

THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

An Introduction

Harry Schofield

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HARRY SCHOFIELD

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To my wife Olive
for her wonderful patience and understanding

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Author's Preface

During the last few years, there has been an increasing number of books produced on the philosophy of education. Many of these are the work of experts in this particular field, and are admirably suited to those students who have some knowledge of general philosophy, or who have no such knowledge but do possess a mind which takes easily to philosophy.

Unfortunately, many students in Colleges of Education do not fall into either of these categories. For them, the admirable books are rather forbidding, and convince the reader that 'philosophy is not for him'.

This book has been planned and written for just this type of student. It aims to show that to find philosophy difficult in such circumstances is neither extraordinary nor a sign that the average student cannot learn to study philosophy successfully.

The book starts from scratch. It attempts to answer simply the two major questions: 'What is philosophy?' and 'What is philosophy of education?' From this simple start, we proceed slowly to discover the areas which philosophy examines, all the while explaining and illustrating basic terms. It is ignorance of these which, in many cases, acts as a barrier between the student and a successful study of philosophy.

Gradually, the reader is introduced to the techniques of linguistic analysis and concept analysis in such a way as to show that these two techniques are not as difficult as their names suggest. To the inexperienced, all such names are terrifying. Closer acquaintance will remove any such fears.

Not all readers will have the same educational background and experience, so that references throughout the book which are familiar to some may be totally new to others. To ensure that the latter will not be at a disadvantage, copious notes are provided at the end of each chapter explaining references to the classical world, medieval universities, literary works, etc. Any terms introduced from other educational disciplines, e.g. psychology and sociology, are similarly explained.

We ask only that the reader be willing to exercise patience, especially in the early stages of the book, and that he be prepared to go slowly and, if necessary, to retrace his steps in places. To provide further assistance, and to stress that all concepts within education are closely interrelated, frequent cross-references are provided. These prepare the way for related ideas yet to be dealt with and, in the later stages, serve as reminders of ideas previously examined.

It is our firm conviction that philosophy is not the province of the privileged few. Those who are prepared to tackle it slowly and confidently will, we feel, be pleasantly surprised at the progress which they make.

H.S.

Liverpool

Chapter 1

The Meaning and Function of Philosophy and Educational Philosophy

The word 'philosophy' frequently causes a feeling of apprehension in the average man and even in the average student. Both believe that it deals with mysterious matters far removed from everyday life and that it traffics in ideas which only the brilliant few are capable of understanding. Such apprehension causes the average man (and the average student) to close his mind firmly against philosophy.

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD 'PHILOSOPHY' AND A DEFINITION

The word 'philosophy' comes from the Ancient Greek noun *φιλοσοφία* (*philosophia*) which literally means 'love of wisdom'. The word 'wisdom' is somewhat old-fashioned nowadays and the expression 'love of wisdom' causes little less apprehension than the word 'philosophy' itself. It suggests abstract and even other-worldly ideas and that strange area of philosophical investigation – metaphysics. The word 'metaphysics' comes from the Greek expression '*ta meta physica*' – 'things beyond the physical realm' – and again we feel mysterious associations which suggest that philosophy is beyond us.

Moreover, if we turn to the writings of Bertrand Russell, one of the most lucid exponents of philosophy, and read his definition of the word 'philosophy', we are more certain than ever that our fears about its difficulty were well founded. Russell (1) writes:

“‘Philosophy’, as I shall try to understand the word, is something intermediate between theology and science. Like theology, it consists of speculations on matters as to which definite knowledge has, so far, been unascertainable; but like science, it appeals to human reason rather than to authority, whether that of tradition or that of revelation. All DEFINITE knowledge, so I should contend, belongs to science; all DOGMA as to what surpasses definite knowledge belongs to theology. But between theology and science there is a no-man’s-land exposed to attack by both sides; this no-man’s-land is philosophy.’

We shall have need to refer on many occasions throughout this book to the terms 'speculation', 'reason' and 'types of knowledge', but our overall

impression of the quotation is that it offers little comfort and merely tells us that philosophy deals with vague matters, which is what we suspected before turning to Russell for help and comfort.

Furthermore, Scheffler (2) suggests that it is not only the average man who shies away from philosophy and believes that it offers little help to him. Scheffler says that in the past and still to some extent in the present *professional* philosophers and *professional* educators come together as 'relative strangers in an academic landscape'. The professional educator cannot see how the general philosopher, who can give no definite answers even to general problems in the same way that science can give definite answers, can throw light on educational problems. The sole purpose of this book is to show that philosophy *can* help not only professional educators, but also practising teachers, however experienced or inexperienced they may be in their chosen profession. It is never too early or too late to enlist the help of philosophy.

In the first place, nothing is ever achieved in life by running away from problems and situations which overawe us. The child who states emphatically that he hates cabbage without ever having tasted it, denies himself the opportunity of ever coming to like it. In addition, every time cabbage forms part of the family meal, there is a tense atmosphere caused by the parents insisting that he must eat cabbage because it is good for him, and the child, with mounting frustration, flatly denying that he will eat cabbage. Consequently, for the child cabbage comes to be associated with his parents' anger, just as Pavlov's dog associated the ringing of a bell with the appearance of food (3), and a perfectly harmless vegetable becomes highly emotionally-toned for that particular child.

Similarly, those who visit psychiatrists are often there for no other reason than that they regularly fail to face up to problems and consequently become afraid of all problems. They try to push the fear out of their conscious mind, but they do not prevent the fear from continuing to work destruction. When they can endure the mental agony no longer, they resort to the psychiatrist. He brings them face to face with their fears and prevents their running away. Only in this way can the fears be destroyed.

Like the child, we shied away from the word 'philosophy' and like the psychiatrist's patient we ran away from Russell's definition of philosophy. It is now time that we faced the situation, to decide whether in fact it is as bad as we feared. If we read what Russell writes directly after the passage quoted, he says that the term 'philosophy' can be used and indeed has been used 'in a number of ways'. Immediately we realize that the terrifying 'no-man's-land' idea may not be the only one available. Furthermore, he writes that the term may be used in a wider or a narrower sense. These two ideas tempt us to think that possibly the term may be used in a simpler

way. Assuming that it can, and because we have already seen that philosophy concerns itself with speculation, we will define philosophy as 'the process of asking questions' and see where this definition leads us.

THE PROCESS OF ASKING QUESTIONS

We have now come from a very complex definition to a very simple one, and it is possible that we have oversimplified matters in the transition. We can think of some questions that merely arouse the original fear in our minds, such as the one asked elsewhere by Russell. He says that a philosophical question may be 'Is there a china tea-pot between earth and Mars revolving in elliptical orbit?'

Again, the thought occurs to us that many people besides philosophers ask questions, and we wonder if all philosophical questions must be like the example which Russell gives to us. It will help at this point if we return to our original definition (by translation) of 'philosophy' as 'love of wisdom'. Since we are attempting to simplify matters, let us substitute the more everyday word 'knowledge' for 'wisdom'. A moment's thought tells us that, young as we are, we have acquired a tremendous store of knowledge (or wisdom), that the process began in infancy and largely consisted of asking questions. We did not approach philosophers for the answers, but, *by asking questions* of our parents, teachers, friends, *we obtained knowledge*. Nor was the knowledge which we acquired in this way, i.e. by asking questions, 'metaphysical' or unrelated to daily life. But there were times when we asked difficult questions, such as 'Where was I before I was born?' or 'How was I born?', which caused the people we asked no small difficulty. Without being taught to ask questions, we formed of our own accord a connection between wanting to know and asking questions. It is a simple matter now to suggest that the philosopher, wanting to know the answers to certain problems, asks a certain type of question.

Our apparently naïve and over-simplified definition of philosophy as 'the process of asking questions' has a famous precedent. No less a person than Plato's teacher Socrates used the question and answer technique, which came to be known as the Socratic method, in his search for true knowledge. The questions which he asked and the answers he received, and the conclusions which he came to, are recorded in the philosophical dialogues of Plato.

Moreover, Socrates asked questions in order to clarify people's ideas, to 'rid their minds of error', as he called it. He believed that too many people accepted ideas at secondhand without ever questioning them. Once they had acquired them, they applied them automatically, without any real understanding of them, and in some cases gained an unjustified reputation for wisdom. Socrates, on the other hand, said that he himself was the

wisest man in the world because he did not pretend to know what he did not know. His wisdom consisted of recognizing his own limitations. By asking questions, he attempted to rid his own mind and the minds of other people of preconceived ideas, which were often a barrier to understanding. We shall find, throughout this book, that once we begin to ask questions we are frequently forced to abandon many preconceptions, often those which we hold most dear. It is not comfort to either intending or practising teachers to know that we are just as prone to these preconceived ideas as anyone else. In view of what we have said already it is clear that philosophy, at least in the form of asking questions, can be practically useful to us.

Some of Socrates' questions are of the metaphysical kind. When he asks 'What is justice?', he is being just as metaphysical as Pontius Pilate when he asked Christ 'What is truth?' At other times, the questions he asks are everyday ones, such as that directed at Cephalus (4): 'But has your property, Cephalus, been chiefly inherited or acquired?' There is certainly nothing mysterious or other-worldly here.

However, we must notice now one of the greatest weaknesses of the Socratic method, namely that it is easy to ask 'loaded' questions. 'Loaded' questions are those which compel the person whom we are questioning to give the answer which we require to suit our purposes. In a court of law such questions are called leading questions, and no judge will allow counsel to use them when interrogating a witness, because they make the witness, who can answer only 'Yes' or 'No', condemn himself out of his own mouth. The questions of the prosecutor 'lead' him to the answer which the prosecutor needs to clinch his case.

It is easy to see, then, that philosophical questions asked in the quest for true knowledge must not be loaded but impartial. They must not reflect the preconceived ideas and bias of the person asking them. The questioner must keep an open mind throughout his investigation and be scrupulously fair in the questions he asks.

One of Socrates' victims becomes very indignant when he realizes that the questions asked of him are loaded (5): 'This is scandalous, Socrates. You understand my doctrine in the sense in which you can damage it most easily.' In the present century, Ryle (6) warns against the same thing when he says that he becomes most angry in his writings when he sees in other people the assumptions, prejudices, and bias which he realizes he himself has.

Emmet (7) says that questions which make 'illegitimate assumptions', which 'beg the question', are the most frequent sources of error in the history of philosophy. This is a further indication that even great minds can become victims of this fault. It also warns us, who are not great minds, that we must be extra careful when we ask questions. Teachers are particularly prone to ask loaded questions when tackling philosophical prob-

lems, because in their daily routine they frequently use a loaded question to make a pupil give them the correct answer, as an alternative to providing him with the information. When the matter is of fact, the method is legitimate, because facts are certain. But, philosophy often asks questions in the realm of beliefs, and loaded questions here are illegitimate. We may find when we begin to ask questions about educational problems that we expose false doctrines and destroy them. If this is done, it must be as the result of asking fair questions.

In order to chart the no man's land which Russell said was philosophy, we must determine not only what sort of questions the philosopher is entitled to ask, but also the areas in which he can legitimately ask them. We hinted at this when we said that not only philosophers ask questions. In other words, not all questions are philosophical questions.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS

Some questions can be answered in the laboratory, while others cannot. The former are empirical questions, and Russell, in his definition, suggested that this sort of question belongs to science, the area of *definite* knowledge. The other type of question was described by Russell as speculative. We also refer to these as theoretical questions and again we use a Greek word which was used in a philosophical context by Aristotle (8). The Greek noun *θεωρία* (*theoria*), as used by Aristotle, referred to a state of contemplation or speculation. This theoretical state was the supreme state of happiness, and one cannot measure happiness in the laboratory. Similarly, Plato's Guardians (9) 'contemplated the good' (rather similar to studying philosophy). Again, one cannot measure the good in the laboratory.

Speculative or theoretical or contemplative questions, then, are not scientific, since they cannot produce in the laboratory answers on which certain knowledge or definite knowledge is based. These questions may belong to the realm of theology, as Russell indicates, but they may equally belong to philosophy. This point will become clearer in a moment. Speculative or theoretical or contemplative questions require us to 'sit down and think', in order to obtain an answer.

The word 'empirical' is derived from the Greek noun *empeiria*, meaning 'experience'. Thus, empirical questions can be answered by our own direct experience. We can test the rightness or the wrongness of the answer. To answer empirical questions, we must 'get up and do'. We can illustrate these two types of questions by very simple examples.

Let us assume that I am sitting on the beach and somebody asks me, 'Is the sea warm today?' If I have already been in for a swim, I can give him a certain answer based directly on my own first-hand experience. If he sees that I am wearing swimming trunks and that my skin is still wet, he

can assume that the experience on which I base my answer is recent experience and therefore reliable. If the same person asks me the same question when I have not been in for a swim, it is probable that my answer would be, 'I'm sorry. I cannot tell you, because I have not been in.'

However, let us assume that I am undecided whether to go in the water or not, because I am not certain that it will be warm enough for my liking. I then pose the question 'Is the sea warm today?' to myself. It is possible to arrive at a theoretical answer. I can summon all the evidence which I know is relevant, such as what time of year it is, what time of day it is, whether the sun is out or not, and how long it has been out. All these pieces of evidence help me to come to a conclusion about the temperature of the sea. But there is still an 'element of doubt'. Perhaps I have got my facts wrong about the temperature of the sea at certain times of the year or of the day. I can be 'pretty sure' of my facts but not 'absolutely' sure. The only sure way to remove the lingering doubt is 'to get up and do', to go and put my hand in the water. In these circumstances, it is probably quicker, and certainly more effective, to go and test the water in the first instance, than it is to sit and theorize about its warmth.

But as I sit on the beach, instead of asking myself 'Is the sea warm today?', I might well ask myself 'Where did the sea come from originally?' A certain theoretical line of reasoning may lead me to ask further questions: 'Is there a God?', 'Did God create the sea?' I have now asked myself four questions as I sit on the beach. I can answer the first one, which is a very ordinary, everyday sort of question, either by speculation (sitting and thinking), or empirically (getting up and doing). In the case of the remaining three questions, I cannot go and do; I can only sit and think, contemplate, speculate, theorize. I can avail myself of experience in my theoretical answers, but not of direct experience. To have learned the theories of philosophers and theologians is a sort of experience, but not the same sort as that experience where I went and put my hand in the water. In answering the last three questions I must avail myself of ideas. After considering my own theories and those of other people that I recall, I may arrive at an answer which satisfies me, or I may not. In neither instance is there any final arbiter, any conclusive evidence equivalent to testing the warmth of the sea with my hand.

From the above examples it becomes clear why Russell assigns all DEFINITE knowledge to science. Science can test its answers empirically, by 'going and doing' in the laboratory, by setting up experiments. At the end of the performance, science can give tangible proof. It can say, 'There, see for yourself, if you do not believe me'. The theologian and the philosopher cannot do this. The answers to the problems of science lie in the 'physical' world, the answers to theological and philosophical problems lie in the 'metaphysical' world, that world which is 'beyond the physical'.

It seems at this point that we were justified in our apprehensions about philosophy when we thought that it dealt with mysterious matters far removed from everyday life. Even after we have defined it as 'the process of asking questions', it seems that we come back to the same sphere of metaphysics, of intangibles (things which we cannot touch or understand by sense impression), of abstract ideas. Moreover, it seems that the questions which philosophy asks are not very different from those asked by theology. '*Theos*' is the Greek word meaning 'God'. Consequently when I asked the question, 'Is there a God?', I can be said to be asking a theological question. When I ask, 'Where did the sea come from?' I am asking a philosophical question. The answer may be that God created the sea, but my original question was not about the existence of God, the essence or attributes of God, or anything to do with religious problems.

To return to our three areas in which questions are asked, theology, science and philosophy, it is often said that science gives definite and precise answers to questions, whereas theology and philosophy do not. We can see now that this is inevitable. Science gives different types of answers from theology and philosophy only because it asks basically different questions. The questions of science are empirical, those of theology and philosophy are speculative. If theology and philosophy ceased to ask speculative questions and began to ask empirical ones, they would cease to be theology and philosophy. Similarly, if science abandoned its method of asking questions and adopted the method of theology and philosophy, it would cease to be science. This is not a condemnation of philosophy and theology but an appreciation that they are not the same as science.

We have now shown briefly that philosophy asks its questions outside the realm of theology as well as outside the realm of science. But it is not necessary to regard this area strictly as a 'no man's land'. The term 'no man's land' implies a waste land in which no one is interested and in which no one holds territorial rights. But philosophy has more right to a place in areas where questions are asked than any other field of inquiry.

THE ANCIENT AND MODERN TASKS OF PHILOSOPHY

If we go back to the days before Plato, when the Ionian philosophers (10) asked their questions we find that originally all questions were philosophical. The Ionians asked about the nature of the universe and where it came from, about the existence of a god and what he did, about the origin of man and what was the relationship between this tiny speck, man, and the immense universe. Thus the philosopher asked questions in those early days which later became the property of different fields of knowledge and inquiry. As man's knowledge developed, certain people specialized in one sphere of investigation, while others specialized in another. After the

rise of modern science in the seventeenth century, the lines of demarcation between areas of investigation became more obvious and more permanent. The development of instruments for measuring made for a very big advance in the methods of giving precise answers to questions; there was no comparable development in the realms of philosophy and theology.

The Greeks were very fond of 'creation myths', especially the type where Mother Earth produced races of gigantic offspring. If we make our own creation myth at this point, it will help us to understand not only how all the other disciplines developed from philosophy, but also how philosophy functions.

At different times, philosophy brought forth offspring. These were called 'science', 'theology', 'history', 'mathematics', and each of these 'children of philosophy' gathered a store of knowledge of his own. Ultimately, when their store of knowledge was great, Philosophy called her children to her and asked them to show her what knowledge they had discovered. Being older and wiser than her children, she was able to derive great meaning from what knowledge each provided. She herself acquired no factual knowledge, but, by putting side by side all the knowledge that her children brought to her, she was able to develop an overall understanding, to look at all the variables. Sometimes there were gaps in the overall pattern. On such occasions, Philosophy did not produce knowledge of her own, or criticize her offspring for providing her with insufficient information. Instead she made suggestions that would fill in the gaps, and interpretations that would provide greater coherence in the picture.

This 'overall picture' which philosophy develops after reviewing all the available data from other disciplines, is produced by the synoptic or speculative function of philosophy. The synoptic Gospels are the Gospels which, when placed side by side and looked at simultaneously (the Greek word means 'looking at together'), are seen to contain much of the same material. Just as the theologian looks at the content of the synoptic Gospels, so philosophy looks at the different disciplines side by side. Brubacher (11) reminds us that philosophy may begin an investigation at the level of common sense and 'that stolid first cousin of common sense, tradition'. We recall that Socrates, too, questioned tradition and that many times his first questions were of an everyday, common sense kind. By asking Cephalus if his wealth was inherited or acquired, he took the first step towards answering the much greater question, 'What is justice?'

However, philosophers find that common sense and tradition are like 'raw data' to the psychologist, i.e. not sufficiently precise to enable him to arrive at meaningful answers. Thus, when a psychologist collects 'marks' (to give a single example) in an experiment, he subsequently applies statistical techniques to these marks (raw scores) and produces 'processed

figures', which give greater accuracy to his findings. The raw data of common sense is in the same category as the raw score marks. Tradition, too, is imprecise, because it may be an untidy collection of data in no really coherent form. Philosophy sifts and refines this, simply by processing the facts of history and science, which themselves examine tradition.

Out of the synoptic role of philosophy, where the data from different areas is set side by side, develops the critical role, which is concerned with the derivation of meaning from the data. If philosophy were merely to arrange the material, so that all the variables could be seen together, it would be like the psychologist who prepares his data for the statistical process he has chosen, but never completes the process, never obtains results.

The combination of the synoptic and critical approaches of philosophy leads logically to the 'normative role'. A 'norm' is a standard or goal, and philosophy, especially when it is applied to educational problems, is frequently concerned with establishing standards and formulating goals. As a result of its present survey of the past, it sees where the past is useful and where it can be approved and where it needs to be improved. From there, it looks to the future and helps to establish guide lines, norms, aims, standards.

We are now in a position to pause and see where our definition of philosophy as a 'process of asking questions' has led us. We have, at the same time, given some answer to our second question, namely, 'In what area does philosophy operate and what type of questions does it ask?' First, it asks questions which are outside the narrower scope of the similar process, theology. It also asks those *speculative* questions to which there is no *empirical* answer, and which are, therefore, not strictly within the realm of science. It may use the findings of both theology and science to help arrive at the final answer to a question, but it will not give as that final answer either a *scientific* or a *theological* answer.

Nor will this answer, when finally given, necessarily be a simple answer such as those produced by science. The application of the philosophical method is not like the application of a formula which always provides a precise solution. At worst, philosophy, after conducting its investigation, will produce an awareness of all the aspects of the problem, and provide those using the method with all possible clarity with the common theory underlying a variety of practices, with a rationally-based, coordinated structure. Where science refuses to accept authorities and their pronouncements at face value and tests them by experiment (empirically), philosophy, likewise, refuses to accept without analysis what authorities say. Instead of the experiment of the scientist, the philosopher uses reason.

Wilson (12) reminds us of the difficulty of the word 'certainty', which is closely associated with the demand for a simple, ready answer, when he

says that there are very few things which teachers can regard as one hundred per cent certain. If we confined our teaching to those things which *are* one hundred per cent certain, we would be unemployed most of the time. If there is doubt about the certainty of 'facts', there is even more doubt about the certainty of beliefs. We shall see, in a later chapter, that this is a problem inherent in teaching religion. Instead of refusing to teach beliefs and 'facts' which cannot be proved absolutely, Wilson advocates that we teach them 'rationally', that is, by producing 'generally acceptable evidence' in support of the 'facts' or beliefs. It is not sufficient to teach them because we believe them, or because they are said to be 'good for children'. The children themselves must be shown the evidence which makes what is taught acceptable. Philosophy seeks objectivity (an unbiased view which accords with acceptable evidence) rather than accepting subjectivity (seeing things from a personal point of view).

This is a further reminder that the human mind is full of preconceptions. The scientist when he formulates hypotheses looks at the evidence. If this supports the hypotheses, he makes a statement of fact based on the findings. No reputable scientist would twist the facts (or data) from his experiment so that they supported his hypothesis. Yet frequently, and not always consciously, we do exactly this. We start off with an idea or a belief and refuse to take heed of anything which contradicts that idea or belief. Such a process is often the foundation on which bigotry is built. Many people had tried to write history before Tacitus (13). He was sufficiently aware of the danger of recording history in the light of preconceptions that he stated that his aim was to record the deeds of Rome and her people 'without partisanship and bias'. Had these faults not been apparent in the works of previous writers of history, there would have been little point in making the statement at all. We can illustrate what is meant by appeal to reason, rather than to preconceptions, by a simple example. If we ask the question, 'Is Russia a more aggressive nation than the United States?' we ought to get an answer from a pro-Russian, a pro-American and a complete neutral, based on the evidence available. Each would first define what he meant by the term 'aggressive', and then, after gathering together the evidence and laying it side by side (the speculative or synoptic approach), he would sift and analyse it rationally (the critical approach) before coming to an answer. If there were no bias, complete objectivity instead of subjectivity, it would be possible to reach an answer acceptable to all three people. It would not matter whether the answer was 'Yes', 'No', or 'in the light of evidence available, no definite answer can be given'. It is most unlikely that this would happen, since the question would be **answered in vastly different ways by the pro-American and the pro-Russian.**

It is even probable that the so-called complete neutral would produce an answer biased (even if only slightly) in one direction or the other.

Wilson warns us of the danger of asking such questions as 'What is education?' Some people may take the question as a request for a definition of education, and we shall deal with this problem in Chapter 2. Others might think, as Thrasymachus thought when asked by Socrates 'What is justice?', that a sociological answer was required. Others might merely see the question as a chance to air some personal (subjective) opinion, possibly in a very dogmatic way. Using philosophical investigation, we shall find that dogmatism is often produced as a substitute for evidence and reason. Moreover, if we remember what we said earlier about loaded questions, we could so load further questions that we could steer the person questioned towards whichever of the three alternatives we wished to choose, irrespective of the first answer that he gave. This was precisely the method of Socrates.

PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHIZING

We have said a great deal so far about philosophy and about philosophers. We have even referred to some philosophers by name. We have seen that they asked questions because philosophy is 'a process of asking particular questions in particular areas'. But if we say that philosophy is a process of asking questions, can we 'philosophize' without asking questions ourselves? Is it possible to say that we are asking philosophical questions when we ask, 'What did philosopher *x* say on subject *y*?' Kant (14) would have given a very firm 'NO' to this question, as we shall see later in this chapter Scheffler does. Kant wrote: 'You will not learn from me philosophy, but how to philosophize; not thoughts to repeat, but how to think.' If we ourselves ask philosophical questions in an attempt to solve philosophical problems, then we philosophize. If we ask ourselves what answers did thinkers of the past produce when they asked philosophical questions to solve philosophical problems, we do not philosophize. If we adopt the second alternative, we use what might be called the 'historico-philosophical' approach by asking what conclusion philosophers came to throughout history. We accept only that answer which appears to suit our needs. But if we philosophize, we have to commit ourselves, to attempt to reach a conclusion for ourselves. Scheffler (15) says that there is nothing new or revolutionary about this distinction, but that it is all too often neglected, especially by educational philosophers in their writings.

Now, we are not saying that what thinkers of the past have said when giving answers to philosophical questions is not important, though we do well to remind ourselves that Wittgenstein (about whom we shall say more later) claims that the total of past philosophizing has led to no

solution of major problems. Indeed, in later chapters we shall have reason to look at some of the ideas of philosophers from the past. But this will only be part of the process; either before or after mentioning their ideas we shall ask our own questions.

It is not presumptuous to say that, valuable as past philosophizing is, the answers it produces may not always be directly relevant to current problems. The variables may have changed, thus changing the problem, however slightly. Secondly, those who are training to teach must realize at the start that there will be many times when they have to make up their own minds on important educational issues which impinge on them as teachers. They will have to commit themselves one way or another. To begin one's teaching career seeking ready-made answers from the past is no preparation for the making of personal decisions.

PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS. THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE

We can call the process of asking questions for ourselves in an effort to produce solutions to philosophical problems the 'analytical' approach, since we have already said that philosophy sifts and analyses evidence. The analytical approach starts from a contemporary problem.

In the context of modern philosophy, three terms are frequently used: 'philosophical analysis', 'linguistic analysis', and 'concept analysis'. The second and third terms are really more precise expressions of the first. Strict interpretation of the terms shows that linguistic analysis examines statements to see if they have any real meaning, while concept analysis analyses certain terms (words) which represent ideas (or concepts). 'History' is a concept. If we examine Henry Ford's statement, 'History is bunk', we apply linguistic analysis. If we merely write down the term 'history' and attempt to decide what it means, we, strictly speaking, use concept analysis. However, in examining Ford's statement, we have to analyse the concept 'history' before we can analyse the total statement 'History is bunk'.

Because philosophical or linguistic or concept analysis is normally associated with twentieth-century philosophy, it is sometimes thought to be a twentieth-century invention. In fact, the awareness that such analysis was necessary dates back at least to the time of Leibniz (16). He realized that when two people attempt to communicate they often fail, either because they use the same words to mean different things, or because they use different words to mean the same thing. In neither case is there any 'essential' difference between them. Deadlock results from misuse and misunderstanding of words. Let us take a simple illustration, to show how two people put the same word into a sentence and seem to say something different. A layman often says, 'If he had any intelligence he would not

behave in that foolish way'. The psychologist says 'The idiot and the imbecile have low intelligence'. Yet our layman used the word 'intelligence' when speaking of a 'normal' man performing a foolish act, and implied that the act showed that he possessed *no* intelligence. Again, our layman says, 'The success of the Beatles is proof that they have personality'. The psychologist says that everyone has a 'personality', but that not all 'personalities' are the same. Again, these statements seem to be contradictory, but they are not. The lay statement does not define clearly the concept of 'personality'.

Leibniz felt that the solution to this sort of problem could be achieved only by developing a 'universal symbolism', which he called *Characteristica Universalis*. The idea was not unlike the idea of developing Esperanto as a world language. But for Leibniz, this universal symbolism was mathematical in nature. Once established, it would ensure that philosophical problems could be solved exactly like mathematical problems. If there were ever a dispute between two philosophers, they would behave exactly like two accountants and say, 'To resolve our difficulty let us sit down and calculate'.

The apparent failure of philosophy to reach conclusive answers to essential problems led twentieth-century philosophers to seek a fresh approach. Both Warnock and Wittgenstein wanted to bring words back from their metaphysical use to their everyday use. Again, we see the common-sense beginnings of philosophical analysis. Warnock wished to take a concept and the problems which surround it, and worry away at it until a solution was reached. Moore, too, advocated a return to the everyday, common-sense use of language as the first step to clearing away the fog created by philosophy in the past.

Thus all three philosophers show an awareness that the long history of philosophy has not apparently brought us any nearer to solving vital problems, and that part of the blame may rest with a failure to use language effectively to communicate philosophical ideas and findings. Colin Wilson (17) has written that we use words in an attempt to 'digest' our experiences, and that at times we suffer from indigestion. At such times analytical philosophy is taken as a kind of 'Alka-Seltzer'!

Later in his career, Wittgenstein said that the misunderstanding arose not from any fault of language itself, but because people tended to think that there was only one set of language rules. This is as wrong as to think that there is only one set of rules covering all forms of sport. Just as there are separate rules for the games of cricket and golf, so there are different sets of rules for the language used in everyday life and language used as a means of communicating philosophical ideas.

Emmet (18) warns against what he calls 'the bewitchment of language'. In particular, we must realize that words can be used 'rationally' and they

can be used 'emotively'. If we think back a little way in this present chapter, we will remember that we said that we could get three different answers to the question 'Is Russia more aggressive than the United States?' The reason for this is that anyone except a complete neutral would be 'emotionally involved' on one side or the other. Emotive language and subjectivity go together; rational language and objectivity go together. Rational language is impartial; emotive language always reveals bias and pre-conceived ideas.

Because this book is so closely connected with particular uses of language and ways of examining language, it is worth while to pause for a moment and to consider how easily misunderstanding can arise when words are used to describe events which we have not experienced.

We often show a few-months-old baby an object of a particular colour and shape and at the same time say, 'Teddy'. We pair the toy and the word, as Pavlov paired the bell and the meat and as the child whom we described as 'disliking cabbage', paired 'cabbage' and 'parental displeasure.' Eventually the sight of the toy is sufficient to make the child say the word 'Teddy'. He first uses the word while he is looking at the toy.

Later, however, he 'develops a concept' (or idea) of 'Teddy'. Then he is able to say the word 'Teddy' without the toy being there for him to see. Later still, his vocabulary increases and enables him to talk about 'actions' outside the house, as, for example, 'Daddy gone work'. Because at a certain time daddy is not at home, the child's experience tells him that he is outside the home and that he has gone to work. The child has experienced seeing his daddy go out and hearing his mother say 'Daddy gone work'. The early language of the child is based on his direct experience of things and actions which are explained to him in words by his parents.

Once the child begins formal schooling, his experience widens. His vocabulary grows. But he is still very much dependent on what he sees as a basis for his expressions. Moreover the language which he hears and uses is very much above the level of difficulty of the naming of particular objects. It is also very much more complex than the simple sentence, 'Daddy gone work'. Someone is not talking to him individually all the time. Because of this, it is very easy to 'talk above the head' of the child, to use words in a way which is very familiar to us, but which is very difficult, if not impossible, for the child to understand. In a well-known experiment, nine-year-old children heard the story of King Alfred and the cakes. Later, they were asked questions on what they had heard. One of these questions involved the use of the word 'ruler' which had no 'relevant' meaning for some of the children. Their experience told them that a ruler was 'a piece of wood used for measuring'. They did not understand the abstract use of the word, which was synonymous with the word 'king'.

Later still, when the child begins to learn foreign languages, the same