do not believe that university governing bodies should dictate to us matters of curriculum or grading.’

(Executive Committee, The Hunter Professional Staff Congress, from *The Hunter Envoy* (Vol. #2-14, Sep 99) p. 3.)

6) ‘As for the question of rebuilding the beach, this is where it gets tricky. Yes, beaches wash away. As an analogy, so do roads. Throughout much of the Northeast and Midwest, roads are destroyed by winter weather, yet all taxpayers pay for repairs. In that instance, it's an economic decision, since people must use roads for commerce. Similarly, along the coast, rebuilding the beach is an economic decision as well, one that directly affects commerce for millions of people. No beaches means no commerce. It's as simple as that.’ (Nicholas Sparks, *NYTimes* Op-Ed, 9/19/99.) for the

4 Judging Arguments

In a republican nation, whose citizens are to be led by reason and persuasion and not by force, the art of reasoning becomes of the first importance.

— Thomas Jefferson

Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted...but to weigh and consider.

— Francis Bacon

As we have seen, when we do philosophy we are fighting to find what is absolutely certain and therefore can never be doubted. Like Augustine and Descartes, we are in search of the Holy Grail of philosophy, namely an absolutely certain foundation for all our reasoning. In this search the deductive forms of reasoning common to logic, mathematics and geometry have served as models or paradigms of absolute certainty.

But as we saw in the last chapter, we can only have absolute certainty regarding logical relations, but not about our empirical world; that we can only have absolute certainty in regards to our thought, but not to our life; to our theory, but not in our practice. Yet the arguments that we advance in philosophy all have to do with our life, and are expressed in the ambiguous forms of our everyday use of language. Consequently, we must have a way of translating our normal way of using language into a more rigorous and structured form, so that we can then evaluate and judge the relative strength of our arguments using the logical tools we have learned.

The first step in this process is then to translate and reconstruct an argument so that it conforms to the formal structure of logical arguments. This entails identifying the premises and conclusions implicit in the way we use language. The second step is to evaluate the argument by examining both its formal and substantive correctness. Typically, the substance or content of the argument is found in its premises, whereas the tell-tale indicators of the formal correctness is found in the connection between the premises and the conclusion. To understand and critique arguments, we must be capable of clearly separating such formal considerations from the substantive, so that we can then evaluate each according to its own criterion of correctness.

After evaluating these separate elements of an argument in terms of correctness, we must then deliberate and decide whether to accept the argument’s conclusion as justified. This last step in judging arguments is the most difficult, because for some types of arguments there is no method or calculus for ultimately deciding whether to accept or reject the argument’s conclusion. The types of arguments advanced to address the perennial questions of philosophy are such that they offer no clearly convincing conclusion. And it is for this very reason that we continue to this day to formulate arguments that address these questions of fundamental philosophic import.

It is precisely at this boundary where method or technique ends, and our own independent thinking begins, that we first begin to truly do philosophy. Questions of validity are decided by appeal to predetermined logical forms. Matters of fact are verified through the publicly observable methods of the natural sciences. But deliberating and judging whether the conclusion of an argument is justified is a skill that each of us must both create and master for ourselves.

Step 1: Translate Premises and Conclusions

Before separating the formal from the substantive content of an argument, we must first reconstruct or translate a typical argument into a formalized structure which preserves relevant substantive points. Once translated into this structure, we can then evaluate the strength of the argument using the tools we learned in the previous chapter.

Three steps in translating an argument are to:

- 1) Explicate
- 2) Eliminate
- 3) Translate.

1) Explicate

Unpack the argument by first identifying the conclusion, the major premise, and then any other supporting premises, whether implied or explicit. It is essential that you first identify the conclusion of the argument, since it is the conclusion that gives you the destination to which all other premises point. Conclusions and premises are usually identified by the certain terms that signify a logical connection:

PREMISE SIGNS

since
for
because

for the reason that

SIGNS

Therefore
consequently, accordingly
we can conclude that
as a result

CONCLUSION

So
Thus

hence

PREMISE TO CONCLUSION CONNECTORS

CONCLUSION TO PREMISE CONNECTORS

| | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| (prem.)..... shows that | (conc.).....(conc.) | (conc.)..... is shown by |
| indicates that | | (conc.)..... is shown by |
| | (prem.) | |
| proves that | | (conc.)..... is shown by |
| | (prem.) | |
| entails that | | (conc.)..... is shown by |
| | (prem.) | |
| implies that | | (conc.)..... is shown by |
| | (prem.) | |
| establishes that | | (conc.)..... is shown by |
| | (prem.) | |
| allows us to infer that | | (conc.)..... is shown by |
| gives us reasons for believing that..... | | (conc.)..... is shown by |
| | | (conc.)..... is shown by |

2) Eliminate

Remove any irrelevant information not contained in conclusions or premises such as descriptions, explanations, illustrations or examples.

3) Translate

Determine in what order the premises support each other, and then translate them into logical form. The goal of translating an argument is to grasp its essential meaning and present it more clearly. By boiling it down to its essential components, and then translating it into our own words, we demonstrate our comprehension of the argument. The goal is to reconstruct the substantive ‘bones’ and logical ‘connective tissue’ of the argument, after having removed all excess ornamentation.

Understanding Arguments by Identifying Implicit Premises

One of the most important steps in translating an argument is making implicit premises explicit. In the everyday use of language we frequently encounter ‘arguments’ with implicit – or unstated – premises. In the course of normal dialogue we seldom pause to consider this. We state opinions and beliefs as if they were matters of fact. And to some degree they are: that we hold this opinion or belief is a fact. But as Aristotle might ask: do we know why we hold that opinion or belief?

The United States will succeed in solving the crises off global economic competitiveness because whenever America has truly devoted itself to solving a crises, it has succeeded.

The first step is to identify the words that indicate the logical sequence of the argument, and thereby identify its premises and conclusion. The word ‘*because*’ signals such a relation, pointing from a conclusion to a premise:

- P1 *Whenever America has truly devoted itself to solving a crises, it has succeeded.*
- C *The United States will succeed in solving the crises off global economic competitiveness.*

As it stands, this argument rests on an assumption: it has failed to make explicit a key thought that would complete the sequence from P1 to C. There is a ‘gap’ in its logical structure. The unstated premise in this case is that *the United States has decided to devote itself to solving this crises*. We now have a more convincing sequence of thinking if we add this implicit premise to the argument:

- P1 *Whenever America has truly devoted itself to solving a crises, it has succeeded.*
- P2 *The United States has decided to devote itself to solving this crises.*
- C *The United States will succeed in solving the crises off global economic competitiveness.*

EXAMPLE 2

Abortion involves intentionally taking the life of an innocent human being, so abortion is murder.

The missing link in this argument is an explicit definition of murder as the intentional taking of an innocent life. If this definition/premise is added to the chain of reasoning, the argument has a much more powerful force:

P1 Intentionally taking the life of an innocent human being is murder.

P2 Abortion involves intentionally taking the life of an innocent human being.

C Abortion is murder.

A Strategy for Translating Arguments

1. Follow the principle of *Charitable Interpretation*: Always fashion the most plausible reading of the original version of the argument.
2. Do not commit the mistake of constructing a Straw Man: avoid using doubtful premises.
3. Make sure you include all premises that are explicitly stated.
4. Include implicit premises that make underlying assumptions and presuppositions explicit.

Exercises for Step 1: Translation

- 1 What is the implied premise in the following argument?

P1 No one who wants fame can be trusted.

P2 Peter is a journalist.

C Peter cannot be trusted.

Employing the method we just learned, explicate, eliminate and translate the following arguments into syllogistic form.

- 2 ‘We can’t restore democracy to Haiti. We can’t restore democracy when it never existed.’

- 3 ‘There is a continuity of development from the moment of conception on. There are constant changes in the foetal condition; the foetus is constantly acquiring new structures and characteristics, but there is no one stage which is radically different from any other. Since that is so, there is no one stage in the process of foetal development, after the moment of conception, which could plausibly be picked out as the moment at which the foetus becomes a living human being. The moment of conception is, however, different in this respect. It marks the beginning of this continuous process of development and introduces something new which is radically discontinuous with what has come before it. Therefore, the moment of conception, and only it, is a plausible candidate for being that moment at which the foetus becomes a living human being.’

Step 2: Evaluation

form and content

Once we have translated an argument into syllogistic form, we then examine it in terms of its formal and substantive correctness.

If the substantive content of the argument corresponds to empirical matters of fact, we say that the premises are true.

If the formal structure of the argument is correct, we say that the argument is valid, and that the conclusion follows from the premises.

If both these criteria are clearly satisfied, if both the form of the argument is valid and the premises are empirically true, we say that the argument is SOUND, and we may then accept its conclusion as JUSTIFIED.

One note qualifying note of caution: The substantive content of the argument always depends on empirical facts; it relies on induction which we have seen is a method of reasoning that can *only produce conclusions with varying degrees of probability*. Obviously then, the conclusion of a sound argument never has the absolute certainty of the necessary conclusion generated by deductive reasoning.

Consequently, we describe most arguments in philosophy as being either relatively strong or weak.

| STEP | 1 st Step: Empirical Correctness | 2 nd Step: Logical Correctness | 3 rd Step: Evaluation |
|---------|--|---|---|
| SUBJECT | of Premises and Conclusion what is being examined | of Conclusion's Relationship to Premises | Conclusion Supported and thus Justified |
| VERDICT | TRUE or FALSE How to describe it | VALID or INVALID | SOUND (STRONG OR WEAK) JUSTIFIED CONCLUSION |

Exercises for Step 2: Evaluation

GOAL: to separate the validity of an argument (its *form*) from the truth of its premises (its *content*). Indicate if the following arguments are valid or invalid, and if the propositions are true or false.

VALID/INVALID

TRUE/FALSE

1) Everyone who studies logic is beautiful. _____

I am beautiful. _____

_____ ∴ I am studying logic. _____

2) Every Supreme Court Justice is a U.S. Citizen. _____

I am not a Supreme Court Justice. _____

_____ ∴ I am not a U.S. Citizen. _____

3) If I put my hand in a flame, then I will be burned. _____

I will not put my hand in a flame. _____
_____ ∴ I will not be burned. _____

4) If I have unprotected sex, then I will be safe from disease. _____

I will not have unprotected sex. _____
_____ ∴ I will not be safe from disease. _____

5) All Virginians are New Yorkers. _____

All New Yorkers are U.S. Citizens. _____
_____ ∴ All Virginians are U.S. Citizens _____

6) All snakes are reptiles _____

All reptiles are animals. _____
_____ ∴ All snakes are animals. _____

Formulate and write out a syllogistic argument that will satisfy the following conditions:

7) Valid but not sound.

8) True but not sound.

9) Valid and true.

10) Invalid and false.

According to the vocabulary we have learned, which of the following statements make appropriate criticisms of an argument?

- 11) Your argument is false.
- 12) Your conclusion is false.
- 13) Your premises are false.
- 14) Your argument is valid.
- 15) Your conclusion is valid.
- 16) Your premises are valid.
- 17) You are arguing from false premises to a valid conclusion.
- 18) Your argument is sound.
- 19) Your argument is not sound, but your conclusion is valid.
- 20) Your argument is sound, but not valid.

Step 3: Deliberate and Critique

Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted...but to weigh and consider. – Francis Bacon

After translating and evaluating an argument, we must deliberate and judge whether its conclusion is truly justified. As we noted earlier, this last step in judging arguments is the most difficult, because there is no method or calculus for ultimately deciding whether to accept or reject the argument's conclusion. Questions of validity and matters of fact are both settled in a fairly straightforward fashion through the use of method. But deliberating and judging whether the conclusion of an argument is justified is a skill. And the first step in developing this skill is to learn how to spot and identify what are known as Fallacies in an argument.

Fallacies

Arguments, like men, are often pretenders. – Plato

Intellectual honesty demands that we formulate the strongest case against our position in order to test its worth. Fallacies in contrast seek to win an argument by any means possible, most notably advancing the weakest possible position as the only alternative.

Fallacies are errors in logical form whose effect however, is to actually make an argument more persuasive, not less. Obvious errors in logical form never persuade: ‘You will either marry or become successful, so why don’t you do both.’ But a fallacy is an error in logical form that tricks you: like a successful politician putting a good Spin on a bad scandal, or a salesperson making good use of partial truths, a fallacious argument turns an error into an advantage. Fallacies have this power because they do not appeal to reason: they rather appeal to the fact that we usually trust what people tell us and take words at face value.

There are two classes of fallacies: those that are fakes and those that are diversions. Street Magicians rely on both these strategies to ply their trade. They create a diversion with the left hand so that we won’t catch what’s being done with the right hand. Or they use counterfeit objects that appear to resemble the real thing, but are actually specially crafted fakes with hidden mechanisms. In this sense fallacies are like logical tricks designed to keep our mind off the real subject of debate. Distractions take your mind away from weak links in an argument, while fakes display the form or structure of a valid argument, but not the true content.

The ultimate goal of both strategies is to win a debate, not to search for the truth. For as every successful rhetorician knows, the one who frames and thereby controls the terms of the debate is the one who, regardless of the truth, always comes out ahead.

Diversions

False Dilemma

This fallacy's strength derives from its claim that there are only two alternatives, one of which is completely absurd, and the other of which is of course her position. This fallacy works – it distracts us – for two reasons. First, one of the alternatives is so frightening – it appeals to our emotions – that we fail to critically reflect and consider whether or not there could be more than just two alternatives. The second reason is that a false dilemma does have the valid logical form of a disjunctive argument:

A or B.

~A

∴ B

It is a fallacy however, since its premise '*A or B*' is not true. The argument is *unsound*. Even though a false dilemma always makes use of the valid form of disjunctive syllogism, its premise is nonetheless not true since in most debates there are more than simply two possible conclusions to be considered. Consider the following examples:

'America -- Love it or leave it.'

Either we ban all guns or we let crime run amok.

Either we pass a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget, or we let deficits ruin us.

Examine this last false dilemma. It rests on an implicit premise that deficit spending will ruin us. Here are two more false dilemmas. Observe how such arguments often operate using implicit premises and conclusions:

If we don't give people the death penalty, they will get off with a few years in prison and then parole. So we should not abolish the death penalty.

Either we allow abortion or we force children to be raised by parents who don't want them.

Straw Man

While adhering to the same valid form of a disjunctive syllogism, the Straw Man repeats the substantive mistake of the False Dilemma by incorrectly attributing the absurd position to the position that is being argued against.

We should ban all guns. Those who oppose a ban on guns don't think very many crimes involve guns, but statistics prove otherwise.

A straw man diverts our attention by making its position appear stronger than it really is, while simultaneously making the opposing position weaker than it actually is. The above example derives its strength by advancing an opposing argument that is obviously flawed. If we critically reflect on such arguments we can detect two premises that are false: 1) inaccurate characterization of opponent's position, and 2) the implicit premise that there are only two alternatives (false dilemma). The diversionary power is generated by the absurdity of the opponent's position. Consider the following examples:

We must spend more on national defense. Senator Raunch believes we should spend less, since evidently he doesn't think that China will present a threat to our national security in the coming years.

Our attention is directed to Senator Raunch's poor reasoning for spending less on defense. Our natural tendency is to immediately conclude that we should spend more, not less.

Gen Xers should be more involved politically. They must not think or even care about the future.

Here we are encouraged to draw this one conclusion, instead of examining other more justifiable reasons for young people not being politically engaged.

This type of rhetorical maneuver employed by the straw man is particularly pernicious because it undercuts the possibility of open debate: to have open debate we must have an

adequate understanding of our opponent's position, and it is this that the straw man strategy stands on its head.

The Fallacy of the False Cause

The Romans described the fallacy of the false cause as *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, which literally means: "after this, therefore because of this." This fallacy arises from confusing simple sequence with causality. It doesn't necessarily follow from the fact that one event precedes another that it is the cause of the second effect. Every event is always preceded by a multitude of events, any of which could be its cause. Sequence alone is insufficient proof of consequence.

For example, doctors in the 1920's discovered that schizophrenia can be treated by administering large overdoses of insulin, which produced convulsive shocks. Hundreds of doctors drew a faulty conclusion and treated mental patients with electric shocks without insulin. In time, the originator of the insulin therapy convinced his colleagues that they had mistaken the effects of his insulin treatment -- convulsive shocks -- as the cause of his successful treatment of schizophrenia. In applying electrical shocks these other doctors confused a side effect with a cause. It was the insulin treatment that restored the patient's hormonal balance, not the effects of that treatment, i.e., convulsive shocks.

Fakes

This class of fallacy is more seductive and tricky than the previous class of diversions. Whereas a False Dilemma and Straw Man are fairly easy to spot, fakes are not. The first two

types are simple errors in reasoning, that is, formal fallacies. As we know, these are **Affirming the Consequent** and **Denying the Antecedent**.

| Valid => necessary conclusion | Invalid => ambiguous conclusions |
|--|--|
| If my car is out of fuel, then it won't start. <u>My car is out of fuel.</u> My car won't start | If my car is out of fuel, then it won't start. <u>My car won't start.</u> My car is out of fuel. |
| If you respected her opinion, then you would seek her advice. <u>You won't seek her advice.</u> You don't respect her opinion. | If you respected her opinion, then you would seek her advice. <u>You don't respect her opinion.</u> You won't seek her advice. |

As we saw earlier, these two incorrect forms of logical inference mirror those of two valid forms: denying the consequent (modus tollens) and affirming the antecedent (modus ponens). In both cases we saw how an invalid inference generates a conclusion which is not necessary, and is thus ambiguous:

If the president does a good job, the economy remains stable. The economy has remained stable. So the president has done a good job.

If he denies that he knows her, then he's been cheating on me. He admitted that he knows her. So he hasn't been cheating on me.

Equivocation

This fallacy derives its strength from the ambiguity of language, and arises when the meaning of a word changes from one premise to another. When the meaning of a term changes from one premise to another, that argument commits the fallacy of equivocation, and

thereby renders its conclusion invalid. A subtle yet powerful fallacy, equivocation displays the superficial form of a valid inference, yet once the ambiguity in meaning is discovered, the real form of the fallacy shows itself as invalid. Consider the following argument:

You are willing to believe in the miracles of modern science, so why won't you believe in the miracles of the bible?

The meaning of the term miracle changes in this argument. First it means amazing (landing on the moon), then it means contrary to natural law (virgin birth). Whereas the arguer is attempting to equate the two, there is actually a huge difference between the meanings of how the same term is used in both clauses. Again:

'We all agree that those who are insane cannot be punished for their actions. Yet don't you also agree that anyone who could possibly murder another human being must also be insane? Consequently, murders should be hospitalized but never jailed.'

The key word is ‘insane’: if its meaning is the same in both premises, then it looks like a sound argument, with true premises (consistent meaning) and a valid form:

All murderers are insane people.

All insane people should not be punished.

.: All murderers should not be punished.

All P1's are P2's.

All P2's are P3's

.: All P1's are P3's.

But what if the meaning of ‘insane’ is different in both statements? That in the first premise it means *legally insane*, and in the second sentence it means *abnormally cruel*? If this is indeed the case, then the changing meaning of the term invalidates the form of the argument. The argument may have true premises (equivocal meanings), but it also displays an invalid form:

All murderers are abnormally cruel people.

All legally insane people should not be punished.

.: All murderers should not be punished.

All P1's are P2's.

All P3's are P4's

.: All P1's are P4's.

Begging the Question

This fallacy is perhaps the most frequently encountered misuse of logic. Although an argument of this form is both valid and has a true premise, it is still considered a fallacy for one simple reason: it is trivial. When we beg the question our conclusion merely restates the premise in different words:

Whatever is less dense than water won't sink in water, because such objects float in water.

The premise is true, and the conclusion follows from the premise in the trivial sense that it simply restates the premise in different words. But the formal structure of this fallacy is similar to that of a tautology:

A

.:. A

It is a fallacy because it fails to provide any evidence or reason that would support the conclusion. If I ask you ‘Why should people tell the truth?’ I am asking you for an argument. If you reply ‘Because its not right to tell lies,’ you have failed to grasp the meaning of my question; that is, you are begging the question. Again:

*The Bible says God exists. Everything in the Bible is true, since God wrote it.
Therefore, God exists.*

'To the Editor: I wonder if Yogi Berra helped George W. Bush prepare for the debate. Answering a question about the military, Mr. Bush said,

Appeal to Authority

An appeal to authority is a fallacy in which your argument attempts to justify its conclusion by citing the opinion of an authority on the issue. This is the laziest and most pervasive fallacy known to humankind, since all it requires is for one to give up their duty to pass their own judgment about important matters. It begins in childhood when we ask our parents 'But why do I have to go to sleep now?' and they respond: 'Because I said so.'

Professor Matthews says that television and film -- as opposed to reading books and talking with people -- deaden the imagination. Going to the movies and watching too much television must be a bad idea.

Exercises

- 1) Write one example (of your own creation) of each of the following fallacies:
 - A. affirming the consequent
 - B. denying the antecedent
 - C. equivocation
 - D. begging the question
 - E. false dilemma
 - F. straw Man

- 2) The following is a collection of all forms of fallacies, both fakes and distractions. It may include instances of false dilemma, straw man, affirming the consequent, denying the antecedent, equivocation, and begging the question. Identify the fallacy in each selection and discuss briefly why the fallacy makes the argument persuasive.
 - A. If you can't lick them, join them.

According to my theory, men who had doting mothers will seek women who are independent and not overly affectionate. This is a reaction to having been smothered by their mothers' affection. Now if my theory is correct, Ed would be attracted to someone like Carla. Ed is attracted to Carla. So I would say that my theory is correct.

If a society encourages freedom of thought and expression, then creativity will flourish. New theories will replace old ones; traditions will be challenged; inventiveness will reign. The eighteenth century was perhaps the period of American history when creativity flourished most, showing the degree to which free thought was encouraged during that period.

Should you be hip or smart?

Most students go to college to improve their job prospects. But the fact is that many areas of study--particularly the liberal arts--don't strike students as preparing them for a vocation. They fail to see that living a life enriched by ideas is a kind of vocation. So when they quit college to get a job they are making a big mistake.

'Mr. McCain, raising questions about Mr. Bush's maturity, defended his emphasis on Social Security, saying "It's not the Washington mentality. It's the grown-up mentality. It's the grown-up mentality that recognizes that we have obligations."

Mr. Bush responded bitterly that it was a Republican philosophy that favored giving tax money back to the people.

"I don't trust Congress," he said. "I trust people. And I want to give people their money back. This is a realistic plan that I'm going to get done. And John, you know, grown-up or non grown-up -- I know that's kind of a line you're trying to come across with, but it's weak -- either you trust the people or you trust government. And our Republican Party ought to stand for trusting the people to spend their own money." To the Editor: I wonder if Yogi Berra helped George W. Bush prepare for the debate. Answering a question about

'To the Editor: I wonder if Yogi Berra helped George W. Bush prepare for the debate. Answering a question about the military, Mr. Bush said, "I believe the role of the military is to fight and win war and therefore prevent war from happening in the first place" (transcript, Oct. 4). GEORGE SOLOVAY, Florham Park, N.J., Oct. 4, 2000.

Florham Park, N.J., Oct. 4, 2000.

Critiquing Arguments

Following the distinction between formal validity and substantive truth, there are two approaches to critiquing arguments:

- 1) Formal: show that a conclusion doesn't follow
- 2) Substantive: show that one or more premises are not true.

Formal Critique

Always begin a critique by determining if the conclusion follows. This will almost always involve making implicit premises explicit. After having added these ‘missing links’ in the sequence of reasoning, you can then determine whether or not an argument is valid.

We have already examined several forms of argumentation that are valid and fallacious. Obviously, you should employ these forms in evaluating the validity of an argument.

After having done this ‘reconstructive surgery,’ if the argument is still not valid, then stop: there is no more work to be done. You have successfully critiqued the argument and shown it to be invalid. But if the argument is valid in form, then you must proceed to evaluate the substantive truth of the premises.

Substantive Critique

There is a sure fire way to critique an argument’s premises: cast doubt on them. If you can do this, the conclusion that logically follows from the premises is most likely unsound. If you cannot cast doubt on the premises, then the argument itself is most likely sound.

There are three effective ways of casting doubt on an argument’s premises

- 1) provide counterexamples to premises that generalize,
- 2) break the connection between *if-then* premises,
- 3) draw attention to further implications of a premise that are doubtful.

1) Counterexamples to Universal Generalizations

This strategy is the most powerful of the three. In the paradigm of a simple syllogism we have seen the following universal generalization:

All bike-messengers are crazy.

A universal generalization is a statement that claims to be true for every case under discussion. In our example, the major premise claims that everything has a characteristic: that all bike-messengers are crazy. In logical notation this reads:

All P1s are P2s = all bike-messengers are crazy.

This seems reasonable enough, since most bike-messengers do appear to be lacking some basic sense of self-preservation. But then again, this proposition makes a universal claim that thus allows of absolutely no exceptions. But how can we make this claim if we have never met or interviewed all the bike messengers in New York City? Or again: consider the following universal generalizations:

All lying is wrong.

No sea animals are mammals.

All killing of human beings is wrong.

The key to providing a good counterexample is finding an example that is clearly counter to what the universal generalization claims. Such a counterexample is uncontroversial. For example, lying to save an innocent person's life is clearly a good counterexample, that is, it is not controversial. Or again: whales and seals are clearly a good counterexample to the universal claim that no sea animals are mammals. In both of these instances we have provided a minor premise that is clearly an exception to the major premise (lying to protect an innocent person and a sea animal that is a mammal).

But what of the last universal generalization: *All killing of a human being is wrong?* In this case we need to find an uncontroversial counterexample. Suppose your counterexample was executing a murderer is not wrong? Or that aborting a fetus is not wrong? Most would agree that these are extremely controversial counterexamples that would inevitably sidetrack

your critique into a debate over capital punishment and abortion. These counterexamples are what we call ‘borderline’ counterexamples. What we need is clearly uncontroversial counterexample that will not side-track our critique. We need a counterexample such as the killing of a person in self-defense.

Consider the universal claim that *all harmful behavior should be illegal*. What would clear – good – counterexamples look like? What would ‘borderline’ counterexamples look like?

Good, uncontroversial counterexamples to the premise that *all harmful behavior should be illegal*:

Failure to exercise

eating a high-fat diet

Borderline, and thus controversial counterexamples:

russian roulette

skydiving

2) Break the connection between *if-then* premises

This strategy also depends on providing counterexamples, but not to a universal statement, but to the claim that there is a necessary connection between two things or activities. This is done by providing instances where the first thing could occur without being necessarily followed by the second. Consider the premise *If birthrates continue to increase, then we will have an overcrowded world*. What would a counterexample look like? Pollution and global warming brought on by increase in population causes the death rate to become larger than the increasing birthrate. The consumption of genetically altered foods decreases life-expectancies. Or even: space exploration will allow us to colonize other planets.

This strategy is not as effective as the first since it doesn't clearly refute or deny the claim made in the original premise. A clear counterexample to a universal statement proves that that universal statement is not true. This is not the case here: breaking the *if-then* connection does not show the premise to be false, it only shows that it is less than certain. But remember: the more probable your counterexample is, the less likely the premise is true.

3) Draw attention to further implications of a premise that are doubtful

This strategy can be used on any form of premise: both universal generalizations and if-then premises, and any other type as well. Its scope derives from the simple truth that every premise has implications. Like dominoes, every premise entails an entire series of further premises. Just as in the system of our beliefs, in the system of rational debate any premise necessarily produces further ramifications. And if we can find further implications of a premise that are doubtful, then we can reason backwards and cast doubt of the original premise.

For example, some people claim that punishment does not prevent crime [implied premise: there is punishment and we still have crime]. What is the implication of the explicit premise? That if there were no punishment the crime rate would not go up, and that, for example, people would still pay their taxes even though there was no threat of punishment.

One Final Tip

When we critique arguments we do a type of two-step mind-game: first step is to translate the argument under consideration into a coherent, logical form. The next step is to evaluate it formally and substantively. The formal evaluation of an argument is usually straightforward; the substantive evaluation is not. When you formulate your counterexample **ALWAYS TRY TO STICK TO COMMON KNOWLEDGE**. A counterexample that requires your reader or discussion partner to make a trip to the library or the lab is not ideal.

Summary

of the Steps to Understanding and Evaluating Arguments

Step 1: Translate

Simplify and structure the remaining propositions in syllogistic form.

Explicate

Unearth Conclusion, and implicit and explicit premises.

Eliminate

Remove Descriptions, illustrations, and superfluous
editorial comments.

Step 2: Evaluate

Valid Form: does conclusion follow?

True Content: are premises empirically true?

Step 3: Deliberate

Accept conclusion as justified, or

Reject as unsound.

5

Putting the Tools to Work: A Method of Philosophy

We have been examining several different tools of thinking that we use to do philosophy. Up until now, we have been forced to examine these tools in the *abstract*, detached from any type of practical -- and thus meaningful -- context.

We have advanced a strategy for evaluating whether or not the conclusions of arguments are justifiable. This strategy is primarily designed to help us confront and examine specific, individual arguments advanced either by ourselves or by other people. The key point is that this strategy only addresses whether one individual position or belief is justifiable.

This strategy, however, promises little success when applied to the activity of doing philosophy. On the first day of this course we said that the subject matter of philosophy is our belief system, or, our system of beliefs. When we speak about belief it must always be in the plural, for each of our individual beliefs *interconnects* with other beliefs: like the web of a spider, each depends upon -- and yet simultaneously supports -- other beliefs. Our system of beliefs is just that: a system which has more in common with

the interconnected weave or pattern of the system of our vital organs than with the interlocking and interchangeable parts of a machine.

Systematic Philosophy

To adequately address the systematic nature of our beliefs, we must make use of what is called *systematic philosophy*. The defining characteristic of systematic philosophy is that it seeks to provide a coherent account of our beliefs that is consistent with one prescriptive principle.

To reiterate what philosophy is about: it is about the right way of living, that is, philosophy must always be rooted in an ethical principle, which manifests itself in the way we live our lives. By definition, this ethical principle cannot be descriptive,

but must be prescriptive: it orientates itself towards what *should* be, instead of what *is*. It is not a passive account of the way things have been and presently are -- both in the world and in our own lives-- but is instead a proactive prescription of the way our lives and world should be.

This ethical principle must be one in number if it is to integrate, center and unify the entire network of beliefs that constitute who we are. It must also be one if we are to be capable of ‘testing’ the worth of that principle in our everyday lives. If this ethical principle is

to successfully unify the network of beliefs, that network must itself be consistent with this ethical principle.

Doing philosophy is the activity of making our belief system explicit. This we do in two steps: the first is theoretical, the second practical. From the standpoint of reasoned reflection, we first test our system of beliefs for internal consistency with our unifying prescriptive principle. Then, in the laboratory of life we test our belief system to evaluate its worth.

We've just said a mouthful: To clarify what I mean by the method of systematic philosophy, let us consider how philosophy differs from the natural sciences.

Systematic Philosophy and the Natural Sciences

the physical versus the metaphysical

The fundamental distinction that determines the course of the entire history of philosophy is between what we perceive with our five senses, and what we perceive with our mind.

What we perceive with our five senses is publicly observable; that is, we all share common access to the reality of our world presented by means of our senses. Debates about the existence of publicly observable objects are relatively straight forward: we rarely debate whether or not other people exist for the obvious reason that every one of our senses provides us with undeniable proof of the existence of our fellow humans.

But what about those other aspects of our reality which are not publicly observable?

What about the interior and very real domain of our minds; a domain that is inaccessible to all but the one who thinks the thought or feels the feeling? Here the question is not about the existence of other people, but of other people's minds: how do we know that everyone of us in this room has a mind, and isn't just a very sophisticated android? Have you ever seen a mind? Heard a mind?

Felt a mind? Of course not, because mind is not publicly observable via our common five senses.

This distinction between what is and is not publicly observable distinguishes the domain of the natural sciences from that of philosophy. The natural sciences' domain of inquiry is whatever can be observed with the five senses, since the five senses provide us with empirical means of verifying the truth of a given statement. This is the sphere of physical objects.

Philosophy's domain of inquiry is whatever *cannot* be observed with the five senses: philosophy investigates the world of ideas, thoughts and beliefs. Here there is no empirical means of determining truth. This is the sphere of our lives that differs markedly from the tangible world of physical objects.

Physics, The Physical, Nature

The etymology of the word nature is the Greek term *physis*, which is also the root of the term physical. The first philosopher to systematically discuss what *physis* is was Aristotle. Physics for Aristotle is the science which seeks to discover the observable causes of change in the empirical world. But according to Aristotle's logic, it lies in the nature of a cause to be different from its effect. Consequently the ultimate cause of change in the empirical world cannot itself be empirical, since the cause of what is observable cannot itself be observable.

To explain the nature of the physical (matter) in terms of the physical would beg the question: what is the nature of the physical?

Aristotle therefore posited another science that would investigate and account for the nature of the physical. Aristotle called this science 'first philosophy' because it investigated the ultimate causes of empirical nature. He maintained that such causes could not be physical, but would rather by necessity have to be different from or beyond the physical. Though Aristotle himself never used the term to describe his first philosophy, tradition has labeled his efforts in this field 'metaphysics,' which in Greek means *after or beyond the physical*.

TABLE 5.1 THE NATURAL SCIENCES COMPARED TO PHILOSOPHY

| | SYSTEM OF SCIENCE | SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHY |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|
| | | |

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| DOMAIN OF INQUIRY | whatever can be observed with the five senses | whatever cannot be observed, i.e. beliefs, thoughts and ideas |
| WHAT IS STUDIED | objects (bullets & comets) | subjects (people) |
| STUDIED IN WHICH RESPECT | as things | in terms of their beliefs, thoughts and ideas |
| DOMAIN OF REALITY | objective reality | subjective reality |
| | SYSTEM OF SCIENCE | SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHY |
| METHOD OF INQUIRY | Scientific Method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hypothesis • experiment • observation • interpretation of data • conclusion | Philosophical Method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unearth presuppositions • transform presuppositions into explicit beliefs through analysis • test system of beliefs for consistency • justification |
| CRITERION OF UNDERSTANDING | prediction and control of object | providing reasons for our beliefs |
| GOAL | factual truth | justifiable belief |
| FORM OF TRUTH | objective | subjective |
| CONTENT OF TRUTH | factual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a matter of verifiable fact | justifiable belief <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistent system of belief |

Consequent to their respective domains of inquiry is what each discipline investigates and studies. The natural sciences investigate *objects* whereas philosophy primarily investigates *subjects*. An object is of course a thing such as a bullet or a comet, whereas a subject is quite simply a person. When we speak of a subject as a person we are not referring to the *genus* human being, which is an object of inquiry for many

different branches of the natural sciences. A subject is a person understood not as a physical object, like a rock or a bullet, but rather as conscious creature.

The *objects* investigated by the natural sciences are studied as *things*, as inanimate material objects. The *subjects* investigated by philosophy are studied as people in terms of their *beliefs, thoughts* and *ideas*.

Accordingly we call the domain of our world investigated by the natural sciences *objective reality*, whereas the domain of our world investigated by philosophy is *subjective reality*. The crucial difference between the two domains of experience? The possibility of empirical verification.

Public Observation & Empirical Verification

Objective reality is the shared domain of our world common to all of us; it is the world of the five senses and public observation: that we all have a brain is a statement that can be publicly observed and verified to be true because the statement corresponds with an empirical fact.

VERIFICATION

From ML. *verificare*, to make true, from L. *versus*, true, and *facere*, to make.

A proposition is verified when its truth is confirmed by convincing empirical evidence. Convincing evidence is provided through the five senses: only those ‘things’ that can be tested by our five senses are capable of being verified as true.

Subjective reality however, is not an open and shared domain of the world. It is a reality unique to each of us, and practically inaccessible to public observation. That we all have a mind is a statement that *cannot* be publicly observed and thus cannot be verified to

be true. That you or I have a mind is a statement that does not correspond to an empirical fact, but rather corresponds instead to a subjective belief.

Because we cannot publicly observe and verify the truth of such beliefs, we must devise a different way of evaluating the relative merit of such beliefs. The prescriptive evaluation of subjective beliefs does not depend on whether they correspond to an empirical fact -- that is, whether they are empirically true. Instead of verification, the prescriptive category of evaluation for subjective beliefs is one of justification.

Methods

Because of this fundamental difference between their respective domains of investigation, each discipline has its own method of inquiry: the scientific method and the method of systematic philosophy.

Natural Sciences

The scientific method is of course the familiar process whereby we systematically investigate empirical reality. We begin with an hypothesis, which is usually an inductive inference tentatively based on established theory or data. We then test that hypothesis through experimentation and observation. Such tests must be under strictly controlled conditions, and consistently produce a body of data that other scientists can replicate under the same conditions. Experimentation is always followed by the interpretation of data and the positing of a theory.

The decisive criterion for determining whether or not a hypothesis is true is that of empirical verification; a criterion which is more specifically one of prediction and control:

only if we can predict and control a given phenomenon X can we say that we have an adequate understanding of that phenomenon. As modern technology makes abundantly clear, the results of the natural sciences provide us with the means to predict and control natural phenomenon.

Systematic Philosophy

The method of systematic philosophy is determined by the nature of its subject: the non-empirical beliefs of a person. In science we formulate a hypothesis in response to a problem. The starting point for science is thus a problem or a question. So too for philosophy.

As we pointed out earlier, philosophy is born of wonder, of waking up to the realization that what you have always believed may not in fact be right. We have suggested that this realization can often times lead to a crisis. Before this crisis we exist on what can only be called a naive and reactive level of belief. This level of belief is characterized by the lack of being aware that our belief system is not ours, but is rather the product of environmental influences beyond our control such as tradition, our families, religion, and the media. At this pre-reflective level of awareness we do not know that our beliefs are relative; we instead assume that they are absolute. This is the level of *having a philosophy*.

But crisis relativizes our belief system: a limit experience or the experience of wonder calls into question our habitual way of understanding ourselves in the world. We suddenly become aware of our ignorance, of how limited our knowledge and understanding of the world truly is. This new insight can lead us to question the legitimacy of our system of beliefs. When we become aware of this, the crucible of our naive belief is broken. This is a fracture that cannot be mended, a rupture that cannot be repaired by

re-assembling the shattered fragments. Quite the contrary: the fragments must be melted down and prepared to become the stuff of which a new fresh vessel will be formed.

The method whereby we go about refining our belief system parallels the method of analyzing arguments we considered in chapter four. The first step in this process is to become aware not only of our system of beliefs, but more importantly, to become aware of the sources of our beliefs.

1 EXPLICATE

The first step is to make the implicit explicit by analyzing our naive belief system. To analyze means to loosen and dissolve: but dissolve into what? Into presuppositions. The first step is thus to make explicit the presuppositions that serve as the foundation of our beliefs, to bring to light the network of implicit assumptions that support our explicit beliefs.

PRESUPPOSITION

ML. *presuppositio*, from L. *pre*, before, and *suppositio*, a placing under.

Similar to an assumption, a presupposition is something which we uncritically take for granted as true, and unconsciously use as the basis for a belief. If I were to say that ‘all poor people are lazy’ I would thereby presuppose that the lack of motivation is the only reason why people are poor. Likewise, the statement in our constitution which asserts that ‘all men are created equal’ is based on many presuppositions about what it means to be human.

In doing this we attempt to make the systematic connections between these unexamined presuppositions explicit; to unearth and uncover the unexamined presuppositions which form the unquestioned foundation of beliefs. Central to this activity is to reflect on the source of these presuppositions: how do we become the way we are?

2 ELIMINATE

The second step is to get rid of these presuppositions by transforming them into articulate beliefs. By means of analysis, we dissolve and refine incoherent and vague presuppositions into clear statements of belief.

3 TRANSLATE

The third step is to transcribe vague presuppositions into propositional form and arrange newly articulated beliefs so that we can gain a clear view of them; to structure beliefs into a systematic configuration, just as an outside accountant does to a disorganized business' financial ledgers.

4 EVALUATE

The fourth step is to examine and appraise these newly articulated beliefs by testing them for internal consistency: are any of our beliefs contradictory?

CONSISTENCY

L. *consistere*, to stand together, from *com*, together, and *-sistere*, to stand.

A set of two or more statements is held to be consistent if none of them stand in contradiction to any of the others. For example, if I were to maintain both a belief in the death penalty and a belief that abortion is wrong because all life sacred, these two beliefs would seem to contradict one another.

5 DELIBERATE

The absence of contradictory beliefs would seem to point to a consistent philosophy consisting of justifiable beliefs. But this is seldom the case with most human beings: it seems that by our very nature we live in this contradictory gap between what is and what should be. Once correctly understood however, we can actually harness

contradiction as a power to sustain and drive our philosophizing. Just as it is possible to harness the tensive interplay of positive and negative electrons to generate the power of electricity, it is likewise possible to harness the contradictions of our beliefs as a sort of intellectual power that will production us on to seek consistency in our philosophy.

The presence of contradictory beliefs point to an inconsistency within our philosophy; an inconsistency that forces us to question whether one of the contradictory beliefs is really justified. By comparing each of the contradictory beliefs to yet other beliefs we can, through the process of elimination, slowly determine which of the beliefs is the weaker link in the chain of reasoning.

Consistency in our belief system justifies our belief system. By providing justification for our beliefs we transform unfounded opinion into reasoned belief. Whereas unexamined beliefs are unfounded beliefs or opinion, beliefs that have been analyzed and critically reflected upon are justified beliefs.

JUSTIFICATION

From L. *justus*, lawful, rightful, proper, and L. *-facere*, to do, make

A belief is justified when it is shown to be consistent with the other beliefs which constitute one's philosophy.

Form and Content of Truth in Science and Philosophy

The goal of the natural sciences is of course factual truth, the form of which is always objective, whereas systematic philosophy aims at producing justifiable beliefs, whose form of truth is subjective.

We use the phrase objective truth when the words of a statement have been verified. That is, when the words of a statement have been shown to refer to an empirical object or state of affairs.

We use the phrase subjective truth when the words of a statement refer to an idea or belief held by a subject, that is, a person. Because beliefs held by a subject are of course incapable of being verified through empirical testing and confirmation, we say that such beliefs may have -- if justified -- a claim to subjective truth.

The content of the truth produced by each discipline differs in that science produces propositions whose content is factual, because verifiable, while philosophy produces propositions whose content can at best be deemed justified, and only after they have been demonstrated to be internally consistent.

Philosophy's Relationship to Science

Philosophy does not stand in direct opposition to the Natural Sciences: their respective domains of inquiry are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, philosophy must itself remain consistent with the objective truths generated by science, just as the technological power delivered by science must be used consistent with the ethical prescriptions of philosophy.

Consequently, we should keep in mind that philosophy and the natural sciences inhabit different points on a continuum of determinacy:

| VERY DETERMINATE | SOMEWHAT DETERMINATE | UNDER-DETERMINED | MOST UNDER-DETERM INED |
|--------------------------|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Hard Science | Theoretical Science | Philosophy of Nature | Philosophy |
| Water boils at 100 cent. | Nothing can travel faster than the speed Of light. | The world is an organ | The aim of life is happiness. |

Science addresses objects that are observable and can be quantified. If an object can be observed and quantified it is what we call a determinate object. Philosophy on the other hand addresses phenomena which do not lend themselves to direct observation and are thus incapable of being directly measured and verified. In this sense, philosophy inquires into phenomena which are under-determined and thus open to interpretation and debate.

But in another more important sense, just as neither extreme of a continuum can ever exist in the total absence of its opposite, science and philosophy become powerless when divorced from one another. Every scientific theory and hypothesis both makes and depends on ideas about reality that cannot yet be verified. Conversely, every philosophy grounds itself, to some degree, in some objective fact of human existence. And in this most important sense we must speak of the possibility of verifying our philosophy.

As we noted earlier, we evaluate our system of beliefs on both the theoretical and the practical level. As we have seen, on the theoretical level we test for internal consistency

of our beliefs both with each other and with our unifying prescriptive principle. But on the practical level we test our beliefs in the laboratory of life by examining how our philosophy manifests itself in the way we live or lives: What is its worth? Does it strengthen or weaken our lives? Does it meet Aristotle's most simple and elegant goal of philosophy: does it lead to real happiness?

Or as one of America's most influential philosophers, John Dewey (1859-1952), put the matter:

'Thus there is here supplied, I think, a first-rate test of the value of any philosophy which is offered to us: **Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful?** Or does it terminate in rendering the things of ordinary experience more opaque than they were before, and in depriving them of having in 'reality' even the significance they had previously seemed to have? Does it yield the **enrichment** and increase of power of ordinary things which the results of physical science afford when applied in every-day affairs? Or does it become a mystery that these ordinary things should be what they are; and are philosophic concepts left to dwell in separation in some technical realm of their own? It is the fact, I repeat, that so many philosophies terminate in conclusions that make it necessary to disparage and condemn primary experience, leading those who hold them to measure the sublimity of their 'realities' as philosophically defined by remoteness from the concerns of daily life, **which leads cultivated common-sense to look askance at philosophy**' (*Experience and Nature*, p.8)

The Open-Ended Nature of Philosophy

If philosophy is similar to the empirical science when it tests its conclusions in the laboratory of life, then it would follow that, just as the results of science change and evolve, so too must the beliefs that constitute our philosophy change and evolve. Both science and philosophy are activities characterized by rational and critical inquiry: they approach a problem with reason,

and subject possible answers to stringent criticism. This points to the open-ended nature of doing philosophy. Like life itself, our philosophy is alive, organic, and therefore always evolving. Only by maintaining an active and vigilant watch over our philosophy can we sustain and nurture this process. As Socrates so aptly put the matter thousands of years ago, philosophy is not about answering our questions, it is about questioning our answers.

READINGS Rationalism and Empiricism

In the following passage from his *Introduction to Philosophy*, Friedrich Paulsen advances a clear and precise overview of what Empiricism is. In doing this he also provides us with an excellent discussion of what Rationalism is.

"...The fundamental conception of empiricism is: there are two kinds of sciences, differing in nature and method--purely conceptual sciences, like mathematics, and objective sciences, like physics and psychology. Rationalism errs in recognizing only one form of science, the mathematical, and in attempting to fashion all sciences after its pattern. That is an impossible undertaking; the sciences dealing with matters of fact, natural and mental sciences, wholly differ from mathematics in content and method.

It is characteristic of mathematics that it makes no assertions concerning the existence and behavior of reality, but deals solely with deductions from notions. Geometry does not say: This figure is a circle; this body is a sphere, and its motion has the form of an ellipse but: Such and such consequences follow from the definition of the circle and the sine. Whoever accepts the definition must also accept its deductions; he is bound by logic to do so. It is wholly immaterial whether or not anything exists corresponding to the notion.

The case is quite different in the other group of sciences, which deal with objects. Physics and psychology aim to inform us how things act which exist independently of our notions. How can we know anything about them? Empiricism answers: Only by experience. It is absolutely impossible to discover from the notion of water and of heat what will happen when the thermometer falls to zero or rises to one hundred degrees; or to infer from the concept of the body what will occur if it is deprived of its support. Only by perception do we learn that it will fall under such circumstances; the concept does not help us in the least. Not even the most perfect intellect, says Hume, the intellect of Adam before the fall, could have told him that if he should happen to fall into the water, he would sink and be suffocated. Nay, it could not even reveal to him what would happen were a body in motion to collide with one at rest. Nor can psychology deduce from an absolute notion of the soul that it feels and desires, reasons and infers, or foresee that air-waves will arouse a sensation of sound, or pressure upon the eye, sensations of light, or a blow in the face, a feeling of anger. All these facts are known by experience only.

Locke² began these reflections. He attempts to prove that all our notions are derived from experience. In the first book of the *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* he undertakes to show, with hypercritical thoroughness, that men do not come into the world with innate ideas; a fact of which perhaps no philosopher, least of all Descartes, needed to be appraised. The real opposition between them is a different one. Descartes claims that it is as possible to form

² John Locke (1632-1704) was an English philosopher and empiricist. Paulsen notes that 'The distinction between demonstrative and experimental knowledge founded on perception is fundamental to the entire fourth book of Locke's *Essay*, which is in reality the principal part of the work. The distinction is, however, not accurately defined. The clear and logical exposition of this difference forms the starting-point of Hume's *Enquiry* (Section IV and Section XII, conclusion).'

notions in physics and psychology as in mathematics, the validity or truth of which is proved by their inner possibility. Locke denies it. The definition of the body: *corpus est res mere extensa*, or the definition: *mens est res mere cogitans*, may be logically possible; it may be clearly and distinctly conceivable, but that by no means establishes its validity: we may have as clear and distinct a conception of a golden mountain. The truth of the notions of all sciences that deal with facts is based solely on the perception of such facts and connections. Hence it follows that the definitions of sciences of fact cannot be as fixed and final as mathematical concepts they may be enlarged and modified by further observation. Our notion of gold is the result of all previous observations concerning this body: it has such and such a color, a particular specific gravity, and reacts in a certain way upon mechanical, chemical, and thermal influences. Further observations may possibly discover new qualities. It is also possible that we may become acquainted with a body having all the qualities of gold but a somewhat higher or lower melting-point. We should in that event extend our notion sufficiently to admit this difference. The mathematical concept, however, is final: A figure in which the radii are not quite equal is not a circle; a line that touches a circle at more than one point is not a tangent. The same remarks apply to the notions on which Descartes aims to base physics and psychology; they are not final or mathematical, but provisional and empirical. Descartes explains: A body is a thing whose essence consists in extension, the soul a thing whose essence consists in states of consciousness (*cogitatio*) for I can clearly and distinctly conceive such a thing. Of course I can; but should experience show that this extended thing also thinks, at least occasionally, or that this thinking being also sets bodies in motion, could I not also conceive that? And in that case would it be advisable to retain the above definitions? Evidently not. For then they would be inadequate to explain actual facts. Hence all concepts concerning matters of fact are provisional notions, they are constantly changing in order to fit the facts yielded by observation. Such notions make a demonstrative procedure like mathematics impossible.

Locke often insists that mathematics is the most perfect form of knowledge. He deplores the fact that this kind of knowledge (which outside of mathematics is possible only in morals)

is restricted to so narrow a field. Nevertheless we must confess that the sciences of fact like physics, chemistry, and psychology cannot be treated according to the mathematical method; observation and experiment are necessary here.

Hume³ continued and completed these reflections. His examination of the notion of cause and effect forms the cardinal point in his brief and simple but thoughtful *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. The law of causality had always been the chief support of rationalism. It was supposed that the effect could be deduced from the cause; the relation existing between cause and effect is the same as that existing between ground and consequent: *sequi=causari* (sequence=cause), Hume shows that this is an error. Inference according to the law of causality is entirely different from concluding according to the logical law of contradiction. The relation between cause and effect is no logical relation at all, discoverable by pure thought. In physics and psychology such phenomena are said to be causally related as invariably succeed each other in time. The perception of succession in time is all that is really observed here; at any rate, an inner connection of phenomena, a necessity that binds them together, is not a matter of observation. I perceive that a certain state follows upon a given state; I expect the same event to succeed it the next time it occurs. Here we have the beginning of the causal conception. We find it in animals; they too learn from experience, and in the manner indicated: a certain succession is perceived in events; at the recurrence of the first, the second is expected or anticipated. The function is more highly developed in man; not every perceived succession leads us to expect its return; we gradually learn to separate the constant causal relations existing between phenomena from the accidental and dissolute connections. But the principle is the same in either case. It is absolutely impossible to discover the effect from the notion of the cause by logical inference. Take the simplest example. The motion of a body in a given period of time is the cause of the same movement during the succeeding period. This is in no wise discoverable by a logical inference. From the proposition that a certain body moves with a

³ David Hume (1711-1776) was a Scottish philosopher, empiricist, and skeptic.

certain velocity per second, and in a certain direction, no logical conclusion follows, except the falseness of its opposite. Nothing whatever can be deduced as to what is going to happen during the next second. On the ground of previous observations, I expect this body to pass through an equal space with the same velocity and in the same direction, during the ensuing period of time. But this expectation is not a necessity of thought, like a mathematical proposition. It is also conceivable that the movement should cease of its own accord, either suddenly or gradually, or that it should turn off in any direction whatever. Past experience has invariably taught us that things behave in the manner stated in the law of inertia, but it is not a logical necessity that the future should resemble the past. Moreover, says Hume,--and that is his most general proposition,--there is absolutely no fact the non-existence of which would not be conceivable or logically possible. The non-existence of any body, the invalidity of any natural law, is conceivable, for the non-existence of the entire world is conceivable.

Hence it follows: In the sciences concerning matters of fact like physics and psychology there are no *truths that are strictly universal and necessary*. These sciences contain propositions that are *only probably universal*. Each one is true with the tacit proviso: subject to correction by subsequent experience. The propositions of mathematics are absolutely universal and necessary. No observation can shake or change the proposition that the sum of the angles of a plane triangle is equal to two right angles; it is implied in the notions themselves as their logically necessary consequence. On the other hand, there is no proposition in physics or psychology that can be said to possess such necessity. Nor is the causal law itself an exception; the proposition that there is absolute regularity in the succession of natural phenomena has presumptive validity only. It is also conceivable or logically possible that phenomena should occur that stand in no relation whatever to all antecedent and all consequent phenomena. We should call such phenomena miracles. Hence miracles are undoubtedly possible, just as possible to thought as facts that may be explained by our laws of nature, i.e., inserted into the natural connection of things according to rules. The question is not a question of possibility, but one of fact. Have facts been observed that would have to be regarded as miracles? Hume raises serious objections to the assertion. According to him the theory that the alleged miracles are explainable, if not physically, psychologically at least, has such great probability that it may be regarded as practically certain. It is a matter of such common experience that human testimony rests on voluntary or involuntary deception, that it seems much more plausible for us to explain an alleged miracle in this way than to abandon the fundamental principle of all natural science, the universal reign of law in nature. This presupposition is, of course, not logically necessary, but has been so often confirmed by facts and has, upon close observation, been so often verified even in the case of alleged miracles, that we have the right, on *a priori* grounds, to doubt new miracles.

That is the epistemology of empiricism....the question at stake in the controversy between rationalism and empiricism is: Do we possess an *a priori* or rational knowledge of objects? Rationalism answers in the affirmative: By pure thought we reach an absolute knowledge of things that cannot be acquired through the senses. Empiricism denies the statement: We gain

a knowledge of objects solely by perception, whence it follows that we have no absolute knowledge....”

Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*

from Book VII of the *Republic*

Socrates and Glaucon discourse on the nature of education:

AND now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: --Behold! human beings living in a underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see.

And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Yes, he said.

And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Very true.

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

No question, he replied.

To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

That is certain.

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow it' the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision, -what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them, -will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

Far truer.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take and take in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

True, he now

And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he 's forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities.

Not all in a moment, he said.

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

Certainly.

Last of he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

Certainly.

He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold?

Clearly, he said, he would first see the sun and then reason about him.

And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

Certainly, he would.

And if they were in the habit of conferring honors among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honors and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer,

Better to be the poor servant of a poor master, and to endure anything, rather than think

as they do and live after their manner?

Yes, he said, I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner.

Imagine once more, I said, such an one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

To be sure, he said.

And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable) would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.

No question, he said.

This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally, either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

I agree, he said, as far as I am able to understand you.

Moreover, I said, you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural, if our allegory may be trusted.

Yes, very natural.

And is there anything surprising in one who passes from divine contemplations to the evil state of man, misbehaving himself in a ridiculous manner; if, while his eyes are blinking and before he has become accustomed to the surrounding darkness, he is compelled to fight in courts of law, or in other places, about the images or the shadows of images of justice, and is endeavoring to meet the conceptions of those who have never yet seen absolute justice?

Anything but surprising, he replied.

Any one who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees any one whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter light, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light. And he will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other; or, if he have a mind to laugh at the soul which comes from below into the light, there will be more reason in this than in the laugh which greets him who returns from above out of the light into the den.

That, he said, is a very just distinction.

But then, if I am right, certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight into blind eyes.

They undoubtedly say this, he replied.

Whereas, our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already; and that just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming into that of being, and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being, or in other words, of the good.

Very true.

And must there not be some art which will effect conversion in the easiest and quickest manner; not implanting the faculty of sight, for that exists already, but has been turned in the wrong direction, and is looking away from the truth?

Yes, he said, such an art may be presumed.

And whereas the other so-called virtues of the soul seem to be akin to bodily qualities, for even when they are not originally innate they can be implanted later by habit and exercise, the of wisdom more than anything else contains a divine element which always remains, and by this conversion is rendered useful and profitable; or, on the other hand, hurtful and useless. Did you never observe the narrow intelligence flashing from the keen eye of a clever rogue --how eager he is, how clearly his paltry soul sees the way to his end; he is the reverse of blind, but his keen eyesight is forced into the service of evil, and he is mischievous in proportion to his cleverness.

Very true, he said.

But what if there had been a circumcision of such natures in the days of their youth; and they had been severed from those sensual pleasures, such as eating and drinking, which, like leaden weights, were attached to them at their birth, and which drag them down and turn the vision of their souls upon the things that are below --if, I say, they had been released from these impediments and turned in the opposite direction, the very same faculty in them would have seen the truth as keenly as they see what their eyes are turned to now.

Very likely.

