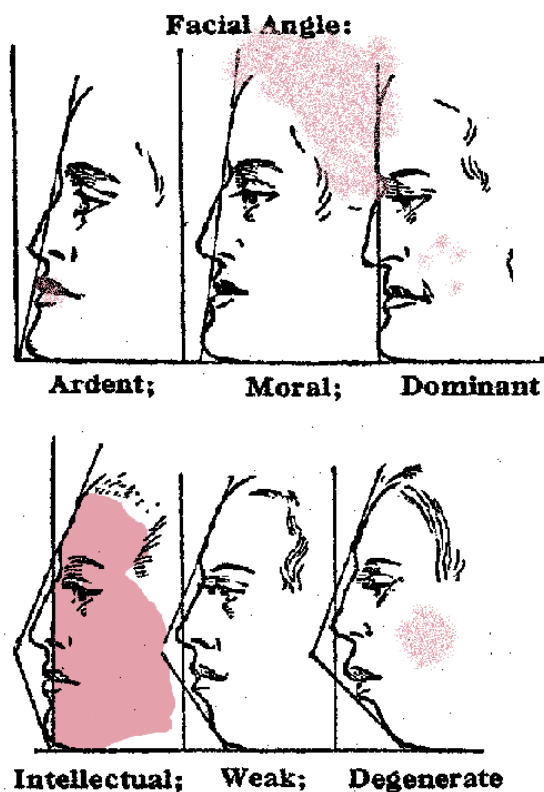


From *The Philosopher*, Volume XXX, Vol. 4 of the Second Series



An Approach to Teaching Philosophy *in* Schools

By *Bernard Youngman*

2003 *The Editor* adds:

The Philosophical Society of England has advocated both the use of philosophical material, and perhaps more importantly, philosophical methods in schools, a prominent strand in its history since the 1930s. We reprint from the archives Bernard Youngman's 1952 assessment of the task of a philosophical education, a task he bases on Bible study and describes as part of leading the young untutored mind towards love of wisdom and knowledge. The teacher, he warns, "must value freedom of thought and revere independence of mind; he must at all times be as Plato so succinctly put it - midwife to his pupils' thoughts."

How Mr Youngman combined this duty with his other one, also hinted at, of bringing the young to the realisation that Christianity is the 'highest' form of philosophy is part of the challenge. And there are other responsibilities too, of course.

In Ecclesiastes there is bitterness and cynicism enough to challenge any adolescent; there is clearly an attitude of sheer materialism, and the writer is devastatingly frank in his statements God, he says, is far away, and not interested in the world or the people in it; He allows evil to flourish all is vanity! Man is just the victim of chance and time. But, he adds, have a good time while the going is good. Here is an almost modern pessimism, and a small dose of this philosophy is probably quite sufficient for the average adolescent. (Most 'Agreed Syllabuses' recommend chapters xi and xii as being enough.)

But the great thing to remember, he concludes, "is that the work must be theirs - by search, preparation, explanation, drama, brains trust, question and answer, project, exploration, study - NOT the teacher's, by chalk and talk!"

(Abridgement of the *Thesis* has necessitated some generalisations)

As Headmaster of a large Secondary School I feel I should put on record some possible methods and levels of practical approach to the teaching of Philosophy in what are generally known as the Fifth and Sixth Forms of both Grammar and Secondary Modern Schools, indeed, in all schools where adolescents come under the guidance of teachers whose personal philosophies may range from the cynical to the mystic! It is our duty to help boys and girls see the wisdom of the ages, understand its influence upon man and his experiences, examine the reasons for its

acceptance or its rejection - and the consequences, and in some way implant a desire for each one to discover within himself the answer to the questions:

"What is Man?"

and especially,

"Why am I here?"

Einstein has asked, "What is the meaning of human life?" It may not take a great scientist to answer that for adolescents but it will help them if they can be given some idea of approach to and analysis and assessment of the various answers they may conceive or discover. In the words of the motto of the Philosophical Society, they will need "wisdom to direct, knowledge to govern". There is precious little of either wisdom or knowledge in the world as they see it. The common philosophy is too often one of "something for nothing", "help yourself", "the devil take the hindmost" "eat, drink and be merry . . ." The adolescent is bewildered by the gulf between the world as he sees it and the world that he would like to believe in. The cruel catastrophic plunge from classroom to factory shatters his wavering faith in anything ethically and doctrinally sound, and his new philosophy quickly takes on a mercenary aspect that is reflected in the attraction of the pay-packet: with disillusionment come the "so-what?" and "I couldn't care less" attitudes to the very things that his teachers had hoped he would learn to honour and respect.

What is it, then, that we wish to do for our adolescents? It is, surely, to help them to love wisdom and knowledge, so that in the acquiring of them they may "see life steadily and see it whole." Socrates was asked by Glaucon, "Who are the true Philosophers?" and replied, "Those who are lovers of the vision of truth." It is just

that vision, of however fleeting a glimpse, that we must try to reveal. It may appear, for them, in some attempt at investigating life as it is - critically and disinterestedly; it may lead to a dedicated search as sacred as that for the Holy Grail.

There are practical matters for consideration, however, in that we cannot guarantee a full course of Philosophy for any of these adolescents. Many of them leave school soon after they are fifteen; some stay on for one, possibly two and rarely three terms longer; even in the Grammar and Independent Schools there is a tendency for them to leave at sixteen. This state of affairs means little time for either Divinity or Philosophy. However, let us not be defeated by this; rather let us accept the challenge and plan the more carefully our teaching of Philosophy through the lesson in Divinity, Scripture, Religious Instruction, or whatever else it is called on the time-table. *When* can this be done - and *How*? As to "When?" - it can and should be done at least in the first term of the last year at school; in this way, all the class will receive guidance for a term and a few will be helped for the year. "*How*" is the crux of this paper.

First let us be clearly aware of the nature of the Philosophy of Religion, then we shall not confuse it with Theology. Theology presents systematically the teaching of historical religion as it relates to the existence and attributes of a Supreme Being and His relation to the world and to man. Philosophy of Religion has a specific aspect -- it investigates the nature of religious consciousness and the value of its decisions on human life. A great deal of the work involved in teaching Philosophy will be covered by discussion and debate. It is, of course, possible to discuss at great length without saying anything of vital importance and without arriving at any firm philosophic decision. The teacher, however, must

value freedom of thought and reverence independence of mind; he must at all times be as Plato so succinctly put it - midwife to his pupils' thoughts. Let us now turn to the experience of the classroom, the methods of approach to be considered, and the practical aspects to be assessed.

1. Comparative Study of Religions

Religion implies the desire to worship; in his worship man accepts a Supreme Being and depends upon Him for his existence; he may or may not accept an "other world." By comparing the major religions of the world, adolescents may eventually be led to accept Christianity as the mainspring of their philosophy, and to some extent the philosophy of Irenaeus that "the life of man is the vision of God." The Christian faith must be presented in its philosophical setting, when the divergent interpretations of life are closely examined. To preach Christian truths as might an impassioned layman is usually to court disaster; truth should be found out by young folk for themselves. The extent of detail will depend upon their abilities and the amount of time at their disposal. But the main features - historical, ethical, theological, philosophical must be touched upon for the work to be of any benefit.

The following religions should be considered:

Jewish (Old Testament) .
 Mohammedanism
 Hinduism
 Buddhism
 Confucianism (the Analects are useful here)
 Grecian
 Christianity (New Testament)

The most suitable books for reference and study are:

World Religions and Jesus Christ, by Paton,
Religions of the World , by Godfrey Philips, and

What can Man Believe? by Barton.

Most *Agreed Syllabuses* are remarkably useful on this subject. Probably the best mode of approach is the setting of chapters and subjects for children who will reproduce the relevant facts in lecturettes and talks for the rest of the class. With a small class, essays should be set.

Search work will involve hunting for information; necessity for clarity of expression will be important. Some guidance in critical comparison will be necessary if children are to see the point of their efforts. The teacher may prefer to give the talks himself and then provide notes, but if the class do the work themselves there will be a keener response and a more likely benefit will accrue from the results of their studies.

The information gathered about each religion needs to be tabled under various suitable headings. Under these, for further comparison, may be noted the guiding principles of each religion, and even the rules, for example, the Silver Rule of Confucianism - what you would not have another do to you, do not do it to him," and the Golden Rule of Christianity - "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them" Here are suggested headings; teachers may add others or word these differently:ó

i. How did it happen?

Origins, spread, acceptance/ persecution, appeal to the individual, to society

ii. What effect had it on people?

Effect on the emotions of individuals, of society

Effect on the mind.

Effect on behaviour.

How far do those 'matter' to each religion?

iii. What did people do about it?

What made them act as they did/

What was their attitude towards others?

How did it influence social structure'?

iv. *What kind of a Supreme Being?*

How is He described or indicated?

What is the relation between Him and Man?

What is good as far as this religion is concerned?

What is evil...?

Is it a positive religions?

Is there an after-life indicated? If so, what is ti like?

Is it a worship of fear - or of love?

v. *What is its philosophy?*

Is it a negative or a positive approach?

Is anything lacking in it? What? Why?

Could you accept it as a rule of life?

From these will arise a number of questions the answers to which will give a fair indication of the 'value' of each religion to the individual as a mode of living to be embraced and a philosophy to be accepted. Of particular interest will be to assess how far human personality counts. *Without overriding this pupil's views and ideas it is the teacher's duty to point the way of Christianity as the supreme philosophy.* This will derive from discussion on some of the following:-

The Christian view of life, immortality, God, Man, God's omnipotence.

His omnipresence, Man's duty to God and his neighbour, prayer and pain, freedom of choice...

Does the Christian base his philosophy on logic or moral suasion? (Almost thou persuadest me.) Is it a matter of rules and opinions - or is ti a complete Way of Life?

Had Plato and Aristotle anything to say that might help the Christian?

What views were held by the Stoics and Epicureans? What did Descartes and Spinoza think about it? What do 'man' say in the twentieth century?

The class could dramatise some of Plato's *Dialogues* here, and produce monographs of pungent references from the great Philosophers. Adolescents need guidance in scrutinising the facts intellectually and critically so that they may see the Christian faith as something demanding a decision, in that it is an integrator of the experiences of life in their immediate

community and a unifier of life in the world at large; its significance in these two directions will give them at least the beginnings of a philosophy of religion, and possibly of life itself.

2. Set Books

A set book offers many opportunities for adventure into the realms of intellectual interests; it helps a student to confirm or challenge his own views, and enables him to follow in the right direction the path he himself wishes to tread. Of course, the lazy teacher will use the set-book method as a means of getting out of doing any work himself; it is to be hoped that the conscientious teacher will use the method as it should be used, with his own critical guidance and carefully prepared exercises. The book must obviously be within the mental range of the pupils, and up-to-date in outlook; it also needs to be of the type that challenges and poses questions. .

Preparation of talks and the writing of answers to carefully worded questions will help students to apply their minds to the topic under study, and discussions will arise from these. Occasionally a formal debate will suggest itself, and this should be handled precisely and formally. Sometimes, the class should be allowed to question the teacher! Each book of a suggested list will pose its own problems, but one inevitable question of special significance will be based on the notion that since Christianity is "played out" since the last war, what will take its place; nature abhors a vacuum, something must. Is it to be a code of ethics, some branch of moral philosophy, a series of metaphysical concepts . . . or what? Adolescents at all intellectual levels will argue fiercely on this topic.

Here are some suggested books. Others

may be noted in the Press, and the Institute of Christian Education will always help.

How Christians Worship, by Fenn
The Two Moralities, by Lindsay
Why be Good, by Reid
Civilisation, Science and Religion, by Ritchie
Personality of Man, by Tyrell
Short History of Mankind, by Somervell
Proper Study of Mankind, by Howard
Philosophy of the Good Life, by Gore
Many Creeds: One Cross, by Storrs

3. What is Wisdom?

Philosophy is the love of wisdom. Our work is to help adolescents to discover what wisdom is. Perhaps the best introduction of all is for the class to turn to Job xxviii, v. 20, and ponder on the words, "Whence then cometh Wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" with the answer in v. 28, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (A.V.). Some would say that this is the core of Christian philosophy; perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it represents pre-Christian philosophy and has much to merit it. Philosophers from earliest times have tried to epitomise experience in some pithy phrase or telling epigram. Many of these are to be found in certain books of the Bible - Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes; and in the Apocrypha - Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. Some background is necessary here to explain the development of God-man and man-God relationships revealed in the Old Testament to the coming of Jesus.

The study of the Wisdom books should be for many adolescents an absorbing section of work during perhaps the last term or last year of their schooling. The Wisdom Literature, as it is called, reflects the experience of the Hebrews, and is strangely practical and earthy. Probably

its philosophy} took the place of the fast-vanishing} prophecy; it seems to accept the earliest prophecies and to evolve from them a system of practical ethics. In Proverbs Wisdom is shown as a philosophy of life based on sound principles of conduct and living, and acknowledged as coming from God, though man can do with it precisely as he himself wills. Good and evil are in opposition, and the adolescent can easily find and list the virtues of the man who is wise in experience humility, honesty, generosity, self-control. Girls might study profitably the attitude towards women, especially in the acrostic poem, Ch. xxi, often called, "the A.B.C. of the perfect wife"

Passages for Study

ii, v. 13 - iii, v.20- - the blessings of wisdom; the source is God who helps man to recognise and follow the good life as well as to recognise and challenge evil - hence, wisdom is the supreme prize.

C.f. *Job* xxviii, *Wis.* ix, 9, *Ecclesiastes* xxiv, *Col.* I, 15-18.

In *Ecclesiastes* there is bitterness and cynicism enough to challenge any adolescent; there is clearly an attitude of sheer materialism, and the writer is devastatingly frank in his statements God, he says, is far away, and not interested in the world or the people in it; He allows evil to flourish all is vanity! Man is just the victim of chance and time. But, he adds, have a good time while the going is good. Here is an almost modern pessimism, *and a small dose of this philosophy is probably quite sufficient for the average adolescent.* (Most Agreed Syllabuses recommend chapters xi and xii as being enough.)

Coming to *Job*, we might regard the book from the angle of Undeserved Suffering, and with an advanced class make comparisons with Lewis's *Problem*

of Pain. Job is protesting against the belief that sin and suffering are indissolubly related; he holds his allegiance to God often in bitterness and despair, never doubting the eventual reward of his own integrity. The teacher may have to sketch the background and lead up to Job xxviii (Cf. Prov. viii), but individuals could prepare the arguments of the three friends and Job's answers. An excellent way to bring out the core of this book is to dramatise it. Failing any other approach such as the writing of a play, it might prove most useful to use the version given in the *Oxford Shorter Bible*, pp. 234-244.

In the Apocrypha, we come to *Ecclesiasticus*, wherein the author personifies Wisdom - 'He (the Lord) created her.' The early chapters are full of wise maxims and counsels, not the least being "gather wisdom from thy youth up; so shalt thou find wisdom till shine old age." *These telling phrases should be entered in notebooks under selected headings:- Friendship, The Good Life, Good Deeds, etc. Ch. xlv is worthy of especial attention.*

The *Wisdom of Solomon* could be a useful is somewhat highly intellectual pursuit if treated as an argument between Jewish and Greek thought about Wisdom. It gives material for discussion in such striking phrases as: - "He that setteth at nought wisdom and discernment is miserable." Here, too, are arguments between immortality and extinction, the righteous and the ungodly man, and so on.

4. The Four Freedoms

It is more than possible that many adolescents will not even know what these are, or when and where and why they were propounded. It is good

therefore to help them to study the reasons for, and the philosophy of the good life lying behind, the Four Freedoms. The class should see that Freedom is a dedication of one's personality and life to the acceptance of an ideal, and that belief in freedom urges us to *act*.

Here, then, are the Four Freedoms; they may be treated in some measure geographically, historically and morally. By far the best approach is through the Project. The class can then divide into four groups each taking one of the Four Freedoms for special attention.

i. Freedom of Worship

What does it mean? Questions of creeds, beliefs, rights of others?
 How many sects? What are they? How did they arise?
 Does the thought challenge our sense of values? How and why?
 Is refraining from interfering with various sects Freedom of Worship? What examples are there historically?
 What is Religion? What does it entail? What does it mean to the present Class/ to the present generation?

ii. Freedom from Fear

Of what? For whom? Look at this from the point of view of both employer and employee; also of government. Examine 'particular' fears - parents, farmers... [fear of parents, certainly at bedtime, but fear of farmers? - Ed.]
 How does it involve loyalties, responsibilities, to God, others, ourselves?
 Discuss 'Service before Self' [Class: Oh not again, Sir! - Ed.]
 Can fear be met with understanding - wisdom?
 What philosophy will meet this 'freedom'?

iii. Freedom from Want

Employment for all?
 Providing and taking opportunities - for what?
 Self or country?
 Resources of all nations.
 Paradox of world gluts and world shortage; supply and demand; unemployment; waste and famine.
 Affording a war is affording a peace.
 New homes for old.
 Provision for the aged and infirm; pensions and fear of and for the future.

Guns before butter!

"He that saveth his life..." "Take no thought for the morrow..." "Give us this day..." ; "Am I my brother's keeper?"

iv. Freedom of Speech

Without it we lose the power to fight for the other three.

Democracy versus totalitarianism.

Propaganda, tabloid thinking, judgement of facts, 'evaluation of the 'truth'. What do *we* think?

Mental versus physical slavery.

Freedom of Education, of Religion, of the press, freedom to vote.

Democracy and the Individual; and Citizenship.

Working together for the good - for Whose?

There will be search work, lecturettes, discussions, talks, visits, essays, and the like, academically; other subjects, like Art and Craft, may then be linked so that expression of the discoveries may be shown through posters, friezes, and eventually an exhibition, for the benefit of the rest of the school and visitors. The whole work should be correlated with Social Studies or subjects related on the normal timetable.

A few suggestions of the general aspect of study may help teachers in particular undertakings, but ordinary teaching experience will point the way of applying the methods already noted.

5. Literature

We may depart from the actual Divinity lesson if need be, to examine the possibilities of philosophic teaching through Literature. There is *something divine* in literature and we need have no fear that we are misusing or abusing our time. The world of Literature opens a vast storehouse for search, but it is not intended that the class shall be toppled into it and left to flounder as best they may. Better that they should choose a great name, a reformer, an artist, a poet, an essayist . . . and trace in his life and

works the philosophy that was the driving force, the dynamic. of his personality.

Thus, Shelley at twenty-one, influenced by Spinoza, Plato, Mary Godwin's father, and revealing his early philosophy in *Queen Mab*. In the spirit of atheism, he protests against the crimes of religion and the unworthiness of the lip-service of prevailing Christianity. In order to detect the development of Shelley's philosophy and for the eventual challenge to his own atheism, the class should then examine more closely *Adonais*, in which he sustains the triumph of the spiritual over the material:

*"the soul of Adonais like a star
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are."*

In *The Triumph of Life* he asks the unanswered riddle of existence, "Then, what is Life?" - a question left unanswered by his own death.

This is given as an example; most of this kind of study can be done by search, essay-work, lecturettes, verse-reading, dramatic work, and so on.

Another source of provocative challenge is the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* wherein are lines that may form the basis for discussion. Such are:

*"Ah, fill the Cup - what boots it to repeat
How Time is slipping underneath our Feet;
Unborn, Tomorrow, and dead Yesterday.
Why fret about it then if Today be sweet!"*

Browning is always rich in philosophic expression. His "Grow old along with me; the best is yet to be" might serve almost as it stands as a formal subject for debate. On the other hand, the lines so familiar in *Pippa Passes* - "God's in His heaven; all's right with the world" can only satisfactorily be studied against the less pleasant background of the whole poem.

Tennyson's *In Memoriam* traces the poet's whole philosophy of life to a triumphant conclusion, and some of his other poems, notably *Enoch Arden*, reveal a wholesome attitude towards life.

Much of Wordsworth is imbued with a philosophy not always in accord with our own, but, tinged with a reverence for life and Nature and the world as he sees it, his *Intimations of Immortality*, does well towards shaping some of the frail thoughts of sensitive minds.

In J. B. Priestley's *I Have Been Here Before* are several avowedly philosophical discussions; it is rich in expression, too, and some of the lines give much food for thought. Nor should Shakespeare be overlooked, especially in his soliloquy passages.

These are given as pointers towards the kind of work that may be attempted; it is necessary that the teacher prepare this work most carefully, so that his pupils are indeed introduced to minds that are wholesome in their attitude towards life and the meaning of life.

6. History of Philosophy

This, of course, can be a somewhat formidable task, and for students of this age and calibre not more shall the merest introduction to the subject can be envisaged. It may be as well to select a "Short History" and enable the class to act a general survey, then some of the chief philosophers and their theories may be studied over and above the survey. Something on these lines may be attempted; detail will depend upon the time allotted and the mental ability of the class.

Begin historically with Thales.

- i. Greek Philosophy 600 BC - 500 AD
 (a) pre-Socratic - Pythagoras, Democritus, polytheism; beginnings of monotheism.
 (b) Socratic - development of scientific thinking. Socrates - one Being, climax of new 'monotheism'. Plato - man's soul proof of God. Aristotle - God the transcendent.
 (c) post-Socratic - Stoics - man self-sufficient; Epicureans - life of 'pleasure'.

Note that in this period we also have four great religions forming: Buddhism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism, Christianity

- ii. Mediaeval period 500-1600 AD
 Mostly an Aristotelian philosophy of the transcendence of God.
 God the Universal Mind, the First Cause, woven into a growing Christian theology propounded by such philosophers as Aquinas, Anselm, Abelard, Duns Scotus.

- iii. The Modern Era 1600 - to the present day
 Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Kant, Spencer, Earl Russell [contemporaneously patron of the Philosophical Society, worth a nod to! - Ed] Whitehead....

Note the development of philosophical thought in the past two decades is better left as a special study...

7. Philosophers

Again we are reminded that the great question of Philosophy. has always been and probably will always be the Psalmist's "What . is Man?" Philosophers have considered the heavens, the sun, moon, stars, only to subordinate all these to the deeper questions of life What is Man? Whence came he? Where is he going? What is the meaning of human life? Then seeking the answers, they' propound many differing philosophies; their theories may be probable or fantastic, but are all expressive of what they believe about life and the reason for Man. The "man-in-the-street" has his philosophy too; he lives in accordance with that philosophy, whether it is a good one, or bad, and he cannot help being an exemplar of it. What is Man? they all ask. The answer may be that of Omar

Khayyam, who, believing that "the flower that once has blown for ever dies" seeks solace in filling the Cup and so to enjoyment. It may be that of Paul, fighting the good fight of faith for a crown of righteousness. Shaw rejoins that "Youth is a wonderful thing. What a crime to waste it on children!" to Browning's "Youth shows but half, trust God; nor be afraid." Whilst Augustine gently sighs, "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is unquiet till it rest in Thee." One man may seek a monastery, another may dedicate his life to slums. If then, a man's philosophy urges him to live in a certain way, is it not equally true that how he lives indicates his philosophy of life? For the layman, philosophy is "thinking what to do in a life situation"; for the professional philosopher it is an endless search for a universally valid answer to an eternal riddle.

Only with advanced pupils can any measure of useful work be done in this section. *Study of the particular theories held by the many great philosophers is difficult for the untrained mind*, nor for these pupils is there need to appreciate to the full the various individual principles, arguments and reasonings. However, it is good for them to have some idea of the development of philosophical thought through the ages, and to realise how man has sought, as he will continue to seek, a unifying explanation of the universe, and an answer to the question - What is the meaning of human life? When our pupils in some measure realise these things, they are the better equipped to try and find out how philosophers set about answering these questions; they will see, too, how the changing ages - with scientific developments, conquest of space and time, psychological processes, advance of learning . . . all these and more have influenced the men who seek to co-ordinate the fast-growing sciences and fields of knowledge that often threaten to

outrun the philosophy that would unite them.

The teacher will do well to select from the suggested list and try to maintain some kind of chronological sequence that may help to reveal development of philosophical thought: Plato, Socrates, Aquinas, Spinoza, Descartes, Locke, Hegel, Whitehead, Shaw, Joad [another Society alumni] , Russell, Moore, Ryle (and others the teacher may prefer).

8. Philosophy Today

The first thing the adolescent must realise about present-day philosophy is the paradox of man's conquest of space and time. The post-war years have, alas, served to produce a territorial division so that English thought is no longer in touch with that of Marxist and certain continental countries. To some extent, then, the philosophic thought of today is an English-speaking philosophy; nor does this invalidate the new principles that are being voiced as the solution sought by the modern philosophers. A recent exposition, with its unfortunate trend towards materialism is Ryle's *Concept of Mind*. Ryle owes much to Ludwig Wittgenstein, who did not publish many of his theories. His main philosophic thought was simple in its profundity; he regarded Philosophy as an activity - "One is a philosopher because one thinks in a certain way, not because one holds certain opinions." What a simple definition for the adolescent, until he begins to think about it! He then went on to suggest that our normal idiom, *i.e.* speech, indicating our concepts, gave a workable framework for a new technique of meeting present-day philosophical problems. Ryle develops this theory; he denies dualism, averring that mind and body are one, since in explaining the one we use the other. He eventually arrives at

the conclusion that the traditional problems insoluble under the two-world theory are in actual fact now overcome in the one-world philosophy - by dissolution!

Alternatively, there is Rusk's *Philosophical Bases of Education*; and there would seem to be a healthy return of philosophers as in Joad's *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics* and Green's *Problem of Good* to the basic idealism of Plato. They are again saying that there is an inner harmony between the soul of man and the heart of the universe, that man's mind is something real and in " touch with the eternal, man's spiritual nature must be developed. Christianise Plato, and we have a philosophy that is once more in accord with the earliest Christian Platonist who wrote the first words of the Fourth Gospel; Canon Spencer Leeson takes this stand in his *Christian Education*.

Science, with its age of the atom, rears an ugly head at belief in a future for man's soul; but Science has been known to bow its head before today. That it will once more give place to Beauty, Truth, Goodness is undoubted; then there may be a return to the belief in things eternal that creates in Man a sense of reason for his existence.

General Summing-up

It is not intended that any course should include *all* these approaches, nor that any section should be so detailed a study that the point of exhaustion in effort and discovery is ever reached. We can do little more than give an introduction to the possibilities of the subject, and whet the appetites of the more thoughtful students under our care. They will all be philosophers whether we like it or not; they will have, we trust, as a result of our

endeavour a better notion of the meaning of life. Being introduced to philosophical thought at school, they may continue and practise an interest in and even develop a love for philosophy itself, long after they have left us.

The great thing to remember is that the work must be theirs - by search, preparation, explanation, drama, brains trust, question and answer, project, exploration, study - NOT the teacher's, by chalk and talk!

In *Religion in School*, Heawood says that "no defence should be needed for tackling the root problems of Christian philosophy . . . if we shirk helping our pupils towards their own constructive thought . . . we abdicate our function." It is our "bounden duty" to see that adolescents leave us with at least the beginnings of a Christian philosophy because we believe that this philosophy is the highest that we ourselves can dare to follow. What *is* the meaning of human life? This we may not wholly understand, but it is not a matter of the blind leading the blind. Even Tennyson admitted his failure to grasp the eternal things; let us be comforted in his heart's cry -

Little flower - but if I could
understand
*What you are, root and all, and all
in all,*
I should know what God and man
is.

- [Back to main journal.](#)