

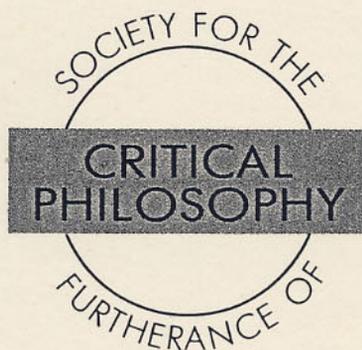
**OCCASIONAL WORKING PAPERS
IN ETHICS AND
THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

Vol. 2. April 2000

Edited by Patricia Shipley

for

The Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy (London)



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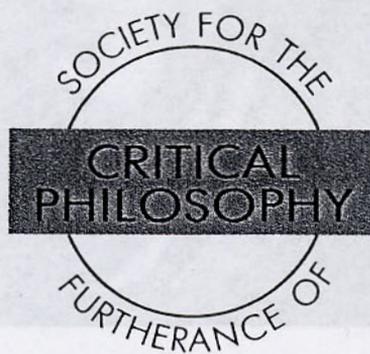
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Socrates

EDITORIAL

CONTRIBUTORS

1. 'KANT TODAY'
Peter Rickman
2. 'CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND
NATIONAL SOCIALISM'
Susanne Miller
(translated for SPC)
3. 'WOMAN IN A MIRROR'
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(translated for SPC)
4. 'THE ACTIVE SUBJECT'
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Socrates

POSTSCRIPT

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PREFACE

The Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy, London (SFCP) was founded by refugees from Germany in 1940 on the ideas of the little known German philosopher, Leonard Nelson (1882 – 1927). Nelson took up one line of Kantian philosophy which had been developed earlier, during the nineteenth century, by Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773 – 1843). This Fries-Nelsonian tradition emphasises empirical and psychological aspects of rational philosophy and is deeply concerned with issues of ethics arising in everyday life and practice. There is a thriving sister charity in Germany, the Philosophisch Politische Akademie (Philosophical Political Academy – PPA), as well as a subsidiary Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren (Society for Socratic Facilitators) with which the SFCP maintains close links. Members of the original Academy had to flee fascist Germany in the 1930s because of their political leanings (they called themselves ‘ethical socialists’), and some eventually made their way to Britain via Denmark. In addition, the SFCP and the PPA have close contacts with Dutch colleagues applying the Socratic Method in industry, business and the public services.

The SFCP is an educational charity and seeks to realise its aims through a variety of paths, including through practice of Socratic Dialogue, and through the support and promotion of scholarship in the Critical Philosophy. The SFCP series *Occasional Working Papers in Ethics and the Critical Philosophy* is seen as a means of producing relevant papers for circulation comparatively swiftly. The papers are prepared by scholars supported by, or in some other way linked to, the Society. They are usually reviewed internally by Society experts. They are ‘working’ or provisional in status in that they are intended primarily to stimulate dialogue and may be revised as a result. Sometimes relevant papers by scholars associated with the Society which have been published elsewhere are reproduced here, with permission, where it is thought our own readers might benefit from having access to them through the series.

EDITORIAL

Many philosophers adopt a cynical or relativistic stance toward practical and ethical questions, or are quite indifferent to them. But ordinary people, on the other hand, are seriously looking for meaning in life and Critical Philosophy offers a rational alternative. The opening paper to the second volume of our *Occasional Working Papers in Ethics and the Critical Philosophy* is an invited contribution by the Kantian scholar, Peter Rickman. Peter was asked to consider the relevance of Kant's philosophy for the present day. Peter's message is crystal clear. We "*desperately need a rational basis for moral judgements*", and the eighteenth century German philosopher, Immanuel Kant has no equal among thinkers for Peter for giving us "*rationally based ethics which avoid both blindness to nonrational forces and unlimited trust in the power of reason*". The Göttingen philosopher Leonard Nelson (1882-1927), who founded the Philosophical Political Academy (PPA) in 1922, was a staunch Kantian (his perspective on Kant refracted through the lens of his post-Kantian German predecessor, Jacob Friedrich Fries, 1773-1843). Nelson was passionately committed to the task of putting Kantian ethics (Kant's 'practical reason') into practice. He would, moreover, have described himself as an 'ethical realist'. The relationship between the rise of fascism and the general or popular will or attitude was of great interest to Nelson, the political philosopher. The destructive power of fatalism was at the centre of his discussions about political realism.

Let us for a moment go back two centuries before Kant and to a different part of the world. Fatalism may have been the source of the decline, at the time of the Spanish conquest, of the wonderful Inca civilisation with its seven million souls. In his fascinating study the American historian William Sullivan makes out a plausible case for their defeat at the hands of the Spanish in the mid 1500s to be rooted in the Incas' beliefs around astronomy. They literally read their fate in the stars. When a handful of Conquistadors arrived they were vastly outnumbered by a huge Inca army that could barely - through lack of willpower - lift a weapon to defend itself. Sullivan argues that the Spanish invasion coincided precisely with the time that the stars were interpreted by the Incas as having foretold that a great disaster was about to befall them. On the first day of the encounter 7000 Incas were slaughtered, and their empire was reduced to two million in 50 years.¹ If Sullivan's analysis holds good, then Nelson's deep concern with fatalism is surely valid.

The concept of 'ethical realism' was the theme of a chapter of Nelson's book 'Politics and Education'.² The chapter is the written version of a lecture he gave to students in Basle in 1921 and it begins with a cry from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "The time is out of joint!" Nelson follows this with the view that our hero was "*shamed and disgusted by the corruption of the Danish Court.*" Nelson continues in empathy with Hamlet "*Surely he would use no other word in view of the condition of Europe at the present day*" (p149). One can infer from his subsequent argument that he, Nelson, identified with Hamlet and equated that period of Danish corruption with the corruption in his own country at the time of rising fascism. One wonders, by the way, if eighty years later Nelson would be disposed to judge modern day Europe in that light.

By 'ethical realism' Nelson seemed to be alluding to a kind of third way between what he described as "*the forces of conservatism and of revolution*" (p151). He opposes the idealist and the 'enthusiast' with the realist. He also berates the irresponsibility of both the optimist and the pessimist for refusing "*to allow that the will has any determining influence upon the course of*

events. *The false idealism of the Optimist and the false realism of the Pessimist alike rest upon a speculative superstition*" (p164). The next phrase in his text makes one wonder if Nelson was getting at Marxist Communism and its basis in the deterministic doctrine of historicism of the German philosopher Hegel - the notion that history evolves willy-nilly and must take its 'logical' course. *"Confidence in the assumed power of the Good to realise itself is thus purchased at the price of unbelief in the power of the personal moral will of man - the price of the loss of moral self-confidence"* (p166).

The first World War Nelson goes on to insist *"was not brought about by the alliance of any military powers whatsoever. We have to thank another alliance for this world war. For it we have to thank the entente cordiale which has for so long existed between the Optimists and the Pessimists of so-called educated European Society"* (p168). He continues *"The activities of the handful of warmongers would never have set in motion the millions of armed men if educated European Society, as a whole, paralysed by its fatalism, had not stood aside"* (p169). There was no short cut for Nelson, only the moral struggle.

After pleading for a new alliance of idealism with realism, Nelson ends his essay (p186) with another quotation, this time from Confucius, which again highlights Nelson's practical bent: "He who does not ask, How can I *do* that? How *can* I do that? With him I can do nothing". Nelson's ideas attain a practical significance, a particular force, and come alive in the next contribution to our volume. It is an historical contribution, translated for the Society by the Canadian scholar, Michael Chase, from the original German, and published here for the first time in English. The German labour social historian, Dr Susie Miller, is a member of the Philosophical Political Academy that has flourished in Germany since its revival in 1949. Women played a valuable part in Nelson's Academy, and in his political movement. The distinguished physicist who was also an important philosopher in her own right, Nelson's assistant and ablest student, Grete Henry-Hermann (1901-1984), was such a woman and is discussed in Susie's paper. Grete subjected Nelson's doctrines to her own trenchant critique.

Susie tells us about life as a member of the political organisation (the ISK - the Militant International Socialist League) which was founded by Nelson within the framework of the German socialist and worker party movements of the time. As part of the German resistance movement many individual ISK members engaged in active and dangerous opposition to fascism and eventually had to disperse throughout the world (some refugees eventually ending up in London to found the Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy). Unlike the Marxist Communists, we are told, the Nelsonians had a fundamental duty which was ethical and grounded in the Critical Philosophy of reason descended from Immanuel Kant. Education was prized by them as an important means of affording all people the chance of a life of dignity and self-determination and should include education in politics. Politics was supposed to be in the service of principles; the ultimate ground of the politician's judgements lying in the deepest ethical convictions.

Susie also introduces an interesting observation about Nelson's views on leadership and democracy. Nelson had a Platonic side and was a charismatic leader. He held controversial views on democracy although he wholly espoused the ethical and democratic ends of justice. He believed rather in the virtues of a leadership based on trust, a quality that a leader had to win and to maintain. The leader also had to lead through the principles of reason and of ethics and not through raw and naked authority.

We learn from Susie that this small band of Nelson's disciples (they called themselves 'ethical socialists') lived quite frugal and ethical lives, making many personal sacrifices. Our third paper, which is by Michael Chase, presents us with the work of the Parisian classicist, Pierre Hadot. According to Hadot, philosophy was fundamentally 'a way of life' for the Ancients, not just a job, and demanded regular and disciplined engagement in solitary 'spiritual exercises' and meditations, not only in philosophical dialogues. The aim of these 'exercises' was to achieve an inner transformation of the self, of one's whole being, leading to a lucid and self-consciously rational moral life or 'lived ethics'. Michael's paper strikes us as particularly relevant because the small group of Nelsonians is probably one of the few examples (if not indeed the only one) of truly putting philosophy into practice, of living philosophy in a wholly committed way and not just talking about it and arguing. Nelson and his followers are in that sense a 20th century model of what the Ancient Greeks meant by philosophy. This meaning eventually got lost, more or less, as philosophy became an institutionalised academic discipline.

In the opinion of another of Nelson's assistants, Willi Eichler, the political party and the state should respect the freedom and competence of individuals to judge and decide for themselves. An individual's dignity and conscience lie outside the state's jurisdiction, but not outside its protection. The many philosophical and religious convictions are to be tolerated. A 'philosophy of life' (Weltanschauung) is the concern of the individual or the community sharing that philosophy, not that of the political party, but this in no way detracts from the moral responsibility and accountability that the politician bears, and basic ethical values of respect for others and justice must be honoured.³

Fascism in Europe was not beaten with the downfall of Hitler in Germany. European civilisation was again on trial with the recent conflicts in the Balkans. Our next contribution is another first. It is an extract ('Woman in a Man's World') from an English translation by Celia Hawkesworth of the original Bosnian publication ('Hiatus'), a book published in Sarajevo in 1994 during the recent siege of the Bosnian capital.* It was commissioned by the Society from Academic Lifeline for Bosnia (UK) as part of its continuing collaboration with that charity which was set up to keep some intellectual spark and higher education alive in a country where these resources were close to total destruction. 'Hiatus' was written by a remarkable Bosnian woman who as chief editor resolutely and single-handedly kept the only Bosnian journal going throughout the siege, a multicultural journal called 'Odjek' (Echo). The torture, murder, rape and genocide carried out in Nermina's country were cold-bloodedly and ruthlessly planned (some might say 'rationally' so).

The next contribution is a reprint of a jointly-authored paper originally published in a journal of the British Psychological Society, and it represents the first fruits of a continuing collaboration between Fernando Leal and myself to critique and update Kantian and Nelsonian ideas in the light of modern scholarship and empirical research. (It was referred to in our paper on information technology published in Volume 1 of the *Occasional Papers*). In the BPS paper we were concerned to emphasise the importance of action, bodily action and the active self as an antidote to the seeming obsession in academia with contemplation and the mind, and as a possible resolution of the problem of dualism - at least in theory. We wanted to make the paper a little more widely available. In any case, to locate it in the series on '*Ethics and the Critical Philosophy*' seems to us an appropriate home for it, in view of its prioritisation of action, especially ethics in practice.

The remaining two papers return to the theme of the Socratic Dialogue that featured in Volume 1. Nelson initiated his own version of the Dialogue which has been developed further by his successors. In her paper Susie Miller mentions that Nelson and the Nelsonians were concerned not to teach philosophy as a lifeless body of erudite texts but philosophising, the Nelsonian Socratic Dialogue being the preferred way of doing this. In one of the papers Fernando Leal continues his critique of the Dialogue, and then joins Rene Saran in the second paper with a very different contribution - in a semi-dramatised form; an imaginary dialogue about the Dialogue. Rules of the Nelsonian Dialogue, and a bibliographic essay on relevant literature are contained in the appendices to this final paper of Volume 2.

In keeping with the philosophy and tradition of the Society the Trustees and the series' editor welcome your views - your dialogue with us - on this edition and on the earlier one (Volume 1). The Society's website at www.sfcg.org.uk contains a message facility for contacting us and details of Society publications.

* Copies of the complete translation are available from the Society.

¹ Sullivan, William (1998) *Secrets of the Incas*. London: Random House.

² Nelson, Leonard 'Ethical Realism' (1928) Chapter 4 in *Politics and Education*. London: Allen & Unwin, pp 149-186, translated by W. M. Lansdell.

³ Eichler, Willi (1971) *Fundamental Values and Basic Demands of Democratic Socialism*. Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Patricia Shipley
(April 2000)

CONTRIBUTORS

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Michael Chase is a classical scholar and a Canadian. He graduated in Philosophy (specialising in Greek philosophy and in 19th century German philosophy) at the University of Victoria, British Columbia in Canada where he later obtained a Masters degree in Classics. Michael speaks Spanish, German, Italian, Russian, as well as French and English, and is able to read Latin and Ancient and Modern Greek. He has given lectures in the Department of Greek & Roman Studies at the University of Victoria, and has conducted research at the University of California, at Kings College in the University of London, and at the National Centre of Scientific Research in Paris which studies Late Antique and Early Medieval Thought. He is at present completing his doctoral thesis in French on the history of Greek philosophy at the Sorbonne's École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris.

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Celia Hawkesworth is Senior Lecturer in Serbian and Croatian at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College, London. She has published numerous articles and several books on Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian literature, including a study *Ivo Andric: Bridge between East and West*, Athlone Press, London, 1984 and *Voices in the Shadows: Women and Verbal Art in Serbia and Bosnia*, CEU Press, Budapest, 2000. She has also published numerous translations, including several works by Ivo Andric. Her most recent translations include two works by Dubravka Ugresic, published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998: *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*, short-listed for the Weidenfeld Prize for Literary Translation and *The Culture of Lies*, winner of the Heldt Prize for Translation, 1999.

Nermina Kurspahic

Nermina Kurspahic was born in Sarajevo in 1956, where she graduated in Comparative Literature and Theatre Studies. While still a student, she began to publish throughout former Yugoslavia articles and reviews of literature, theatre and particularly art. Her essays on the art of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been collected in book form, to be published soon. She has also published essays on sociological, general cultural and political themes. Her novel, *The Disappearance of the Blue Riders (Iscezavanje plavih jahaca)*, was published by the International Centre for Peace in Sarajevo in 1994. The novel was translated and published in Turkey in 1997 (*Ciglik [The Shriek]*). Her collection of essays *Sarajevo War Sketches (Sarajevski ratni pogledi)* was awarded the Soros Essay Prize and published by Oko, Sarajevo, 1999. She has also published a volume of poems, *Soon Your End Will Come As Well (Skoro ce i tebi kraj)*, Ljiljan/Zid, Sarajevo, 1999. She works as the editor-in-chief of the cultural and art periodical, ODJEK (Echo).

Fernando Leal

Fernando Leal studied philosophy, linguistics and classical scholarship in Heidelberg, Bonn and Cologne and is Professor of Social Science in the University of Guadalajara in Mexico, where he also has a special interest in linguistics, founding a Centre for the study of Mexican Indian Languages there. Whilst studying for his doctorate in Germany he acquired a knowledge of Leonard Nelson's work in depth. He has collaborated with the Society for several years in the promotion and development of the Critical Philosophy, working closely with Paul Branton* up to Paul's death.

Susanne Miller

Susie Miller was born in 1915 and was a member of the political party founded by the German philosopher, Leonard Nelson, the Militant International Socialist League (the ISK) whilst she was a refugee in London during the second world War. She later became an assistant to Willi Eichler of the German Social Democratic Party (the SPD) from 1952-1960. She also worked as an employee of the SPD Executive. In 1963 she was awarded her Doctorate at the University of Bonn in political science, history, and education. Between 1963 and 1978 Susie was scientific researcher for the German Commission on the History of Parliament and the Political Parties in Bonn. Since then she has been occupied with voluntary work for various organisations in political education. She continues as an active member of the Philosophical Political Academy in Germany which was also founded by Nelson, and of which she was Chairperson between 1982 and 1990. Susie is the author of a number of books and articles on the history of the German social democratic movement.

Peter Rickman

Peter Rickman is Visiting Professor at City University in London. He has been a university teacher for 50 years, lecturing on various branches of philosophy including on Ethics and particularly on Kant. He has published extensively in the social sciences as well as in philosophy, and is often to be seen at meetings in London (in 'Kant's Cave' especially) of the popular 'Philosophy for All' which aims to make philosophy more widely available to ordinary people. Peter is the Chair of Trustees of the M. E. Rickman Trust which gives grants for medical research equipment. He does all the charity's administrative work. He also works with 'Cruse', the bereavement charity.

Rene Saran

Rene Saran has worked in industry, commerce, voluntary societies and in adult and higher education. She studied politics and history as a mature student at Ruskin College, Oxford, and then at Manchester University, before going on to get her Doctorate in education policy at London University. In her retirement she has remained active as a researcher, resulting in articles and books on education policy and management, as a school governor, and in various voluntary societies, in particular as a Trustee and Secretary of the Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy. She is a member of the Philosophical Political Academy (PPA) in Germany and is also fluent in German. She has participated in many Socratic Dialogue groups since 1940, mainly in Germany, and became a Socratic Facilitator (group leader) in 1996. Her mother, Mary Saran was a student of Nelson's, and a writer and activist. Rene is the widow of Paul Branton.*

Patricia Shipley is Emeritus Reader in Occupational Psychology at Birkbeck College at the University of London where she taught for several years, a visiting scholar at Kings College, London, a Fellow of the British Psychological Society, and for eight years a Trustee of the Society. She has also studied Philosophy. She collaborated for many years with Paul Branton* on ergonomics projects in industry, and is working on the promotion of the Critical Philosophy through the development and updating of its main philosophical ideas in a postmodern and post-traditional world. She is currently Honorary Professional Adviser to the Society and General Editor of the Society's publications.

- * Paul Branton was a Trustee of the Society and died in 1990. A distinguished ergonomist and applied psychologist he carried forward and developed the Kantian/Nelsonian tradition in philosophy through his research on skilled performance in organisations, in his scholarly publications, and in his practice of the Socratic Dialogue as an adult teaching method.

KANT TODAY

H. Peter Rickman

THE CASE FOR REASON

My thesis is straightforward: We desperately need a rational basis for moral judgments and Kant has no equal as champion of such a basis. One reason for maintaining the rational potential of human beings is the flood of irrationality which threatens to engulf us.¹ Its historical manifestations are only too familiar: The murder of five million Jews ordered by the leaders of a civilised country, genocide in Europe, Asia and Africa, indiscriminate terrorism to achieve political goals in many parts of the globe. Superstitions and prejudices, though less lethal, are omnipresent.

A need for rational moral principles further arises from the multiplicity and variety of culturally and religiously grounded moral codes meant to curb inhuman behaviour. In the global village conflicting moral schemes thus confusingly confront each other.

Contemporary intellectual movements reflect and encourage the drift into irrationality. Scepticism, resignation to cultural relativism and a general mistrust of reason as a preserve of the middle classes open the door to nihilism. Logical consistency, the pursuit of objective truth, successful, unambiguous communication and clarity of aim are suspect or even condemned as weapons against the proletariat.

Regard for reason has, furthermore, suffered from the exaggerated claims of some of its protagonists as well as the misrepresentations of its detractors. The rational man is seen as a bloodless pedant, "a dessicated calculating machine." The belief in logically compelling answers is condemned as dogmatic intolerance.

However, no major philosopher I know of – not Plato, not Aristotle, nor Spinoza or Kant – ignored or underestimated the powers of our instincts and emotions at work in human beings. When they defined man as the rational animal they insisted that human beings are capable of reason and thus of rationally controlling and channelling those dark forces. They also recognised the limitations of reason, appreciated that in many spheres, such as in choosing a partner or friend, or appreciating beauty, emotions play a vital and indispensable part.

KANT

The philosophy of the 18th century German thinker Immanuel Kant offers a defensible and still much needed rationally based ethics which avoid both blindness to nonrational forces and unlimited trust in the power of reason. The titles of his main works herald his judicious approach. They are called 'critiques', by which he meant an examination of both the powers and limitations of reason. His work has affected all subsequent philosophy and indeed, adjacent disciplines such as theology, history, psychology, physical science, and literary criticism. Subsequent thinkers have criticised or modified it, but have also built on it. Here I shall concentrate on what reason can and cannot do, and the role it needs to play in the moral life.

Brought up in the tradition of Leibnizian rationalism which assumed that human reason was, in principle, capable of coming to know a rationally ordered reality, Kant was shaken by Hume's scepticism. He came to think that the assumption of a rationally ordered reality was a too ambitious hypothesis. However, he sided with rationalism against empiricism by noting features of our knowledge that were more certain than anything that we derive from the data of our senses. We experience a structured world of objects and causally linked events. Kant extrapolated the presuppositions which made this possible. The elements of certainty in our experience are due to the way the human mind organises the data it receives. It is active in cognition, not a passive slate on which experience writes its letters. This is Kant's 'Copernican Revolution' according to which the empirically real world, the world of mountains and animals is "phenomenon". Ultimate reality, unknowable in itself, is inescapably seen through the perspectives of our cognitive capacities. This assures us of the presence of a creative reason as the necessary condition of commonsense experience. It also follows that the rational principles validated as necessary ingredients of experience are thereby not legitimised outside that sphere. Reason, trying to prove the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the like, involves itself in contradictions and, in Kant's own words "flaps its wings impotently in the void." There is room for faith, speculation and the framing of guiding hypotheses but these are not to be confused with the kind of knowledge we have in everyday experience or the

sciences which are built on it. Reason is indispensable in organising our data but provides no reliable data of its own.

So we can reject scepticism about everyday knowledge and science. Of course, we make mistakes, scientific theories have shown themselves to be inadequate and needed modifying or replacing, and we have become less optimistic than our nineteenth century predecessors of reaching complete knowledge. Yet science is not an irrational activity. We do have knowledge and criteria for its soundness.

It equally follows that some modesty is in order when we embrace a faith or engage in metaphysical speculation. We are warned against being dogmatic and imposing our views on others. The idea of tolerance comes down from the enlightenment as espoused by Kant.

THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

By 'practical reason' Kant did not mean the application of reason in practice, but the power of reason itself to direct the will. The pure law of reason is, however, an essential ingredient of practical decision making. Kant fully appreciated that such pure principles are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for moral choices. We need all kinds of knowledge about human nature, the relevant circumstances, prevailing conventions and the like, as well as an assessment of priorities. A moral philosophy does not take the burden of choice from individuals.

Kant himself lectured on anthropology and wrote about the application of moral principles to the law and to international affairs. I shall not deal with these aspects of Kant's work – though they testify to his perspicacity – for two reasons. Firstly they are less well-known and less easily accessible. Secondly, and more importantly, they reflect more directly Kant's personal views, coloured as they are by the historical and cultural situations which he faced some 200 years ago, and so are more controversial.

Kant started from the recognition that the moral judgments we make claim to be universal and unconditional. "May be lying is wrong in some cases" does not sound like a moral judgement. Neither our feelings, nor any information we have accumulated, can account for these characteristics. Only reason can. So what can reason – divorced from all evidence – command? The answer is: consistency of the will. Hence the first formulation of the 'categorical imperative',

which spells out the law of practical reason, is the universality principle. You must be able to will that the maxims of your actions should become universal law. This is clearly a fairness or impartiality principle which bids you not to make an exception of yourself. It is manifestly a philosophic formulation of traditional versions of the moral law such as "Love thy neighbour as thyself", "Do unto others as you want them to do unto you" or "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander." This principle has been explained and expanded in terms of bracketing your own situation and interests, by subsequent Kantians, but all this is already implied in Kant's own formulations.

There have been misguided criticisms of the universality principle which ignored its exclusive applications to moral issues.² It is hardly necessary to show that it would be nonsensical to try to universalise such principles as "I shall always do my shopping on Tuesday afternoon" or "I shall devote my life to philosophy".

There is a second, more serious, criticism: the categorical imperative has no real content. It does not tell you what to do. This applies equally to the traditional formulations. You are still left to decide what form your love of a neighbour should take. This is as it should be for it is not anybody's business to tell others what they ought to do. They must choose their own aims. The voice of conscience speaks in all of us. It can, obviously, not be an excuse for wrongdoing that you have not read Kant or the Bible.

Moral philosophy can only serve as an antidote to self-serving sophistry, and the categorical imperative provides merely a criterion of the moral soundness of a maxim on which we propose to act. It serves much as the rules of logic; they cannot tell you what to put into an article, but any violation of them condemns the article you have written.

The formulation of the categorical imperative which provides more guidance is the one which commands us to treat human beings always as ends and never as means only. Of course we treat each other as means all the time. The taxi driver serves to get me to the station, and I, in turn, help to provide his livelihood. But this must never override respect and consideration for the other person, his point of view and interests.

This formulation is rooted in our general view as to what morality is all about. If it were simply about achieving socially desirable ends it would be dispensable. Instead of appealing to the conscience of drivers, we could have more policemen about. Instead of upholding the ideal of fidelity in

marriage, we could design some modern chastity belt. Kant believed - and is he not right? - that something of value is achieved if a person chose to act from moral principles rather than being physically compelled or socially pressured. It then becomes a moral duty not to impede the possibility of such choices. The freedom of the individual to make his own decisions, to set his own goals, must be respected and, indeed protected. The only grounds for limiting such freedom is the protection of the freedom of others. This is what it means to treat human beings as "ends".

A number of objections have been raised against Kant's whole approach and need to be confronted if a case is to be made out for his moral philosophy being the best, if not the only basis for ethical practice today.

It has, firstly, been argued that it is harshly inhuman to base one's judgements on principles, while disregarding consequences. This is a misunderstanding, for clearly any deliberate action is directed to a purpose, i.e., aims to achieve distinct results. A genuine choice of a purposeful action also involves the utmost effort to achieve it. A moral judgment is directed to the nature of that purpose and the degree of effort put into achieving it. What is morally irrelevant are the unintended and unforeseeable consequences of our actions. If accidentally beneficial results occur, we may rejoice, but must withhold moral approval.

Kant explicitly bids us to seek the happiness of others. Indeed we have a duty towards our own, and this disposes of criticisms of Kant's neglect of emotions. We certainly receive criteria for doing the humanly and socially right thing. If, however, acting morally realises - as we have suggested - an intrinsic value, a further criterion for so acting comes into play. For Kant - and surely this chimes in with our common understanding - the motive for action must be the moral law itself. To do the right thing from fear or hope of profit does not deserve moral approval.³ To be truly moral requires intelligible aspiration which we can never be sure of realising, because of the obscurity of our motives. It is as well, as it preserves us from self-satisfied smugness.

A second line of criticism concerns the rigour with which Kant's principles condemn, without qualification, such acts as lying, and thus ignore possible conflicts of values. Should we really tell the truth even if it imperils an innocent person? I do not think Kant has dealt with this issue very explicitly. The following suggestion would, however, be consistent with Kant's approach. Lying always remains wrong but it may be the

lesser wrong in a conflict of values. In this case the universality criterion could be applied on that level.

A third criticism frequently levelled against Kant's moral philosophy is the low value it seems to place on emotions. Should we not give more recognition to such emotions as parental love, sympathy and compassion?

A trap which critics sometimes fall into is to argue from the person to the work. Kant, it seems, was not a very emotional man. He did not want to see his own sisters for many years. He contributed to charities regularly but was not moved by the misery he witnessed. He also appeared to be virtually asexual, hardly interested in sex. In the present context, it is irrelevant whether this was due to biological factors, repression or spectacular sublimation. Some of his personal views and specific remarks were coloured by this. But our job is not to judge the man. His moral philosophy is - I want to argue - free from an undue bias against emotions.

It is certainly true that Kant vigorously maintained that morality cannot and should not be based on emotions. There are several reasons for this. To start with, feelings are subjective and vary from person to person. Disputes between people on this tend to be inconclusive. Secondly, emotions can change within the individual. He may like children today and detest them tomorrow because he has a headache. Finally, and most decisively, emotions are not - or only very partially - under our control. If "love thy neighbour" meant "show him affection" instead of "show him respect and consideration", as I have already claimed, it may be impossible to feel this for the dirty drunkard next door. But a moral command presumes that it is possible to respond.

This does not mean that Kant deprecated such emotions as affection, benevolence and the like. However, we have forms of approval distinct from moral praise. Such qualities make - in Kant's view - a person "nice" and "loveable" etc. Being moral is reserved for our acting on reason which speaks to us as the voice of conscience. Indeed, this is what morality is all about. When we respond to our emotions or instincts we are on a par with all the things in the world subject to causal laws. Acting morally is to be self legislating, following the reason within us, and so asserting our freedom, and thereby deserving respect.

Kant is further accused of not only refusing any moral status to our emotions but of not appreciating their proper and important role in human life. I consider this totally mistaken. When Kant states - as I have already mentioned - that we have a duty

to our own happiness, he surely does not refer merely to the intellectual delight in creative thought he no doubt felt and which played a prominent part in his life. This, one might think, is not a very burdensome duty, as we naturally seek happiness. However, what Kant is talking about is the temptation of sacrificing the overall quality of our lives for some transitory pleasure which drugs, for example, may provide.

When Kant talks about our duty to promote the happiness of others rather than their morality, he not only rejects any kind of priggish paternalism, but also underlines that respecting others means aiding their aim rather than to impose ours, as long as they do not interfere with the freedom of others.

CONCLUSION

We remain indebted to Kant's powerful defence of positions we abandon at our peril. We all share a common reason which enables us to advance our knowledge and communicate across the obstacles created by the variety of languages and ideologies and remains our best defence against both blind irrationality and bigoted dogmatism.

That same rationality provides us with basic moral principles, upholding the freedom and dignity of all human beings while respecting the religious, cultural and political differences of our historical positions.

NOTES

¹ I have discussed some aspects of the revolt against reason in Rickman, H.P., (1998) 'Deconstruction, The Unacceptable Face of Hermeneutics'. *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 29, No. 3, p 299 - 313.

² See Scarre, Geoffrey, (1998) 'Interpreting The Categorical Imperative.' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*.

³ T S Eliot wrote in *Murder in the Cathedral*: "The last temptation is the greatest treason to do the right thing for the wrong reason".

CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY AS A DEMAND FOR RESISTANCE AGAINST NATIONAL SOCIALISM

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Susie Miller

After his incarceration in the Brandenburg Prison in January 1939, the prisoner Alexander Dehms, condemned by the Popular Tribunal to ten years of prison for 'preparation for high treason', had to fill out a questionnaire on the course of his life. To the question: "Under what circumstances, and as a result of what cause, did you commit your deed?", he answered: "out of the conviction that I was doing my duty".¹ The ethical justification for his act was crucial for the biographical and spiritual background of a man who took part in the Resistance work of the International Socialist League of Struggle (ISK). As a semi-illiterate 16-year-old metalworker, Dehms had come into contact with the International Youth League (IJB) in 1920. In 1924, he became for a few years a student in the Walkemühle Country Camp school near Melsungen, not far from Kassel, and he then joined the ISK. The IJB, the Walkemühle, and the ISK were founded by the Göttingen philosopher Leonard Nelson, who had intended them to transform the results of his extensive philosophical work into practice. 'Development for action, led by a strong consciousness of responsibility' was 'the real goal of the IJB', as Dehms explained twenty-five years after Nelson's death.² The Walkemühle served the same purpose, and the ISK presupposed such an education for its political work.

The IJB, the ISK, and their founder Leonard Nelson

The IJB was an educational association of like-minded people, whose members had to take an active part in organisations of the workers' movement. Courses were given at the Walkemühle - the most complete of them took three years - in which young people were trained for the political tasks which the IJB, and later the ISK, set for its members. There was also a department in this

school for children of pre-school and school-age, in which Nelson's pedagogical principles were tested. In 1933, the Nazi regime confiscated the Walkemühle; but some of the teachers continued their work with children first in Denmark, and then, briefly, in Wales.

The ISK was founded after the leaders of the SPD decided in 1925 that it was not possible to be a member of both the IJB and the SPD. This measure meant that the IJB was deprived of its most important arena of political activity, and it was forced to found its own political organisation, the ISK³. The ISK, which viewed itself as part of the German and international Workers' movement, saw the justification and need to form an independent party - which, however, in the short time of its existence during the Weimar Republic had not had the ambition to present its own choice of candidates - in its justification for the struggle for socialism, which came from Nelson. In contrast to the Marxist organisations, Nelson referred to a fundamental ethical duty, which is manifest in critical philosophy as the justified weighing up of interests. The organisation of the ISK, as well as the tasks it set for its members, stood in the closest connection to Nelson's theory.

For the most part, the founders of the ISK came from the IJB, and had participated in courses given by Nelson and his closest collaborators. Nelson exercised an extraordinary influence on all those who came into contact with him. This is shown by an article written at Nelson's early death - he died at 45 - whose author definitively distanced herself from Nelson's ideas and political path, and yet who paid an emotional homage to his personality and his work:

The edifice of his thought is built up in the clearest light, yet it would have meant no more than that of

other serious men of science, were it not for his will to apply theoretical work to practice. When one encounters Nelson's work, one does not listen to it with interest; rather, one is impelled to action, to make this one just reality come about, and shake oneself free of all lukewarm indifference. To be political and to act poetically is the most deeply experienced demand ... For the young, he was and is the shining model of a leader, who gave his inclinations and his interests - and even his life, as is proved by his death - for the cause of right ... In his presence, one was a better person, and everything turned into flames for one thing: his idea. Not by persuasion nor big words; for he was ascetic even in his speech, but only through the effect of the strength of his convictions.⁴

The life of the man from whom, long after his death, such an effect emanated forth, ran its course without apparent drama; yet it was anything but the quiet life of a German scholar. Leonard Nelson (1882-1927), son of a prominent Berlin lawyer, grew up in a liberal home, interested in culture and the arts. In 1909, he graduated in philosophy, but entered the Faculty of Sciences of Göttingen University, and was there named Honorary Professor in 1919. His scientific work, built upon the foundations created by Kant and Jakob Friedrich Fries, was devoted to the resurrection and continuance of the Critical Philosophy. He held that this philosophy, and only this philosophy, was the "protector of intellectual freedom" and "guardian of the autonomy of Reason". It was to help "to establish the doctrine of the self-confidence of Reason in its rights, against all false doctrines of the impotence of human reason".⁵

Nelson made this claim on philosophy, to which he had devoted himself, in an essay from 1915. Around this time, his own life-plan was definitively influenced by the shattering experience of the First World War, in which he did not participate for reasons of health. From the outset, Nelson's philosophical work was intended to point the way towards the transformation of society; yet his social and political orientation was transformed during the course of the war. Profoundly disillusioned by the nationalism of the scientific circles and the liberal-bourgeois associations in which he had previously been active, he withdrew from them and joined the Independent Social-Democratic Party (USPD), which had been founded in April 1917. Together with Minna Specht, the gifted teacher who would later be leader of the Walkemühle, he created the International Youth League. With this

organisation, he wished to win over the workers' movement to the views which, in his opinion, constituted the presupposition for the successful struggle for a free and just society. These views concerned the workers' movement in two fundamental respects: they demanded a revision of its theory, as well as the readiness to make stronger demands upon its members.

First and foremost among the "false doctrines" to which the workers' movement adhered, in Nelson's view, was Historical Materialism, which had been received into the Marxist workers' movement as a supposedly scientific knowledge of the "naturally necessary" development towards Socialism. On the other hand, Nelson affirmed the Marxist thesis of the necessity of the class struggle. For Nelson, however, the class struggle was not the result of the inner "contradictions" of Capitalism, against which the workers rebelled in their own "material" interest; instead, it was an ethical demand: "The class struggle is justified as the struggle for what is right, and the necessity of the class struggle is based on the practical necessity of what is right".⁶ The socialist workers' movement was to carry out this struggle from the conscious knowledge of the ethical duty towards the construction of a society in which justice and freedom reigned, so that the human value of each and every person was respected. From this there resulted for Nelson the demand fundamentally to change scientific and societal relations, and this was where he agreed with the socialist workers' movement and their struggle.

Only those whose moral and spiritual strength had been fortified by constant testing and training, and whose own behaviour corresponded to the postulates which they themselves place upon a socialist society, could be ready for this struggle. With the founding of the IJB, and later of the ISK, Nelson was following his goal of forming such people, and of giving them political influence. Nelson remained a Professor at Göttingen until his death, and survived the founding of the ISK by not quite two years. Among the causes of his death from bronchitis in October 1927 were his over-strenuous efforts in his scientific, pedagogical, and political work. Nelson's successor at the head of the ISK was his collaborator Willi Eichler, who had already previously taken over a large part of the political work.

Whereas in the IJB the realisation of philosophical knowledge under the leadership of Nelson and his immediate students played an important role - and the leaders were concerned to teach not philosophy, but philosophising; that is, to transmit a method of critical thought and discussion - so, in the ISK, political work naturally came to the forefront. Over the course of time, the ISK increased its numbers above the nucleus of the IJB. More than two-thirds of them were young workers, craftsmen, and employees; the others were teachers in popular schools and institutes of higher education, as well, in a small number of cases, as academics in liberal professions.⁷ If the theoretical studies and discussions in the ISK decreased in comparison with the IJB, this was not primarily a result of the social composition of its membership, but of the extent of the political tasks which were set for them: the publishing of a monthly newsletter (ISK) and, from the beginning of 1932 the daily *Spark* (Der Funke); all members shared the task of selling this paper, in homes, bistros, cafés, at meetings and in the streets. There was also the organisation of the group's own meetings, everywhere ISK-groups were to be found; active participation in the unions and associations of freethinkers, in the Workers' League of Abstinence, and in other organisations. The nature of the ISK as a community of like-minded people was further strengthened by this intense activity. The foundation of this binding and duty-bound mentality remained the ethical principles and objectives which had been derived from the Critical Philosophy, through the intermediaries of Nelson and his students.

The organisational structure of the ISK was given beforehand by Nelson's criticism of democracy. Nelson held the goals of democracy - the respect of human rights, freedom of opinion and intellectual freedom, the rule of law, and public criticism - to be the foundations of the state of law, but he rejected majority decisions of what is right in a given case, for he refused to place that which is recognised as right at the disposition of contingent majorities. Reason, which alone has the right to decide what right demands, "appears...only in the judgement of him who is sufficiently educated". It followed from this that "he alone, thanks to the sovereignty of Reason, can be Lawgiver when it comes to right". "Thus, to the question of who the ruler in the State shall be, the only conclusive answer is the old Platonic one: the wisest". Nelson

foresaw the same principle for the "Party of Right", which was to realise justice in state and society; he also called it the "Party of Reason".⁸ Nevertheless, he hinted at the limits of the analogy between this party and the state of Right: "The only power which can give the Party leader a kind of substitute for the external violence which is available to the leader of a State, is the power of *trust* which the membership brings to him". Yet in contrast to organisations which rely on the principle of authority, the leader of a "Party of Right" ought to derive his "right to trust" exclusively from his defence of the "Demands of Reason".⁹ In fact, the existence and functionality of the ISK depended essentially on the trust that leadership decisions were motivated by rational considerations and in every case by the effort to serve the common cause. This trust was also strengthened by the fact that the grounds for decisions were usually made public, and thoroughly discussed. The author knows from her own experience that the relations between the members of the ISK, whether they belonged of the leadership or the membership, were by no means free from tensions, but only in exceptional cases were there doubts about a comrade's honesty and disinterestedness.

A climate of trust arose automatically in the ISK, because entry into this small organisation, which was separated from the main current of the workers' movement - many critics, even sympathetic ones, saw in it an elitist socialistic 'order' - brought with it no personal advantages. On the contrary, it was linked to the readiness to submit oneself to rules which held for all members: members had to leave their church, be vegetarian, abstain from alcohol, observe strict discipline in the fulfilment of agreements, and pay rigorous party dues. Even more than by these demands, the life of the ISK members was affected by the absolute priority attributed to political work. In many cases, this signified the repression of private desires and tendencies, and the loosening or abolition of personal ties to family and friends. In a word, what was required was the renunciation of 'personal realisation', to use modern terminology. And yet, this renunciation was compensated - as is testified in retrospect by former ISK members - by the experience of a community fighting in solidarity for an ethically-grounded goal, which each person belonging to this society affirmed out of his or her own convictions. That this goal could only be reached through the conscious, continual effort of

will of the people who were pledged towards it, was among the fundamental items of knowledge which had caused Nelson to found the ISK, and which constituted a constant incitement for the membership to dedicate their strength wholeheartedly to the political struggle. This manifested itself in all clarity during the ISK's desperate attempts, at the end of the Weimar Republic, to halt the march of the National Socialists, and in their resistance work after the 'seizure of power'.

The ISK in the Struggle against National Socialism

With regard to the behaviour of the ISK against National Socialism, let us repeat a remark by Wolfgang Abendroth:

The ISK supposedly had "at its disposition, in advance, its own political theory which contradicted the then-current theoretical points of departure of all directions of the workers' movement, was based on sect-like existence, and was almost notoriously unreal, which had been worked out by the Göttingen Professor Leonard Nelson". The particular problem that arises from this conjuncture came about because to a large extent - despite this beginning which derived from an idealistic philosophy, which did not at all predestine this group to realistic socio-political analyses - there became possible in many cases greater insight into political developmental tendencies and more useful suggestions for political action in the opposition to fascism, than were comprehensible to the leadership groups of the major parties".¹⁰

Now, the ISK did not occupy itself with National Socialism earlier than other organisations of the workers' movement, nor did it recognise the danger earlier than they. The theme of National Socialism was first dealt with extensively in the ISK's journal in 1930¹¹: in the year, that is, of the NSDAP's alarming and unexpected success in the Reichstag elections. It is doubtful that the ISK's socio-political analysis of National Socialism was more clear-sighted than that of others. It is nevertheless certain that after the election of September 1930, the ISK, unlike other parties, groups, and individuals on the Left, held a victory by the NSDAP (German National Socialist Workers Party - the NAZI Party) and a long National Socialist reign to be possible. The view held above all by Communists, but also by Social Democrats, that National Socialism was a brief interlude,

conditioned by the development of capitalism, and which would be followed by socialism, never existed within the ISK. This was a consequence precisely of its theory. The denial of deterministic and teleological interpretations of history made the ISK capable of a realistic assessment of the chances a criminal movement had of coming and staying in power. The critique of democracy adopted by Nelson also contributed here; viz., that it gave demagogues and charlatans the possibility to achieve their goals; that popular sovereignty gave no guarantee that decisions would be taken with a view to reason; and that the means available to the democratic state were insufficient to ensure its own defence.

The resolve, energy, and readiness for self-sacrifice of the ISK members in the struggle against National Socialism was emphasised by all authors who have occupied themselves with the history of this organisation. Werner Link emphasised that "the ISK members were immune to fascistic experiments", and "because of their subjective consciousness of struggling on the side of the working class as Socialists".¹² This interpretation is correct insofar as the ISK held the workers and their organisations, especially the two great workers' parties and the unions, to be the essential force capable of withstanding the National Socialist threat; and it was obvious for the ISK to align itself with this defensive front, for which it had so expressly agitated. Yet the ISK's behaviour with regard to National Socialism and Fascism was not determined only by its self-understanding as belonging to the workers' movement. It was also motivated by the uncompromising rejection of Nazi ideology, which stood in the sharpest contrast to the rational philosophy which the ISK recognised as its own. Although the majority of the ISK members were not familiar with the system and foundations of the Critical Philosophy, still, they oriented themselves towards the guiding ideas which were presented in this philosophy for human social and political life: justice, freedom, and the duty to act out of respect for human value on the basis of these criteria. That National Socialism, by its whole essence - which in the last years of the Weimar Republic expressed itself not merely in its ideology and propaganda, but even more clearly in its acts of terrorism and assassination - was the enemy of these ideas, and once in power would stop at nothing to suppress them, was clear to the ISK members. Undeterred by the fact that the

National Socialists rejected democracy and Marxism, they saw in this no kind of affinity with their own views; for the idea of leadership developed by Nelson, as well as its practice within the ISK, were based upon wholly other principles than those which were the norm for dictatorships, and the critique of Marxism taken over by Nelson was directed towards giving an ethical foundation to those consequences of this doctrine which he accepted. The philosophical material with which the ISK members were equipped neither gave them arguments for concessions to the Nazis, nor the comforting hope that they could not stay in power for long. Friedrich Engels' remark about 'sinking into barbarism' was cited as a warning more and more often within ISK circles; and that is what the reign of the NS would mean, was not in doubt among them.

From this awareness the ISK drew consequences which determined the organisation's life until the end of the Weimar Republic. Beginning in January 1932, it resolved to publish only one daily newspaper, *The Spark*, in order to spread through this medium its suggestions for the struggle against National Socialism.¹³ The ISK leadership, as well as the editors and press of its monthly journal, moved from Göttingen to Berlin; the adult section of the Walkemühle was closed, and its teachers Minna Specht, Hellmut von Rauschenplat (Fritz Eberhard) and Gustav Heckmann, as well as Grete Hermann (Henry-Hermann), who had worked together with Minna Specht on Nelson's posthumous writings, joined the editorial board of the *Spark*, which was led by Willi Eichler. It was a bold undertaking, for the ISK did not have access to the capital needed to run a daily newspaper; the editors had no experience whatsoever in daily journalism; a pool of subscribers was difficult to come by in the current climate of unemployment; and financing from advertisements could not be counted upon. Nevertheless, the *Spark* appeared from January 1, 1932 until February 17, 1933. The central preoccupation for which the ISK lobbied in its newspaper, its official meetings, and its petition drives was the creation of a united front of all forces "which were at one in their rejection of Fascism", as was stated in the *Urgent Appeal*¹⁴ which it founded, in order to obstruct the further rise of the Nazis. For this reason, the ISK held a reconciliation between the SPD and the KPD (Communist Party of Germany), supported by the unions, to be essential.

The immense efforts which these undertakings cost did not, as we know, lead to the desired result. After the overthrow in Prussia of the government of the Chancellor of the Reich, Braun, in July 1932, there was no longer any question for most members of the ISK, that the Nazis' seizure of power could be averted. To be sure, the ISK continued all its efforts in that direction, but in autumn of 1932 its local organisations began to prepare themselves for 'illegality' and persecution. Outer signs of ISK membership, such as membership books and signs, were discarded, mutual house searches were carried out for checking purposes, agreements were reached on behaviour during arrests, and simulated interrogations were held.¹⁵

The ISK in the Resistance

Once the NS-dictatorship was in place, virtually the entire membership of the ISK was prepared to carry out resistance against the regime under conditions of illegality. Concrete guidelines for its organisation were discussed at a secret meeting of local delegates held in Saarbrücken in July 1933. Following this, a network of five-member groups was established nationwide. Hellmut von Rauschenplat (Fritz Eberhard) took over the leadership of illegal work in Germany, and the Foreign Office of the ISK was set up in Paris, under the direction of Willi Eichler.¹⁶

Participation in this illegal work, of the life-threatening risks of which everyone at the time was perfectly aware, depended on the personal resolution of each member. That this work required qualities which had gone untested within the ISK - or were even looked down upon - such as the ability to dissimulate; to lead a double life; to make untrue statements; and to deny actions one had committed - was known to all. The requirement to be ready for such behaviour caused no moral scruples among the ISK membership, since they held it to be justified, or even compulsory, against a criminal regime. The question was, however, whether the personality structure and socialisation of the people who had felt themselves at home in the ISK, and had been formed by its ethical principles, made such behaviour even possible for them, even if they had been prepared for it. Perhaps surprisingly, this question can be answered in the affirmative, in the majority of cases. There were also people in the

ISK, however, who knew beforehand that they could not respond to the demands of conspiratorial work. Thus, a longtime teacher from the Walkemühle, who had been among the earliest members of the Youth group, explained that she was incapable of lying in such a way that this would not be immediately recognised, and that she therefore would not take part in the illegal work. These resolutions and motives were respected, and the personal relations between her and her comrades remained unaffected.

The ISK's participation in the resistance of the workers' movement was high in relation to the small number of its members; and its groups were able to escape the clutches of the Gestapo for longer than most others. The relationship of trust and mutual willingness to help one another among the members of this closed organisation, as well as the strict discipline practised in the ISK, made good prerequisites for illegal work. Although those who took part in it lived in constant anxiety, they never considered ceasing it, for this work gave meaning to their lives.¹⁷

During this period of illegality, the discussions in the tradition of the ISK led by Grete Hermann (Henry-Hermann), the onetime assistant of Leonard Nelson and after his death co-editor of his works, and others, contributed to an understanding of the meaning of the resistance. Grete Henry-Hermann wrote about them as follows:

We experienced that courage and readiness for resistance can be strengthened by intellectual clarification of values involved therein, and we therefore built this effort into the preparations for illegal work. Thus, until the year 1937, when arrests by the Gestapo made such meetings impossible, I travelled to the various cities in which our friends were carrying out their illegal work, and while I did not take part in this work, I held philosophical classes with them on the question: What is resistance against Fascism all about? Why are we taking part? What is it we are trying to defend?¹⁸

On the evolution of these philosophical courses, Grete Hermann emitted the following judgment:

They went deeper, and were more alive, than any other educational work which I have led in my life.¹⁹

Courses in which philosophical questions and resistance work were discussed were also given by people who actively participated in such work; for

instance, Erna Blencke - who took over the leadership of illegal work in Germany after Eberhard fled abroad - Hans Lehnert, Richard Bauersachs, Julius Philippson.

In the ISK's resistance work, as in the workers' movement generally, the only means used was the word - written, spoken, or whispered - to declare their point of view, and to provide political enlightenment. The 'illegals' of the ISK did not believe they would be able to topple the NS regime. Their goal was, by means of visible signs of opposition against the Nazi state, to strengthen and give courage to all those who doubted it. They thus wanted to create a new cohesion among opponents of the Nazis, whose front they could hope to widen in the future. Yet the internal and especially external political successes of the Nazi state provided Hitler with a growing number of followers, and his opponents became, to an ever greater extent, victims of the ever-tightening net of terror. The illegal work of the ISK, too, came to a halt in 1937-38. By this time, most of the ISK members who took an active part in the Resistance had ended up in jail, in prison, or in concentration camps, insofar as they had not succeeded in avoiding the threat of arrest by fleeing abroad or going underground within Germany. Contact between those ISK members who were at liberty or had been released from jail nevertheless remained in existence throughout the whole Nazi period.

Contact between the ISK leadership in exile in Paris, who had developed active publicity there, and the 'illegals' in Germany was very close, and had become indispensable for the work of both sides. After the wave of arrests in Germany, this contact was almost completely interrupted. The occupation of France then made the German refugees once more into objects of persecution by the Nazi power. Most of the ISK members in France were able, with the help of comrades, to flee to the United States or Switzerland. Just before the war, a few made it to England.

Lines of Continuity in the Reception of Nelson's Philosophy

The group of ISK exiles in London, where, amongst others, many of the leading members - Willi Eichler, Fritz Eberhard, Minna Specht, Grete Henry-Hermann - had found refuge, applied

themselves during the Second World War to ensure the continued existence of the organisation, and to preparing their members for the tasks that would await Socialists in a Germany freed from the Nazis. The ISK's future-oriented perspective, like that of most exiled German Socialists, was determined by the conviction that there was 'another Germany', embodied by people who had held on fast to the values of Humanity. German resistance against Hitler's regime, and the lives which it had cost, were for the exiled Socialists the strongest argument for refuting the thesis of the 'collective guilt' of the German people, the consequences of which it held to be dangerous as far as post-war politics were concerned. In the effort to work out new concepts for the future of Germany, the groups of German Socialists met in London, and in 1941 joined together as a 'Union'. Their only collaboration with the Communists was within an association of German Unionists in Britain. The ideological and political differences, which during the Weimar Republic had kept the individual Socialist groups separated from one another and from the 'Mother Party', the SPD, gradually disappeared within the 'Union'. The community of ideas of resistance to the Nazi dictatorship and the notions on the future structure of Germany won the day.

After the end of the war, the ISK dissolved, and most of its members joined the SPD. Many of them took up positions within this party, in the unions, and in other institutions of public life. Willi Eichler, who had been a member of the guiding committee of the SPD since 1946, was named president of the commission which worked out a sketch of the Godesberger Program. In a fitting characterisation of the influence which Nelson's philosophy, through the intermediary of his students - in particular Eichler - had upon this Program, it has been said:

The only thing that was supposed to be fixed were the content aspects of the basic values. He (Eichler) was clearly aware that for the realisation of socialist society the foundations of its principles are less important than their authority and their transposition into practice.²⁰

It had also been a question of the authority and transposition of principles and values within the wide spectrum of anti-Nazi resistance, however differently these may have been grounded. The Critical Philosophy, which Nelson developed into

the philosophy of the ISK, proposed rational justifications. Yet most of the members who took part in the political life of the Weimar Republic and then the Resistance never reached the point of travelling the scientific path to these justifications, and subjecting them to verification. They saw the meaning of Nelson's philosophy in its urgent insistence on commitment to praxis led by reason and morality. The politically active believers in this philosophy did precisely this in their resistance against the Nazis, and also in their later activity.

NOTES

¹ The document was in the Document Center at Berlin; it later came into the possession of A. Dehms, who died Sept. 20, 1979. The author was able to see it after his death at the home of Mrs. Lore Dehms in Berlin.

² 'Alexander Dehms, Leonard Nelson und die Walkemühle', in M. Specht and W. Eichler, eds., *Leonard Nelson zum Gedächtnis*, pp. 265-269.

³ For more details, see W. Link, *Die Geschichte*; K.-H. Klär, *Zwei Nelson-Bünde*.

⁴ Trude Wiechert, 'Leonard Nelson als Pädagoge', *Jungsozialistische Blätter*, Heft 12 (1927), p. 2811.

⁵ See Grete Henry-Hermann, ed., *Leonard Nelson, Vom Selbstvertrauen*, p. 135.

⁶ Cf. H.-J. Heydorn, ed., *Leonard Nelson*, p. 206. On the context, see Heydorn's excellent Introduction, *ibid.* pp. 32ff.

⁷ Cf. the categorisation by professions in W. Link, *Die Geschichte*, p. 143.

⁸ Nelson, in 'System der philosophischen Rechtslehre und Politik', *Ges. Schriften*, vol. VI, p. 246. Cf. the critique of Nelson's judgments on democracy and on the Leadership Principle which he defended in Gustav Heckmann's 'Foreword to Nelson', *Ges. Schriften*, pp. XIIIff., as well as in Arnold Gysin's Foreword to Vol. IX of Nelson, *Ges. Schriften*, p. XVf.

⁹ Nelson, 'Demokratie und Führerschaft', *Ges. Schriften*, vol. IX, p. 413f.

¹⁰ Foreword to W. Link, *Die Geschichte* (unpaginated).

¹¹ The contents of the contributions are given by W. Link, *Die Geschichte*, p. 128ff. Cf. Helga Grebing, 'Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus', in Wolfgang Luthardt, ed., *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung und Weimarer Republik*, 2 vols., Frankfurt: Edition Suhrkamp, 1978, pp. 259-379.

¹² W. Link, *Die Geschichte*, p. 144.

¹³ Cf. W. Link, *Die Geschichte*, pp. 146ff., Suzanne Miller, 'Gustav Heckmann als Redakteur der Tageszeitung "Der Funke"', in D. Horster-D. Krohn,

eds., *Vernunft*, pp. 89-98; M. Saran, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 77-86.

¹⁴ Cf. Horster/Krohn, eds., *Vernunft*, p. 351 f. (facsimile of the *Urgent Appeal*).

¹⁵ Reported by Ludwig Gehm in a conversation on Second German Television, January 27, 1983: "Ludwig Gehm: A German Resistance Fighter". Gehm was leader of the ISK resistance work in the Frankfurt region. In 1937, he was arrested and condemned to two years of prison. He then went to concentration camp Buchwald, and finally to Penal Battalion 999.

¹⁶ W. Link, *Die Geschichte*, p.177.

¹⁷ Reported by Ludwig Gehm (see n. 16).

¹⁸ Grete Henry-Hermann in the rough version of an unpublished essay, a copy of which is in the author's possession.

¹⁹ Letter from Grete Henry-Hermann to Birgit Nielsen of Holte, Denmark, March 17, 1981.

²⁰ Thomas Meyer, 'Die Aktualität Leonard Nelsons', in Horster/Krohn, eds., p.53.

German Sources of Dr Miller's paper

The paper has been published at the following German sources. For complete bibliographical information of the publications mentioned in the notes see the reprint in Sabine Lemke-Müller below. (Ed)

Miller, S., (1983) 'Kritische Philosophie als Herausforderung zum Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus'. In: Hans-Heinz Holzer & Hansjörg Sandkühler (eds) *Antifaschismus oder Niederlagen beweisen nichts, als dass wir wenige sind*. Cologne: Paul-Rugenstein-Verlag, 53-67.

(i) Reprinted in: Hans-Heinz Holzer & Hansjörg Sandkühler (eds) (1995) *Sozialdemokratie als Lebenssinn: Aufsätze zur Geschichte und Gegenwart der SPD zum 80. Geburtstag von Bernd Faulenbach*. Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachfolger, 230-245.

(ii) Lemke-Müller, Sabine, (ed) (1996) *Ethik des Widerstands: Der Kampf des Internationalen Sozialistischen Kampfbundes (ISK) gegen den Nationalsozialismus*. Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachfolger, 32-45.

WOMAN IN A MAN'S WORLD

Extract from HIATUS: Under the Sign of Sickness, in the Name of Health
by Nermina Kurspahic, Sarajevo : Zid, 1994

Essay translated for The Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy
by Celia Hawkesworth

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December 1999

Ah, these women

Futurologists believe that an 'era of women' will soon arrive. In their view, this should bring peace to the planet Earth, exhausted by millennia of destruction and devastation according to male scenarios. Of course, prophecies about a change in the state of the planet, but in a female way, are based on assumptions that the 'psychology of woman' is different from that of men, and therefore a world ordered according to her principles ought to be different. Jung's scientifically based distinction between the existence of two archetypes in mankind, the (male) *animus*, and the (female) *anima*, set up a chain reaction in a whole series of disciplines. And although this category of Jung's originated in human, male, wholeness, it did significantly point the way to investigating (more thoroughly) the particularities of female individuality and the removal of many clichés about it.

'The female way of being has been manifested in human history in various archetypal forms, that is in repeated clusters of assumptions and models of behaviour which are connected with specific dominant types of the female.'¹ These dominant types (such as Mother, Hetaera, Amazon, Woman) determine all, or almost all the commonest assumptions about women and thus dictate their position and function in society.

One of the commonest, virtually universal, clichés, is that emphasis on female qualities entails sacrificing the intellect. At the same time, the concept of 'femininity' acquires pejorative connotations, which automatically degrade those who bear them, and favour the intellect as a male principle and property per se. History records negations of such beliefs, but they are rarely accepted by the human consciousness. One witty commentary, but not a tendentious one, was Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*.

And, while art concerns itself with women, sporadically, sometimes in a malicious and tendentious way, the fact is that women themselves concern themselves with art, and very successfully at that. Not as just an appendage, but as its integral part. And from such a position, they then articulate their artistic discourse.

Many believe that a 'woman's era' will come and that it will lead to qualitatively different relations in the world. Perhaps. It is hard to tell. But it is certain that everything, good and bad, past times (both matriarchal and patriarchal and more contemporary variants of existence), all have to be incorporated into a potential new world. If not, if one world view, however female, were to become dominant, and inimical to everything else, chaos would ensue again. (But everything began with chaos. Some would say, must it be so again?)

Elisabeth Badinter is far more precise (and optimistic). In her book *Man/Woman. The One is the Other*, she concludes, at the outset: 'Their respective attributes - for so long defined by the "nature" of each sex - are becoming more and more difficult to distinguish. Their relations no longer have the same bases, and are following different paths from those laid down by their forefathers. The criteria are disintegrating as they multiply, and we are beginning to lose our bearings . . .'²

Women and War - in a pattern of archetypes

Many serious theoreticians (such as Nicole Loroux, Elisabeth Badinter, Pauline Schmitt-Pantel) believe that the mere fact of giving birth is one form of 'war' - the struggle for life. And although biology allotted the female physical discomfort, especially in the act of creation of a new life - and all monotheistic religions later adopted this into their dogma - it can nevertheless be affirmed quite categorically that war is incompatible with the

female psyche. While there is some speculation about the historical existence of gynocratic communities, J. J. Bachofen maintains that they did indeed exist and had no experience of violence. Moreover, the matriarchy which this author calls the 'poetry of humanity' was founded on the values of 'love, communality, respect for the integrity of living creatures' (human and animal). On the basis of incidental data (Plutarch), but also according to myth and the findings of contemporary anthropologists (C. Levi-Strauss, M. Eliade), it can be said that the only form of violence known in societies organised on 'female principles', was that provoked by groups of armed women known as Amazons or Sabines. However, all that is known about them are legends, and such legends are often the projections of a quite un-objective (patriarchal) outlook on life.

While people may have different views of individual aspects of female existence, almost all those concerned with such topics consider war (and hunting) to be pre-eminently male activities. More precisely, they are seen as the most extreme expression of the patriarchal consciousness. There is no doubt that contemporary Western civilisation, like those of earlier times, is essentially patriarchal. Of course, different degrees of emancipation in individual social communities mean that the attributes of patriarchalism are not equally 'distributed' in them. Many contemporary societies are currently overcoming elements of the manifestation of patriarchy, while some are still living in the deep shadow of recent trends. One of the most striking examples of isolation from emancipatory developments is the territory of the central Balkans, which lives in deep shade in comparison to the 'sunny' processes of liberation elsewhere in the world. Patriarchy, which some serious modern scholars consider to be not only the oldest but in fact the only form of organisation of *homo sapiens* (matriarchy is excluded from this scheme, or else its appearances are given ephemeral, subsidiary significance and status), has dictated all aspects of the behaviour of living beings (human and animal). In the patriarchal structure the male is at the top of the ladder, with all the attributes of lord of the planet Earth. The domination of the male was accomplished over the centuries by many different means, including aggression, and above all war. In all areas of human thought war has been recognised and identified as a male category. And in keeping, presumably, with the accepted cliché that the male outlook implies systematic, logical thought, reason, intellect, all forms of its expression are permitted, indeed encouraged, to possess their own logic, their own set of values. And as one of these

beliefs, war is presented as a sensible, useful and logical activity.

In the patriarchal system of values, war is usually seen as an act approved by God. According to Elisabeth Badinter, the dictatorships in European countries between the two world wars (Germany, Italy, Spain, USSR) 'were so many deliberate attempts to reinforce patriarchy'.³ One way to achieve that (reinforcement of the influence and domination of male principles) is through war. War is perhaps the simplest, and to the patriarchal consciousness the archetypal means of self-affirmation, realisation of hegemony. To put it simply, war is based on force, power, categories through which man has proved his superiority, as a biological and social being, in relation to all others and particularly women. That is why war represents more than a game, and the rules which were respected especially in chivalric times (some persistent patriarchs endeavour to extend these into the present day), are not necessary, nor do they oblige the actors in war to respect them. In its 'realisation', war is anarchy, chaos, against which, paradoxically, the patriarchally ordered world struggles. That world has defined anarchy and chaos as female characteristics, and consequently endeavoured to overcome them in its organisation. And, in that sense, war is offered as a means of overcoming the conditions which are perceived as female (disorder, lack of discipline). By contrast, war, with all its tragedy and the instrument of that most male and most patriarchal institution - the army - is conceived as a set of strict rules (a euphemism) which are to replace those that existed up to then. And they are usually projected as a direct threat to male values.

The antagonism between male and female beings and their principles has existed for millennia and has only sometimes been subdued, or apparently ended. The relationship between the male and female world is often referred to as the 'war of the sexes', but it has in fact been based, at least up to now, on an endeavour to extend and deepen the domination of the male over the female. Consequently civilisation to date records the periodic attack of the male worldview against all that is not subordinate to it. Everything that deviates from the scheme of the patriarchal is exposed to such attack and although patriarchy does not include either the essence or all visible manifestations of the male, it has nevertheless imposed itself as the only representative and interpreter of (all) its (male) characteristics.

Patriarchy has not manifested animosity only towards women who do not conform to its dictates,

but also to those men who do not satisfy the criteria of male supremacy. Hans Mayer has called those anathemized by patriarchy 'outsiders', and identifies them as above all women, then Jews and homosexuals.

The ideal of the patriarchal consciousness is the tribal community, strictly hierarchical, at the head of which is a healthy male (white, if possible) capable of fulfilling all his biological and social functions. All those weaker than him (physically above all) are subordinated to him and serve the promotion and maintenance of his principles. Every disturbance of the desired structure is condemned, and one means of doing this is through war.

War occurs when patriarchy is threatened, or feels sufficiently strong to endeavour by expansion to extend the spheres of its influence, or when one social community, strengthened in its 'most élite forms of expression' - the nation and the army - seeks through them to subjugate, to subordinate to themselves and their values all others, including women, or particularly women from, what is to them, the enemy camp. Then the most brutal methods are used (torture, rape, humiliation) in order to achieve those ends. Examples of the behaviour of Serbian, and Croatian soldiers towards women, for the most part Bosniaks, Muslims, in the war of the nineteen-nineties in Bosnia Herzegovina were drastic. Rape, which has been recorded in all wars up to now as an incidental phenomenon, appeared for the first time here as an organised, programmed and deliberate part of the plan of genocide, the annihilation of a people. It was possible, in the minds of the geniuses of evil, to carry out that annihilation by the physical annihilation of a people and their culture, and through the systematic rape of women, some of whom were in fact forced to conceive and to bear children, whose fathers were part of the aggressors' genocidal machinery. In the demonic conception of these rapes, all those who participated certainly had in mind also the fact of the cultural, ethical, aesthetic status of women in Bosnian and Herzegovinian society and the family. For that reason, the insistence of those who attacked Bosnia and Herzegovina that their soldiers should engage in mass rape fits the programme of the destruction of a people which must be, according to them, not only physical, but mental and spiritual.

Of course, theoreticians of war have systematised it into various aspects, forms, but in fact no one can negate its patriarchal background. War may be promoted as a series of rules, but once it has been

set in motion it displays all its bestiality and allows its participants to free themselves from all the inhibitions of civilisation and abandon themselves to atavism and all the inner currents of the unconscious. That is why in all relevant and humane accounts war is recognised as an inhuman, bestial assault. (These last sentences arranged in a logical syllogism produce the conclusion: patriarchy imposes and permits animalism, even if it is not itself bestial.)

The world of women, which has not expressed its attributes only in gynocratic communities, exists in opposition to the patriarchate and its values. But today there is no 'world of women' as a unified category. On the contrary, women are sometimes a firm part of the value system of patriarchal societies. What is more, they are sometimes instrumentalized. Again, the most drastic example in this sense is the behaviour of the majority of Serbian women (in both Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina), who supported the war and murder, and sent their sons and husbands joyfully to destroy others, and to prevent them from receiving food and water. For that reason it is inappropriate to claim that the attributes of women are universally valid and that they represent an unimpeachable standard of behaviour.

Historically, it has not been proved that female attributes have manifested themselves in the form in which Bachofen, for example, presents them. Nevertheless, many scholarly disciplines have established that difference in the female outlook, to which war and violence are completely alien and unacceptable. But, in war, as a typical product of paternalism, women are a very crucial factor - whether they are called up to fight, or 'treated' in a special way because they 'provide' descendants, future potential recruits. In the first case the century-long (erotic) male dream of the armed woman is realised.

The idea of the armed woman has not only been artistically stimulating, the desire to realise it has conditioned the direction of many ideologies and political programmes (Fascism, Nazism, Stalinism and Communism as a whole). In this sense many political programmes developed whole strategies in order to include (directly or indirectly) women and war. The greatest advance in that area was achieved in the Third Reich, but it also had considerable success in nationalistic Serbia. Remembered in history as a special kind of paroxysm and orgy of paternalism, the Nazi programme accorded a strict role to women, which they had to respect, or be subject to sanctions. In this scheme the woman was the model many-sided mother, obedient executive of all male desires, a

symbol which was always supposed to manifest its biological and social inferiority; but woman was portrayed and experienced also as a possible provocation to the strong (fascist or patriarchal) man.

'During this war, which marks a decisive turning point in the history of the West, manliness showed its ugliest - most murderous - face. In contrast to previous wars, death was not only dealt on the battlefields. It was organized, systematically and nationally, for the use of civilians who did not conform to the Nazi norms. (Prisoners of war were better treated than the civilians deported to the camps.) During this period of madness, none of the positive aspects of manliness could be expressed. Pity, respect for international agreements, and above all the protection of women and children, were excluded from this genocidal war. While it may be true that wars always constitute parentheses in the observation of the Rights of Man, Europe had never known such a betrayal of the ideals she had been establishing for two centuries. By shattering the concept of humanity, the war waged by the Nazis provoked a genuine horror of all the "values" in whose name it had been fought. When the survivors were able to assess the full extent of the human disaster, they turned against all ideas of racism or discrimination. Violence and the use of force were stigmatised as being Absolute Evil. Whether we like it or not, it was the archaic, manly values that people were thus putting in the dock.⁴

And really, the war experiences of Europe were so dramatic and bloody that people believed that war could never be repeated on that territory, especially in view of the degree of mass emancipation from male perceptions. All conflicts which flared up around the world were interpreted from a European perspective as the archaic and outmoded remnants of uncivilized nations and societies. But the conceit of such an attitude has been revealed, intermittently, several times, in post-war Europe. (On the whole the conflicts on the territory of Europe since the Second World War were ideological in origin and they were provoked and initiated by patriarchal states of communist orientation; from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, to the former East Germany.) The greatest surprise (for optimists) occurred at the end of the eighties, with the appearance of national-socialism in Serbia, when those verbal clashes developed into a real ideological-ethnic-religious war on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

The war brought into the open characteristics of a community whose apparently democratic nature

had deceived the world for decades. Before the eyes of the world, former Yugoslavia was exposed and revealed as a collection of antagonistic tribes with marked patriarchal characteristics. The dominance of the male (patriarchal) principle was never in fact questioned. It had only been concealed for a time, or rather it had adapted its activity to conditions of the absolute control of the *paterfamilias*, and was only by chance well-disposed to certain aspects of the emancipated consciousness. With nothing to control it, the unleashed energy of the Balkan patriarchs could focus only on destruction. With the help of that most patriarchal of formations - the army - an anti-civilisational putsch was carried out on the territory of the central Balkans with the aim of establishing the anachronistic, retrograde, archaic forms of an ancient past, in which the patriarchal consciousness felt most comfortable. For that reason its endeavours to return to, and even strengthen, the past were and remain unscrupulous, merciless and deceitful.

The status of woman in the patriarchal scheme of life is well-known. It is subordinate and marginalised. The degree of emancipation attained in the period of milder, socialist patriarchalism was seriously undermined in the onslaught of some of its pre-eminent characteristics (newly reinforced nationalism, chauvinism). And the nation, through which the male principle of patriarchalism is most strongly and clearly manifested is directly contrary to the endeavours of female liberation.

In the nineteen-nineties, large numbers of people were placed on the sacrificial altar of Balkan nationalism. Pride of place among them goes to women. Sometimes consciously, even at the cost of going against their nature, they allowed themselves to be instrumentalised in the nationalist war-game of men.

The effects of women's acceptance of male concepts are well-known and numerous; but in the conditions of the provocation, instigation and continuation of war they are dramatic and dangerous. Quite simply, it then becomes clear that extreme patriarchalism is vital, universal, indestructible, because it has overcome its one real (however weak) opponent: woman and her psyche.

In the psychology of rampant nationalists, or aroused patriarchs, to win over women to their cause means to neutralise potential dangers and strengthen their own position among those whom women can influence (husbands and children). This means at the same time that the recruitment of

ever more devotees of 'male fantasies' (nations, arms, wars) can be carried out without hindrance.

Many feminists have seen and experienced women as an almost coherent group, opposed or oppressed in the predominantly male world. However, the population of women is not homogeneous. Many elements influence the fact that some women, as individuals, endeavour to realise and affirm themselves (on a social, professional, human level) against their biological assumptions and limitations. There is nothing wrong with this, on the contrary. Problems occur when women, perhaps in a strong desire to enter the public arena (reserved in Balkan, patriarchal, society for men), work, whether unconsciously or not, in the interests of those who wish to marginalise them, to set them aside. So it happened on the territory of former Yugoslavia that many women, even prominent ones, have agitated publicly for the aims of the Balkan patriarchs.

First they accepted the catch-phrase that they were under threat (even sexually) because they belonged to a particular nation; in other words, they were the property of a tribe which was concerned for them, but which demanded their absolute submission. Contrary to all the laws of nature, some women agreed to force their own sons, fathers or husbands into war, and death. And at the same time they agreed to consider other mothers, those from a different tribe, or nation, as their enemies. The situation in the central Balkans in the nineteen-nineties developed into a real orgy of patriarchalism, abounding in various bizarre aspects. Meanwhile, by contrast, the civilized world believed in the arrival of a new era, an era of women, emancipated from their biological burdens (motherhood, subordination), but at the same time it placed its hopes in freeing men from the patriarchal, so that they could accept the best not only in women, but also in themselves.

Quite unexpectedly, at the end of the twentieth century an 'incident' occurred in former Yugoslavia, which upset all scientifically founded assumptions about the future, rendered suspect many anthropological, cultural, sociological discoveries which suggested altered relationships in the world, and returned to concepts belonging to the past.

The phenomenon of women's participation in (men's) wars is well-known and has been artistically treated among the peoples of former Yugoslavia. In this connection the most familiar is the epic singing of the so-called 'Kosovo cycle'. Songs about the Maid of Kosovo, the Mother of

the Jugovici, and others, reflect an epic, heroic, world-view, in which woman is allocated a place and function. This is reduced to self-sacrifice, maternal 'generosity' in giving birth (to sons) for the 'righteous' armies in the battle against the enemy. There was similar propaganda directed at women during the Second World War, and still more after it. The poet Skender Kulenovic in his famous poem 'Stojanka, the Mother from Knezopolje' extolled the 'heroism' of the mother who does not weep for her sons who 'perished for liberty', but proclaims triumphantly that she would bear more sons and sacrifice them too. This poem is filled with superlatives (not only on the aesthetic level); what is praised above all is the mother's moral stance. And this dimension is in complete collusion with the patriarchal ideal of the need of woman to function as a reproductive machine, in order for the mechanisms of male communities to work unhindered.

In the nineteen-nineties the poem 'Stojanka, Mother from Knezopolje' was recited in many places in former Yugoslavia to many mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, with the aim of raising their morale and gaining their collaboration in the Balkan patriarchs' war. The effect of such propaganda meetings, and similar manifestations, was significant. Scenes of women hysterically supporting 'their side' (nation, army), and offering the lives of their children, husbands, fathers, and even sometimes their own, were not infrequent, but to all those observers who were not infected with the national-chauvinist lunacy they were repellant.

Numerous scholars and philosophers of former times were inclined to attribute anarchy, lawlessness, even destruction, to the 'female principle'. They were inclined to base this view on the fact that women were involved in black magic. But 'women's magic' in itself did not provoke catastrophes, drastic consequences (at least this has not been scientifically proven); although that is how its effect, in popular thinking, manipulated by men, was always presented. On the other hand, wars and similar men's games have obviously produced destruction, suffering and death, and there is abundant empirical evidence of this. For this reason, the collaboration of women and the interpretation of war as a necessity amounts to collaboration with death and destruction - in other words with all that is contrary to women's nature. Women who have linked themselves with the ideological basis of the war (as a patriarchal category par excellence), must in sober moments experience conflicts with such powerful physical and psychological disruption which must at the very least be traumatic. Something of this has

already been experienced by some female inhabitants of the former Yugoslavia - even those who did not agree to this particular kind of patriarchal manipulation, but still more those who participated in it directly or indirectly.

The battlefields of the war in the last decade of the twentieth century in former Yugoslavia abound in familiar, or as yet undiscovered atrocities of soldiers towards both women and their children. These loathsome crimes often surpass any artistic imagination.

As always, the victims of the war are particularly women - whether they agreed consciously, or were forced or dragged into the war games of the exalted patriarchs. In an irrational time such as war, where rational and logical thought is suppressed by rabble-rousing propaganda, it is hard for many, and particularly for women, to realise the extent to which they are being manipulated. But more peaceful times will, as always, bring analyses, interpretations of everything that has happened. As a consequence of what happened in former Yugoslavia at the end of the twentieth century, a large number of people, men and especially women will be traumatised, humiliated, wounded, or far more than that, by what they have witnessed, if not themselves experienced.

Meanwhile, on an international level, theoreticians such as Elisabeth Badinter for example, encouraged by trends in conditions of peace, believe that we are seeing a process of the mutation of mankind, in which the 'One' (man) is changing and becoming the 'Other' (woman). In truth she does also mention the pessimists' prognosis that war could upset this process. But she defends her stated thesis with the thought that in the era of nuclear weapons, when war is no longer waged on the basis of physical conflict, but by sophisticated technology, women also participate and that participation in war has become a moral decision.

The events of the last decade of the twentieth century in the Balkans dangerously threaten such optimistic assumptions. Some may imagine that this military regression is of limited effect - given that the war was waged on the territory of former Yugoslavia - but, judging by the evident readiness of all military formations in the world at least to participate in observing wars and separating the

fighters, there is little room for optimism or faith in the transformation of ingrained human habits.

NOTES

¹ Ann Belford Ulanov, 'Archetypes of the female', *Delo*, *op. cit.*, p. 14

² Badinter, *Man/Woman. The One is the Other*, London, 1989, p.xi

³ Badinter, *op. cit.*, p. 129

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131

THE ACTIVE SELF: BEYOND DUALISM

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ABSTRACT

What would follow if we should take seriously the view that the SELF (each one of ourselves) is primarily and fundamentally active; that people are in the first place and above all doers? Such a view could be consistent with empirical research (skill psychology, ergonomics, the study of stress) and other philosophical positions, such as Kant's primacy of the practical and Macmurray's concept of the SELF as Agent.

To begin with, the SELF thus conceived as active is less grandiose, less of an abstraction, than 'consciousness' whose current emphasis we believe is misplaced, or than the 'cognitive' side of the mind (the 'contemplative') which is also in vogue in psychology. By grounding such a view in the everyday conduct of ordinary people, we might have a better chance of effectively counteracting and avoiding Dualism which is now recognized to be a theoretical impasse but continues to have adverse consequences in practice. A number of empirically-substantiated conclusions follow from this concept of the fundamentally active SELF:

1. It can be shown that conduct in the real world is only made possible by constant use of the SELF as a reference point.
2. This unremitting, often unreflective, representation of oneself is bodily throughout.
3. The very nature of SELF-representation makes the active SELF the only source of certainty in a psychologically (if not physically) thoroughly uncertain world.
4. Its being active necessitates that all internal representations (mental models, etc.) are oriented towards the future and the conquest of chance. The active SELF is thus essentially a

predictor and an effector 'at a temporal distance' - it changes the world to fit its own purposes.

5. Empirical studies show that representations of 'value' are constantly involved in conduct at different levels of awareness. Feelings and emotions can be a non-verbal manifestation of such representations.

Finally, it follows that speculations must begin about the implications of this reasoning for ethical conduct in relation to the autonomy of the active SELF.

There was a time when mind was a four-letter word which one would neither use nor mention in good psychological company. Neither did people care very much about theory in those days - or, if they did, they kept quiet for fear of scientific ridicule. Things have changed a lot in the last twenty-odd years. The birth of 'the mind's new science' has been joyfully announced and rightly declared to be a joint venture of several disciplines ranging from neurophysiology to philosophy (Gardner, 1985). The black box of old behaviouristic lore now lays partially open under the name of cognition (alias internal representations, mental models, information processing, etc.) This whole development is welcome. Nonetheless the emphasis on cognition is somewhat misplaced. We think that it is time to take seriously the view that the mind, or rather - to avoid from the beginning a term which has such strong intimations of dualism - the SELF, i.e., each one of ourselves, is primarily and fundamentally active rather than primarily and fundamentally cognitive.

THE CONTEMPLATIVE BIAS

Some of you will immediately think that we've got it wrong. Any self-respecting cognitivist knows that cognition is an active process. No tabula rasa here, thank goodness. Whether internal representations are acceptable or not and which variety would be acceptable, whether one is for or against the reducibility of mental imagery to computations, whether functionalism is good enough or not, whether information has to be 'processed' or is rather 'afforded' by an appropriate environment - all this and much more is debated under the working assumption that perceiving and thinking is something people do and not something that just happens to them. The mind of cognitive psychology, and cognitive science in general, is clearly active, not passive.

But activity of this kind is just not good enough. When we say that the SELF is primarily and fundamentally active what we mean is rather that people are in the first place and above all doers. They do things and do not just know or perceive things. Think of Gibson's construct (Gibson, 1979). It is certainly more exciting than some other constructs offered up in the theoretical market, because it doesn't just sit there waiting for Nature or a cognitive psychologist to give it something to perceive. It does move around and by moving obtains from the environment all sorts of (perceptual) information. But it doesn't do anything else; it only moves in order to perceive; this seems its whole purpose in life. Now humans are not like

that (neither are animals for that matter, but we want to talk only about humans here.)

Let's get something clear. Our problem is not with theory as such. Although practical people have sometimes strong feelings against too much theorizing, this is not our position here, or at least not only that. Theorizing is fine, and we need it. The problem is that there is a deep-ingrained habit of theorists to set themselves up as models. Theorists are contemplators and they live a contemplative life. (This is, of course, a matter of degree.) Thus they are inclined to think of people as living a contemplative life, too; people are then modelled as perceivers or as 'believers' (cf. Dennett, 1987). But life, real life, ordinary life as we know it, is very different indeed. Those parts of psychology that are nearest to real life, like skill psychology, ergonomics, or the study of stress, invite us to think of the mind or the SELF in quite different terms. Of course, you may think that this is only natural and just a consequence of having to do with real people in real everyday situations; the peculiar interest in doers makes for bias. But it is not so easy. A similar bias, if bias it is, is forthcoming from other fields.

We first have the lessons of the neurophysiological labs, if one would only listen to them: even perception has been found to depend not only on movement (as with Gibson) but on active movement (see Jeannerod (1983) on Held's experiments). A 'motor' theory of mind has been urged against the 'sensory' ones common to behaviourism and cognitivism (Weimer, 1977). Then there is developmental psychology as cultivated by Piaget, who has, by the way, been saluted as one of the founding fathers of 'the mind's new science': according to him and his school of genetic epistemology intellectual operations develop out of sensori-motor action. And even philosophy, that most contemplative of disciplines, has champions of the active SELF both in the traditional (Kant, 1786; Macmurray 1962) and in the modern analytic vein (Ryle, 1949; Wittgenstein, 1953; 1969).¹

Although all this does not in itself prove anything, it nevertheless makes the proposal of an 'activistic' (rather than just 'cognitivistic') psychology more plausible or less farfetched than it would otherwise be. And this is enough for a start. Our question is then: what might be the features of the active SELF?

SELF REPRESENTATIONS AND DUALISM

G. E. Moore's defence of commonsense (1925) starts by expressing what would be according to him an absolutely certain proposition for even the most sceptical of philosophers: here is a hand, viz. Moore's own hand. Curiously enough, the evidence for the existence of his hand is for Moore the fact that he can see it before him, just as he can see the table or a pen before him. This might be commonsense, as expressed in common language. But it is clearly not good enough. What, for example, if Moore had been blind? In reporting an accident affecting his leg, Sacks (1984) has shown how the certainty of the existence of one's leg or hand wholly depends on action, on the ability to move it oneself and on receiving (non-visual) 'feedback' of having moved it. (Incidentally, this point is not only neurophysiologically sound but was also emphasized by Wittgenstein on purely theoretical grounds.) Given that all human activity and all exercise of skill would be impossible without the ability to use a part of one's own body as reference point, there must be interdependence between action and SELF-representation. As a matter of fact, a 'sense of SELF' (proprioception) is present in reflex movements as much as in spontaneous ones. And even at deeper levels, e.g., in the formation of antibodies and other 'autopoietic' activities, we find a strong connection between organismic activity and SELF-representation (cf. Maturana and Humberto/Varela, 1979).

Helmholtz asked: When I scan the environment with my eyes, how do I know that it is my eyes that move and not the environment? The (very much abridged) answer is: because it is me who moves the eyes. This is certainly true at the level of eye macromovements (cf. Jeannerod, 1983), but it may also be true even for Rapid Eye Movements (Branton, 1984). But this is the perception story all over again. Take posture instead. Maintaining upright posture, both in sitting and in standing, in a seemingly constant struggle against the forces of gravity, is a crucial SELF-activity which is absent in sleep and present in the waking state. In this kind of bodily activity we generate signals continuously which enable us to discriminate our SELF from any signals coming from other sources (Branton, 1987).

Let's try to envisage the consequences of this line of reasoning. The fact that SELF-representations, as present in human activity, are bodily throughout is, we think, one of the best arguments against body-mind dualism and as yet undervalued. Some people might reply that nobody (with the possible

exception of Sir John Eccles) really believes these days in body-mind dualism. But the dualism referred to in the title of this paper is not just old Cartesianism; we mean a very deep, and insidious, universal phenomenon, which wears many masks, such as theory v. practice, expert v. layperson, causal v. purposive explanation. Body-mind dualism is just the tip of a very large iceberg whose adverse consequences in practice are rendered possible because it is disguised in so many different ways. In fact, we suspect that the widespread bias in favour of cognition, and against action, what we call the contemplative bias, is also a kind of covert dualism. We shall briefly come back to dualism a little later on, but the limitations of space will prevent us from discussing the topic in all its complexity.

A CAVEAT ON CONSCIOUSNESS

Most representations of the active SELF are totally outside awareness.² A little introspection confirms that, like many other common activities, postural control goes on usually outside SELF-awareness or full consciousness. Purposes are also like icebergs - they are only sometimes consciously pursued, and even then they have vast submerged parts which we fail to notice because we take so much in ordinary life for granted. It is certainly difficult for skilled operators doing complex jobs to express what they do precisely, in words. Experts in ergonomic job analysis using verbal protocols which rely on operators' literal on-the-spot linear descriptions of their activities have found this, to their disappointment. Such skilled and sophisticated processes carried on outside full awareness continue to slip the cognitive grasp of the expert systems analyst who would dearly love to get it all down on paper for modelling by computer later. As Polanyi (1958) observed, only 10% is verbalisable (linguistically code-able) and the rest is 'tacit' knowledge - or plain old ordinary real-world knowledge; knowing how as opposed to knowing that.³

Nobody can say, of course, that there is any SELF-representation which is not eventually amenable to awareness. The experience, on the one hand, of neurological patients with grave motor lesions who have been able to move their limbs with the help of conscious perception, and the existence, on the other hand, of techniques such as yoga or biofeedback should make us wary of any such generalization. But the point is that SELF-representations are normally unconscious and that the free flow, the grace and the effectiveness of human movement and skill depend on this feature.

Why do actions need to be immediately accessible to full consciousness? In a high-speed world of technology, with so much and so many on the move, there certainly isn't time for that. Full awareness seems only to come into force when something goes wrong ('this damned ship doesn't appear to be going round fast enough!') - and is abandoned immediately after making the appropriate corrections. Or something goes wrong because consciousness comes into play (e.g., tripping over yourself when thinking about your foot and leg movements when climbing stairs). These facts need special emphasizing, because it has become quite fashionable to talk of 'consciousness' in a way which suggests that it is, so to speak, the mark of the mind. Why has consciousness, like cognition, come to enjoy such an inflated role in modern theorising about minds? We suspect it is a direct consequence of the contemplative bias.⁴

CERTAINTY, CONTROL, AND DUALISM AGAIN

Let us now turn to certainty, which is also widely confused with consciousness. It is fashionable to talk about quantum physics and quantum uncertainty and the role these might play in an understanding of the mind/brain (Penrose, 1989; Lockwood, 1989). We are not interested in that, but in a concept of uncertainty which is of direct psychological relevance. The world is inherently uncertain in the sense that it is impossible to predict what is going to happen when, or rather it remains uncertain as long as people don't do anything. For it is through active human work that the world becomes less uncertain. Human beings introduce (some) certainty into the world through what they do. The reason why we can drive with a great amount of certainty is that we have built good roads and good cars, and drivers tend to follow the Highway Code. Whoever has been in a Third World country knows how uncertain driving can be. Despite ongoing and future reductions in uncertainty, there is always some left, however. You suddenly hear a knock on your door which you did not predict.

The important part of this is the fact that whatever certainty we may achieve is based on our own activity, on what we ourselves do. For only what we ourselves do is (for us) certain. The active SELF is above all a source of certainty; it produces certainty. This certainty has no necessary connection to consciousness. It may be totally outside immediate awareness. Of course, certainty can also be accompanied by asking people about

their decisions, or their dreams, and so on; but it does not depend on it. Moreover, sometimes awareness emerges as soon as certainty disappears, e.g., when Sacks 'lost contact' with his own leg.

Another important consequence is that certainty underlies control, and this opens up a new dimension. In the developed world, society's response to dealing with complexity has been to specialize. Technical experts have proliferated, and there has been an ever-increasing 'division of labour'. But there is a downside to expertise; for one thing, it can foster alienation and dependency in the layperson, who may, as a result, feel helpless, stressed and in danger of losing control. This is sometimes the case even for those individuals at the control-room interface, who have little or no say in the design and management of the system in which they play such an important role - and yet they carry immediate responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They can be taken beyond their limits when the technology demands more of them than is within their natural capabilities - when they have less than full control. Impaired ability to anticipate possible errors and intervene in the process in time can be a source of stress, especially when the operators know they carry responsibility for other people. Between midnight and 3 a.m. is not a good time, for example, to travel by long-distance coach, to perform surgical operations, or to run experiments in a nuclear power plant.

Here is a dualism of controllers and controlled. Operators of powerful process plants (and powerful missiles) may feel stressed the more remote they become from the direct control of that plant, as more and more instrumentation and automation is interposed between themselves (in theory the 'controllers') and the potentially dangerous object which is supposed to be under their control. The plant designers, the experts, do not carry the daily hands-on responsibility at the interface, which is actually vested in the operators who may have strictly limited discretion.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Another feature of the active SELF is that it is always oriented towards the future. This has been shown to be the case in ergonomic research. A very good example is the train driver (Branton, 1978; 1979). Being in control of what amounts to a very heavy and very fast missile whose stopping time covers several miles, the train driver has to take decisions well in advance of the future state of the train. There is no actual perception (as in car driving) of the approximate spot where the train is

going to be; nonetheless the train driver's performance is very exact both in space and in time.

Another suitable example is that of piloting a supertanker. A supertanker can be as wide as an 8-lane motorway and over a quarter of a mile in length. Fully-laden it can draw 60 feet of water, and in some of our waterways there may be as little as 6 ins. maximum underkeel clearance in the deep-dredged channel up to the berth. Sudden power failure impairing steering control is an emergency. A ship of these dimensions has 'slow-speed' dynamics, and it could theoretically cover up to 2.5 nautical miles before coming to a stop, even when 'braked' at full engine-astern speed. Damage to ship and shore installations in a collision could be very costly, and there may also be grave pollution risks. These ships present special stress and control problems in berthing and manoeuvring, and under difficult conditions of dock layout and weather the supertanker pilot may be operating at the limits of human skill. The equations of motion for these ships are far from fully understood (Shiple, 1979). The pilot has to think and plan well ahead, and, sometimes, 'hope for the best'.

A third example comes from phonetics. A process which appears in practically all languages is assimilation. This process occurs when a sound changes one (or several) of its features depending on which other sound is pronounced afterwards. Compare 'intolerable' with 'impossible'. In the analysis of these two words, you have to account for the fact that the negative morpheme (the prefix in-, im-) contains either an n or an m. For reasons which it would take too long to explain, the correct analysis is that the underlying form in- (with an alveolar nasal stop) changes to im- (with a labial nasal stop), i.e., it 'assimilates', when it occurs before a labial stop (like the p in impossible). Speakers of English anticipate the labial feature of the sound that is going to be pronounced next and change the preceding one accordingly. Assimilation in this extreme form is recognized by linguists to be only the tip of the iceberg. The fact is that similar anticipations occur all the time, and modern technology allows us now to take a moving picture of the movements of the tongue and other articulatory body-parts, or to analyze the spectrograms of the human voice, and it is clear that these body-parts are always doing two or even more things: whilst performing the present articulation, they are at the same time initiating the next articulatory movement, and sometimes the next after the next or even further forward. What is more, this is all done normally outside conscious awareness.

Branton (1987) has proposed that this 'living and acting ahead' is the normal condition of the SELF, even though only in extreme cases such as train driving can it be shown irrefutably. We used to think of the muscles as spatial distance effectors; but they are, according to Branton, just as much effectors 'at a temporal distance'. The SELF is, to use his own phrase, 'always conquering the future'. The evidence seems to point in this direction. This could be the most profound mark of mental life, more important than the 'present of consciousness' which is a rather superficial phenomenon.

PURPOSES, EMOTIONS, VALUES AND ETHICS

We now turn to a series of concepts which more than anything else we have thus far mentioned will provoke a defensive reaction. First of all, the very concept of a purpose. In order for the above-discussed conquest of the future to be able to take place, the SELF has to have purposes of its own. A purpose is above all a representation of what has to be. This, of course, is teleology, something that is now almost universally rejected in the intellectual world. But if the SELF is at all like what we have tried to sketch, it has to be purposive. We would like to insist that the purposes we have in mind are not the purposes of Nature; that kind of teleology we reject as firmly as anyone. If Nature (or God) has any purposes of her own, we don't know them; they are forever beyond us. What we propose is only that humans have purposes, and that only by having them can humans do what they do. No psychology can ignore purposes if it wants to take the active SELF seriously. There is actually a very strange situation here. Many psychologists, especially those working in the practical and 'applied' parts of the discipline, talk of purposes in a natural way. On the other hand, mainstream psychological theory abhors such talk. Attempts at discrediting purposes, or at reducing them to causes, abound, both by diehard behaviourists and by cognitivists (Dennett, 1987; for an even more recent discussion see Montefiore & Noble, 1989). But individual purpose has been shown empirically (Powers, 1978). The rejection of purposes is based on several mistakes, foremost among which is, again, the contemplative bias, which consists in assuming the observer's and not the actor's point of view. It is the contemplative bias which has so far prevented purpose from becoming a basic concept of scientific psychology.⁵

But purposes are not enough for the active SELF. We contend further that purposes include representations of 'value' to explain choice, and

why we are interested in one purpose rather than another (such as the safety of passengers where this conflicts with the time-efficiency of the system). Such representations are constantly involved in conduct at different levels of awareness. Thus feelings and emotions can be a non-verbal manifestation of a person's values; for example, when feelings of being stressed accompany the awareness at some level that the achievement, or maintenance, of a particular personal goal (purpose) is under threat, especially where failure is expected to have important consequences. Emotions can only emerge - as befits an active SELF - from direct, specific interactive experiences and not from scanning the environment in search of an appropriate object (Mandler, 1985).

Among those values, the moral or ethical ones loom large. Philosophers have recently begun to see ethics as a joint enterprise of several disciplines, and applied scientists (such as doctors and psychologists) are forced by the nature of their work to think about ethical issues (Toulmin, 1982). Thinking along the lines suggested above may be a start in the psychological study of ethical reasoning. It will necessarily involve speculation, but speculation will be sound so long as it is also empirically grounded. But we believe that the partnership between speculation and empirical study can only be fruitful if guided by a sound theory of the SELF as active. Most relevant in this respect, as some of the things we have been saying already suggest, is the study of stress (cf. Branton & Shipley, 1986). Although an action, a decision even, does not have to be a conscious one, it can be extremely stressful if you 'know' (at some level) that you lack sufficient control for a decision to be made comfortably where the consequences of failure are likely to be dire. The stressful image of the Air Traffic Control (ATC) job has now assumed a myth-like quality. But there are grains of truth in it. Studying their acts alone will not reveal this. We may still have to ask the operators themselves what it all feels like and be prepared to glean insights from the kind of language they use, among other things. For, although, as we said, little is indeed verbalisable at the level of skills, there are lots of analogies and metaphors going on in common speech which can be more illuminating than literal protocols. For example, the analogy of a house of cards (a pyramid of playing cards) has been used to describe the controller's mental modelling. It is the sudden contingency, the unexpected event, like an unplanned aircraft arriving in the sector, which can be that one card too many that leads to the whole pack collapsing. It is the picture, mental model or representation itself which collapses.

Like other stressful jobs, ATC has its own stress vocabulary. Controllers fear 'losing the picture', 'losing my scan'. What, after all, do the blips on the radar screen mean to the controller? The picture is de-coupled from reality; it is artificial and objectified. The picture on it is not even 3D; vertical separation of aircraft is left to the controller's imagination. The active SELF may not be aware of what it is actually doing or even of what it is capable of doing, it may be easily reduced to making up stories, to babbling or to downright silence if it tries to verbalize, artificially as it were, its activities and skills; it may grow eloquent, in its own metaphorical way, after a dangerous and stressful event has passed; and again, it may 'freeze' both verbally and bodily when lack of control coupled with a sense of responsibility (that marvellous quality we all seem to take for granted) makes it panic - the active SELVES of this world get strokes, suffer acute pain, and can become chronically ill or actually die in the pursuit of their jobs.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To sum up: we have tried to show that if the SELF (or in misleadingly dualistic parlance, the mind) is primarily and fundamentally active, then it can be empirically substantiated that the SELF (the mind) must possess several basic features. Most important among them are: it constantly uses SELF-representations of a largely unconscious and unreflective nature; it is the only source of psychological certainty; it lives in the more or less immediate future (although of course capable of long-term planning); it is purposive; and it has values, especially moral values, which direct its activities.

One concept which will have to be reviewed next is the old philosophical notion of autonomy. We don't mean just the biological autonomy claimed by some physiologists (e.g., Varela, 1979), but real ethical autonomy, i.e., (to use traditional idiom) the ability of people to set and follow their own aims and purposes. If such a notion can be made plausible, then an active SELF should be an autonomous SELF. A theory of the active SELF is in the best sense of the word a task for the future. We plan to develop our thoughts on this theme in a companion paper.

Let us finish here with a rhetorical question on the dualistic theme we considered earlier, and contrast the responsible practical agent passionately committed to the job with the Cartesian detached observer - the dispassionate expert. Both often go

about their activities unquestioningly. An unintended consequence of taking the observer's position in psychology may be unethical practice. Is the subject under observation, for example, a person to be cared about, co-operated with, and whose purposes are respected; or an object to be probed or manipulated to suit only the purposes of experts who behave as though they are detached from the world and carry no responsibility for it and in it?

NOTES

¹ Even philosophy of science has been coming round to a re-evaluation of the experiment, of scientists (as agents doing things with their hands and not only in their heads), and of the importance of intervening as opposed to representing (cf. Hacking, 1983; Gooding, 1990). As to traditional philosophy, a recent article by Christine Korsgaard (1989) has shown the fruitfulness of Kant's primacy of practice for contemporary debates in analytical philosophy; her rebuttal of Parfit's personal identity arguments seems to us quite on the right track.

² In fact, it is now widely accepted that cognition is also largely unconscious, but it took time to get there.

³ Ryle's longtime neglected distinction has become fashionable in recent times, especially in 'connectionist' circles. This is a welcome development, although we have the impression that people working in this area are, like Ryle, too much preoccupied with the knowing how which is embodied in thinking; i.e., in cognitive practices such as calculating, and not in real complex activities which may involve cognition in that sense but certainly cannot be reduced to it (cf. Bechtel & Abrahamsen, 1991).

⁴ If our argument holds, then the importance attributed to Libet's experiments has been greatly exaggerated. Apart from objections to the design of the experiments, as voiced in some of the peer commentaries to Libet's target article published in *Brain and Behavioural Sciences* (Vol. 8, No. 4, Dec. 1985), Danto's philosophical objection that a voluntary action, and even a decision, does not have to be conscious, is well taken (*ibid.*, pp.560-1). But a discussion of all this would take us too far. The awe-inspiring ambiguity of the word 'consciousness' (and its opposite) plays havoc with all discussions of the topic. To give two very condensed examples; all human activity is necessarily sentient, but not necessarily aware, and the fact that it is not aware does not mean that it is automatic as opposed to spontaneous, as the much neglected work of Duker (1983) has tried to show. On the other hand, ambiguity doesn't imply unrelatedness. Consciousness is a many-sided phenomenon, and a recent attempt to look at it in this way is very promising (Baars, 1988).

⁵ In this context we want to point to a recent book (Rosenbrock, 1990) which presents a complex argument

to prove that causal and purposive explanations are mathematically equivalent. We agree with the author that the current prejudice in favour of causality (usually called 'mechanism' in psychological contexts) has enormous practical consequences, and that designing technology in the purposive mode might alleviate much human misery.

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PIERRE HADOT ON ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE

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Michael Chase

I

A series of recent publications has made the thought of the Parisian scholar Pierre Hadot better known in the English-speaking world. This paper will discuss, in particular, Hadot's thesis that ancient Greek and Roman philosophy was a way of life. Since one of the points Hadot has emphasised is that extensive knowledge of an author's socio-historical background is essential for full understanding of any literary or philosophical work, I shall begin with a few words about the current French intellectual scene.

Before I talk about Pierre Hadot and his views on philosophy, it might be wise for me briefly to set the Parisian intellectual scene as a background, in case some of you may not be familiar with its Byzantine complexity.

French Academia is basically designed as a pyramid. At the bottom we have the Universities; for instance the eleven branches of the Université de Paris. Here tuition is free and staff are underpaid, classrooms are overcrowded and the toilets are periodically trashed with sledge-hammers by Leftists or Rightist extremists, whom it is hard for the uninitiated to distinguish. Working conditions in the libraries of the "Facs", as they are called, approximate those of Belsen or Dachau: besides being cold, ill-lit and dirty, their libraries' usefulness is rather limited by the fact that they have no books.

At the top of this pyramid are a series of establishments called Les Grandes Écoles, with names like Polytechnique and the École Normale Supérieure. These are where the French élite is schooled: almost all French presidents and corporate Chief Executives have studied at one of the Grandes Écoles. Entry is by nationwide open competition, and many parents structure their lives around getting their children into such places, moving, for instance, to neighbourhoods where the elementary schools have a good success rate on the entrance exams. The École Normale Supérieure,

located on the Left Bank, behind the Pantheon on the Rue d'Ulm, has since its foundation in the French Revolution been the Parisian hotbed for philosophers: Sartre and De Beauvoir were classmates there; Foucault both studied and taught there, as did Derrida and Deleuze.

Finally, somewhere in between these extremes are the so-called Grands Établissements: the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), for instance, with its various sections (4th = history and philology; 5th = "religious sciences"; 6th = social sciences, etc.). Here admission is free and open to the public; to attend a seminar one need only obtain the permission of the Director of Studies in the discipline one's interested in. The audiences in these classes are therefore quite mixed; one wild-bearded gentleman used to come to a number of different seminars with a wide assortment of coloured pens: during classes he would communicate by ESP with extraterrestrials, and used different coloured ink to keep track of which of his alien correspondents said what.

When one reaches the culmination of one's academic career in France, one may be elected to the Collège de France, an institution founded about 450 years ago which currently is home to about 50 professors, each representing a different discipline, from Theoretical Astrophysics and Experimental Embryology to the Psychology of the Plastic Arts. The only duties of this eminent bunch is to give ten public lectures per year and to "cause knowledge to progress". On the suggestion of Michel Foucault, Pierre Hadot presented his candidacy to the Collège and was elected in 1983.

Right from the outset, Hadot was an outsider: unlike the great majority of Professors elected to the Collège, he had not attended the ENS. Instead, he had first studied at the Sorbonne; then studied at and graduated from the relatively humble EPHE (5th section), where he had taught since 1964. Hadot was well aware of his outsider status; in his Inaugural Lesson to the Collège given in February

1983, Hadot thanked his colleagues for having elected him, although

I had few of the qualities which usually allow one to get noticed, and the discipline I represented was not one of those which are now fashionable. I was, as the Romans said, a kind of *homo novus*, who did not belong to that intellectual nobility, one of whose titles is traditionally that of Former Student of the École Normale Supérieure.

Hadot went on to excuse himself for the jargon - free simplicity of his speech:

I don't have that tranquil authority which is conferred by the use and the mastery of the idioms currently spoken in the Republic of Letters. My language ... is not adorned by that mannerism which nowadays seems to be *de rigueur* whenever one sets out to speak about the human sciences.

Nor was Hadot's dislike for jargon something he just thought up to shock his audience of former Normaliens. Ten years previously, in the postface to the second edition of his book on Plotinus, Hadot had quoted Marcus Aurelius (*Meditations* 9, 29) to the effect that 'The work of Philosophy is simple and discreet; let us not be carried away by the swollen puffiness of solemn affectation'. Hadot had gone on to say:

I sincerely believe that our most urgent and difficult task today is, as Goethe said, to 'learn to believe in simplicity'. Might it not be the case that the greatest lesson which the philosophers of Antiquity have to teach us is that philosophy is not the complicated, pretentious, and artificial construction of a learned system of discourse, but the transformation of perception and of life?

Nor, as we shall see, is Hadot's dislike for incomprehensible jargon in philosophy merely a matter of personal taste. Rather, it seems to him symptomatic of a general decline in philosophy from Ancient to modern times, consisting largely in the fact that philosophy has forgotten the ancient distinction between philosophy and discourse about philosophy, and has come to concentrate more or less exclusively on the latter. We'll return to this point, and look at Hadot's controversial sociological and historical explanations for this alleged degradation of philosophy.

II

Although Pierre Hadot has published on a remarkably wide variety of topics - he was the first person in France to call attention to Wittgenstein, for example, and has written on Kant, Goethe, Nietzsche, Heidegger and many other thinkers - his main claim to fame has been as a student of post-Aristotelian philosophy, from the Stoics and Epicureans to the Neoplatonists and Church Fathers; and the Chair created for him at the Collège de France was entitled 'History of Hellenistic and Roman Thought'. Here I will only have time to single out a few themes from Hadot's voluminous oeuvre: I'll concentrate on the dangers of anachronism in interpreting ancient texts; ancient philosophy as consisting in spiritual exercises, and the contrast, to which I've already alluded, between philosophy and discourse *about* philosophy.

Hadot starts out from the fact that modern interpreters are often nonplussed when they encounter ancient philosophical writings: often, they find these writings unsystematic, confusing and lacking structure. Many modern scholars - especially Anglo-American, I might add - are content to explain this phenomenon by the stupidity and/or poor writing skills of the ancients; after all, they did not have the chance to attend Cambridge or the University of Chicago. Hadot has attempted another kind of explanation, or rather series of explanatory factors:

- i. All ancient philosophy bears the traces of its oral origins. In the time of Plato and Aristotle, Athenian society was still primarily oral, and written texts were used primarily as a series of written reminders - Greek *hupomnēmata* - for what a speaker wished to say. Most of Aristotle's extant writings, for instance, came into being as a series of such lecture notes or written reminders¹.
- ii. Partly deriving from the oral nature of ancient philosophy is the importance of the audience as a factor which determines the structure of philosophical texts. Ancient texts were intended, says Hadot, to carry out a quite specific and determinate effect upon their listeners and/or readers. Hadot has referred to this as the 'psychagogic' factor. Ancient philosophers, claims Hadot, did not hesitate to use a wide variety of rhetorical and persuasive techniques, as well as rigorous argumentation, in order to bring about a certain state or disposition in the souls or minds of their disciples. Furthermore, an ancient philosophical text was usually carefully tailored to appeal to an audience at a specific

stage of philosophical development: just as today we would not launch into an abstruse exegesis of a tricky point in a text by Habermas in front of a first-year class, so the tricky dialectics of Plato's *Parmenides* or the physics of the *Timaeus* are unlikely to have been intended for the same audience as the more straightforward *Apology* or *Euthyphro*.

- iii. The nature of the disposition or state of mind which the philosophical master intended to bring about in his disciples brings us to our third point: Hadot wants to say that ancient philosophers did not, in the first instance, set out to expose philosophical systems; rather, they intended to bring about in their listeners and readers a conversion to a wholly different kind of life. Hadot has speculated that the six schools or philosophical tendencies which existed in Greece and Rome during the Hellenistic period – Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Scepticism, and Cynicism – correspond to six 'existential choices' or attitudes to life, each of which corresponds to 'a permanent possibility of the human spirit'.² It is this basic choice of lifestyle which Hadot considers as fundamental, while the specific detailed doctrines of each school are, as it were, epiphenomena, elaborated in order to justify each fundamental choice of lifestyle.³ For instance, if a person is inclined towards vigilance and the fulfilment of duty, puts a primacy on freedom, autonomy, and integrity, and believes in the absolute value of morality, then he or she will probably be attracted to the Stoa. If the person's natural bent is rather towards relaxation and enjoyment of the pure, simple pleasures of existence, he will probably opt for Epicureanism. Most of us are probably combinations of the two, Hadot suggests, with varying admixtures as well of the personality types to which the other four ancient philosophical tendencies correspond. Hadot has cited Goethe, Rousseau, and Thoreau as examples of such mixed personality types.

Current in all schools were brief sayings, formulated in striking, memorable language, which formulated the school's most basic beliefs. In Stoicism, for instance, an example of such a saying was 'there is no good but moral good; no evil but moral evil'⁴; this saying was a summary of the results of all Stoic ethical teaching, and when called to mind it would remind the student of the detailed proofs by which its validity had been proved to him or her in the classroom.⁵ Such sayings also provided material for the spiritual exercises of

meditation and memorisation, which, as we shall see below, were common to all schools.

All ancient philosophical schools, claims Hadot, shared the most basic points of their diagnosis of the human condition, as well as the aetiology thereof. Human beings on the whole, they thought, are by and large a pretty miserable bunch. We are tormented by passions; worries about the future, regrets about the past, concerns about what other people may think of us, and other such topics which 'do not depend on us'.⁶ We desire things that we may never obtain, and fear things that we cannot escape.⁷ So consumed are we by worry that we are prevented from truly living. What is needed to correct this unfortunate situation is a complete conversion⁸ and transformation of our way of looking at the world and the things and events within it. This change in vision, it was thought, will result in a change in our way of being, thanks to which we may attain lucidity, peace of mind, and true freedom. What is called for, in other words, is that we change our lives.

A change of this depth and magnitude cannot come about overnight. If we want to improve the form, strength, tone, and endurance of our bodies, then we need to undergo a carefully-planned process of physical training which, by dint of regularly repeated exercises, will gradually bring about the desired changes – provided, of course, that we stick to our program and carry out all its recommendations on a regular basis.

The ancients thought the same held true of our psychism⁹: the only way it can be changed is by the patient, regular application of a series of *spiritual* exercises.¹⁰ Hadot's most radical claim is thus that ancient philosophy *consists* in the practice of spiritual exercises.

Unfortunately, no single ancient text on the specific topic of spiritual exercises survives, and in order to investigate them Hadot was forced to gather hints and allusions from a wide variety of ancient Greek and Roman writers. Taken in their totality, however, these hints and allusions allow us to construct a fairly rich picture of what ancient spiritual exercises must have been.

Many spiritual exercises were characteristic of a particular philosophical school: in Platonism, for example, the authoritative definition of philosophy as a training for death leads to the typically Platonic spiritual exercise of attempting to separate the soul from the body; this implies a series of exercises intended to purify the soul from everything other than what it essentially is.¹¹ Similarly, the Socratic injunctions to know oneself, pay attention to and

care for oneself could be pursued as spiritual exercises.¹² For that matter, Hadot has suggested that all Plato's dialogues can be understood as spiritual exercises: rather than to set forth philosophical doctrines, their goal is to make Socrates' reader and interlocutor traverse a specific path, in the course of which he or she becomes more skilled at finding out the truth.¹³ Hadot sees Plato as using rhetorical and literary means to bring his reader or listener to abandon the partiality of individuality,¹⁴ and accede to the universal viewpoint of reason or thought, in which we willingly submit ourselves to the demands of the *Logos* and the norm of the Good. The result of these exercises, for Plato, is greatness of soul (Greek *megalopsukhia*).

Inner detachment with regard to exterior things and persons are characteristically Stoic exercises, as is the *praemeditatio malorum* or imaginative prefiguration of such apparent¹⁵ evils as poverty, suffering, and death, so that we shall be prepared should such seemingly bad things actually occur. Another Stoic spiritual exercise was that of attention (Greek *prosokhê*): it consisted of being constantly aware of all one said and did.¹⁶ This constant attentiveness allowed the philosopher to keep the fundamental rules of life (Greek *dogmata; kanônes*) close at hand (Greek *prokheiron*) at all times.¹⁷ The fulfilment of one's social duties (Greek *kathêkonta*) could also be viewed as a Stoic spiritual exercise.

For the Epicureans, who held that pleasure¹⁸ was the highest good, the memories of past pleasure was recommended, as was the discipline of desires (elimination of unnatural and unnecessary desires (those for luxurious food or clothing, for instance); limitation and gradual elimination of those which are natural but unnecessary, such as sexual desires; concentration on the satisfaction of those, like hunger and thirst, which are natural and necessary). Since the pleasures of friendship were an important part of Epicurean philosophy, the mutual correction of faults in an atmosphere of fraternal cooperation also played a role in the communal life of Epicurean schools, as did public confession of one's own faults.

Yet to two schools so widely perceived as opposed as were the Stoa and the Epicurean Garden, many of the spiritual exercises they recommended were surprisingly similar. Both schools, for instance, preached the examination of the conscience,¹⁹ as did the Pythagoreans. Such imaginative exercises as the view from above, in which one imagines the earth from a high vantage point in order to remind oneself of the insignificance of human affairs, was common to Stoics, Epicureans and Cynics. All

schools advised the meditation upon, memorisation and assimilation of the sayings and dogmas of the founding fathers of the respective schools: the goal was to master such sayings to the point where they would be 'at hand' whenever the student confronted a difficult situation in life. When confronted with a personal loss, for instance, a Stoic would recall his school's fundamental division of things and events into those which depend on us and those which don't; he would recall he should care only about the former and lovingly accept everything falling under the latter category, since it had all been decided by a beneficent deity – the *Logos* – with whom we are consubstantial in the highest part of ourselves (the *hêgemonikon*, or guiding part of our souls). When an Epicurean faced the prospect of, say, pain or illness, he would remind himself that if pain is truly intense it does not last long, and if it lasts long it is not truly intense and can therefore be tolerated. In almost all potentially frightening or disheartening situations, the Epicurean could take comfort from the *tetrapharmakos*, or fourfold remedy:

God presents no fears
 Death presents no worries;
 Good is easy to obtain
 Evil is easy to endure.²⁰

Despite their striking differences, Stoics and Epicureans also agreed on the importance of living in the present moment. For the Stoics, only the present existed in the true sense of the word, past and future possessing only a secondary and derivative form of existence, so that the present was all one had. The Epicureans argued that one could derive as much pleasure from a moment of true happiness as from an eternity; and they advised their disciples to live each moment as if it were simultaneously the first and the last they would live; thus the pure pleasure of sheer existence and the wonder one feels at the fact of the world's existence could be intensified. Finally, reading philosophical texts and listening to the oral teaching of a master could be carried out as spiritual exercises, as could writing. Epictetus advises his students to keep a written diary of their thoughts and emotions, with a view to keeping track of their spiritual progress. In later Greek philosophy and in Christianity, the oral or written explanation of and commentary upon texts was among the most important and widely practised form of spiritual exercise.

III

One point that Hadot remarks is particularly noticeable in Hellenistic thought – although he argues it is also latent in the thought of Plato and Aristotle²¹ – is the distinction between *doing*

philosophy and *talking about* philosophy. Talking about philosophy is of course essential: as rational beings, the main means we have of communicating with and attempting to persuade our fellow-human beings is language, and our own inner dialogue, the ordering and rendering coherent of which is a major goal of the practice of spiritual exercises, can only be carried out by language, whether spoken or merely thought.

Traditionally, philosophy was divided into three parts: physics, ethics, and logic. Some Hellenistic thinkers, however – especially Stoic – insisted that this distinction is valid for pedagogical purposes only. When teaching philosophy, they argued, we give a theoretical exposé of logic, consisting in the abstract study of the rules of reasoning, forms of syllogisms, etc.; a theoretical exposé of physics, in which we study motion, rest, time, space and so forth from an abstract point of view; and a theoretical exposé of ethics, in which we classify the virtues and the passions and distinguish various kinds of goods and evils.

Yet when it comes to practice rather than theory, say the Stoics, philosophy is a unitary act, which consists in the indivisible and simultaneous practice of a lived physics – in which one strives to achieve consciousness of the fact that one is a part of the universe, with which one is of the same substance – a lived ethics, which consists in placing ourselves in the service of the human community, and in general acting in accordance with justice – and a lived logic, which consists in the careful analysis of all our representations (Greek *phantasiai*), with a view to giving our assent only to those representations or sense-impressions which are unambiguously clear and objective.²² When we pass from the pedagogical/theoretical study of philosophical discourse to the actual practice of philosophy, says Hadot,²³

We are no longer concerned with doing logical theory; that is to say the theory of speaking and of thinking well; nor with doing the theory of physics of the cosmos; nor with doing the theory of right actions; rather, we are concerned with actually speaking well, thinking well, acting well and being conscious of our place within the cosmos.

Thus, in antiquity, if we are to believe Hadot, philosophy was a way of life consisting in the unitary act of practising lived logic, lived physics, and lived ethics. Philosophy was, as Hadot writes, ‘a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle which engaged the whole of existence ... a progress which makes us better and causes us to be more fully’. Assuming for the moment there is some truth to this

account, what happened to this conception of philosophy between late Antiquity and today? Hadot’s views on this subject are among the most controversial aspects of his theories.

As Christianity first fought for recognised status within the Roman Empire, and then, in 310 CE, became the official state religion, Christian theologians were forced to come to terms with the legacy of ‘pagan’, or non-Christian philosophy. In the second and third centuries CE, Christian Apologists such as Justin, Clement of Alexandria and Origen took over the spiritual exercises in which pagan philosophy consisted; happy as they were to present Christianity as a philosophy, the translation of pagan philosophy into a Christian idiom presented relatively few problems. As the Church grew in self-confidence and authority, however, the practice of spiritual exercises tended to be marginalised, and relegated to such fringes of the Orthodox Christian world as monasticism,²⁴ some brands of Eastern Orthodox spirituality,²⁵ and Christian mysticism in general.²⁶ Within the main body of the Church, however, Christian philosophy was progressively stripped of its spiritual exercises, and its role came to be perceived as that of a mere handmaid to theology (*ancilla theologiae*). Philosophy, founded on reason, was by now considered inferior to theology, which relied on the superior ‘virtue’ of faith, and philosophy’s job was now restricted to supplying logical, ethical, and physical dogmas for use by the Faculty of Theology. This process, whereby philosophy became exclusively abstract, theoretical, and no longer a way of life, was virtually complete by the 13th century, the time of the height of Medieval scholasticism. This was also, Hadot reminds us, the period of the foundation of the first western universities, who pursued and intensified the reduction of philosophy to talk *about* philosophy, to the detriment of the practice of philosophy as a way of life. The scholastic, theology-dominated University maintained a virtual monopoly on the teaching of philosophy from the 16th to 18th centuries; yet Hadot points out that many of the most creative philosophers during the 16th to 18th centuries were those who managed to keep themselves apart from the university: Descartes (for whom philosophy was still the ‘practice of reason’), Leibniz, Spinoza, Malebranche.

Even when the Universities managed to free themselves from the hold of Scholasticism, Hadot argues, they remained indelibly influenced by this conception of philosophy; in effect, all that was done was to replace one form of theoretical discourse by another form of such discourse. From the late 18th century on, this new philosophy was indissolubly linked with the University, in the

persons of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel. The trend continued in the twentieth century with Husserl, Heidegger, Moore, Russell, and the great majority of influential German and Anglo-American philosophers.

For hundreds of years, then, philosophy's milieu has been the state-sponsored educational institution. Hadot views this relationship as problematic, not to say pernicious for the well-being of philosophy. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Hadot argues, it was no accident if much of the most creative philosophy took place outside the university, in the persons of Schopenhauer, Marx and Nietzsche, (who, despite their massive differences, all invite us to radically transform our lives), Kierkegaard, Emerson and Thoreau.²⁷ Only in the twentieth century, writes Hadot, did university-associated philosophers begin to resurrect the idea of philosophy as a way of life; he points to Bergson, Wittgenstein, and some of the phenomenologists, with their methods for transforming our perception of the world. Yet the Linguistic turn in Anglo-American philosophy, as well as structuralist, post-structuralist, and deconstructionist tendencies emanating from the Continent, only furthered what Hadot sees as the theoreticization of philosophy. In our time, the virtually exclusive concentration on talk *about* philosophy, and the avoidance of most questions concerned with its practice as a way of life, have alienated many from the discipline. In many places, philosophy has become a highly technical exchange between specialists, to whom alone it is interesting or comprehensible. Unlike the situation in antiquity, most philosophy professors no longer train students to live better, more meaningful lives; instead they are professionals training students to become professionals, who will in turn teach more professionals. Often, the goal of philosophy as a profession has consequently become reduced to publishing as many highly technical philosophical articles as possible. This often becomes an end in itself, and philosophers seldom seem to ask themselves whether the immense proliferation of often trivial and almost always heretically technical articles, of interest only to other professional philosophers, really advances the cause of philosophy or is otherwise desirable.

In Antiquity, writes Hadot, it was not only Chrysippus or Epicurus who were considered philosophers; but any person who lived a truly philosophical life of rational lucidity and moral conscience was considered to have equal rights to that title; he cites the examples of the Roman statesman Cato of Utica; Publius Rutilius Rufus; Quintus Mucius Scaevola; all of whom sought to realise the Stoic ideal of wisdom in their lives.²⁸ Nowadays, by contrast, philosophers are judged and

evaluated just like any other academics: by the number of initials following their name, and the number of publications on their c.v.'s. It would strike most of us as odd at best and irrelevant at worst to say à propos of a philosopher: 'yes, I know he's published a lot in prestigious journals; but does he *live* in a philosophical way?' Yet it was precisely this kind of question that philosophers of Antiquity thought it perfectly natural to ask; and this is perhaps an indication of the large gap between antiquity and our postmodern times, which makes it so difficult for us to understand the philosophical writings of antiquity. Here are some examples from the 2nd century CE Stoic Epictetus:

Come and listen to me read my commentaries ... I will explain Chrysippus to you like no one else can, ... if necessary, I can even add the views of Antipater and Archedemos ...

So it's for this, is it, that young men leave their fatherlands and their own parents? To come and listen to you explain words? Trifling little words?²⁹

Show me your own progress [in philosophy]. Suppose I was talking to an athlete, and I said to him, 'Show me your shoulders', and he then replied, 'Take a look at my weights'. Take a hike, both you and your weights! What I want to see is the *effect* of the weights! [Now you say to me], 'Take this book entitled *On choice*, and see how well I have read it'. That's not what I'm looking for, you slave, but how you *act* in your choices and refusals, your desires and aversions, and how you go at things, and apply yourself to them and prepare yourself, whether you are acting in harmony with nature, or out of it. For if you are acting in harmony, show me that, and I will tell you that you are making progress; but if you are out of harmony, then get lost ...³⁰

As a remedy to this state of affairs, Hadot is not advocating a slavish return to ancient philosophy. What he does suggest is that the various ancient philosophies be detached from their outmoded mythical and cosmological elements and reduced to the propositions they themselves considered most fundamental. This is no less than what we would expect, if it is true that doctrinal details are epiphenomena thought up in order to justify the original existential choice which is what is really characteristic of each philosophical school. Hadot's diagnosis of modern – or is it post modern – malaise is similar to that of the ancients: we do not see the world *qua* world, he writes, but as a mere means to satisfy our desires. The ancient Sage, by contrast – who served ancient philosophy as a transcendent norm which was to be imitated, even if never

attained – was portrayed as having the whole constantly in mind, as thinking and acting within a cosmic perspective, and as having gone beyond the narrow limits of illusory individuality. The means used by the sage to achieve this cosmic consciousness were the spiritual exercises I've been describing. Hadot suggests these exercises - when subjected to the process of reduction I've mentioned above – can provide us with guidance in our relationships to ourselves (vigilance in thought), to the cosmos (consent to events which do not depend on us, and over which we have no control; realisation of the fact one is part of whole), and to other human beings (importance of acting in accordance with duty and justice, in service of the human community). It is this last requirement which, Hadot believes, is the hardest to carry out: it is all too easy to allow ourselves to be blinded by the passions of anger, resentment, and prejudices. Wisdom, he claims, consists in an equilibrium between peace of mind and the passions brought about in us by sight of suffering and injustice around us. This is a gargantuan task; to achieve such wisdom – in other words, to become a Sage – may well be impossible, as the Stoics believed. At the very least, to pursue this goal we will need all the help we can get; and if some or all of ancient spiritual exercises – suitably modified – can be of some assistance to us; then why should we not give them a try?

NOTES

¹ This view has been developed in particular by the Swedish scholar Ingemar Düring; cf. I Düring 1945/1968; 1956/1968; 1966.

² A.I. Davidson 1995, p.34. Elsewhere Hadot speaks of 'various possible fundamental attitudes of reason'; cf. 1995 p.273.

³ Cf. P. Hadot 1993d, p.70.

⁴ Another example is Seneca's 'semper idem velle. idem nolle' (*Letter* 20, quoted by P. Hadot 1991, 214).

⁵ This is the origin of such texts as Epictetus' *Manual* or *Encheiridion*; and of the Epicurean *Principal Doctrines* (also known as the *Ratae Sententiae* or *Kuriai Doxai*), as well as the *Gnomologium Vaticanum*. The collection of sayings known as *The Sentences of Sextus* (ed. H. Chadwick, Cambridge 1959) was used both by Christians and by Pythagoreans. Such catholicity was not rare: neither the Stoic Seneca nor the Neopythagorean Porphyry hesitated to use Epicurean sayings when encouraging philosophical beginners.

⁶ Cf. Heidegger's accounts of inauthentic existence, well discussed by A. De Waelhens 1955, pp. 109-117.

⁷ The emphasis on unbounded desires as the cause of our suffering particularly Epicurean; cf. P. Hadot 1993d, 71.

⁸ On conversion, cf. P. Hadot 1993a, 175-182.

⁹ Cf. I Hadot 1969, 13 n. 23, quoting Isocrates, I, 12; Seneca, *Epistle* 94, 30.

¹⁰ Hadot's use of the word 'spiritual' in this context has caused the raising of many an eyebrow. A precise English translation of his most important book would be 'Spiritual Exercises and Ancient Philosophy', but the publisher Blackwell refused to allow us to use this title, believing, probably rightly, that it would cause bookstores and libraries to place the book beside the works of Baba Ram Dass and Shirley Maclaine. Hadot's reason for using the term is merely that he wishes to stress that the exercises in question are not purely intellectual, but are intended to affect the imagination, emotions, and our entire psycho-somatic organism.

¹¹ Plotinus would refer to this process of removing alien accretions from the soul as 'sculpting one's own statue'. This concept of purification, in which each grade of purification is linked to a different degree of virtue, was systematised first by Plotinus (cf. *Ennead* VI 7, 36 5ff) and then, most influentially, by his student Porphyry (*Sentence* 32). Such purifications are spiritual exercises par excellence; cf. P. Hadot 1993, 35 & n. 48.

¹² Meditation is dialogue with oneself, and the goal of spiritual exercises as a whole can be formulated as bringing order and coherence to one's inner dialogue. In this context, Hadot has called attention to those passages in the *Symposium* where Socrates stands lost in thought, 'applying his intellect to himself'. Does Plato want us to understand he was practising the spiritual exercise of meditation?

¹³ In this interpretation of Plato, Hadot is following the interpretations of R. Schaerer and V Goldschmidt.

¹⁴ Thus, for Hadot, the training for death advocated in the *Phaedo* is in fact a death to one's own individuality. Once the point of view of objective universality has been attained, human problems and suffering can be placed in their proper perspective, and seen to lack importance in the overall economy of the universe.

¹⁵ Apparent rather than real: since they do not depend on us, such 'misfortunes' as death, sickness, etc., are not in fact 'bad', according to the Stoics, but indifferent.

¹⁶ The importance of attention persisted in Eastern Christian mysticism and monasticism, and plays an important role today in the Russian Orthodox Church.

¹⁷ When we have practised the exercise of attention sufficiently, the fundamental principles will come to our mind with the sureness of a reflex. We are to respond to events as we would if suddenly asked a question; cf. Epict., II, 16, 2.

¹⁸ The kind of pleasure referred to by Epicurus was not chiefly sexual, but rather the intellectual and aesthetic pleasures derived from intellectual discovery, the contemplation of nature, and friendship.

¹⁹ In the morning, we should go over all we have to do during the day, and decide upon which principles we will

base our actions. At night, we should go over all our thoughts, feelings, and actions, in order to catch all faults and mistakes we may have made. We should examine our dreams with the same goal.

²⁰ Cf. P. Hadot 1993d, p. 72; A.-J. Festugière, *Épicure et ses dieux*, Paris 1985 [1946], p.46.

²¹ Cf. P. Hadot 1993e, p. 4.

²² P. Hadot 1993d, pp. 76-77.

²³ P. Hadot 1991, p. 212.

²⁴ In Christian monasticism, we find a high value placed on the originally pagan spiritual exercises of attention (*prosokhê*), meditation (*meletê*), examination of conscience, and training for death.

²⁵ Important in this respect was Hesychasm.

²⁶ Rhineland Dominican mystics like Meister Eckhardt present good examples of the extra-ecclesiastical persistence of spiritual exercises.

²⁷ Hadot's enumerations are not, of course, intended to be exhaustive, but are offered merely by way of illustration. It would be possible to add many names to Hadot's list of important non-University philosophers: one thinks of Peirce and Dewey, as well as the twentieth-century German thinker Leonard Nelson whose University Chair was non-salaried.

²⁸ P. Hadot 1993e, P. 4.

²⁹ Arrian, *Discourses of Epictetus*, 3, 21, 7-8.

³⁰ Arrian, *Discourses of Epictetus*, 1,4,13-15.

Editor's Note : Readers may like to have the following reference:-

Hadot, Pierre (1995) *Philosophy as a Way of Life : Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Oxford: Blackwell. Edited by Arnold Davidson and translated by Michael Chase.

THE RELATION BETWEEN VALUE CONFLICTS AND THE SOCRATIC DIALOGUE

Fernando Leal

εγω δε αν μη σε αυτον ενα οντα μαρτυρα
παρασχωμαι ομολογουντα περι ων λεγω,
ουδεν οιμαι αξιον λογου μοι πεπερανθαι
περι ων αν ημιν ο λογος ηι.

Plato, Gorgias 472B6-C1

When I listen hard
Is bird to bird, wheel on rain,
What you say, I say.
How tall the pines are!
Heads thinned, as though to hear what
Heaven says through wind.

Mimi Khalvati, 1995

So said I, and still say the same;
Still, to my death, will say -
Three gods, within this little frame,
Are warring night and day;
Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
They all are held in me;
And must be mine till I forget
My present entity!
Oh, for the time, when in my breast
Their struggles will be o'er!
Oh, for the day, when I shall rest,
And never suffer more!

Emily Bronte, 1846

This is going to be a difficult talk - for me and for you. For me, because I have to cover a great deal of immensely complicated topics in a matter of a few minutes each. For you, because my task will require you to concede some moot points without much argument. There is nothing you or I can do about it. It is to be hoped that you will be sufficiently interested in what I have to say, and the manner in which I will say it, for you to accept the only deal I can offer you under the circumstances.¹

The subject of my talk is the *relation* between value conflicts and the Socratic dialogue. You may ask why the formulation seems to be so abstract and noncommittal; why, in other words, do I not propose to talk about the *application*, or at least the

applicability, of the Socratic dialogue to value conflicts, or even to the *resolution* of value conflicts. The only reason is that I am a philosopher, and it is one of the most basic virtues of a philosopher to go one step at a time. In other words, I don't think we can really ask about the application of the Socratic dialogue to value conflicts before we say something about the relation, as such, between value conflicts and the Socratic dialogue. As a matter of fact, I shall touch on the topic of application, or applicability, but in a somewhat indirect way.

Now, in order to talk about the relation between value conflicts and the Socratic dialogue, I must talk about these two concepts, the concept of a value conflict and the concept of the Socratic dialogue. This I shall endeavour to do in five stages.

First and foremost, I will try to show that the definition, characterisation or clarification of the two concepts becomes really powerful only insofar as we attempt to view them from what I conceive to be three basically different perspectives. For reasons which will, I hope, soon be appreciated, I will refer to these three perspectives as the first-person perspective, the second-person perspective and the third-person perspective. I consider this distinction of perspectives as a fundamental distinction - for critical philosophy in particular and for philosophy in general, indeed for any intellectually sound approach to the understanding of all things human. And that is why I will try first to explain a little bit what I think these perspectives are. This is the subject of Part I.

Then I shall try to define, characterise, or at least clarify the central concepts of this talk. I shall tackle first the concept of a value conflict in Part II and then that of the Socratic dialogue in Part III.

Finally, after such a characterisation of our two concepts, we shall have to ask ourselves what is the relation between them and whether it is possible to apply the Socratic dialogue to value conflicts. To do so I shall start by reviewing what I take to be the main ways there are to analyse what happens in a

value conflict and how such a conflict can be resolved or at least understood. This is the task of Part IV. Once I have done this, I shall then attempt, in Part V, to say something about the main skill we need to develop in order to have a chance to use Socratic dialogue as a means to solve a value conflict and I shall touch briefly upon a few related matters.

I

There is a very widespread prejudice that the only scientific way to understand or explain a human ability, action or behaviour is by turning it into an *object* of study. This is the most obvious way to give meaning to the expression 'third-person perspective'. The expression itself comes from traditional grammar.² For the purposes of this talk the category of 'person' is most clearly available in the pronoun system: the English first person is present in forms like *I, me, my, mine, myself*; the second person in *thou, thee, thy, thine, thyself* (or *you, your, yours, yourself*); the third person in *he, she, it, them*, etc. So when a neuropsychologist, for example, wants to understand or explain a language pathology or a motor disorder, he or she naturally takes the 'third person perspective' - the human being afflicted with the disorder is viewed as a 'third person', a *he* or a *she*. The patient is observed and experimented upon. This seems the only way to guarantee *objectivity*. That famous word, 'objectivity' (as well as the scientific imperative behind it), is the ordinary way to name what I am calling the 'third person perspective'.

All this may seem trivial. But the point of my insisting on such an apparent triviality is that it does not at all reflect what goes on in any serious research of human beings and their actions, abilities and behaviour. It may be true of physics and chemistry,³ but it becomes highly dubious as soon as we enter biology, and it ceases to make sense for the social and human sciences. In the latter the researcher constantly interacts with the human beings under investigation: experimental tasks, interviews and surveys - the staples of ordinary research - are all conducted in the 'second person perspective' (there is a *you* I am talking to, and not just a *she* or *he* I am talking about). No research can be conceived without such perspective. I hope you agree to that, because I cannot possibly enter into any details here. Moreover, most methods necessitate also the 'first person perspective'.

Again, this is most clearly the case when we consider that social research demands the active engagement of the so-called 'subject' under investigation in a way that can only be described as 'first person'. And even when that does not happen in the most obvious and direct way, i.e. by asking the 'subject' what she thinks, means, or feels, at least an analogue of that perspective is always present in a kind of 're-enactment' or 'empathetic understanding' by the researcher of what the 'subject' thinks, means, or feels. In other words, the researcher is always somehow engaged in mind-reading, in reconstructing what is going on in the mind of the 'subject'. Again I hope you agree to that without any further argument. As you would agree to this: that no research can be done without a massive engagement of the 'first person' of the researcher himself or herself. Yet any report of findings tends to obscure that basic fact, again because it would diminish objectivity. In a sense we should speak here of an 'objectivist prejudice' (a prejudice in favour of objectivity).⁴

If this is so in scientific research, it is even more so in the ordinary understanding of other human beings we engage in most of our waking time and even in our dreams. It is simply impossible to even attempt to understand or explain what other people do and say without a most peculiar combination of the three perspectives. Some of you may even suggest that the picture I am offering here suffers from some important measure of oversimplification in that I am only considering the three grammatical 'persons' so to speak in the 'singular'. What about the 'plural' - *we, you, them*, and its variations, *all of us, some of us, most of you, a few of you*, etc.? This is a very tricky question I don't want to enter into just now.⁵ It suffices for the present purposes that you agree that at least the 'singular' forms of the three 'persons', and each one of their associated perspectives, are a condition of possibility of understanding and explaining what humans do and say. Or rather: what is such a condition of possibility are not so much the persons themselves or the perspectives attached to each one of them, but the fact that in trying to understand and explain human actions and meanings we go from one perspective to the other, the fact that we so to speak constantly engage in a sort of *shifting* or perhaps a *scanning* process. It is this perspective shifting or person scanning (what one may call, paraphrasing Frege, a *Personenverlauf*) which is, I think, a condition of possibility of any explanation of what humans do, think or say.⁶

A small example may help here. If anything can be considered second person, then it has to be the research interview, a very popular method in social science. Although my personal expertise with that method has been limited to linguistic research (with a dash of anthropology, which is almost always part of linguistics, at least when the language under study is 'exotic'), I have been obliged to think hard about it because I have a seminar for doctoral students who are doing their dissertation research on some branch of social science (anthropology, sociology, economics, social psychology, history). According to my own experience as an interviewer and after listening to lots of my students' stories, I have come to the conclusion that successful interviewing goes through three stages. The first, most basic stage is when the interviewee conceives the interview situation under the model of an examination, in which she is a child or pupil who is being examined by the interviewer. This is of course not the ideal situation, as anyone can see. But some interviewers never go beyond that. It may sound absurd, given that, according to the rules of research, the interviewer is looking for information which she by definition does not know, so how could she be an examiner on a subject which she largely ignores? Although I cannot possibly go into the details and argue my position properly, I would like to say that, since *eliciting information* as the primary target of a research interview is a third-person goal, it will inevitably yield a situation like the one I described because the pupil-teacher relation is a fundamental human scenario, indeed a human universal. Anyway, a more advanced stage somehow reverses the situation, putting the interviewee in the position of an elder or teacher who is explaining something to a more inexperienced person (either a younger member of the community or a foreigner). Although the target and the scenario are essentially the same, there is nevertheless a subtle change, in that the interviewer is put in a position of *listening* for the first time. I mean this phenomenologically: during the first stage, the researcher is, say, confirming her hypotheses or probably prejudices, which is what creates the peculiar and even slightly absurd pupil-teacher relation in the first place. So there is an inflection between the first and the second stage which moves the researcher from an almost pure third-person perspective into a second-person one. As it is, when a researcher reaches the second stage, things become much better, as everyone will tell who has undergone the experience. Yet the third phase is the best: it happens when interviewer and interviewee come to be, and to see each other as,

fellows or partners in an ongoing friendly conversation. This is very difficult to attain, because it requires a special effort on the part of both persons; and it is more often than not the interviewer who is not able or willing to go in that direction. However, it is only here that what I would call *deep listening* takes place. But more about listening anon. It suffices here to see that it is as difficult as it is necessary to go through a good deal of person scanning (perspective shifting) before one can say that an interview has succeeded. And even then, the *form of the report*, i.e. the way researchers have to report an interview, will again obscure the changes of perspective and sort of effect a reduction of the second-person to the third-person, a kind of objective zooming on what is non-dialogical in the interview. How can one report on an interview without eliminating the second-person? So the objectivist prejudice is so to speak in-built in the reporting practice itself. And it even belongs to all sorts of extra-scientific practices, such as gossip, forensic procedures, debriefings, clinical diagnosis, pastoral and confessional habits, etc. It is simply all over the place, the more insidious as we are only dimly aware of it.

These are deep waters, and I am painfully aware that I have been just agitating the surface. I certainly hope to be able to expound the issue more fully somewhere else. To cut a long story short, if what I call perspective shifting or person scanning is, as I have hinted before, a condition of possibility of the understanding and explaining of human action and meaning, and that within both scientific knowledge and ordinary understanding, then it must be a central issue for the critical philosopher, whose sole business after all is the investigation of just such conditions of possibility. Now even assuming that I am right in all this, the question arises as to what it has to do with the topic at hand—the relation between value conflicts and the Socratic dialogue? My provisional answer is: everything. This I will try to show to you now.

II

First, we must determine what a value conflict is. I start with what is, on the face of it, a pretty simple distinction. There are, I think, two possible kinds of conflict between human beings. One I call a 'conflict of interests', the other a 'conflict of values'. The labels I am using are not particularly important. I happen to think they quite agree with present English usage; but I am also aware that

Nelson for one uses the words 'interest' (*Interesse*) and 'value' (*Wert*) almost as synonyms. So if anybody here hates the verbal distinction as such or deems it inaccurate or otherwise inappropriate, please drop it and replace it with whatever terms you prefer. The only thing I care about is that you understand the conceptual distinction I am trying to make; never mind the words. So what is the difference between a conflict of interests and a conflict of values?

Let's see. People involved in a conflict of interests in an important sense agree with each other completely and understand each other perfectly - or at least as completely and perfectly as this is ever humanly possible. They share the same values to a large extent, i.e. they either share *all* values or at least *all those* values which are relevant to the conflict.⁷ This can be best illustrated by means of an example. Suppose there are two members of a university department both of whom want to be the head of that department. Let's call them Peter and Paul. They clearly have a conflict of interests. Their values may be exactly the same, in fact they usually *are* the same, e.g. they both like the feeling of control over other people and over resources; they both like to take decisions, they both like their names painted on the glass panels of office doors and printed in official stationery, they both like to make people wait, to be brought coffee, to be asked for permission, to be very busy all day, to receive lots of calls, to inaugurate conferences, to introduce visitors to the local audiences, to sign leaves of absence, to talk to VIPs; they both like to be addressed in a special tone of voice, to have their own parking place at the University; they both enjoy intriguing and politicking, having a good secretary, organising and presiding over meetings; and so on and so forth. Have I left anything out? Well, you can fill the gaps in; I'm sure you know those people as well or even better than I do. Now it is precisely because Peter and Paul enjoy all these things and hold them in high esteem that they have a conflict of interests which puts them at odds with each other. It is emphatically not a matter of values.

How different is the situation when two people, let's call them Martha and Mary, have a conflict of values! Martha is head of the department, Mary just works there. But Mary wants to start a research project which she thinks is really important stuff, and for that she needs some cash. Now Martha must first approve Mary's project before it can be sent to the relevant government

agency or private foundation. In order for Martha to approve Mary's project, it has to be compared to the other research projects submitted to her. But her decision is not so much based on the contents, importance or feasibility of the projects, but on whether they will improve or enhance the relationship with a given agency or foundation, because that relationship, if carefully cultivated, will result in more financing next year. Now Mary's project does not fill Martha's bill, even if it is otherwise an outstanding project and most certainly would be financed if only Martha would approve it. Martha's reasons not to give her approval of Mary's project have nothing to do with the value of that project, indeed they are completely foreign to any of Mary's values. Martha's decision is based on a completely different set of values. So Martha and Mary have a conflict of values. When this sort of thing happens, it is very difficult for Martha to explain her decision to Mary; and it is very difficult for Mary to understand Martha's decision. On the other hand, Mary's counter arguments tend to bore Martha, who thinks poor Mary is *so* short-sighted, unable to see the big picture. She tries to explain that her decision is in the best interest of the department; but Mary insists that the only interest of the department should be in furthering good research projects. Value conflicts have this curious feature, that people think awful things about their adversaries - that they are unreasonable, heartless, evil or downright stupid. In contrast to a good old conflict of interest, people do not seem capable of understanding each other. This is what makes value conflicts so difficult. When people have a conflict of interests, a trade-off is never out of the question, an alliance is worth thinking about, and it is always possible to *negotiate*. But how can you compromise with your values? Would they still be your *values* if you could strike a bargain and sacrifice them? The distinction I have just drawn is of course one of those sociologists since Max Weber love to call 'ideal types', not because they are something we strive for, but because in real life they seldom occur in all their purity. Even Mary, for all her high ideals about science and truth may become an ally for or against Martha, if she wants to achieve what she wants; and even Martha will come to forfeit her financial calculations and her sense of public relations and take some care of the science side of her department, if she wants to survive as its head. But our ideal types are very useful to make clear what is an important distinction; and they are not completely fictitious. And when I talk about value conflicts here, I am

only talking about conflicts which are more like that between Martha and Mary than that between Peter and Paul, conflicts in which people do not understand each other, conflicts in which the other person seems to be talking nonsense, conflicts which make negotiations and alliances very hard indeed, and even sometimes simply impossible.

Now, a value conflict, being a relationship between (at least) two people, has to a certain extent the structure of a dialogue. So it seems as though a dialogue should be the ideal medium to think through, and maybe re-solve, a value conflict. But there is this paradoxical situation that a value conflict seems precisely to preclude a dialogue by its very nature (here we must take very seriously the nature of a value conflict as opposed to any other sort of conflict, which would not have that paradoxical structure). So let's forget about dialogue for a minute and let's tackle value conflicts from a different perspective. In fact, let's take the perspective of which the above description is but one example. It is, you will agree with me, a third-person perspective. Right now that I am talking to you, none of us is either Martha or Mary; Martha and Mary are outside our talk; Martha and Mary are third person. They are objects for us; we report on them; we analyse them. Such a report and such an analysis necessarily lead to (some form of) value relativism. It is *their* values we are talking about, not yours, not mine. So they are, as values, *relative* to the persons, Martha or Mary, who have them.

But don't be scared: there is certainly something to be gained by relativism if we don't forget what it is, i.e. where it comes from, viz. from adopting a third-person perspective. That perspective opens one's heart for the virtue of tolerance, and that is a good thing, as we shall see later on.⁸ But it stops short of the phenomenon we are interested in, viz. why Martha and Mary have such a hard time talking to each other. So we must push forward to another perspective; but since we are trying to circumvent dialogue because of the aforementioned difficulty, this will have to be the first-person perspective. When assuming it, we immediately see that we cannot be relativistic anymore. It is precisely because of that that there is a conflict and a conflict which takes the precise form it takes. The problem with that perspective is that it is so speak closed upon itself. As long as I am not someone who reports on Martha, who analyses Mary, as soon as I am or become Martha or Mary, I certainly see with my own eyes, experience in my

own self, am moved in my own heart—these values I was merely talking about are not values relative to such and such a person, but they are my own values, and as my own values, they are simply values, not values relative to me, but values in themselves, values as such, *absolute* values. If I should say that they are only relative values, values relative to me, then this may be an otherwise admirable effort to be objective, but it would at the same time supersede them as values. One can be a relativist about anyone but oneself. Modern folks delude themselves on this point, so I shall dwell a little longer here. Many people nowadays think they are sophisticated and enlightened, because they can manage to utter the words, 'Oh these are only *my* values' and 'What I value is just relative to my culture or my education or even my genes'. This we can say indeed (as, by the way, some Greeks and Indians were already saying twenty-five hundred years ago), but we cannot mean it if we are really talking in the first-person perspective. The interesting thing is that we can, and sometimes do, talk about ourselves from a third-person perspective. This can happen because we talk about ourselves as not present or not active, e.g. when we are telling a story about some past event or imagining ourselves in a possible predicament. But when we are present and active, when we are really there, when we have to act, when something we care about depends on what we do, when the life or happiness of someone we love is at stake, then we cannot possibly just talk about ourselves. And then we cannot possibly be relativistic about our values.

But again that does not help us - not really. If taking the *third-person* perspective allows us to *describe* and analyse Martha and Mary, it cannot decide who is right or wrong because the values are seen (described, analysed) as relative to each one of them.⁹ We sort of listen to both of them - insofar as one can actually 'listen' to a third person, which is necessarily a very limited kind of listening - but we don't in a sense really understand what the fuss is all about. If, on the contrary, taking the *first-person* perspective allows us to *be* (or become) Martha and Mary, then it makes us think that, say, Martha is right. We understand what the fuss is all about (it is about a very real value which Mary doesn't get in her head), but we are 'out of range' for what Mary is saying. (Remember that it *is* a conflict of values not of mere interests.) So apparently what we need is exactly what we cannot get: the second-person perspective. We must be able to listen to the other person as a second

person, as the one human being we have in front of us, trying desperately to explain something we apparently cannot understand, to come to terms with values we definitely do not share. But don't make any mistakes here: listening is always very difficult, even when the person we are listening to shares all or most of our values; but listening to someone who has got different values, is incomparably more difficult and it would sometimes seem downright impossible.

III

In a sense we could say that when there is a conflict of values, dialogue cannot be of help, because it seems theoretically impossible to talk to someone who does not understand me or to listen to someone whom I do not understand. I want first to emphasise the word 'theoretically', because we have to remember that we are right now taking a third-person perspective on all this, we are just *talking* about dialogue, not having one. So even if a dialogue in a situation where we have a conflict of values should seem to be 'theoretically' impossible, yet it may be the case that it is *practically* feasible in some way. But let's continue with our theoretical considerations here. If we analyse the situation here (I insist: the situation *is* second-person, analysing it *is* third person, so we see how the person scanning goes on and on when we try to understand what people do, which is what I am trying to do here today with you), then we shall see that the only hope to make some progress is *by focusing the dialogue on values as such*. That is, as long as the conversation is about convincing or persuading the other person, winning her over to my point of view, moving her to accept my choices, options or decisions, we shall be only touching the issue which is at the basis here - the powerful issue of real value differences - in a very superficial way. Such value differences will repeatedly and sometimes forcefully surface, but the people involved will quickly let them sink again in the vast ocean of empty words, shifting meanings and constant misunderstandings which are the staple of ordinary conversation. In order to avoid all that, the people involved need to concentrate on the substance of the disagreement at hand, and that is in our case a disagreement on values. So from being an *obstacle* for dialogue, value differences would become the *object* of dialogue. This focusing, this concentration is very unordinary; it therefore demands a special way of

doing things, a special kind of dialogue, even a special technique.

Well then, I want to say that it was Socrates who first invented that kind of dialogue, and the technique going with it. The original Socratic dialogue is nothing else but value-oriented dialogue, dialogue centring on values, zooming in on them, putting them in the limelight so to speak. Those of you who know something about the literature on the historical Socrates have surely come across the question of 'Socratic definitions'. It has been noticed that at least in Plato's dialogues, Socrates is almost always deeply preoccupied with asking questions like 'What is justice?', 'What is courage?', 'What is knowledge', 'What is beauty?' or 'What is modesty?' - and we also see him showing again and again that attempts to giving what we would call a definition invariably failed. One thing is clear to anyone who reads carefully: Socrates is not looking for definitions in the dictionary sense. There were of course no dictionaries in Socrates' day, but there was a sophist, called Prodicus, who had come very close to the idea, at least to the idea of what we call a thesaurus; and Socrates never tires to poke fun at Prodicus, indicating that such a thing is very far from, in fact opposite to, what he himself is trying to do. So we can be confident that Socrates didn't conceive of dialogue as producing a kind of glorified *Oxford English Dictionary*. But what is he then trying to do? That's the question of 'Socratic definitions'. In my opinion, nobody has ever really clarified the issue. We may come close to an answer if we notice that Socrates never speaks of 'definitions' - this is a later expression introduced by Aristotle in the wake of a proposal by the later Plato. I don't think it really captures what Socrates is about, although it of course is not a wild or stupid interpretation (nothing Aristotle or Plato say is ever stupid). So what does Socrates say instead? He almost always says he is looking for the εἶδος - a Greek word which means 'aspect' or 'form', so to speak the 'shine' or the 'looks' which something beautiful and good has. In other words, Socrates is always looking for something good or even for Goodness itself. I think this is the key to the whole thing: when Socrates is asking, say, 'What is justice?', what he means is 'What makes justice something good?', 'What is the good in justice?', or to speak in a more modern fashion, 'Why do we appreciate or value justice?' (or even 'Why should we care for justice?').¹⁰ I think this is *the* Socratic question. And a Socratic definition - if there is any such thing - would be an answer to *that*

question. By the way, I have come to the interpretation of Socrates which I have just sketched not only through consideration of the Greek texts (people who know more about Greek than I have ever dreamt of knowing have read those texts before me, and with incomparably greater discipline and erudition), but also through the practice of the Socratic dialogue with my German and British friends. I have found again and again that a Socratic dialogue in the Nelson-Heckmann tradition always contains, either explicitly or implicitly, the kind of question I have been talking about, which is why I think it fully deserves the proud label of a *Socratic* dialogue.

Summarising my thesis: when the historical Socrates is said to have been looking for 'definitions' and trying to express 'ideas', what he was trying to capture is what we nowadays call values. (The word 'value' has of course lots of drawbacks, but it is so established that I don't want to force language lest the argument becomes ridden with unnecessary jargon.) So, if I am right in saying that the only way to use dialogue in value conflicts is to focus on values, then dialogue in value conflict situations has to be Socratic in some sense. But there is a problem. Most of the time, when we have a Socratic dialogue, we do so with people who by and large share our values. This of course does not mean that a Socratic dialogue, and particularly listening within the framework of a Socratic dialogue, is in such cases *easy*. A Socratic dialogue is never easy; nor is listening ever easy. But just imagine what it could be to have a Socratic dialogue with someone who really disagrees with you on values. What about Plato's dialogues? They are after all our best source for the historical Socrates. So do we have anything to learn from them in relation to that question? In general, the partners of Plato's Socrates are not very dissimilar to him: they are certainly far less intelligent or quick-witted, but they by and large share Socrates' values, which are or were the values of an ordinary Athenian citizen. So Plato's dialogues generally look like explorations in widely shared values, and in that respect they are like an ordinary Socratic dialogue conducted in Germany among friends. But there are some interesting exceptions, mainly the *Gorgias* and the first book of the *Republic*. In these we see two people, Callicles in the *Gorgias* and Thrasymachos in the latter, who at least claim to have very different values from Socrates. Similar things appear here and there in other dialogues, but disagreement is never as forcefully presented as in these two powerful texts. This is

what makes them so interesting; and I would suggest to anyone who is interested in the application of the Socratic dialogue to value conflict situations really to study these two dialogues of Plato.

Now the tradition of critical philosophy (as in fact the tradition of most Western philosophy) is that when there is a disagreement on values, such a disagreement must be a matter of appearance rather than reality. Philosophers in general, and critical philosophers in particular, tend to assume that at bottom all human beings think and feel in roughly the same way about things, i.e. they all have the same values, even if they don't always recognise that fact.¹¹ For all sorts of reasons (language, culture, climate, upbringing or whatnot) they seem to themselves to differ, yet all difference would evaporate if one pushes the dialogue deeply enough. If we are, say, involved in a Socratic dialogue over the question of justice, sooner or later we will find out that we all think and feel the same about justice, that justice is a value for all of us, and that it is the same value for all of us. I think this is a very good assumption, and one we should take very seriously. There are many more things we can agree upon if we summon a sufficient amount of patience and diligence; and if we learn to listen. The assumption is that there is truth *somewhere*, the question being how to find it. And the Socratic dialogue purports to be an answer to that question.

As you very well know, this is a powerful assumption of the Socratic dialogue in the Nelson-Heckmann tradition, and one which can be safely attributed to both Plato and the historical Socrates himself. In fact, it marks the Socratic dialogue as fundamentally different from any other sort of dialogue I have heard of. Other forms of dialogue may have a great therapeutic or cathartic value; I don't know enough to have an opinion about that. I don't even know whether the Socratic dialogue has such a value. But if it has, it is something additional to what it really is and purports to be: a philosophical way to attain truth. The problem here is that the very idea of a value conflict seems to compromise that in some way. Our next task is therefore to see how a Socratic dialogue as a dialogue which focuses on values can ever be able to attain truth when there is a serious disagreement not merely about interests but about values.

IV

Suppose the two partners in conflict are A and B. The most obvious answer would be to say that either A is right (and B wrong) or B is right (and A wrong). It certainly looks that way when A and B appear to contradict each other. A famous principle of logic says that *there is no third term between a pair of contradictions*. But we know from the history of philosophy that many such appearances are in fact deceptive; that there often is some hidden assumption lurking in the background and thoroughly unrecognised by the parties in dispute even though, or perhaps because, they share it. One of the argumental gambits of philosophy has been to unmask and reveal such hidden assumptions so that everybody can see that there is no contradiction, or rather that there is a contradiction *only insofar as we assume what the parties in dispute are assuming*. But as soon as we stop making that assumption, we can see that there is indeed at least one third term, one possible proposition which is incompatible with what both parties are saying. Those of you who have read Nelson will surely remember his virtuosity in using that gambit. In such case we may very well conclude that both parties are wrong.

By the way, this is something that usually can only be done by stepping outside of the dispute, i.e. by taking the third-person perspective. From the first-person perspective, and from the second-person one for that matter, it is utterly impossible to detect hidden assumptions, just because they are one's own assumptions. The usual attitude is what has been called *dogmatic*, i.e. the position that *I* am right and *you* are wrong. But please be reminded that the idea of dogmatism is not a first-person concept but a third-person one; when I assert something I would not call myself dogmatic, I would just say that I am *right*. So the very idea of dogmatism is not something I could ever entertain as long as I am taking the first-person perspective. It is certainly something that *you* may tell me; and by that you are inviting me to take a third-person perspective, to abandon momentarily the role of speaker I have in our dispute. And I may invite you to do the same. On the other hand, to entertain the possibility that *I* may be wrong and *you* may be right is already a great progress, as Benjamin Franklin famously asserted, and is certainly the best practical advice one could wish in cases of disagreement. But again, this is something that I (or you for that matter) can entertain only by stepping outside the dispute as such. So we also

have here a shifting of perspectives. And of course, to entertain the thought that *we both* may be wrong can only be the consequence of a shifting of perspectives. When this thought is entertained in the proper philosophical spirit, it will always include the revealing of hidden assumptions. And when this is done, the picture we obtain is that some of the things we are asserting in the dispute are right and some of them are wrong. To decide which is which will crucially depend on abandoning the assumption we were unconsciously making and replacing it with an alternative. Such an alternative, together with some of A's premises and some of B's premises, will yield a way out of the dispute. We will then discover that behind our conflict there was a consensus which, because of that hidden assumption, could not be brought to light - and provoked all sorts of misunderstandings and bad feelings.

The strategy I have just sketched - certainly a full third-person strategy - is one which deserves the old Greek name of *dialectics*, and it certainly underlies the practice of the Socratic dialogue from the very beginning: the idea that we may be both partly right and partly wrong, and that we can clarify where and how by talking to each other according to certain rules. It somehow presupposes that all human disagreements, and particularly all conflicts of value are relatively superficial, that there is a hidden harmony, a fundamental agreement, because there is only one truth. That is why consensus, even if not identical with truth, seems like a worthwhile target for the Socratic dialogue. If we all agree here and now, we may still be wrong, all of us. In a certain sense we may say that we Socratics are hungry for disagreement, because we thrive on that.¹² Disagreement is a motor which drives our quest, even though agreement can never be the end of that quest.

But what if we should question the assumption that there is one truth? This would have enormous consequences for value conflicts as well as for the Socratic dialogue. The idea that there is not one truth is historically associated with *relativism*, and I think we should direct our attention to that now. But mark my words: I am not interested in relativism as a *philosophical* position. As a philosophical position I find relativism hopelessly untenable; the moment it is formulated, it stands refuted.¹³ But neither the refutation nor the doctrine itself are really very interesting. What is interesting about relativism is the fact that it can promote tolerance by allowing us to take a

detached perspective on ourselves.¹⁴ Relativism, like dialectics, is, and can only be, a third-person position: only from the outside as it were can I (or you) claim that my (or your) assertion of value is relative to what I (or you) think and feel. The fact of the matter is that from the first-person perspective I am *asserting* that value, I am defending it, I am behind it, I am so to speak representing it on earth and before all other human beings - in particular before you. So I cannot remain what I am at the same time as I say that it is only relative to me. It just cannot be relative to me if it is indeed me who is asserting it - not *whilst* I am asserting it.

So relativism, like Franklin's advice, or like philosophy's search for hidden assumptions, are ways of allowing us to step outside our dispute and look at ourselves differently, more critically if you wish. And yet relativism is different from both Franklin and philosophy in that it appears to preclude our looking for truth. Nobody is harmed by a bit of relativising her own opinions and prejudices; but people could very well get paralysed in their quest of values to be upheld and honoured. One way out is, again, dialectics; in fact, dialectics, from a historical point of view, is just that: philosophy's answer to relativism. Dialectics somehow assumes that what we humans believe and assert are always half-truths which point to ever higher truths; such higher truths we can only reach by means of some form of contradiction.¹⁵ There is a great temptation to think that way, and I am sure that it is not without merit. But I want to suggest another way out which tries to dig deeper into the challenge of relativism. This I call *complementary thinking* in honour of Niels Bohr who seems to have been the first thinker to propose it. In a nutshell, complementary thinking hypothesises that any two values can actually have the following four properties:

- they can be *relative* to a certain way of looking at things and *determined* by it;
- they can both be equally *valid*, and the corresponding assertions equally *true*;
- they can be *incompatible* with each other;
- they can form together a *whole* which *exhausts* the situation, i.e. a whole which cannot be superseded or overcome by a better or more complete description of the state of affairs.

I think these four properties capture the essence of complementarity as set forth in Bohr's account of quantum physical events. It is not relevant to the

purposes of this talk to deploy the comparison further.

Those are very strange properties. Complementary thinking runs against both common sense and traditional philosophy. Yet it is important to be clear about one thing: it is most emphatically not the same as relativism. One way of explaining the difference may be this. Let's say that the most common form of relativism is *subjectivism*, i.e. the idea that values (and generally opinions and beliefs and assertions) are only subjective. In my terminology, I would say they are valid and/or true to a first person asserting or upholding them, but not to a third person watching the proceedings from outside. The third person can only observe that such and such a human being asserts an opinion or upholds a value. Well then, both dialectical thinking and complementary thinking do not want to have any truck with that; for both positions there is a truth of the matter; they are both *objectivist*. But whereas dialectics assumes that subjects never get things quite right, so that an indefinite process of thinking is necessary to uncover ever deeper layers of truth behind incompatible assertions and values which forever escape adequate expression, complementary thinking suggests there may be an upper limit to our efforts such that some assertions or values which appear to be incompatible are indeed incompatible and there are no further hidden assumptions which can lead us to a harmonic view of the world.

It may appear that both dialectics and complementarism would not in actual practice be very different. But I suspect there are important practical differences as soon as we take seriously our value disagreements and conflicts, at least when they take place within organisations. And that is the reason why I think that the Socratic work initiated by our Dutch colleagues is so important. To cut a long story short, let's start with the relatively uncontroversial concept of *division of labour*. Everybody knows that division of labour accompanies a certain degree of social and communal development. After all, only the smallest human groups can afford self-subsistence practices, and even these may well necessitate at least some modest degree of labour division. To this I add that division of labour unavoidably brings with it some measure of what I call 'axiological specialisation'; people do not only become skilled in doing a certain kind of work, they also acquire certain values. I don't think this

is merely speculation on my part: it is based on observation and experience and backed up with extensive reading of what other people have observed and experienced. It can only be denied by cynics who think that 'value' is an empty concept. When anybody assumes a given job in a human group or organisation, she also assumes certain values which sustain and underlie that job. Values so to speak *come with the job*; to use an expression common to industrial and occupational psychology, values belong to the 'job description', even if they are not always explicitly contained in it or explicitly taught to the novice.¹⁶ Different jobs generate and cultivate different values; so a clash between values is unavoidable. For me, this is the origin of all value conflicts among people.¹⁷

That last assertion is of course speculative; I do not know, nor do I have any means to prove, that there are not other sources of a value conflict, say personality, temperament or the genes. In fact, there may be such, but I suspect they are invariably channelled into the distribution of jobs and values within organisations. However this may be, it is the kind of value conflicts which arise in an organisation which interests me most. I think they can best be described by the four properties listed above: (a) the values one has are relative to the job and the job determines those values; (b) they are real values, objectively necessary to do the job; (c) they are incompatible with each other, i.e. cannot be reconciled by a kind of axiological ascent which would be able to harmonise them; (d) there is no possible mode of organisation which has a set of compatible values and is thus more 'complete' and can dispense with division of labour and axiological specialisation. To take again the example of Martha and Mary, an organisation such as a university needs them both; it needs both administrators and researchers. The well-being of organisations requires them to be good at their separate jobs, which entails them being faithful upholders of the values such jobs embody.¹⁸ In fact, there are processes of selection, internal to the organisation, which by and large ensure that the right people get the right jobs; there is also a lot of *self-selection*, which helps channelling personalities and cognitive styles into the appropriate slots usually provided beforehand. Disagreements and clashes and conflicts are bound to emerge, and they will be good for the organisation, because everybody's job is important and everybody's values are vital. People have to be convinced, at least most of the time, that the values

which go with the job are worthwhile; otherwise they are never going to fight for them.¹⁹

But if things are like that, then what are the chances of the Socratic dialogue in the case of a real value conflict within an organisation?

V

Let's start by summarising what I have been trying to say: from the third-person point of view, we can only be relativists or dialectical or complementarists, i.e. we can only assume that both persons are right in that questions of values are relative to culture, education and whatnot; or else we can assume that both persons are only half-right (and half-wrong) because there is always a higher truth that can only be reached - or at least approximated - by a dialectical process; or finally we can assume that both persons are right, but not because values are relative, or because there is some hidden harmony to be discovered dialectically, but because values can really and truly be incompatible without ceasing to be objectively valid. I don't think relativism is a serious contender; it is rather more of a philosophical non-starter which refutes itself, even if it is very useful as a means to foster tolerance and open-mindedness. The dialectical viewpoint is very interesting, and it is no wonder that so many philosophers have tended towards it, even philosophers of very different persuasions indeed (each one of whom had of course a different version to offer, a fact that is not important here). So I think we should never forget that this is a possibility. Yet my experience suggests that very often, and especially in the context of human society (i.e. within a particular group, organisation, institution or community, or perhaps sometimes also among different ones) it happens that values are both incompatible and necessary within that context.

Now all this happens from the third-person perspective, whereas from the first-person perspective things look vastly different. One thing we cannot do as onlookers (from the third-person perspective) is say that A is right and B is wrong, at least not when it comes to values, because if we do, we have *ipso facto* changed perspective - we have actually taken position, we have showed our colours, we have put up our flag. We may do this with a dry tone of voice and a semblance of sober objectivity, but that's only appearance. We are being as damn subjective as the next guy - and

rightly so. It is a matter of what *our* values are. It is a matter of the first-person perspective. Now from that point of view we have to be *dogmatic* in the only useful sense of the word. And what about the second-person perspective? Well, that starts only when we, even though we remain convinced and dogmatic, start listening to the other person.²⁰ This process goes through several stages. At first we only listen because we want to see whether the other person is understanding us. Then there is Franklin's quip: I may be wrong, you may be right. This leads us to the possibility of listening in such a way as to get you right - and this means at first just to get your point but at last it means to try to believe you, to see what you see, to tremble before your values. This is the most difficult part of a Socratic dialogue in a situation of value conflict. Can it be done? I don't know. But I must say that these two stages can happen, nay do happen, in more ordinary Socratic dialogues.

The most basic virtue in a participant of a Socratic dialogue is *listening*. So we have to talk about listening, and my impression is that we have not even started to think about what listening really is and what it implies. I don't have any theory to offer here; just a few observations I want to share. My experience in the Socratic dialogue has taught me two important things. The first basic lesson is that sometimes *I really have nothing to say* - in other words, that silence is what is indicated.²¹ I do not mean this in the ordinary sense, as when one finds that one does not have enough information to talk about a given subject. The Socratic dialogue is not about information. So when I don't have anything to say, then this can only mean that things are really obscure to me, that I don't know and don't understand what I was supposed to know or understand. This is what I call the experience of silence, Socratic silence.²² Now a Socratic dialogue is always about values.²³ So this is a very awkward situation: I am in a position to uphold my most cherished values and I don't even know what they actually are. This is a very humbling experience; and it certainly opens the way to deep listening - listening to yourself and listening to others. The second basic lesson I have been taught is that there is an important difference between listening to someone *in order to see whether she understands me* and listening to her *in order to see whether I understand her*. The recognition and acceptance of this difference is in my experience crucial to a Socratic dialogue. This is so independently of whether there is or isn't any disagreement on values. I think that very often we

are terribly pre-occupied with what we think; and of course we may very well be justified in that; it may exactly be what is called for in that particular moment. But it can also happen that such pre-occupation makes us actually deaf to what other people are saying (and sometimes even to what we should be saying).²⁴

How does all this apply to a Socratic dialogue in the context of a value conflict? In a nutshell, I would say that in such a context listening proper would be letting that *other* value (the value which is not *mine*) reveal itself to me, letting myself bask in that *other* value's light, allowing myself to be filled by it, overwhelmed by its sheer power, carried away by its beauty. Then - but only then - I would be not just listening to the person in front of me, but to the *λογος* that speaks through that person.²⁵ It must be conceded that this is perilously close to rhetoric: the listening would seem to depend on the rhetorical power of my partner in dialogue; and this is something that Socrates warned us against. Rhetoric is the domain of illusion and manipulation, of appearance and falsehood. So the Socratic thing is to escape that, to eliminate *by a certain technique* the use of any rhetorical devices the other may want to use, so as to be able to listen to the value itself, to what is good in what the other says even if, and perhaps precisely because, the mode of expression actually used by our interlocutor should be plain, unadorned, dense, stammering, ungainly, clumsy, or otherwise unappealing. Can we do that? I don't know.²⁶ But the answer is not something we can afford to spare ourselves.²⁷

I would like to finish by quoting Plato, who in the middle of a critique of rhetoric and relativism and a defence of dialogue and dialectics once let Socrates say to his interlocutor: 'If I cannot make you yourself my one witness to those things I am saying, in such a way that you come to say the same things as me, then I don't consider to have achieved anything worth talking about with respect to the things our talk is about'.²⁸ Talk about 'witnesses' is here associated, as I just suggested, with a critique of rhetoric. The master rhetorician can indeed convince the judges, among other things, by a skilful manipulation of witnesses, whereas the dialectician only needs one witness as it were, viz. the interlocutor she has in front of her. So far, so good. Yet if what I have been saying to you today is anywhere near the mark, then I am afraid we'll have to change that Socratic saying to something that may appear only slightly different,

viz. 'If I cannot make *myself* your one witness to those things you are saying, in such a way that I come to say the same things as you, then I don't consider to have achieved anything worth talking about with respect to the things our talk is about'.²⁹ But who has the strength demanded by such a way of listening? Who is ready to submit to its discipline? Who is at least willing to try?

NOTES

¹ The 'talk' I refer to above is an oral version of some of the themes of this paper given at the International Conference 'Socratic Dialogue at Work: The Dutch Experience', Leusden, 9-15 August 1998. The footnotes are provisional: they contain highly personal reminders pointing out certain questions which need more reflection; the reader may skip them without any qualms. As for the Greek epigraph, I translate it and comment on it at the end of the paper. I want to thank the Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy for its moral and financial support. The first draft was read by Michael Chase, Rene Saran and Pat Shipley, whose comments are hereby warmly acknowledged. I hope this second draft will please them a bit more.

² In all languages there is a category of 'person', which contains three sub categories: first person, second person, and third person. This category interacts and combines with the categories of 'number' (singular, plural, sometimes dual and trial), 'exclusion' (of the second or third person in the plural), 'gender' (masculine, feminine, neutral, or any number of noun classes), eventually 'tense', 'aspect' and 'mood' (in verb forms). There are all kinds of complications, according to the language investigated, but the category of 'person' as such is never absent from any language.

³ However, even in the so-called 'hard sciences' we can find analogues of a most interesting combination of the three perspectives, which I cannot talk about here.

⁴ This is something that traditional (positivistic) philosophy of science has until recently managed to sweep under the carpet as the 'context of discovery'.

⁵ The Appendix gives an idea of the linguistic complexities involved, as illustrated by the English language. Being a linguist, I added it to this paper only out of a professional scruple. The reader may ignore it altogether.

⁶ The distinction between 'persons' is analogous to Davidson's distinction between 'objective', 'subjective' and 'intersubjective', but I cannot examine that analogy here. I do not approve of Davidson's terminology because I don't believe the traditional subject-object distinction is well-grounded; but that again is too complicated a question. Finally, there may also be an analogy between the above distinctions and Collingwood's distinction between the 'logic of

assertion' (which is rather third person or at most first person) and the 'logic of question and answer' (which is primarily second person).

⁷ When I say 'all values', I mean off course 'most' or 'as many as you wish'. Agreement and disagreement is a matter of degree.

⁸ Some readers may be reminded of *Verfremdung*, a procedure of detachment or estrangement first theorised about by the Russian formalists as an important literary and artistic technique.

⁹ The moment we *agree* with one of the contenders - the moment we *say* what she says - we are not within the third person perspective any more.

¹⁰ The difference between 'Why *do* we care for justice?' (as a matter of fact) and 'Why *should* we care for justice?' (as a matter of norm) is very subtle indeed; and it has to do with the hard core of critical philosophy, viz. the relation between fact and value. But this is far too large a question which I must remain content to indicate here.

¹¹ Again the question of *fact!* (General remark: we only too easily confuse facts and values. Of course, they belong together, and you cannot have one without the other. But they should not be confused. Now there are some subtle differences in the way we actually do the confusing. Sometimes facts carry values in them; which is why people like Putnam want to get rid of the distinction: the fact aspect is all we see, and the value is concealed. Yet sometimes it works the other way round: values carry facts behind them, so when e.g. someone asserts that schools should be good everywhere. There may be self-conscious elitists; but most people would agree with that. Now independently of the Socratic question, What is good?, there are some facts which are concealed, e.g. about how much money would be necessary to achieve that particular goal—or how many good teachers.)

¹² It is a little bit like what happens in Popper's philosophy of science: we are so to speak trying to refute what we say by finding, not a crucial experiment, but someone who thinks otherwise. Value conflicts should also be in this respect an ideal ground for a Socratic dialogue.

¹³ It is in fact a glorious case of what may be called a 'pragmatic contradiction' (similar to an old question in the philosophy of language about the being of non-existent things).

¹⁴ This detachment can eventually fire back and produce in people a cynical indifference to values; but I cannot believe this can become very widespread for sociological reasons I cannot go into here but may be obvious to the reader. The possibility of some form of 'ethical paralysis' (see below) is much more serious.

¹⁵ Of course, one's reach may exceed one's grasp, even for accomplished dialecticians. Maybe we should speak of 'approximating the truth rather than attaining it'. The dialectical pursuit would then be essentially asymptotic (coming increasingly closer to the target rather than actually touching it); and this is certainly how most scientists see their enterprise.

²⁷ However that may be, it has to be said that the Socratic dialogue as dialogue is not enough and cannot be. I mean the following. As dialogue, it can only be a second-person perspective. But if what I have been saying about perspective shifting is correct, then it has to be part of the solution of a value conflict. This can certainly be done to some extent within the dialogue itself, but only to some extent. Some (first-person) meditative practice outside the dialogue and some (third-person) analysis of the situation, also outside the dialogue, must also take place. The dialogue feeds from these two and feeds back into them. Part of the third-person analysis would then be something like a theory of complementarity. As for meditative practice itself, it is important, among other things, because value conflicts can happen (indeed they must happen, albeit we are not always aware of them) *inside* each one of us. A relatively simple example is the cohabitation in us of two incompatible organisational values. More complex still is the fact which Heidegger used to call inauthenticity. Yet it is generally true that the values which are able to capture and even *haunt us*, and which effectively and actually capture and haunt us, are seldom perfectly compatible among themselves, although only certain situations would actually enable us to see that. (This is, of course, what the third

epigraph of this paper - by the way curiously Socratic - is all about.) So any Socratic dialogue over a value conflict is capable of being completed by taking the first-person perspective in order to attain a consciousness of incompatible values which are all of them really felt by me as values, either as embedded in an actual situation or even independently of an actual situation.

²⁸ Compare the original text in the first epigraph to this paper. Observe the slightly playful repetition of words: 'If I cannot make you yourself my one witness to the things I am saying (λεγω) so that you come to say the same things as me (ομολογουντα), then I don't consider to have achieved anything worth talking about (αξιον λογου) with respect to the things our talk (λογος) is about'.

²⁹ Shorter version: 'if I cannot make you agree with me, then we have achieved nothing' vs. 'if I cannot make myself agree with you, then we have achieved nothing'. The second epigraph of this paper, taken from a poem inscribed in a London bus, expresses beautifully what is at stake here. The third epigraph brings out the multiplicity of values (and voicings of values) which are inside each of us - for our delight and our torment.

APPENDIX (FOR LINGUISTS)

Pronoun systems in the languages of the world differ considerably, but it is possible to distinguish the most relevant features for the understanding of human action by means of the following table (with illustrations taken from the English language):

Perspective	Number	Person*	Gloss**	English	
Individualising	Singular	1	I	<i>I</i>	
		2	thou	<i>you</i>	
	Plural	1 + 2	I + thou [+ thou + ...]	<i>we</i>	
		2	thou + thou + ...	<i>you</i>	
	Pure nonpersonal	Singular	3	(s)he	<i>he, she</i>
		Plural	3	(s)he + (s)he + ...	<i>they</i>
	Mixed personal and nonpersonal	Plural	1 + 3	I + (s)he [+ (s)he + ...]	<i>we</i>
1 + 2 + 3			I + thou [+ thou + ...] + (s)he [+ (s)he + ...]	<i>we</i>	
2 + 3			thou [[+ thou + ...] + [(s)he [+ (s)he + ...]]	<i>you</i>	
Generalising	Singular	1	Generalising 'I'	<i>I</i>	
		2	Generalising 'thou'	<i>you</i>	
	Plural	1	Generalising 'we'	<i>we</i>	
		3	Generalising 'they'	<i>they</i>	
	Collective	3	Nonspecific actant	***	
	-	-	Erased actant	****	

* Abbreviations: 1 = First Person, 2 = Second Person, 3 = Third Person. ** Square brackets enclose optional constituents. *** Examples: *everyone, someone, people, the neighbours, the enemy, the world* ... **** Examples: PASSIVE, INTRANSITIVISATION, NOMINALISATION...

The grey cells refer to the main three perspectives touched upon in the main text. It should be clear to seasoned practitioners that the Socratic dialogue uses more than those. On the other hand, consideration of the rightmost column evidences the ambiguities of the English personal pronoun system, which can also be presented in a more perspicuous form as follows (the order upper-to-lower signifies less ambiguous-to-more ambiguous):

A DIALOGUE ON THE SOCRATIC DIALOGUE

English Pronoun	Meanings			
	'Individualisation'	'Purity'	Number	Person
<i>he, she</i>	Individualising	Pure	Singular	Third
<i>they</i>	Individualising	Pure	Plural	Third
	Generalising			
<i>I</i>	Individualising	Pure	Singular	First
	Generalising			
<i>we</i>	Individualising	Pure	Plural	First and Second
	Individualising	Mixed	Plural	First and Third
	Individualising	Mixed	Plural	First, Second, Third
	Generalising			
<i>you</i>	Individualising	Pure	Singular	Second
	Individualising	Pure	Plural	Second
	Individualising	Mixed	Plural	Second and Third
	Generalising			

It may be of interest to know more about the relation between the linguistic category of 'individualisation' (vs. 'generalisation') and the epistemological category of 'objectivity' (vs. 'subjectivity').

authors of this piece to write about the Socratic Dialogue in a more accessible way. She asked us because we enjoy cooperating and have between us a range of perspectives on the Socratic Dialogue. Rene has experienced it in Germany, Britain and Holland ever since she can remember (and she's retired now); she became a Socratic facilitator in 1996.¹ Fernando came to know the Socratic Dialogue when a student in Germany in the 1990s. Having studied Leonard Nelson's philosophical works, he met the circle of people in Germany who were active in the Philosophical Political Academy and has been attending several of the Socratic Dialogue courses.

We chose the dialogue form for this article in an attempt to make our exposition of the Socratic Dialogue more lively and accessible, especially to newcomers.² Writing a dialogue is a very difficult endeavour because Plato's dialogues have been and are a model which no-one has managed to match. Plato was one of the greatest poets in Western literature. Our readers should be indulgent towards us and bear in mind that we ourselves are fully aware that we cannot compete with Plato.³

In our little dialogue we set out to introduce a new first-time participant, Anna, to what participation in the Socratic Dialogue has to offer. Anna has just arrived at a residential centre where several groups are going to engage in Socratic Dialogue for five days; she is apprehensive, doubtful about her own capacity, and during the first evening goes into conversation with Fernando and Rene. She tells them that a friend told her about the Socratic Dialogue, that he was enthusiastic about it and suggested to her she would find it interesting and enjoy participating because he felt she was tired of the emptiness of everyday conversation. Not that

but in a sense everyone develops their own approach to the Socratic Dialogue - so it doesn't mean just one thing.

The Dialogue

Anna: Hi folks, I am Anna. Some friends of mine told me you two know so much about the Socratic Dialogue. I have so many questions—may I join you?

Fernando: Please do.

Rene: Fire ahead.

Anna: First of all, what makes the Socratic Dialogue distinctive?

Fernando: Like everything humans have invented, the Socratic Dialogue develops and changes. You Anna know business, so you'll understand that business today is different from what it used to be. Even at the same point in time, business in different cultures (for example Japanese compared with European) has different characteristics.

Rene: But I think we must identify something central and abiding in Socratic Dialogue which characterises it. A Socratic Dialogue can happen at any time between two or more people when they seek to answer a question.

Anna: But here on this trustee we have the choice between a few questions. What do you mean, then, it could be any question?

A DIALOGUE ON THE SOCRATIC DIALOGUE

Fernando Leal and Rene Saran

Introduction

Volume 1 of these Occasional Papers contains a translation of Leonard Nelson's essay on the Socratic Method. As was explained there, the essay was based on a lecture given by Nelson at the Pedagogical Society in Göttingen, Germany, in the early 1920s, nearly 80 years ago. Perhaps that explains why the Editor received several comments from readers who had found Volume 1 of great interest that they had problems with Nelson's essay. This welcome feedback led the Editor to ask the authors of this piece to write about the Socratic Dialogue in a more accessible way. She asked us because we enjoy cooperating and have between us a range of perspectives on the Socratic Dialogue. Rene has experienced it in Germany, Britain and Holland ever since she can remember (and she's retired now); she became a Socratic facilitator in 1996.¹ Fernando came to know the Socratic Dialogue when a student in Germany in the 1980s. Having studied Leonard Nelson's philosophical works, he met the circle of people in Germany who were active in the Philosophical Political Academy and has been attending several of the Socratic Dialogue courses.

We chose the dialogue form for this article in an attempt to make our exposition of the Socratic Dialogue more lively and accessible, especially to newcomers.² Writing a dialogue is a very difficult endeavour because Plato's dialogues have been and are a model which no-one has managed to match. Plato was one of the greatest poets in Western literature. Our readers should be indulgent towards us and bear in mind that we ourselves are fully aware that we cannot compete with Plato.³

In our little dialogue we set out to introduce a new first-time participant, Anna, to what participation in the Socratic Dialogue has to offer. Anna has just arrived at a residential centre where several groups are going to engage in Socratic Dialogue for five days; she is apprehensive, doubtful about her own capacity, and during the first evening gets into conversation with Fernando and Rene. She tells them that a friend told her about the Socratic Dialogue, that he was enthusiastic about it and suggested to her she would find it interesting and enjoy participating because he felt she was tired of the emptiness of everyday conversation. Not that

Anna is a blue stocking, lacking humour, or always serious. She enjoys the banter of small talk with her friends and even engages mischievously in occasional gossip. Both as a student and subsequently in her professional life she experienced searching and serious conversations and discussions but those were solely within specific and limited settings.

Neither Fernando nor Rene have any intention of pontificating - each will describe what the Socratic Dialogue means to them. Anna quickly recognises that in a sense everyone develops their own approach to the Socratic Dialogue - so it doesn't mean just one thing.⁴

The Dialogue

Anna: Hi folks, I am Anna. Some friends of mine told me you two know so much about the Socratic Dialogue. I have so many questions—may I join you?

Fernando: Please do.

Rene: Fire ahead.

Anna: First of all, what makes the Socratic Dialogue distinctive?

Fernando: Like everything humans have invented, the Socratic Dialogue develops and changes. You Anna know business, so you'll understand that business today is different from what it used to be. Even at the same point in time, business in different cultures (for example Japanese compared with European) has different characteristics.

Rene: But I think we must identify something central and abiding in Socratic Dialogue which characterises it. A Socratic Dialogue can happen at any time between two or more people when they seek to answer a question.

Anna: But here on this course we have the choice between a few questions. What do you mean, then, it could be any question?

Rene: Not any type of question. For example, not one about empirical knowledge; it has to be a philosophical/ethical question, or a mathematical one or one about the theory of knowledge. This is the case because it has to be answerable by our own effort of reflection and thinking.

Fernando: As far as I am concerned any question can be approached with this method.

Anna: So the two of you disagree over that point. I am really confused now. How on earth were the questions chosen for this course?

Rene: Facilitators tend to discuss the suitability of questions with each other. Both in Germany and in Holland facilitators get together to brainstorm the suitability of questions as well as other aspects of the Socratic method. To give you a personal example, when I facilitated my first Socratic Dialogue, I wanted to be sure to take a question on which I felt the necessary confidence, because being a facilitator is no easy task. As various aspects of education had interested me for a long time, the whole topic of relations between students and teachers and the question of discipline concerned me. So I chose a question about that which asked: *Do teachers have the right and/or the duty to discipline their students?*

Anna: How did that dialogue develop? It sounds interesting.

Fernando: Yes, it was fascinating.

Anna: How do you know, were you there or has Rene told you about it?

Fernando: I was a participant in that group.

Anna: So how was it then?

Rene: I remember the example well. We always start from the concrete — choosing an example of real life experience as told by one of the participants. Choosing the best example can be difficult for the group. Once selected, participants ask all sorts of questions and the details of the example are fleshed out.

Anna: That sounds almost like gossip!

Fernando: Perhaps there's an element of that! But in the Socratic Dialogue the example and its details are a kind of platform for reaching more general judgments about different ethical aspects of our lives.

Anna: I see the point. But couldn't this kind of probing become embarrassing?

Rene: You're perfectly right. All kinds of difficulties can arise. This is why facilitators have developed criteria for selecting the example.

Anna: For instance?

Fernando: First of all, the person volunteering the example has to be willing to present it with frankness and to answer all questions.

Anna [puzzled]: All questions? I don't think I could do that!

Rene: Well, reasonable and relevant questions only!

Fernando: Of course. There is a second important aspect: the example should be about an experience that is concluded and 'filed away'.

Anna: Ah yes, an experience that doesn't hurt any more.

Fernando: Yes, but it has to have some enduring significance.

Rene: I agree, without that the example wouldn't provide Fernando's platform.

Anna: I'd like now to get back to that example about discipline. Can you share it with me?

Rene: In this case I can, but sometimes an example best remains confidential to the group. People are sensitive and feel that it is a privilege to hear about someone's particular experience. The trust developed in the group prevents them talking about it with others outside the group.

Anna: So what, then, was the example?

Rene: It was given by a secondary school teacher about an adolescent and very bright boy who always wanted to be in the limelight. This prevented other students from participating on an equal footing and the teacher felt obliged to discipline the bright student in order to give the others their chance. So that raised the issue of rights and duties.

Fernando: Immediately another participant interjected that it was much too early to talk about rights and duties. According to him, we first had to talk about discipline, in particular to establish that the example was actually a case of disciplining.

Anna: I seem again confused! Aren't you moving in circles?

Fernando: It's funny you should say that, that's exactly what the old Athenians objected to Socrates: that he was all the time going round in circles, thoroughly confusing everyone.

Anna: What, then, did Socrates answer?

Fernando: He agreed with the description; but added that he was himself confused.

Anna: I'm beginning to doubt whether I will like the Socratic Dialogue.

Rene: This Socratic confusion is precisely what often causes impatience and frustration among participants. They want answers. Often pressure is exerted on the facilitator to allow quicker progress towards answering the question.

Fernando: Ah yes, progress! We all have become so used to demand progress from everyone and on all occasions. [Somewhat mischievously:] But you know, Anna, in the Socratic Dialogue what we do is rather more a re-gress than a pro-gress.

Anna: You mean going backward rather than forward?

Rene: Oho, I'd like that explained!

Fernando: Well, take the example we were just talking about. The original starting question was whether a teacher has the right or the duty to discipline students. That question sounds quite straightforward. But the moment one starts really thinking hard about it, the very concept of disciplining, which we were presupposing in the very formulation of the question, becomes unclear.

Rene: So we have to focus on *that* concept first, before we can tackle rights or duties.

Fernando: Exactly.

Anna: I see. And this may look to newcomers like moving in circles.

Fernando: Only natural. But in fact it would be more helpful to think of it in terms of retracing our steps, questioning what we were taking for granted, trying to clarify our own presuppositions. And this stepping back can and will happen again and again in a Socratic Dialogue, so no wonder people get impatient sometimes.

Rene: My experience as facilitator is that when such impatience has unnerved me and I have allowed the group to try to leap forward, it has been fatal to the process.

Anna: You mean, someone actually passed out?

Fernando [laughing]: No, not quite that.

Rene: But it does happen that a participant is so exasperated that he demands an immediate Meta-Dialogue.

Anna: What on earth is that?

Fernando: It's a bit like in a soccer game when a player or a coach asks for time off to discuss an incident (for example, when someone has been hurt). The game or the dialogue is interrupted to talk about it and how it might move on. A Meta-Dialogue is just a dialogue about the dialogue.

Anna: How does it work? What actually happens?

Fernando: The type of questions discussed in the Meta-Dialogue are different from those in the main dialogue. They include the reasons, including the emotions, which caused the impatience and frustration.

Anna: So if one participant is upset by the behaviour of another, this would be a reason for the Meta-Dialogue?

Rene: Yes, it is common practice to have a Meta-Dialogue on the agenda everyday when those sorts of frustrations can be aired, and also questions asked about the Socratic Method and any difficulties that have arisen. As these sometimes arise from the way the facilitator conducted the group, it has been found helpful for the facilitator to vacate the chair and for the group to agree to a participant taking over this role.

Anna: Do you mean the facilitator is ousted? It sounds like a coup.

Fernando [laughs]: No, no, no—it's only for the duration of the dialogue.

Anna: So during the Meta-Dialogue the facilitator would be able to express her own frustrations freely and explain her behaviour to the group.

Rene: Yes, I suppose that could happen, but it is much more likely that group members express their frustrations with each other, with the facilitator or with the slowness of the dialogue. I remember one dialogue in which someone expressed anger at the

painfully slow pace, and got some support. Like you, it was his first Socratic Dialogue. He had come with fervent interest in the question and wanted to reach an answer before he left.

Anna: I think I might be just like him. I am used to looking for results. In the business meetings I attend time is money.

Fernando: I quite see what you mean and sympathise with it. But reaching the answer is not the main purpose of a Socratic Dialogue.

Anna: So what, then, is the purpose?

Rene: In my view it is to assist people to think more clearly in cooperation with others, to articulate their beliefs together with the reasons for them, about major issues in order to reach insights and understanding at a deeper level.

Fernando: That's a mouthful! Let's begin with the first part. Thinking in cooperation with others has very different properties from thinking on one's own.

Anna: That sounds almost banal. Why do you think families, business people, professionals and even children are constantly talking among themselves?

Rene: Remember I said talking about major issues. You'd surely agree that not all family councils, business meetings and professional conclaves do that, not to mention child's talk.

Anna: OK, not all — but do you imply that when those conversations are about important questions, then it's a Socratic Dialogue?

Fernando: Yes, I think if such conversations are conducted in the spirit of real cooperative thinking then indeed they have something Socratic about them.

Anna: I see what you mean. I've experienced within families or among colleagues in the organisations familiar to me people often shut each other up, individuals fall silent and stop contributing, whilst others dominate the proceedings and get their own way.

Rene: Have you read the Socratic Dialogue rules which were sent to you before you came?

Anna: Yes I did, but I am now beginning to see more clearly their significance.

Fernando: One useful way to think about the rules is to realise that they work both ways. Everyone has the right to be heard which also means all have the duty to listen. On the other hand everyone also has to say what they think in order for the others to listen and understand what is meant.

Rene: From this follows that no-one should interrupt when someone else is speaking, nor should people hold forth in endless monologues or at the other extreme fall silent.

Anna: Does the facilitator have to ensure that all these pitfalls are avoided? That's a tough task!

Fernando: It is tough, but we shouldn't put the facilitator into an isolated position. In fact, we must recognise a group responsibility here. After all, it is the group which develops the content of the dialogue.

Anna: Do you mean, the facilitator says nothing, totally unlike many teachers I know?

Rene: That's right, you'll see in the rules that the facilitator is not to intervene in the content. This, too, can be difficult because there's always the temptation to steer the group in a particular direction.

Fernando: After all, the facilitator will have thought about the question beforehand.

Anna: So she's got two tasks: to control herself and to control the group.

Rene: When it gets hard to control a group as facilitator, I often seek the group's help. For example, if things get chaotic due to constant interruptions the group might agree that no-one speaks without first signalling and being given the word. Another problem arises when the group loses its way. In such a case the facilitator needs the help of the group to re-establish what we're talking about. The facilitator cannot alone ensure the necessary calm and patience.

Anna: Calm and patience? Isn't that going to take all the fun out of it?

Fernando: To be funny and patient are not incompatible; in fact, Socrates was both. The best dialogues I've attended were abundant in humorous and spontaneous moments.

Rene: Fernando, earlier you said there is something quite special about thinking together, how would you relate that to the rules?

Fernando: Let's, for example, take persons who are in the habit of dominating every conversation. They can do that because they're self-centred, in love with their own voices, not listening to what others have to say. Suppose such persons find themselves in a Socratic Dialogue. In so far as the facilitator and the group succeed in upholding the Socratic Dialogue rules, such behaviour would be restrained.

Anna: Do you really expect such people to change their everyday habits?

Fernando: That might happen in the long-term if such people expose themselves to the Socratic Dialogue on several occasions. But I was thinking of something more immediate. Dominant people tend to have one-track minds—they tend to think and speak along the same lines and even to repeat the same thought. If the rules are kept this will be prevented during the Socratic Dialogue—dominant people for once are forced to change their thinking pattern.

Rene: Why is that so important unless there's a more long-term effect?

Anna: Fernando is surely only expanding your own statement of the purpose of the Socratic Dialogue: to assist people to think more clearly in cooperation with others.

Rene: Yes, but I added that people doing this were likely to reach insights and understanding at a deeper level.

Fernando: And what if they don't? Would that diminish the significance of the Socratic Dialogue?

Rene: Yes, I believe that a dialogue which does not make people develop insights and deeper understanding is of lesser value.

Anna and Fernando [at the same time]: Why?

Rene: Because I made the assumption if they attained such insights it would affect the way they conduct their lives.

Fernando: As my old friend, the Editor, says: 'what is the evidence for your assumption?'

Rene: OK, it's a hunch, to get the evidence would need research.

Anna: Oh dear, does that mean some social scientist has to observe us? That would make me take the next train home!

Fernando: Don't worry, we're not there yet! I agree with Rene that the ultimate purpose of the Socratic Dialogue is to change the way people live. That was already Socrates' avowed purpose. But whether this can be achieved through insight and understanding, and indeed whether insight and understanding always result from Socratic cooperative thinking, are for me open questions. Hm, come to think of it, we're back at research!

Rene: Meanwhile however most participants do enjoy the experience. More seriously, on this matter it might not be too difficult to do some research by writing both to those who have acquired the habit and those who seem to prefer to stay away from the Socratic Dialogue.

Anna: I certainly can think of some dominant personalities who, if restrained, would never come back.

Fernando: By the way, dominant people are only one type who would be changed if they keep to the rules. Think for instance of the silent type.

Rene: Yes, some people just love listening to others but never offer to share their own thoughts.

Anna: I've got it now: the two way rule — some need restraining, others need coaxing!

Rene: As facilitator one has to be tactful and sensitive about the silent ones. It's useless to pounce on such people.

Fernando: In fact, this is again a group task rather than the facilitator's alone. In good groups such people are able to open up because the group makes them feel comfortable.

Anna: In my experience some people remain silent because they fear they'll be interrupted.

Fernando: Yes, people who love constantly to interrupt belong to a third type because they're not necessarily dominant ...

Rene: ... And certainly not silent!

Fernando: There you go, you're interrupting me — I hadn't finished. I was going to add that interrupters often do this out of liveliness, spontaneity, and humour. They can be quite disarming and charming.

Rene: We don't want to lose those enchanting qualities, so it's a question of applying the rules flexibly.

Fernando: Are we now clear that the way people think is changed at least for the duration of the Socratic Dialogue and provided the rules are upheld?

Anna: Yes, in theory at least, but I'm waiting to try it - tomorrow morning.

Rene: That's the spirit!

Fernando: You'll find that in the Socratic Dialogue your thinking becomes very confused at first but if you learn to slow down and listen carefully to everything that is said you'll reach a new sense of structure and order.

Anna: It is good that you say this because there's something that's been troubling me all along. With a difficult question and listening to everyone's contributions I'll need to concentrate really hard. What if I lose the thread of the argument?

Rene: That's where the board or flip chart helps. The facilitator insists that every important question or statement is written up.

Fernando: Yes, and group members can and should ask for points to be written up if the facilitator fails to do so.

Rene: Indeed, I've known this aspect of keeping an overview of the group's work critically discussed during the Meta-Dialogue. It's a very important part of the Socratic Method.

Fernando: Some people in addition like to keep their own personal notes but others find it impossible because it interferes with their concentration. In any case, the importance of the flip chart record lies in exhibiting the group's shared thinking.

Rene: Whilst a point is being written up the group needs to concentrate on ensuring that the thought being recorded is expressed with as much precision as possible.

Fernando: The effort of writing up group thoughts is the clearest manifestation of cooperative thinking.

Anna: Does this mean you only write up things which everyone agrees with?

Rene: Yes, if and when all-round agreement is reached, then a consensus sentence is formulated. But important disagreements are also recorded against people's names.

Anna: So part of the Socratic Dialogue is actually a debate?

Rene: No, most definitely not! I recently had the very unexpected experience that some participants treated the dialogue as a debate, making their points to win.

Fernando: Did they actually say so?

Rene: Yes, one person said so quite explicitly. He even used the expression 'scoring points' during the Meta-Dialogue.

Fernando: 'Scoring points' would of course mean in this context producing good arguments, or at least arguments that seem to be good because they are well formulated by a very articulate person.

Anna: Ah yes, I know the sort of people. It is a different sort of domination I have experienced in some business meetings. These people don't appear to dominate in the way we were talking before.

Fernando: Yes, they are sometimes even very quiet people; they speak little but they are always deadly.

Anna: And one feels so powerless. Even if one feels one is in the right, they win at this game.

Rene: This should not happen in a Socratic Dialogue. Every participant has the right to self-defence against the arrows of words.

Anna: What does the facilitator do to protect the innocent?

Fernando: I think the flip chart can be used in such situations. Am I right, Rene?

Rene: Yes, the facilitator must prevent any wordsmith to steam roller the group into a false consensus. If only one person still harbours doubts, that's enough. The flip chart will record the powerful statement or overwhelming argument together with the fact of disagreement which the person cannot articulate with reasons at that moment.

Fernando: Again a bit like time off in soccer!

Anna: I think I'm starting to like it. But Rene, what happened when that participant said he was 'scoring points'?

Rene [very emphatically]: Oh, I had to disabuse him. In fact, it was during that very searching Meta-Dialogue that I as the facilitator suddenly recognised what had been going on.

Anna: What then had been going on?

Rene: Although it was a good and cooperative group, somehow the work lacked the clarity and cohesiveness which I normally expect and to some extent had achieved in the past. I experienced the facilitator's despair.

Fernando: Would you say they'd actually been listening to each other and thinking together?

Rene: For two and a half days I wondered because I was unable to identify what the problem was. I even shared my discomfort and asked for the help of the group. The Meta-Dialogue worked as a huge eye-opener for me.

Anna: If that happened to you as an experienced practitioner, does that mean that the rules in themselves don't necessarily ensure that the group works in the right spirit?

Fernando: One way to look at it is that people stick to the rules of the Socratic game in a formal sense because they want to reach an outcome, an answer to the question. What they perhaps fail to recognise is that the process of the dialogue is more important than reaching an answer.

Rene: Well, I'm not so sure whether one is more important than the other, but I agree that the process is basic. In fact, most dialogues I've experienced ran out of time before answering the starting question, without people feeling disappointed.

Fernando: I often think of the Socratic Dialogue as akin to mountain climbing. The fun, the excitement and the point lie wholly in the actual climbing, not in reaching the peak.

Rene: Yes, but you would surely agree that the view on reaching the top — often magnificent and overwhelming — is worth having.

Anna [dreamy]: What a beautiful image ... Dear me [looking at her watch] have you realised that's already 11.30! If we're to be fresh tomorrow we better turn in.

Appendix 1

Aims, Procedures and Rules for Socratic Dialogue

Basic Aims

Summarised they are:

- a) To answer the question by seeking out the truth of the matter and to reach consensus — ie reaching a result or **outcome**;
- b) To experience the cooperative process of seeking the answer and to understand each other — ie engaging in the **process**;
- c) To deepen individual **insights and understanding** particularly of ethical and value issues as the basis for social action — ie to enhance self-confidence in our ability to reason and to deal rationally with our emotions, and to **conduct our lives** accordingly.

Participants may not reach definitive **outcomes** in the form of agreed answers. This need not lead to disappointment because a positive experience of participation in cooperative thinking is of major importance and can be very rewarding as a **learning process**, and have **profound meaning for one's life**.

In order to fulfil these aims, it is essential that all participants attend throughout from the beginning of the dialogue to its end.

Procedures

The Socratic Dialogue normally uses the following procedures:

1. A well formulated, general question, or a statement, is set by the facilitator before the discourse commences.
2. The first step is to collect examples experienced by participants in which the given topic plays a key role.
3. One example is chosen by the group, which will usually be the basis of the analysis and argumentation throughout the dialogue.

4. Crucial statements made by the participants are written down on a flip chart or board, so that all can have an overview of the discourse.

Rules for participants

There are eight basic rules for participants in the Socratic Dialogue:

1. Each participant's contribution is based upon what s/he has experienced, not upon what s/he has read or heard.
2. The thinking and questioning is honest. This means that only genuine doubts about what has been said should be expressed.
3. It is the responsibility of all participants to express their thoughts as clearly and concisely as possible, so that everyone is able to build on the ideas contributed by others earlier in the dialogue.
4. This means careful listening by everyone to all contributions. It also means active participation so that everyone's ideas are woven into the process of cooperative thinking.
5. Participants should not concentrate exclusively on their own thoughts, they should make every effort to understand those of other participants and if necessary seek clarification.
6. Anyone who has lost sight of the question or of the thread of the discussion should seek the help of others to clarify where the group stands.
7. Abstract statements should be grounded in concrete experience in order to illuminate such statements. This is why a real-life example is needed and constant reference back to this is made during the dialogue.
8. Inquiry into relevant questions continues as long as participants either hold conflicting views or have not yet reached clarity.

Rules for facilitators

1. The main task of the facilitator is to assist the joint process of clarification so that any achieved consensus is genuine. Consensus is only achieved when contradictory points of view have been resolved and all arguments and counter-arguments have been fully considered; the facilitator has to ensure this happens.

2. The facilitator should not 'steer' the discussion in one particular direction nor take a position in matters of content.
3. The facilitator should ensure that the rules of the dialogue are upheld, for instance watch that particular participants do not dominate or constantly interrupt the dialogue, whilst others remain silent.

Criteria for suitable examples

1. The example has been derived from one's own experience; hypothetical or 'generalised' examples ('quite often it happens to me that ...') are not suitable.
2. Examples should not be very complicated ones; simple ones are often the best. Where a sequence of events has been presented, it would be best for the group to concentrate on one event.
3. The example has to be relevant for the topic of the dialogue and of interest to the other participants. Furthermore, all participants must be able to put themselves into the shoes of the person giving the example.
4. The example should deal with an experience that has already come to an end. If the participant is still immersed in the experience it is not suitable. For example, if decisions are still to be taken, there is a risk that group members might be judgmental or spin hypothetical thoughts.
5. The participant giving the example has to be willing to present it fully and provide all the relevant factual information so that the other participants are able to understand the example and its relevance to the central question.

Appendix 2

A Brief Survey of the Literature on the Socratic Dialogue

This is an attempt at a bibliographic essay on the Socratic Dialogue, which does not pretend to be exhaustive in any way. The main purpose of it is to show that there is a budding literature on the actual practice of this form of dialogue in several

countries. After referring to the original meaning of 'Socratic Dialogue' as a literary form, we proceed to the new meaning - not a literary form but an actual practice, which started some eighty years ago in Germany and has been cultivated ever since. We start with the founder of that practice, Leonard Nelson, and then survey the further developments of the method in the after-war period, as they are described in papers and books. The literature is not homogeneous, either in style or in the views expressed. Most of it is plainly written and unpedantic; and although some parts of it is more scholarly than others, there is a tendency not to go too far astray from actual experience and practice. As everything alive, not all people writing on the Socratic Dialogue agree with each other on how best to use it or indeed on what it is. But such a state of affairs is more an asset than a liability if all Socratics are open-minded and ready to learn. We shall be glad if our modest attempt furthers that purpose.

The literary form of the Socratic Dialogue emerged in Athens around the time of Socrates' death. We know the names of a good dozen of authors who wrote Socratic Dialogues, but apart from a handful of fragments we only possess those written by Xenophon and Plato. They both wrote a version of the speech given by Socrates (*Apology*) to defend himself against a charge of impiety, which include brief dialogues between him and his accusers. They also both wrote an account of a drinking party (*Symposium*) in which Socrates merrily engages in conversation with his friends. Besides, Xenophon wrote quite a long Socratic dialogue on the subject of estate management (*Oeconomicus*) and a collection of very brief dialogues on several moral issues (*Memorabilia*). As for Plato, he is the undisputed master of the genre, having written no less than 17 relatively short Socratic dialogues (*Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Protagoras*, *Hippias Minor*, *Gorgias*, *Charmides*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Meno*, *Lysis*, *Euthydemus*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Hippias Maior*, *Theatetus*, *Cratylus*, *Philebus*) and a very long one on the subject of politics (the *Republic*). The term 'Socratic Dialogue' refers in this context exclusively to a literary form in which the main character is called 'Socrates', having a more or less faithful relationship to the historical Socrates. Both Plato and Xenophon wrote other dialogues, in which Socrates is not the main participant, although they are otherwise not essentially different from those already mentioned.

Our own little dialogue uses the term 'Socratic Dialogue' with a different meaning. It refers not to fictional pieces in which someone called 'Socrates' appears, but rather to real conversations among several people according to certain aims, rules, and

procedures, of which we present our version in Appendix 1. This new meaning was certainly inspired by some of Plato's Socratic dialogues, yet this does not mean that the fictional conversations contained in them follow those rules. In any case, a form of Socratic Dialogue which is recognizably related to the rules set forth in Appendix 1 was practised by the German philosopher Leonard Nelson (1882-1927), first in some of his seminars at Göttingen University shortly after World War I, and then within his political groups until his death in 1927. An account of the method, and the first source of the new meaning of the term 'Socratic Dialogue' is a paper he gave at the Göttingen Pedagogical Society in 1922, subsequently published in 1929. That paper, entitled 'The Socratic Method' was translated into English in 1949, and is now available in the *Occasional Working Papers in Ethics and the Critical Philosophy*, volume 1, April 1998, pp. 42-62 ed. by P Shipley.

The tradition started by Leonard Nelson was cultivated by his friends, disciples, comrades, and followers after his death up to the present. One of them, Gustav Heckmann (1898-1996), was perhaps its most dedicated practitioner and the single most powerful factor in its further development and its current widespread practice in Germany, the Netherlands and Britain. In particular, he is responsible for two important innovations in Nelson's method, viz. the use of the blackboard or the flip chart to fix in writing certain statements, thus making them available to the whole group as shared property, and the device of a 'Meta-Dialogue', introduced in order to allow the group to discuss problems, both intellectual and emotional, which arise from the conduct of the dialogue. Heckmann's ideas and experiences with the Socratic Dialogue are described in his book, *Das sokratische Gespräch: Erfahrungen in philosophischen Hochschulseminaren* (Hannover, Hermann Schroedel Verlag, 1981; reprint in Frankfurt am Main, dipa-Verlag, 1993), which is unfortunately not available in English. A short update of the book, centred on the 'Meta-Dialogue' is contained in the paper 'Über sokratisches Gespräch und sokratische Arbeitswochen', by Gustav Heckmann and Dieter Krohn (*Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Philosophie*, fascicle 1, 1988, pp. 38-43).

Several papers and books on the Socratic Dialogue have appeared in German after Heckmann's book. The *Festschrift* for Gustav Heckmann's 85th birthday (*Vernunft, Ethik, Politik*, edited by Detlef Horster and Dieter Krohn, Hannover, SOAK Verlag, 1983) contains papers by Hans Lehmann, Peter Kern and Hans-Georg Wittig, Fritz Eberhard,

Wolfgang Klafki, Klaus-Rüdiger Wöhrmann, Detlef Horster, Otto-Friedrich von Hindenburg, Gisela Raupach-Strey, and Werner Kroebel. A paper by Detlef Horster ('Das sokratische Gespräch in der Erwachsenenbildung'), expounding some quite controversial ideas about the Socratic Dialogue, was published in separate form as vol. 11 of the series *Theorie und Praxis* at Hannover University in 1986. (See also Horster's later work, *Das Sokratische Gespräch in Theorie und Praxis*, Opladen, 1994.) A symposium on the Socratic Dialogue took place in 1988, and a book containing eight of the papers presented there was published (*Das sokratische Gespräch: ein Symposium*, edited by Dieter Krohn, Detlef Horster and Jürgen Heinen-Tenrich, Hamburg, Junius Verlag, 1989.) In 1989 an informal in-house publication, the 'Rundbrief der Sokratiker', was launched to inform people about new ideas, developments, and topics of actual Socratic Dialogues. This was replaced in 1994 by a series called *Sokratisches Philosophieren*, which is published by dipa-Verlag in Frankfurt am Main on a yearly basis and also contains formal papers on more general philosophical topics. Of special interest are volumes III (*Diskurstheorie und Sokratisches Gespräch*, 1996), volume IV (*Neuere Aspekte des Sokratischen Gesprächs*, 1997), and volume VI (*Das Sokratische Gespräch — Möglichkeiten in philosophischer und pädagogischer Praxis*, 1999). Some of the papers mentioned so far advance interesting, although sometimes controversial proposals for the development of the Socratic Dialogue, suggest its application to new problems or in new settings, and attempt a comparison of this method with other forms of dialogical communication discussed in the philosophical, pedagogical and psychological literature. In similar fashion, Rainer Loska's important monograph, *Lehren ohne Belehrung: Leonard Nelsons neosokratische Methode der Gesprächsführung* (Bad Heilbrunn, Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 1995), is an extremely well-researched, meticulous and thoughtful study of the Socratic Dialogue as compared with other related methods for the teaching of mathematics at school level. Finally, Ute Siebert's *Das sokratische Gespräch: Darstellung seiner Geschichte und Entwicklung*, published in 1996, is a short history of the German tradition of the Socratic Dialogue, which purports to be the first instalment of a comparative study between the Socratic Dialogue and some African forms of communication.

As we said in the third paragraph, Nelson used the Socratic Dialogue first in an educational setting but very soon extended its application to the more clearly practical purposes of his own political organisations. In fact, he later changed the educational setting itself - from philosophical

seminars at university level to his own special rural school, established both for the education of children and the training of future political leaders. Nelson's followers continued these traditions both before and during World War II. A particularly striking example of the use of the Socratic method within organised political activity refers to the question 'What is at stake in our fight against fascism? What are we defending here?', as facilitated by Nelson's disciple, Grete Hermann (1901-1984), with members of the German resistance movement (see Susanne Miller, this volume). Nelson's development of a more practice-oriented Socratic Dialogue reaches back to the historical Socrates himself, who emphasized that his purpose was not just to examine people's beliefs but their lives. (See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a way of life*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995; and Michael Chase, this volume.) Socrates was not interested in the question 'How ought we to live?' from a purely theoretical perspective; he wanted people to live better lives, more ethical lives; he was interested in action according to ethical values. And so was Nelson.

After World War II, the dissolution of Nelson's political organisation in Germany was causal in the restriction of the use of the Socratic Dialogue first to higher education and then to a kind of voluntary adult education, mostly in the form of residential courses for several days. The *spiritus rector* behind this work was Gustav Heckmann. However, some interesting changes have been occurring, especially in this decade, which mimic Nelson's own original development. On the one hand, a group of German educators, either trained by Heckmann himself or familiar with his work, have been experimenting with the Socratic Dialogue both within more formal educational settings and in secondary schools. On the other hand, a Dutch philosopher, Jos Kessels, originally trained in Germany within Heckmann's group of collaborators, has been pioneering the use of the Socratic Dialogue in different kinds of organisations - public and private, profit and nonprofit, product-oriented and service-oriented - in the Netherlands. This controversial new development is described in his recent book, *Socrates op de markt: Filosofie in bedrijf* (Amsterdam, Boom, 1997), which refers the reader to some earlier papers (see also Dries Boele, 'The "Benefits" of a Socratic Dialogue, Or: Which Results Can We Promise?', in *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*, vol. XVII, no. 3, Spring 1997, pp. 48-70). Both the German and the Dutch extensions (documented in vol. IV of the series *Sokratisches Philosophieren*), constitute a beautiful example of the vitality of Nelson's tradition of Socratic Dialogue.

Finally, it can be argued that there is as yet no clear discussion of the place of the Socratic Dialogue within the tradition of Critical Philosophy which leads from Kant to Nelson and his followers. Nelson himself urged again and again that Critical Philosophy needs to be constantly renewed and further developed by each new generation. The two tasks may belong together in such a way that one cannot tackle one whilst ignoring the other. A systematic attempt at clarification of the issues involved in relating the Socratic Dialogue to the critical tradition and updating our approach to that tradition is the main aim of a series of papers by Fernando Leal in these *Occasional Working Papers* (see 'The Future of the Critical Philosophy' and 'What is the Link between the Critical Philosophy and the Socratic Dialogue' in volume 1, as well as 'The Relation between Value Conflicts and the Socratic Dialogue' in the present volume).

NOTES

¹ This was at the first international conference, held in Britain, on 'Socratic Dialogue and the Critical Philosophy'. The second international conference took place in the Netherlands in 1998 on 'Socratic Dialogue: The Dutch Experience'. A third one is to take place in July 2000, in Germany. These conferences are sponsored by the Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy and the German Philosophical Political Academy.

² We have included as Appendix 1 our version of a more formal statement of 'Aims, Procedures and Rules for Socratic Dialogue' and as Appendix 2 a bibliographic essay about the relevant literature.

³ Nelson himself experimented with the dialogue form in a text he wrote during the first world war. In it, four people discuss the threat of proposed war-time legislation to academic freedom, reflecting on the defects of the German school system and debating the taking of action in defence of freedom, without which basic values held dear are endangered (see Leonard Nelson, 'Von der Zukunft der inneren Freiheit: Ein Gespräch', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. VIII, pp. 365-386, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1971). We hope our attempt is no worse than Nelson's.

⁴ The authors wish to acknowledge the kind and valuable comments made on the first draft of this paper by Silvia Leal and Isabel Leal Chase.

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