



Gilbert Ryle The Concept of Mind

THE CONCEPT OF MIND

by

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book offers what may with reservations be described as a theory of the mind. But it does not give new information about minds. We possess already a wealth of information about minds, information which is neither derived from, nor upset by, the arguments of philosophers. The philosophical arguments which constitute this book are intended not to increase what we know about minds, but to rectify the logical geography of the knowledge which we already possess.

Teachers and examiners, magistrates and critics, historians and novelists, confessors and non-commissioned officers, employers, employees and partners, parents, lovers, friends and enemies all know well enough how to settle their daily questions about the qualities of character and intellect of the individual with whom they have to do. They can appraise his performances, assess his progress, understand his words and actions, discern his motives and see his jokes. If they go wrong, they know how to correct their mistakes. More, they can deliberately influence the minds of those with whom they deal by criticism, example, teaching, punishment, bribery, mockery and persuasion, and then modify their treatments in the light of the results produced.

Both in describing the minds of others and in prescribing for them, they are wielding with greater or less efficiency concepts of mental powers and operations. They have learned how to apply in concrete situations such mental-conduct epithets as 'careful', 'stupid', 'logical', 'unobservant', 'ingenious', 'vain', 'methodical', 'credulous', 'witty', 'self-controlled' and a thousand others.

It is, however, one thing to know how to apply such concepts, quite another to know how to correlate them with one another and with concepts of other sorts. Many people can talk sense with concepts but cannot talk sense about them; they know by practice how to operate with concepts, anyhow inside familiar fields, but they cannot state the logical regulations governing their use. They

are like people who know their way about their own parish, but cannot construct or read a map of it, much less a map of the region or continent in which their parish lies.

For certain purposes it is necessary to determine the logical cross-bearings of the concepts which we know quite well how to apply. The attempt to perform this operation upon the concepts of the powers, operations and states of minds has always been a big part of the task of philosophers. Theories of knowledge, logic, ethics, political theory and æsthetics are the products of their inquiries in this field. Some of these inquiries have made considerable regional progress, but it is part of the thesis of this book that during the three centuries of the epoch of natural science the logical categories in terms of which the concepts of mental powers and operations have been co-ordinated have been wrongly selected. Descartes left as one of his main philosophical legacies a myth which continues to distort the continental geography of the subject.

A myth is, of course, not a fairy story. It is the presentation of facts belonging to one category in the idioms appropriate to another. To explode a myth is accordingly not to deny the facts but to re-allocate them. And this is what I am trying to do.

To determine the logical geography of concepts is to reveal the logic of the propositions in which they are wielded, that is to say, to show with what other propositions they are consistent and inconsistent, what propositions follow from them and from what propositions they follow. The logical type or category to which a concept belongs is the set of ways in which it is logically legitimate to operate with it. The key arguments employed in this book are therefore intended to show why certain sorts of operations with the concepts of mental powers and processes are breaches of logical rules. I try to use *reductio ad absurdum* arguments both to disallow operations implicitly recommended by the Cartesian myth and to indicate to what logical types the concepts under investigation ought to be allocated. I do not, however, think it improper to use from time to time arguments of a less rigorous sort, especially when it seems expedient to mollify or acclimatise. Philosophy is the replacement of category-habits by category-disciplines, and if persuasions of conciliatory kinds ease the pains of relinquishing inveterate intellectual habits, they do not indeed reinforce the rigorous arguments, but they do weaken resistances to them.

Some readers may think that my tone of voice in this book is excessively polemical. It may comfort them to know that the assumptions against which I exhibit most heat are assumptions of which I myself have been a victim. Primarily I am trying to get some disorders out of my own system. Only secondarily do I hope to help other theorists to recognise our malady and to benefit from my medicine.

The Official Doctrine

There is a doctrine about the nature and place of minds which is so prevalent among theorists and even among laymen that it deserves to be described as the official theory. Most philosophers, psychologists and religious teachers subscribe, with minor reservations, to its main articles and, although they admit certain theoretical difficulties in it, they tend to assume that these can be overcome without serious modifications being made to the architecture of the theory. It will be argued here that the central principles of the doctrine are unsound and conflict with the whole body of what we know about minds when we are not speculating about them.

The official doctrine, which hails chiefly from Descartes, is something like this. With the doubtful exceptions of idiots and infants in arms every human being has both a body and a mind. Some would prefer to say that every human being is both a body and a mind. His body and his mind are ordinarily harnessed together, but after the death of the body his mind may continue to exist and function.

Human bodies are in space and are subject to the mechanical laws which govern all other bodies in space. Bodily processes and states can be inspected by external observers. So a man's bodily life is as much a public affair as are the lives of animals and reptiles and even as the careers of trees, crystals and planets.

But minds are not in space, nor are their operations subject to mechanical laws. The workings of one mind are not witnessable by other observers; its career is private. Only I can take direct cognisance of the states and processes of my own mind. A person therefore lives through two collateral histories, one consisting of what happens in and to his body, the other consisting of what happens in and to his mind. The first is public, the second private. The events in the first history are events in the physical world, those in the second are events in the mental world.

It has been disputed whether a person does or can directly monitor all or only some of the episodes of his own private history; but, according to the official doctrine, of at least some of these episodes he has direct and unchallengeable cognisance. In consciousness, self-consciousness and introspection he is directly and authentically apprised of the present states and operations of his mind. He may have great or small uncertainties about concurrent and adjacent episodes in the physical world, but he can have none about at least part of what is momentarily occupying his mind.

It is customary to express this bifurcation of his two lives and of his two worlds by saying that the things and events which belong to the physical world, including his own body, are external, while the workings of his own mind are internal. This antithesis of outer and inner is of course meant to be construed as a metaphor, since minds, not being in space, could not be described as being spatially inside anything else, or as having things going on spatially inside themselves. But relapses from this good intention are common and theorists are found speculating how stimuli, the physical sources

of which are yards or miles outside a person's skin, can generate mental responses inside his skull, or how decisions framed inside his cranium can set going movements of his extremities.

Even when 'inner' and 'outer' are construed as metaphors, the problem how a person's mind and body influence one another is notoriously charged with theoretical difficulties. What the mind wills, the legs, arms and the tongue execute; what affects the ear and the eye has something to do with what the mind perceives; grimaces and smiles betray the mind's moods and bodily castigations lead, it is hoped, to moral improvement. But the actual transactions between the episodes of the private history and those of the public history remain mysterious, since by definition they can belong to neither series. They could not be reported among the happenings described in a person's autobiography of his inner life, but nor could they be reported among those described in some one else's biography of that person's overt career. They can be inspected neither by introspection nor by laboratory experiment. They are theoretical shuttle-cocks which are forever being bandied from the physiologist back to the psychologist and from the psychologist back to the physiologist.

Underlying this partly metaphorical representation of the bifurcation of a person's two lives there is a seemingly more profound and philosophical assumption. It is assumed that there are two different kinds of existence or status. What exists or happens may have the status of physical existence, or it may have the status of mental existence. Somewhat as the faces of coins are either heads or tails, or somewhat as living creatures are either male or female, so, it is supposed, some existing is physical existing, other existing is mental existing. It is a necessary feature of what has physical existence that it is in space and time, it is a necessary feature of what has mental existence that it is in time but not in space. What has physical existence is composed of matter, or else is a function of matter; what has mental existence consists of consciousness, or else is a function of consciousness.

There is thus a polar opposition between mind and matter, an opposition which is often brought out as follows. Material objects are situated in a common field, known as 'space', and what happens to one body in one part of space is mechanically connected with what happens to other bodies in other parts of space. But mental happenings occur in insulated fields, known as 'minds', and there is, apart maybe from telepathy, no direct causal connection between what happens in one mind and what happens in another. Only through the medium of the public physical world can the mind of one person make a difference to the mind of another. The mind is its own place and in his inner life each of us lives the life of a ghostly Robinson Crusoe. People can see, hear and jolt one another's bodies, but they are irremediably blind and deaf to the workings of one another's minds and inoperative upon them.

What sort of knowledge can be secured of the workings of a mind? On the one side, according to the official theory, a person has direct knowledge of the best imaginable kind of the workings of his own mind. Mental states and processes are (or are normally) conscious states and processes, and the consciousness which irradiates them can engender no illusions and leaves the door open for no doubts. A person's present thinkings, feelings and willings, his perceivings, remembering and imaginings are intrinsically 'phosphorescent'; their existence and their nature are inevitably betrayed to their owner. The inner life is a stream of consciousness of such a sort that it would be absurd to suggest that the mind whose life is that stream might be unaware of what is passing down it.

True, the evidence adduced recently by Freud seems to show that there exist channels tributary to this stream, which run hidden from their owner. People are actuated by

impulses the existence of which they vigorously disavow; some of their thoughts differ from the thoughts which they acknowledge; and some of the actions which they think they will to perform they do not really will. They are thoroughly gulled by some of their own hypocrisies and they successfully ignore facts about their mental lives which on the official theory ought to be patent to them. Holders of the official theory tend, however, to maintain that anyhow in normal circumstances a person must be directly and authentically seized of the present state and workings of his own mind.

Besides being currently supplied with these alleged immediate data of consciousness, a person is also generally supposed to be able to exercise from time to time a special kind of perception, namely inner perception, or introspection. He can take a (non-optical) 'look' at what is passing in his mind. Not only can he view and scrutinize a flower through his sense of sight and listen to and discriminate the notes of a bell through his sense of hearing; he can also reflectively or introspectively watch, without any bodily organ of sense, the current episodes of his inner life. This self-observation is also commonly supposed to be immune from illusion, confusion or doubt. A mind's reports of its own affairs have a certainty superior to the best that is possessed by its reports of matters in the physical world. Sense-perceptions can, but consciousness and introspection cannot, be mistaken or confused.

On the other side, one person has no direct access of any sort to the events of the inner life of another. He cannot do better than make problematic inferences from the observed behaviour of the other person's body to the states of mind which, by analogy from his own conduct, he supposes to be signalled by that behaviour. Direct access to the workings of a mind is the privilege of that mind itself; in default of such privileged access, the workings of one mind are inevitably occult to everyone else. For the supposed arguments from bodily movements similar to their own to mental workings similar to their own would lack any possibility of observational corroboration. Not unnaturally, therefore, an adherent of the official theory finds it difficult to resist this consequence of his premisses, that he has no good reason to believe that there do exist minds other than his own. Even if he prefers to believe that to other human bodies there are harnessed minds not unlike his own, he cannot claim to be able to discover their individual characteristics, or the particular things that they undergo and do. Absolute solitude is on this showing the ineluctable destiny of the soul. Only our bodies can meet.

As a necessary corollary of this general scheme there is implicitly prescribed a special way of construing our ordinary concepts of mental powers and operations. The verbs, nouns and adjectives, with which in ordinary life we describe the wits, characters and higher-grade performances of the people with whom we have to do, are required to be construed as signifying special episodes in their secret histories, or else as signifying tendencies for such episodes to occur. When someone is described as knowing, believing or guessing something, as hoping, dreading, intending or shirking something, as designing this or being amused at that, these verbs are supposed to denote the occurrence of specific modifications in his (to us) occult stream of consciousness. Only his own privileged access to this stream in direct awareness and introspection could provide authentic testimony that these mental-conduct verbs were correctly or incorrectly applied. The onlooker, be he teacher, critic, biographer or friend, can never assure himself that his comments have any vestige of truth. Yet it was just because we do in fact all know how to make such comments, make them with general correctness and correct them when they turn out to be confused or mistaken, that philosophers found it necessary to construct their theories of the nature and place of minds. Finding mental-conduct concepts being regularly and effectively used, they properly sought to fix their

logical geography. But the logical geography officially recommended would entail that there could be no regular or effective use of these mental-conduct concepts in our descriptions of, and prescriptions for, other people's minds.

The Absurdity of the Official Doctrine

Such in outline is the official theory. I shall often speak of it, with deliberate abusiveness, as 'the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine'. I hope to prove that it is entirely false, and false not in detail but in principle. It is not merely an assemblage of particular mistakes. It is one big mistake and a mistake of a special kind. It is, namely, a category-mistake. It represents the facts of mental life as if they belonged to one logical type or category (or range of types or categories), when they actually belong to another. The dogma is therefore a philosopher's myth. In attempting to explode the myth I shall probably be taken to be denying well-known facts about the mental life of human beings, and my plea that I aim at doing nothing more than rectify the logic of mental-conduct concepts will probably be disallowed as mere subterfuge.

I must first indicate what is meant by the phrase 'Category-mistake'. This I do in a series of illustrations.

A foreigner visiting Oxford or Cambridge for the first time is shown a number of colleges, libraries, playing fields, museums, scientific departments and administrative offices. He then asks 'But where is the University? I have seen where the members of the Colleges live, where the Registrar works, where the scientists experiment and the rest. But I have not yet seen the University in which reside and work the members of your University.' It has then to be explained to him that the University is not another collateral institution, some ulterior counterpart to the colleges, laboratories and offices which he has seen. The University is just the way in which all that he has already seen is organized. When they are seen and when their co-ordination is understood, the University has been seen. His mistake lay in his innocent assumption that it was correct to speak of Christ Church, the Bodleian Library, the Ashmolean Museum *and* the University, to speak, that is, as if 'the University' stood for an extra member of the class of which these other units are members. He was mistakenly allocating the University to the same category as that to which the other institutions belong.

The same mistake would be made by a child witnessing the march-past of a division, who, having had pointed out to him such and such battalions, batteries, squadrons, etc., asked when the division was going to appear. He would be supposing that a division was a counterpart to the units already seen, partly similar to them and partly unlike them. He would be shown his mistake by being told that in watching the battalions, batteries and squadrons marching past he had been watching the division marching past. The march-past was not a parade of battalions, batteries, squadrons *and* a division; it was a parade of the battalions, batteries and squadrons *of* a division.

One more illustration. A foreigner watching his first game of cricket learns what are the functions of the bowlers, the batsmen, the fielders, the umpires and the scorers. He then says 'But there is no one left on the field to contribute the famous element of team-spirit. I see who does the bowling, the batting and the wicket-keeping; but I do not see whose role it is to exercise *esprit de corps*.' Once more, it would have to be explained that he was looking for the wrong type of thing. Team-spirit is not another cricketing-operation supplementary to all of the other special tasks. It is, roughly, the keenness with which each of the special tasks is performed, and performing a task keenly is not performing two tasks. Certainly exhibiting team-spirit is not the same thing as bowling or catching, but nor is it a third thing such that we can say that the

bowler first bowls *and* then exhibits team-spirit or that a fielder is at a given moment *either* catching or displaying *esprit de corps*.

These illustrations of category-mistakes have a common feature which must be noticed. The mistakes were made by people who did not know how to wield the concepts *University*, *division* and *team-spirit*. Their puzzles arose from inability to use certain items in the English vocabulary.

The theoretically interesting category-mistakes are those made by people who are perfectly competent to apply concepts, at least in the situations with which they are familiar, but are still liable in their abstract thinking to allocate those concepts to logical types to which they do not belong. An instance of a mistake of this sort would be the following story. A student of politics has learned the main differences between the British, the French and the American Constitutions, and has learned also the differences and connections between the Cabinet, Parliament, the various Ministries, the Judicature and the Church of England. But he still becomes embarrassed when asked questions about the connections between the Church of England, the Home Office and the British Constitution. For while the Church and the Home Office are institutions, the British Constitution is not another institution in the same sense of that noun. So inter-institutional relations which can be asserted or denied to hold between the Church and the Home Office cannot be asserted or denied to hold between either of them and the British Constitution. 'The British Constitution is not a term of the same logical type as 'the Home Office' and 'the Church of England'. In a partially similar way, John Doe may be a relative, a friend, an enemy or a stranger to Richard Roe; but he cannot be any of these things to the Average Taxpayer. He knows how to talk sense in certain sorts of discussions about the Average Taxpayer, but he is baffled to say why he could not come across him in the street as he can come across Richard Roe.

It is pertinent to our main subject to notice that, so long as the student of politics continues to think of the British Constitution as a counterpart to the other institutions, he will tend to describe it as a mysteriously occult institution; and so long as John Doe continues to think of the Average Taxpayer as a fellow-citizen, he will tend to think of him as an elusive insubstantial man, a ghost who is everywhere yet nowhere.

My destructive purpose is to show that a family of radical category-mistakes is the source of the double-life theory. The representation of a person as a ghost mysteriously ensconced in a machine derives from this argument. Because, as is true, a person's thinking, feeling and purposive doing cannot be described solely in the idioms of physics, chemistry and physiology, therefore they must be described in counterpart idioms. As the human body is a complex organised unit, so the human mind must be another complex organised unit, though one made of a different sort of stuff and with a different sort of structure. Or, again, as the human body, like any other parcel of matter, is a field of causes and effects, so the mind must be another field of causes and effects, though not (Heaven be praised) mechanical causes and effects.

The Origin of the Category-Mistake

One of the chief intellectual origins of what I have yet to prove to be the Cartesian category-mistake seems to be this. When Galileo showed that his methods of scientific discovery were competent to provide a mechanical theory which should cover every occupant of space, Descartes found in himself two conflicting motives. As a man of scientific genius he could not but endorse the claims of mechanics, yet as a religious and moral man he could not accept, as Hobbes accepted, the discouraging rider to those

claims, namely that human nature differs only in degree of complexity from clockwork. The mental could not be just a variety of the mechanical.

He and subsequent philosophers naturally but erroneously availed themselves of the following escape-route. Since mental-conduct words are not to be construed as signifying the occurrence of mechanical processes, they must be construed as signifying the occurrence of non-mechanical processes; since mechanical laws explain movements in space as the effects of other movements in space, other laws must explain some of the non-spatial workings of minds as the effects of other non-spatial workings of minds. The difference between the human behaviours which we describe as intelligent and those which we describe as unintelligent must be a difference in their causation; so, while some movements of human tongues and limbs are the effects of mechanical causes, others must be the effects of non-mechanical causes, i.e. some issue from movements of particles of matter, others from workings of the mind.

The differences between the physical and the mental were thus represented as differences inside the common framework of the categories of 'thing', 'stuff', 'attribute', 'state', 'process', 'change', 'cause' and 'effect'. Minds are things, but different sorts of things from bodies; mental processes are causes and effects, but different sorts of causes and effects from bodily movements. And so on. Somewhat as the foreigner expected the University to be an extra edifice, rather like a college but also considerably different, so the repudiators of mechanism represented minds as extra centres of causal processes, rather like machines but also considerably different from them. Their theory was a para-mechanical hypothesis.

That this assumption was at the heart of the doctrine is shown by the fact that there was from the beginning felt to be a major theoretical difficulty in explaining how minds can influence and be influenced by bodies. How can a mental process, such as willing, cause spatial movements like the movements of the tongue? How can a physical change in the optic nerve have among its effects a mind's perception of a flash of light? This notorious crux by itself shows the logical mould into which Descartes pressed his theory of the mind. It was the self-same mould into which he and Galileo set their mechanics. Still unwittingly adhering to the grammar of mechanics, he tried to avert disaster by describing minds in what was merely an obverse vocabulary. The workings of minds had to be described by the mere negatives of the specific descriptions given to bodies; they are not in space, they are not motions, they are not modifications of matter, they are not accessible to public observation. Minds are not bits of clockwork, they are just bits of not-clockwork.

As thus represented, minds are not merely ghosts harnessed to machines, they are themselves just spectral machines. Though the human body is an engine, it is not quite an ordinary engine, since some of its workings are governed by another engine inside it—this interior governor-engine being one of a very special sort. It is invisible, inaudible and it has no size or weight. It cannot be taken to bits and the laws it obeys are not those known to ordinary engineers. Nothing is known of how it governs the bodily engine.

A second major crux points the same moral. Since, according to the doctrine, minds belong to the same category as bodies and since bodies are rigidly governed by mechanical laws, it seemed to many theorists to follow that minds must be similarly governed by rigid non-mechanical laws. The physical world is a deterministic system, so the mental world must be a deterministic system. Bodies cannot help the modifications that they undergo, so minds cannot help pursuing the careers fixed for them. *Responsibility, choice, merit and demerit* are therefore inapplicable concepts—unless the compromise solution is adopted of saying that the laws governing mental processes,

unlike those governing physical processes, have the congenial attribute of being only rather rigid. The problem of the Freedom of the Will was the problem how to reconcile the hypothesis that minds are to be described in terms drawn from the categories of mechanics with the knowledge that higher-grade human conduct is not of a piece with the behaviour of machines.

It is an historical curiosity that it was not noticed that the entire argument was broken-backed. Theorists correctly assumed that any sane man could already recognise the differences between, say, rational and non-rational utterances or between purposive and automatic behaviour. Else there would have been nothing requiring to be salvaged from mechanism. Yet the explanation given presupposed that one person could in principle never recognise the difference between the rational and the irrational utterances issuing from other human bodies, since he could never get access to the postulated immaterial causes of some of their utterances. Save for the doubtful exception of himself, he could never tell the difference between a man and a Robot. It would have to be conceded, for example, that, for all that we can tell, the inner lives of persons who are classed as idiots or lunatics are as rational as those of anyone else. Perhaps only their overt behaviour is disappointing; that is to say, perhaps 'idiots' are not really idiotic, or 'lunatics' lunatic. Perhaps, too, some of those who are classed as sane are really idiots. According to the theory, external observers could never know how the overt behaviour of others is correlated with their mental powers and processes and so they could never know or even plausibly conjecture whether their applications of mental-conduct concepts to these other people were correct or incorrect. It would then be hazardous or impossible for a man to claim sanity or logical consistency even for himself, since he would be debarred from comparing his own performances with those of others. In short, our characterisations of persons and their performances as intelligent, prudent and virtuous or as stupid, hypocritical and cowardly could never have been made, so the problem of providing a special causal hypothesis to serve as the basis of such diagnoses would never have arisen. The question, 'How do persons differ from machines?' arose just because everyone already knew how to apply mental-conduct concepts before the new causal hypothesis was introduced. This causal hypothesis could not therefore be the source of the criteria used in those applications. Nor, of course, has the causal hypothesis in any degree improved our handling of those criteria. We still distinguish good from bad arithmetic, politic from impolitic conduct and fertile from infertile imaginations in the ways in which Descartes himself distinguished them before and after he speculated how the applicability of these criteria was compatible with the principle of mechanical causation.

He had mistaken the logic of his problem. Instead of asking by what criteria intelligent behaviour is actually distinguished from non-intelligent behaviour, he asked 'Given that the principle of mechanical causation does not tell us the difference, what other causal principle will tell us?' He realised that the problem was not one of mechanics and assumed that it must therefore be one of some counterpart to mechanics. Not unnaturally psychology is often cast for just this role.

When two terms belong to the same category, it is proper to construct conjunctive propositions embodying them. Thus a purchaser may say that he bought a left-hand glove and a right-hand glove, but not that he bought a left-hand glove, a right-hand glove and a pair of gloves. 'She came home in a flood of tears and a sedan-chair' is a well-known joke based on the absurdity of conjoining terms of different types. It would have been equally ridiculous to construct the disjunction 'She came home either in a flood of tears or else in a sedan-chair'. Now the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine does just this. It maintains that there exist both bodies and minds; that there occur

physical processes and mental processes; that there are mechanical causes of corporeal movements and mental causes of corporeal movements. I shall argue that these and other analogous conjunctions are absurd; but, it must be noticed, the argument will not show that either of the illegitimately conjoined propositions is absurd in itself. I am not, for example, denying that there occur mental processes. Doing long division is a mental process and so is making a joke. But I am saying that the phrase 'there occur mental processes' does not mean the same sort of thing as 'there occur physical processes', and, therefore, that it makes no sense to conjoin or disjoin the two.

If my argument is successful, there will follow some interesting consequences. First, the hallowed contrast between Mind and Matter will be dissipated, but dissipated not by either of the equally hallowed absorptions of Mind by Matter or of Matter by Mind, but in quite a different way. For the seeming contrast of the two will be shown to be illegitimate as would be the contrast of 'she came home in a flood of tears' and 'she came home in a sedan-chair'. The belief that there is a polar opposition between Mind and Matter is the belief that they are terms of the same logical type.

It will also follow that both Idealism and Materialism are answers to an improper question. The 'reduction' of the material world to mental states and processes, as well as the 'reduction' of mental states and processes to physical states and processes, presuppose the legitimacy of the disjunction 'Either there exist minds or there exist bodies (but not both)'. It would be like saying, 'Either she bought a left-hand and a right-hand glove or she bought a pair of gloves (but not both)'.

It is perfectly proper to say, in one logical tone of voice, that there exist minds and to say, in another logical tone of voice, that there exist bodies. But these expressions do not indicate two different species of existence, for 'existence' is not a generic word like 'coloured' or 'sexed'. They indicate two different senses of 'exist', somewhat as 'rising' has different senses in 'the tide is rising', 'hopes are rising', and 'the average age of death is rising'. A man would be thought to be making a poor joke who said that three things are now rising, namely the tide, hopes and the average age of death. It would be just as good or bad a joke to say that there exist prime numbers and Wednesdays and public opinions and navies; or that there exist both minds and bodies. . . . I try to prove that the official theory does rest on a batch of category-mistakes by showing that logically absurd corollaries follow from it. The exhibition of these absurdities will have the constructive effect of bringing out part of the correct logic of mental-conduct concepts.

Historical Note

It would not be true to say that the official theory derives solely from Descartes' theories, or even from a more widespread anxiety about the implications of seventeenth century mechanics. Scholastic and Reformation theology had schooled the intellects of the scientists as well as of the laymen, philosophers and clerics of that age. Stoic-Augustinian theories of the will were embedded in the Calvinist doctrines of sin and grace; Platonic and Aristotelian theories of the intellect shaped the orthodox doctrines of the immortality of the soul. Descartes was reformulating already prevalent theological doctrines of the soul in the new syntax of Galileo. The theologian's privacy of conscience became the philosopher's privacy of consciousness, and what had been the boggy of Predestination reappeared as the boggy of Determinism.

It would also not be true to say that the two-worlds myth did no theoretical good. Myths often do a lot of theoretical good, while they are still new. One benefit bestowed by the para-mechanical myth was that it partly superannuated the then prevalent para-political myth. Minds and their Faculties had previously been described by

analogies with political superiors and political subordinates. The idioms used were those of ruling, obeying, collaborating and rebelling. They survived and still survive in many ethical and some epistemological discussions. As, in physics, the new myth of occult Forces was a scientific improvement on the old myth of Final Causes, so, in anthropological and psychological theory, the new myth of hidden operations, impulses and agencies was an improvement on the old myth of dictations, deferences and disobediencies.

CHAPTER 11

KNOWING HOW AND KNOWING THAT

(1) *Foreword.*

IN this chapter I try to show that when we describe people as exercising qualities of mind, we are not referring to occult episodes of which their overt acts and utterances are effects; we are referring to those overt acts and utterances themselves. There are, of course, differences, crucial for our inquiry, between describing an action as performed absent-mindedly and describing a physiologically similar action as done on purpose, with care or with cunning. But such differences of description do not consist in the absence or presence of an implicit reference to some shadow-action covertly prefacing the overt action. They consist, on the contrary, in the absence or presence of certain sorts of testable explanatory-cum-predictive assertions.

(2) *Intelligence and Intellect.*

The mental-conduct concepts that I choose to examine first are those which belong to that family of concepts ordinarily surnamed 'intelligence'. Here are a few of the more determinate adjectives of this family: 'clever', 'sensible', 'careful', 'methodical', 'inventive', 'prudent', 'acute', 'logical', 'witty', 'observant', 'critical', 'experimental', 'quick-witted', 'cunning', 'wise', 'judicious' and 'scrupulous'. When a person is deficient in intelligence he is described as 'stupid' or else by more determinate epithets such as 'dull', 'silly', 'careless', 'unmethodical', 'uninventive', 'rash', 'dense', 'illogical', 'humourless', 'unobservant', 'uncritical', 'unexperimental', 'slow,' 'simple', 'unwise' and 'injudicious'.

It is of first-rate importance to notice from the start that stupidity is not the same thing, or the same sort of thing, as ignorance. There is no incompatibility between being well-informed and being

silly, and a person who has a good nose for arguments or jokes may have a bad head for facts.

Part of the importance of this distinction between being intelligent and possessing knowledge lies in the fact that both philosophers and laymen tend to treat intellectual operations as the core of mental conduct; that is to say, they tend to define all other mental-conduct concepts in terms of concepts of cognition. They suppose that the primary exercise of minds consists in finding the answers to questions and that their other occupations are merely applications of considered truths or even regrettable distractions from their consideration. The Greek idea that immortality is reserved for the theorising part of the soul was discredited, but not dispelled, by Christianity.

When we speak of the intellect or, better, of the intellectual powers and performances of persons, we are referring primarily to that special class of operations which constitute theorising. The goal of these operations is the knowledge of true propositions or facts. Mathematics and the established natural sciences are the model accomplishments of human intellects. The early theorists naturally speculated upon what constituted the peculiar excellences of the theoretical sciences and disciplines, the growth of which they had witnessed and assisted. They were predisposed to find that it was in the capacity for rigorous theory that lay the superiority of men over animals, of civilised men over barbarians and even of the divine mind over human minds. They thus bequeathed the idea that the capacity to attain knowledge of truths was the defining property of a mind. Other human powers could be classed as mental only if they could be shown to be somehow piloted by the intellectual grasp of true propositions. To be rational was to be able to recognise truths and the connections between them. To act rationally was, therefore, to have one's non-theoretical propensities controlled by one's apprehension of truths about the conduct of life.

The main object of this chapter is to show that there are many activities which directly display qualities of mind, yet are neither themselves intellectual operations nor yet effects of intellectual operations. Intelligent practice is not a step-child of theory. On the contrary theorising is one practice amongst others and is itself intelligently or stupidly conducted.

There is another reason why it is important to correct from the start the intellectualist doctrine which tries to define intelligence in terms of the apprehension of truths, instead of the apprehension of truths in terms of intelligence. Theorising is an activity which most people can and normally do conduct in silence. They articulate in sentences the theories that they construct, but they do not most of the time speak these sentences out loud. They say them to themselves. Or (they formulate their thoughts in diagrams and pictures, but they do not always set these out on paper. They 'see them in their minds' eyes'. Much of our ordinary thinking is conducted in internal monologue or silent soliloquy, usually accompanied by an internal cinematograph-show of visual imagery.

This trick of talking to oneself in silence is acquired neither quickly nor without effort; and it is a necessary condition of our acquiring it that we should have previously learned to talk intelligently aloud and have heard and understood other people doing so. Keeping our thoughts to ourselves is a sophisticated accomplishment. It was not until the Middle Ages that people learned to read without reading aloud. Similarly a boy has to learn to read aloud before he learns to read under his breath, and to prattle aloud before he prattles to himself. Yet many theorists have supposed that the silence in which most of us have learned to think is a defining property of thought. Plato said that in thinking the soul is talking to itself. But silence, though often convenient, is inessential, as is the restriction of the audience to one recipient.

The combination of the two assumptions that theorising is the primary activity of minds and that theorising is intrinsically a private, silent or internal operation remains one of the main supports of the dogma of the ghost in the machine. People tend to identify their minds with the 'place' where they conduct their secret thoughts. They even come to suppose that there is a special mystery about how we publish our thoughts instead of realising that we employ a special artifice to keep them to ourselves.

(3) *Knowing How and Knowing That.*

When a person is described by one or other of the intelligence-epithets such as 'shrewd' or 'silly', 'prudent' or 'imprudent', the description imputes to him not the knowledge, or ignorance, of this or that truth, but the ability, or inability, to do certain sorts of things.

Theorists have been so preoccupied with the task of investigating the nature, the source and the credentials of the theories that we adopt that they have for the most part ignored the question what it is for someone to know how to perform tasks. In ordinary life, on the contrary, as well as in the special business of teaching, we are much more concerned with people's competences than with their cognitive repertoires, with the operations than with the truths that they learn. Indeed even when we are concerned with their intellectual excellences and deficiencies, we are interested less in the stocks of truths that they acquire and retain than in their capacities to find out truths for themselves and their ability to organise and exploit them, when discovered. Often we deplore a person's ignorance of some fact only because we deplore the stupidity of which his ignorance is a consequence.

There are certain parallelisms between knowing *how* and knowing *that*, as well as certain divergences. We speak of learning how to play an instrument as well as of learning that something is the case; of finding out how to prune trees as well as of finding out that the Romans had a camp in a certain place; of forgetting how to tie a reef-knot as well as of forgetting that the German for 'knife' is 'Messer'. We can wonder *how* as well as wonder *whether*.

On the other hand we never speak of a person believing or opining *how*, and though it is proper to ask for the grounds or reasons for someone's acceptance of a proposition, this question cannot be asked of someone's skill at cards or prudence in investments.

What is involved in our descriptions of people as knowing how to make and appreciate jokes, to talk grammatically, to play chess, to fish, or to argue? Part of what is meant is that, when they perform these operations, they tend to perform them well, i.e. correctly or efficiently or successfully. Their performances come up to certain standards, or satisfy certain criteria. But this is not enough. The well-regulated clock keeps good time and the well-drilled circus seal performs its tricks flawlessly, yet we do not call them 'intelligent'. We reserve this title for the persons responsible for their performances. (To be intelligent is not merely to satisfy criteria, but to apply them; to regulate one's actions and not merely to be well-regulated.) A person's performance is described as careful or skilful, if in his operations he is ready to detect and correct lapses,

to repeat and improve upon successes, to profit from the examples of others and so forth. He applies criteria in performing critically, that is, in trying to get things right.

This point is commonly expressed in the vernacular by saying that an action exhibits intelligence, if, and only if, the agent is thinking what he is doing while he is doing it, and thinking what he is doing in such a manner that he would not do the action so well if he were not thinking what he is doing. This popular idiom is sometimes appealed to as evidence in favour of the intellectualist legend. Champions of this legend are apt to try to reassimilate knowing *how* to knowing *that* by arguing that intelligent performance involves the observance of rules, or the application of criteria. It follows that the operation which is characterised as intelligent must be preceded by an intellectual acknowledgment of these rules or criteria; that is, the agent must first go through the internal process of avowing to himself certain propositions about what is to be done ('maxims', 'imperatives' or 'regulative propositions' as they are sometimes called); only then can he execute his performance in accordance with those dictates. He must preach to himself before he can practise. The chef must recite his recipes to himself before he can cook according to them; the hero must lend his inner ear to some appropriate moral imperative before swimming out to save the drowning man; the chess-player must run over in his head all the relevant rules and tactical maxims of the game before he can make correct and skilful moves. To do something thinking what one is doing is, according to this legend, always to do two things; namely, to consider certain appropriate propositions, or prescriptions, and to put into practice what these propositions or prescriptions enjoin. It is to do a bit of theory and then to do a bit of practice. •

Certainly we often do not only reflect before we act but reflect in order to act properly. The chess-player may require some time in which to plan his moves before he makes them. Yet the general assertion that all intelligent performance requires to be prefaced by the consideration of appropriate propositions rings unplausibly, even when it is apologetically conceded that (the required consideration is often very swift and may go quite unmarked by the agent. I shall argue that the intellectualist legend is false and that when we

describe a performance as intelligent, this does not entail the double operation of considering and executing.

First, there are many classes of performances in which intelligence is displayed, but the rules or criteria of which are unformulated. The wit, when challenged to cite the maxims, or canons, by which he constructs and appreciates jokes, is unable to answer. He knows how to make good jokes and how to detect bad ones, but he cannot tell us or himself any recipes for them. So the practice of humour is not a client of its theory. The canons of aesthetic taste, of tactful manners and of inventive technique similarly remain unpropounded without impediment to the intelligent exercise of those gifts.

(Rules of correct reasoning were first extracted by Aristotle, yet men knew how to avoid and detect fallacies before they learned his lessons, just as men since Aristotle, and including Aristotle, ordinarily conduct their arguments without making any internal reference to his formulae. They do not plan their arguments before constructing them. Indeed if they had to plan what to think before thinking it they would never think at all; for this planning would itself be unplanned.)

Efficient practice precedes the theory of it; methodologies presuppose the application of the methods, of the critical investigation of which they are the products. It was because Aristotle found himself and others reasoning now intelligently and now stupidly and it was because Izaak Walton found himself and others angling sometimes effectively and sometimes ineffectively that both were able to give to their pupils the maxims and prescriptions of their arts. It is therefore possible for people intelligently to perform some sorts of operations when they are not yet able to consider any propositions enjoining how they should be performed. Some intelligent performances are not controlled by any anterior acknowledgments of the principles applied in them.

The crucial objection to the intellectualist legend is this. The consideration of propositions is itself an operation the execution of which can be more or less intelligent, less or more stupid. But if, for any operation to be intelligently executed, a prior theoretical operation had first to be performed and performed intelligently, it would be a logical impossibility for anyone ever to break into the circle.

Let us consider some salient points at which this regress would

arise. According to the legend, whenever an agent does anything intelligently, his act is preceded and steered by another internal act of considering a regulative proposition appropriate to his practical problem. But what makes him consider the one maxim which is appropriate rather than any of the thousands which are not? Why does the hero not find himself calling to mind a cooking-recipe, or a rule of Formal Logic? Perhaps he does, but then his intellectual process is silly and not sensible. Intelligently reflecting how to act is, among other things, considering what is pertinent and disregarding what is inappropriate. Must we then say that for the hero's reflections how to act to be intelligent he must first reflect how best to reflect how to act? The endlessness of this implied regress shows that the application of the criterion of appropriateness does not entail the occurrence of a process of considering this criterion.

Next, supposing still that to act reasonably I must first perpend the reason for so acting, how am I led to make a suitable application of the reason to the particular situation which my action is to meet? For the reason, or maxim, is inevitably a proposition of some generality. It cannot embody specifications to fit every detail of the particular state of affairs. Clearly, once more, I must be sensible and not stupid, and this good sense cannot itself be a product of the intellectual acknowledgment of any general principle. A soldier does not become a shrewd general merely by endorsing the strategic principles of Clausewitz; he must also be competent to apply them. Knowing how to apply maxims cannot be reduced to, or derived from, the acceptance of those or any other maxims. /

To put it quite generally, the absurd assumption made by the intellectualist legend is this, that a performance of any sort inherits all its title to intelligence from some anterior internal operation of planning what to do. Now very often we do go through such a process of planning what to do, and, if we are silly, our planning is silly, if shrewd, our planning is shrewd. It is also notoriously possible for us to plan shrewdly and perform stupidly, i.e. to flout our precepts in our practice. By the original argument, therefore, our intellectual planning process must inherit its title to shrewdness from yet another interior process of planning to plan, and this process could in its turn be silly or shrewd. The regress is infinite, and this reduces to absurdity the theory that for an operation to be

intelligent it must be steered by a prior intellectual operation. What distinguishes sensible from silly operations is not their parentage but their procedure, and this holds no less for intellectual than for practical performances. 'Intelligent' cannot be defined in terms of 'intellectual' or 'knowing *how*' in terms of 'knowing *that*'; 'thinking what I am doing' does not connote 'both thinking what to do and doing it'. When I do something intelligently, i.e. thinking what I am doing, I am doing one thing and not two. My performance has a special procedure or manner, not special antecedents.

(4) *The Motives of the Intellectualist Legend.*

Why are people so strongly drawn to believe, in the face of their own daily experience, that the intelligent execution of an operation must embody two processes, one of doing and another of theorising? Part of the answer is that they are wedded to the dogma of the ghost in the machine. Since doing is often an overt muscular affair, it is written off as a merely physical process. On the assumption of the antithesis between 'physical' and 'mental', it follows that muscular doing cannot itself be a mental operation. To earn the title 'skilful', 'cunning', or 'humorous', it must therefore get it by transfer from another counterpart act occurring not 'in the machine' but 'in the ghost'; for 'skilful', 'cunning' and 'humorous' are certainly mental predicates.

It is, of course, perfectly true that when we characterise as witty or tactful some piece of overt behaviour, we are not considering only the muscular movements which we witness. A parrot might have made the same remark in the same situation without our crediting it with a sense of humour, or a lout might have done precisely what the tactful man did, without our thinking him tactful. But if one and the same vocal utterance is a stroke of humour from the humorist, but a mere noise-response, when issuing from the parrot, it is tempting to say that we are ascribing wit not to something that we hear but to something else that we do not hear. We are accordingly tempted to say that what makes one audible or visible action witty, while another audibly or visibly similar action was not, is that the former was attended by another inaudible and invisible action which was the real exercise of wit. But to admit, as we must, that there may be no visible or audible difference between a tactful or witty act and a tactless or humourless one is

not to admit that the difference is constituted by the performance or non-performance of some extra secret acts.

The cleverness of the clown may be exhibited in his tripping and tumbling. He trips and tumbles just as clumsy people do, except that he trips and tumbles on purpose and after much rehearsal and at the golden moment and where the children can see him and so as not to hurt himself. The spectators applaud his skill at seeming clumsy, but what they applaud is not some extra hidden performance executed 'in his head'. It is his visible performance that they admire, but they admire it not for being an effect of any hidden internal causes but for being an exercise of a skill. Now a skill is not an act. It is therefore neither a witnessable nor an unwitnessable act. To recognise that a performance is an exercise of a skill is indeed to appreciate it in the light of a factor which could not be separately recorded by a camera. But the reason why the skill exercised in a performance cannot be separately recorded by a camera is not that it is an occult or ghostly happening, but that it is not a happening at all. It is a disposition, or complex of dispositions, and a disposition is a factor of the wrong logical type to be seen or unseen, recorded or unrecorded. Just as the habit of talking loudly is not itself loud or quiet, since it is not the sort of term of which 'loud' and 'quiet' can be predicated, or just as a susceptibility to headaches is for the same reason not itself unendurable or endurable, so the skills, tastes and bents which are exercised in overt or internal operations are not themselves overt or internal, witnessable or unwitnessable. The traditional theory of the mind has misconstrued the type-distinction between disposition and exercise into its mythical bifurcation of unwitnessable mental causes and their witnessable physical effects.

The clown's trippings and tumblings are the workings of his mind, for they are his jokes; but the visibly similar trippings and tumblings of a clumsy man are not the workings of that man's mind. For he does not trip on purpose. Tripping on purpose is both a bodily and a mental process, but it is not two processes, such as one process of purposing to trip and, as an effect, another process of tripping. Yet the old myth dies hard. We are still tempted to argue that if the clown's antics exhibit carefulness, judgment, wit, and appreciation of the moods of his spectators, there must be occurring in the clown's head a counterpart performance to that which is taking

place on the sawdust. If he is thinking what he is doing, there must be occurring behind his painted face a cogitative shadow-operation which we do not witness, tallying with, and controlling, the bodily contortions which we do witness. Surely the thinking of thoughts is the basic activity of minds and surely, too, the process of thinking is an invisible and inaudible process. So how can the clown's visible and audible performance be his mind at work?

To do justice to this objection it is necessary to make a verbal concession. There has fairly recently come into general use a certain special sense of the words 'mental' and 'mind'. We speak of 'mental arithmetic', of 'mind-reading' and of debates going on 'in the mind', and it certainly is the case that what is in this sense mental is unwitnessable. A boy is said to be doing 'mental arithmetic' when instead of writing down, or reciting aloud, the numerical symbols with which he is operating, he says them to himself, performing his calculations in silent soliloquy. Similarly a person is said to be reading the mind of another when he describes truly what the other is saying or picturing to himself in auditory or visual images. That these are special uses of 'mental' and 'mind' is easily shown. For a boy who does his calculating aloud, or on paper, may be reasoning correctly and organising his steps methodically; his reckoning is not the less a careful intellectual operation for being conducted in public instead of in private. His performance is therefore an exercise of a mental faculty in the normal sense of 'mental'.

Now calculating does not first acquire the rank of proper thinking when its author begins to do it with his lips closed and his hands in his pockets. The sealing of the lips is no part of the definition of thinking. A man may think aloud or half under his breath; he may think silently, yet with lip-movements conspicuous enough to be read by a lip-reader; or he may, as most of us have done since nursery-days, think in silence and with motionless lips. The differences are differences of social and personal convenience, of celerity and of facility. They need import no more differences into the coherence, cogency or appropriateness of the intellectual operations performed than is imported into them by a writer's preference for pencils over pens, or for invisible ink over ordinary ink. A deaf and dumb person talks in manual signs. Perhaps, when he wants to keep his thoughts to himself, he makes these signs with his hands kept behind his back or under the table. The fact that these

signs might happen to be observed by a Paul Pry would not lead us or their maker to say that he was not thinking.

This special use of 'mental' and 'mind' in which they signify what is done 'in one's head' cannot be used as evidence for the dogma of the ghost in the machine. It is nothing but a contagion from that dogma. The technical trick of conducting our thinking in auditory word-images, instead of in spoken words, does indeed secure secrecy for our thinking, since the auditory imaginings of one person are not seen or heard by another (or, as we shall see, by their owner either). But this secrecy is not the secrecy ascribed to the postulated episodes of the ghostly shadow-world. It is merely the convenient privacy which characterises the tunes that run in my head and the things that I see in my mind's eye.

Moreover the fact that a person says things to himself in his head does not entail that he is thinking. He can babble deliriously, or repeat jingles in inner speech, just as he can in talking aloud. The distinction between talking sense and babbling, or between thinking what one is saying and merely saying, cuts across the distinction between talking aloud and talking to oneself. What makes a verbal operation an exercise of intellect is independent of what makes it public or private. Arithmetic done with pencil and paper may be more intelligent than mental arithmetic, and the public tumblings of the clown may be more intelligent than the tumblings which he merely 'sees' in his mind's eye or 'feels' in his mind's legs, if, as may or may not be the case, any such imaginings of antics occur.

(5) *'In my head'*.

It is convenient to say something here about our everyday use of the phrase 'in my head'. When I do mental arithmetic, I am likely to say that I have had the numbers with which I have been working 'in my head' and not on paper; and if I have been listening to a catchy air or a verbal jingle, I am likely to describe myself later on as still having the tune or jingle 'running in my head'. It is 'in my head' that I go over the Kings of England, solve anagrams and compose limericks. Why is this felt to be an appropriate and expressive metaphor? For a metaphor it certainly is. No one thinks that when a tune is running in my head, a surgeon could unearth a little orchestra buried inside my skull or that a

doctor by applying a stethoscope to my cranium could hear a muffled tune, in the way in which I hear the muffled whistling of my neighbour when I put my ear to the wall between our rooms.

It is sometimes suggested that the phrase derives from theories about the relations between brains and intellectual processes. It probably is from such theories that we derive such expressions as 'racking one's brains to solve a problem'; yet no one boasts of having solved an anagram 'in his brains'. A schoolboy would sometimes be ready to say that he had done an easy piece of arithmetic in his head, though he did not have to use his brains over it; and no intellectual effort or acumen is required in order to have a tune running in one's head. Conversely, arithmetic done with paper and pencil may tax one's brains, although it is not done 'in the head'.

It appears to be primarily of imagined *noises* that we find it natural to say that they take place 'inside our heads'; and of these imagined noises it is primarily those that we imagine ourselves both uttering and hearing. It is the words which I fancy myself saying to myself and the tunes which I fancy myself humming or whistling to myself which are first thought of as droning through this corporeal studio. With a little violence the phrase 'in my head' is then sometimes, by some people, extended to all fancied noises and even transferred to the description of the things that I fancy I see; but we shall come back to this extension later on.

What then tempts us to describe our imaginations of ourselves saying or humming things to ourselves by saying that the things are said or hummed in our heads? First, the idiom has an indispensable negative function. When the wheel-noises of the train make 'Rule Britannia' run in my head, the wheel-noises are audible to my fellow-passengers, but my 'Rule Britannia' is not. The rhythmic rattle fills the whole carriage; my 'Rule Britannia' does not fill that compartment or any part of it, so it is tempting to say that it fills instead another compartment, namely one that is a part of me. The rattle-noises have their source in the wheels and the rails; my 'Rule Britannia' does not have its source in any orchestra outside me, so it is tempting to state this negative fact by saying that it has its source inside me. But this by itself would not explain why I find it a natural metaphor to say that 'Rule Britannia' is running in my head rather than in my throat, chest or stomach.

When I hear the words that you utter or the tunes that the band plays, I ordinarily have an idea, sometimes a wrong one, from which direction the noises come and at what distance from me their source is. But when I hear the words that I myself utter aloud, the tunes that I myself hum, the sounds of my own chewing, breathing and coughing, the situation is quite different, since here there is no question of the noises coming from a source which is in any direction or at any distance from me. I do not have to turn my head about in order to hear better, nor can I advance my ear nearer to the source of the noise. Furthermore, though I can shut out, or muffle, your voice and the band's tunes by stopping up my ears, this action, so far from decreasing, increases the loudness and resonance of my own voice. My own utterances, as well as other head-noises like throbbings, sneezes, sniffs and the rest, are not airborne noises coming from a more or less remote source; they are made in the head and are heard through the head, though some of them are also heard as airborne noises. If I make noises of a very resonant or hacking kind, I can feel the vibrations or jerks in my head in the same sense of 'feel in' as I feel the vibrations of the tuning-fork in my hand.

Now these noises are literally and not metaphorically in the head. They are real head-borne noises, which the doctor could hear through his stethoscope. But the sense in which we say that the schoolboy doing mental arithmetic has his numbers not on paper but in his head is not this literal sense but a metaphorical sense borrowed from it. That his numbers are not really being heard in his head in the way in which he really hears his own coughing in his head is easily shown. For if he whistles or yells loudly with his ears stopped up, he can half-deafen himself or set his ears singing. But if in doing his mental arithmetic, he 'sings' his numbers to himself as if in a very shrill voice, nothing half-deafening occurs. He makes and hears no shrill noises, for he is merely imagining himself making and hearing shrill noises, and an imagined shriek is not a shriek, and it is not a whisper either. But he describes his numbers as being in his head, just as I describe my 'Rule Britannia' as running in my head, because this is a lively way of expressing the fact that the imagination of the production-cum-audition is a vivid one. Our phrase 'in my head' is meant to be understood as inside inverted commas, like the verb 'see' in such expressions

as "I 'see' the incident now, though it took place forty years ago". If we were really doing what we imagine ourselves doing, namely hearing ourselves saying or humming things, then these noises would be in our heads in the literal usage of the phrase. However, since we are not producing or hearing noises, but only fancying ourselves doing so, when we say that the numbers and the tunes that we imagine ourselves droning to ourselves are 'in our heads', we say it in the knowing tone of voice reserved for expressing things which are not to be taken literally.

I have said that there is some inclination to expand the employment of the idiom 'in my head', to cover not only imagined self-made and head-borne noises but also imagined noises in general and, even wider, imagined sights as well. I suspect that this inclination, if I am right in thinking that it exists, derives from the following familiar set of facts. In the case of all the specifically head-senses, either we are endowed with a natural set of shutters or we can easily provide an artificial set. We can shut out the view with our eyelids or with our hands; our lips shield our tongues; our fingers can be used to stop our ears and nostrils. So what is there for you and me to see, hear, taste and smell can be excluded by putting up these shutters. But the things that I see in my mind's eye are not excluded when I close my eyes. Indeed sometimes I 'see' them more vividly than ever when I do so. To dismiss the ghastly vision of yesterday's road-accident, I may even have to open my eyes. This makes it tempting to describe the difference between imaginary and real views by saying that while the objects of the latter are on the far side of the shutters, the objects of the former are on the near side of them; the latter are well outside my head, so the former are well inside it. But this point needs a certain elaboration.

Sight and hearing are distance-senses, while touch, taste and smell are not; that is to say, when we make our ordinary uses of the verbs 'see', 'hear', 'watch', 'listen', 'espy', 'overhear' and the rest, the things we speak of as 'seen' and 'listened to' are things at a distance from us. We hear a train far away to the south and we get a peep at a planet up in the sky. Hence we find a difficulty in talking about the whereabouts of the spots that float 'before the eye'. For though seen they are not out there. But we do not speak of feeling or tasting things in the distance, and if

asked how far off and in which direction a thing lies, we do not reply 'Let me have a sniff or a taste'. Of course we may explore tactually and kinaesthetically, but when we find out in these ways where the electric light switch is, we are finding that it is where the finger-tips are. An object handled is where the hand is, but an object seen or heard is not, usually, anywhere near where the eye or ear is.

So when we want to emphasise the fact that something is not really being seen or heard; but is only being imagined as seen or heard, we tend to assert its imaginariness by denying its distance, and, by a convenient impropriety, we deny its distance by asserting its metaphorical nearness. 'Not out there, but in here; not outside the shutters and real, but inside the shutters and unreal', 'not an external reality, but an internal phantasm'. We have no such linguistic trick for describing what we imagine ourselves feeling, smelling, or tasting. A passenger on a ship feels the deck rolling beneath him chiefly in his feet and calves; and when he gets ashore, he still 'feels' the pavement rolling beneath him 'in his feet and calves'; but as kinaesthetic feeling is not a distance-sense, he cannot pillory his imaginary leg-feelings as illusions by saying that the rolling is in his legs and not in the street, for the rolling that he had felt when aboard has equally been felt in his legs. He could not have said 'I feel the other end of the ship rolling'. Nor does he describe the illusory rolling of the pavements as being 'felt in his head', but only as 'felt in his legs'.

I suggest, then, that the phrase 'in the head' is felt to be an appropriate and expressive metaphor in the first instance for vividly imagined self-voiced noises, and secondarily for any imaginary noises and even for imaginary sights, because in these latter cases a denial of distance, by assertion of metaphorical nearness, is intended to be construed as an assertion of imaginariness; and the nearness is relative, not so much to the head-organs of sight and hearing themselves, as to the places where their shutters are put up. It is an interesting verbal point that people sometimes use 'mental' and 'merely mental' as synonyms for 'imaginary'.

But it does not matter for my general argument whether this excursus into philology is correct or not. It will serve to draw attention to the sorts of things which we say are 'in our heads', namely, such things as imagined words, tunes and, perhaps, vistas.

When people employ the idiom 'in the mind', they are usually expressing over-sophisticatedly what we ordinarily express by the less misleading metaphorical use of 'in the head'. The phrase 'in the mind' can and should always be dispensed with. Its use habituates its employers to the view that minds are queer 'places', the occupants of which are special-status phantasms. It is part of the function of this book to show that exercises of qualities of mind do not, *save per accidens*, take place 'in the head', in the ordinary sense of the phrase, and those which do so have no special priority over those which do not.

(6) *The positive account of Knowing How.*

So far I hope to have shown that the exercise of intelligence in practice cannot be analysed into a tandem operation of first considering prescriptions and then executing them. We have also examined some of the motives which incline theorists to adopt this analysis.

But if to perform intelligently is to do one thing and not two things, and if to perform intelligently is to apply criteria in the conduct of the performance itself, it remains to show how this factor does characterise those operations which we recognise as skilful, prudent, tasteful or logical. For there need be no visible or audible differences between an action done with skill and one done from sheer habit, blind impulse, or in a fit of absence of mind. A parrot may squawk out 'Socrates is mortal' immediately after someone has uttered premisses from which this conclusion follows. One boy may, while thinking about cricket, give by rote the same correct answer to a multiplication problem which another boy gives who is thinking what he is doing. Yet we do not call the parrot 'logical', or describe the inattentive boy as working out the problem.

Consider first a boy learning to play chess. Clearly before he has yet heard of the rules of the game he might by accident make a move with his knight which the rules permit. The fact that he makes a permitted move does not entail that he knows the rule which permits it. Nor need the spectator be able to discover in the way the boy makes this move any visible feature which shows whether the move is a random one, or one made in knowledge of the rules. However, the boy now begins to learn the game properly, and this generally involves his receiving explicit instruction in the

rules. He probably gets them by heart and is then ready to cite them on demand. During his first few games he probably has to go over the rules aloud or in his head, and to ask now and then how they should be applied to this or that particular situation. But very soon he comes to observe the rules without thinking of them. He makes the permitted moves and avoids the forbidden ones; he notices and protests when his opponent breaks the rules. But he no longer cites to himself or to the room the formulae in which the bans and permissions are declared. It has become second nature to him to do what is allowed and to avoid what is forbidden. At this stage he might even have lost his former ability to cite the rules. If asked to instruct another beginner, he might have forgotten how to state the rules and he would show the beginner how to play only by himself making the correct moves and cancelling the beginner's false moves.

But it would be quite possible for a boy to learn chess without ever hearing or reading the rules at all. By watching the moves made by others and by noticing which of his own moves were conceded and which were rejected, he could pick up the art of playing correctly while still quite unable to propound the regulations in terms of which 'correct' and 'incorrect' are defined. We all learned the rules of hunt-the-thimble and hide-and-seek and the elementary rules of grammar and logic in this way. We learn *how* by practice, schooled indeed by criticism and example, but often quite unaided by any lessons in the theory.

It should be noticed that the boy is not said to know how to play, if all that he can do is to recite the rules accurately. He must be able to make the required moves. But he is said to know how to play if, although he cannot cite the rules, he normally does make the permitted moves, avoid the forbidden moves and protest if his opponent makes forbidden moves. His knowledge *how* is exercised primarily in the moves that he makes, or concedes, and in the moves that he avoids or vetoes. So long as he can observe the rules, we do not care if he cannot also formulate them. It is not what he does in his head or with his tongue, but what he does on the board that shows whether or not he knows the rules in the executive way of being able to apply them. Similarly a foreign scholar might not know how to speak grammatical English as well as an English child, for all that he had mastered the theory of English grammar.

(7) *Intelligent Capacities versus Habits.*

The ability to apply rules is the product of practice. It is therefore tempting to argue that competences and skills are just habits. They are certainly second natures or acquired dispositions, but it does not follow from this that they are mere habits. Habits are one sort, but not the only sort, of second nature, and it will be argued later that the common assumption that all second natures are mere habits obliterates distinctions which are of cardinal importance for the inquiries in which we are engaged.

The ability to give by rote the correct solutions of multiplication problems differs in certain important respects from the ability to solve them by calculating. When we describe someone as doing something by pure or blind habit, we mean that he does it automatically and without having to mind what he is doing. He does not exercise care, vigilance, or criticism. After the toddling-age we walk on pavements without minding our steps. But a mountaineer walking over ice-covered rocks in a high wind in the dark does not move his limbs by blind habit; he thinks what he is doing, he is ready for emergencies, he economises in effort, he makes tests and experiments; in short he walks with some degree of skill and judgment. If he makes a mistake, he is inclined not to repeat it, and if he finds a new trick effective he is inclined to continue to use it and to improve on it. He is concomitantly walking and teaching himself how to walk in conditions of this sort. It is of the essence of merely habitual practices that one performance is a replica of its predecessors. It is of the essence of intelligent practices that one performance is modified by its predecessors. The agent is still learning.

This distinction between habits and intelligent capacities can be illustrated by reference to the parallel distinction between the methods used for inculcating the two sorts of second nature. We build up habits by drill, but we build up intelligent capacities by training. Drill (or conditioning) consists in the imposition of repetitions. The recruit learns to slope arms by repeatedly going through just the same motions by numbers. The child learns the alphabet and the multiplication tables in the same way. The practices are not learned until the pupil's responses to his cues are automatic, until he can 'do them in his sleep', as it is revealingly put. Training, on the other hand, though it embodies plenty of

sheer drill, does not consist of drill. It involves the stimulation by criticism and example of the pupil's own judgment. He learns how to do things thinking what he is doing, so that every operation performed is itself a new lesson to him how to perform better. The soldier who was merely drilled to slope arms correctly has to be trained to be proficient in marksmanship and map-reading. Drill dispenses with intelligence, training develops it. We do not expect the soldier to be able to read maps 'in his sleep'.

There is a further important difference between habits and intelligent capacities, to bring out which it is necessary to say a few words about the logic of dispositional concepts in general.

When we describe glass as brittle, or sugar as soluble, we are using dispositional concepts, the logical force of which is this. The brittleness of glass does not consist in the fact that it is at a given moment actually being shattered. It may be brittle without ever being shattered. To say that it is brittle is to say that if it ever is, or ever had been, struck or strained, it would fly, or have flown, into fragments. To say that sugar is soluble is to say that it would dissolve, or would have dissolved, if immersed in water.

A statement ascribing a dispositional property to a thing has much, though not everything, in common with a statement subsuming the thing under a law. To possess a dispositional property is not to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change; it is to be bound or liable to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change, when a particular condition is realised. The same is true about specifically human dispositions such as qualities of character. My being an habitual smoker does not entail that I am at this or that moment smoking; it is my permanent proneness to smoke when I am not eating, sleeping, lecturing or attending funerals, and have not quite recently been smoking.

In discussing dispositions it is initially helpful to fasten on the simplest models, such as the brittleness of glass or the smoking habit of a man. For in describing these dispositions it is easy to unpack the hypothetical proposition implicitly conveyed in the ascription of the dispositional properties. To be brittle is just to be bound or likely to fly into fragments in such and such conditions; to be a smoker is just to be bound or likely to fill, light and draw on a pipe in such and such conditions. These are simple, single-track dispositions, the actualisations of which are nearly uniform.

But the practice of considering such simple models of dispositions, though initially helpful, leads at a later stage to erroneous assumptions. There are many dispositions the actualisations of which can take a wide and perhaps unlimited variety of shapes; many disposition-concepts are determinable concepts. When an object is described as hard, we do not mean only that it would resist deformation; we mean also that it would, for example, give out a sharp sound if struck, that it would cause us pain if we came into sharp contact with it, that resilient objects would bounce off it, and so on indefinitely. If we wished to unpack all that is conveyed in describing an animal as gregarious, we should similarly have to produce an infinite series of different hypothetical propositions.

Now the higher-grade dispositions of people with which this inquiry is largely concerned are, in general, not single-track dispositions, but dispositions the exercises of which are indefinitely heterogeneous. When Jane Austen wished to show the specific kind of pride which characterised the heroine of 'Pride and Prejudice', she had to represent her actions, words, thoughts and feelings in a thousand different situations. There is no one standard type of action or reaction such that Jane Austen could say 'My heroine's kind of pride was just the tendency to do this, whenever a situation of that sort arose'.

Epistemologists, among others, often fall into the trap of expecting dispositions to have uniform exercises. For instance, when they recognise that the verbs 'know' and 'believe' are ordinarily used dispositionally, they assume that there must therefore exist one-pattern intellectual processes in which these cognitive dispositions are actualised. Flouting the testimony of experience, they postulate that, for example, a man who believes that the earth is round must from time to time be going through some unique proceeding of cognising, 'judging', or internally re-asserting, with a feeling of confidence, 'The earth is round'. In fact, of course, people do not harp on statements in this way, and even if they did do so and even if we knew that they did, we still should not be satisfied that they believed that the earth was round, unless we also found them inferring, imagining, saying and doing a great number of other things as well. If we found them inferring, imagining, saying and doing these other things, we should be satisfied that they believed

the earth to be round, even if we had the best reasons for thinking that they never internally harped on the original statement at all. However often and stoutly a skater avers to us or to himself, that the ice will bear, he shows that he has his qualms, if he keeps to the edge of the pond, calls his children away from the middle, keeps his eye on the life-belts or continually speculates what would happen, if the ice broke.

(8) *The exercise of intelligence.*

In judging that someone's performance is or is not intelligent, we have, as has been said, in a certain manner to look beyond the performance itself. For there is no particular overt or inner performance which could not have been accidentally or 'mechanically' executed by an idiot, a sleepwalker, a man in panic, absence of mind or delirium or even, sometimes, by a parrot. But in looking beyond the performance itself, we are not trying to pry into some hidden counterpart performance enacted on the supposed secret stage of the agent's inner life. We are considering his abilities and propensities of which this performance was an actualisation. Our inquiry is not into causes (and *a fortiori* not into occult causes), but into capacities, skills, habits, liabilities and bents. We observe, for example, a soldier scoring a bull's eye. Was it luck or was it skill? If he has the skill, then he can get on or near the bull's eye again, even if the wind strengthens, the range alters and the target moves. Or if his second shot is an outer, his third, fourth and fifth shots will probably creep nearer and nearer to the bull's eye. He generally checks his breathing before pulling the trigger, as he did on this occasion; he is ready to advise his neighbour what allowances to make for refraction, wind, etc. Marksmanship is a complex of skills, and the question whether he hit the bull's eye by luck or from good marksmanship is the question whether or not he has the skills, and, if he has, whether he used them by making his shot with care, self-control, attention to the conditions and thought of his instructions.

To decide whether his bull's eye was a fluke or a good shot, we need and he himself might need to take into account more than this one success. Namely, we should take into account his subsequent shots, his past record, his explanations or excuses, the advice he gave to his neighbour and a host of other clues of various

sorts. There is no one signal of a man's knowing how to shoot, but a modest assemblage of heterogeneous performances generally suffices to establish beyond reasonable doubt whether he knows how to shoot or not. Only then, if at all, can it be decided whether he hit the bull's eye because he was lucky, or whether he hit it because he was marksman enough to succeed when he tried.

A drunkard at the chessboard makes the one move which upsets his opponent's plan of campaign. The spectators are satisfied that this was due not to cleverness but to luck, if they are satisfied that most of his moves made in this state break the rules of chess, or have no tactical connection with the position of the game, that he would not be likely to repeat this move if the tactical situation were to recur, that he would not applaud such a move if made by another player in a similar situation, that he could not explain why he had done it or even describe the threat under which his King had been.

Their problem is not one of the occurrence or non-occurrence of ghostly processes, but one of the truth or falsehood of certain 'could' and 'would' propositions and certain other particular applications of them. For, roughly, the mind is not the topic of sets of untestable categorical propositions, but the topic of sets of testable hypothetical and semi-hypothetical propositions. The difference between a normal person and an idiot is not that the normal person is really two persons while the idiot is only one, but that the normal person can do a lot of things which the idiot cannot do; and 'can' and 'cannot' are not occurrence words but modal words. Of course, in describing the moves actually made by the drunk and the sober players, or the noises actually uttered by the idiotic and the sane men, we have to use not only 'could' and 'would' expressions, but also 'did' and 'did not' expressions. The drunkard's move was made recklessly and the sane man was minding what he was saying. In Chapter V I shall try to show that the crucial differences between such occurrence reports as 'he did it recklessly' and 'he did it on purpose' have to be elucidated not as differences between simple and composite occurrence reports, but in quite another way.

Knowing *how*, then, is a disposition, but not a single-track disposition like a reflex or a habit. Its exercises are observances of rules or canons or the applications of criteria, but they are not tandem operations of theoretically avowing maxims and then putting them into practice. Further, its exercises can be overt or

covert, deeds performed or deeds imagined, words spoken aloud or words heard in one's head, pictures painted on canvas or pictures in the mind's eye. Or they can be amalgamations of the two.

These points may be jointly illustrated by describing what happens when a person argues intelligently. There is a special point in selecting this example, since so much has been made of the rationality of man; and part, though only part, of what people understand by 'rational' is 'capable of reasoning cogently'.

First, it makes no important difference whether we think of the reasoner as arguing to himself or arguing aloud, pleading, perhaps, before an imagined court or pleading before a real court. The criteria by which his arguments are to be adjudged as cogent, clear, relevant and well organised are the same for silent as for declaimed or written ratiocinations. Silent argumentation has the practical advantages of being relatively speedy, socially undisturbing and secret; audible and written argumentation has the advantage of being less slap-dash, through being subjected to the criticisms of the audience and readers. But the same qualities of intellect are exercised in both, save that special schooling is required to inculcate the trick of reasoning in silent soliloquy.

Next, although there may occur a few stages in his argument which are so trite that he can go through them by rote, much of his argument is likely never to have been constructed before. He has to meet new objections, interpret new evidence and make connections between elements in the situation which had not previously been co-ordinated. In short he has to innovate, and where he innovates he is not operating from habit. He is not repeating hackneyed moves. That he is now thinking what he is doing is shown not only by this fact that he is operating without precedents, but also by the fact that he is ready to recast his expression of obscurely put points, on guard against ambiguities or else on the look out for chances to exploit them, taking care not to rely on easily refutable inferences, alert in meeting objections and resolute in steering the general course of his reasoning in the direction of his final goal. It will be argued later that all these words 'ready', 'on guard', 'careful', 'on the look out' and 'resolute' are semi-dispositional, semi-episodic words. They do not signify the concomitant occurrence of extra but internal operations, nor mere capacities and tendencies to perform further operations if the need

for them should arise, but something between the two. The careful driver is not actually imagining or planning for all of the countless contingencies that might crop up; nor is he merely competent to recognise and cope with any one of them, if it should arise. He has not foreseen the runaway donkey, yet he is not unprepared for it. His readiness to cope with such emergencies would show itself in the operations he would perform, if they were to occur. But it also actually does show itself by the ways in which he converses and handles his controls even when nothing critical is taking place.

Underlying all the other features of the operations executed by the intelligent reasoner there is the cardinal feature that he reasons logically, that is, that he avoids fallacies and produces valid proofs and inferences, pertinent to the case he is making. He observes the rules of logic, as well as those of style, forensic strategy, professional etiquette and the rest. But he probably observes the rules of logic without thinking about them. He does not cite Aristotle's formulae to himself or to the court. He applies in his practice what Aristotle abstracted in his theory of such practices. He reasons with a correct method, but without considering the prescriptions of a methodology. The rules that he observes have become his way of thinking, when he is taking care; they are not external rubrics with which he has to square his thoughts. In a word, he conducts his operation efficiently, and to operate efficiently is not to perform two operations. It is to perform one operation in a certain manner or with a certain style or procedure, and the description of this *modus operandi* has to be in terms of such semi-dispositional, semi-episodic epithets as 'alert', 'careful', 'critical', 'ingenious', 'logical', etc.

What is true of arguing intelligently is, with appropriate modifications, true of other intelligent operations. The boxer, the surgeon, the poet and the salesman apply their special criteria in the performance of their special tasks, for they are trying to get things right; and they are appraised as clever, skilful, inspired or shrewd not for the ways in which they consider, if they consider at all, prescriptions for conducting their special performances, but for the ways in which they conduct those performances themselves. Whether or not the boxer plans his manoeuvres before executing them, his cleverness at boxing is decided in the light of how he fights. If he is a Hamlet of the ring, he will be condemned as an

inferior fighter, though perhaps a brilliant theorist or critic. Cleverness at fighting is exhibited in the giving and parrying of blows, not in the acceptance or rejection of propositions about blows, just as ability at reasoning is exhibited in the construction of valid arguments and the detection of fallacies, not in the avowal of logicians' formulæ. Nor does the surgeon's skill function in his tongue uttering medical truths but only in his hands making the correct movements.

All this is meant not to deny or depreciate the value of intellectual operations, but only to deny that the execution of intelligent performances entails the additional execution of intellectual operations. It will be shown later (in Chapter IX), that the learning of all but the most unsophisticated knacks requires some intellectual capacity. The ability to do things in accordance with instructions necessitates understanding those instructions. So some propositional competence is a condition of acquiring any of these competences. But it does not follow that exercises of these competences require to be accompanied by exercises of propositional competences. I could not have learned to swim the breast stroke, if I had not been able to understand the lessons given me in that stroke; but I do not have to recite those lessons, when I now swim the breast stroke.

A man knowing little or nothing of medical science could not be a good surgeon, but excellence at surgery is not the same thing as knowledge of medical science; nor is it a simple product of it. The surgeon must indeed have learned from instruction, or by his own inductions and observations, a great number of truths; but he must also have learned by practice a great number of aptitudes. Even where efficient practice is the deliberate application of considered prescriptions, the intelligence involved in putting the prescriptions into practice is not identical with that involved in intellectually grasping the prescriptions. There is no contradiction, or even paradox, in describing someone as bad at practising what he is good at preaching. There have been thoughtful and original literary critics who have formulated admirable canons of prose style in execrable prose. There have been others who have employed brilliant English in the expression of the silliest theories of what constitutes good writing.

The central point that is being laboured in this chapter is of

considerable importance. It is an attack from one flank upon the category-mistake which underlies the dogma of the ghost in the machine. In unconscious reliance upon this dogma theorists and laymen alike constantly construe the adjectives by which we characterise performances as ingenious, wise, methodical, careful, witty, etc. as signalling the occurrence in someone's hidden stream of consciousness of special processes functioning as ghostly harbingers or more specifically as occult causes of the performances so characterised. They postulate an internal shadow-performance to be the real carrier of the intelligence ordinarily ascribed to the overt act, and think that in this way they explain what makes the overt act a manifestation of intelligence. They have described the overt act as an effect of a mental happening, though they stop short, of course, before raising the next question—what makes the postulated mental happenings manifestations of intelligence and not mental deficiency.

In opposition to this entire dogma, I am arguing that in describing the workings of a person's mind we are not describing a second set of shadowy operations. We are describing certain phases of his one career; namely we are describing the ways in which parts of his conduct are managed. The sense in which we 'explain' his actions is not that we infer to occult causes, but that we subsume under hypothetical and semi-hypothetical propositions. The explanation is not of the type 'the glass broke because a stone hit it', but more nearly of the different type 'the glass broke when the stone hit it, because it was brittle'. It makes no difference in theory if the performances we are appraising are operations executed silently in the agent's head, such as what he does, when duly schooled to it, in theorising, composing limericks or solving anagrams. Of course it makes a lot of difference in practice, for the examiner cannot award marks to operations which the candidate successfully keeps to himself.

But when a person talks sense aloud, ties knots, feints or sculpts, the actions which we witness are themselves the things which he is intelligently doing, though the concepts in terms of which the physicist or physiologist would describe his actions do not exhaust those which would be used by his pupils or his teachers in appraising their logic, style or technique. He is bodily active and he is mentally active, but he is not being synchronously active in two different

'places', or with two different 'engines'. There is the one activity, but it is one susceptible of and requiring more than one kind of explanatory description. Somewhat as there is no aerodynamical or physiological difference between the description of one bird as 'flying south' and of another as 'migrating', though there is a big biological difference between these descriptions, so there need be no physical or physiological differences between the descriptions of one man as gabbling and another talking sense, though the rhetorical and logical differences are enormous.

The statement 'the mind is its own place', as theorists might construe it, is not true, for the mind is not even a metaphorical 'place'. On the contrary, the chessboard, the platform, the scholar's desk, the judge's bench, the lorry-driver's seat, the studio and the football field are among its places. These are where people work and play stupidly or intelligently. 'Mind' is not the name of another person, working or frolicking behind an impenetrable screen; it is not the name of another place where work is done or games are played; and it is not the name of another tool with which work is done, or another appliance with which games are played.

(9) *Understanding and Misunderstanding*

It is being maintained throughout this book that when we characterise people by mental predicates, we are not making untestable inferences to any ghostly processes occurring in streams of consciousness which we are debarred from visiting; we are describing the ways in which those people conduct parts of their predominantly public behaviour. True, we go beyond what we see them do and hear them say, but this going beyond is not a going behind, in the sense of making inferences to occult causes; it is going beyond in the sense of considering, in the first instance, the powers and propensities of which their actions are exercises. But this point requires expansion.

A person who cannot play chess can still watch games of chess. He sees the moves being made as clearly as does his neighbour who knows the game. But the spectator who does not know the game cannot do what his neighbour does—appreciate the stupidity or cleverness of the players. What is this difference between merely witnessing a performance and understanding what is witnessed? What, to take another example, is the difference between hearing

what a speaker says and making sense of what he is heard to say?

Advocates of the double-life legend will answer that understanding the chess-player's moves consists in inferring from the visible moves made on the board to unwitnessable operations taking place on the player's private stage. It is a process of inference analogous to that by which we infer from the seen movements of the railway-signals to the unseen manipulations of the levers in the signal-box. Yet this answer promises something that could never be fulfilled. For since, according to the theory, one person cannot in principle visit another person's mind as he can visit signal-boxes, there could be no way of establishing the necessary correlation between the overt moves and their hidden causal counterparts. The analogy of the signal-box breaks down in another place. The connections between levers and signal-arms are easy to discover. The mechanical principles of the fulcrum and the pulley, and the behaviour of metals in tension and compression are, at least in outline, familiar to us all. We know well enough how the machinery inside the signal-box works, how that outside the signal-box works and how the two are mechanically coupled. But it is admitted by those who believe in the legend of the ghost in the machine that no one yet knows much about the laws governing the supposed workings of the mind, while the postulated interactions between the workings of the mind and the movements of the hand are acknowledged to be completely mysterious. Enjoying neither the supposed status of the mental, nor the supposed status of the physical, these interactions cannot be expected to obey either the known laws of physics, or the still to be discovered laws of psychology.

It would follow that no one has ever yet had the slightest understanding of what anyone else has ever said or done. We read the words which Euclid wrote and we are familiar with the things which Napoleon did, but we have not the slightest idea what they had in their minds. Nor has any spectator of a chess tournament or a football match ever yet had an inkling of what the players were after.

But this is patently absurd. Anybody who can play chess already understands a good deal of what other players do, and a brief study of geometry enables an ordinary boy to follow a good deal of Euclid's reasoning. Nor does this understanding require a prolonged grounding in the not yet established laws of psychology. Following

the moves made by a chess-player is not doing anything remotely resembling problematic psychological diagnosis. Indeed, supposing that one person could understand another's words or actions only in so far as he made causal inferences in accordance with psychological laws, the queer consequence would follow that if any psychologist had discovered these laws, he could never have conveyed his discoveries to his fellow men. For *ex hypothesi* they could not follow his exposition of them without inferring in accordance with them from his words to his thoughts.

No one feels happy with the view that for one person to follow what another person says or does is to make inferences somewhat like those made by a water-diviner from the perceived twitching of the twig to the subterranean flow of water. So the consolatory amendment is sometimes made that, since a person is directly aware of the correlations between his own private experiences and his own overt actions, he can understand the performances of others by imputing to them a similar correlation. Understanding is still psychological divining, but it is divination reinforced by analogies from the diviner's direct observation of the correlations between his own inner and outer lives. But this amendment does not abolish the difficulty.

It will be argued later that a person's appraisals of his own performances do not differ in kind from his appraisals of those of others, but for the present purpose it is enough to say that, even if a person did enjoy a privileged illumination in the ascription of mental-conduct concepts to his own performances, his supposed analogical argument to the mental processes of others would be completely fallacious.

If someone has inspected a number of railway-signals and signal-boxes, he can then in a new case make a good probable inference from observed signal-movements to unobserved lever-movements. But if he had examined only one signal-box and knew nothing about the standardisation-methods of large corporations, his inference would be pitifully weak, for it would be a wide generalisation based on a single instance. Further, one signal-arm is closely similar to another in appearance and movements, so the inference to a correspondingly close similarity between the mechanisms housed in different signal-boxes has some strength. But the observed appearances and actions of people differ very markedly, so the

imputation to them of inner processes closely matching one another would be actually contrary to the evidence.

Understanding a person's deeds and words is not, therefore, any kind of problematic divination of occult processes. For this divination does not and cannot occur, whereas understanding does occur. Of course it is part of my general thesis that the supposed occult processes are themselves mythical; there exists nothing to be the object of the postulated diagnoses. But for the present purpose it is enough to prove that, if there were such inner states and operations, one person would not be able to make probable inferences to their occurrence in the inner life of another.

If understanding does not consist in inferring, or guessing, the alleged inner-life precursors of overt actions, what is it? If it does not require mastery of psychological theory together with the ability to apply it, what knowledge does it require? We saw that a spectator who cannot play chess also cannot follow the play of others; a person who cannot read or speak Swedish cannot understand what is spoken or written in Swedish; and a person whose reasoning powers are weak is bad at following and retaining the arguments of others. Understanding is a part of knowing *how*. The knowledge that is required for understanding intelligent performances of a specific kind is some degree of competence in performances of that kind. The competent critic of prose-style, experimental technique, or embroidery, must at least know how to write, experiment or sew. Whether or not he has also learned some psychology matters about as much as whether he has learned any chemistry, neurology or economics. These studies may in certain circumstances assist his appreciation of what he is criticising; but the one necessary condition is that he has some mastery of the art or procedure, examples of which he is to appraise. For one person to see the jokes that another makes, the one thing he must have is a sense of humour and even that special brand of sense of humour of which those jokes are exercises.

Of course, to execute an operation intelligently is not exactly the same thing as to follow its execution intelligently. The agent is originating, the spectator is only contemplating. But the rules which the agent observes and the criteria which he applies are one with those which govern the spectator's applause and jeers. The commentator on Plato's philosophy need not possess much philo-

sophic originality, but if he cannot, as too many commentators cannot, appreciate the force, drift or motive of a philosophical argument, his comments will be worthless. If he can appreciate them, then he knows how to do part of what Plato knew how to do.

If I am competent to judge your performance, then in witnessing it I am on the alert to detect mistakes and muddles in it, but so are you in executing it; I am ready to notice the advantages you might take of pieces of luck, but so are you. You learn as you proceed, and I too learn as you proceed. The intelligent performer operates critically, the intelligent spectator follows critically. Roughly, execution and understanding are merely different exercises of knowledge of the tricks of the same trade. You exercise your knowledge how to tie a clove-hitch not only in acts of tying clove-hitches and in correcting your mistakes, but also in imagining tying them correctly, in instructing pupils, in criticising the incorrect or clumsy movements and applauding the correct movements that they make, in inferring from a faulty result to the error which produced it, in predicting the outcomes of observed lapses, and so on indefinitely. The words 'understanding' and 'following' designate certain of those exercises of your knowledge *how*, which you execute without having, for example, any string in your hand.

It should by now be otiose to point out that this does not imply that the spectator or reader, in following what is done or written, is making analogical inferences from internal processes of his own to corresponding internal processes in the author of the actions or writings. Nor need he, though he may, imaginatively represent himself as being in the shoes, the situation and the skin of the author. He is merely thinking what the author is doing along the same lines as those on which the author is thinking what he is doing, save that the spectator is finding what the author is inventing. The author is leading and the spectator is following, but their path is the same. Nor, again, does this account of understanding require or encourage us to postulate any mysterious electric sympathies between kindred souls. Whether or not the hearts of two chess-players beat as one, which they will not do if they are opponents, their ability to follow one another's play depends not on this valvular coincidence but upon their competence at chess, their interest in this game and their acquired familiarity with one another's methods of playing.

This point, that the capacity to appreciate a performance is one in type with the capacity to execute it, illustrates a contention previously argued, namely that intelligent capacities are not single-track dispositions, but are dispositions admitting of a wide variety of more or less dissimilar exercises. It is however necessary to make two provisos. First, the capacity to perform and to appreciate an operation does not necessarily involve the ability to formulate criticisms or lessons. A well-trained sailor boy can both tie complex knots and discern whether someone else is tying them correctly or incorrectly, deftly or clumsily. But he is probably incapable of the difficult task of describing in words how the knots should be tied. And, second, the ability to appreciate a performance does not involve the same degree of competence as the ability to execute it. It does not take genius to recognise genius, and a good dramatic critic may be indifferent as an actor or playwright. There would be no teachers or pupils if the ability to understand operations required complete ability to perform them. Pupils are taught how to do things by people who know better than they how to do them. Euclid's *Elements* are neither a sealed, nor an open, book to the schoolboy.

One feature in this account of understanding has been grasped, though from the wrong end, by certain philosophers who have tried to explain how an historian, scholar or literary critic can understand the deeds or words of his subjects. Adhering without question to the dogma of the ghost in the machine, these philosophers were naturally perplexed by the pretensions of historians to interpret the actions and words of historic personages as expressions of their actual thoughts, feelings and intentions. For if minds are impenetrable to one another, how can historians penetrate the minds of their heroes? Yet if such penetration is impossible, the labours of all scholars, critics and historians must be vain; they may describe the signals, but they can never begin to interpret them as effects of operations in the eternally sealed signal-boxes.

These philosophers have put forward the following solution of their spurious puzzle. Though I cannot witness the workings of your mind or Plato's mind, but only the overt actions and written words which I take to be outward 'expressions' of those inner workings, I can, with due effort and practice, deliberately enact such operations in my own private theatre as would naturally

originate just such actions and words. I can think private thoughts of my own which would be well expressed by the sentences ascribed to Plato's hand, and I can, in fact or in fancy, execute volitions of my own which originate or would originate actions like those which I have witnessed you performing. Having put myself into a frame of mind in which I act like you, or write like Plato, I can then impute to you and to him similar frames of mind. If this imputation is correct, then, from knowing what it is like for me to be in the frame of mind which issues in these actions and words, I can also know what it was like to be Plato writing his Dialogues and what it is like to be you, tying, perhaps, a clove-hitch. By re-enacting your overt actions I re-live your private experiences. In a fashion, the student of Plato makes himself a second Plato, a sort of re-author of his Dialogues, and thus and only thus he understands those Dialogues.

Unfortunately this programme of mimicking Plato's mental processes can never be wholly successful. I am, after all, a twentieth-century English student of Plato, a thing which Plato never was. My culture, schooling, language, habits and interests are different from his and this must impair the fidelity of my mimicry of his frame of mind and therefore the success of my attempts to understand him. Still, it is argued, this is, in the nature of the case, the best that I can do. Understanding must be imperfect. Only by really being Plato could I really understand him.

Some holders of theories of this type add extra comforts to it. Though minds are inaccessible to one another, they may be said to resonate, like tuning-forks, in harmony with one another, though unfortunately they would never know it. I cannot literally share your experiences, but some of our experiences may somehow chime together, though we cannot be aware of their doing so, in a manner which almost amounts to genuine communion. In the most fortunate cases we may resemble two incurably deaf men singing in tune and in time with one another. But we need not dwell on such embellishments to a theory which is radically false.

For this theory is just another unsuccessful attempt to wriggle out of a perfectly mythical dilemma. It assumes that understanding would have to consist in contemplating the unknowable workings of insulated ghosts and tries to remedy this trouble by saying that, in default of such knowledge, I can do nearly as well by con-

templating such ghostly operations of my own as would naturally issue in overt 'expressions' similar to those of the persons whom I wish to understand. But this involves a further unwarrantable but interesting assumption, namely that to similar overt deeds and words there always correspond similar internal processes, an assumption which is, according to the theory itself, completely untestable. It assumes, also quite improperly, that it follows from the fact that I go through certain internal processes that I must perfectly appreciate them for what they are, i.e. that I cannot misconstrue, or be puzzled by, anything that goes on in my own stream of consciousness. In short, this whole theory is a variant of the doctrine that understanding consists in problematic causal divination, reinforced by a weak analogical argument.

What makes the theory worth discussing is that it partly avoids equating understanding with psychological diagnosis, i.e. with causal inferences from overt behaviour to mental process in accordance with laws yet to be discovered by psychologists; and it avoids this equation by making an assumption to which it is not entitled but which is on the edge of the truth. It assumes that the qualities of people's minds are reflected in the things that they overtly say and do. So historians and scholars in studying the styles and procedures of literary and practical activities are on the right track; it is, according to the theory, just their inescapable misfortune that this track terminates in the chasm separating the 'physical' from the 'mental', the 'overt' from the 'inner'. Now, had the holders of this theory seen that the styles and procedures of people's activities *are* the way their minds work and are not merely imperfect reflections of the postulated secret processes which were supposed to be the workings of minds, their dilemma would have evaporated. The claims of historians and scholars to be able in principle to understand what their subjects did and wrote would have been automatically vindicated. It is not they who have been studying shadows.

Overt intelligent performances are not clues to the workings of minds; they are those workings. Boswell described Johnson's mind when he described how he wrote, talked, ate, fidgeted and fumed. His description was, of course, incomplete, since there were notoriously some thoughts which Johnson kept carefully to himself and there must have been many dreams, daydreams and silent babblings

which only Johnson could have recorded and only a James Joyce would wish him to have recorded.

Before we conclude this inquiry into understanding, something must be said about partial understanding and misunderstanding.

Attention has already been drawn to certain parallelisms and certain non-parallelisms between the concept of knowing *that* and the concept of knowing *how*. A further non-parallelism must now be noticed. We never speak of a person having partial knowledge of a fact or truth, save in the special sense of his having knowledge of a part of a body of facts or truths. A boy can be said to have partial knowledge of the counties of England, if he knows some of them and does not know others. But he could not be said to have incomplete knowledge of Sussex being an English county. Either he knows this fact or he does not know it. On the other hand, it is proper and normal to speak of a person knowing in part how to do something, i.e. of his having a particular capacity in a limited degree. An ordinary chess-player knows the game pretty well but a champion knows it better, and even the champion has still much to learn.

This holds too, as we should now expect, of understanding. An ordinary chess-player can partly follow the tactics and strategy of a champion; perhaps after much study he will completely understand the methods used by the champion in certain particular matches. But he can never wholly anticipate how the champion will fight his next contest and he is never as quick or sure in his interpretations of the champion's moves as the champion is in making or, perhaps, in explaining them.

Learning *how* or improving in ability is not like learning *that* or acquiring information. Truths can be imparted, procedures can only be inculcated, and while inculcation is a gradual process, imparting is relatively sudden. It makes sense to ask at what moment someone became apprised of a truth, but not to ask at what moment someone acquired a skill. 'Part-trained' is a significant phrase, 'part-informed' is not. Training is the art of setting tasks which the pupils have not yet accomplished but are not any longer quite incapable of accomplishing.

The notion of misunderstanding raises no general theoretical difficulties. When the card-player's tactics are misconstrued by his opponents, the manoeuvre they think they discern is indeed a

possible manoeuvre of the game, though it happens not to be his manoeuvre. Only someone who knew the game could interpret the play as part of the execution of the supposed manoeuvre. Misunderstanding is a by-product of knowing *how*. Only a person who is at least a partial master of the Russian tongue can make the wrong sense of a Russian expression. Mistakes are exercises of competences.

Misinterpretations are not always due to the inexpertness or carelessness of the spectator; they are due sometimes to the carelessness and sometimes to the cunning of the agent or speaker. Sometimes, again, both are exercising all due skill and care, but it happens that the operations performed, or the words spoken, could actually be constituents of two or more different undertakings. The first ten motions made in tying one knot might be identical with the first ten motions required for tying another, or a set of premisses suitable for establishing one conclusion might be equally suitable for establishing another. The onlooker's misinterpretation may then be acute and well-grounded. It is careless only in being premature. Feinting is the art of exploiting this possibility.

It is obvious that where misunderstanding is possible, understanding is possible. It would be absurd to suggest that perhaps we always misconstrue the performances that we witness, for we could not even learn to misconstrue save in learning to construe, a learning process which involves learning not to misconstrue. Misinterpretations are in principle corrigible, which is part of the value of controversy.

(10) *Solipsism*

Contemporary philosophers have exercised themselves with the problem of our knowledge of other minds. Enmeshed in the dogma of the ghost in the machine, they have found it impossible to discover any logically satisfactory evidence warranting one person in believing that there exist minds other than his own. I can witness what your body does, but I cannot witness what your mind does, and my pretensions to infer from what your body does to what your mind does all collapse, since the premisses for such inferences are either inadequate or unknowable.

We can now see our way out of the supposed difficulty. I discover that there are other minds in understanding what other

people say and do. In making sense of what you say, in appreciating your jokes, in unmasking your chess-stratagems, in following your arguments and in hearing you pick holes in my arguments, I am not inferring to the workings of your mind, I am following them. Of course, I am not merely hearing the noises that you make, or merely seeing the movements that you perform. I am understanding what I hear and see. But this understanding is not inferring to occult causes. It is appreciating how the operations are conducted. To find that most people have minds (though idiots and infants in arms do not) is simply to find that they are able and prone to do certain sorts of things, and this we do by witnessing the sorts of things they do. Indeed we do not merely discover that there are other minds; we discover what specific qualities of intellect and character particular people have. In fact we are familiar with such specific matters long before we can comprehend such general propositions as that John Doe has a mind, or that there exist minds other than our own; just as we know that stones are hard and sponges are soft, kittens are warm and active, potatoes are cold and inert, long before we can grasp the proposition that kittens are material objects, or that matter exists.

Certainly there are some things which I can find out about you only, or best, through being told of them by you. The oculist has to ask his client what letters he sees with his right and left eyes and how clearly he sees them; the doctor has to ask the sufferer where the pain is and what sort of a pain it is; and the psychoanalyst has to ask his patient about his dreams and daydreams. If you do not divulge the contents of your silent soliloquies and other imaginings, I have no other sure way of finding out what you have been saying or picturing to yourself. But the sequence of your sensations and imaginings is not the sole field in which your wits and character are shown; perhaps only for lunatics is it more than a small corner of that field. I find out most of what I want to know about your capacities, interests, likes, dislikes, methods and convictions by observing how you conduct your overt doings, of which by far the most important are your sayings and writings. It is a subsidiary question how you conduct your imaginings, including your imagined monologues.