

ating morally would render their children morally dependent. When Laing and Esterton say that she 'could not know . . .' (see quotation above) this 'could not' is a logical could not: it is not that the girl failed to exercise her cognitive skills; she simply had no sure cognitive skills to exercise - as the authors put it "Her difficulty was that she could not know when to trust or mistrust her own perceptions and memory or her mother and father". (p.43)

One could say that with Maya the educational process has broken down. If education is about leading out a child into autonomous existence, then epistemological education is about making the child cognitively autonomous. In transferring their cognitive skills to their children, parents dissolve the position of 'natural' (perhaps 'contingent' is a better word) authority which initially they have. It is precisely this and other dissolutions or abolitions of authority which Maya's parents will not tolerate. They cannot let their daughter grow up. (cf. parents who try to stop sexual growing up.) Here is Maya's mother speaking, the first and last sentences being those of Laing and Esterton:

"She recalled a 'home truth' a friend had given her recently about her relation to Maya.

'She said to me, you know, "well, you can't live anyone's life for them - you could even be punished for doing it" - And I remember thinking "What a dreadful thing to think", but afterwards I thought she might be right. It struck me very forcibly. She said to me, "You get your life to live, and that's your life - you can't and you mustn't live anybody's life for them". And I thought at the time, "Well, what a dreadful thing to think." And then afterwards I thought, "Well, it's probably quite right".

This insight, however, was fleeting." (p.47)

The study of the Abbotts shows how parents can maintain their children in dependence not merely by material means or control of the purse, etc. - but also by cognitive means. These means include, in particular, the failure to transmit epistemological criteria, the Knowledge of Knowledge. The parents keep these criteria to themselves, and in the conversations reproduced in *Sanity, Madness and the Family* one can see them using these criteria as instruments of control and coercion.¹

This is plain from the dialogues which daughter and mother have about daughter's memory. Memory is a source of knowledge, but can be invoked in justification for knowledge claims only to the degree that it is reliable. Our individual assessment of the reliability of our own memory is made not just on the basis of our awareness of how often and in what sorts of cases we can't remember something which we think we could or should be able to remember. It also depends on the frequency etc. with which other people in a better position to know (epistemological authorities) validate our memory claims. Maya's mother uses her position as an epistemological authority² with respect to her daughter's memory as a means of controlling and, hence, denying autonomy to her child. Thus, according to Laing and Esterton:

"Mrs Abbott persistently reiterated how much she hoped and prayed that Maya would remember anything if it would help the doctor to get to the bottom of her illness. But she felt that she had to tell Maya repeatedly that she (Maya) could not 'really' remember anything, because (as she explained to us) Maya was always ready to pretend that she was not really ill.

She frequently questioned Maya about her memory in general, in order (from her point of view) to help her realize that she was ill, by showing her at different times either that she was amnesic, or that she had got her facts wrong, or that she only imagined she remembered what she thought she remembered because she had heard it from her mother at a later date". (p.46)

Here I am reminded of George Orwell's 1984, where control over the records against which one could check the veracity of one's memory eliminates this as a possibility and throws people back entirely on their own resources. But without any inter-subjectively accessible sources, or inter-subjective confirmation of memories, each individual's memory capacity is itself weakened. The first act of defiance which Orwell's hero, Winston Smith, commits is to keep a *Diary* - an objectified record against which he can check his own memory and which is, in principle, publicly accessible. In philosophical terms, Orwell is working with a non-Cartesian conception of the thinking self: the thinking self for Orwell does not exist, essentially, in isolation from other thinking selves; its existence is interdependent with their existence. It seems to me that Laing and Esterton's work gives some sort of empirical

1. It is usual to add at this sort of point a phrase: "no doubt unconsciously". But in these families there is room for some doubt.

2. 'arbiter' is the word Laing and Esterton use (p.43).

support to this non-Cartesian position which one can find, for instance, in both Hegel and Wittgenstein - authors whom Laing has read. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in the section on the dialectic of Master and Slave, the non-Cartesianism is perfectly clear:

"Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it is only by being acknowledged or 'recognised'".³

But Maya does not appear to have adopted Winston Smith's strategy. There is no reference to her keeping a *Diary*. More to the point, she has not left home. Her way out has been to withdraw into her own world' though (significantly) 'feeling at the same time most painfully that she was not an autonomous person' (p.43). I say 'significantly' for her way out is doomed to failure. It is only in the intersubjective world that criteria for knowledge can be found, and hence only in this world that the distinction between real and imaginary, and the stability of perceptions and conceptions, can be maintained. Maya's withdrawal is an impossible project. It cannot (logically cannot) lead to autonomy. For autonomy is tied to knowledge and the knowledge of knowledge. Here again we have some sort of empirical illustration of the philosopher's thesis about the connexion between knowledge and freedom.

Without levity, one can suggest after this reading that if Maya needs anyone it is an epistemologist, not a psychiatrist. Unless, of course, some psychiatrists are really epistemologists.⁴

3. Hegel - *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie. (Allen & Unwin, 2nd edn, revised, 1949), p.229.

4. It would be better if some psychiatrists were really child-snatchers. For Maya and those like her are not in a position to take the obvious way out and leave home; they can perhaps only be taken away and certainly they need help in establishing their own independence. It would be even better to abolish the form of family which Laing and Esterton study; but I am trying to interpret the situation of its victims not simply from the point of view of proving the necessity of this abolition but also to discover what can be done in the situation with which we still have to live.

It will be clear from these remarks that I do not accept what Laing and Esterton have to say in the Preface to the second edition of the *Sanity, Madness and the Family*. The disclaimers they make there are so obviously contradicted by their own text as to appear simply bizarre. They have explicitly produced a theory of social causation in schizophrenia, though one which, admittedly, does not preclude the possibility of an organogenetic component. But whatever the constitution of Maya's brain cells, there is no good reason for accepting the behaviour of her parents.

PHILOSOPHY ON FILM

Michael Chanan

Michael Chanan has recently completed a series of six documentary films on Oxford Philosophy. In this article he discusses the project and the problems which it presented.

Can there be anything of interest in a series of films on Oxford Philosophy, especially to a group of philosophers whose relationship to Oxford Philosophy is essentially critical? I hope the answer is yes. In the first place, the idea of such a film series is sufficiently out of the line of thinking of both philosophers and television programme planners (for whom this series is initially intended) to make the outcome undetermined. In the second place, the films should serve a teaching purpose (they will also go to the American Campus circuit, and we hope to make them available for non-television screening in this country, too) by documenting graphically various aspects of Oxford Philosophy which otherwise remain vague in students' minds. I'm talking about the concrete way in which Oxford Philosophy is situated in the world. Transcribed on paper the content of these films may seem to some to have only a marginal interest. But to see and hear, not in strange surroundings but in their natural habitat, the Oxford philosophical sub-species, is one of the main opportunities these films are intended to provide. (They also have historical and archive value, and include a unique tape of Austin lecturing). Unlike the printed page, celluloid has a built in alienation effect always available

to the film-maker: the viewer can apprehend the totality of manner, appearance and so forth, characterising the background out of which any set of ideas, any life style, comes, but at a distance and without himself being physically involved in the scene. Whatever people say is mediated by the phenomenological facts, and it may not even be necessary for the film maker to add directives, although it is established documentary technique that he should do so. These films, therefore, are intended not just to be seen, but to be used.

You will recall the *Conversations with Philosophers* series on Radio 3, now published in book form, in which Bryan Magee interviewed some thirteen British philosophers. Apart from the issues which were raised about their narrowness (which the Radical Philosophy Group has been formed to combat) the criticism was made against this series that Magee, since he was not conversing with the philosophers but interviewing them, failed to show what philosophizing is actually like, or about. One of my first aims in this series was to set up real conversational situations (insofar as anything in front of film cameras and contained by them is real) between pairs of philosophers, and simply to let the cameras run. I used two cameras for all conversations, one on each speaker, so as to be entirely free in editing to choose which interlocutor to show on the screen, in other words to show non-verbal as well as verbal conversational interaction. I also left it up to the interlocutors themselves to decide in advance how much or how little their conversation would be pre-structured. All that had been determined was the general area of each conversation. I was able to film up to half an hour of conversation without interruption, although I didn't always do so; I planned to film as much as three hours of conversation to produce each fifty-five minute film, which would also include other sequences, but as it turned out it wasn't for the most part necessary to film so much. In editing, I tried as far as possible to follow the chronology of each conversation, but felt myself free to structure them by my own (filmic and philosophical) judgement.

Only the first film differed in ground-plan from this simple general pattern: this is a historical retrospective by A.J. Ayer covering his philosophical career, and includes large chunks of him 'speaking to camera', but it is critical in approach, descriptive of Oxford's social background, and in general follows the established pattern of television documentaries, using diverse illustrative and contrapuntal visual material. This material falls into several groups:

- i) newsreel illustrating various period aspects;
- ii) specially shot material of Oxford today;
- iii) still photographs of personalities, book titles,
- iv) sections of interviews or of conversations later in the series freely intercut to make narrative or thematic points.

I have used the words 'illustrative' and 'contrapuntal', but these are not mutually exclusive categories. A shot of Moritz Schlick or Wittgenstein is illustrative in more than a trivial sense - when the viewer sees Schlick in stiff collar and tie, and recalls Wittgenstein in open-neck shirt, a point has been made. But more than that, material in categories (i) (ii) and (iv) was always (with one exception) used to make some thematic or conceptual point. Sometimes the picture would make a verbal point more concrete. For example in describing the social background of Oxford I placed a sequence of a post-Schools champagne party in Trinity College garden against Hilaire Belloc's lines,

*"The accursed power that stands on privilege
And goes with women and champagne and bridge,
Broke, and democracy resumed her reign,
Which goes with bridge, and women, and champagne."*

Sometimes the picture would be used to make a point that the words didn't make, but related to them. Sometimes the picture would be used, to contradict the words.

All these are general procedures regularly followed in the making of documentary - and of course 'feature' - films. They have to do with the multi-dimensionality of the medium. To anyone with some knowledge of European philosophy, the word *dialectic* springs to mind. And this is where, making films about philosophy, one comes up against the fundamental problem: philosophical argument, at least in the analytic tradition, is unidimensional and linear. And yet the films, in order to be good films, had to be dialectical in character.

One apparent constraint that exists within the medium (as opposed to the constraints that are imposed on it from without by producers, programme planners, distributors and so on) is the need to structure time. Philosophical argument is totally ideational and therefore does not come up against this problem. In general however, time is not felt by the film-maker as a constraint (unless in the same way that the philosopher might feel words to be a constraint) for it is the very means of his trade: he can expand it, contract it, reverse it, jump it, go against it. (McTaggart would have blown his mind on L'Annee derniere a Marienbad.) An external time constraint exists, however, in the need to standardise the length of one's film to fit rigid television schedules. A further consideration that arises at this point is that it would be totally unreasonable to expect a lay audience to concentrate on intellectual argument for almost an hour.

Taking all this to mind, I decided it was necessary in each film to provide non-intellectually-demanding sequences, preferably ones with some lyrical and positive content, which would serve several purposes: to gain the viewer's confidence at the beginning of the film; to portray each participant in his concrete environment; and to break the film up at structurally controlled points where the viewer would be able to relax attention a little.

One of the problems in shooting such sequences is one that every documentary maker has in relating to subject-matter with which he is *de facto* only partially acquainted, namely, how far he is portraying what's there, and how far he is imposing his own structure on what's there. But the aesthetic questions raised here are beyond the scope of these notes.

What is important, however, is that not all of these additional sequences were pre-planned. The possibilities sometimes emerged only after the main shooting, and in at least one case I shot material on a pure hunch that it would come in useful. This was when I found an open air dramatization of *Alice in Wonderland* taking place during our main shooting period. Knowing the relevance of its verbal wit to language philosophy, I filmed some of it on the probability that I would be able to use it somewhere, which has proved to be the case. (I had already, for various reasons, had to drop the idea of using clips of a similar verbally witty nature, from such films as the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup* and Hardy's *A Chump at Oxford*.) The problem I conceived myself to be attacking here is perhaps related to the importance of examples in language philosophy, namely, how to concretize what you're talking about. The difference is that in language philosophy the search for examples should be leading you through your philosophizing, whereas I was merely trying to provide concrete instances on an interpretive level. But isn't it possible that this kind of procedure in films could be used as a philosophical tool?

I have tried to do something approaching this in the conversation between Ayer and Bernard Williams (the only non-Oxford philosopher in the series) on the theme of whether the scientific description of the world conflicts with the common-sense description. This conversation was on a suitably lay level and was well-shaped. It attacks, of course, a central theme in English philosophy, namely the respect shown for common-sense. Ayer put forward a pragmatic and utilitarian point of view, and Williams placed Ayer on the defensive by enlarging the terms of reference. I have tried to take this a step further. In the first place, during the filming, I asked Williams, when he was talking about the question of a world without observers, to make reference to the (usually unthought about) presence of the cameras, and had the two cameras turn to face each other as he did so. I then shot introductory and closing sequences in which each camera shows the other camera looking at the scene. (The film is called, by the way, *Appearance and Reality*.) I then extended this in editing the film, by incorporating clips from educational science films showing, at points where they refer directly or obliquely to such phenomena, atomic structures, crystal growth, diffraction patterns and so forth. On one level I wanted to give the viewer a chance himself to wonder at the things which gave rise to this philosophizing, and not just allow him to appreciate the business intellectually. But I also wanted to set him a problem which he is free to discern and worry about as he chooses or not. R.D. Laing has called the problem "Experience as Evidence". At the beginning of *The Politics of Experience* he writes, "...facts become fictions without adequate ways of seeing 'the facts'. We do not need theories so much as the experience that is the source of the theory." And, "Natural science is concerned only with the observer's experience of things...Natural science knows nothing of the relation between behaviour and experience. The nature of this relation is mysterious - in Marcel's sense. That is to say, it is not an objective problem. There is no developed method of understanding its nature." Some European philosophers have struggled to deal with this problem. I am optimistic that film is a medium that can be used to present it clearly and with force - and that this is just one of the many types of problem which film, inhabiting the twilight world between discourse and image, can bring into consciousness and make available for philosophizing.

I would characterize this loosely as the business of using film conceptually, or cognitively. It is an important problem in aesthetics as to how much cognitive content works in the medium of art possess. It can be a task for the film-maker to develop film's potency for cognitive expression. I remind you of Leibniz's description of music as 'a hidden arithmetical activity of a mind that does not know it is counting,' and Schopenhauer's: 'a hidden metaphysical activity of a mind that does not know it is philosophising.' Many films have a very strong identifiable philosophical content. But would it be too outlandish to suggest that say, Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* were the hidden imagistic activity of a mind that did not know it was composing a film?
