CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS OF PHILOSOPHY

John A. PASSMORE

There is not a single philosophical proposition which, except for relatively short periods of time in particular circles in particular countries, has won universal acceptance. This is equally true of propositions *about* philosophy – about its subject-matter, its methods, its objectives. Are these two facts, constantly invoked by internal or external critics of philosophy, of any real consequence ?

There are now those who would deny that they are. Philosophical systems, they would say, are nothing more than elaborate fictions. What is called « disagreement » is, on this view, simply « difference ». We should welcome it, just as we welcome the differences between *Hamlet* and *Waiting for Godot.* If we criticise particular philosophers it should not be on the ground that they are mistaken, but simply as lacking originality, craftsmanship, imagination, style. This one might call the « aesthetic » response to philosophical disagreement. A second response is historicist. Philosophers, it is then said, simply reflect the culture in which they live. Since there are divergent streams in any culture and even more obviously in cultures over space and time, it is not in the least surprising that philosophers disagree ; if they did not do so, they would not be exercising their proper, reflective, social function.

Very few philosophers, however, would be happy with either of these responses. They are far from seeing themselves either as exceptionally abstract fiction writers or as museum specimens for sociologically-minded historians, a view which inevitably involves an absolute relativism. They are hoping to answer, or at the very least to clarify, consequential questions. Yet, just for this reason, they cannot be wholly complacent about the extent of philosophical disagreement.

Admittedly, philosophers can point to the fact that disagreements persist over considerable periods of time even in the physical sciences, as about cosmological issues or the mechanisms of evolution or the causes of dinosaur extinction. But neither in the natural sciences nor even in such controversial areas of the humanities as archeology or history could one plausibly assert, as I began by doing, that « nothing at all has been finally settled ». No doubt, at any given time there are

Guttorm Fløistad (ed.), Language, Meaning, Interpretation, 11-44.

philosophers who would deny this, confident that they or some philosopher to whom they stand in the relation of a disciple have finally decided some particular issue ; one might say, even, that their thinking thus is what keeps philosophy going. But if not so long ago it seemed reasonable to assert that, anyhow, no one would ever again defend the ontological argument or the doctrine of representative perception, that so far philosophy makes progress, one could not now make even these limited claims.

This certainly does not demonstrate that it is impossible in principle to establish with at least general, even if not wholly universal, agreement any philosophical proposition whatsoever. Indeed to establish that would itself be to demonstrate the truth of a philosophical proposition and one which could only be demonstrated by making use of philosophical premises. But it is scarcely surprising that many philosophers should be troubled by the extent of philosophical disagreement, and should set out either to find a way of securing agreement – or at the very least to try to account for disagreement – in a way that does not make philosophy a wholly nugatory inquiry.

Of course, there are other philosophers who do not let their sleep be troubled by worries about what philosophing is. They learn to philosophise in particular institutions in particular countries ; they practise philosophy, with no qualms, as it is practised in a particular tradition, with its own unquestioned criteria of success and failure. That is just as well. A period when, as F. Alquié wrote in his *Signification de la Philosophie* (1971), « the energy of philosophers is almost wholly devoted to arguing about the nature of philosophy » is unlikely to be a philosophically fruitful one. But circumstances can arise in which the question has to be faced who counts as being a philosopher and what as philosophy.

It may, for example, have to be decided whether particular persons are to be included in a philosophical dictionary, not because their ability is questioned but because doubts are felt about whether that achievement is in philosophy rather than in theology or sociology or lay preaching. Or administrative disputes, often very bitter, can arise about whether a particular course of studies is suitable for offering within a philosophy department. Or philosophers may find themselves confronted by colleagues or government officials who, particularly in these financially straitened and utility-driven days, have to be persuaded that philosophy is something more than an elaborate intellectual game, undeserving of public support.

As Julia Kristeva has remarked: « In the redistribution of modern discourses, it is philosophy that comes out as necessarily losing ». In England philosophy departments have been closed down ;

in France Claude Lefort has told us that philosophy is « on its way to losing its credit altogether » as « an enterprise both chimerical and defunct » (Montefiore, 1982). So philosophers can be compelled by external pressures to face questions about philosophy's subject-matter, its objectives.

Our principal concern, however, is with a different class of cases when philosophers themselves, for internal reasons, are deeply dissatisfied with what they see as the lack of progress in philosophy. They come to believe that this is because philosophers have been working with erroneous ideas about what the aim of philosophy is or how it ought to be conducted or what kinds of questions it can profitably take up and that philosophy will make no progress unless it reforms itself in these respects. There is novelty in such dissatisfaction with the philosophical *statu quo,* issuing in proposals for change which will at last set philosophy on a progressive course – Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Brentano, Husserl, Carnap, are notorious, but by no means the sole, exemplars. The development of science, first natural, then social, particularly gave rise to a search for a province philosophy could still claim to rule and a method peculiarly its own. In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, a number of new factors have come into operation which complicate this perennial quest for philosophy in a new key.

The first is the attempt totally to professionalise philosophy ; the second is fresh relationships between philosophy, mathematics, logic and science ; the third is the rise of « applied » philosophy ; the fourth is the emergence of attacks on philosophical Occidentalism ; the fifth is the growth of radical feminism ; the sixth is the emergence of doctrines about « the end of philosophy ». By no means all philosophers are disturbed by these phenomena ; many work away in their chosen field without paying any attention to them, but they provoke others into views about philosophy and its methods which are largely peculiar to the last few decades.

PROFESSIONALISAT1ON

In order to avoid controversy about the nature and limits of artistic endeavour, a « work of art » is now sometimes defined as anything accepted as such by « the Art-world ». In the same spirit, philosophers, tired of disputes about the nature of philosophy, sometimes define it as what is accepted as such by « the philosophical world ». But what does this mean ? Consider the elucidation offered, although not finally accepted, in *The Institution of Philosophy* (Cohen and Dascal, 1989) :

> « Philosophers are individuals employed by philosophy departments at reputable learning institutions, who read (and eventually publish in) prestigious philosophical journals, participate in philosophical conventions and so on. Similarly a philosophical text is a piece of discourse produced *qua* exercise of one of the institutionally acknowledged forms of philosophising, or else a piece not so produced but recognised as of philosophical value by philosophers ».

On the face of it this is preposterous, instantly dismissable as a definition. But it is worth considering, all the same, as an introduction to the unprecedented condition of philosophy in those countries where such a definition could be considered worthy of serious consideration, especially the United States.

Why do I call it preposterous ? Because it would compel us to conclude that what have always been regarded as the great philosophers of the past are improperly so described. For the most part, the Founding Fathers of modern philosophy were not « employed by philosophy departments in reputable learning institutions » – this is true of Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Leibniz. Not only that, they directed, Leibniz apart, their controversial energies against those who were thus employed, the « school men ». They neither read nor published in « prestigious philosophical journals », for there were no such journals. Neither, for the same reason, did they « participate in philosophical conventions ». At most they corresponded with one another. As for the « institutionally acknowledged forms of philosophising », they rebelled against these, too, seeking to introduce quite new methods. Even in our century, Russell when he published *Principia Mathematica,* Wittgenstein when he wrote his *Tractatus,* were not University teachers and neither work was orthodox in its form. In both France and England, not until the later decades of the nineteenth century did the Universities become, even, the principal centres for philosophising ; neither Mill nor Maine de Biran was a University teacher. And not until 1876 did either country have a philosophical journal. Even then, they were self-described as journals of psychology as well as philosophy.

Then how could any such definition be taken seriously, at least in the United States ? There philosophy, as distinct from wisdom, has for long, Peirce apart, been centred in Universities. Furthermore, over the protests of William James, the United States set up, decades earlier than such English speaking countries as England and Australia, graduate schools which set out to professionalise philosophers. More than that,

however, many philosophers would now contend that the definition is not at all preposterous if it is read as a contemporary definition of contemporary philosophers. That it does not apply to past philosophers is, in their eyes, irrelevant; only philosophy as it now is should be of any concern to contemporary philosophers. There is no longer room, they would add, for that looseness of structure which enabled so many « outsiders » to make crucial contributions to philosophy and is often regarded, therefore, as a virtue.

How is this neglect of past philosophers, as now irrelevant, justified ? On standard historicist grounds. « Their problems », Gilbert Harman once remarked, « are not our problems » – a view, incidentally, which no one but an historian of philosophy is in any position to confirm or disprove. On this view, if we were to define philosophy in terms of its concern with a particular set of problems, just as much as on the institutional definition, it would apply only to present day philosophers, not to earlier philosophers, as they will have confronted not these, but different, problems. Progress, on this view, consists not in finding solutions but in raising new problems.

One advantage that might be claimed for such a dismissal of the past is that it offers a means of replying to certain objections which scientists sometimes raise against philosophy, that it has still not answered the questions which Plato asked and that it argues with long dead philosophers, presenting their views as being still worthy of consideration. For the first objection disappears if the problems philosophers now face are in fact totally different from the problems Plato faced and the second one goes if philosophers no longer cite philosophers from past times. And it is indeed true that although American-style articles, even very short ones, now usually contain long lists of references, these very frequently do not go back in time much further than five years, citing only the most up-to-date contributions to the contemporary controversies in which their articles are engaged. (The sheer volume of publications makes this reaction easy to comprehend as does the lack of computerised bibliographies beyond the last decade). Should we simply say, then : « Substantially, philosophy is now a wholly new subject and an institutional definition of philosophers gives a clear indication of who now counts as such » ?

Let us first ask ourselves why these striking changes in philosophical style have occurred. Three factors are particularly important : the rise of analytic philosophy, the expansion of universities, the speeding up of international communications. Analytic philosophy comes in various guises, sometimes attempting, as in the case of Carnap, large-scale constructions. But Bertrand Russell's description in our *Knowledge of the External World* (1914) of « the

new spirit in philosophy » as « consisting in the substitution of piecemeal, detailed and verifiable results for large untested generalities recommended only by a certain appeal to the imagination » is perhaps the best description of the style of analytic philosophising which now generally, although by no means universally, prevails in many different countries. Even large works are meticulous in their detail, closely argued throughout.

Analytical philosophising, however, must now be taken to include the minute examination of other people's « piecemeal » results by bringing forward counter-examples and pointing to logical gaps – or perhaps a similarly minute examination of someone else's criticism of the piecemeal results. A tremendous wave of philosophical activity can thus be generated by a single short article.

What the piecemeal approach seems to suggest, then, is the possibility of philosophical teamwork in which a large number of philosophers can make a small individual contribution to the solution of a large problem, so that generalisations are « recommended », not by the imagination, but by having passed through a great number of critical minds, examining every argument for and against the detailed particulars, every example or counter-example, in the minutest of fashions, forging it in the fire of controversies.

The speeding up of communications makes it possible for this kind of cooperation to be conducted on an international scale wherever analytical philosophy is practised, whether in journal articles, or in the conferences and seminars where such articles are delivered as papers or even in computerised electronic mail discussions. Philosophical discussion of the analytic sort, one might therefore say, is across space if only to a very limited degree across time.

That the philosopher finds himself surrounded by so many like-minded philosophers is a source of confidence. As Rüdiger Bubner has put it :

> « One can play down the question of the epistemological status of philosophical theories by simply pursuing what everyone is pursuing whether it be linguistic analysis or logic or theory of science. One then shares with everyone else the conviction of the importance of this pursuit which even seems well-founded so long as this conviction is everyone's conviction » (Bubner, 1981).

Admittedly it is far from being true that all analytic philosophers form part of a single network. Philosophy has traditionally been divided into less than a dozen segments – in the earlier decades of the twentieth

century only eight or so – and any particular philosopher would normally contribute to something like half of them, as philosophers otherwise so different as James, Bradley, Moore, Russell, Dewey, Croce, Bergson all did.

In contrast, Nicholas Rescher, from whom these statistics have been taken, distinguishes in the contemporary world some forty fields and goes on to distinguish six main, further subdividable, fields within one such a section, logic. No one would be surprised to find a contemporary philosopher devoting a lifetime to one of these sub-sections, developing detail, whereas philosophers had normally been notorious for the range of their generalisations. There are, of course, still analytically-inclined philosophers who, like Rescher himself, contribute to a variety of fields. But they are for the most part – again like Rescher – from an older generation. In spite of this specialisation, once more in the manner of normal science, the number of philosophers devoted to any one speciality is, by historical standards, exceptionally large. There is no risk that they will lose confidence as a result of intellectual loneliness.

There are now, then, thousands of philosophers, talented, highly trained, confident of their methods, doing exactly what Russell said they should do and institutionally compelled to publish. Is this to be the golden age when, at last, philosophers will have secured general agreement, comparable to the degree of agreement achieved by physical scientists, that they have solved the philosophical problems recognised by their contemporaries as such ? Older philosophers may often doubt this. A far from hostile Sidney Hook is not alone in judging that « Only the style of thinking has changed. It has become more scientific without the fruits of science... It has greater depth, complexity and subtlety of analysis and rigour of argument. But this has not diminished disagreement. It has preserved and intensified it » (Bontempo, 1975).

Perhaps as a member of an older generation he is not, on historicist grounds, permitted to judge. But there is a distinct note of disillusionment in Hilary Putnam's later writings, which comes to a head in his significantly titled *Renewing Philosophy* (1993), as in the logician Hao Wang's *Beyond Analytic Philosophy* (1986). This is equally striking in Simon Blackburn's « Can Philosophy exist ? » with its detailed internal critique of analytical philosophy and its end-of-the-millenium Sisyphean conclusion. « Perhaps we are condemned to enact a perpetual tragedy : philosophical reflection must be practised, therefore it is practised, therefore it can be practised. But except in the small, not successfully, at least, not if there is a point to the process outside itself » (RP, 1993). Such pessimism is, of course, by no means

universal. But Blackburn's final remarks are no doubt accentuated by the failure of analytical philosophy to make any contact with the general culture of our time. This may be partly because philosophers now spend so much of their time fortifying their defences not only against actual but potential critics that the major drive of their work is disguised.

This section has concentrated on « analytical philosophy », an expression which covers, of course, a variety of different philosophical approaches, some of which, like « ordinary language » therapeutic philosophy, are now scarcely ever practised. That concentration reflects the fact that intense professionalisation, leading to institutional definitions of philosophy, is in this area most marked. But it disguises the weakest point in institutional definitions, the fact that everywhere analytical philosophy now exists philosophy is divided by the intellectual equivalent of a Berlin Wall, almost as difficult for philosophers to penetrate as that Wall was for Germans. That is no longer, so far as it ever was, a Wall between « Anglo-Saxon » and « Continental » philosophers ; it now exists wherever philosophy is practised. On the one side dwell analytical philosophers, on the other side, as was revealed in the battle for control of the American Philosophical Association, theologians, phenomenologists, post-modernists, radical-feminists, hermeneutical philosophers and so on. It is true that, as in the case of the Norwegian D. Føllesdal and the Finnish G.H. von Wright, attempts have been made to link analytic philosophising with in the first case, Husserlian phenomenology and, in the second case, Gadamer's hermeneutics – as, indeed, Gadamer himself partly does – but when it comes to uniting analytic philosophy and post-modernism, vigorous philosophical activities with doctrines about the death of philosophy, the task is formidable to the point of impossibility, although, as we shall see, Richard Rorty picks out some elements from each.

This is by no means the first time, shocking as Gilbert Ryle took it to be, that philosophers have « taken sides » in philosophy. In the early years of the twentieth century, just about every philosophical periodical was a place for disputes between Idealists, Realists, and Pragmatists. But they belonged to the same associations, respected one another, read one another, argued with one another. In the modern world, the debate on speech-acts between Derrida and John Searle is a very rare example of intellectual contact, of any sort, between what are normally quite different worlds, certainly not in agreement about who were the great twentieth century philosophers, or even their great predecessors, or about what counts as a « prestigious journal ». From that point of view an institutional definition is now totally

inappropriate, unless we are prepared to say, as admittedly some would, that only those who live on their side of the Wall count as being philosophers.

The institutional definition would also exclude those now numerous individuals who teach in departments which are labelled « philosophy », write in journals which describe themselves as being « philosophical » journals, without ever finding their way into « prestigious » journals. At most, then, it could demarcate that class of persons who are recognised by the established figures on one side of the Wall as being fit to be published in the philosophical journals in which those established philosophers write and as respectable candidates for posts in the universities where they teach from those many others who call themselves philosophers and are so described by the journals in which they publish and by the publishers of their books – if they write any – but are not, on these institutional criteria, « successful ». So its range of application is very narrow, even if, in compensation, it offers a degree of protection against obvious quacks.

PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

No one would now claim, what Descartes took for granted, that the natural sciences – he did not believe in the possibility of social sciences – all form part of philosophy. It is nowadays very rare, even, for persons trained to be philosophers also to make contributions to physics, or biology, or economics, although not at all uncommon for them to have been trained in the sciences, including mathematics under this head, and then to switch their attention to philosophy or at least to draw metaphysical conclusions from their scientific work, in the manner of the physiologist Sir John Eccles or the physicist Paul Davies or the biochemist Jacques Monod. Nevertheless, the relationship between philosophy and science is still a much disputed question, philosophy sometimes being regarded as a species of science, sometimes as taking science as its model, sometimes as using scientific results as its testing-points, sometimes as a topic to be investigated, sometimes as an enemy to be fought. « Philosophy of science » comes in many different varieties (Passmore, 1983).

The view that philosophy is continuous with science is by no means novel : one finds it argued both by Brentano and by Comte, to mention only two cases. One of its more notable exponents is W.V. Quine. Very often in statements about philosophy, however, « is » has the force « ought to be » ; what purports to be a general description of philosophers can in fact only serve as a description of what the describer regards as *good* philosophy. I have already suggested this in

the case of institutional definitions. Quine has elsewhere spoken of « philosophy » as being « just a name given by administrators to a huddle of subjects they do not know how else to characterise » (Bontempo, 1975). We can take him to be saying, then, that there is such a thing as what Russell called « scientific philosophy » and that this is philosophy as it ought to be (Quine, 1981). We have already noted the ways in which analytical philosophy, at least in certain of its forms, adopts what it takes to be the scientific style.

Then how is it to be distinguished from the other sciences ? Quine's answer, not a novel one, is that the difference lies in the generality of the concepts philosophy investigates. The analysis of concepts, he admits, is by no means peculiar to philosophy – this as against earlier views that philosophy simply is analysis – since scientists often analyse the concepts which are of peculiar interest to them. But although scientists use, they do not analyse, such very general concepts as « class », « attribute » and many another.

Philosophers who have in the past taken this kind of view have sometimes used it to suggest that philosophy is superior to science, offering an ultimate justification of it. Quine is by no means saying that ; in some contexts, indeed, he turns to science in the form of experimental psychology to solve what had traditionally been regarded as philosophical problems. So he seeks to « naturalise epistemology », converting it into a problem in physicalised psychology which would explain how human beings make their way, through language training, from physical sensations to the propositions of science (Quine, 1969).

For such philosophers as Daniel Dennett, a good deal more than epistemology has to be « naturalised ». In his foreward to a book which R. Millikan significantly entitled *Language, Thought and other Biological Categories* (1984), Dennett sees in the naturalisation of philosophy « one of the happiest trends in philosophy in the last twenty years ». One can see here the influence of environmentalism with its total rejection of the man/nature antithesis, its insistence that human beings form part of nature, with the consequence, as Dennett sees it, that « philosophical accounts of our mind, our knowledge, our language must in the end be continuous with, the natural sciences ». Quoting these passages T.R. Baldwin has argued that they should not be regarded as a gross surrender to « scientism » but simply as a recognition that in no other way can we avoid a dualism within the human mind between the natural and non-natural ingredients which, with the classical difficulties of dualism, makes self-understanding impossible (Baldwin, 1993).

J.J.C. Smart stands close to Quine, but relates philosophy to science in a somewhat different manner ; science is for him a court of

appeal. A philosophical discussion terminates if a point is reached at which one of the discussants can be driven into saying something that is incompatible with an established scientific theory – this contrasting with the traditional doctrine that the termination point is reached only when one of the discussants is driven into self-contradiction (Bontempo, 1975).

Not that either Quine or Dennett or Smart take scientific doctrines to be automatically free of error, let alone to offer us propositions which are deducible from self-evident truths. The days when philosophers, including Russell, hoped to do for physics what he thought he had done for mathematics are long gone. Simply, the sciences are thought of as presenting us with the most reliable knowledge we have about the world – somewhat as an up-to-date airline timetable is the most reliable information we have at a given time about when the plane leaves. What Quine has totally rejected is the *Tractatus* doctrine that philosophy is not a science, along with the cognate doctrine that psychology has no more bearing on it than has any other natural science.

By no means all analytic philosophers share this doctrine that the propositions of natural science are the final court of appeal, the sole source of relatively reliable knowledge. But even when they do not, they can still set out to turn philosophy into something more like science than it traditionally has been. Michael Dummett is distressed by what Hook had noted, that analytic philosophy had failed to reduce the level of disagreement among philosophers. He sets that down to the fact that it was unsystematic, simply analysing concepts one by one, in the piecemeal manner, without ever making it plain why these concepts were of particular importance to philosophy. (He is an Oxford man, and particularly had English analysis in mind). He wants to see philosophy establish itself as a « systematic investigation » proceeding « according to generally agreed methods of inquiry », achieving results « which are generally accepted or rejected according to generally agreed criteria » and finally issuing in « an articulated theory ». For a while, under neo-Kantian influence, it had been assumed that philosophy could do this by identifying itself with epistemology. But that approach, according to Dummett, has failed. Philosophy, he says, should rather follow Frege, as Dummett interprets him, by converting philosophy into a theory of meaning (Dummett, 1978).

He is not here using the word « meaning » in the sense that many philosophers elsewhere have given it, in which it is equivalent to « purpose », as where G. Granger (RP, 1933) speaks of philosophy as having no specific objects but as providing us, without being in any strict sense a science, with a systematic conceptual account of the

« *signification* » or the « *sens* » of human experience, « individual and collective ». For Dummett, « meaning » is used as semantics uses it. It will be a theory of « what it is to understand », of « what one knows when one knows a language », the principles which underlie our linguistic competencies. It is not surprising that Dummett should look in this direction for his « scientific philosophy ». For if Franco-German critics of English-speaking philosophy used to complain that it was preoccupied with the question how we can know what Russell called « the external world », they now accuse it of being obsessed with the question how sentences – no longer sense-data – can give us such knowledge. Post-war « ordinary language » philosophy may now be generally despised but the « linguistic turn » has not been reversed, although, of course, not all analytical philosophers take this particular direction.

Our present interest is confined to Dummett's attempt to find in his version of « the theory of meaning » a line of investigation which can secure for philosophy the kind of success typical of science. He is not suggesting that philosophers should wholly devote themselves to the study of meaning but rather that it, not physical science, will act as a kind of tribunal before which philosophical speculations can be judged. He is rejecting Wittgenstein's view that there is no general theory of language as distinct from the description of individual language games ; Donald Davidson is rather, along with Frege, his inspiration.

When philosophers concern themselves with science, however, it is more often to investigate its structure than to imitate it. So Rudolf Carnap, in search of a topic which philosophers could take as their own once they had abandoned what he dismissed as « pseudo-problems », settled in his *The Logical Syntax of Language* (1934) on « the logic of science » as a substitute for « the inextricable tangle of problems that is known as philosophy ». In contrast with Carnap, F.P. Ramsey, for all his interest in the sciences, had seen it, in his *The Foundations of Mathematics* (1931) as the task of philosophy to « take the propositions we make in science *and everyday life* and try to exhibit them in a logical system with primitive terms and definitions, etc. ». Few philosophers nowadays would regard it as possible to develop, without generating contradictions, so embracing an epistemology, although Paul Lorenzen's constructivism, as developed in his *Methodisches Denken* (1968), has allied ambitions.

« The logic of science » was, of course, by no means a Carnapian invention. The central question of such a logic, how scientific observation and experiments relate to scientific laws, had been explored by Mill and Whewell in England, Duhem, Poincaré and Bachelard in

France, Mach and Herz in Germany, if with very different conclusions. It was in their degree of formalisation that such philosophers as Carnap stood out from their predecessors, with Russell's *Principia Mathematica* as their model. If philosophy had to be understood as the logic of science, it was obviously going to be a highly technical subject, open only to those who were skilled in probability theory and mathematical logic.

In confining philosophy of science to an analysis of logical relationships between scientific sentences, the logical positivists and their associates relied on a distinction between what Hans Reichenbach called « the context of justification » and « the context of discovery », taking only the first of these to be of philosophical interest, discovery being of concern only to psychologists and sociologists. Karl Popper, in contrast, called his major work *The Logic of Inquiry* (1935) and whereas Reichenbach wrote of Carnap that « his theory may be regarded, after a fashion, as a modern fulfillment of Descartes' quest for an absolutely certain basis of science » (Reichenbach, 1935), Popper entirely rejected the possibility of constructing a «logic of science » in this sense. On his view, to equate philosophy with the logic of science, as Carnap and others understood it, would be to assign to it a task which simply cannot be successfully carried through. There is, on Popper's view, no absolutely certain basis for science ; science is a matter, rather, of making conjectures and then seeing whether these conjectures will stand up to attempts to falsify them. In his *Patterns of Discovery* (1958), N.R. Hanson equally refused to confine philosophy to « justification » as distinct from « discovery ». But whereas Popper's references to the history of philosophy are only to a few stock examples, even if he interprets them differently, Hanson extensively so refers, arguing that philosophers have misunderstood science by taking their examples from relatively closed areas of investigation rather than from science in the making, still open.

Indeed, « the context of discovery » is to a growing extent passing out of the hands of philosophers into the hands of historians and sociologists, to a degree which has led Mary Hesse to worry that her emphasis in *The Structure of Scientific Inference* (1974) on the part played by sociologico-historical factors in determining what scientists take to be an acceptable hypothesis has had « unfortunate consequences » in the form of a disregard, on the part of those who have freely cited her, of the concepts of truth and rationality (Hesse, 1976). The publication of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) – Kuhn was trained as a historian of physics – with its emphasis on « normal science », has accentuated this tendency which David Stove, in his *Popper and After* (1982), truculently attacks.

So there are still philosophers of science who pay no attention to Jürgen Habermas' complaint in his *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968) that to describe science in purely logical terms is to cut it off from the life of society, as a living organism in constant interaction with the society that gave birth to it, which offers it sustenance but also profits from the existence of science-based technology. No doubt interesting, they would reply, these are matters for historians and sociologists ; what concerns philosophers is the logical structure of the scientific theories thus conceived and thus utilised.

One relevant side-effect, however, of the attempted taking-over of the philosophy of science by a theory of discovery is to reduce the contrast between science and philosophy in respect to securing agreement. Mary Hesse argues that total scientific agreement is only to be found at the lower levels of science. For Feyerabend, even in his earlier, less revolutionary writings, a science in which complete agreement has been secured is fossilised; disagreement is a sign of vitality (Feyerabend, 1963).

A second relationship between science and philosophy arises out of changes in science itself, out of its encountering problems which cannot be settled by further observation or experimentation or calculation, which seem to involve, or to have consequences for, traditional metaphysical issues. These problems particularly arise in biology and physics. It is still not orthodox practice to follow Wolfgang Stegmüller in devoting considerable chapters of a history of philosophy, his *Hauptströmungen der Gegenswartphilosophie* (Vol. 2, 1975), to what would normally be regarded as physics, cosmology and biology but after a period when such questions, with an occasional exception like Reichenbach, were left to scientists, trained philosophers with a background in biology and physics are exploring in considerable numbers such topics as space and time, quantum mechanics, evolutionary theory.

One is witnessing, then, a kind of intellectual interplay between philosophers and scientists. This is even more marked in such fields as the classical « mind-body » problems where one finds a measure of collaboration between philosophers, psychologists, neuro-physiologists and computer theorists – even if a degree of scepticism is sometimes expressed about the value of the philosophers' contribution.

Such collaborative work is completely at odds with the « ordinary language » philosophical psychology, practised in the mid-century decades at Oxford by philosophers whose education had been for the most part classical, devoid of any contact with science. Like Wittgenstein they were scornful of experimental psychology. In his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) Wittgenstein argued that the

techniques experimental psychologists use do not bear upon the problems that confront them. What is really needed, on his view, is a clarification of our everyday thinking about human beings by more careful conceptual analysis. The emergence, quite in opposition to such « folk-psychology », of « cognitive psychology » has intensified the impersonal and non-literary tone of professional analytic philosophy – making even sharper the contrast with most recent French and Italian philosophy and still further alienating those who approach philosophical problems from literature rather than from mathematics and physics.

A third relationship with science takes the form of writings about science, where science is under scrutiny as a form of human activity, just as one has « philosophies of » religion, history, art. (To write about philosophy is, on this showing, to philosophise, not to engage in meta-philosophy). The intention, in such cases, can be diverse. The philosopher sometimes sets out to relate these forms of activity to one another, to bring out resemblances and differences. So, in the case of history there can be debates about whether, as C.G. Hempel had argued, we can think of it as offering science-style explanations or whether, in the manner of Hayden White, one has to treat an historical work as a literary narrative. There are disputes, similarly, about whether it is logically possible for religious and scientific propositions to clash, about whether the understanding of an artistic work demands historical knowledge and so on.

In each case philosophers are thought of as being able to wield certain broad concepts with a particular degree of confidence – to mention examples : theory, evidence, knowledge, implication, proof. But in each case, too, the attempt to wield them may produce a hostile response – such responses as « that is not what we count as " evidence " in history, by " truth " in literary criticism, by " proof " in law ». And it is only by penetrating in some detail into these activities that the philosopher can estimate the force of these responses, perhaps in the end deciding that it is the general philosophical concepts which need to be reconsidered. Just because it does require such investigation into the detailed working of particular forms of inquiry, it is now normal for philosophers to specialise in one particular « philosophy of ... » rather than to face the task of considering their cross-relations in the general pattern of human culture, as Kant, Hegel, Croce and Collingwood all did.

There is still another way of looking at the relationship between philosophy and science. Philosophers may criticise science. This is not, in general, a criticism of science for having come to particular conclusions, of the sort in which Goethe engaged with his development

of an alternative to Newton's theory of colours or which was typical of German later attempts to develop a « Naturphilosophie ». Sometimes, it takes a condescending view of the scientific enterprise, as in Sartre's remark that science is only concerned with « the details » as contrasted with philosophy's interest in the broad picture, sometimes, as in the case of Paul Feyerabend, it attacks modern science, with the pre-Socratics as his ideal, for not being sufficiently imaginative, for seeking agreement rather than fresh ways of looking at the world, sometimes it sees science as something which is given to « forgetting » the world around it in its zeal for exact theories, it then being the task of philosophy to supplement science by bringing to light what it has « repressed ». Or it may even condemn science as « a potent agent for maintaining power relationships and womens' subordination ».

Whereas Husserl was at first prepared to describe phenomenology as a form of science, by 1935 he could write : « Philosophy as a science, as serious, rigorous, indeed apodictally rigorous science, is a dream from which we now awaken ». But more than that, he finally embarked on a critique of science based on a distinction between the word we daily live in and the world as science depicts it. Science, he argues, has its roots in that world we live in, however abstract and remote its conclusions may be. Yet its successes lead to the neglect of the everyday world and this is a neglect only phenomenology can repair.

Although Karl Jaspers had condemned those who supposed either that philosophy is science – a view he ascribes to Descartes – or, in the manner of the early Husserl, could be converted into it, he did not share the confusion of science with technology which the existentialists so often exhibited. He had trained as a doctor and came to science through psychopathology. And he continued to believe that, as he says in his *Man in the Modern Age* (1931), « any philosopher who is not trained in a scientific discipline or who fails to keep his scientific interest alive will eventually fall into confusion ». Bitterly hostile to Freud and Marx he saw them, however, not as scientific but as « putting forward a world-view in the guise of science ». If Darwin, too, he condemns, this is on account of the special character on his views.

Heidegger did not object in his early work to being regarded as a scientist but in the end he held the views about science which Jaspers condemns, describing science as « a technical, practical business », quite incapable of « waking the spirit », as Jaspers had taken it to do. On the contrary, he says, it « emasculates the spirit ». In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1953, revised from a 1929 address) he specifically condemns the view that « scientific thinking is the only authentic rigorous thought and that it alone can be and must be made

into the model for philosophical thinking ». In fact, so he holds, precisely the opposite is true. Science is only a derived form of philosophy.

In a similar spirit, Gadamer, deeply influenced by Heidegger, says of his own hermeneutics that it can « bring to consciousness what the methodology of science pays for its own advances, what glossings-over and abstractions it demands, through which it leaves behind in perplexity the natural consciousness, which, however, as the consumer of the inventions and information acquired through science, it constantly follows ». So whereas philosophical cognitive psychology sees itself as making progress, in part, by rejecting « the natural consciousness », at least so far as self-consciousness goes, and thereby coming nearer to an understanding of how we think, Gadamer would see philosophy's task, rather, in reminding such psychologists of how we normally think. This, on his view, is something which science represses, or at least, in Marcel's phase, « neglects in a fundamental way » in the name of what it takes to be rationality.

Science as the only proper intellectual model, science as at best a route to a technology which itself is a danger to the human spirit – these are polar extremes between which there are many intermediate positions. But much of the deep cleavage in contemporary philosophy derives from the fact that so many philosophers stand firm at one or the other of these extremes.

PHILOSOPHY, MATHEMATICS AND LOGIC

There is one other « philosophy of » which is of particular importance for epistemology. That is the philosophy of mathematics. Mathematics had always been cited as the one indisputable example of a form of inquiry which issued in total certainties as distinct from firm beliefs. Russell had questioned whether this was really true of mathematics as it had traditionally been conceived but nevertheless set out to show that it could in principle serve as such a model by deriving its conclusions from the propositions of pure logic. Gödel's theorem (1931) destroyed the hope of constructing a system of the *Principia Mathematica* type by proving that in any formal system adequate for number theory there is a formula such that neither it nor its negation is provable.

Gödel's theorem is now often invoked in defence of some form of sceptical relativism. As an elaborate demonstration it can scarcely serve that function and it anyhow applies only to formal systems of a sort not to be found outside mathematics. But it did help to destroy the hopes of those who sought, as Russell did, to construct systems which can be demonstrated to be totally free from contradictions and which do

not involve any assumptions or any unproven hypotheses. Many philosophers have lost their favourite model of rational perfection.

As in the case of science, philosophers of mathematics had concentrated on the context of justification rather than the context of discovery. In the context of justification the mathematician served as a model for man as a rational animal. Here was someone, so many philosophers saw the situation, whose intellectual conduct was beyond reproach, who constructed a path from premises to conclusion like a logic-machine, with no guesses permitted, with certainty, not mere plausibility, as its sole concern. Pólya's *Mathematics and Plausible Reasoning* (1954) had thrown doubts on the accuracy of this picture. In more recent times, both Imre Lakatos in the essays posthumously published as *Proofs and Refutations* (1976) and Hilary Putnam in his *Collected Papers* (1975) insist on the resemblances between mathematical investigations and the work of empirical scientists with its use of conjectures, hypotheses. Mathematical propositions are always revisable, as non-Euclidean geometries should have, Putnam says, made apparent. Once more, then a classical model has been lost.

Another important overlap with mathematics is in two specialised areas : mathematical logic and probability theory. The Founding Fathers of mathematical logic include many mathematicians and nowadays much of the work in *The Journal of Symbolic Logic* lies beyond the reach of any but those philosophers who are also mathematicians. As developed by Russell and followed up by others such as Quine, mathematical logic undoubtedly now provides part of the ordinary language of professional analytic philosophers and is used by them as an argumentative tool. But should we say, as Russell eventually did, that it now forms no part of philosophy, any more than economics does, although in both cases philosophers have played a large part in its formation ? This conclusion is resisted by some philosophers on two grounds : first, that divorced from philosophy mathematical logic tends to become nothing but a game, of no real interest either to mathematicians or philosophers, and secondly, much more critically, that it is a grave error to think of Russellian mathematical logic as something which philosophers can use with no greater qualms than they would use elementary arithmetic.

Russellian logic had earlier been attacked by C.I. Lewis on the ground that its account of implication was philosophically unsatisfactory and it was either ignored or severely criticised at Oxford, as by F.C.S. Schiller and P.F. Strawson. But these were attacks on formal logic as a whole, setting out to substitute for it either, in Strawson's case, informal logic or in Schiller's case, as later for Dewey, a theory about the phases of investigation. Many other

philosophers, both in English-speaking countries and in Poland and Finland, sought rather to expand Russellian extensional logic by adding to it modal logics, tense logics, deontic logics and so on. A more fundamental revision, particularly developed in Poland by Lukasiewicz, was by the development of three valued logics – these arising in his case out of metaphysical motives, to make it possible to say of propositions about the future that they are neither true nor false but undetermined. (E.L. Post had also developed such a system in the same year but Lukasiewicz saw Post's work as a « formal game », no part of philosophy).

Still more radical revisions of Russellian logic find expression in the relevance logics adumbrated by W. Ackermann and developed by A.R. Anderson and N.D. Belnap in their *Entailment* (1975). G.E. Moore had introduced the conception of entailment as the name for what he took to be the everyday concept of implication, as distinct from Russell's « material implication » and C.I. Lewis had developed the concept of « strict implication ». In Australia, R. Meyer and R. Routley carried logical radicalism even further. Their paraconsistent logics (Priest, 1982) are generally dismissed but have occasional adherents throughout the world, for example in South America. The general effect is that while it looked for a time as if mathematical logic had entirely detached itself from philosophy, it has returned to the fold as an objet for criticism and renovation – at least if it is to be regarded as a general logic rather than as simply the logic of mathematics. And this is on the ground that it fails to « acccord with our logical intuitions ». It is no longer possible to think of formal logic as one area where philosophers have finally reached agreement.

As for probability, there are mathematical calculi which are used within a wide range of cases. But there is still bitter disagreement about exactly what one is doing when ascribing probabilities, a debate in which both mathematicians and philosophers participate. This participation lends support to the view that if philosophers always disagree this is because once agreement has been reached there is no need for their special capacity to make careful distinctions, to define the points at issue. At the same time there are special reasons why this debate is of interest to philosophers as debates about, let us say, the extinction of dinosaurs, are not ; their persistent concern with the nature of truth, the justification of belief and knowledge, makes debates about probability of particular concern to them.

APPLIED PHILOSOPHY

At least from Heraclitus onwards, philosophers have spoken out on a

wide variety of social, moral and political issues. Locke and Spinoza on toleration, Kant on war and peace, Mill on the subjection of women are by no means untypical. In the course of such writings these philosophers did not hesitate to tell their readers what they ought to do. In France, at least from the time of the Enlightenment « *philosophes* », a similar tradition has been maintained. With the rise of analytical philosophy in English-speaking countries, it was generally agreed, however, that such prescriptions formed no part of philosophy. But did not Bertrand Russell comment on just about all the public issues of his day ? Yes, but what influenced analytical philosophers was his theory rather than his example.

For although Russell was more than willing to give practical advice on how, let us say, teaching, marriages, politics ought to be conducted he insisted that in doing this he was writing not as a philosopher but as a parent, husband, citizen. There was, he said, at most a « psychological », not a « logical », connection between his philosophical views the advice he gave. So even so strong an admirer of Russell as A.J. Ayer (Ayer, 1949) can without any sense of betrayal unhesitatingly assert that it is a complete mistake for anyone to look to moral philosophy for moral guidance. All that moral philosophers can do, on this view, is to analyse moral concepts by considering, in G.E. Moore's manner, what kind of quality « good » is, or whether what profess to be moral judgments are in fact imperatives in disguise or expressions of emotion and not therefore, in either case, premises from which prescriptions can be deduced. In a more trenchant manner, C.D. Broad had told philosophers to leave prescriptive judgments to « clergymen, politicians, and leader-writers ». To compete with them, Broad meant us to conclude, would be to descend to a very low level indeed. For some decades in English-speaking countries that was the standard doctrine.

But when, in Peter Singer's introduction to an anthology *Applied Ethics* (1986) which includes essays by distinguished philosophers from England, Australia, the United States, he cites Ayer and Broad, it in the spirit of someone describing the attitudes of the Dark Ages. Singer has that confidence in his field which flows from the fact that he had a « immense volume of literature » from which to select the contents of his anthology. In selecting, he tells us, he demanded « rigour of argument ; originality of ideas ; illumination of a significant philosophical argument ; clarity of presentation ; and relevance to an important practical problem ». Nothing more, surely, could be demanded than this – the philosophical virtues, at least as conceived by analytical philosophers, conjoined with what analytical philosophy does not display : « relevance to an important practical problem ». But

Singer weakens the impressiveness of this description by a lame ending – « or at least one of these ». For to possess only one of these characteristics a work need not be philosophical at all or, alternatively, might be nothing but an empty format exercise. And that is exactly what some of the critics of applied philosophy would say of it, whether they are philosophical critics, raising the first of these objections, or practitioners raising the second of them.

In the last quarter of this century, applied philosophy has nevertheless been a « growth industry », giving birth to a great range of books, articles, specialised periodicals. As late as 1974, making an exception of John Passmore's *Man's Responsibility for Nature,* a British sociologist could say that « for fifty years no one has expected philosophers to be useful ». Now philosophers can find themselves chairing public public committees of inquiry, whether into censorship or into genetic engineering and participating in ethics committees in a wide range of institutions. So, on the face of it, the field of what counts as « doing philosophy » – even if « applied philosophy » – has been greatly enlarged in territory and in public status. (This change can perhaps be ascribed to the student movements of the sixth and seventh decade, which brought to the forefront a number of issues that continued to attract attention even when the revolutionary fires had died down).

English-speaking applied philosophy, as developed by philosophers who were analytically trained, differs in many respects from the writings on public affairs of Franco-German philosophers. In general, Franco-German philosophers write at a high level of abstraction and have as their main objective a critique of bourgeois society. In contrast, English applied philosophy, of the sort now being considered, takes up very specific issues – issues where public opinion is deeply divided on moral rather than political grounds. These would include abortion, euthanasia, animal welfare, environmental preservation, business practices. Much of it, as is clear from Singer's desiderata, continues to practise the virtues esteemed by analytical philosophers but there has been in some areas an infusion of ideas which derive from Heidegger and the French post-modernists. For the most part, however, English-language applied philosophy displays a respect for science, even when criticising it for some particular reason.

Generally speaking, applied philosophy is applied ethics. Environmental philosophers, it is true, often invoke such principles as « everything is connected to everything else » which were promulgated within Absolute Idealism, or some variety of holism. Or they may make observations about differences between – or more often, a lack of difference between – human beings and animals which depend not on

biological investigations but on problems of a logical or epistemological kind. (Example : does it tell against the view that the human species is, in however weak a sense, rational that some of them are born decerebrate, or live in a coma or become demented ?). Discussions of abortion may raise problems about the concept of identity, environmentalism about causality. But for the most part the fundamental problems relate to moral decisions and the court of appeal is ethics.

What generally happens is that « applied philosophers » have recourse to some pre-existing moral theory ; only rarely, as in the case of R.M. Hare, have they themselves developed moral theory before embarking on applied philosophy. So Peter Singer appeals to Utilitarianism, considered particularly as demanding equality of treatment, in his *Animal Liberation* (1975) and for that reason limits his concern to sentient beings whereas environmentalists often take theories of rights as their starting point, arguing that these apply to the non-sentient as well as the sentient.

In many other cases, however, and to the annoyance of Hare, « applied philosophers » simply appeal to everyday moral intuitions. They may, indeed, come to doubt, in the course of their work, whether any single moral theory can do anything more than point to one kind of moral consideration that has to be taken into account, as distinct from the sole consideration. Partly as a result, a degree of unease has been developing amongst applied philosophers, especially among those who work close to clients, about whether they have anything substantial to contribute. So the announcement of a 1993 Australian Conference with the title « Philosophy and Applied Ethics Re-examined » begins thus :

> « Once it was thought that applied ethics (especially medical ethics) had given philosophy a rebirth. For many years philosophers have had a tremendous input into applied ethics. However, now disillusionment has set in ; there appears to be a significant gap between the theory of applied ethics and its practice ».

The gap between a general ethical theory and practical advice is, of course, in any case considerable. To say, for example, that decisions about whether to remove a person from a life-maintaining device ought to take account of all the interests involved still leaves open the question what these interests are and how far they can be reconciled. But if the point of departure is simply a set of ethical intuitions of the sort generally recognised in a particular society as pointing to moral

considerations which have to be taken into account, then it is not at once plain what the philosopher, *qua* philosopher, has to contribute.

Perhaps, however, one could take their contribution to consist in the fact that philosophers have been trained to be better than non-philosophers at seeing what the issues are and setting them out clearly. That ought to be a significant contribution, certainly, in debates that generate more heat than light. But it is by no means the same thing as being in a position, by relying on philosophical principles coupled with a knowledge of the relevant scientific facts, to advise other people what to do.

That has already come to be the accepted position in relation to many « philosophies of » which might, indeed, be described as « applied philosophy » in the sense that the philosopher confronts them as raising epistemological and ontological problems but is considering those problems in the light of the details of a specific form of human activity. We have already seen this in the case of the philosophy of science, where philosophers have more and more taken account of the actual operations of science as distinct from looking at it with an abstract logical eye. So philosophers of history, of the arts – « philosophy of the arts » is a better name than « aesthetics » – of law, of economics now commonly have a more than casual acquaintance with these special forms of activity even although their interest in them is not quite of the same kind as that of the ordinary practitioner.

PHILOSOPHY OUTSIDE THE WEST

In Western histories of philosophy, – with such striking exceptions as Karl Jaspers' *The Great Philosophers* (1957) – as distinct from histories of ideas, it is customary to exclude what the author regards as sages, religious teachers, and even more firmly, « folk philosophers ». To cite examples, if the author of such a work makes mention of Luther, Calvin, Blake, Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, or of such books as the Bible, it will not generally be to look closely at them but only to point to the way in which they have influenced the systematic philosophers on whom atention is concentrated. Still less would such an author count as philosophers the utterers of such statements as « My philosophy is : never give up ».

Admittedly, in countries where Western style philosophies did not for centuries flourish, one can come across a book in which, to take a case, such philosophers as there have been in Russia can find themselves chapter-to-chapter with Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. But Andrzej Walicki has carefully entitled such a book *A History of Russian Thought* (1979) – or « thought » rather than of philosophy. This, of

course, is not to deny that Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are both mind-shaking and mind-forming. It is not at all improper for such a philosopher as John Anderson or Boyce Gibson in Australia or von Wright in Finland to write about Dostoevsky as an interesting thinker. Neither is it to deny that philosophers can be influenced by the « folk philosophy » of their society, as I have indeed suggested is the case in respect to Australian philosophy (Passmore, 1993). Simply, neither novels nor proverbial wisdom nor broad life-policy pronouncements count as being contributions to systematic philosophy in any of its forms, whether as practised by Heidegger or by Quine.

It would be widely agreed, however, that there are marginal cases such as Kierkegaard whom Heidegger, while greatly admiring him, describes in the « Question concerning Technology » (1954) as a « religious writer, not a thinker » even if elsewhere as « neither a theologian nor a metaphysician and yet the essential element of both ». In either phrase, Heidegger is dissociating him from the Nietzsche with whom Kierkegaard has often been associated, who is for Heidegger « a metaphysical thinker who preserves a closeness to Aristotle ». Yet when Heidegger was writing thus, many distinguished British philosophers were denying that Nietzsche was a philosopher at all and were dismissing Heidegger as a purveyer of nonsense, at best a theologian in disguise.

Embarrassing as these conflicts of judgment can be, they fade into insignificance when one opens the pages of St. Elmo Nauman's *Dictionary of Asian Philosophies* (1978). For there name after name, doctrine after doctrine, an historian of Western philosophy would take to have its place in a dictionary-encyclopedia of religious thought and religious institutions but not in a dictionary of philosophy.

« Asia » is, of course, a Western concept. Even the most physically remote of European countries, let us say Norway and Greece, have vastly more in common than do Arabia and Japan – or even such contiguous countries as India and China. If « Asian » countries have anything in common, it is only that they differ from the West. That, even, is in varying degrees. The Middle East has been over time distinctly more Western than Japan was until quite recently and no one could doubt that it at one time had a flourishing philosophical life, of great importance in the history of European philosophy. The only question could be whether when, under political and religious pressures, that philosophical life decayed to be replaced by mysticism, this mysticism ought still to be counted as philosophy, thus destroying a distinction between philosophy and mysticism on which Western historians of philosophy have generally insisted. (So in Passmore's historical *The Perfectibility of Man,* 1970, mystical thinkers play an

important part but in his *A Hundred Years of Philosophy,* 1957, they have no place).

Even when Arabic philosophy was at its peak, Beruni, as cited by Nauman, wrote thus :

> « India, not to mention Arabia
> has produced no Socrates
> there no logical method
> has expelled phantasy from science ».

The absence of Socrates here stands for the absence of systematic criticism. But not all Indians would agree that « logical method » is absent from India, although the prevalence of the contrary view perhaps explains why the *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle* (1989-1998) has headed the relevant section «Pensées asiatiques » rather than « Philosophies asiatiques ».

In his contribution to *Indian Philosophy : Past and Present* (1982) Kalidan Bhattacharyya nevertheless tells us that « a great many of the philosophical topics, right from the days of Thales to contemporary philosophers of various brands have been studied in Indian philosophy at least as thoroughly, seriously and systematically as there [in Europe] if not at places more so ». These discussions, of course, mainly arose in a theological context, not, as in modern Europe, out of the rise of physical science. But they were certainly wide-ranging and turned around fundamental questions about God, nature, knowledge, mind. Such a book as K.S. Murty's *Philosophy in India* (1985) contains, however, a great deal of material of a sort which would not be regarded as relevant in a similar book on philosophy in any Western country.

Indeed, he himself concludes by raising the sort of consideration a Western philosopher, and, as well, those many Indian philosophers who are substantial participants in recent Western debates – such as G.L. Pandit in his *Methodological Variance* (1991) – would invoke. On the one side, as Murty says, there are those Indians for whom « *any* kind of religious, moral, political or social « talk » is regarded as philosophy, at the other extreme those who regard nothing as philosophy unless it, for one group, employs the methods and style of professional analytical philosophy or, for another group, imitates the severities of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* ».

On the first approach, according to Murty, philosophy becomes « amorphous, soft and loose », on the other view it becomes « restricted, hard and rigorous ». Indian philosophers, he tells us, are in reasonable agreement about what counts as Western philosophy (as distinct from religion, literature, etc.) but do not have a parallel

agreement about what counts as philosophy in India, so some Indian philosophers would reject the claim of many of the people he has talked about to be philosophers. He himself suggests that they might properly provide material for a critical « philosophy of religion or for political, social, and legal philosophy » ; philosophy then enters into the picture as a systematic critical examination of ideas and forms of activity which may not in themselves be philosophical. And the possibility is left open, as is certainly the case, of describing particular Indian thinkers, modern and ancient, as being philosophers in the Western sense, or senses.

A more controversial case is Africa. Here there is in the first place the question whether it is sensible to talk about « African » philosophers, in the manner of L.A. Senghor's concept of *négritude* as distinct from, let us say, « Bantu Philosophy », as the Belgian missionary Placide Tempels did in his book with that title (1946) which is often, if not quite accurately, taken to be the first to attempt to offer a description of African ideas. If he had called his book « Bantu Thought », some have said, a great deal of subsequent controversy would have been avoided. (Hountondji has in fact suggested that the original Flemish title should have been translated as « Philosophical Reflections on the Bantu »). That was in fact the practice of such British anthropologists as Meyer Fortes, faced with a similar task. Afro-Americans are more likely than Africans, who are still deeply conscious of their tribal diversity, to write books with such titles as R.A. Wright (ed) *African Philosophy : An Introduction* (1977) or to support such arguments as C.A. Diop's that philosophy actually originated in a then-negroid Egypt, not in Greece.

The crucial debate, however, is whether one can pick out something describable as « philosophy » in the oral traditions of African ethnic groups. With a natural emphasis on what were for a time French colonies, the *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle* explores these issues at considerable length and from a variety of points of view, significantly under such headings as « *ethnophilosophie* », « *ethnologique* ». My own emphasis will be on West African writers.

What one certainly finds in West Africa, as many observers have noted, is a very rich collection of proverbs, some of them touching on questions which have been of interest to Western, as well as African, philosophers. But such proverbial wisdom, as Kwasi Wiredu emphasises in his *Philosophy and African Culture* (1980), is also to be found in Western societies, still operative there and enriched over time by poets, dramatists, novelists. What characterises Western philosophy is that « the wisdom of the elders » as expressed in such proverbs is not regarded as being decisive ; it has to stand up to the sort of critical

examination to which Socrates submitted the « received wisdom » of Simonides.

To say this is not to try to reinstate the view that in tribal societies there were no heretics or that there is something called « the primitive mind ». But proverbial wisdom, by its very nature, is not heretical. What is lacking is the close systematic criticism which was directed against received wisdom by a Xenophanes or a Socrates. So, in a manner comparable to what Murty says in the very different case of India, African philosophy, for Wiredu, will be distinctive in taking up issues which are of special interest within African traditions but it will use the critical methods, the close analytic reasoning developed within Western philosophy and will take advantage of the discussions that have taken place there, wherever they are relevant.

A different attitude is taken up, however, by Wiredu's colleague and critic, Kwame Gyekye in his *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought* (1980), subtitled « The Akan Conceptual Scheme ». He treats the Akan proverbs as being in and of themselves a conceptual scheme, to be brought into order as such, somewhat as if Xenophanes had sought to systematise the Greek stories about the gods rather than to criticise them for what he saw as their immorality and anthropomorphism or Plato had spent his time setting in order the proverbial wisdom of Simonides and Polemarchus. In a certain sense, Gyekye hopes to develop a scheme of the same sort as what Strawson developed in his *Individuals* (1959) as « descriptive metaphysics » but it is to characterise only the governing concepts of a particular tribe.

In reply to this contrast, some would assert that Strawson's conceptual scheme, although it claims to be universal, even if requiring to be restated over time in a different idiom, in fact does no more than systematise the key concepts of European individualism. Should this be true, however, both Strawson and Gyekye should be described as doing ethnophilosophy, rather than philosophy proper – unless we are prepared to argue that this is the most philosophy can expect to achieve, that it must surrender its universalistic ambitions. One should add, too, that not all Africans are happy with the concept of ethnophilosophy. Some, like P. Hountondji in his *Sur la philosophie Africaine* (1977) see it as reviving the exploded doctrine that in tribal societies everybody thinks alike.

In defence of the view that proverbial wisdom, although purely gnomic, can count as a contribution to philosophy, Gyekye cites as Greek examples of such wisdom the Socratic maxims « No one willingly does wrong » and « Virtue is knowledge ». But these were far from being « the wisdom of the elders » and, more importantly, they were defended by argument, that fact distinguishing them from the

comparably unorthodox gnomic paradoxes of Oscar Wilde, quoted so freely in the Japanese scholar Hajime Nakamura's A *Comparative History of Ideas* (1975).

A more arguable case is Heraclitus, if we take it that his fragments are not the only remaining sentences out of what was once a continuous book, containing linking arguments, but are representative of the way in which he wrote. But at least we have material here for the construction of a consequential, radical, theory, which is utterly opposed, and indeed hostile to, received opinions as represented in proverbial wisdom. Something similar is true of the pre-Socratics generally, who are not uncommonly invoked as being what African philosophy can properly be compared with. But there is nothing which compares with Parmenides.

The wider importance of these considerations is that if we were to accept the view that proverbs, or indeed contemporary proverb-style aphorisms such as « Greed is good », count as philosophy, philosophy becomes so broad a concept that it disappears as a discipline, perhaps into the maw of « cultural studies ». An alternative would be to abandon « philosophy », simply as such, as the name of a discipline, and to describe any broad statements about man's place in the cosmos, about moral and social relationships, about the nature of human activities which are not candidates for critical examination as « folk philosophy », thus distinguishing them from what one would have to call « systematic critical philosophy ». Indeed, something like this must have been in Karl Popper's mind when, in his contribution to *The Owl of Minerva* (Bontempo, 1975), he wrote that « all men are philosophers or at least have philosophical prejudices » but went on to refer to a special class of persons who critically examine these prejudices. Perhaps one could further distinguish from both folk philosophers and critical philosophers another class, ethnophilosophers, who try to systematise the conceptual framework of « popular philosophy » – or conflicting popular philosophies – while abstaining from criticism.

So far as I am aware, there is not the same degree of contemporary controversy about the nature of philosophy in China or Japan as there is in India or some regions of Africa or amongst Afro-Americans. China and Japan were never colonised, except for short periods of time and excluding Hong Kong, and feel no need to justify their cultures – far from it – even when they are now considerably influenced by Western ideas, as in China's case by Marxism and in Japan's case by a Heidegger who is sometimes conjoined with Zen. Individual philosophers go their own way, as Tomonobu Imamichi does with his Ecophilosophy. One could explore particular issues, like Nakamura's suggestion that Buddhism shares Wittgenstein's attitudes

to metaphysics, one can argue about whether Confucius or Lao-tzu can properly be regarded as philosophers rather than as moralists. But all this lies beyond our present emphasis on the contemporary.

THE END OF PHILOSOPHY

Although, as we earlier saw, some analytical philosophers display a degree of disillusionment about the present outcome of analytical philosophy, it is in general true that in their busy professional lives they would think it merely absurd to speak of philosophy as dead, or dying. Indeed, one of them, Hector Neri Castañeda, contributes to *The Institution of Philosophy* – a book which admittedly has as its subtitle « A Discipline in Crisis ? » – an essay in which he tells us that his sole regret is that he is not young enough fully to participate in the richness and variety of contemporary philosophy. In his *The View from Nowhere* (1986) Thomas Nagel dismisses attempts to get rid of philosophical problems as arising from the fact that « a lot of philosophers are sick of the subject and glad to be rid of its problems », not out of any inherent defect in philosophy.

Neither are those French philosophers often lumped together as post-modernists always prepared to commit themselves to the view that the time has come to pronounce funeral rites over philosophy. In the interviews with Derrida which make up *Positions* (1981) where, as he rightly remarks, he speaks out more definitely than is his wont, he specifically rejects « what is today so easily called the death of philosophy ». If for much of the time he works, as he says, on the margins of philosophy, philosophy has still to be there to be marginal to, as something which, he adds, he can move into and out of. No doubt he practises philosophical deconstruction, often by exploring, as in his study of Heidegger *Of Spirit* (1987), what a philosopher has not considered, although we could reasonably expect it to be considered, or such details as the philosopher's use of quotation marks and much else that is normally regarded as marginal to a philosopher's work but can in fact throw a blazing light on it. Only for those who care about philosophy, however, has such interpretative work any significance.

Foucault, too, has distressed such of his admirers as see in the Enlightenment the source of all evil by laying it down, again in an interview, that « the central issue of philosophy and critical thought since the eighteenth century has been, still is, and, I hope, will remain the question : What is this Reason that we use ? What are its historical effects ? What are its limits and what are its dangers ? » (Foucault, 1982). No doubt, Foucault wants to transform philosophy by giving up the search for « formal structures of universal value », by « exploring

what ought to be changed in its own thought ». But this familiar plea for transformation is not a death sentence. The Italian post-modernist Gianni Vattimo still finds it possible to write a book with the title *The Adventure of Difference : Philosophy after Nietzsche and Heidegger* (1980) as if philosophical life still goes on.

What, indeed, could it mean to say that philosophy had now come to an end ? One thing it could mean is that all the questions which philosophers have asked, in so far as they admit of being answered by philosophers, have now been answered. So in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* Wittgenstein tells us in his preface (1918) that he believes himself « to have found, in all essential points, the final solution of the problems » although others, he grants, may « find better ways of formulating his thoughts ». Only to this very limited degree, it would seem, should philosophy continue. But Wittgenstein, of course, was later to return to philosophy and even at the end of the *Tractatus,* he had already left open at least one task for philosophy – « when anyone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his expressions » – a task which many philosophers were enthusiastically to undertake. In the long run, indeed, Wittgenstein was still another philosophical reformer, if like Derrida thinking of philosophy as a practice rather than a theory. But even then what have been most discussed in his later writings are theories – whether about the possibility of constructing a private language or about language games. The theoretical impulse in philosophy is not easy to kill.

Another possibility is that the « end of philosophy » is not a description but a demand. One can interpret some of Marx's adverse comments on philosophy in these terms, as demanding that philosophers should give up philosophy and concentrate on changing the world. Within many radical movements, indeed, one finds something like this as the extreme point in a spectrum – in feminism, for example.

For such feminists as J.R. Richards in *The Sceptical Feminist* (1982) the feminist, no doubt, is to deploy characteristic philosophical techniques, drawing attention to concealed presuppositions, contradictions, fallacious arguments, as exhibited in traditional male philosophising. Much of the earlier feminist literature consisted of close analytical studies of such topics as abortion, rape, discrimination. At the radical extreme, however, there are those who reject philosophy out of hand as arising, according to V. Solinas, out of male feebleness, an incapacity successfully to relate to « anybody or anything », which sets males weeping at what they call « the Human Condition » but should properly be called « The Male Condition », and leads them to go in

search of metaphysical consolation. Her principal examples of this are Heidegger and the existentialists (Solinas, 1969). In a similarly hostile category fall such French feminists as L. Irigaray for whom « female sexuality » cannot « articulate itself, even minimally, within an Aristotle-type logic ». The only way out for women, she argues, is to « transcend logic » (Irigaray, 1977) – a view cited only to be firmly contested by contributors to *Women and Philosophers* (ed. Janna L. Thompson, 1986) whose writings clearly display that they have no difficulty in working within such a logic. But the anti-philosophical feminists have many followers.

A third view, developed for example by Moira Gatens in her closely argued *Feminism in Philosophy* (1991) deconstructs, in Derrida's manner, antitheses which, although not without dissenting voices, Western philosophy has often deployed, always with the suggestion that the first mentioned member of the antithesis is superior to the second member, which is dependent upon it. These are such antitheses as mind/body – where body is taken to include everything except mind, nature/culture with its attendant assumption that there is an inborn feminine nature prior to socialisation, and particularly reason/passion. But one can welcome the re-examination of these antitheses, even claim to having in the past contributed to it, without at all treating such a re-examination as an argument for killing off logical reasoning and thereby philosophy as distinct from the mere enunciation of opinions.

For a full-blown doctrine of the end of philosophy one has to turn, with whatever trepidation, to Heidegger. He is a striking case of a writer who has been highly influential largely in virtue of being misunderstood. So ignoring both the title *Sein und Zeit* of Heidegger's only book and its epigraph from Plato's *Sophist,* French existentialists took him to be writing philosophical anthropology ; ignoring the many things he says about « *Sein* » which are incompatible with such a reading, theological translators and commentators took *Sein,* « Being », to mean « God ». Similarly his doctrine that philosophy is now at its end is sometimes taken to assert nothing more than that the fields in which philosophy once operated have now been taken over by the special sciences, natural and social, so that there is nothing left for philosophy to do.

All these misinterpretations are quite natural. His philosophical anthropology and the accompanying epistemological attack on conventional correspondence theories of truth are the most intelligible, and for many the most interesting, elements in *Sein und Zeit* ; his later writings in general are much easier to read if one ignores the passages which are incompatible with that reading and takes *Sein* to mean

« God » ; however convinced one may be that when Heidegger speaks about the end of philosophy he means something far more complex than what has worried so many philosophers – that they have found themselves forced to retreat from familiar territory by the advance of science – one can find it next to impossible to say what he does mean in a way that is both intelligible and faithful to his texts.

Very crudely, however, we can take him to be asserting, first, that we are living in a technology-governed world in which even human beings are regarded as resources. (This is the side of Heidegger with which it is very easy to sympathise). Secondly, that technology is not just a collection of machines, many of them admittedly useful. Its essence lies, rather, in its expression of the Nietzschean will to power i.e. « the will to will ». And Nietzsche, for Heidegger, is the final outcome of a metaphysics which had its source in a Plato who broke up the unity of Being by his theory of forms, in the subsequent division between essence and existence, in Descartes' view that the existence of the subject, not of Being, is the primary certainty and his ascription to such subjects of a power to master the world, a world reduced to extension.

In his *Metaphysics as History of Being* (Heidegger, 1961) Heidegger traces the history of metaphysics, which is at the same time a history of « the oblivion of Being », from Aristotle-Plato, through such scholastic philosophers as Suárez and Aquinas, for whom he once expressed a special sympathy, Descartes – his particular horror – Leibniz, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Husserl, to culminate, so unexpectedly, in the fragments collected as Nietzsche's *Will to Power.* Not a single English-speaking philosopher – no critic of what Heidegger sees as the metaphysical tradition – plays any part in his history. (In contrast, Yves Michaud has written a book called *Hume et la fin de la philosophie,* 1983, seeing Hume as already terminating what Heidegger regards as philosophy). In an admittedly incomplete reading of Heidegger I recall only one side reference to English-speaking philosophy, the description in his « Recollection in Metaphysics » (Heidegger, 1961) of logistics as « the calculable organisation of the complete lack of knowledge about the essence of being ». After all, for him there are only two philosophical languages – German and Ancient Greek. To point to analytical philosophy would have done nothing to persuade him that philosophy is not dead.

In the spirit, he says, which, not the devices it creates, is the essence of technology, where forgetfulness of Being, a total concentration on particular beings, subjectivity as the will to will, reaches its culmination, philosophy carries its forgetfulness of Being – a forgetfulness, we are to understand, destined by Being – to its

extreme point. « The essence of technology is completed metaphysics ». There is therefore now no option but to turn back, abandoning metaphysics in favour of « thought ». So at the end of his essay « The Word of Nietzsche » (1943) he writes thus : « Thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the most stiff-necked adversary of thought ».

The contrast between thought and philosophy – for Heidegger philosophy is metaphysics, with epistemology no more than an illegitimate child of metaphysics and logic assimilated to it in Hegel's fashion – is one that has many times recurred in the present discussion and not always contemptuously. (The complicated relationship between Hegel and Heidegger on this point is explored in De Vetiis, *Heidegger e la Fine della Filosofia,* Florence, 1974). As Heidegger does, I have taken « thought » to include many of the utterances of poets – as indeed of novelists and those less readily describable writers whom I have elsewhere called « Sages », authors of pronouncements which often throw light upon, or generalise or compel us to recognise the character of, our own experience but without arguing for them in a systematic fashion.

Heidegger, however, describes « thought » in his *What is Thinking ?* (1954) not as something worth listening to but as in itself a « non-conceptual » kind of « reverential listening », listening ultimately to the ancient Greek language, especially before the Greek philosophers « forgot Being », but even to those echoes of that time one can still hear in Plato and Aristotle. If this indeed is where we are now destined to return, metaphysics having run its destined course, then certainly philosophy has come to its end. (Many analytical philosophers would say quite generally of that they call « Continental » philosophy that is *already* substitutes « thought» for philosophy). In contrast, if Karl Jaspers, too, speaks of the end of Western philosophy, this is only as a preliminary to the construction of a « world philosophy ».

In the English-speaking world, the philosopher most often cited as a proponent of the « end of philosophy » doctrine is Richard Rorty. So in an anthology prophetically entitled *After Philosophy* (ed. Kenneth Barnes et al., 1987) it is he who heads the section entitled *The End of Philosophy,* with Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida as his sole companions. The special appeal of Rorty – who is particularly loved by those many English Department exponents of « Theory », that amalgam of philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, which ignores the restraints the practitioners in these areas impose on their speculations – consists in the fact that he has on the face of it tunnelled beneath the Wall.

He was for long best known as the compiler of an anthology *The*

Linguistic Turn (1967). But if the philosophers included in that volume, were all, in European eyes at least, analytical philosophers, Rorty's lengthy preface already foreshadowed what were to be the critical themes of his essays, finally collected as *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), and in the less clear *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980) which made his name. Although not themselves recognising this fact, Rorty argues, such American philosophers as Quine, Sellars, Davidson are moving in the same direction as Wittgenstein – whom Rorty reads as a satirist – Gadamer and Heidegger, away from the conception of philosophy as being in any sense a theory. They were pragmatists in spite of themselves.

For Rorty, gone now are dreams of finding unquestionable foundations for human knowledge, gone is any suggestion that the world can be looked at *sub specie aeternitatis* as distinct from through the eyes of a particular culture at a particular time, gone is any attempt to explain as distinct from understanding, in the manner of Gadamer's hermeneutics, gone too, is the idea of truth, except in the pragmatic interpretation of William James, gone, finally, is the adversarial manner of argument, beloved by analytical philosophers, condemned by the feminist philosophers brought together by Merrill Hintikka and Sandra Harding in their *Discovering Reality* (1983). (One can, of course, be prepared to say some of these farewells, as I myself am, without accepting others and without at all agreeing with Rorty's conclusions about philosophy).

The task of the philosopher, for Rorty, is to be « edifying », in the sense of contributing through conversation to the general education of human beings. That process can remain as « philosophy » but « Philosophy », as now understood, is dead, even if it has not yet recognised that fact. Substantially, the philosopher is now to be seen as a Sage, if a conversational rather than a Delphic-style Sage. Rorty would also refuse to admit the distinction between conversation – which, in my experience, is most often nothing but an interchange of banalities, in the manner of Dean Swifts' *Polite and Ingenious Conversation,* or at best what Heidegger calls « chatter and prattle » – and discussion, on which I have relied in my own accounts of philosophy (Passmore, 1967, 1993). But to make such contrasts is at once to philosophise, as it would be to try to distinguish philosophical conversations from talk about the weather, as being « the conversation », so Gadamer says, « in which we are all caught up together and never cease to be caught up – whether one says that philosophy is dead or not » (Gadamer, 1976).