

A dissertation on the Positivism of

D.J. O'Connor's "Introduction to the

Philosophy of Education" with special

reference to the final chapter.

by

D. B. CLARKE

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PREFACE

This essay is basically an analysis of the last chapter of Professor D.J. O'Connor's book An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education. It is generally critical of that book's positivist stance and examines three matters in particular: the Verification Principle, the possibility of Metaphysics, and the nature of Ethical Judgements as O'Connor deals with them.

The Introduction draws attention to the fact that the book accepts the viewpoint of contemporary philosophical analysis. It points out that the author is anti-speculative and anti-metaphysical, and that nonetheless he embraces an extreme empiricist position with rationalist writing. It draws attention to the influence the book seems to have had upon student teachers despite its sweeping generalizations. It recognises the value of linguistic analysis but questions whether a thorough philosophical study of the matters raised in the book would lead to the conclusions drawn by Professor O'Connor.

Chapter I The Verification Principle emphasizes the difficulties which A.J. Ayer's thesis met and which the author seems not wholly to recognise. Not only is the formulation of the principle open to question but its verification is impossible if we are to accept it in logical positivist terms. Modern views of language make it very difficult to apply simple dichotomies. A criticism follows of O'Connor's use of the word "experience" and his implied definition of "knowledge".

It is argued that his conception of "knowledge" and his conception of "theory" are both ill-founded.

Three theories are then referred to as respectable theories which would be rejected out of hand by O'Connor's methods: first, Chomsky's theory of language acquisition, secondly, Hick's eschatological approach to the verification of faith, and thirdly Boyce Gibson's contention that verification is a "gradually widening conviction". Finally there is a discussion of the phenomenon of comprehension.

In the 2nd Chapter "Is Metaphysics Meaningful?" there is a critical analysis of the way in which O'Connor deals with Castle and Maritain, and of the way he misinterprets the three "basic" questions.* It is suggested that there is need to distinguish between the contemplation of one single object and the contemplation of the world taken as a whole. The concept of falsification is discussed in relation to faith. It is further pointed out that we cannot explain the origin of an ordered cosmos as a whole in terms of a prior orderliness for that would be part of the cosmos we are trying to explain. It is argued that O'Connor's case against metaphysics is itself metaphysical.

In the 3rd Chapter "Ethical Judgements" it is recognised that educational judgements have an ethical content. The positivist argues that value judgements are relative and emotive. This chapter examines the possibility of moral judgements being true or false, and the existence of criteria for such judgements.

The Conclusion makes a brief analysis of the current climate in education and argues that there is

* What are we? Where are we? Where ought we to be going?

a place for a Christian Philosophy of Education.

I am grateful to the Archbishop of Melbourne who provoked me into beginning this small study of the relationship between faith and knowledge, to Professor Selby Smith who encouraged me, and above all to John Radvansky who reintroduced me to the joys of being a student, and without whose inspiration I would not have embarked on a journey of which this essay is a modest beginning.

INTRODUCTION

In the preface to his book "An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education" Professor D.J.O'Connor wrote

"The view point represented here is that of contemporary philosophical analysis. This label does not, as is often supposed, apply to a single school of philosophy but is used to refer to the work of a large number of philosophers of very widely differing views. However, they do share certain attitudes and ways of thinking which have not yet been sufficiently represented in writings on education. Indeed, the only previous attempt of this kind so far as I am aware, is Professor C.D. Hardie's excellent little book Truth and Fallacy in Educational Theory published in 1942 and now out of print." (Page V)¹

The publication of O'Connor's book followed some controversial correspondence in "The Times" referred to in the Educational Supplement's review.² The professor had criticised sharply the teaching given under the title of "Philosophy of Education" which he described as "a collection of edifying obiter dicta composed by men, from Plato to Whitehead, whose real interests lay elsewhere." This particular reviewer recognises the pioneer effort in the book. For the first time there became available to students an introduction to modern philosophic trends and some indication of how linguistic analysis could help in the consideration of educational theory and practice, especially in the areas of criticism and clarification. For this reason it was, as Archambault called it, "an original and influential book".³

The reviewer in the Literary Supplement is aware of this originality and potential influence⁴

"No branch of knowledge is more in need of the antiseptic, not to say sterilizing ministrations of the logical analysts than that of education. Indifferent practitioners in a multitude of departments and colleges pour out every year for the thousands of teachers in training a stream of theories on the aims and purposes of education. It is good to have them faced with the question "What do your sentences mean, if they mean anything at all?" At a price students can afford, concise in statement, clear in argument, the book is dangerous - to those who would wish the schools to maintain their characteristically Christian atmosphere which is in such marked contrast to the world outside."

This reviewer, rightly in my opinion, states that O'Connor's main discussion concerns the teaching of religion and morality, and that the unsettling effects of his approach "can easily spread from the universities to the schools." Indeed the final chapter discusses "some of the philosophical issues basic to any educational theory"⁵; and it discusses them in a way that is unsettling, as we shall see.

The reasons for examining this final chapter in detail are firstly that it contains, as the author and most reviewers suggest, the meat of the argument. Secondly, if the book is influential it is important to consider how its readers may be influenced. Finally, if it is a pioneering, original effort it is necessary to bring the new ideas under criticism.

A cursory glance at the reviews which followed close upon publication confirms that nearly everyone seeking to convey the flavour of the book refers to the final chapter. Professor Benne⁶, after quoting extensively from pages 111 to 113, writes:

"These quotations suggest the anti speculative, anti-metaphysical bias of Professor O'Connor's viewpoint."

L. Arnaud Reid quotes at length from pages 113, 114, 115, 132 and 137 in his review⁷ as he summarises the argument of the book. If as well the author himself claims in the final chapter to discuss the basic issues, and many of his reviewers agree that he has done so, it seems fair to limit one's analysis to this chapter.

That the book is widely read can be seen from the fact that it has been continually reprinted and is required reading in many teachers' colleges and education faculties. That it is influential does not necessarily follow, but at the least it could be quoted as authoritative support for the views expressed in it, for example the view that religion is irrelevant to education. (p 137) It would be impossible to show that a number of teachers and students hold the opinions they do because Professor O'Connor wrote this book. It would be difficult to show that it was a seminal work in the development of Logical Positivist attitudes among teachers. All I shall attempt to demonstrate is in what regard the final chapter is Positivist. I shall do no more than suggest that the general educational climate in Australia is Positivistic, and note the coincidence.

Thirdly and most importantly I shall take what "The Times" called the sharp edged tools of linguistic philosophy into this final chapter in order to determine if possible the meaning of significant statements made and to consider the validity of the arguments. This is simply to do with O'Connor's "Philosophy of Education" what he has done with his predecessors in the field. He sees Philosophy as a second order discipline and would probably agree with the metaphor of a two storey building in which ordinary people carry on their everyday business and conversation on the ground floor, while philosophers observe this business and conversation from a bird's eye

view on the first floor.⁸ The philosopher of education examines educational statements for their meaning, for the methods of verification, for their status in logic, and for their relationship to knowledge, and in turn his own statements will come under scrutiny from his fellow workers on the same floor. It is the philosopher's business to make second order statements whenever these help to clarify first order statements and therefore first order knowledge. It is his business to "try to provide the analysis of concepts like 'cause', 'self', 'mind', 'voluntary action', 'obligation', 'good', 'society' and so on". He hopes by his activity to "reveal logical tangles." (p 112)

O'Connor counts himself among "those philosophers who are called 'critical empiricists' or 'logical analysts' " (p 112). There is here an admission that there are other 'schools' of philosophy. Some critics have felt that O'Connor's attitude toward these other philosophers is not very tolerant. Such philosophers seem to be parcelled together under the term 'irrationalist', and O'Connor says earlier in his book (p 26)

"The irrationalist will decry what he calls 'intellect' or 'logic' and praise instead mysterious impulses and intuitions. It is a very widespread attitude and characterizes the intellectually lazy, the woolly minded, the fanatical and the superstitious. And it is the more pernicious in having supporters who enjoy some reputation - philosophers such as Nietzsche and Bergson, theologians like Kierkegaard and a great many artists and writers, to say nothing of well known pretentious mystagogues like Rudolf Steiner and Ouspensky".

As A.M. Kean points out⁹ this is rationalist writing with a vengeance; he continues,

"Any kind of analysis tends, we feel, to commit a fundamental error if, in applying a criterion of truth it divides intellectual behaviour into the sheeplike and the goatlike, and leaves matters there. In the last resort the goats have to be explained and justified like the sheep; indeed they have to be justified better than they could do it themselves."

There would be a very long list of philosophers, theologians, artists, writers and mystagogues (if we might so name Otto and Hoppold) who would dissent from O'Connor's views. He seems to have selected names in order to build a case on the doubts which already exist in the mind of the reader about the people he has chosen. It is not surprising that he deals with Jacques Maritain later in this chapter in a way which Arnaud Reid¹⁰ calls "scandalously unfair".

It is surely a cardinal principle of philosophy to take seriously the carefully expressed views of other honest philosophers and of accepted authorities in what we have termed first order disciplines. For a critical empiricist it would seem particularly important to avoid emotional arguing. Yet as Kean points out¹¹

"Although Professor O'Connor repeatedly warns the reader and himself against sweeping generalizations he does not succeed in avoiding some quite wild generalizations and is sometimes unfair to his opponents."

There is also a more subtle kind of generalization of which one should be aware. O'Connor writes that the work of critical empiricists

"does not give us any new knowledge rather it gives us a new point of view on what we already know" (p 112)
 "it does not pretend to add to our knowledge of the world" (p 113)

"it can have the positive result of clarifying and refocusing our thinking" (p 113)

"The word 'philosophy' promises much more than this to many people. How can we be sure that this promise cannot be honoured? " (p 113)

"We have the same reason for rejecting metaphysics as we have for rejecting witchcraft" (p 114)

"We have positive groundsfor rejecting the grandiose claims of metaphysics" (p 114)

The underlining is mine and draws attention to the plural pronoun which M.B. Foster examines in his article

" 'We' in Modern Philosophy" ¹²

The constant repetition of 'we', 'us' and 'our' can no doubt be defended by saying that an impersonal form is hard to maintain in a long essay without dullness, and the first person singular sounds egotistical. Nonetheless it is awesome for the student to be told that "we have positive grounds" for the clear inference is that sensible people would accept the view of "we" experts. As a student reads this chapter he is invited by inference to identify himself with "us". Now this is polemical, persuasive, emotional writing and should be scrupulously avoided by anyone claiming the objectivity which O'Connor claims. I must therefore advance with caution not only to avoid being enmeshed in his embracing plural pronoun but also to avoid setting traps of my own.

No philosopher would quarrel with O'Connor's starting point when he says that in one of his roles at least, a philosopher is "a sort of inspector or assayer who rejects those theories and arguments which can be shown to be faulty by the logical touchstones or gauges which are his stock in trade" (p 112). Much benefit has come in the twentieth century as philosophers have aimed to clear up puzzlement, prevent misleading construction of language and expose absurd theories rather than to get a clearer view of the structure of reality.¹³

Gilbert Ryle commented on this as early as 1931 in an article "Systematically Misleading Expressions"

"I conclude that there is after all a sense in which we can properly enquire and even say 'what it really means to say so and so'. For we can ask what is the real form of the fact recorded when this is concealed or disguised and not duly exhibited by the expression in question. And we can often succeed in stating this fact in a new form of words which does exhibit what the other failed to exhibit. And I am for the present inclined to believe that this is what philosophical analysis is, and that this is the sole and whole function of philosophy But as confession is good for the soul, I must admit that I do not very much relish the conclusions to which these conclusions point. I would rather allot to philosophy a sublimer task than the detection of the sources in linguistic idioms of recurrent misconstructions and absurd theories. But that it is at least this I cannot feel serious doubt." ¹⁴

Not least in education has this process of clarification been helpful. Concepts like 'mind', 'knowledge', 'training', 'indoctrination', 'Mental health', 'self-realization', 'authority', 'freedom', 'equality', 'punishment', and 'education' itself have been studied in a new and fruitful way. However the last part of Ryle's comment raises the question, Are we in danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water? To a large extent this can be answered by looking at the "logical touchstones" a particular philosopher uses.

CHAPTER I

THE VERIFICATION PRINCIPLE

O'Connor's touchstone can be summarised in two quotations from his chapter on "The Nature of Philosophy"

"the results of any sort of enquiry are acceptable in so far as they are publicly testable, reliable and coherent with the rest of public knowledge" (p 17)

"public recognition by experts, progressive corrigibility, and coherence with established knowledge are the best guarantees we have" (p 45)

The word 'testable' bears witness to the trouble Ayer's Verification Principle ran into in the late thirties and forties but the argument of the chapter under review is squarely based on the Verification Principle in its complete rejection of Metaphysics. According to O'Connor any scientific use of language must be the utterance of a tautology or of an empirical statement.

But what is to be said of the Verification Principle itself?

Early in its history extreme claims were made that meaningful sentences must be reducible to possibilities of experience which could conclusively verify the proposition under discussion. But verificational analysis moved away from this 'strong' sense of 'verify' to what Ayer terms the 'weak' sense of the word.¹

It was seen that conclusive verification would be out of the question for such vitally important statements as scientific expressions of general law, since no finite set of observations could in principle succeed in verifying conclusively a universal statement for the simple reason that the observations are limited to the past and the universal statement includes the future. Under the 'weak' interpretation of verification synthetic

statements can be more or less fully verified or probable but never conclusively verified or necessary; only analytic statements can be necessary.

As soon as the concept of verification comes under analysis one realises the difficulty of formulating the principle. Hick for example² (convincingly) argues that the central core of the concept is the removal of ignorance or uncertainty concerning the truth of some proposition. The proposition is 'verified' when something happens which makes it clear that the proposition is true. A question is settled when rational doubt is removed. The way in which doubt is removed will vary according to the subject matter. Such a view throws open the question whether the notion of verification is purely logical or is both logical and psychological, and the form in which O'Connor enunciates the principle does nothing to settle the issue. But I am not concerned at this point with the way in which the principle of verification is formulated. A more awkward question arises when one asks, what is the status of the Verification Principle as here formulated?

"the results of any sort of enquiry are acceptable in so far as they are publicly testable, reliable, and coherent with the rest of public knowledge" (p 17)

According to O'Connor this statement must either be a tautology, that is a rule of language, or it must be an empirical proposition. The statement looks like a synthetic proposition telling the reader something about the world, contingent upon the way the world is. If this is so then one must ask, how is the proposition to be verified?, and the answer is that it cannot be verified in the terms required by the proposition.

Perhaps, then, the Verification Principle is a generalization resulting from an exhaustive study of

metaphysical statements all of which had been found to be meaningless independent of the principle. Such a view would not be acceptable to the Logical Positivist because it would involve the examination of each new metaphysical statement to see if perchance one might be meaningful and so prove an exception to the rule. As Popper³ has pointed out the essence of a scientific theory is that it should be falsifiable; one should be able to envisage what conditions would invalidate the theory even though one does not expect such conditions to obtain. (vd. Note)

If metaphysical statements must of necessity be meaningless then the Verification Principle is analytic and a priori; it is a rule of language of a conventional character. But then the opponents of Positivism would be entitled to say, that is a convention we can manage without and we therefore continue to call metaphysics meaningful.

If the word "meaningless" is made by the Positivists to include all metaphysical statements in a stipulative fashion there remains a difficulty of another kind.

Opponents have to lump together as nonsense

"Melodic cheese billows explicitly"

"God answered my prayer"

"This is good"

and some would find it hard to be convinced that this is a reasonable attitude.

In "Metaphysics and Verification"⁴ Wisdom wrote:

"Well, shall we accept the verification principle? What is to accept it? When people bring out with a dashing air the words 'The meaning of a statement is really simply the method of its verification', like one who says 'The value of a thing is really simply its power of exchange', in what sort of way are they using words? What is the general nature of their theory? The answer

is, 'It is a metaphysical theory'."

C.L. Stevenson to whom O'Connor refers with qualified approval in the chapter on value judgements writes this:⁵

"It is of no little service to stress the ways in which metaphysics has been confused with science; and to the extent that positivists have done this their 'conquest of metaphysics' has not depended on exhortation. But do their distinctions take us more than half way to a full rejection of metaphysics? Are we led to go the other half by the word 'nonsense' defined so that it may cast its objectionable emotive meaning upon metaphysics, without being predicated of it untruthfully. The same question arises even when metaphysics is denied cognitive meaning only. 'Cognitive' is used to mean 'empirically verifiable or else analytic' and with exclusive laudatory import. Hence the positivistic contention reduces to this: 'Metaphysical statements are neither empirically verifiable nor analytic; hence they are not respectable.' If metaphysicians answer 'Our statements, even though neither empirically verifiable nor analytic, are still respectable', they are scarcely to be led away from their position by mere exhortation."

These two quotations lead to the position where one questions whether O'Connor's logical touchstones are versatile enough to do the job he assigns to them.

Wittgenstein⁶ argued - and it is an argument to which I shall return - that philosophers from Socrates to Moore had been mistaken in thinking that a formula could be found which would encompass the different uses of 'knowledge' and 'justice' in which they were interested. Some words do not fall under a definition as 'triangle' does in the field of geometry. Rather they form a family "united by a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss crossing; sometimes overall similarities,

sometimes similarities of detail."

He and others draw attention to the fact that we use language in ways which make the application of simple dichotomies like analytic - synthetic, true-false, impossible. The question to be asked is not simply, 'Does this statement fit my category system and how does it measure up by my touchstone?' but instead, 'What are people doing when they use ethical, scientific, metaphysical language, claim knowledge, express belief, make promises, or sympathize?'

It will be clear then that the point of view of this paper, while it is appreciative of the critical empiricist position enunciated by Professor O'Connor, is broader in the sense of the statements from Wittgenstein and Wisdom.

A philosopher, says O'Connor, in criticising any theories will formulate theories of his own but "such theories tend to be interpretations of experience in terms of experience and not like the theories of the metaphysical philosophers in terms of entities transcending experience. Philosophical theory constructionis in the nature of a reshuffling of the items of experience into a comprehensible pattern like the solution of a jig saw puzzle." (p 112)

The stress on 'in terms of experience' gives an empiricist flavour to the statement, but it is nevertheless not easy to understand what the phrase means. If it means "in words that people recognize and understand" that would not exclude the metaphysician for nobody can describe the highest flights of imagination except in terms of his own experience; that is why angels tend to have harps, haloes, wings and nightshirts. The phrase is more likely to mean "set out in a series of synthetic propositions each of which can be verified" in which case one wonders

why the particular phrase was used. Another possibility is that the writer is laying down a rule for the game he is going to play. Under the rule, statements like "To be true a proposition must correspond to an actual state of affairs" or

"A sentence will be factually significant to a given person if and only if he knows how to verify the proposition which it purports to express; that is, if he knows what observations would lead him under certain conditions to accept the proposition as being true or reject it as being false."⁷ are admissible whereas statements like

"Jesus said, I am the Truth" or

"The Word of God is Truth" are inadmissible.

Such a distinction may be valid but the status of the rule which makes that distinction is still in question as we have already seen.

In a long chapter of his Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, John Hospers discusses the relationship between testability and meaning and ends with this comment⁸

"The only area in which the testability criterion is at all plausible is in reference to empirical statements, such as are made in daily life and in science. If you make some assertion about the world, you should be able to indicate what observations of the world would count for or against it."

Earlier Hospers points out that true knowledge involves a belief that a proposition is true, the fact that it is true, and the existence of adequate evidence. O'Connor discusses this matter of adequate evidence on pages 17 f. of his book and on page 31 he makes this comment:

"For a question to be a genuine one, it must have a framework that will determine in advance the form that the answer must take and the terms in which it will be made.

We have such a framework for a question when we know the sort of evidence that will give us the answer but are ignorant of exactly what the evidence will be."

He therefore distinguishes sharply between the 'knowledge' claimed by mathematicians, historians and scientists and that claimed by metaphysicians. He concludes that the only 'knowledge' worthy of the name is empirical knowledge.

O'Connor restates his position in this way (p 112) "the work ofcritical empiricists.....does not give us any new knowledge as does the work of the scientist. Rather it gives us a new point of view on what we already know and so may properly be said to provide understanding rather than knowledge. By reformulating and reinterpreting the common content of human experience it tries to provide the same sort of unifying overall views of experience as traditional metaphysical systems purported to supply. But since it tries to do this without going beyond experience it does not pretend to add to our knowledge of the world."

What is important in this passage is the implicit definition of 'knowledge'. Despite Bertrand Russell's warning:

"Logical positivists have, in my opinion, misconceived the relation of knowledge to experience" ⁹

O'Connor defines knowledge as that which the scientist provides or which at the least can be cognised by the senses. The only knowledge, he says, is empirical knowledge, and the implication is that one can be certain about that knowledge whereas there may be uncertainty about the interpretation or understanding. This is why (p 29) mathematicians and scientists enjoy "spectacular success" while moralists, metaphysicians, and theologians meet with a "notable lack of success".

Such a cut and dried definition of knowledge may be alluring but many would not agree with it and O'Connor ought to acknowledge that fact.

Now Bertrand Russell was an empiricist philosopher and in many ways sympathetic to the viewpoint expressed by O'Connor. For example he wrote that faith was "a firm belief in something for which there is no evidence. We do not speak of faith that 2 plus 2 equals 4 or that the earth is round. We only speak of faith when we wish to substitute emotion for reason." ¹⁰

In a number of books Russell demonstrates his general agreement with the stance of the anti-metaphysicians. In the final chapter of his "History of Western Philosophy" he applauds the methods of modern analytical empiricism and states:

"I have no doubt that, in so far as philosophical knowledge is possible, it is by such methods that it must be sought; I have also no doubt that by these methods many ancient problems are completely soluble." ¹¹

It is significant therefore that in his great work on "Human Knowledge" he should deal cautiously with the verification principle and after a lengthy discussion make this comment:

"You cannot without incurring an endless regress, seek the significance of a proposition in its consequences, which must be other propositions. We cannot explain what is the significance of a belief or what makes it true or false without bringing in the concept 'fact', and when this is brought in the part played by verification is seen to be subsidiary and derivative". ¹²

In the same book Russell has chapter headings "Knowledge Transcending Experience" and "The Limits of Empiricism" and in one place he writes:

"Knowledge is a term incapable of precision. All knowledge is in some degree doubtful and we cannot say what degree of doubtfulness makes it cease to be knowledge, any more than we can say how much loss of hair makes a man bald." ¹³

For O'Connor "knowledge" means "empirical knowledge" of a very specific type which can be verified by scientific procedures. This is a stipulative definition and it must follow therefrom that his "reformulating and reinterpreting" does not add to "knowledge". But such a statement is of doubtful value as a preliminary to discussing religion and morality since it is analytic. It says virtually "Knowledge is what can be discovered by scientific procedures, therefore only scientific procedures can add to knowledge". Yet the statement is presented as synthetic, telling the reader something about the world which is so fundamental that it explains why metaphysical statements (other than the verification hypothesis) are unacceptable. But as Frederick Ferré points out:¹⁴

"There remain many problems confronting language which hopes to speak meaningfully about supernatural facts ... but we shall not advance our understanding of theological language by making it analytically impossible - as does verificational analysis - for language to refer to any but scientific facts. Such victories are too cheap to be convincing."

Professor Ferré is one among many who have argued against the position taken up by O'Connor and it will not do to say, the Logical Positivist has positive grounds for rejecting metaphysics but a rough outline of the case will do for "it would need a book on the theory of knowledge to justify this point of view in detail" (p 114). For he is going on to examine what he calls "two crucial questions" (p 137) as if the point of view had been justified. The liveliness of the debate on this point of view in the

sixties and early seventies suggests that O'Connor's basic assumptions, vital as they are to this chapter, are far from proven.

O'Connor's approach to "knowledge" is as dogmatic as his approach to "theory" and "explanation". He defines "knowledge" as "empirical knowledge". In making such a definition he succeeds in doing what Socrates in the "Theaetetus"¹⁵ failed to do but he works on the same assumption about general terms that Socrates worked on. First, by defining "knowledge" in the clear cut way he has done, O'Connor assumes that there is no justification for applying a general term to its instances unless the instances have something in common other than that they are instances. Secondly, he assumes that nobody knows the meaning of a general term unless he is able to say what it means, that is to state what it is that the instances have in common and in virtue of which they are its instances. But these assumptions have been challenged, by Wittgenstein in the "Philosophical Investigations" and in the "Blue and Brown Books", and more recently by Renford Bamborough in "Reason, Truth and God".¹⁶

The concept of knowledge is treated by Wittgenstein as a "family resemblances" concept. In the "Theaetetus" Socrates considers examples of knowledge. Every proposed definition that has any plausibility is based upon an examination of the most typical cases of knowledge. Each refutation consists in uncovering examples of knowledge that are not covered by the definition or in citing examples that are covered by the definition but are not cases of knowledge. What Socrates saw as failure - a failure that the Logical Positivists have overcome by stipulative definition - Wittgenstein sees as success. For it is the great variety of the cases of knowledge, the lack of a single common element, and the complex structure of the concept which defeat attempts to

categorise the concept simply, to sum it up in a sentence, even one as famous as the Ayer sentence already quoted. What is important and illuminating is the fact that Socrates and his friends can already distinguish cases to which the term 'knowledge' applies from the cases to which it does not apply.

Like Socrates we can know what 'knowledge' is without knowing what the definition of knowledge is. Even if there existed a correct and useful definition of knowledge it would not be a means, and certainly not a necessary means, to knowing what knowledge is, since one would need to have a complete grasp of all the cases of knowledge, and of their relations to one another and to everything that is not knowledge before one could be sure the definition was correct.

O'Connor's positivism naturally follows from the assumption that there is a formula or definition in which the common essence of all cases and types of knowledge can be summed up. He notices the differences between mathematics and the natural sciences, his chosen paradigms of knowledge, on the one hand, and morality, theology and metaphysics on the other. Then he rejects the instances which do not conform to his preconceived picture of the essence of knowledge. However, his reference to "natural knowledge" on page 113 indicates a half-hearted recognition that there is knowledge of another kind.

Dr. C.B. Daly says pertinently:

"If my empirical knowledge forces me to ask questions which cannot be answered in empirical terms, then I know that empirical knowledge is not adequate to the reality which I am. But to know that knowledge is inadequate is a valid and a most important kind of knowledge. It is a perpetual invitation to deeper reflection."

I have to this point examined O'Connor's conceptions of "theory" and "knowledge" for in these lie the "positive grounds" (p 114) upon which the discussion of religion and morality is based. If these concepts themselves are ill founded, as I have sought to show, then the remainder of the argument is suspect. Before proceeding with this analysis however there are two statements which are regrettable in a book that continually stresses the need for objectivity, which are rhetorical not reasonable, and which are polemical rather than philosophical.

For example he gives as his "best reason" for the rejection of metaphysics (p 113)

"Some of the ablest men have done their best during twenty-five centuries to work out metaphysical views of the universe and man's place in it which would provide a positive answer to these disputed questions of religion and morality and have all failed."

Apart from the obvious fact that the words "positive" and "failed" need much closer examination, the statement is an exaggeration which does scant justice to the poets, prophets, saints, martyrs and reformers who are part of human history. Nor of course do we know what will happen in the twenty sixth century or the twenty seventh. I am reminded of Donald Soper who was challenged at an open air meeting by a heckler who shouted "Christianity's been in the world for nearly two thousand years, and look at the state of the world!" He replied, "Soap's been in the world a bit longer and look at the state of your neck! "

The second example of playing to the gallery is on page 114.

"We have the same reason for rejecting metaphysics as we have for rejecting witchcraft, astrology or phrenology."

Dr. Ewing, whom he names in his bibliography, is among many who have offered sober defences for some metaphysical statements.¹⁸

Among others should be included Dr. Alvin Plantinga who writes:¹⁹

"The fact is that no one has succeeded in stating a version of the verifiability criterion that is even remotely plausible; and by now the project is beginning to look unhopeful If the notion of verifiability cannot so much as be explained, if we cannot so much as say what it is for a statement to be empirically verified then we scarcely need worry about whether religious statements are or are not verifiable. How could we possibly tell?"

Were there space and time I would like to quote extensively from Professor H.D. Lewis²⁰ who in his "Philosophy of Religion" surveys in detail the arguments concerning the validity of metaphysical statements. However, the simple point I want to stress is that reasonable defences of some metaphysical statements have been made.

By his insistence on "public testability" and by his claim that experience can only be interpreted "in terms of experience", O'Connor appears deliberately to be outlawing the use of concepts which transcend experience. One of these concepts is "mind", and indeed some empiricist philosophers have tried to dispense with that particular concept. And yet despite the work of Ayer or Ryle or Skinner²¹ the concept of mind stubbornly survives.

Many people find it efficacious to use 'mind' in their interpretation of experience, and it is especially difficult to theorise on the acquisition of language without using the concept. Using what I understand to

be O'Connor's touchstone it would be as faulty to include "mind" in a philosophical theory as it would to include "God". For that reason I deem it necessary to look more closely at a theory of language acquisition in order to see whether O'Connor's 'rule of the game' is a help or a hindrance.

The modern linguist faces the phenomenon of a child's rapid move from vocal behaviour to verbal behaviour, through sounds, babbling, words, to sentence formation.

"At the age of about one, a normal child not impaired by hearing loss or speech impediment will begin to say words. By one and a half or two years old, he will begin to form simple two and three word sentences. By four years he will have mastered very nearly the entire complex and abstract structure of the (English) language." ²²

A common explanation of this phenomenon is that babies imitate what they hear because they are encouraged to do so, or because they enjoy doing so. Modern linguistic theory does not agree. Chomsky says: ²³

"It is not easy to find any basis (or for that matter to attach very much content) to the claim that reinforcing contingencies set up by the verbal community are the single factor responsible for maintaining the strength of verbal behaviour. The sources of the strength of this behaviour are almost a total mystery."

Chomsky posited a theory of the growing child creatively constructing his language on his own in accordance with innate and intrinsic capacities, developing new structures of language, modifying and discarding old structures as he goes. The child acquires "grammars" within a very short period so that he can

effectively communicate with siblings, parents, peers and adults generally; furthermore the "grammars" are derived from a limited sampling of the child's language. Not only is the process very rapid, it is resistant to distortion.

Taking into account the limitations of memory, it seems unreasonable that a child can acquire and use, in a short time, a highly complex grammatical system by memorizing that set of utterances he has been exposed to and trying to reproduce the set. It seems feasible to postulate that what a child does is to acquire and use a set of rules which formulate the underlying regularities. These are the generative rules of the grammar of his language, and he uses these rules not only to generate the strings he may have heard but also to generate other possible strings. The concensus of psycholinguists is that the evidence gathered so far indicates that children develop, discard and refine rule systems, ultimately arriving at adult competence. It is postulated that there are innate determinants of the process of language acquisition which account for the universality of underlying structures. The nature of these structures and the complexity of the task so readily achieved by children leads researchers to theorise that a child's "mind" is set in a predetermined way to process the sorts of structures which characterize human language arriving at something like a transformation grammar of his native tongue. ²⁴

Dan Slobin writes:

"One of the motivations for postulating innate mechanisms in language acquisition is the notion that the speech input is not a rich enough source for the induction of grammar. That is, as pointed out repeatedly above, the surface structures of sentences do not provide sufficient information for the

interpretation of those sentences." ²⁵

Theoretically it might be possible to formulate rules which would enable a machine to make the sort of linguistic judgements which are made by human beings. But in undertaking such a task we would need to set up a model of competence; we would need to consider an idealized performance of the language task. In practice many psychological variables intervene to distort behavioural predictions based on the pure competence model. Limits of memory prevent people from uttering or understanding sentences beyond a given length or level of complexity. Fatigue, inattention, distractability, emotional excitement affect linguistic performance in many ways not envisaged by the model of competence. Furthermore it seems clear that children are in possession of rules of language before they can put them into use; their "competence" outreaches their "performance". They have within them the capacity to generate and to understand sentences they have never heard. Furthermore as Chomsky has pointed out ²⁶ people not only possess rules of language, they have the capacity to modify, and also the capacity to break them.

In other words language capacity in man is very complex indeed. We know a great deal about the neurology of speech but as Zangwill has shown ²⁷ all our knowledge of the mechanisms of speech and their relation to the brain do not enable us to understand how these mechanisms work. In spite of the vast accumulation of knowledge scholars are still unable to propose a biological theory of language ²⁸. In the light of the facts known Chomsky has postulated "innate principles of the mind" for which he argues in his lecture on "Interpreting the World". ²⁹ His theory has been challenged by several writers including David Crystal in "Linguistics" ³⁰, but my point is that Chomsky's writing

is serious, scholarly and reasoned. By O'Connor's touchstone it would be inadmissible without debate; it would be ruled out of court as a metaphysical theory. Few modern linguists would wish to discard Chomsky's views out of hand.

There are two other theories I wish to refer to in order to demonstrate how restricting the Logical Positivist position is. It does not matter whether one is attracted or repelled by the theories. The point is that they have been put forward by honest philosophers who value highly the philosophical developments of the twentieth century.

First, John Hick ³¹ has put forward a verification theory in regard to the Christian Faith:

"Although the system of Christian beliefs is not as a whole directly verifiable is there perhaps some one aspect of it which is in principle experientially confirmable and which can establish the factual character of the other beliefs that are bound up with it? There are certain eschatological expectations - expectations about the ultimate future - which, I want to suggest, satisfy an acceptable criterion of factual meaningfulness and which impart to the Christian belief-system as a whole the character of a true or false assertion.

But has not the notion of an after-life been ruled out by modern philosophers? The answer is that it is ruled out by some and not by others; and these latter include some of the most strongly science-oriented thinkers. For example Moritz Schlick, who was at the centre of the Vienna Circle from which logical positivism originally emanated, held that the hypothesis that after death I shall continue to have conscious experiences is an empirical hypothesis. Schlick did not at all think that there is an after-life, but he acknowledged that

the statement that there is is a genuinely factual assertion."

If I have interpreted "in terms of experience" correctly, O'Connor would reject "eschatological expectations" as transcendental entities, and yet it does seem reasonable to suppose that if one lives after death one will know about it.

Secondly, A. Boyce Gibson,³² writing in "Theism and Empiricism" has a rather different theory of verification which can be indicated through two quotations.

"Verification can only take the form of a gradually widening conviction spread over the years from the hopes of youth to the meditations of age, and over situations swinging between crisis and routine that the way of faith is the sufficient way and one which promotes in each of its phases its own perpetuation. The verification of faith is not like the verifications of science."

"We know (in answer to Ayer) perfectly well what would verify the Christian faith: its success in disposing of what we have called the counter evidence. We also know what would falsify it - its inability, in practice, to handle the counter evidence..... the verification of faith is not simply the verification of propositions: there has also to be verified a whole manner of feeling and acting. But as we have shown, the propositions are fused with it and diluted in it, and without them the verification is incomplete. Precisely for this reason, it has to come by way of a whole life and cannot be pinned down to a controlled experiment."

O'Connor's position is that knowledge and the interpretation must be expressed in propositions that are publicly testable. By saying that the verification of faith cannot be done by the verification of propositions Boyce Gibson is on this view saying that faith cannot be verified at all. Thus the central argument of Boyce Gibson's considerable book is ruled inadmissible without further debate.

My intention in referring to these three theories is not to present an argument for metaphysics though in the next chapter I will suggest the line such an argument might take. The intention is simply to show that O'Connor from the outset refuses to take seriously any theory that does not fit into his constricted category system. This it seems to me is not a promising start to a discussion of basic philosophical issues.

The analogy of the jigsaw puzzle which accompanies the statement on page 112, if it is to be taken seriously, demands some comment. Let it be conceded that philosophers reshuffle the items of experience into a pattern different from one with which they are already familiar. What makes the new pattern comprehensible? By what criteria is comprehensibility to be determined? What makes one comprehensible pattern preferable to another?

When I am trying to complete a jigsaw puzzle I can refer either to the picture on the box or I can assume that the picture when finally completed will be recognisable. Furthermore the shapes will fit snugly into one another, the patterns of small objects and their colours will give me a matching procedure, and finally no pieces are missing. But the world is not like that at all. I do not know what the final picture looks like; some of the pieces are distorted, some defaced, some discoloured; many are missing and I have

no way of knowing how many; I do not really know the ultimate size or shape of the picture. To make O'Connor's analogy meaningful I should need a revelation of a transcendental nature, unless of course he is implying that we now know the limits of whatever can be known.

Moreover comprehensibility involves a delicate and intricate process which operates between "I can't see it" and "Ah, now I see" and perhaps between "experiencing" and "experiencing as". In "Philosophical Investigations" Wittgenstein³³ draws attention to the ambiguous duck-rabbit shape which you can see either as a duck's head facing left or as a rabbit's head facing right. Two people, or the same person at different times, may perceive the same marks on paper in significantly different ways. Wittgenstein wrote of "seeing as"; one sees the picture as a duck or as a rabbit. It is possible with Hick³⁴ to expand this notion into that of "experiencing as" not only visually but through all the organs of perception together. We experience situations in different ways as having different kinds of significance, and sometimes find it impossible to experience situations in the same way as other people.

When I look at the puzzle picture and cannot see the rabbit but can see the duck, people can help my perception by such comments as "those are his ears"; but if I eventually do see the rabbit it would be by my own voluntary, optional, uncompelled effort. The important thing is that my perception has changed, my level of comprehensibility has been extended, not merely by a reshuffling of the items of experience, but by the addition to those items of a personal interpretative factor. O'Connor's analogy recognises this factor while his earlier statement precludes it.

There are two further difficulties in this bland statement about the "interpretation of experience".

In formulating any theory about the world I have to use words. I am at once confronted with the difficulty of bringing everything relevant to the surface of language, not just because the universe is very big and I am small but because there is a "space" between the world (including the world's language) and my speaking or writing of it. It has been said that epistemology describes us only in so far as we are not in the world. "Shuffling the items of experience" is a misleading metaphor because it suggests that "shuffling" is all that goes on; it is however a pregnant phrase because it leads to the question, Who does the shuffling and where do you stand to do it? Put another way the question is, What is the reality of that 'space' between the world and my speaking of it? Can that reality be known and if known can it be symbolised? O'Connor would answer presumably not that the 'space' does not exist but that it cannot exist because he has ruled it out of order.

Wittgenstein, early in his writing, maintained that language 'pictured' the world.³⁵ When we think of the world as in some way matching our semantical vehicles we parcel up the world into units which correspond with the types of semantical vehicles we employ: into things for words to refer to; into facts which make our sentences true; into classes of things to fit our generalizations. So language and the world can reflect one another faithfully.

However, this notion conceives of language as external to the world and immediately we are confronted with the difficulty of including language in our study of the world and with the further difficulty of studying

the relationship between the language and the world of experience which it describes. The ultimate "jigsaw" which would embrace 'world', 'language' and the 'space' between them is ever receding; the ultimate referent which could give comprehensibility to the bits of jigsaw which we have, seems of necessity to be transcendent at least in some way. Nevertheless if we are ever to know this ultimate referent there must also be a way to bring it into our ken.

Karl Popper in "Objective Knowledge" meets the issue which I have raised by distinguishing three "worlds"; first the world of physical objects or of physical states; secondly the world of states of consciousness, or of mental states or perhaps of behavioural dispositions to act; and thirdly the world of objective contents of thought, especially of scientific and poetic thoughts and of works of art. In his Third World are to be found theoretical systems and problem situations, and most importantly critical arguments. In many ways this Third World is the equivalent of "human language and thought." He maintains that this world is objective and autonomous in the same sort of way that a book of logarithms produced by a computer has an existence of its own irrespective of whether it is ever used by human beings. He gives as analogy the story of a nesting box which he put in his garden. It was for a time ignored, then used by a family of blue tits for a brief spell before they abandoned it. The nesting box may have been abandoned prematurely; it might have been capable of improvement; it might have been useless. So, argues Popper, is it with any theoretical system devised by man. Yet the world of language, of conjectures, theories and arguments - in brief the universe of objective knowledge - is one of the most important of these man-created, yet at the same time

largely autonomous, universes. He claims that it is impossible to understand the human mind and the human self without understanding the Third World.

"The process of learning, of the growth of subjective knowledge is always fundamentally the same. It is imaginative criticism. This is how we transcend our local and temporal environment by trying to think of circumstances beyond our experience, by criticising the universality, or the structural necessity, of what may, to us, appear (or what philosophers may describe) as the 'given' or as 'habit'; by trying to find, construct, invent new situations - that is test situations, critical situations; and by trying to locate, detect and challenge our prejudices and habitual assumptions." 36

It would be hard to better these words as a description of prophetic insight as displayed in the Old Testament, and they carry us far beyond O'Connor's definition of knowledge. According to Popper the incredible thing about life is the interaction between ourselves and our work by which we constantly transcend ourselves, our talents and our gifts.

"This self transcendance is the most striking and important fact of all life and all evolution, and especially of human evolution." 37

However for Popper the physical world is an open system,³⁸ and his theory suggests that man will always fall short in his understanding of a universe, or perhaps three universes, which expand with every creative human act. This is a very different notion from St. Paul's belief that one day we who now see through a glass darkly shall see "face to face". It seems to me that the human striving towards the "Omega" inevitably populates the Third World with different formulations of the God-Hypothesis.

I venture to illustrate this point with a parable based on ideas from Hick and Mitchell.

A man out walking one sunny Sunday afternoon finds a street he has not noticed before and strolls along it. He meets a friend hurrying towards him from the other end of the street. "Come with me", says the friend and both of them turn into an alley leading to a large warehouse. Stooping through a small iron door in the wall, the man finds himself in a huge darkness, his sight surprised by the move out of the bright sunlight. However, he does notice in the middle of the floor a table with a lamp upon it. Round the table huddles a group of men looking like Rembrandt's conspirators; they whisper earnestly together. Beyond them he sees a prisoner - unbelievable - tied to one of the supporting pillars, and a figure standing on guard with some sort of machine gun in hand. His friend takes him towards the table. He hears snatches of conversation. "We'll take over the Post Office we'll put men in all the main government buildings John and his group with all the gear must secure the Broadcast Station the coup will be so quick people won't realise what's happened." Sedition, conspiracy, revolution in a peaceful democracy! - the man cannot believe it; the whole scene is beyond comprehension. Try as he may, even though he knows precisely what he perceives, he cannot make sense of it. Suddenly, a voice from the distance shouts, "Right, cut! That's fine, we'll print." And the warehouse is full of light. The man sees cameras and camera crews, and he understands the scene which had been so baffling.

The point I am making is that the 'warehouse of the world' has no room in it for 'explanatory studio equipment'.

Thus far in the paper I have examined "the logical

touchstones" by which O'Connor judges philosophical arguments and theories, and have suggested that they are stipulative and restrictive to the point of intolerance, and that in their elucidation O'Connor is guilty of inconsistency for the reasons I have given. If it is argued that brief statements of a philosophical position must of necessity be inadequate, and that therefore it is unfair to expect more than a rough sketch, the counter argument is in O'Connor's own words: (p 117)

"It may be thought absurd to try to examine so considerable and controversial a question in the course of a few pages. Yet the basic issues are very simple and they can easily be stated in quite a summary form."

The "basic issues" as O'Connor enunciates them are not simple and cannot be easily summarised except with a dogmatism that is unscientific, unphilosophical and possibly dangerous.

CHAPTER II

IS METAPHYSICS MEANINGFUL?

O'Connor begins the second part of this chapter with reference to a paper in the Hibbert Journal of March 1955 by the Professor of Education at the University of Hull, E.B. Castle. He concedes that the paper is interesting and yet he makes no effort to counter the argument. Rather he takes an illustrative allusion to Jacques Maritain as a peg to hang an argument on; what follows is more like special pleading than an essay in philosophy. Castle's point is that at no time in our history have we been more convinced about the value of education, more feverishly engaged in planning and building fine schools, more willing to spend money on the training of the young. Yet, he asks, are we planning with some ultimate end in view, or are we engaged in a sparring match with each new economic, technological or social problem as it comes along, using education only as a means of satisfying immediate needs. He asks further whether it is not sad to reflect that science and technology in the hands of good and intelligent men could now bring to fruit all that prophetic religion, stemming from the Hebrew prophets, has demanded for the physical welfare of mankind, if only there were the will to perform the task and to re-direct our energies. What is demanded by the modern situation, says Castle, is not that we should ask where we are going, but that we should decide where we intend to go.

Many people would agree with Castle that these are not pseudo questions as O'Connor implies that they are (p 116). Certainly they are questions often asked in one form or another. Maritain's three questions constitute one graphic form, and they should be interpreted in the context of the whole article. The only fair alternative would have been to examine critically

Maritain's philosophy as set out in "Distinguer pour unir, on Les degres du savoir" first published in 1932 and translated into English in 1959.¹ There is no evidence in O'Connor's chapter that he has considered Maritain's argument - though he may well have done - for there is certainly no discussion of it.

In a long and complex book Maritain seeks to show that by using a truly critical method and valuing the knowledge of "things" the way can be opened to an exploration of the world of reflection. He insists that "Being" can be loosed from the matter in which it is incorporated. He concedes that metaphysics is of no use in furthering the output of experimental science. He concedes that metaphysical truth is "useless" but claims it is necessary.² He is developing an argument put massively in the late twenties by F.R. Tennant,³ more modernly by E.L. Mascall⁴ and more simply by William Temple in Nature, Man and God⁵ where he argued that the fact the world has, in the course of evolution, given rise to minds that reflect on the very process out of which they have emerged provides strong justification for the belief that the world is itself the product of a transcendent Mind. The second half of this proposition is not relevant. But it is very pertinent to ask "What are we?", which is Maritain's first question if part of the answer is, "We are transcendental; we can apparently stand outside ourselves and the world and ask transcendental questions". O'Connor's response seems to be, "You should not do it, because such questions cannot be answered by the scientist." Of course he might be saying, "the metaphysical phase of man was part of the evolutionary process; we are now moving, and with profit, into the physical phase." But such a view does not seem to be supported by the facts. Some people still ask the questions raised by Castle in the Hibbert Journal.

The reader is told that Maritain's questions cannot serve as a starting point for philosophy because the questioner wants to hear an answer of a certain kind; what look like questions are really disguised religious conclusions, and the questions are spurious (pp 116, 117). Of course as Arnaud Reid points out⁶ if you insist on browbeating a pupil to give one answer and no other to a question you are only pretending to be seeking a 'best' or a 'right' solution. But if some questioners are unfair on some occasions it does not follow that the questions asked may not be genuine questions, and may not be by some people genuinely asked. Many responsible philosophers believe that they are important questions and that the student, especially the student teacher, ought to put such questions to himself. He will be more honest if he is open to their possible profundity than if he dismisses them for Professor O'Connor's reasons as having only a "ring of profundity" (p 115).

He dismisses the third question "Where ought we to be going?" as a "variant of those ethical questions of value that we discussed in Chapter 3" without the slightest hint that it follows naturally from the other two questions. Leaving aside for the moment the confusion between axiology, ethics (or meta ethics) and morals (or normative ethics) we can look briefly at some questions raised in the third chapter. They include, "What things are good as ends?", "How are we to find out what things are good (as ends or means)?", "Is this particular action x wrong or right?", "Are actions of type A wrong or right?", "Why is this so?" (pp 54,55,69). Such questions emphasize the significance of the word "ought" in the original question. O'Connor's quiet acceptance of the word "ought" is remarkable. He is conceding that men can have aims in life and that they can choose between one aim and another; but more than that he is stating that men have an "obligation" to

pursue those aims they believe to be "better". This is a very large concession and it surely validates the first question of Maritain's which in part now becomes, "What sort of beings are we that we should have these notions of "ultimate purpose", "choice", and "obligation". If O'Connor tells me (p 115) that I am a middle class Australian in the twentieth century with a certain biological and psychological structure and a determining heredity and race history surely I may reasonably reply, "that's fine, I now know where I am going because it has been determined, and really I have no choice even though I may think that I choose; I must go where I am going and I do not quite understand your use of the word "ought". " If on the other hand he tells me "you are just a fortuitous concourse of atoms", then I might reasonably reply, "then it doesn't matter where I am going."

In other words he cannot logically admit the validity of the third question without admitting the validity of the first. The second question, as O'Connor perceives, relates to the temporal state in which men find themselves, and arises from the mystery of "carpe diem" which has puzzled and provoked thinkers and artists throughout the story of mankind. All three questions are interdependent and as originally framed contained the plural pronoun. Maritain was conscious of another factor, that man is a social animal. It is unfortunate, to say the least, that O'Connor sees fit to change the form of the question so that this additional cause of puzzlement is lost.

In his facile treatment of Castle's paper which makes up Part II of this final chapter, O'Connor seems not to distinguish between the contemplation of one single object or other and the contemplation of the world taken as a whole, or more satisfactorily, one's entire experience of the world taken as a whole.

What is being asked is, how shall we "perceive" the world? With this in mind one might conceive of metaphysics as a conspectus, map, grid, slant or model; as a framework upon which we rationally arrange and structure our worldly experience taken as a whole, into some meaningful unity; as a rational synopsis of all our experience. Or one might conceive of metaphysics as the linguistic formulation of a conspectus of the world which appears to have explanatory value, and perhaps heuristic significance. Or one might conceive of metaphysics as a 'projection' in the sense in which a cartographer uses the term, recognising the difficulty of translating into a particular medium what cannot properly be expressed in that medium. John Wisdom explores this possibility in his celebrated paper "Gods" in which he relates the parable of the garden to show how an explanatory hypothesis may start by being experimental and gradually become something quite different.⁷ Anthony Flew replied with a similar parable in his essay "Theology and Falsification"⁸ and there has been considerable discussion of Wisdom's position since, much of it prior to the publication of O'Connor's book although a greater amount since. It is not within the scope of this paper to review this discussion but its existence should be noted, and might have been commented on by O'Connor who so sweepingly and authoritatively rejects metaphysical questions. However I wish to revert briefly to the notion of 'falsifiability' referred to earlier.

Dr. Heimbeck⁹ has pointed out that for Karl Popper falsifiability was a criterion for demarcating scientific theories from non scientific; it was never a criterion of meaning as A.G.N. Flew made it.¹⁰ John Wilson puts the case in this way¹¹

"If a statement is not decisively falsifiable, in

principle as well as in practice, then the statement is not informative."

If the truth of a statement is consistent with any evidence that might be forthcoming it is argued that such a statement cannot be informative. To say, "There is a tiger in the kitchen and nothing that happens could falsify the truth of that statement" is clearly nonsense. On the face of it falsification is the obverse of verification and Flew has used it powerfully in this way to ask, "What could falsify the existence of God?"¹² But it would be rash to assume that verification and falsification must always be related in a symmetrical fashion. John Hick¹³ has pointed out that the proposition "there are three successive sevens in the decimal determination of π " has not yet been verified so far as the value of π has been worked out. But it will always be true that such a series may occur at a point not yet calculated. So the proposition may one day be verified if it is true, but cannot be falsified if it is false.

Nevertheless, just as O'Connor argues that religious claims cannot be verified, Flew and others argue that they cannot be falsified and are therefore vacuous. In rejecting this argument I would make two points.

First, as Warnock¹³ and Waismann¹⁴ have shown crucial utterances of science are not open to any final falsification. Secondly, there is a tendency to conflate evidence with criteria, to confuse the grounds for believing a statement to be true or false (the checking conditions) with the conditions which would actually make a statement true or false (the truth conditions). In his book "Falsification and Belief"¹⁵

Alastair McKinnon argues strongly against Flew's position and towards the end of the work has this to say:

"This answer may become clearer if we begin by asking why anyone should adopt the scientist's fundamental use of "order" and, more generally, his characteristic attitude toward the world. Of course, there are cultural, pragmatic and even personal reasons for doing so but these, we have agreed, are now beside the point. The question is not that of the causes which might prompt one to adopt this attitude but rather the reasons or defences he might legitimately offer for doing so. Put thus, the answer seems quite plain. There is no absolute justification for the adoption of this attitude but one who is committed to the enterprise of understanding can conditionally justify this choice on the ground that science is the most disciplined expression of the human attempt to understand what is usually referred to as the world in which we live. Though he cannot finally justify his commitment to understanding, he can appeal to this commitment to justify his adoption of the scientific attitude. The situation appears to be very similar in the case of religious belief. There is no absolute and unconditional justification for belief as such. The believer may adopt a religious approach to the world but there is no argument by which he can rationally compel others to do likewise. He can, however, defend his position as following from his commitment to the enterprise of understanding and he can argue that those who reject it confess thereby that, to this extent, they have forsaken this enterprise. The justification for belief is like that of science; in both cases it is finally conditional. But there is one important difference. While both science and religion aim at an understanding of reality, the former, by its own nature and admission, is content

with a limited and restricted account while the latter continues to strive for a total and unrestricted interpretation. Its drive for understanding is in every way more comprehensive and ambitious. It follows, therefore, that the commitment which really justifies the adoption of the scientific attitude points yet more strongly to the acceptance of religious belief."

O'Connor does not share this view and in the third section of his chapter he seeks to show that theological statements are not meaningful and therefore should have no place in education.

"religious beliefs do not admit of rational support and are therefore immune to rational criticism.... they cannot be of any concern for rational enquiry, for they cannot be either communicated or demonstrated" (p 125)

As illustration of his thesis O'Connor discusses the Teleological Argument as formulated in Aquinas' Five Ways. The result is a loss of clarity in the argument and a failure to deal adequately with the very complex issues raised. Since O'Connor takes the Argument from Design first, I shall follow him, even though the contention that theological statements are meaningless is the larger issue.

O'Connor follows David Hume who in the posthumously published Dialogues on Natural Religion subjected the argument to detailed scrutiny. His criticisms might be summed up in this way. First the argument involves comparing the whole universe to an artefact "which we know, on other grounds, to be designed for a purpose" (p 119). But, says Hume, why single out human artefacts. If we are comparing the whole universe to a small section of the items within it, that is comparing the whole to a part, why not select some other part? For instance, the cosmos seems as much like a vegetable as it is like

a machine. But then the analogy of human artefacts breaks down; potatoes are not in our experience designed by men. The way O'Connor presents this first criticism is slightly different. He raises the point that if we ask a question "What is X designed for?" we are begging the important question which has first to be asked, "Is this X designed for a purpose at all?" (p 120)

"The basic fault of such questions as, What is the purpose of man? and What is the meaning of life? is that they beg the more fundamental question, Is the Universe designed and created for a purpose?"

Here he stops, when he might have strengthened his argument by reference to Hume's other three points. His second was that even if we accept the machine analogy there is no necessity to postulate one Maker. Whereas a savage might infer from a canoe the intentions of one craftsman, a sophisticated person would infer from a great and complex ship a host of craftsmen and designers. So the cosmos might have been the work of a committee of gods.

Thirdly the Argument is anthropomorphic. The more we make the Author of Nature like the Designer of a machine the more we make God like man. The stronger the argument the more blasphemous our conception of God.

Fourthly, Hume noted the problem of evil. If orderliness and purpose are the pointers to a Creator then evil and disorderliness must be counted as counter evidence.

In preference to pursuing Hume's argument O'Connor takes up a point made by Kant in his Critique of Practical Reason. If, he said, we observe a chain of means and ends in nature it is wrong to think that this indefinitely extended chain could ever be experienced

in all its completeness. The Being which is postulated as the ultimate cause of the chain lies beyond all possible experience: and such a Being can never enter into a system of scientific knowledge.

O'Connor, no doubt with Hume and Kant in mind, turns to his prior question, "Is the Universe designed for a purpose?" He rejects an affirmative answer on two grounds.

"Suppose it were true that all processes directed by intelligent beings involve adaptation of means to ends. It would still not follow that all adaptation of means to ends was the work of intelligence." (p 121)

"We have no possible means of applying a test for intelligent design to those phenomena which display adaptation of means to ends but are not already known on other grounds to be planned" (p 121)

The elaboration of these arguments leads him to the conclusion:

"We have seen how this question is to be treated. And this, though it does not give us the answer, does give us a reason for ceasing to ask the question" (p 123) However, it seems to me that he reaches this conclusion by way of an inadequate argument.

The original question concerns the universe and Aquinas appeals to a highly general example of purposiveness seen in the fact that material, non-intelligent, multifarious things 'co-operate' in producing a stable world order and stable sub-systems which 'work' in a regular and mutually dependent way. It was Paley who stressed biological adaptation rather than cosmic orderliness and O'Connor seems to have confused the two arguments. The analogy with the machine to which he refers needs to be given its full significance. A machine has three relevant characteristics. First, it is a complex of interacting parts. We do not

call an ashtray a machine even though it is an artefact designed for a particular purpose. Second, the machine has a specific effect or function. Third, it is planned and produced by intelligent human beings. O'Connor refers to the last two of these characteristics but not to the first one when he refers back to the universe. He quotes the teleological arguer:

"We may therefore conclude that the universe which shows so many of these adaptations is the outcome of intelligent planning and that it is the work of a designer." (p 120)

But this is not a correct presentation of the basic argument which is rather that the cosmos can be regarded as a complex whole made up of interacting parts and in its orderliness and regularity resembles a machine. As it is hard to conceive of a machine existing without authorship so it is hard to conceive of the universe existing without authorship. Of course one might well attempt a description of how a complex ordered whole comes into existence out of a more chaotic state, as men have done in seeking to account for the solar system. But as Ninian Smart has pointed out¹⁶ it is necessary in order to elaborate such theories to refer to existing regularities; any explanation depends on the theorist's knowledge of the laws of nature. There is, as it were, a premiss of orderliness upon which the theory rests which attempts to explain the transition from the chaotic to the orderly. The emergence of the organised out of the relatively chaotic implies that even the relatively chaotic is not complete chaos. So that to explain orderliness we must presuppose some degree of orderliness. And here we reach the point of dilemma which itself prompts the question that O'Connor wishes not to be asked. We find that we cannot explain the origin of the ordered cosmos as a whole in terms of a

prior orderliness; a prior pattern of events governed by regularities; for such a pattern would be part of the cosmos which we are trying to explain. Either we say, as O'Connor implicitly says, that there can be no explanation of the universe's orderliness, or we can say that the only explanation would be non-scientific.

Part of the reason for asking the question, "Is the Universe designed for a purpose?" is the very fact that we are confronted with the dilemma described in the previous paragraph. It is part of the problem that "we could never test the rest of the material" in the way we conduct scientific experiments. Nevertheless we find ourselves able to conceive the idea of the universe as a whole constituted by a vast pattern of interacting events in space-time. We recognise a resemblance to a highly complex machine and we frame our question accordingly, fully aware that a scientific answer is not possible.

What does not logically follow is that we could never know the answer to the question, or that some day any answer might not be 'verified' in a manner appropriate to the context of the question. Meanwhile to say, as O'Connor does, that it "is a very bad piece of reasoning" to frame our question in terms which have made sense of our environment and experience thus far, seems an exaggeration. It would be rather silly to say that within our world we recognise the role of man in imposing orderliness and regularity, but when we consider the universe as a whole as being orderly we will be wrong to begin from the tentative knowledge which we have. The point of course is not that the Argument from Design proves the existence of God - no philosopher of religion has ever said so. Aquinas' Five Ways and the other arguments presented by the philosophers of religion are added together to suggest that the postulation of a

God-hypothesis is a reasonable one. As John Wisdom remarked, these arguments operate not like the links in a chain but as the legs of a chair.¹⁷

One would have expected from a philosopher some cognisance of the philosophy of religion, and some recognition that many writers (vide E.L. Mascall in The Openness of Being)¹⁸ have examined the validity of natural theology in the light of philosophical analysis and that their arguments are much more "profound" than O'Connor gives credit for. It is difficult to avoid the feeling that he is putting up skittles which are fairly readily knocked down. Arnaud Reid in his review makes this point very strongly when he uses the phrase "scandalously unfair".

The larger issue discussed in Section III is whether theological statements are 'rational'; whether they are admissible in rational discussion. He concludes that they are not (pp 123-126), and for this reason are to be excluded from any educational programme.

Almost at the same time as the publication of the book under discussion there was also published a book Faith and Logic¹⁹ in which there was a careful and sensitive examination of the bearing of modern philosophy upon Christian faith. The book was intended "as a contribution to a continuing debate" and there have been many essays and collections of essays since in which this debate has been continued. In other words the conclusion reached by O'Connor and 'wished' by him upon his readers has not been widely accepted by those whose major concern has been philosophy or theology. The question is not closed but open. One of the essays in the book Faith and Logic which has itself led to a considerable literature is "The Possibility of Theological Statements" by I.M. Crombie, and in dealing with the last

pages of Section III I shall refer to his argument. He makes the point very early:

"My procedure will be to ignore the loose statement of the case (the doctrine that unverifiable statements are meaningless is like the doctrine that cars are fast; not entirely false, but blanketing so many important distinctions as to be useless)".²⁰

He concedes that theological statements have the paradoxical features ascribed to them by their opponents but denies that paradox demonstrates a lack of meaning; rather, it illuminates the meaning by characterising the subject matter. We have already been confronted with a paradox in considering the nature of the universe. If there is that which explains the orderliness of the total cosmos it cannot be part of the cosmos or it would become merely a part of what we are seeking to explain. If it is not part of the cosmos its existence may not be "publicly tested" in the way that parts of the cosmos may be scrutinised, and yet there are those who insist that this is the only permissible way to attest the 'existence' of anything.

As I have already indicated, theological statements - and I assume this is what O'Connor loosely refers to as 'religion' - are about a mystery, yet they do bear some relationship to utterances that are not theological, and the sense of mystery itself may be seen to be an appropriate response to parts of our experience. O'Connor's position is that, while he admits the right of people to hold religious beliefs, he claims that these beliefs constitute a system that exists without any reference to things in the real world. If it is asked "what was his purpose in changing his job?" (p 119) O'Connor could understand and accept answers like, "he wanted to earn more money", or "he wanted more free time",

or "he wanted more congenial work" but he would presumably not accept "he wanted to do the will of God" because that is a reason which would be impossible to check. A question like "What is the will of God for him?" would produce ambiguous statements; clarification of the concept 'will of God' would be elusive. But, argues Crombie, it is this very elusiveness which is a consequence, indeed an expression, of the fact that all theological statements are about God, and that God is not part of the spatio-temporal world, but is in intimate relation with it.

Statements about God are to be interpreted as if their subject was a particular individual and yet they differ in logical character from all other statements about particular individuals. It should be noted that seeing God is neither technically impossible nor logically impossible as going to Neptune is technically impossible or seeing the average man is logically impossible; it is theologically impossible.

Secondly statements about God are claimed to be true and are claimed to have determinate meaning, and yet the theist seems not to regard himself as embroiled in scientific dispute; he seems to claim an immunity which belongs only to those who do not make statements of fact. If it is true that "God loves men" then there is nothing which can happen to any man that would falsify that statement. If "God made the world" it is impossible to conceive what the world might be like if God did not make it.

Both these situations are inevitable for the theologian but are anathema for the critical empiricist. For Crombie the major contribution of natural theology is not the proof of God which he says "cannot be accomplished".²¹ What natural theology does do is to reveal the intellectual pressures which lead intelligent

people into the anomalies already referred to. As I have already indicated, human beings do not accept the idea that they are ordinary spatio-temporal objects, and since they find themselves as it were "standing beyond the universe" they have no real difficulty in postulating a God-hypothesis. Indeed the special concepts needed for coping with human experience, 'love', 'hope', 'faith', 'obligation', have a relative independence of space, and are thought of in quite a different way from 'walking' or 'digesting'.

"If God exists, He is unique, and if other beings are related to Him, that relation is also unique Now if this is so, by what sort of reasoning could the existence of God possibly be proved? Neither He nor the world's relation to Him can be made the instance of a rule, as has been shown ad nauseam by those who criticise the Causal Argument the demand for a First Cause is a demand for an instance of the genus 'cause', and the activity of God being unique is at best an analogy of that genus, but not an instance of it."²²

It has been argued that the notion of transcendence is a loophole²³ and that either 'God' stands for something at least partly within our experience so that statements with the word 'God' in them are to that extent experimentally verifiable: or else 'God' does not stand for something within our actual or potential experience in which case, to put it bluntly, statements about God can have no possible interest for us and may well be meaningless. But this is really too slick a dilemma. As McPherson has reminded us²⁴ religious people have a real, often overwhelming experience which is extremely difficult to explain and to this extent religion may be 'inexpressible' without being meaningless. At the same time men have to find words to declare their religion and if there is a dilemma it is the requirement to express the non-rational (or super-rational) in rational

discourse. In seeking to explain what happens to man within the Universe, men are inexorably led "beyond" the Universe and "beyond" themselves.

Any attempt to express this notion of transcendence leads to category mistakes, or what Crombie calls category transgressions, such as saying that God is Spirit, or that He is Infinite, or Necessary, or Omnipotent. Such affirmations can be readily criticised if they are regarded as quasi-empirical statements. They are not, and the fundamental error of O'Connor is that he treats them as though they were. He fails to see that theological statements are interpretative and explanatory of the whole of man's experience and for that reason have to be different in kind from the sort of statements which for O'Connor are paradigmatic of all meaningful statements. Basil Mitchell's parable of the Stranger in the "Theology and Falsification" of New Essays in Philosophical Theology²⁵ draws attention, as does Wisdom's parable already referred to and John Hick's famous parable of the Journey²⁶, to the reality albeit the ambiguity of the evidence on which the theistic perspective is based. In Prospect for Metaphysics Ian Ramsey points out that metaphysics is rooted in man's desire "to knowjust where he is journeying."²⁷ It arises whenever a man seeks to map the Universe and plot his position upon it, when he seeks "to elaborate some explicit interpretative scheme, critically suited as far as may be to the whole of experience."

Part of this totality of experience is religious experience which it is claimed brings about an increase of awareness of how things are; in this sense it is cognitive. Great importance is given by James Richmond²⁸ to Karl Rahner's words "... lies outside our free control ...". The subject is convinced that what is apprehended is uninvited, unsought, un-self-induced; that it invades

and impinges upon his consciousness from without. As Rahner says, the religious experience "irresistibly attests its own presence." This is the "Idea of the Holy" which has been so fully examined by Rudolf Otto²⁹ and developed by Ninian Smart in Philosophers and Religious Truth³⁰ and in a two day conference held at Princeton in December 1962 whose proceedings are recorded in John Hick's Faith and the Philosophers.³¹ Any interpretation of man in the universe which does not take full account of this experience is deficient.

Notwithstanding my criticism of O'Connor's argument it must be stated that linguistic philosophy has done an important service for the theologian. First it has restated and sharpened the attack on traditional arguments for the existence of God, and theologians are less likely to talk nonsense without recognising that they are talking nonsense. Secondly, while some theologians have taken refuge in the fortress of "revelation", many have felt challenged to give their statements a coherent meaning and a consistent use. They have felt the need for rational enquiry not to have been diminished but increased; and they would certainly dissent from O'Connor who says it is impossible. Thirdly, the use of the logic of language in attempts to solve paradoxes as in the mind/body problem or in the freewill/determinism problem have encouraged thinkers to battle with other paradoxes like good/evil, in the hope that either the paradox be resolved or that we learn to live with it and derive illumination from it. Fourthly, there has been a tendency since Ayer and O'Connor for linguistic philosophers to develop their own metaphysic as they seek to interpret the familiar, and their dialogue with the theologian has been and will continue to be fruitful. It is recognised that as Leavis and Lewis can read Milton³² and come to diametrically opposed views about him as a poet, so men seeing the same things can

place upon them entirely different patterns. The dialectic between philosophers may result in greater wisdom for all and perhaps a new interpretation.

To the extent that O'Connor contributes to this service of linguistic philosophy he must be praised. But it is unfortunate that the tone of this section is intellectually sceptical: "you can believe if you want but your faith is not reasonable and cannot be validated." The position as I see it is rather that faith is reasonable for some people, or for some people at some times, but not for other people at other times. It is possible for people to come to believe on adequate grounds. The crucial point is that there is no 'across the board' answer as to what constitutes adequate grounds; criteria have to be established separately for each different subject matter. Moreover the reasonableness of a belief depends on what data a man has at his disposal. In 1474 it would have been unreasonable to believe that one could in England see and listen to a man on the underside of the earth. It is in principle quite possible for a person to have participated in experiences on the basis of which it is reasonable for him to believe in God (and even unreasonable not to) while another person who has not had these experiences may with equal reason not believe in God. In such a situation it seems to me quite reasonable for the believer to invite the non-believer to attempt to share his experiences and to examine the reasons behind his belief, and equally proper for the non-believer to indicate the reasons for his non-belief. In the field of education these attitudes should be both seen as positive attitudes. Religion is not extra, it is interpretative. O'Connor's Positivist view is also interpretative. Writing on this point Foster states:³³

"We are witnessing the disappearance of metaphysics

and its replacement by - what? It is not true that nothing has stepped into the place which metaphysics has vacated. What has stepped in is what I have called by the vague name of 'humanism'. This is not an empirical matter as we have seen. The choices and stipulations with which it is concerned are not datable acts of individual human beings. To call it a humanist metaphysics would stress the fact that the old metaphysics has been replaced by something which is so to speak on the same level as itself, but it would be misleading because we do not use the name 'metaphysics' to describe the kind of thing which it is. In some ways humanist myth would be a better description."

What Professor O'Connor has in fact done is to give a summary and somewhat disjointed answer to Maritain's three questions, What are we?, Where are we?, and Where are we going? In giving reasons for his answer he has the same difficulties as I have in giving reasons for my answer, and both our answers must be open to scrutiny and to amendment. The difference between us is that I recognise the metaphysical nature of my arguments; he fails to see the metaphysical nature of his.

I turn now to the fourth section in which O'Connor considers the relationship between religion and morality.

CHAPTER III

ETHICAL JUDGEMENTS

In the fourth section, O'Connor discusses the relationship between ethics and religion: what he calls the "nature of the connexion between morality and religion" (p 126). He concedes, belatedly I think, that religion is a vague concept and defines the term as incorporating code, cult, and creed; and he asks whether a moral code can exist without a religious setting. However, he uses 'morality' and its cognates without clarifying the concept and it is therefore hard to follow the process of his argument.

Most careful modern philosophers would distinguish between three branches of "ethics". First there are moral questions: for example, "Is the teaching of religion in schools wrong?" Secondly, there are questions of fact about people's moral opinions: for example, "Who believes that the teaching of religion in schools is wrong?" Thirdly, there are questions about the meaning of moral words or about the nature of moral concepts: for example "What is one saying if one says, the teaching of religion in schools is wrong?" The first branch would normally be called "morals" or "normative ethics"; the second branch would be called "descriptive ethics"; and the third branch would be called the "logic of ethics" or "metaethics" or most commonly "ethics". A philosopher needs to distinguish clearly the kind of moral statement he is making.

O'Connor asks

"What we want to know is whether an effective moral code can exist apart from a religious setting? (p 126) and he answers "It would be possible for a man to hold to a set of moral rules without holding any supporting

religious beliefs." (p 127)

Here he appears to be discussing morals, so that when he concludes on page 137 that morality has an essential link with education he seems to be saying that it is right to teach morals in school but wrong to teach religion. However he states on page 127

"We are concerned here only with the claim that the validity of moral judgements needs to be guaranteed by the truths of religion" and on page 129

"Anyone who argues from statements about religion to statements about moral values argues from premisses which do not contain value concepts to statements which do" and on page 137

"I have been concerned here only with the claim that education has a necessary basis in ethics and religion."

These statements look like ethical statements and he seems to be asking whether ethical statements are coterminous with theological statements. His reference to Hume and his recapitulation of arguments set out on page 59 confirm that O'Connor is arguing that moral statements are not derived from theological statements. But it should be realised that the Humean argument, refined by Moore, is basically that one cannot derive an "ought" from an "is". If this is so then another question is raised: "Where are such statements derived?" Using O'Connor's rather misleading terminology, the question is, "Where do moral codes come from if they do not come from religion?" Or the question might be put, "Of what nature are ethical judgements?" This is a question he neither clarifies nor attempts to answer, despite his reference to the "validity of moral judgements." His statement that any man, religious or not, can hold to

a set of moral rules is ambiguous and unhelpful. Everyone, including the criminal, has a moral code of some sort and I doubt if the fact has ever been disputed. Ethical judgements become significant when moral codes are compared, when the morality of one action is judged against the morality of another action. He says on page 137 that the purposes which motivate men may be trivial and selfish, but they "ought" not to be. But what is the significance of this "ought"? How would O'Connor answer a crude disciple of Ayn Rand who claimed that human purposes should be selfish? Nowhere in this section is there an attempt to deal with the nature of ethical judgements or even an attempt to indicate that his dismissal of religion demands some alternative. The reader must be content with a comment on page 71 "the problem of how to justify our value judgements is still an unsolved problem of philosophy."

Of course when O'Connor states that a man can hold to a set of moral rules without holding any supporting religious beliefs he is probably assuming a high moral standard and expressing the view that a man can behave himself well whether he is religious or not. Again I doubt if this has ever been disputed. The confusion arises because he has mixed up two questions, "where does the moral code come from?" and "where does the strength of character to keep the moral code come from?"

What O'Connor seems to want to say is this. A man can be good without being religious. Educators should want their educands to be good, and that involves the teaching of morals. Religion should not be taught because it cannot be "publicly tested", but its omission need not stop the teaching of morals. The work of the Farmington Trust is based on this axiom and in their book¹ Introduction to Moral Education John Wilson puts the case more clearly. It is not at all clear from

this chapter what is meant by "morality" and how it is to be related to education. This is an important question and should have been clarified. For if it is wrong to teach, "If God so loved us, ought we not also to love one another?" it is also wrong to teach, "You should not have intercourse with your girl friend in the Sixth Form" because the truth of that statement cannot be "publicly attested" either. What is to determine which moral code shall be taught?

In fact he raises an even more complex problem.

"I have been concerned here only with the claim that education has a necessary basis in ethics and religion and that it is the task of philosophy to justify this claim by making clear the character of the connexion. I believe that it is true that morality has this essential link with education but that it is false that religion is relevant at all." (p 137)

It would appear from this statement that O'Connor has been concerned to show that words like "ought", "should", "right" and "good" have a place in educational theory. But in fact he has not discussed this matter at all, and he certainly has not indicated how the terms could be derived. Two questions have been conflated and neither has been answered: "What 'morality' ought to be taught?" and "What of anything ought to be taught and how?" In an introduction to Philosophy one would not expect a complete attempt to answer them, but at least in this chapter one would have expected some hint as to how the questions might be tackled.

It could be argued that a descriptive approach to ethics would be both instructive and helpful without being indoctrinatory. But then too it could also be held that a descriptive approach to religion could be equally acceptable. The difficulty arises when a

teacher is contemplating the possibility of being prescriptive. Indeed this seems to me to be the true locus of debate not only in religion and ethics but in politics, aesthetics, and social mores: how far should a teacher be prescriptive? It might have been beneficial if O'Connor had included some discussion of this issue in his book.

What he has done is to raise the autonomy of ethics as the substantial issue in this section, and by doing so he has brought into question the justification of any evaluative judgement. The intention is to show that there is no necessary connexion between ethics and religion: that ethical judgements can neither be reduced without residuum to judgements that fall within theology, nor can they be deduced formally from such judgements either. The effect is to remind us that ethical judgements cannot formally be deduced from any judgements or propositions that are 'empirical' in O'Connor's meaning of that term. Hare has written² "Let us suppose that someone claims that he can deduce a moral or other evaluative judgement from a set of purely factual or descriptive premises, relying on some definition to the effect that V (a value word) means the same as C (a conjunction of descriptive predicates). We first have to ask him to be sure that C contains no expression that is covertly evaluative (for example, 'natural', 'normal', 'satisfying' or 'fundamental human needs'). Nearly all so-called "naturalistic definitions" will break down under this test - for to be genuinely naturalistic a definition must contain no expression for whose applicability there is not a definite criterion which does not involve the making of a value judgement. If the definition satisfies this test, we have next to ask whether its advocate ever wishes to commend anything for being C for his definition has made this impossible."

Furthermore, if ethical concepts were to be defined in terms of non-ethical concepts, these would be the fundamental ones. Since all derivative concepts must be definable in terms of the fundamental ones, the whole content of ethics would be reduced to something non-ethical.

O'Connor has argued throughout the book that the empiricist approach, especially through science, has been immensely successful in providing knowledge about the nature of things. He has argued that what we cannot "know" using empirical tests cannot be known. One would expect him for this reason to argue that if we are to discover a morality that is incontrovertible we have to use scientific means to discover it, and scientific definitions to explain our discoveries; if this is not possible then he needs to justify the inclusion of ethics in an educational programme.

By his silence in this chapter O'Connor confirms the view that he sees Ethics as basically emotivist as he explains it in the third chapter; although he disclaims the position it is hard to avoid the opinion that he is subjectivist and relativist. This makes it all the harder to understand why he allows 'morals' to remain in the ambit of education. No ethical statement is 'publicly testable' nor can it be deduced from a proposition that is 'publicly testable'; surely then such statements can no more be admissible in the language of the educator than the statements of the theologian. It is hard to understand why he does not admit the complex problems in this area even if he is not prepared in the space available to argue them.

There is something peculiar about an ethical judgement that marks it off from all other kinds of statement. When I say "A is good" I imply a claim

that ' "A is good" can be objectively and rationally justified or validated.'

An ethical judgement claims that it will stand up under scrutiny by oneself and others in the light of the most careful thinking and the best knowledge, and that rival judgements will not stand up under such scrutiny.

David Hume makes the point in Part I of his Enquiry into the Principles of Morals:

"The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation When a man denominates another his 'enemy', 'rival', 'antagonist', 'adversary' he is understood to speak the language of self-love, and to express sentiments, peculiar to himself, and arising from his own particular circumstance and situation. But when he bestows on any man the epithets of 'vicious' or 'odious' or 'depraved' he then speaks another language and expresses sentiments, in which he expects all his audience are to concur with him. He must here.... depart from his private and particular situation and must choose a point of view, common to himself and others." ³

In fact we have to

"invent a peculiar set of terms, in order to express those universal sentiments of censure or approbation".⁴

Such a language of public dialogue recognises the claim to objective validity. This ability of ethical statements to stand on their feet I shall return to.

There is plainly not such an autonomy about ethics_ that it is altogether independent of factual judgements - that would be absurd.

We judge what we ought to do because of what the situation is or what it seems to us to be. We judge something to be good or bad because of its factual nature. In this kind of way ethical judgements are based on matters of fact. The man must be kicking the dog, and without a sufficient reason, before we can say, "that's bad!"

However, granting this dependence, autonomy is still preserved because from no factual proposition whatever can we infer that things which have certain properties will be intrinsically good or bad. Similarly, from factual propositions alone we cannot infer that any act of a given kind in a given situation will be morally right or wrong.

It is clear then that the Autonomy of Ethics, though it excludes certain views as to the relation between ethics and theology or between ethics and natural science, need not deny any and every kind of relation between ethics and these other disciplines. I would briefly refer to one such relation.

In our keenness to separate Ethics from Theology it is not always remembered that "God" is ordinarily a "partially-moral" term. In our civilization and thus in our language, it would not be strictly proper to call a being "God" whose actions were not perfectly good or whose commands were not the best of moral directives. That God is good is a truth of language, and not an ethical contingency, since one of the usual criteria of Godhead is that the actions and commands of such a being are perfectly good. In referring to some being as "God" we would in part be saying that he is morally faultless.

When we say "God is good" we are not making a moral judgement; that would be either redundant or impertinent. We are making a commitment, a response to the revelation

of the Holy. Without some such commitment it would be impossible to even approach the moral standard we set for ourselves. The commitment may be theistic or it may be atheistic; I think that is generally conceded. But the nature of that commitment is, I submit, impossible to define in physical terms, and by saying that an unbeliever can be 'moral', meaning that he can maintain high standards in behaviour and attitude, O'Connor surreptitiously introduces this concept of commitment without attempting to analyse the concept. If a man commits himself to moral values, or indeed to values in other fields, and believes these values to be in some way objective, then it is clear that the values do not proceed from the subjective desires and choices of human beings. From whence then do they arise? It cannot, for reasons already given, be said that the moral law arises from material causes. If it comes neither from the material world nor from the world of conscious beings, is there not a *prima facie* case for saying that the source of moral value is beyond the world: that the source is transcendent? It is not the purpose of this paper to argue the case but simply to suggest that there is a case to be argued. O'Connor ignores it.

His thesis has been that a proposition can only be true or false if it can be verified in accordance with the procedures which are acceptable in Science. I want now to look at this thesis in relation to moral judgements.⁵

Whether any judgement is true or false always depends in some way on its relation to a reality which is not itself a set of judgements or 'propositions'. In this sense the correspondence theory is obviously true.

But it would seem important not to bring the concept

of 'copying' into 'correspondence'. It may not be reasonable to demand a separate fact for every true judgement.

Is it a distinct fact that there is a Tasmanian graduate in this room where I am writing? Another that there is a man in this room? Another that there is a musician in this room? Another that there is a Tasmanian graduate living in my suburb?

Is it a distinct fact that there are no Tasmanian tigers in this room, nor are there male Indian elephants?

If it is not so, then we shall say that the proposition "'truth' consists in correspondence to 'facts'" is not an acceptable definition.

Similarly, if I say this lump of sugar is soluble, am I asserting the existence in the lump of an actual quality, "solubility", which is there even when the sugar is not exposed to water.

If I say, "the match will take place if the rain stops", how does the truth of this hypothetical statement derive from its direct correspondence to facts?

Perhaps we can concede that what the Correspondence Theory does, as opposed to pragmatist or coherence theories, is to insist that the truth of a judgement is dependent on reality. However, the mode of dependence may be different as regards different kinds of judgement.

Descriptive affirmative empirical judgements are directly rendered true by the possession of a quality or relation by the thing or things to which it is attributed. "I have a black pen" is true because there is actually a pen in my hand and it is black.

Contra-factual conditionals on the other hand are

not made true because they correspond to some hypothetical fact, but rather by the nature of existent things which is such as to imply that if things had been different in way A, they would have been different in way B.

"I would have had this paper printed, had time and money allowed" if true, is true not because the paper is actually printed in some hypothetical sense, but because my nature is such and my practice has been such to give credence to the proposition.

"The submarine men would have died, had they not been rescued" depends for its truth on the existent world but it does not express a fact simply exemplified in the existent world. Different kinds of propositions may depend for their truth on the real in different ways, and this may constitute a ground for arguing that they are true only in different senses of the term "true". It might be possible to distinguish a general meaning of the word "truth" and a set of more special meanings which could all be regarded as applications of the general. Parallel to this we could posit a general meaning of 'good' and a set of special meanings.

"A is good" generally then means "A is such that it ought to be the object of a pro-attitude."

Of course involved in this 'general' definition are subsets of meaning.

"Being kind to people" is good in the sense that I ought to have a pro-attitude toward it.

"Eating fillet steak" for me at any rate is good and I have a pro-attitude to eating steak.

But while I "admire" the first kind of action I do not "admire" the second. The pro-attitude is of a

different kind.

This kind of distinction enables me to say that moral judgements can be true and yet be true-in-a-different-sense to that in which factual propositions are true.

Five points might be made in support of the view that ethical judgements (though autonomous) can be true or false. In this paper they can be indicated rather than argued at length.

1. There is the irresistible tendency shown in language to treat ethical judgements as indicative statements. It is clear that our language usage comes about from periods and through periods when ethical statements were treated as a kind of metaphysical statement or as a kind of empirical statement. But attempts to 'isolate' ethics as a separate discipline did not have and have not had a tendency to remove the indicative. While the current usage does not prove anything it cannot be ignored.
2. When I am trying to decide what to do, I am conscious of trying to find out something and not merely of trying to decide one way or the other in order to escape the discomfort of indecision. I feel I am trying to find out the truth about what I ought to do.
3. Ethical judgements agree with ordinary judgements in depending for their validity on their relation to the factual nature of the real.
The proposition "You are hurting me" depends for its truth on a network (possibly quite complex) of facts. The judgement "You ought not to kill Tom merely because you don't fancy the tie he is wearing" also depends for its truth on a network of facts.

4. Pictures of "commanding" or "deciding" will not fit past actions, the more so if we wish to change a moral judgement about a past action. In addition to this difficulty there is the further complication that in making a "moral judgement" there seems to be always more than a prescriptive element (and prior to it). Before I say "Do not kill Tom" something has gone on very like a mental process of assessment or evaluation.
5. Lastly and arising from the fourth point, ethical judgements differ from commands, exhortations or practical decisions in that they do not only urge actions on oneself or others, they claim that there is good reason for urging them (without of course specifying the reason).
 "Stop kicking that dog" is an imperative that invites the question "why?" which itself often means "why should I?". Answers like: "Because I say so", "Because he is bleeding", "Because he cannot kick back", are unsatisfactory unless they carry some moral implication e.g. "You are hurting him, and it's wrong to inflict pain needlessly", or "You are a man, and a decent man does not behave like that."

Having suggested that "moral judgements" can of themselves be true or false, I must face the question of criteria. How is the truth of judgements to be established when there is conflict?

For the religious man criteria may be found in the tenets of his religion. For some these criteria will be sufficient. For others they will do until they can find out more about the reasons for deeming an action or a class of actions to be right or wrong, just as there is wisdom in a child obeying the decrees of a trusted parent until the child can fathom the reasons

behind a parent's judgements. It seems to me arbitrary to say that we can never know the criteria by which moral judgements are to be recognised as true or false.

As Arnaud Reid points out in his review⁶ the student preparing to be a teacher needs to become aware of his own aims and values and to be critical of them, and with this in mind to formulate a working educational faith by which he may live and act, modifying his views in the light of his continuing experience. He needs to have his attention drawn to the most fundamental issues and to learn a technique of clarifying the concepts with which he will think and rethink the questions he considers important. Professor O'Connor puts before the student the usefulness of philosophical analysis and explains some of its procedures, but he is restrictive and intolerant and perhaps on the matters of religion and morality misleading.

CONCLUSION

To educate a man we must have some notion of what it is we are to educate. The present general climate of opinion rejects a "soul component". Indeed we are being shown the possibility of a value-free concept of man.¹ In any event it is not respectable to consider the "spiritual" development of a man in the way that many of our forefathers would have done. (vide Godliness and Good Learning David Newsome. John Murray, 1961).

Professor Partridge in the 1966 Buntine Oration quoted Jacques Barzun "What are the broad divisions of thought and action in the world? There are three and only three: we live in a world saturated in science, in a world beset by political and economic problems, and in a world that mirrors its life in literature, philosophy, religion, and the fine arts."² It is significant that he chose to speak on the second of these divisions as the area which needed attention in schools.

Many people would agree that world problems can be solved by the application of a developed social science, the continued use of technology, and improved "communication". A survey of articles in the Australian Journal of Education would confirm that this is a common view. Brian Hill in a recent article³ is critical of the pragmatist approach that is so prevalent. Such an approach is evident in an earlier article by J.P. Powell⁴ in which he distinguishes Hardie, O'Connor, and Scheffler from the "nonsense which usually passes for the philosophy of education." J.C. Walker, reviewing the educational philosophy of Professor M.V.C. Jeffreys, writes:

"This irrationalist bent appears to be the result of considerable existentialist influence on Jeffreys. His discussion of knowledge and truth centres almost entirely on the individual. It is a frequent characteristic of existentialists that they appeal to a kind of intuitive knowledge to substantiate their epistemological positions, and this is in most cases self knowledge rather than the fruit of empirical enquiry." ⁵

To be metaphysical is to be suspect; to be theological is to be condemned as an educational philosopher. And yet Paul Hurst can ask, Where are values to be found?⁶, Peters can speak of a "passion for truth"⁷, Kneller does allow a role for Metaphysics,⁸ as does Maurice Balson.⁹

"It is this writer's belief that no satisfactory answers can be found to any practical questions concerning teaching methods, curricula, or aims of education until due regard has first been given to the question of the nature of reality."

The big questions are not being tackled on the ground that they do not fit into a framework of empiricist, positivist, and materialist thought. But the questions remain - unanswered, and in the present climate of thought unanswerable. As a result there is in education a "lack of perception of range and profundity"¹⁰. We effectively banish from our Universities and Schools "ideas about the conduct of life".¹¹

"One has to admit that today it is scientific knowledge that is uppermost in the minds of the people - knowledge which is factual, derived by public investigation, certified by statistics, and with no mystical overtones. With this type of knowledge discovery of certain aspects of the external world and disclosure of certain

'natural' processes have been facilitated. This suggests that man is increasingly in a position where he can manipulate and, hopefully, control his destiny.... But this type of knowledge does not in itself say how one ought to decide or what decisions one ought to make." ¹²

It has long been said within the Churches that academic leadership was antagonistic to religion. The reply was, yes, that is so, because your religion is irrational and does not meet the standards laid down simply by A.J. Ayer. The word "irrational" of course was a 'boo' word, serving the purpose at hand better than "extra-rational" which might have been fairer. Young men and women have therefore concluded that it is unintellectual to be religious. Assuredly, religion was irrelevant to educational philosophy.

But the times are changing, and straws in the wind suggest that theology will become intellectually respectable again within the field of education. Anna Hogg's lecture to the I.V.F. in Perth in 1961 was entitled "The Relevance of a Christian Philosophy of Education", and the whole lecture is germane to the present argument, though space allows only a small extract.

"To argue that the speculative function of Philosophy must be ruled out because it does not meet the requirements of science (whatever the interpretation of those requirements), is to prejudge the whole question and to be guilty of using the very procedure the argument is trying to eliminate." ¹³

More recently she has said this: ¹⁴

"The man in the street regards faith and investigation as contradictory notions, for does not faith mean unquestioning acceptance and honest investigation the

subordination of faith. In more sophisticated forms, perhaps, this view is widely held by academics. Basically the problem as they see it is that religion and research are by their very nature mutually exclusive and indeed incompatible." She goes on to explain that such a view is erroneous. To be an educationist and a philosopher and a Christian is possible despite many opinions to the contrary.

Dr. Paul Tillich was even more outspoken.

"Another unsolved problem of contemporary education must be brought out, namely its claim to be humanistic. Genuine humanism is a matter of absolute seriousness. It is religious in substance though cultural in form. It considers the human potentialities as expressions of man's being a mirror of the universe and its creative ground. When the religious substance of humanism disappeared, the mere form was left, abundant but empty. And today the means of mass communication mediate these empty remnants of former cultural creations to everybody day and night. But we must ask, which of these cultural goods speaks to us as the German poet, Rilke, felt that the torso of a Greek Apollo spoke to him: 'Change thy life!' Cultural goods have become trimmings, means for having a good time, but nothing ultimately serious." ¹⁵

So our young students can read "Jane Eyre", write critically about Charlotte Bronte, and yet fail utterly to understand the basis of Jane Eyre's morality.

The same young people would scoff at Hooker's aphorism in the beginning of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book V.

"True Religion is the root of all true virtues and the stay of all well ordered commonwealths."

It is not merely that churches are empty, Bibles unread, prayers at mother's knee unspoken. Our society has in general cut itself off from its roots. Education, in the English speaking world, like our civilization in general, is founded on the Christian faith; in a thousand ways that "faith" is built into our inheritance. Such is the burden of Spencer Leeson's 1944 Bampton Lectures.¹⁶ Not only have we repudiated that "faith"; we have proscribed "faith" as subordinate to "reason".

In one of the famous sentences of English, Milton wrote "I call therefore a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices both private and public of peace and war." The adverbs are worth noting for they call to mind a disposition eloquently described by the prophet Micah: "to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly." Such a disposition is not suddenly put on and it does not emerge as a recommendation from a conference of experts. It grows with a man as he grows and it comes from the culture into which he is born and by education inducted, in an environment where men seek the whole truth through debate, without prejudice and without passion.

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Note. Although it is not immediately relevant to this paper it is important to remark that Popper stated, against Flew, that falsifiability is not a criterion of meaning but a criterion for demarcating scientific theories from non-scientific theories. Even this application of the principle has been questioned, for example by Frederick Ferre in Language, Logic and God, by Raeburne Heinbeck in Theology and Meaning - a Critique of Metatheological Scepticism, and by George Marrodes in "God and Verification" in Canadian Journal of Theology X.3. July 1964.

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The whole of a radio discussion between Chomsky and Stuart Hampshire recorded in The Listener 30th May 1969 is relevant especially the following paragraph by Chomsky.

"Ultimately I think that there will definitely some day be a physiological explanation for the mental processes that we are now discovering, but I think this will be proved true for a not very interesting reason. It seems to me that the whole issue of whether there's a physical basis for mental structures is rather an empty issue, for the simple reason that if you look over the course of the history of modern science what you discover is that the concept "physical" has been extended step by step to cover anything that we understand..... When we ultimately begin to understand the properties of mind we shall simply, I am sure, extend the notion "physical" to cover these processes as well.

What is at issue is only whether the physiological processes and physical processes that we now understand are only rich enough in principle - and maybe in fact - to cover the mental phenomena which are beginning to emerge. That is an empirical question. I don't know what the answer to it is, but I have no doubt that if they are not rich enough we shall add new principles and call them physical principles".

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Note: among many interesting comments in these lectures there is a quotation from Lecky's "History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism" which has some relevance to my theme.

"A change of speculative opinion does not imply an increase of the data upon which those opinions rest, but a change of the habits of thought and mind which they reflect. Definite arguments are the symptoms and pretexts, but seldom the causes of the change..... Reasoning which in one age would make no impression whatever, in the next age is received with enthusiastic applause".