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The Language Needed by Mother Tongue Speakers in our School System[1]

Keith Chick

In designing the Specific Purposes courses for foreign and second language adult learners which are currently so popular[2], one starts with the analysis of needs, including language needs. Because the learners are learning the language for educational or occupational purposes, it is possible to specify these needs with some degree of accuracy. Language needs are arrived at by identifying what sort of language competence is required if the learners are to achieve the targetted behaviour (follow a lecture, write an academic essay, understand air traffic control instructions, negotiate an export contract etc), assessing the general level of competence of the group before starting the course, and then noting in what respects this falls short of the targetted competence.

To follow the same procedure in the case of tongue speakers in the general school system is very difficult. Since most learning of the mother tongue takes place informally outside classrooms the competence they bring to school at the beginning and subsequent stages differs greatly from individual to individual. Moreover, while it is possible to specify the pupils' language needs in respect of their use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction across the curriculum, their future needs are too diverse to predict. In the circumstances, it is possible to say only that the language needed by mother tongue speakers in our school system is that which will allow them to be communicatively competent for school and for life.

To give substance to this statement, I want to concentrate on the nature of communicative competence (referred to henceforth as c c). This is a term which has been increasingly widely used over the past decade and a half, but, until very recently, poorly understood. It was introduced initially to highlight the limitations of Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence: the nature of the speaker's tacit knowledge of the rules of the grammar of his language. Scholars who used the term c c were concerned to point out that linguistic competence represents only a part of the knowledge which underlies the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately. They did not challenge the mentalistic or cognitive nature of the concept of competence. Thus early descriptions of c c tended also to be mentalistic. A case in point is the description provided in a paper I delivered at an in-service course for L_1 teachers in 1975[3].

Recently an alternative way of describing competence has emerged from the work of interactional sociolinguists who see communicative competence not as something in a person's head but as something which is interactionally accomplished. They argue that what goes on in heads is not available for analysis, there being no convenient dip stick for measuring a person's level of competence. They attempt to describe communicative competence not from the perspective of the *analyst*, but from that of the *participant*. Their interest is not in *product* (in the analyst's rules), but from *process* (in the interpretative procedures by means of which participants negotiate meaning).

Since what these studies reveal is not that the cognitive view is wrong, but that it is partial (c c is both knowledge and behaviour), I shall start by outlining the product or analyst's view of c c presented in the 1975 paper. Thereafter I shall explain what changes and additions need to be made to provide a process or participant's perspective. Questions about the level and sort of competence pupils can be expected to have on entering school and that which is required for school and for life will be dealt with only in passing.

According to the 1975 paper c c in English includes the following components (See Fig 1):

1 Knowledge of the sound system of the language. This means, firstly, knowing what are the contrastive sound

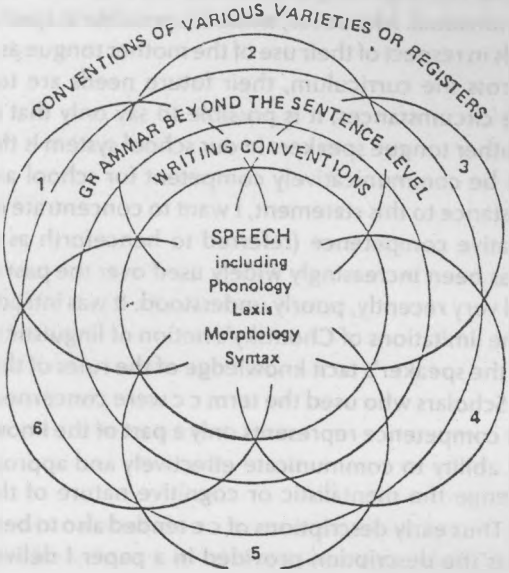


Fig. 1. THE GRAMMAR OF A LANGUAGE

units — the vowels and consonants — and how they combine to form syllables and other stretches of speech; and secondly, knowing the intonation patterns of the language.

2 Knowledge of the vocabulary, or to put it more technically, the lexical structure of the language.

3 Knowledge of the internal forms of words, the morphology of the language, eg the various morphemes to indicate plural number: +s, +es, +ves.

4 Knowledge of the syntax of the language. A person with a knowledge of the syntax of English would, for example, utter only one of the combinations of the same seven words:

> My mother has yes visited the doctor.
> Yes my mother has visited the doctor.
> Yes my mother the doctor has visited.
> Yes my mother visited the doctor has.

5 Knowledge of the writing conventions of the language. This includes not merely the spelling conventions and punctuation, but the conventions used by the skilful writer to compensate for the absence in writing of cues to meaning which one can take for granted in the speech situation, eg tone of voice, gesture, movement, physical setting.

6 Knowledge of the structure of discourse; that is, structure of language beyond the sentence level. This includes knowledge of how to write paragraphs and larger texts with topical unity and coherence.

7 Knowledge of the linguistic requirements of a wide range of communicative situations and roles. Those of my readers who are communicatively competent in the register of literary studies will know that it is inappropriate to write in a literary essay: 'so this guy Macbeth was too yellow at first to do the king in, but his ball-and-chain soon pushed him into it.'

What is still, for the most part, valid in this description is the first four components which are concerned with knowledge of linguistic organization at or below the sentence level. This is knowledge, incidentally, that most pupils have more or less mastered by the time they reach school: they make few phonological, morphological or grammatical errors (at least when using simple sentences) and usually have a vocabulary

store sufficient for their immediate purposes.

In components 5 to 7 the concern is with language beyond the sentence level, with contextualized language use or discourse, and here an account of c c as knowledge of distinctive linguistic forms and structures is less than adequate. To provide a more adequate description of competence involved in communicating effectively and appropriately in speech and writing within a wide range of social contexts (which is what components 5-7 attempt to account for), it is necessary to examine interactions, as do interactional sociolinguists, from the perspective of the participants. McDermott and his associates examine, for example, classroom interaction in reading lessons in a junior primary class[4]. At one stage of the lesson there is some uncertainly in the class as to what they are doing together.

Teacher: All right. Perry's ready. Who else is ready?
Anna: Me
Jimmy: Not me
Perry: CA-
Maria: Can I go?
Rosa: YOU . . . (mock reading)
Perry: CAN
Rosa: I could read it
Anna: Can't we please go over it with everybody.

The uncertainty concerns whether what they are doing together is 'getting a turn' or 'Perry reading'. What is significant is that what resolves the uncertainty is Rosa's interruption: 'I could read it'. Anna's subsequent request to read together makes sense only if it is clear that what they are doing is 'Perry reading'. To understand how the particulars work out what they are doing together one needs the information that Rosa was far behind her peers in learning to read and frequently used various ploys to hide her performance, such as looking away at points where she might be asked to take a turn, calling out for turns at the wrong times or using the wrong words to secure a turn at the right times. The other pupils who had this contextual information were able to use it to interpret what they were doing together.

What then does the participant's perspective on this interaction reveal about c c? The first thing is that c c is clearly interactionally accomplished. In this case, the teacher and the pupils, by attending to Rosa's utterance,

but not answering it, made Rosa's duplicity a competent display. McDermott and his associates observe that at other times the teacher and pupils spotlighted Rosa's weaknesses by, for example, challenging her claims to reading competence.

Secondly the participant's perspective reveals that an important aspect of c c is the ability to use contextual information to infer the social and functional meaning of utterances. There is no one-to-one relationship between linguistic forms and functions. Rosa's 'I could read it' has potentially the communicative value of: a report on her ability; a request to read; an answer to a previous question. As is apparent from the analysis, its meaning emerges from the negotiative, interpretative work of the participants, ie the opposite of what it literally express.

The participant's perspective also reveals that another important aspect of c c is the ability to create, together with the other participants, the social situation or context. An important aspect of any context for talk is what the participants are doing together, and, in this illustration, we see the participants working this out. The failure to recognize that contexts are interactional accomplishments is a major limitation of the description of c c within the context of subject specialities given in component 7. In this component, context is presented as somehow pre-existing. What is missed in the explanation that the uttering of: 'So this guy Macbeth was too yellow at first to do the king in etc' reveals communicative incompetence because the utterance is inappropriate to the context of literary studies, is that the student might well be using the utterance to redefine the context, or at least that part of the context concerned with the relationship between the participants. To make this point clearer, one can imagine a teacher using an utterance like this as a pedagogic ploy which signals to the pupil that a more informal context prevails in which the pupil can feel free to express his thoughts in language which comes more easily to his lips.

Furthermore, it is evident that the ability to create contexts includes not only the capacity to assess *what* a context is, but *when* it is. It reveals that contexts are not only being continuously readjusted as participants negotiate what they are doing together and what their relationships are, but continuously changing. Cc, therefore, includes the ability to perceive subsequent events which confirm or disconfirm these expectations.

A close examination of not merely the verbal but also the non-verbal behaviour of the participants in this illustration reveals another aspect of c c. This is the ability to co-operate with others in the achievement of conversational synchrony. It is evident that the teacher and pupils in this interaction organize their verbal and non-verbal behaviours (proxemic configurations, postures, patterns of gazing, gestures) in co-operative, reciprocal, rhythmically co-ordinated ways. Their behaviour is not unlike

that of ballroom partners of long standing who, confident in their mutual knowledge of the basic sequence of dance steps and the signals by which they inform one another of changes in direction or tempo, move in smooth harmony. In similar fashion conversationalists use synchrony to judge when significant next moments will occur[5]. During synchronous interactions tonal and other accented syllables tend to occur at evenly spaced intervals across time, and at points when the current speaker is introducing new information content. Synchrony therefore enables speakers to signal and listeners to anticipate when significant next moments will occur, such as when new information is to be conveyed, when a turn change is appropriate or when an answer to a question previously asked will be given. Significantly, during asynchronous interaction, important cues are often not perceived because they occur at the 'wrong times'. Consequently participants unintentionally interrupt one another, fail to build on one another's contributions to the development of themes, misinterpret one another's intentions and misjudge one another's attributes and abilities. The interaction is experienced as stressful and frustrating.

Looking at what takes place in the interaction from the perspective of the participant reveals further that c c for speaking 'involves the skilled and simultaneous manipulation of linguistic, paralinguistic and non-verbal communicative choice'[6]. This is something obscured by the analyst's neat classification of c c into different levels of organization evident in the earlier paper.

Thus far I have shown how the examination of spoken interaction from the perspective of the participants provides a more adequate description of competence for speaking and listening. In the remainder of the paper I want to show that a participant's perspective also contributes a more adequate description of competence for writing and reading, and for communicating within specialist areas, than that given in components 5-7. Since such competence is the specific responsibility of schools, an adequate description of it is essential if one wishes to know what language is needed by mother tongue speakers in our school system.

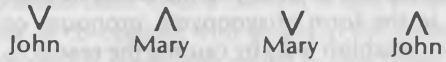
In the analyst's description provided in components 5 to 6, competence for writing is described as knowledge of the distinctive linguistic features of the written mode. Because the focus is on product rather than process, the differences between speech and writing are focussed on. However a major problem with this approach is that the goal of an adequate description of the distinctive linguistic characteristics of the written mode has proved elusive. While it is possible to distinguish the differences between, say, informal conversation and expository prose, the boundary between speech and writing becomes fuzzy when one discovers that written

discourse types such as love letters or imaginative literature display many of the features associated in the popular mind with speech, and that spoken discourse types, such as lectures or radio broadcasts, display many of the features associated with writing. It becomes increasingly fuzzy when one discovers that the speech of people who belong to social and cultural groups with a long history of literacy frequently displays features associated with writing, while the writing of neo-literates frequently displays features associated with speech.

By contrast, when one examines writing from the perspective of the participant, and looks at the process rather than the product, it is the similarities rather than the differences between speech and writing that come into focus. Communicating, whether in speech or writing, requires of the partricipants the sort of interpretative negotiative work already described. What ultimately determines the different surface forms of different types of written and spoken discourse, is the amount and quality of interpretative work that is required in the different contexts of talk and writing[7].

To clarify this point, I want to compare two forms of discourse that are produced in very different contexts, namely informal conversation between intimates and formal expository prose.

In informal conversation between intimates there is much in the way of shared background and assumptions about the world. Moreover, the context of the immediate surroundings is available to be referred to, and the participants themselves are present to provide feedback. This means that the participants can be minimally explicit and leave their hearers to make sense of what they are saying by calling on their background knowledge to interpret cohesive signals carried in the various non-verbal (facial expressions, gesture, spatial configurations) and prosodic channels (intonation, stress, tone of voice, pace). These cues for implicit meaning enable participants to fill in information not made explicit, and signal and interpret the relationship between what is being uttered and the developing topic or themes. To give a simple example the intonation of:



signals that this is an introduction, and allows the hearer to fill in the information left implicit, and show the relationships of the parts to the whole:

John *this is* Mary. Mary *this is* John[8].

The social situation or context which calls forth expository prose is quite different. Such writing developed in response to the needs of complex, technological society for efficient communication between great numbers of people who were geographically separated and who were typically

strangers. Since in such situations commonality of background cannot be assumed and, since neither the physical situation nor co-participant(s) are available, different interpretative strategies are called for. Background information and relationship between ideas and the developing theme have to be made explicit. This is achieved by means of a number of devices including:

a Lexicalization, ie information which the writer cannot assume is shared is verbalized.
b Use of various linking devices such as 'so', 'because', 'however', 'while' to signal the relationship between the ideas and the overall thematic development.
c Use of syntactic consolidations to embed information that cannot be assumed, and signal relative importance of ideas.
d Use of punctuation to signal thematic development by making the sentence structure explicit and showing how ideas are related. 'One of the main purposes of punctuation is to help the reader see in advance how the part he is about to read relates to what he has just read. If he sees a period he prepares himself for a new subject; if he sees a coma, he witholds closure on the sentence in progress etc.'[9]
e Use of paragraphing to mark off sub-themes.
f Ordering sentences and paragraphs such that they appear parts of a developing theme and using a system of signals which make this ordering explicit. The system includes linking words and phrases such as 'the next day', 'then', 'thus', 'on the other hand', 'adjacent to ', which signal the type of sequencing used (temporal, logical, spatial). It includes metastatements such as headings, sentences and paragraphs in which the writer informs the reader explicitly how he intends to develop the theme or how a particular sub-theme relates to the overall theme. It includes, also, the repetition of key items either in their original form or in the form of synonyms, pronouns or paraphrases. These establish links by causing the reader to refer backwards or forwards in the text.

What this comparison reveals is that c c includes another two abilities. The first is the ability to assess what information necessary is either not available in the context, or cannot be inferred from implicit signals. The second is the ability in relatively decontextualized situations to use the various devices, outlined above, in relation to expository prose, to make explicit what is not available from these two sources. Since pupils come to school with considerable ability for communicating in maximally contextualized situations such as the home, a considerable amount of language learning in

schools needs to involve learning to communicate effectively and appropriately in increasingly decontextualized situations.

In the description of competence for communicating in specialist areas given in component 7 one sees a similar focus on product rather then process. Such competence is described as merely knowledge of the characteristic linguistic features of specialist varieties or registers. In 1975 there was still optimism that register analysis would in due course produce descriptions of specialist varieties such as the register of science, of literature, of law etc.

As with the search for distinctive features of speech and writing, the goal has proved elusive. The analysis of register from the perspective of the participant reveals that what is more crucial for communicating in these specialist areas is access to interpretative schema or frames. These are sets of expectations about likely behaviour in activities typical in those specialist areas (eg giving a lecture, writing a report etc) including likely role relationships between participants, likely communicative tasks comparison, exemplifying, definition) which together will constitute the activity, likely content and likely ways of ordering that content. These schema guide the participants in their interpretation by predisposing them to see some aspects of the discourse as more salient than others. Since the effectiveness of the mother tongue throughout the curriculum depends vitally on the availability of these schemas, this is an aspect of c c which it is important to include in any account of what is needed by mother tongue speakers in our school system.

To sum up, if we are to get an adequate picture of the language needed by mother tongue speakers in our school system, we cannot stop short at an analyst's description of c c such as that provided in the 1975 paper. As the above discussion has shown a participant's perspective reveals that c c includes in addition to linguistic competence, the following:

1 The ability to use the context to infer the social and functional meaning of utterances.
2 The ability to create, together with other participants, the social context or situation. This ability includes the capacity to assess both what a context is and when it is.
3 The ability to co-operate with others in the achievement of conversational synchrony which in turn helps them to identify significant next moments in the interaction.
4 The capacity for manipulating linguistic, paralinguistic and non-verbal choice simultaneously.
5 The ability to assess what information is not available in the context or cannot be inferred, and to use a wide range of devices to make this information explicit.
6 Access to interpretative schema associated with the various specialist disciplines.

Even allowing for the fact that much of the necessary competence is learnt informally, it should be apparent that the remainder cannot be accomplished within the confines of mother tongue language lessons. To accomplish that goal, the teacher of mother tongue needs the co-operation of his colleagues in other subjects. I do not intend here to suggest what form this co-operation will take. However what is likely is that one of the roles of the language teachers will be to explain to his colleagues what language is needed. I hope that this discussion will assist them in this task.

NOTES

1 The author wishes to acknowledge the helpful criticisms and suggestions for redrafting of Ralph Adendorff

2 A Specific Purposes course may be defined as 'one that is based on an analysis of the communication needs of learners and which sets out to meet these needs directly and efficiently.' C J Brumfit and J T Roberts *Introduction to Language and Language Teaching*, London: Batsford, 1983, p 208.

3 J K Chick 'The Role of Grammar', *Crux*, 9: 4 (1975), pp 3-10. L1 is used throughout to refer to the use of a first language, L2 to the use of a second language.

4 J Dore and R McDermott 'Linguistic indeterminacy and social context in utterance interpretation', *Language*, 58 No 2 (1982), pp 374-398.

5 F Erickson 'Timing and Context in Everyday Discourse: Implications for the Study of Referential and Social Meaning', unpublished paper delivered at the Conference on Children's Oral Communication Skills, University of Wisconsin, 1978.

6 A Bennett 'Language proficiency and communicative competence in school settings', unpublished ms of Department of Research and Evaluation, Tucson, Unified School District Arizona, p 6.

7 D Tannen 'Oral and Literate Strategies in Spoken and Written Discourse', *Language*, 58 No 1 (1982), pp 1-21.

8 This example is quoted from J Gumperz *Discourse Strategies*, New York: OUP, 1982.

9 M Shanghnessy *Errors and Expectations*, New York: OUP, 1977, p 26.

Linguistic Demands made on Second Language Pupils in Schools

Rose Lennard

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is the result of a *pilot study* into language and learning across the curriculum. As such, it is only a mere starting point for further research. It was difficult to decide whether to provide a comprehensive overview of the issues involved and which my research to date has confirmed (and these are many), or to concentrate narrowly on only one or two aspects in detail. I have opted for the former, as I feel the latter would obviously be more valid as my research begins to become more focused.

What I have attempted to do, therefore, is to provide as comprehensive a view as possible of the many and complex issues involved in classroom interaction, with a view to possibly sensitizing teachers to what it is they are asking of their pupils in the language learning/teaching process, which applies to *all* teachers, irrespective of their subject areas, as learning essentially takes place through the medium of language. As a result of this type of conscious reflection on their classroom teaching, teachers can begin to move away from unthinking stereotyped instruction and to realise the need for a fit between teaching objectives (product) and the conduct of teaching (process).

In order to illustrate the kind of issues we are dealing with here, I have transcribed part of an exchange between teacher and pupils, which took place in an English class in a school where English is the medium of instruction for all subjects and the pupils are mostly second language (L2) speakers of English. (See Appendix — Example 1)

In this exchange, it appears that the pupil is concentrating on the purely structural form of the utterance, interpreting it literally and has missed, or is ignorant of, its illocutionary force. This points to the need, not only to teach the structures, but also their value *in use*. For the L2 learner, linguistic problems may not only arise from unfamiliarity with the grammar of the L2, or from interference from the first language (L1), but also from unfamiliarity with the *rules of discourse* — the various speech acts performed through the language. In this respect it should be kept in mind that linguistic problems (of comprehension and production) are also traceable to cultural and social/background differences. Learning a

language, for these pupils, also means learning a culture, and the *repertoire* of that culture.

2 MOTIVATION

Research in this field is obviously not new. Initially, classroom-centered research focused on methodology, in terms of what constituted 'good' or 'bad' teaching behaviours. More, recently, however, the emphasis has been on *language* as the medium through which learning takes place.

With this focus a number of research projects have developed in South Africa, with the express purpose of investigating (a) the use of language in the classroom, and through this (b) the linguistic demands that are made upon L2 pupils, both from teachers and textbooks.

For example, the Institute for the Study of English in Africa has launched a project to investigate the linguistic demands on L2 pupils at Std 1 level. Findings from this research will then be used to inform the syllabus and the production of materials at Sub B level. A colleague at the University of the Witwatersrand is currently investigating Std 3 level, with the purpose of informing the Std 1 syllabus. In turn, I have decided to investigate the linguistic demands made on L2 pupils at Std 5,6 levels *ie* at entrance level to the secondary school.

Other research projects of this nature include that which was conducted in the Adult Language & Literacy in Industry Project under the auspices of the Centre for Continuing Education. I would like to mention at this point that many of the issues to be discussed in this paper have already been uncovered during the course of the above-mentioned projects, and my own research only serves to confirm their findings, in terms of establishing tendencies in classroom interaction patterns, and of examining the nature of various types of discourse to which pupils are exposed in language and learning across the curriculum.

I was invited to conduct research into linguistic demands made on pupils in school, by teachers from three schools: St Barnabus, Pace College and Woodmead. Two of these schools have implemented a course called 'Integrated/General/Developmental Studies' which is seen as a shift in focus from traditional subject 'slots' to a focus on 'skills and ideas to be acquired'. A number of subjects, mainly taken from the 'humanities' (history, social studies, geography, etc) are 'merged', the principle behind the methodology being that of 'enquiry', *ie* investigative learning, through which pupils are presented with problems such as: the reading and interpreting of large-scale maps with a definite purpose in mind; the collecting and interpreting of evidence in connection with history, etc.

A number of British schools have already implemented this policy with some success but it is something of an innovation in South Africa schools. For this reason, the teachers concerned are anxious to monitor the

effectiveness of this component in terms of language development, which is a further reason for my involvement in this area of research.

3 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

My *general objectives* in this type of research are three-fold:

To investigate the language demands made on pupils in all skill areas, by teachers and materials at entrance level to the secondary school, *ie* to look at the required level of language proficiency in terms of linguistic complexity and discourse modes.

To investigate and describe the language used by pupils in their school work, and in this way, foster an understanding of the linguistic processes by which pupils acquire information and understanding, and the implications this holds for the teacher's own use of language.

To attempt to ascertain the nature of the gap which exists between the above levels.

This is obviously a mammoth task and would need years of research before any really valid conclusions can be offered. However, this preliminary investigation can only serve, for the present, as a pointer to the issues involved. Eventually it is hoped that certain areas may offer themselves for closer investigation, which may go some of the way to establishing the nature of at least part of the 'gap'.

My research methodology, to date, has consisted mainly of the following:

Observation, description and analysis of lessons at weekly intervals over a two-month period.

Consultation with teachers and pupils concerning lesson content and problem areas (there could have been more of this).

Analysis of textbooks, materials and pupils' writing.

Comparison of data across schools.

Feedback to teachers (which is the purpose of this paper).

4 THEORETICAL RATIONALE

The theoretical tenets upon which my research is based are mainly derived from Barnes[2], Britton[3] and the findings of the Bullock Committee[4]. They are:

That the connection between speech and knowledge is so close that entering into new knowledge, acquiring new concepts and learning how to employ them are linguistic activities which open up new realms of discourse.

That in order to examine learning, we have to examine language. Learning happens in the language interactions generated in lessons which involves investigating the language of teachers, pupils, textbooks and worksheets.

That children need language for a wide range of purposes and that many of these 'modes' can be exploited by teachers across the curriculum by means of educational tasks and greater team-effort towards the development of pupils' language.

That teachers should come to respect their pupils' language as a key resource for learning, leading to a critical awareness of their *own* language in the process.

5 CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION

Whether we are looking at English as L1, L2 or language across the curriculum, we are essentially looking at *communication*. Rather than focusing solely on linguistic errors *per se*, recent research has moved towards looking at the communicative intentions of the participants in an interchange, and whether this intention was achieved or not.

In this section, I have attempted to devise a framework, composed of questions, which grew out of my analysis of the data which I have collected to date. In this way, I hope to bring to light the issues which should be taken into consideration in any attempt to investigate the nature of language in classroom interaction. Owing to limitations of paper length, I have decided to include only a little of the data to illustrate some of the questions which are raised. In the Appendix I provide samples of the data from which I worked as so that conclusions may be drawn without bias.

Two major variables which influence teacher and learner language are Interaction and Input. The former has a more methodological focus, and the latter, more linguistic. I have organised the framework of analysis under these two headings.

Framework of analysis

INTERACTION

a Interaction patterns

When examining the following patterns of interaction: teacher-pupil, pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil:

Who initiates the interaction and how often?
What is the purpose and function of the interaction?
In quantitative terms, which functions predominate and what effect could this have on the development of pupils' language?

For example, a pupil may initiate an interaction with the teacher because he needs clarification of a point he may not have understood. However, it is most often the teacher who initiates the interaction with the purpose of: questioning pupils on their knowledge of content and understanding of concepts; instructing them; explaining content/concepts to them. In these cases, the nature of the pupils's interaction is usually one of single responses.

A further point to note is that pupil-pupil interaction may be markedly different (during pair or group work) from that of teacher-pupil interaction, leading to differences in use of language, which brings me to the *function* of an interaction. Stubbs[5] discusses various types of speech acts which the teacher is performing during her interaction in the classroom; functions such as explaining, defining, questioning, instructing, prompting, etc, and the type of discourse sequences through which these functions are carried out, such as drills, dictation, group answers, copying, etc. All this points to the fact that the teacher has far more control than pupils in terms of conversational control of the topic, over relevance and correction of pupils' utterances, over when and how much pupils may speak.

An example of this was shown in a study by Long & Sato (in press), cited in Gaies[6], in which the forms and functions of ESL teachers' speech were examined and compared to previously established patterns of L1 speakers' questioning behaviour. Their study was based on the hypothesis that questions inside and outside of the classroom tend to serve different interactional functions, *ie* classroom questions 'are typically aimed at having the learners display knowledge of material covered in class rather than at eliciting referential or expressive information unknown to teacher' (pp 208-9). The former are termed 'display' questions (eg What's the opposite of *long* in English?) and constituted more than half of all questions. By contrast, the latter type, termed 'referential' questions, were the predominant question type in interaction outside the classroom. The main feature of 'display' questions is that they do not invite the pupils to respond *at length* or to respond from their own experience and in their own language. This type of questioning can often turn into mere 'guessing games', where a typical interaction might become a desperate attempt on the part of the student to guess what is in the teacher's head. (see Appendix — Example 2).

Further studies, cited in Gaies[6] focused on 'turn-taking' and the relation

between ethnicity and distribution of interactional turns. Briefly, it was found that Asian students (in a study by Sato) initiated far fewer 'turns' than non-Asian students and that this influenced the teacher to call on them less often for their contribution. There could be implications here for the 'multicultural' classrooms of South Africa schools.

Another study, conducted by Schinke, cited in Gaies[6], examined patterns of participation in all-English content classes (English as medium of instruction). It was found that L2 learners with Limited English Proficiency (LEP): '... have significantly fewer interactions with the teacher than their L1 counterparts, and when they *do*, they are often functionally quite different from those between teacher and L1 pupils' (p 210). Very often, LEP-teacher interactions tended to involve classroom and lesson management more than genuinely instructional goals.

Another function of teacher-pupil interaction is of a metalinguistic type. Here, the teacher concentrates on language itself in terms of: lexical items (what's the meaning of X?); propositions (can you put that another way?); speech acts (let's discuss this further). Propositions, *ie* the explicit monitoring of others' speech, usually only occurs in very specific situations, the classroom being one of them. If the roles were to be reversed, *ie* pupils asking teachers what *the*y mean, uneasiness could prevail, leading to a break-down in communication. The point is that 'metacomments', concentrating on pupils' expression, are often seen as an *evaluation.* In this sense the pupil-teacher interaction pattern would be unexpected, but could be very revealing if it became an accepted pattern!

Other language functions of the metalinguistic type include: defining, editing, correcting, checking/confirming understanding, summarizing, interpreting pupil talk and negotiating meaning. An investigation, in quantitative terms, of this type of function might reveal how much time is spent (or not spent) in focusing on language itself, and this does not apply only to language classes.

b Teacher behaviour

In the teaching and testing of pupils' understanding of concepts/content, how often does the teacher resort to the following behaviour patterns? Which patterns predominate in any one lesson? What are the implications for the development of pupils' language?

> Teacher explains concepts/terminology in deductive fashion, either through verbal definitions/description, or through non-verbal examples (as in maths and science).
>
> Teacher allows pupils to arrive at an understanding of the concept/content by assigning tasks/activities geared towards problem-solving.

Teacher and pupils *explore* concepts together, sometimes through prompts from the teacher, sometimes through focusing on language itself.

Teacher allows pupils enough time to express themselves and explain what they wish to say. Related to this are the following possible behaviours:

Teacher ignores pupils' attempts (either changes topic or ask another pupil to supply the 'correct' answer).
Teacher supplies answer herself.
Teacher paraphrases pupils' answers.
Teacher expands pupils' answer/utterances.
Teacher accepts inadequate expression for the sake of content.

How does the teacher treat error correction:

By ignoring errors?
By correcting them, but not necessarily explicitly?
Is treatment of errors consistent and unambiguous?

In examining teacher behaviour patterns, we are of necesity moving towards an examination of methodology. The intention here, however, is not to be *prescriptive,* but *descriptive,* so that teachers may become more aware of the type of behaviour which promotes (or hinders) language use and learning in their pupils.

In connection with error treatment, the complexity of this task is obvious when we consider that correction often consists, not a single teacher response, but rather of an *exchange* or *cycle* of verbal moves which involves a series of responses in rapid succession. There is also the issue of *differential* feedback, *ie* feedback which encourages the learner to make further attempts to communicate (perhaps more positive).

c *Pupil behaviour*

Are pupil responses merely to please the teacher, which is also related to the 'guessing game'?
Are they directed at obtaining further information (focus on content)?
Are they directed at clarifying concepts/lexical items (focus on language)?
Do pupils offer their own spontaneous, uncalled-for contributions? If so, how often?

INPUT

a *Teacher talk*

How much difficult/unfamiliar terminology is used by the

teacher *ie* what is the conceptual gap between teacher and pupils?

How much subject-specific terminology is used in any one lesson? What implications could this have for *loading* on pupils? What could the implications be for the pupils' encountering this type of loading in every lesson in a school day?

What is the syntactic complexity of the teacher's language in terms of clause length and register. What is the information density? How does it compare to the complexity of the language used by pupils? What are the implications of this for clarity of instructions, explanations, questions?

How often does the teacher relate her own language/register to that of her pupils, in terms of simplifying her 'talk' and relating it to their own experience?

The general opinion has been that 'teacher-talk' is often way above pupils' heads. However, a recent study by Gaies[7], of the syntactic features of ESL teachers' speech in the classroom revealed that the teachers were often tuned into their learners' level of proficiency and that their own language was syntactically less complex than that which they used with other L1 speakers or L1 pupils. This may facilitate L2 acquisition. A further finding was that *frequency of occurrence* of certain syntactic and lexical features was related to the learners' production of those same features, in other words Input influenced Output. An example of this can be seen in the predominance of question forms in the classroom an example of which can be seen in Example 3 in the Appendix. The extracts were taken from pupils' writing in a maths class. They had been given five minutes to write on the topic 'The need for measuring things'. It could be argued that this is (or has become) a regular feature of South African Black English (SABE) but it has not yet been established to what extent input is a factor.

Frequency of occurrence can also have a negative side, however. Pupils often resort to imitating teacher or textbook language, especially in their written work, without being aware of the appropriateness (or not) of certain language structures of stylistic features for different modes of discourse. Example 4 in the Appendix provides two extracts taken from pupils who were writing their autobiographies. In the first extract, there is a definite switch from the expository, factual discourse mode of the first paragraph, to a more 'fictional' style in the second, possibly drawn from novels or short stories.

In terms of subject-specific terminology and consequent loading on

pupils, Cretchley & Stacey[8], in their investigation into the English language demands made on Black workers in an adult education programme from May 1982 — April 1983, found that pupils tended to experience difficulty with subject terminology which was *related* in an area. In spite of explanations, pupils showed evidence of not having internalised various related concepts when they were introduced together. An aspect of this type of problem came to light in a maths lesson which I observed recently. The intention was to introduce to the concept of parallel lines, which eventually led to *acute* angles. When asked to demonstrate their understanding of this concept, by drawing their own parallel lines, one bright pupil decided to draw *obtuse* angles, which, of course, were equally valid in terms of illustrating the concept. This naturally led to the concept of *corresponding* angles which later led to *vertical* angles and finally, *transversals!*

Confusion of related terms in a given subject area can also apply to confusion over terminology relating to *different* subject areas. This might account for an observation taken from a pupil's workbook: '. . . especially if we do experiment we can use different camicals such as magnasiem of pourtush and copper celsius.'

b The language of textbooks and materials

How many different 'discourse modes' are pupils exposed to through textbooks used across the curriculum? What implications might this have for loading on the pupil?

How different is the syntactic complexity of the language used in school texts to that of the pupils' own spontaneous writing?

What is the loading on pupils in terms of:
Information density of passage/text?
Unfamiliar/technical vocabulary?

How clear and well-defined are the tasks set in the textbooks?

If the extracts from school texts, reproduced in Appendix — Example 6, are examined, it is obvious that the pupils are exposed to a variety of discourse modes, each with its specific vocabulary and language structures, in the course of a school day. The implications of this for loading on pupils is significant. Furthermore, if the task which appears in Appendix — Example 7 is taken as representative of tasks appearing in other school texts across the curriculum, it is not at all surprising that our pupils have difficulty in interpreting the language of education!

c Pupil talk

What is the level of syntactic complexity of pupils' language:

In oral participation in class?
In their written work?
Is there any marked difference between the two? What are the implications of this?

In which ways does the nature of the activities/tasks set by the teacher influence pupils' use of language? (eg copying information, supplying information obtained through research in their own words, engaging in problem-solving and enquiry activities)

To what extent does the classroom arrangement (lockstep, pair or group work) facilitate/inhibit pupil participation and therefore, use of language?

Does the pupil's response/written feedback show an understanding of the concepts which have been previously taught? If not, could this be owning to:
The inability of the pupil to express himself correctly?
The nature of the teacher's explanation during the lesson?
Other reasons?

Kellogg Hunt[9] mentions three factors concerning the development of language structure: As children mature, a) they produce more words on a given subject, b) the sentences they use tend to be longer, c) a larger proportion of their clauses tend to be subordinate clauses. From his research, he concludes that *clause length* is a better index of maturity than actual sentence length. However, this does not only apply to first language acquisition. Vivian Cook[10], in his study with native children and foreign adults, concluded that clause length appeared to be related to syntactic complexity, when comparing the performance of both types of learners on their performance on a test with relative clauses. Longer clauses tend to be more difficult, as they have a larger number of clauses reduced and consolidated into *one*. An illustration of this can be seen in an example taken from Appendix — Example 6 c:

Should we need a set of terms of *reference that* is universally acceptable, we must find a *bearing independent* of ourselves and *one which* does not change.

This sentence alone consists of five clauses (independent and subordinate) some of which are contained in others.

The above example has further implications for the type of tasks we set our students, especially where reading and researching topics is involved. The type of language which they reproduce in these kinds of tasks may be way above the pupils' actual level of proficiency, which, in turn, reduces

the task to a useless sort of exercise. As an illustration of this point, see Appendix — Example 8. These extracts, taken from pupils' workbooks for their 'General Studies' component, further show the widely diverse discourse modes which pupils are expected to interpret and write in.

In relation to the point concerning a pupil's understanding (or not) of concepts as revealed in his written feedback, I have reproduced some examples taken from pupils' homework on the Elizabethan world view. (see Appendix — Example 9). Unfortunately, the actual lesson of introduction to the concept was not observed, so any conclusions can only be tentative. However, certain semantic difficulties which pupils were encountering do come to light from the extracts alone. This type of data further confirms the point made earlier concerning the difficulties encountered by pupils from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Finally, I would like to mention an exercise that was counducted at one of the British schools discussed in Robertson[11]. The headmaster wished to introduce a whole-school language policy to make teachers aware that they were *all* responsible for the language development of their pupils. Teachers were asked to examine pupils' written work and count the words which they had written during their first year of secondary schooling. The teachers were also made to look at subjects *other* than their own in order to get some idea of what pupils were exposed to in other areas of the curriculum. The words were then classified into three broad kinds: a) creative work b) personal observation and interpretation of facts c) copying from blackboard/book, dictation. It was found that the emphasis lay on the third kind (copying) which pointed to the need for a balance between different types of writing. Furthermore, it pointed to the lack of opportunity that pupils have for expressing themselves in their *own* terms and exploring content in an investigative way.

A further exercise used was a *cloze* procedure (every nth word deleted) which teachers had to complete but which they could also use with their own pupils. They were given passages on topics other than their own expert knowledge. This exercise had the following advantages: a) it allowed teachers to experience the difficulty of having to use contextual clues and of finding accurate and appropriate vocabulary, b) it made them aware of the necessity for prediction and sequencing, c) it sensitized them to what it is they are asking their own pupils to do when they ask them to read and interpret texts.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Classroom-centred research of the type described in this paper has the following implications for teachers and educationists interested in the language development of their pupils:

It should reveal the prerequisite of a body of common language skills necessary for all subject areas.

It should reveal that language work conducted in one discipline can profitably be applied to another as long as there is team-effort among teachers.

This has implications for a 'whole-school' language policy across the curriculum.

Classroom research in conventional terms needs to be supplemented by more qualitative and introspective research, such as the keeping of *diaries* by both teachers and pupils.

Far more resources for 'independent' learning need to be provided in schools and part of the contribution towards this should come from pupils themselves.

Innovations such as Integrated Studies, mixed-ability teaching and small-group work complement a 'Language Across the Curriculum' approach.

A perspective which recognises the subtlety of what children already know and can do with language, is more likely to lead to a reorganisation of methods and materials, and to attempt to get children to explain their misunderstandings and to become involved in observation, discovery and the weighing of evidence, than a perspective which regards a child's performance on a worksheet/test as a neutral index of some underlying ability/inability.

APPENDIX

Example 1

T: I was interested in seeing your essays and I was very pleased with what I did see. What I have done this morning is . . . I'm sorry, I didn't ask permission of Shereen . . . Where's Shereen . . . stand up, . . . Shereen, I have taken the liberty to use your composition and put it onto a photocopy machine and I want to share it around . . . I think we did decide to do this before so that each of you can see what the mistakes are . . . you're all making BIG mistakes . . . and the same mistakes . . . do you mind, Shereen?
P: Yes, Ma'am.
T: You mean you don't.
P: I mind.
T: Huh?!
P: I mind.
T: You DO mind?
P: Yes

T: You don't want me to give it to them . . . it's a nice essay . . .
(Class giggle)
T: You don't want me to do it?
P: I want you to.
T: MMM?
P: I want to.
T: Tell me what you . . . would you . . . would you MIND if I gave them copies of your essay? You don't want me to do it?
P: Yes . . .I *want* you to do it!
T: You *want* me to do it? So let's learn this . . . when I say 'Would you mind' . . . would you mind doing something . . . that's a problem here. When I ask you 'would you mind doing something' it means 'Is it going to be too much *TROUBLE* for you?'. (Turns to a pupil) X, come and stand up here. 'Would you *mind* going to fetch me a dictionary?'
P: No, I don't.
T: Pause . . . . . well . . . if I ask you that, you *DON't* have to reply 'No, I don't' . . you would just say 'yes, Mrs P,' and go and do it. Would you mind fetching the dictionary?
P: Yes. (NB. Compare to first pupil's initial response!)

Example 2

T: What was Michelangelo's greatest single sculptoral creation? What did he produce? What one thing did he produce?
P: A sculpture.
T: Of . . . . .
P: Of Jesus.
T: Of *whom?*
P: Of the Mother.
T: No, well, perhaps you believe that, but what was told to us is that his most important was . . . of *what* sculpture . . . of what character that we have heard about the morning? What am I looking for?

Example 3

We need to measure things to get rid of something like when you want to measure distance and you want to know *how big is something* like *how big is the school* . . . you can tell us *how tall is the robber* . .

We had to know how to measure things so that we know *what size is something* and *how long is it* . . . we must know *how much oil must we put* or *how much must we buy* . . .

Example 4

I was born in a cool, polite and behaviour family. They behave like human beings. I came from Transvaal and was brought up in Johannesburg.
It was July 7th at ten o'clock pm. It was a cold, cold night. The moon was high and I was a sweet baby who liked to eat. I looked more or less a baby boy. I used to smile to everybody, not only my parents.

We are family of five. Both my parents, myself and my two younger brothers. My parents are *gentle as lambs and strong as lions.* I am born in the Christian family. In the evening the house *is like a butterfly* it is so quiet. My brother is a *quiet fellow.* Two or three days before I was born, my parents *debated.* My father says I shall be a boy and my mother, a girl. Unfortunately I was a girl.
(Title of essay was 'My Beginnings')

Example 5

Especially if we do experiment we can use different camicals such as magnasiem of pourtush and copper celsius

Example 6[12]

Maths

These old systems had many *shortcomings.* They can be used to *denote* numbers, but are *cumbersome* for calculations. *Computations* were often done with the help of an *abacus.*

The first natural number is taken as 1, and we *assume that* each natural number has a *successor* which is greater than its *predecessor.*

(Other terms taken from the same text include: binary operations, commutative, addends, expanded exponential forms, inverse operations.)

Science

When heat *is spread* around by this method, we call it *convection.* Heat can *be transferred* by convection in liquids and gases. In convection, the heated particles of water move and are *replaced* by cold particles which in turn are *heated* and move on.

Geography

When we give directions we often use expressions such as 'to the right', 'to the left' 'above', 'below' and so on. These terms are *relative* to our position and depend on the way we are facing at the time of speaking. *Should we need* a set of terms of reference that is *universally* acceptable, we must find a *bearing independent of ourselves* and one which does not change.

History

The plough changed farming from plot cultivation to agriculture (the *tillage* of fields) and *welded indissolubly* cultivation and stockbreeding.

It *relieved* women of the *most exacting drudgery,* but *deprived* them of their *monopoly* over the cereal crops and the *social status that conferred.*

Biology

The flowers of aloes usually have the *calyx* and the *corolla* joined together to form a *perianth.* This perianth consists of six *lobes* arranged in two *whorls* of three each. The perianth *segments* are joined to form a tube.

Example 7

H G Wells once defined civilization as:
'Civilization . . . is the settlement of men upon an area continuously cultivated and possessed, who live in buildings continuously inhabited, with a common rule and a common city or citadel.'

Explain this statement in the light of what you have read in this chapter. (Boyce)

Example 8

Egyptian Art

The art style on these scrolls followed contain strict rules. The main one is the principle of 'frontality' which means that a person is shown in such a way that

shoulders, hands, eyes are drawn from the front, while head, hips, legs and feet are shown from the side. Important parts are drawn longer than others. They did not use perspective but showed everything from the most obvious viewpoint. Some magnificant detailed observation is shown in Egyptian drawings.

Literature

I hear a mouse
Bitterly complaining
In a crack of moonlight
Aslant on the floor

'Little I ask
And that little is not granted
There are few crumbs
In this world anymore'.

How I got into the situation

One Saturday afternoon was a man. He was a woodcutter. He was poor and he was selling wood to make himself rich. One morning he set out early. Because he wanted to come back home at noon. As he was chopping came a big brown bear with its cubs. The man didn't know what to do. He ran away and as he was running he saw a nearest tree and climbed it up.

The Pyramids and Sphinx

The pyramids itself was twenty years in building. It is a square 800 feet each way and the sphinx the same, built entirely of polished stone, fitted together with the utmost care.

Example 9

Elizabethan world view

World view means the philosophy. During Elizabethan time there were no USA and reformation.

The world view at Elizabethan time meant that to consider about something. It was a great change of age. They believed in the chain of being that was a warning by the discoveries in astronomy and science.

This used to be believed a long time ago during Elizabethan times. It is widely known that like for instance, today you're rich tomorrow you are poor as you have never ever been rich. That is why they say the first one to eat is just as good as the last eater. This kind of King is based on such a thing.

Elizabeth world view is a philosophy of what people think Elizabeth was the queen and she will remain the queen forever.

The world view is that the idea that man (during Elizabeth times mostly) thought of the world. There were many beliefs at that time and one of them is that the Bible was translated from Latin to English and for the first time the church was attended by ordinary people. They discovered that the world was round and the shape of the earth too.

NOTES

1 I Robertson *Language Across the Curriculum: Four Case Studies*, Schools Council Working Paper 67, 1980.
2 D Barnes *From Communication to Curriculum*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.
3 J Britton *Language and Learning*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.

4 *A Language for Life* — The Report of the Bullock Committee (England), HMSO, 1975.
5 M Stubbs *Discourse Analysis: the Sociolinguistic Analysis of Natural Language*, Oxford: Blackwells, 1982.
6 S Gaies 'The investigation of language classroom processes' in *Tesol Quarterly*, Vol 17 No 2 June 1983.
7 See in Gaies.
8 G Cretchley & J Stacey 'The English language demands made on black workers in an adult education programme'. Unpublished report (1983) on research conducted in the Adult Language & Literacy in Indus*ry Project, May 1982 — April 1983.
9 K W Hunt *Syntactic Maturity in School Children and Adults*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970.
10 V Cook 'The comparison of language development in native children and foreign adults' in *Iral* Vol 9 No 1 February 1973.
11 See note 1.
12 The experts in this example were taken from the following textbooks:
Shapiro & Schnell *Essential Mathematics 5*, Perskor.
R Holmes *Window on the World*, Standard 5, Book 1.
AN Boyce *A History for Standard 6*.
Rogan, Kaske & Vilakazi *Science: An Investigation*, Standard 5.

Towards a Philosophy of Education

Stephen Theron

I want to point to some aspects of philosophy in itself which can then be identified as reappearing, at least analogously, in the concept of education which I will at least partly sketch.

Philosophy fits awkwardly, first of all, into the category of an academic subject among others, as, of course, does education. After all, the first Academy was the creation of a group of philosophers already in existence. Philosophy, the movement, itself drew up the list and defined the scopes of the subjects of the Academy. Was it to make of itself just one of those subjects?

The conclusion to be drawn from this is not that there is a superior class of philosophers, still less of educationalists, but that philosophy is needed in all academic, in all human activity, which aspires to be called wise.

I

One thing philosophy shares with the particular subjects is that it demands *discipline* to be itself. However, it differs from them in taking nothing for granted, unless perhaps that its business is to ask questions, to *wonder*, and so we should not be scandalized if philosophers differ, at least in emphasis, as to what that discipline should be, whether transcendental meditation, computer science or what. But in so far as effort is implied (and here again Kant would make *all* value proportionate to effort while others would stress the passivity of intuition, of 'letting being be') all, perhaps, would agree with Wittgenstein that the battle of philosophy is 'against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language'[1], by that is, uncritical acceptance of current forms of speech and what they might seem to imply.

Language can betwitch us in many ways. For example, noun phrases and the necessity of what Kotarbinski called 'onomatoids' easily lead us to believe in probably fictitious entities like the wisdom of Socrates as something distinct from Socrates which he has, or in events as things because we say one event precedes another, just as a cat might precede a tortoise. Again it is easily taken for granted, because we talk of mind and will, that there are two horses in the psyche which pull together or against one another. But this can't be assumed, and in fact a developed analysis of

the will tends to show, as against Descartes, Kant and other voluntarists, that will is a sort of function of mind whereby it inclines to what is understood as good. Most of language is unconscious or dead metaphor, as when we still say, despite all we know, that the sun sets, and philosophy and science battle against this prominence of picture, symbol, onomatization or whatever. Nevertheless, says Thomas Aquinas, the philosopher may be likened to the poet as well because 'both are concerned with the marvellous'[2], ie with that which leads us on to ask questions.

The answers to our questionings resolve themselves into various *explanations*. Now today we hear a lot of talk about explanatory models, or even *working* models, of explanation and it is certainly true that our attempts at explaining reality to ourselves are constantly needing revision; hence the idea of models which we progressively *scrap* in favour of better ones.

But it would be a further bewitchment by language if we allowed this talk of models to commit us to an extreme form of relativism, the statement of which is itself 'self-destructing'[3]. The *endeavour* of science or philosophy is to explain, to say how things are. That we constantly discover we haven't seen the whole of it is something quite other than the paradoxical position that our way of seeing something of itself stops us from seeing it.

That we find so often that our early conceptual schemes were insufficient is what lies behing the openness, the tentative unfinished character of philosophical vision, even after we have made the usual distinctions between what is hyphothetical and what is established. Here, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, it clashes with the notion of ideology, which is precisely, as *contradistinguished* from philosophy, a conceptual scheme or model adopted for a practical purpose[4] (whether to manipulate large populations or, from their point of view, to have a handy frame of reference) and which, she says, is 'never interested in the mystery of being', never stops to wonder. As Heidegger says, in his oracular, not necessarily bogus way, 'thinking is letting being be'. In a sense what this paper is going to suggest is that there is a standing temptation for educationalists to replace philosophy with ideology in the interests of smoother teaching, truth and wisdom being the casualties. But if, in a university, we were not teaching truth, what *would* we be doing? (I read of a schoolmaster who defended publishing a geometry text-book with an invalid version of one of Euclid's proofs on the grounds that it was 'easier to use').

This openness means that philosophy is never an achieved science. One can't answer the question what does philosophy teach about so and so, one two three. It is, as Joseph Pieper says, conditioned by hope[5]. It caters to human wonder. Wonder is, in a sense, the antithesis of the world of work, it

is incommensurable with it and so organized work, even research work, is tempted to ignore it, but it can't be eradicated from human nature (Thales will continue to fall down the well while star-gazing and be laughed at by the serving-maid); in a sense it characterizes human nature as the awareness of the universal in the midst of the particular, and wonder, too, needs its discipline, philosophy, if man as man is to survive (cf. CS Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*[6]). Ideology, pseudo-philosophy, inoculates the mind against such considerations. 'What do you really teach the young who crowd to your lectures?' Socrates asks Protagoras the Sophist. 'To be well-informed', he replies, 'both in their own affairs, namely how best to manage one's house and run one's estate, and in matters concerning the State; how best to be effective in speaking and in acting'[7]. That last sentence, one might protest, is a worthwhile programme. The point is it has nothing to do with the sense of wonder and the search for explanation, where the mind breaks free into *theoretical* activity historically called academic, after that Athenian grove where Plato first sought to institutionalize it. *Theoria* of course is Greek for contemplation, seeing, speculating, the aim of study. How best to pass exams, Protogoras might have added, but here we may hope in any self-respecting academy that the longest way round is the shortest way home, that the student who studies the matters of his *subject* will get more honour than one who studies to convey to the examiner an impression of having studied. That is not his subject (or ours, and we have our honour as well, above 'base cowardice, foolish compassion or self-seeking treachery', as a wise man put it)[8].

It is clear there is a certain tension between the demands of truth and those of utility. 'I have bothered to ask in what way I was useful to society as a whole; I contented myself with expressing what I recognized as good and true. That has certainly been useful in a wider circle; but that was not the aim; it was the necessary result' (Goethe). Of course pedagogues have a job to do, in which to make themselves useful, but that job consists in a certain communication of truth, between which and serviceability we have noted a tension.

I am making value judgements, you will tell me, and why on earth should I not do so? This brings me back to what I was saying about models of explanation. Having said something about explanation in philosophy, I now want to suggest that in pedagogics, as in the social sciences, and indeed the physical sciences, we have to be careful about the way, the extent to which, we take over various paradigms of philosophical explanation, so that they remain philosophical and don't become that ideological indoctrination the clear-headed know to be jargon. We *do* take over these paradigms. It is of the nature of philosophy *vis a vis* the particular sciences that we should do so, since every science has its philosophy, its frame of reference and point of insertion into the world.

II

I will give three examples of this use of undigested philosophical theory by educators and communicators in general.

1 How much physical science in the modern period, for example, worked with a comparatively uncritical acceptance of the natural philosophy of Descartes and Locke! You can see this especially in popular science writing where authors seem to see no problem about the primary/secondary qualities distinction. Yet philosophers of science today suggest that in taking over the philosophy of empiricism scientists misrepresented or very insufficiently grasped what they themselves were actually doing, *viz* trying to render the physical universe intelligible and constructing very abstract schemata for the purpose, never mind what actually appears to the human observer. That appearance can in its turn be explained by the conceptual scheme, many would now say. But the point of Locke's distinction was to avoid conceptualism. And so the popular science writers and teachers today still talk as if *the* scientific way to see a flower is to ignore its colours, say.

2 Again, in the social sciences, Hugo Meynell, in his recent article 'Doubts about Wittgenstein's Influence'[9], illustrates how the unsystematic, tentative speculations about language as a form of life have become in writers such as Bloor or Derek Phillips an extreme and what he calls, following Grisez, a self-destructing type of relativism. Winch's classic article 'On Understanding a Primitive society'[10] could, I have little doubt, be shown to have been misused in the same way. Meynell shows that what Wittgenstein actually said is compatible with there being 'a single set of basic assumptions and procedures in all use of language whatever', whether or not this set can itself be justified. But of this insight the Wittgensteinian sociologists are innocent. 'To appraise an argument for validity', writes Bloor, attacking Popper's *Objective Knowledge*, 'is to apply the standards of a social group'. They adroitly saw off the branch on which they are sitting, Meynell remarks.

It is not to our purpose now to argue about this question as such. I present it as my second example of how generalized, abstracted philosophical thought comes to be distorted and misused, somehow rendered too assured, in more particular studies and so, a *fortiori*, in the teaching of them. *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

3 My third example, coming perhaps nearer home, takes off conveniently from the citation from Bloor about appraising an argument for validity. The fact-value cleavage had a long run in early twentieth century British philosophy and naturally has found its way into ideas about the teaching of English as also educational theory in general, just at the time when philosophers have started to be embarassed about it, as they

should be in my view. There is a lot wrong with the fact-value way of looking at the world; yet Professor D J O'Connor, in his *The Philosophy of Education*[11], seems to base his whole approach to moral education on it, and it has become what we might call the ideological trend among teachers.

A clue to how wrong this neat dichotomy between fact and value, so tempting to professional explainers and expounders, is, can be gleaned from Bloor's remark above, which we criticized, that 'to appraise an argument for validity is to apply the standards of a social group'. That he is even able to say this is significant. If it *were* so, then clearly all our efforts at logical objectivity are pretentious and worthless, the structures of physics merely reflect our society and maybe it merely suits us to *imagine* our space explorations have been successful etc, etc. But such a state of affairs, one can argue, is strictly *unthinkable*, because self-destructing.

Nonetheless Bloor is right that we do *appraise* arguments for validity, that to judge and argument valid is to make an evaluation, as J O Urmson insisted[12]. Yet in this case it is *vital* for human intellectual life that *this* evaluation have no connection with arbitrariness and individualistic subjectivity. The whole reality of *objectivity* is based on it, on seeing such things as the validity of a syllogism in Barbara. Yet in the hands of philosophers like A J Ayer[13], and still more our educationists, the point of distinguishing fact and value is to distinguish the objective and true from guesswork and emotion. There is talk of value-free science, but is not science a value?

Once the connection between evaluativeness and individualistic subjectivity has been destroyed, and at least a large body of philosophers think it can be, the whole picture in moral education, for instance, is altered. Whatever one thinks of this it is clear that the field is open and that to drill young minds in an absolute contrast of factual with value statements to the disadvantage of the latter is ideological indoctrination in the worst sense.

Very likely the teacher has not thought of this. He is fatally attracted, very often, to oversimplifications, things which are easy to put over.

Now one would not want to deny that oversimplification has to be tolerated in teaching. The point is that one must be aware of it if it is not to become dangerous. The teacher must, as far as he can, be a good philosopher, a friend of wisdom.

III

This brings me to my final moral: to distinguish between a skill and the *rationale* of that skill, tying it up with what I said about theories and explanatory models. I am suggesting that the common failing my three

examples illustrate is a subordination of the *theoretical* capacities of the learner to the *practical* needs of the teacher.

You could train a parrot, maybe, to recite the three main inflections of the strong English verbs, say, but you could never teach it English, never educate it. It would never *understand* what it was saying. How does one communicate understanding, with its necessary concomitant of an assessing, critical attitude?

In his paper 'On Teaching Logic'[14] Geach argues that if any skills are taught there must, to avoid an infinite series of teaching skills (skill B to teach skill A, C for B etc), be 'a skill whose possession already sufficiently qualifies a man to impart that skill to others'. He calls this a 'self-perpetuating' skill. What interests me here are the reasons he gives why logic is such a skill; I think these reasons apply to many or most (all?) academic subjects. He says:

> To understand logical notation even at a very elementary level, people need certain fundamental insights: for example, they need to distinguish, as Frege says, between concept and object. This is not a matter of logic's dictating to us what sort of objects we are to acknowledge as existing, it is a matter of good logical grammar; people who fail to grasp the distinction in practice will write down would-be formulae that are sheer gibberish and are uninterpretable.

Mention of grammar, analogical to be sure, reminds me of attempts by linguists like Fries, in the 50s, to reclassify English grammar in terms of Class 1, Class 2 etc words instead of noun, verb, etc. The essential difference, as far as I could see, was that the new system eliminated or greatly minimized the need for any *insight* of a conceptual sort into the character of the different parts of speech. You merely read off what class of word it was form its structural position in the sentence. A computer could do it. At last one could teach English to zombies while leaving them in their state of zombification; a much more painles way of earning one's keep.

Geach goes on:

> . . . the insights required are themselves not conveyable in logically well-formed sentences . . . In manipulating his symbols the master of logic *shows* his grasp of a principle like this; but he cannot *state* it in a logically correct sentence; all he can do is to utter quasi-sentences of a sort that experience shows sometimes enable the pupil to catch on.

The point is more general; how would one, with the linguistic system I sketched above, explain the radical difference between 'he entered the

room' and 'he killed the cat' ('he entered the date in his diary'), without the pupil *catching on,* having the insight to *catch on,* to the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs? Geach continues:

> Whether they have caught on is testable, even by university examinations; but there can be no art of teaching, except exhibitions of logical skill, with helpful noises of the kind I just illustrated in a brief sample, in the hope that the skill will be conveyed (in Plato's phrase) like a flame leaping from mind to mind. And when we see things from this angle, how futile and sophistical will appear the claim to *train* people in the art of making the flame leap.

You may have doubts about this strong conclusion, but certainly one can't train the flame itself. This is my point about insight.

R S Peters, in his 'What is an Educational Process'[15], refers to the teaching of skills as a sub-class of training, and distinguishes mastery of skills from both knowledge and the understanding of principles. The concept of training, he says, has application where 'little emphasis is placed on the underlying *rationale*'. Clearly, then, skill as a sub-class of training has little or no application to what should be taught in logic, the underlying *rationale* of all our discourse. As Geach said, the claim to train people in this area is sophistical. Teaching them 'how best to be effective in speaking and acting', but not educating them, poisoning their minds, rather, like the thoughtless indoctrination in the fact/value stance or the self-destructing extremes of ethical relativism assumed as a 'working model' (Stevenson's phrase in *Ethics and Language*[16] which made of value judgements mere noises of approval) or the glib assurance of the popular science writer that peacocks are not really blue and green, though they do really weigh so and so many kilograms. All these 'models' have in common that they are easier to put over than the truer, nuanced view, which was the schoolmaster's defence when it was pointed out to him that his text-book taught an incorrect theorem of geometry. Logic, of course, is merely the extreme case which illuminates for us the general point at issue.

The point of all this is that we want to avoid filling young people's minds with valueless know-how or worse. We want them to have insights, want to play our part in what Peters calls 'the transmission of critical thought'. 'The problem of the teacher is to pass on a body of knowledge in such a way that critical attitude towards it can also develop'[17]. 'From the point of view of education what is essential is the grasp of a conceptual scheme for ordering facts rather than skill in research'[18].

The difficulty with insight, the leaping flame, for some minds is that it is non-quantifiable. But the same can be said, after all, of the work of the

teacher himself. One cannot calculate the worth of his activity in order to pay him a proportionate wage, but only remunerate him so as to enable him to continue the spiritual activity of making the flame leap.

NOTES

1 *Philosophical Investigations*, I, 109.
2 St Thomas Aquinas, *Comm in Met, I, 3.*
3 cf G Grisez, *Beyond the New Theism*, Notre Dame, 1975.
4 cf H Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Vol 3.
5 Joseph Pieper, 'The Philosophical Act', in *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, Mentor Omega, New York, 1963.
6 London, 1943.
7 Quoted in Pieper, op cit.
8 P T Geach, 'On the Teaching of Logic', *Philosophy*, 1979.
9 *Philosophy*, 1981.
10 *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1964.
11 London, 1957.
12 J O Urmson, 'Some Questions concerning Validity', in *Essays in Conceptual Analysis* (ed. Flew), 1966.
13 *Language, Truth and Logic* (2nd ed), London, 1946 (cf p 107).
14 See note 8.
15 In Peters, *The Concept of Education*, pp 14-15.
16 *Ethics and Language*, Yale, 1944.
17 Peters, op cit p 19.
18 *Ibid* p 20.

Education and rationality

Mark F Dorgan

Education is concerned with the acquisition and use of knowledge. A core issue in education is thus that of the nature of knowledge. Central to this epistemological debate is whether the rationalist position is valid or whether the relativist attack on that position invalidates the rationalist argument. If the rationalist position cannot be invalidated by the relativist attack and the rationalist position can be shown to be acceptable, then education and rationality are conceptually connected. However, if it is the relativist position which is valid, then it is education and relativism which are conceptually linked. This provides a vastly different concept of education.

In this paper I will consider the relativist attack on rationality. This will be followed by a critique of the relativist position from three perspectives: firstly, through a consideration of the notion of cultural difference; secondly, through a consideration of the relationship between culture and meaning; and thirdly, through a consideration of what it may mean to speak of relativism.

1 The relativist attack on rationality

In general, the relativist position is that all knowledge is relative to the culture, sub-culture or group in which it is found. That is, it challenges the rationalist notion that there is the possibility for universal knowledge, by saying all beliefs are provisional, embedded in a changeable framework. This is based on the belief that men are products of their society or culture, their knowledge having validity only within their own culture[1].

A further claim of the relativists is that it is not possible for a member of one culture to have meaningful, rational discourse with a member of another culture, because they are each located in different, culturally determined and mutually exclusive systems of meaning. What counts as true in one culture does not necessarily count as true in another. This contrasts sharply with the rationalist claim that there is a common area of reference for all men, that is, that men can have meaningful, rational discourse across cultures, and be objective.

For the relativist, what is taught in schools is merely knowledge relative

to the culture in which that school is located. The knowledge that pupils acquire in school is relative to the teacher's culture and not something valuable in itself and in its consequences, or something objective[2].

F C White[3] says that the relativist claims are based on three major arguments, two empirical and one a *priori*.

The empirical arguments:

1 A comparative study of cultures shows different beliefs.
2 A study of cultures from within shows that their beliefs change, even even ultimate beliefs and principles.

The a *priori* argument:

1 Since there is no demonstration for the uniqueness of fundamental principles, we must concede the possibility of their being replaced by a rival, not complementary, set.

There are three issues which arise out of these arguments, in my view: one, the practical issue of how culture or cultural differences may be identified for the purpose of the empirical arguments; two, whether it is out of culture that fundamental beliefs or meanings necessarily arise; and three, what it may mean to speak of relativism. I will deal with the first by considering the notion of cultural difference, the second by exploring the relationship between culture and meaning, and the third by considering whether it is meaningful to speak of relativism.

2 Cultural differences

A basic assumption of the relativist is that there are various, identifiably-different cultures. The assumption is that these differences are significant and fundamental enough to account for the relativist position.

Firstly, what can be said to constitute culture? One may say that a particular language common and unique to a group of people forms part of their culture, as may certain customs and practices, political, legal and economic system, religious beliefs, and so on. But though these may be some of the elements that constitute culture, to what extent can they account for cultural *differences* or *distinct* cultures? A further question, which will be dealt with in my next section is, can these areas of difference sufficiently account for mutually exclusive systems of rationality?

One can reasonably clearly distinguish between the language, customs, beliefs and systems of a Kikuyu tribe and that of an Eskimo group, (let us say, the Inuit). Their languages are radically different and mutually incomprehensible. Their customs are different in terms of initiation rites, dances and so on. Their economic systems differ in that the Kikuyu are herders and the Inuit are hunter-gatherers. Their political systems differ in

that one group elects a ruling chief, while the other does not. Their religious beliefs differ too. And so on. Except for incidental similarities, we can say with a great degree of certainty that these two groups have two different cultures.

However, with reference to these same groups, since they have come into contact with missionaries, explorers, anthropologists and settlers, many of the features I have identified above as distinguishing their cultures have changed to include say the English language, some degree of Christian religious beliefs, certain elements of Western dress and political and economic practices, though traditional beliefs, systems and practices are still widely found. In other words, today there are many similarities, at least at the superficial level, between Kikuyu and Inuit culture in their modified form, though some degree of difference still exists.

Let us take an even more complex situation, that in South Africa. The languages spoken include English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Pedi and many more, including various dialects of these. Customs include Western, traditional and those of mixed origin. Political and legal systems include partial democracy with Roman-Dutch law, chieftain systems with built-in legal powers, and many people are subject to both. As for religious beliefs, there is a wide range of Christian, traditional and hybrid beliefs, as well as many sects. The economic system is largely capitalist, though elements of other systems remain. But do these varied systems, beliefs and practices mark off different, distinct groups of people?

It is quite conceivable that there are Anglican Zulus who speak Afrikaans and pay dues to a local chief, but work on a Johannesburg mine. So too there may be a Sotho woman who can speak only English and Fanagalo, belongs to a hybrid sect and earns her living as a shebeen owner. Or a Portuguese-speaking man who also speaks English, is an atheist and runs a supermarket. And so on. Rather than trying to think up absurd examples here, I am merely illustrating that though there are broad areas of cultural difference in South Africa, there is a potentially infinite number of combinations of these elements that can exist. Logically, there are potentially as many different cultures in South Africa as people (in the relativist sense of culture) and, if the relativist position is valid, potentially as many different mutually-exclusive systems of rationality as people. But this is absurd, for culture is a communal phenomenon and it is questionable whether private systems of rationality are possible at all. It is thus not certain that *distinct* cultures or *clear* cultural differences can be identified.

Further, that one person can share elements of different cultural traditions, as in the South African examples above, points strongly to the possibility of a person from one cultural background understanding a

practice originating in another cultural background. This cuts across the relativist notion of the incommensurability of culturally-determined systems of rationality.

A second issue undercutting the relativist incommensurablility thesis is that of the translatability of language. While the Inuit and Kikuyu languages mentioned earlier are mutually incomprehensible, it is certainly possible for a Kikuyu man, for instance to learn Inuit language and to then translate from the one into the other. So too, in the South African context, the majority of people can and do operate in more than one language. These examples suggest that cross-cultural understanding is in fact possible.

The fact that clear cultural differences and distinct cultures cannot always be identified, particularly in the modern world, weakens the empirical arguments for cultural relativism, but does not invalidate them. Added to this is the fact that the South African examples and the issue of translation mentioned above constitute arguments *against* relativism through undercutting the incommensurability thesis. I will now attempt to develop this argument further by considering the relationship between culture and meaning.

3 Culture and meaning

Setting aside for the moment the problem of how cultural difference may be used to identify distinct cultures, let us imagine two men having two different and mutually incomprehensible languages, practicing different customs, having different religious beliefs and participating in different political, legal and economic systems.

When one man says his word for 'sky', he means the blue expanse above him. This word may have certain religious connotations or be linguistically related to words which refer to elements of the political, legal or economic systems, or to certain customs in his culture, but basically it still refers to the blue expanse above. So too for the other man. (Hollis[4] calls this a 'bridge-head'.)

Similarly, both men are bound in their use of language by the limitations of their common reality, for example that they both walk on the ground or other horizontal-type surfaces, rather than on walls or inverted on the ceiling, or that they share the same senses with which to experience their environment. The men share a common world at some basic level.

Further, the customs, beliefs and systems of the one man are at least potentially describable by the other, by reference to the participants, their powers and their functions.

If the common world of the men places minimum logical bounds on both of their languages and the diverse elements of their worlds are at least

potentially describable in both languages, then both languages share a basic logic and are potentially translatable through their ability to be used to describe the same elements of the same events or practices.

If there is no common point of reference in the languages of the two men and if their various beliefs and systems are unable to be described by the other, at least potentially, then their languages would have a different function from that which we call language. In other words, they would not be using language.

But if one of the differences between the two men's cultures is different languages, then they must be using language. But then they must have some common references (such as 'sky'), assuming they are living in the same world, and their various systems, beliefs and practices must be at least potentially describable by the other. But this implies that these beliefs etc. are potentially mutually comprehensible. This is the rationalist position.

What I have argued above is that in order for the notion of different languages to have meaning, both languages referred to must *be* languages. That is, they must both conform to what can validly constitute a language and the functions of language must be performed by both. In other words, they are different only by virtue of that which they have in common. So too for other cultural differences. Cultures can thus only be identified as different by virtue of that which they have in common. If this were not so, then it would be impossible to talk about a different culture, because there would be no common point of reference to which to appeal. The relativist identification of cultural difference thus presupposes a common point of reference, and therefore, of understanding.

In other words, for the notion of cultural difference to have meaning, there must already be a common point of understanding, so that the relativist is doomed before he starts. For his basic assumptions to have meaning, he must assume a rationalist position to have meaning, he must assume a rationalist position. The only statement he can validly make in the light of his own thesis is 'There are creatures, in every way similar to men as I know them, who make sounds and perform actions, none of which are in any way comprehensible to me.'

4 The meaning of relativism

The above analysis of the relationship between culture and meaning leads us seriously to question whether the notion of an extreme relativism has any meaning.

Amongst the claims of relativism are: that truth is relative to the culturally located system of rationality within which a truth-claim is made; that knowledge is relative to the culture within which it arises; and, that culturally located systems of rationality consist in meanings unique to and

only comprehensible within that system.

But what do we mean by 'truth' and by 'knowledge'? When we say that a statement is true, we are saying that the information it conveys is the case. The notion of truth implies that what is stated is universal.

The same sort of argument can be applied to 'knowledge'. When we talk about knowledge, we do not *mean* knowledge relative to our culture, just as in the case of truth we do not *mean* truth relative to our culture. (This of course does not guarantee that we cannot be mistaken).

If the only constraint on knowledge and truth were cultural criteria, we would be forced to ask the questions, 'Knowledge of what?' and 'Truth according to what criteria?' We must then answer that it is knowledge of culturally determined beliefs and truth as determined by cultural beliefs. In other words there is no common world at the root of culture with reference to which meanings can be limited at all. But then any statement is true and counts as knowledge that is culturally acceptable. The literal statement, 'Men can breathe water' is then true if culture so decrees. But this is absurd, because of the very nature of man's reality — the world all men share.

Further, if knowledge and truth were relative to cultures, languages could not be meaningfully translated *at all,* but it is certainly the case that they can be translated, if not perfectly, at least intelligibly.

In other words, the relativists, in order for their position to be meaningful, have to change the meanings of notions such as truth and knowledge. But if they need to change these meanings in order for their position to be meaningful, then within the present world and system of fundamental meanings, their position is meaningless.

Let me illustrate this point by borrowing an analogy used by Barnes and Bloor[5] in championing the relativist notion that all beliefs can be explained in the same way. They say that the rationalist idea that rational and true beliefs require different explanations from irrational and false ones is like saying that when an adding machine produces correct results one needs one kind of explanation of how it works, but when it produces incorrect results its workings must be explained in another way; in terms of wires, short circuits etc.

I do not wish to enter the debate of which Barnes and Bloor's work forms a part, but I feel that their adding machine analogy can be usefully employed in my argument.

Let us imagine that the mathematical system represents the nature of man's common reality. In the same way in which we are interested in whether it is possible for people to have universal knowledge, so we are interested in whether it is possible to produce mathematically correct results with the adding machine. The rationalist says that it is possible to

discover what procedures on the adding machine can produce mathematically correct results from the basic knowledge we all have. The relativist says that it does not matter what results are produced; those results are true relative to the conditions under which they were produced (what buttons pressed, what circuits made etc). But this is to discard the meaning and function of mathematics. It is to change the function of the adding machine. It is to change reality by redefining meanings. And if the validity of your position depends on the redefinition of fundamental meanings, your position has no present meaning.

In the same way as the relativist seeks to change reality in the case of the adding machine, so he must change reality in the case of people, in order to give his position meaning. As I noted earlier then, 'relativism' has no meaning.

If the relativist position is meaningless, how can we account for differences in belief (as in the first empirical argument) and changes in belief (as in the second empirical argument)? With reference to my exploration of the relationship between culture and meaning, it is clear that there is some common point of reference and the potential for mutual comprehensibility. But a common point of reference does not guarantee mutual beliefs *in every sphere* or *at every level* and nor does the potential for mutual comprehensibility guarantee the realisation of that potential. Further, it is quite conceivable that elements of culture such as religious belief may influence general beliefs. All we can say is that though the potential for mutual understanding exists, as does the potential for the discovery of truth, differences in belief or changes of belief merely point to the fact that people can be mistaken, that the potential does not guarantee the realisation. All we can do is strive for better ways of facilitating the realisation of that potential. This in no way effects the meaning of notions such as 'truth' and 'knowledge'.

As to the a *priori* argument, that since there is no demonstration for the uniqueness of fundamental principles, we must concede the possibility of their being replaced by a rival, not complementary, set, if there is a common point of reference and the potential for mutual comprehensibility, then certain minimum requirements are specified for what may constitute a rival set of fundamental beliefs, making it a complementary or alternate set, rather than a rival set. That is, it explains or redefines the same reality, rather than creating a new one.

Conclusion

If the relativist attack on rationality is weakened by the practical issue of the difficulty in seeing cultural differences as indicating distinct groups of people and by the fact that people can share elements of different cultural

backgrounds, and it is apparently invalidated by the facts that the notion of cultural difference relies on some common understanding and that it is uncertain whether 'relativism' has any meaning, then what conclusions can be drawn with reference to education?

Clearly, the idea that the knowledge acquired by pupils in schools is necessarily relative to the culture in which that school is located and not something valuable in itself, something objective, must be discarded. But in favour of what?

I have noted earlier that a common point of reference and the potential for mutual comprehensibility across cultures, as well as the potential for a knowledge of truth, do not guarantee the realisation of these potentials. There thus remains the possibility that what is taught in schools is, at some non-fundamental level, distorted by individual or group beliefs.

In the light of the above, it is the task of the educationalist to recognise the common point of reference and the potential for knowledge and truth, attempt to identify them and to attempt in an ongoing way to determine in what way these potentials may be realised through education.

In recognising that the nature of human knowledge involves the potential for rationality and thus objectivity, we must necessarily recognise that education and rationality are conceptually linked, by virtue of the conceptual connection between knowledge and education. It is only on this firm base of rationality that education has the potential for being meaningful, for if this potential is not realised or if knowledge is seen as merely relative, then education loses both its function and meaning to become schooling, socialisation or even indoctrination.

NOTES

1 F C White, 'Knowledge and relativism I' in *Educational Philosophy and Theory* Vol 14 p 1.
2 *Ibid.*
3 *Ibid* pp 7-12.
4 M Hollis, 'The social destruction of reality' in M Hollis and S Lukes *(Eds), Rationality and Relativism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.
5 B Barnes and D Bloor, 'Relativism, rationalism and the sociology of knowledge' in M Hollis and S Lukes *(Eds), Rationality and Relativism.*

Some Observations on Courses in Educational Management[1]

Ray Basson

1 Introduction

Educational management courses have proved to be popular and are still in considerable demand. Two management courses held during the last two years in Johannesburg were re-run several times, and it would appear that the demand for future courses remains as great as ever.

The first course was organised by the Department for Continuing Education at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1981, the second was run by the Independent Teachers' Centre, a non-racial teachers' organisation based in Johannesburg.

Each course had its sceptics and its devotees. The first drew its inspiration from group dynamics, stressing that face-to-face negotiations between people created the management structures of everyday school life. It is *an* example of trends towards greater democratisation in educational management today. The second draws upon concepts developed in the behavioural sciences. It stressed that management systems are developed outside particular school contexts, are applied in schools, and that the task of school administrators is to 'fit' people into the 'imported' management system. This is *an* example of the dominant bureaucratic mode in schools today. Both courses are interesting because they offer contrasting approaches to educational management, the first proceeding on the premise that management structures cannot meaningfully be developed apart from practitioners and their contexts, whilst the second presuming that they can.

This article will attempt (i) to suggest several dilemmas for head teachers which arise from the economic and social context of schools in the Republic; (ii) to characterise the courses and the assumptions of the respective democratic and bureaucratic modes from which they may be drawn, and (iii) to suggest that perhaps the crucial question for school administrators to ask is whether 'understanding' or 'prescription for practice' is preferable for educational management today?

A few points need to be made at the outset:

It is assumed that expertise in educational management resides with educationists (head teachers) and not with an agency

'outside' education or the school context (ie with management at grassroots level).

It is not intended to criticise the courses, but rather to provide ideas which may assist us to debate issues underlying management decisions.

Nor is it the intention of this article to promote any one perspective over another. My belief is that particular school contexts evoke particular combinations of democratic-bureaucratic management styles, and the onus is upon individual school administrators in the particularities of their school contexts to decide upon, evaluate and adjust the balance which is considered appropriate.

2 Dilemmas of school management — a context

(a) Head teachers and teachers who manage school affairs are faced with interesting dilemmas arising out of the economic and social context within which their management policies are located.

South Africa is a capitalistic society in which management systems flourish because bonuses are offered by employers to personnel who work overtime or who are especially productive. Systems therefore which are borrowed from the business community to address the problems of school management lack crucial ingredients which make these systems work, namely bonuses and overtime pay[2]. This needs to be borne in mind especially in the case of the second mode discussed in this article (the bureaucratic mode). Thus unlike the business community, the educational community lacks one viable management mode which is workable despite changes in the economy. How then do head teachers make their administrations work knowing that teaching personnel are not adequately rewarded, and who are, as a result, not sufficiently respected by the community they serve? How does this affect their power in schools, and the effectiveness of their administrations?

Answers to these questions are perhaps dependant upon the extent to which a school administration is understood both by its creators/adopters, and the teachers being organised. The extent to which teaching personnel see themselves as having a stake in the administration may be an indication of the extent of their job satisfaction and thus their incentive to work despite financial deprivation. In addition, the extent to which a meaningful distinction can be maintained between the extrinsic rewards head teaches can offer and the financial incentives offered by society, will very largely determine the extent to which teachers feel part of and not alienated from the societal context in which they work. Clearly, the financial implications of educational management systems are a major issue in schools today.

Within this wider economic context, there is little doubt that teachers are exploited. Thus, one of the main tasks of school management is to attempt to reconcile teacher incentive to work with their ability to tolerate financial deprivation and the concomitant low status which accompanies it in capitalist societies.

Secondly, it is suggested that economic realities underlie all management policies in education, and that their influence is typically underplayed or not acknowledged sufficiently by school management policy-makers. Economic realities cannot be ignored. Their influence is not limited to day-to-day budget issues, but are rather pervasive and subtle and not easily detected. The belief that an investment in education is an investment in the future (human capital theory) has little currency in this country, South Africans being more inclined to the view that an investment in education is money wasted, as no immediate returns are realised on such an investment. The point I wish to make is that when messages transmitted by the wider society tend to give a higher priority to return on investments rather than to investment in people, it is not surprising that school management policies are inclined towards the well defined bureaucratic approach to management, and for innovative approaches to be distrusted. It is therefore to be expected that teachers attending the second course tended to accept quite readily the bureaucratic management mode and for teachers to express their unease with the first course, which attempted to democratise extant management policies for schools, is to identity wider constraints upon policy-making decisions in attempting to escape the subtle deterministic influence that economic forces tend to exert on school management policies.

(b) It may be useful to describe the wider social context of education in South Africa in terms of the two primary functions of the administrative structures which surround schools, namely the functions of 'maintenance' and 'change'[3]. McKinney and Westbury suggest that these two functions are hierarchically interdependant, and that 'maintenance' is the more fundamental function. 'Maintenance' refers to '. . . the need of schools to deliver their services, deploy their teachers, to house their pupils in adequate plant, and the like.' 'Change' refers to the function of school administrative structures '. . . to keep schools as modern and as current as possible.' McKinney and Westbury use these terms to describe state administration of schools in Gary Indiana during this century, a period in their educational history which was dominated, in its later stages, by racial integration of schools and modernization of the school curriculum. It is assumed in this article that they will be useful to describe Government policy for education in the RSA and in describing the influence of these policies on management in particular school contexts.

The intention here is to provide only a rudimentary insight into ecucation in the RSA to suggest that schools are officially perceived at present as being primarily agents of social change. This perhaps is most visible in the Government's response to the De Lange Report. The White Paper on Education maintains the status quo by (i) its rejection of the key De Lange recommendation for a single Ministry of Education, (ii) by the Government's insistance that it will not allow empty school buildings built for one race to be used by another if this infringes the Group Areas Act thereby entrenching the Act for education, (iii) by clearly entrenching the mainstay of separate, Christian-National, education, and (iv) by the Government firmly pegging the De Lange recommendations for reform to the pace of the country's constitutional change[4].

Perhaps, the result of the recent referendum is the most promising indication of the possibility for change in the power structures of the country. Changes in education which the Government has agreed to, however, do not tamper with the mechanisms of apartheid. For example, (i) a financial plan will be adopted and, for the first time, statutory bodies will be established to co-ordinate education for the four major race groups. (ii) Educational standards, teaching qualifications, teacher salaries and teacher training will be co-ordinated by a number of bodies. (iii) Farm schools will be upgraded and pre-school bridging courses are being investigated. (iv) A three-tiered system of imposing school fees will be introduced as soon as suitable formulas have been devised that will not discriminate against the poorer child[5].

It seems clear in the South African context that maintenance is the more fundamental function of the administration of education. Little structural change is apparent, as the fundamental problem of the exclusion of blacks from a centralised Ministry of Education remains.

School management decisions are readily perceived by pupils to 'mirror' these wider debates in society. This is perhaps inevitable. What is not as inevitable, is the substance of the implications arising from the specific management mode adopted. The implications of a management policy convey to pupils the stance a school adopts in relation to these debates. Pupils typically perceive the implications of management policy in terms of the popular view of different types of government with which they are familiar, and readily express their preferences. They are unlikely to perceive management to be benevolent, or authority to be benign, but to see both as being the exercise of power which seeks either to empower or to control pupils. Thus, if bureaucratic management policies characterise a school's administration, it might need to complement these policies with attempts at democratisation. Similarly, democratic policies may need to be complemented with the system of bureaucracy. The need to complement

management modes might be particularly true for bureaucratic administrations which merely 'mirror' the 'maintenance' function of the educational administration in response to economic and social constraints, rather than as a result of acts of will on the part of head teacher to pursue a particular management mode. Thus, another dilemma for head teachers is how to develop a management mode which is seen to be appropriate to the way they engage in the social debates of the day, a mode which performs not merely a maintenance function but which, in addition enables teachers to participate in the process of social change.

3 Management a democratic and a bureaucratic mode

Whilst the above dilemmas may not be the most immediate concerns of head teachers and teachers in schools, they nevertheless are pressing concerns which can hardly be ignored. One of the problems of the courses described in this article, was that they tended to focus attention upon day-to-day management issues and to systematise them at the expense of critically evaluating the ideas presented. Hence, the purpose of describing the two courses is to give some details about educational management (this section) *within* a context for education in the RSA (Section 2).

The first management course was based upon ideas drawn from group dynamics, and is an example of a democratic approach to educational management. Whilst greater democratisation may be a major trend in educational management today, it is unlikely to be considered the predominant mode in management thinking. The dominant mode is more likely to be a structural approach to educational management, an example of which being suggested in the second management course. It was based upon ideas drawn from the behavioural sciences, claims scientific respectability, and is easily recognisable today in modern bureaucracies.

Each mode complements the other. The former stresses *face-to-face negotiation* in which agreements arrived at constitute the management structures of a school, whereas the latter stresses the *development of management systems* into which people are 'fitted'. The structural weakness of the former is the strength of the latter. The negotiation weakness of the latter is the strength of the former. Any management style which fails to take seriously people involvement in management or the structural component of management systems, is likely to be considered deficient.

Generally speaking, educationists attending the course felt more at home with the structurally oriented rather the democratically oriented course. To the extent that this is correct, may indicate the extent to which school administrators have a preference for adopting systems than face-to-face negotiations which give life to and sustain education management systems.

The democratic mode

The democratic mode typically proceeds, in their courses, by 'doing it' *(ie by individual participation).*

The course proceeded as follows:

i Individuals in small groups decided upon an/several aspect(s) of school life to be discussed throughout the course, which raised management issues.

ii Each individual negotiated directly with others what these issues might be and how they might be resolved. It was anticipated that there would be considerable differences in both the perception of what the issues were and how they might be resolved.

iii Attempts were made to understand and perhaps resolve these differences by adopting different management styles, allocating power to individuals to make the different systems work in discussion of agreed-upon issues, and then to stand back and comment dispassionately upon the management styles tried.

iv This helped to better understand the issues, and the styles adopted. More particularly, it helped to understand how complex the management task is when a headmaster, for example, attempts to address the variety of needs and interests of identifiable pupil, parent and teacher groupings in his school[6].

This mode proceeds upon the assumption that management consists in people negotiations: management systems are not independent, or somehow 'outside' of people. The democratic mode perceives the pursuit and promotion of understanding to be the goal of management policies, and, because people see they have a stake in the system they are already 'motivated' to make it work. It thus does not seek to prescribe to practitioners. Nor does it assume that there is consensus on school issues, but rather it assumes that consensus-claims conceal the differences which are the focal point of policy-making decisions from the outset. A democratic administration is likely to prepare pupils to meet diversity in society, as it perceives the goals of education not to be reducible to statements which are treated as being fairly unproblematic, but the goals of education are highly controversial, and to be understandable *only* because they are debated. Management, thus, is about what it is that one is doing, being able to recognize its many guises (both overt and convert), and in developing an effective style which can tolerate rather than ignore difference.

The bureaucratic mode

As opposed to 'doing it', a course based upon the bureaucratic mode of educational management is likely to proceed by 'telling how to do it' and by 'demonstration' (*ie* by lecture and application). Thus the second course presented statements describing essential steps and routines to be followed, which together make a management system and which can be applied in a wide variety of fields of endeavour, in different decades and in different continents. A great deal of time was spent therefore in defining each statement, and applying them to education, following on from illustrations of their successful application in business.

There were two components to the course. Firstly, an outline was given of management based upon American business-management thinking, and secondly, the concept 'leadership' was pursued in some depth. Here are three considerations discussed on the course to do with 'management':

i A manager's job consists in being *responsible for results*. These he gets *through* the *actions of people* in his/her charge. Regardless of the results achieved, s/he is *accountable* for them. If s/he is to achieve results through directing the actions of people, and if s/he is *accountable* for the results achieved, s/he needs to be given the authority to make decisions and to take action. The most effective way to use this *authority* is through planning, organizing, controlling and leading the actions of his/her team so that they are able to achieve the results s/he wants.

ii The Management Process: Responsibility, directing the actions of people, accountability and authority underlie the manager's job; the management system established involves detailed planning and oraganising, and the manager is expected to lead and control the whole process. Thus *planning* involves forecasting, establishing objectives, determining their sequence and priority in the time available, budgeting, developing policies, and developing procedures for necessary routines.

Organising involves the manager in developing the organisation structure, delegating and entrusting work to others and developing and effective team so that objectives can be attained. In *leading* the team s/he must make decisions so that others may take action, communicate what is to be done and motivate people; s/he must also choose people to take action and help improve their knowledge, attitudes and skills by providing opportunities for personal growth. Finally, s/he must *control* what is being done. S/he must establish performance criteria, evaluate the quality and quantity of the results achieved, and take appropriate corrective action, and keep a record of

and report on progress made.

iii The management system developed can be recorded to relate management functions, *ie critical performance* areas, with *key areas in which results* must be obtained. Hence, a document can be produced detailing the crucial performance areas and the key areas in which results must be produced.

Case studies from commerce and industry were then studied to initiate one into management thinking prior to applying these ideas to management problems in education.

The second part of the course was concerned with leadership. Very briefly, this included the following considerations:

i Motivation (the expectancy approach): rational management policies are dependant on people being *motivated* to work. The amount of *effort* people will be prepared to put into their work, in this view, is determined by one's knowledge of what one is expected to do *(performance outcome),* on the value one places on rewards offered (valence), and on the knowledge that if one tries hard enough one will be able to achieve *(effort performance expectancy).* Effort together with the appropriate worker skills and knowledge (competence) result in particular performances which, if successful, lead to *rewards* and satisfaction, or, if unsuccessful, lead *to re-analysis* of effort-performance expectancy.

ii Broadly speaking, leadership has two dimensions: the first involves the management skill dimension (planning, organising, leading and controlling, as previously discussed), and the second dimension involves people skills, like motivation. If one is to accomplish educational goals one needs to know about oneself and others.

iii Thus, a questionnaire was given to help perceive leadership style and style range. This also gave data on style adaptability,and led to determining the relationship between leadership style, which is conceived as high/low task and high/low people oriented behaviour, and the maturity of a leader's followers (high or low level of maturity.) Thus, for example, if a school administrator has a high orientation to the task in hand and a low orientation to people relationships, the leadership style is likely to be characterised by 'telling' rather than 'delegating', and to assume a low level of maturity of the staff. Conversely, if an administration has a low need of teacher surveillance in performing a task and a low need to define what the task is that the leaders need to perform, its leadership style is likely to be characterised by 'delegation' rather than 'instruction', and to assume a

high level of staff maturity.

iv Situation analysis: With this knowledge of management skills and people skills, one can analyse a school's particular management requirements and begin to develop fairly systematically an appropriate management style. This was the final exercise of the course, to apply people and management skills and develop a management policy for an educational context[7].

4 Discussion: the modes contrasted

Clearly, the two modes are different. The democratic mode is likely to be more sensitive to change than the bureaucratic mode, which is more inclined to system maintenance. This is due to the fact that it is more sensitive to the diverse interest groups in the school rather than imposing an imported system and assuming interests to be fairly homogenous, and tends to be open to suggestion and debate as to what the issues may be, rather than processing suggestions in a fairly mechanistic way and prescribing solutions. As a system its structure is less clear than the bureaucratic mode, which gives 'pegs' to guide practice, and its structure is likely to be radically altered or disappear altogether with a change in participants, whereas bureaucratic structures may remain relatively unaffected by the coming and going of personnel. In addition, the democratic mode tends to be characterized by personal rather than impersonal human relationships, and its management system is likely to consist in a wide variety of ideas in its attempt to understand the issues prior to decision-making and action-taking, whilst the protocol of bureaucracies keeps issues clear and fairly unproblematic, proceeding rapidly to decisions and actions. In times of financial cut-backs a democratic style is likely to experience a sense of crisis and to require re-thinking, but is likely to be amenable to social change. A bureaucratic style is likely to become more efficient in times of restraint, and to experience crisis in times of social change.

As the recession in South Africa continues in accordance with world trends on the expectation of an upswing in the economy later this year, calls for greater accountability for money spent on education are likely to continue in the short term. Exacerbating this trend is the declining percentage of GNP and Total Public Spending on education, 3,4% and 17,9% in 1978/80, (as opposed to 4,1% and 17,9% in 1973/74)[8]. This is particularly true of white education. Figures suggest that the decline in Public Spending on education implies an increase in spending on black education[9], as does the amount spent on informal education, which in 1982 exceeded the amount of money spent on formal education.

The recent public announcements by the Minister of National Education

that private individuals will in future have to pay for their education may partially alleviate the trend of the Government to spend less on education, but it will only assist to keep the more direct influences of inflation on day to day costs at bay in the short term. These admittedly general indicators corroborate the Government's White Paper on education in the RSA that no significant structural changes are imminent in South Africa education[10], perhaps because the immediate incentives for change have been removed or, conveniently forgotten. Some changes have taken place, as detailed previously (see Part II).

The effect of these wider trends is likely to result in head teachers adopting a more bureaucratic style in managing their institutions, white head teachers perhaps more so than their black colleagues. Whilst this might make for greater efficiency in times of financial stringency, it might also have the unfortunate effect of making them less amenable to change and hence more prone to crises, when change becomes inevitable. It would seem that school administrators need to become less bureaucratic and more democratic in their management sytles within the present educational climate which is characterized by system maintenance *and* indications of system change. What the future of education will be is unclear, uncertainty being inherently part of the problem. What seems to be clear is that schools will be crucial mechanisms of social change, and hence school management policies will become increasingly crucial in contributing to a future social order. School management policies therefore need critical scrutiny. They need to be shifted away from a predominantly present orientation and short-term objectives, towards policies which innovate in the present for the sake of developing apropriate long-term policies. It is unlikely that these policies can be imported for adaption to local conditions. Head teachers need to draw upon their experience and their knowledge of management modes and the wider requirements of society, and then proceed to action in which both understanding and action mutually inform each other in appropriate action. It is with the development of such future-oriented policies that head teachers need to be grappling in the Eighties.

Conclusion

Each mode as offered in these courses provides ideas for educational management. They call for decisions to clarify and develop more selfconsciously extant management styles which, presumably, will be better suited to the education and social changes confronting us in the Eighties, whilst also affording the possibility of stability for reflection and consolidation prior to further change. Change in education needs to precede structural change in society[11]. Its crucial role is to keep open for

debate possible bases of social integration in a society seeking to throw off its divisive past and pursue a more egalitarian future. Hence educational administrators may already be playing a more important role in society than is commonly realised and management courses may act as catalysts to better understand the potential for change inherent in school administrative positions. Management courses thus clearly have a role to play in the Eighties and beyond. More properly, they may be preludes to certification. Management courses offered by universities in B Ed and M Ed programmes might permit educational management to become an area of study in its own right. Such recognition might indicate university responsiveness both to educational management as a growing area for research, and, to the felt-need of teachers and school administrators who wish to study critically a variety of management modes which may be offered in extant taught courses. This might be a more appropriate location of educational management courses in the future.

NOTES

1 This paper tends to concentrate on the head teacher's executive role and, thus, underplays the head teacher's role of academic leadership in the curriculum area. This bias makes a difference to the way in which one conceives of 'working with teachers'.
2 There is, of course, a major difference between businesses and schools, which those who think in terms of 'educational management' tend to overlook. Business can take outcomes (profits/productivity) for granted, and 'organizational theory' (developed primarily in the sphere of business) can proceed on the same assumption. Questions need to be raised about the limitations of 'organizational theory' in the sphere of schooling, where outcomes are always open to question. The criterion of 'efficiency' needs critical scrutiny in the sphere of schooling (see, for instance R Callahan *Education and the Cult of Efficiency.)*
3 W L Mckinney & I Westbury 'Stability and Change: The Public Schools of Gary Indiana, 1940-70' in W A Reid and D F Walker (eds) *Case Studies in Curriculum Change,* London: RKP, 1975, p 44
4 *The Star* Johannesburg, 23 November 1983, p 1
5 *The Star* Johannesburg, 23 November 1983, p 1
6 Management Course I (Department for Continuing Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 1981); handouts and notes
7 Management Course II (Independent Teachers' Centre, Johannesburg); handouts and notes
8 HSRC *De Lange Commission Report – Education Financing,* Pretoria, 1981, Chapter V
9 *Ibid* p 4
10 The Star Johannesburg, 23 November 1983, p 1
11 I realise that this statement is controversial, however, in South Africa in the recent past schools have been a key site of discontent and struggle.

DISCUSSION
'Marxism and morality' II: A Rejoinder to Dorgan's 'Reply'

Leon W Benadé

If the readers of *Perspectives in Education* will permit me the privilege of formulating a rejoinder to the reply which Mark Dorgan[1] made to an article written by me in July 1983[2], I would like to pass certain critical, as well as defensive, comments. For the purposes of clarity and brevity I will not provide a rehash of my earlier article, but will instead attempt to indicate, largely for Dorgan's sake, what some of my intentions were. In so doing, I will hopefully satisfy any critical queries Dorgan, or others, may raise in response to that paper. The most direct route would be to respond to each of Dorgan's more serious critical comments in their turn.

Above all, my intention in providing a critique of Skillen's article[3] was to indicate that he had failed to distinguish between morality and certain ideological forms masquerading as morality — forms which I dubbed 'obfuscatory ideology' due to their doubly obscuring nature. The latter forms are historically specific to societies in the sense that they would be deployed by the materially dominant group in such societies to ensure their continued hegemony over the materially weaker groups in those societies. By contrast, I wanted to suggest that morality is historically timeless in the sense that it is a universal manifestation which has not changed radically in form with changes in the material make-up of societies. This is not the place to examine my reasons for making this suggestion, suffice it is to say that I make this suggestion because I believe it is a sense of morality which has brought humankind out of the caves. However, this suggestion is pregnant with possibilities for fiery debate, which, given my present purpose, is out of the question.

Dorgan's first allegation is that I 'misunderstand' Skillen's use of the term 'morality'. This leads me, he says, to say I disagree with Skillen, although, again according to Dorgan, I unwittingly agree with Skillen. Is this paradox indeed evident? Dorgan speaks of materially-dominant groups deploying ideological forces to perpetuate their position of material control: 'One of the ideological forces . . . which can be used . . . is a system of morality.'[4]

But this is precisely the point I have just made: a *system of morality* is not morality. It is instead a set of ideas *dressed up* as morality, *ie* 'obfuscatory ideology'. Dorgan's use of the phrase 'a system' is suggestive of one system among many, one option among many. On the contrary, morality is a

single manifestation, not one manifestation among many others. The point of saying this is that Dorgan employs the same use of 'morality'as Skillen does, which leads me to wonder if it is not Dorgan who misunderstands *my* use of 'morality' rather than I who misundestand *Skillen's* use of the term.

This suspicion is borne out by the parenthetic allegations made by Dorgan on page 167 of his reply. I *know* that Skillen operates with an *historically specific* notion of 'morality' which is *class-bound*. Let me make reference to my earlier article:

> Skillen associates the articulation of 'morality' with the class system, and especially with capitalism . . . (and says) . . . that morality expresses the interests of the dominant class . . . he (also) . . . makes the assumption that morality is an historically specific ideology.[5]

The problem which Dorgan seems to have overlooked, and one which I did not make an explicit target for attack in my earlier paper, is the relativist trap into which Marxist theoretical enterprises often lurch. Skillen argues — and Dorgan finds himself lending support to this view — that morality is a time *specific* ideological form to be found in *all* class societies at *all* stages of their material development. What has happened here is that a specific form has been turned into a universal law. I think that this slide causes problems which it is not my intention to investigate now. I do think, however, that I have shown that I *do not* misunderstand Skillen's notion of 'morality', and nor do I unwittingly 'agree' with his position while claiming to 'disagree' with it. It does seem though, that if anything, Dorgan has a shallow understanding of my reading of Skillen.

Dorgan's second allegation is that due to my (alleged) 'misunderstanding' of Skillen's notion of 'morality', I also 'misunderstand' his notion of agency. In attempting to illustrate this 'misunderstanding' Dorgan provides the reader, who may be unfamiliar with Skillen's article in question here, with a thumbnail sketch of Skillen's account of agency. In effect Dorgan has captured *another dimension* of Skillen's account from that which I attempted to capture. My intention was not to show the reader what Skillen was getting up to with his account of agency, but rather to highlight the *theoretical bedrock* on which this account was based. I found this bedrock at least shifting and uncertain, hence my allusions to Althusserian conceptions of agency — allusions which I qualified by way of a footnote.

Dorgan seems to have overlooked the dimension of Skillen's account which I sought to illuminate, but has made critical comments based on a quite different aspect of Skillen's account, namely that aspect which *he* sought to illuminate. The only 'misunderstanding', as I see it, is that Dorgan has failed to distinguish between giving an account of point of view, and

passing critical comments on the theoretical assumption underpinning such a point of view.

It is most astute of Dorgan to realise that my postulation of 'social agapism' represented a 'change of focus', because this is indeed what I had intended. However, he makes a blunder when he suggests that my intention in postulating this particular theoretical position was to provide 'the Truth' in respect of morality. The intention of attempting to sketch this position was *not* to provide a '. . . universal definition of what may constitute the most acceptable moral code'[6]. My intention was to distinguish between morality and 'obfuscatory ideology', and this 'change of focus' sought to indicate the kind of vehicle necessary to transport the notions properly appropriate to the conception of 'morality'.

Dorgan goes on to say that arguments about 'the good' are 'the problem' at the centre of moral philosophy. Though I would concede that these arguments are indeed of central significance to moral philosophy, I would be loath to think of them as *the problem*. His final allegation suggests that my postulation of 'agapism' only reformulates, but does not solve this problem. Just as I am loath to see the overriding significance of discussions of 'the good', I would be loath to believe I could provide 'the solution' to this 'problem.' Dorgan goes so far as to suggest that indeed, the solving of this problem should have been my central priority. The problem to which I addressed myself has been reiterated often enough already; in 'agapism' I certainly did not see a 'solution' to the problem which I confronted, but saw rather a typical vehicle appropriate to transporting notions which could properly be termed 'morality'.

NOTES

1 Mark Dorgan '*Marxism and Morality*: A Reply' in *Perspectives in Education*, Vol 7 No 3 December 1983
2 Leon Benadé '*Marxism and Morality*: A Critique — Towards Social Agapism? in *Perspectives in Education*, Vol 7 No 1 July 1983
3 Tony Skillen 'Marxism and Morality' in *Radical Philosophy*, Vol 8 1974
4 Mark Dorgan *op cit* p 166
5 Leon Benadé *op cit* p 43
6 Mark Dorgan *op cit* p 168

Black Philosophy of Education

Charles Morris

In his article 'The notion of an African philosophy'[1] Stephen Theron concludes that there is no separate Black philosophy, and that (p 156) '. . . progress for African philosophy . . . would lie in grafting itself onto that evergreen', *ie* of Western philosophy. With respect to philosophy proper I am in agreement, and indeed the search for a specifically African philosophy seems on a par with a search for a specifically African mathematics. With regard to popular usage however such phrases as 'My philosophy is . . .' simply express a basic attitude towards living, and here there may well be a specifically African philosophy. While this is an obvious distinction to draw we should note that it is one which is often blurred in an African context. In this article, unless otherwise stated, 'philosophy' will be used in the strict sense.

Although I am in agreement with Stephen Theron's conclusions, my reasons differ from his. Basically his argument rests on the assertion that (p 157) 'The Western philosophical tradition is *the* tradition.' Taking the article as a whole it seems clear that he is thinking in terms of the achievements of Western philosophers, of the great systems of philosophy, particularly of the religious philosophers. There is, he alleges, no point in Africans making a separate start in philosophy in view of the superiority and consolidated progress of existing Western philosophy. This may be so but, even if it is, it lays too much stress on the results of philosophising rather than the activity itself. What links and unifies philosophers as a body is to be found in the common approach that they all share. Philosophy must be regarded at least as much as approach — a very special form of inquiry — than as a special structure or body of 'knowledge'. If Africans use the characteristic approach of philosophy they become part of the general philosophical community, if they abandon it, and there are special temptations for them to do so, they are not creating a separate philosophy, they are simply not in philosophy. This is not, of course, to claim that what they are doing is of no value, but just that it is not philosophy.

I hesitate to define 'philosophy' as it is always a subject of controversy. Perhaps an example of this way was A J Ayer in the 1930s who rejected much of what had been done in philosophy as not properly belonging to

the province of philosophy, and sought to reduce it to conceptual analysis. (He has since largely retracted his position.) I think however that there would be general agreement that the following are necessary characteristics of philosophy though not constituting a definition:

(1) That philosophy takes nothing for granted, and tries to make explicit the assumptions on which we think and act. Philosophy seeks to determine the logical status of such assumptions.

(2) That philosophic enquiry is open-ended and follows the argument wheresoever it leads.

(3) That philosophy should be expressed as clearly, objectively and simply as is compatible with the meaning it seeks to convey. In particular, emotive and persuasive terms should be avoided.

(4) That philosophy is concerned with matters in which no final proof is possible. Philosophic enquiry is not one that can ultimately be settled by reference to empirical fact.

(5) Philosophising relates to understanding, and not to reforming, though philosophical conclusions may form a basis for reform. It is a value in itself. While it may have useful side-effects it is not instrumental or subordinated to other ends.

While Stephen Theron's article has much to recommend it I find it unfortunate (as a piece of philosophic writing) that it contains elements of emotive writing, eg (p 158) '. . . we were transformed, largely through the missionaries, into the heirs of Jerusalem, Greece and Rome and became fellow citizens of the eternal city with people like Augustine and Pope Gregory the Great . . .' It is also difficult not to feel that Stephen Theron's attitude towards the alleged closeness (or even basic unity) of philosophy and religion is not partisan.

Philosophy of education, that Achilles's heel of philosophy, is in a vulnerable position in Western countries, and its status in Africa is even more precarious. Those in charge of teacher training courses, themselves rarely philosophers, commonly see this subject as the vehicle for putting forward to students an accepted overview of the nature of education and of its aims, and not as initiation into a form of disinterested enquiry with education as its main focus. Black philosophy, as it seems to be developing, links it with a 'philosphy of life' (which shows little, if any, evidence of an abstract philosophic scrutiny), and sees it as an instrument for fostering 'development'. There also seems to be a tendency in Black philosophy of education to believe that any general, multi-disciplinary conclusion is, in some way, a philosophic conclusion, even though one can determine no specifically philosophical approach. I recently read Professor Luthuli's book, *The Philosophical Foundations of Black Education in South Africa*[3], which I found both stimulating and valuable, but I could not help noting

how much of it was of an anthropological, historical, or sociological nature. I could find little or nothing of the dominant school of philosophy, and of philosophy of education, for a large part of this century, *ie* conceptual analysis, though the work would have benefited greatly from the conceptual analysis of many of its key terms. At a lower level, philosophy of education, which appears in Black Training Colleges as part of the Theory, or Principles, of Education, is presented dogmatically, with little or no distinction being drawn between statements of fact, opinion or inference[4].

'Separate' philosophies usually come about by ignoring some vital aspect of philosophic procedure. For example, the so-called 'radical philosophy' movement in England rests its separate identity on having an ideological base which is not to be challenged, that of dialectical materialism working through the class struggle. This may be radical and it may even be valuable, but it is certainly not philosophical. Philosophy, as a subject, retains some prestige largely because, inter alia, it represents an impartial search for truth and understanding, not as a special pleading for and by the committed. Success in this search may always be in doubt due to cultural conditioning (a philosophical problem in its own right), but it is important that the effort should continue to be made. It may even be that the study of the spirit and procedures of disinterested abstract philosophy would have greater *incidental* benefits for Africa than an attempt to build an instrumental 'philosophy of development'.

In conclusion, Professor Luthuli's final remarks in his book (p 85: 'In the case of the Blacks in South Africa the school curriculum should reflect the philosophy of Blacks and not that of any other group.') seem unexceptionable. Nevertheless, if one were to change 'Black' to 'White' in the above quotation, how many of us would still agree?

NOTES

1 Stephen Theron 'The notion of an African philosophy' in *Perspectives in Education* Vol 7 No 3 December 1983
2 Particularly in *Language, Truth and Logic*
3 Profesor of Philosophy of Education, University of Zululand
4 For example, the views of Professors Van Zyl and Duminy (*Theory of Education*, p 28) on sex stereotyping are expressed as facts. Not only are these views controversial, but they would render the authors liable to prosecution in many countries

Notices

We apologise to our readers and subscribers for the delay in the publication of this issue of **Perspectives in Education.** Volume 8 Number 2 is to be published in October, and Volume 8 Number 3 in December 1984.

We would like to remind our readers that all papers published in the *Articles* section of this journal have been refereed by our Consulting Editors, a list of whom is provided inside the front cover. Papers published in the *Discussion* section have not been refereed.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

The Editors will welcome contributions in the form of comments on local events or questions, original articles, discussion of articles published in previous issues, reviews, items for the 'Notices' section, and so on.

Contributions should be sent to:

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Contributions should not ordinarily exceed 3 000 words in length, and should be typewritten on one side of A4 paper, double spaced, with ample margins. Three complete copies should be submitted. Proofs will not be sent to authors for correction.

There is to be no separate 'Bibliography'. References should be kept to a minimum. All notes (which includes 'footnotes' and references) are to be numbered consecutively in the text (in Arabic numerals, in parenthesis, *on* the line of the text), and should be listed at the end of the article, as 'Notes'. Titles of papers or chapters cited are to be enclosed in quotation marks; titles of books are to be underlined. Examples:

NOTES

1 Carole Pateman *Participation and Democratic Theory,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
2 PF Strawson 'Freedom and Resentment' in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays,* London: Methuen, 1974, pp 15-23.
3 L Althusser 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in BJ Cosin (ed) *Education, Structure and Society,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, see p 81.

Substantial quotations (more than about 3 lines) should be indented. shorter quotations should be enclosed in single quotation marks. Omissions from a quotation should be indicated by three dots.

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