

THE QUESTIONING IMAGINATION

1

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I

Bryan Mac Mahon's 'The Windows of Wonder'¹ is a story about a young woman who took a job as a stand-in teacher. The school was in a bogland valley surrounded by a wall of mountains, close to the sea. She had been told that the inhabitants of the village were a queer clannish crowd. The school children sat gravely in rows and consumed her with their brown eyes. Their minimal cooperation and response to her efforts to educate them drove her near to despair. Then one day, without looking for it, she discovered the secret. In a reading lesson she was explaining the meaning of the word, legend. She asked the children if they remembered the story of the Children of Lir? There was no response. It transpired that they had never heard of or read any of the great stories or legends of their culture. They had lost an invaluable treasure. She said to them:

Your minds are like rooms that are dark or brown. But somewhere in the rooms, if only you can pull aside the heavy curtains, you will find windows - these are the windows of wonder. Through these you can see the yellow sunlight or the silver stars or the many-coloured wheel of the rainbow. ...

The windows I speak of are the legends of our people. Each little legend is a window of wonder. Each time you hear a story or ponder upon a story or dream yourself into a story or break or remake a story, you are opening a window of wonder.

The story goes on to recount her success at sparking interest and curiosity in the minds of the children. The parents complained. The principal asserted that she was wasting valuable teaching time. The school teacher she was standing in for unexpectedly returned and her stay was abruptly ended.

The story is a parable about the questioning imagination. Legends, stories, what Joseph Campbell would term myths,² are windows of human wonder. We might read them purely to be entertained. But there is another way of reading in which the great stories and myths become evokers of our wonder. If the imagination is suitably cultivated by them then it is possible that our questioning will get started. But if the imagination is not cultivated it would seem very difficult, almost impossible to spark off wonder. Without it the room of our wonder is in darkness. Much in our educational and life upbringing imprisons our imagination and wonder or both. We can be

The Questioning Imagination

imprisoned by inherited images of humanness, society, of life, and of God. We can inherit a sense of what questions can or cannot be raised. The 'Windows of Wonder' is a story about the tension and conflict between the imprisonment and the liberation of wonder.

Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird³ is a story about the inhabitants of Maycomb, a racially divided town. One summer Atticus' children, Jem (10) and Scout (6) have a visitor next door. Nicknamed Dill, he was described as a sort of pocket Merlin whose head teemed with eccentric plans and strange longings. In a house a few doors away lived Boo Radley. Because of certain misdemeanors in his past, an unstable personality and a severe father who could not tolerate shame, he has been confined to his home. He was never seen out and rarely spoken about by adults. As a result:

The Radley place fascinated Dill. In spite of our warnings and explanations it drew him as the moon draws water, but drew him no nearer than the light pole on the corner, a safe distance from the Radley gate. There he would stand, his arm around the fat pole, staring and wondering.⁴

The more Jem and Scout told Dill about Boo Radley, the more he wanted to know. Towards the end of the summer it became his project to make him come out.⁵

On one level the story is about the coming out of Boo Radley. On another is it about Tom Robinson who was a member of the black community. Occasionally he helped Mayella Ewell, the isolated daughter of a ne'er do well white father, with jobs around her back yard as he passed by on his way to work. One day she invited him into the house to help fix a door and, in her loneliness, put her arms around him. Her father came upon them and accused Robinson of assault. Atticus, the father of Scout and Jem, who held that every lawyer gets at least one case in their lifetime that affects them personally, was called upon to defend him. Soon the children found themselves being questioned, 'does your father defend niggers?'⁶ For the white community, the account by Mr. Ewell of what happened was sufficient. A trial, with all its attendant critical questioning, was unnecessary as the testimony of the blacks could not be trusted. Such was the situation in which Atticus found himself. The story draws a beautiful contrast between the world and wonder of the children, Scout, Jem and Dill, and of the adults, Atticus, the Ewells, the Robinsons, and the judge and jury of Maycomb. It also charts the transition of Jem into the adult world.

The wonder of Dill, Jem and Scout about Boo is a curiosity that in one sense is beyond the adult horizon. For adults have dismissed the mystery with

The Questioning Imagination

a name, abnormal. The person is abnormal, that is all that there is to it. Yet to the children the abnormal, the strange, the anomalous, is still a source of fascination. Only with entry into adulthood will it, by conformity to conventions, be removed from the map of their world. It leads us to conclude that just as adults can say, you're too young to understand that question yet, so children might also comment, you're too old to get into that question any more! The connected experiences have simply become dead to adult interest and attention. Equally there is the incomprehension by the children of the racial prejudice of the world of the adults, of the hardening of biases to such an extent that the truth cannot be reached.

Taken as a whole the story from one standpoint is a beautiful illustration of childhood wonder in transition into adolescence and adulthood. It is a story about how experiences can become dead to our wonder and about how our wonder can become dead to experiences. Each individual in the cast of characters of the story represents some dimension, some room of our minds. There is the wonder child within us that approaches experiences with a freshness and naivety. There is the adult in us who operates within a repertoire of meaningful issues. There is the tension between the two. There is the element of bias and prejudice in us. We are all a mixture.

Charles Perrault's Blue Beard (1697) is the story of a marriage of a rich and powerful man with a frightening blue beard to one of the daughters of a neighbouring lady. Soon after they are married Bluebeard goes away on business, leaving all the keys to his country house with his wife. She is to open anything she wishes except the door into the little room at the end of the long gallery on the ground floor. When her party arrive at the country house the wife's curiosity is so strong to find out what is in that room that she leaves the party and goes off to explore on her own.

Perrault's tale has a happy ending. In 1911, on the eve of the First World War, Bartok composed his operetta In Bluebeard's Castle.⁷ It is of the form of a conversation, largely structured by wonder and curiosity, between the man and the woman, Bluebeard and Judith. Judith loves him and has entered his castle. It is always dark and icy and gloomy within, weeping with moisture. She asks him to show her over his castle, of which she can see seven great barred and bolted doorways.⁸ In her love she wants to open them all and bring light and air and laughing breezes throughout. She opens the first door and finds behind it his torture chamber and a crimson river of blood-stained waters. She opens the second door and finds behind it his battle weapons and armor. She responds:

I came hither because I love you.
I am here, and I am yours.
Show me all your hidden secrets.

The Questioning Imagination

Let me enter every doorway.

Bluebeard replies that he will give her three more keys and that is all. She can look as much as she wants but she is to ask no questions.

She opens the third door and finds behind it his gold and diamonds, his castle treasury, all bloodstained. She opens the fourth door and finds behind it the castle's secret garden with giant lilies and exquisite roses. Bluebeard asks her to love him and ask no questions as she opens the fifth door. From a lofty verandah she finds herself dazzled by the vista and magnitude and radiance of his kingdom, containing sun and moon and stars, but also clouds that throw blood red shadows. Exclaiming, she stares fixedly out, distracted at the vista, her wonder, curiosity, questioning momentarily dismantled. She turns to Bluebeard and remarks, 'Let the last two doors be opened.. None of your great doors must stay shut fast against me.' Bluebeard cautions her.

The story illustrates Jerome Miller's point⁹ that our wonder is like the hinge of a door that swings open into sometimes exciting and sometimes dangerous unknown places. Existentially questioning the dark side of our existence is always dangerous. There are always some questions about the evil doings in society whose pursuit will place our lives in danger.

In many situations in life which provoke us into questioning we simply bring out of our store the kinds of questions which are part of our habitual way of doing things and put them to the situation. No doubt we can do the same in reading the stories. But is it also the case that these stories question us? Is there to be discerned in reading them in their fullness a passive and an active interplay? Initially we might put our questions to them but does the imagery of the stories eventually draw us further into them as towards an unfamiliar door. To what extent, in order fully to enter into them, do we have to dismantle our personal mental ego and its repertoire of procedures and routines of questioning and let the questions be put to us? Do the dynamic images created in them become the soil in which the seeds of new and further questions form in us? They invite us to enter into the imaginative experiences they recount and as we do so we find we have to let go of our rigid control of them. They become the questioner and as good stories somehow we never really exhaust their ability to put us to the question. That is assuming that one reads them for something more than entertainment.

II

What is it that causes questioning and questions to start in us? Why is it that some welcome and grow with the questions that in their lives seek them out while others can be so afraid of them? Teachers in all disciplines, tacitly or

The Questioning Imagination

consciously, labour to communicate and cause or evoke questions and questioning in their students. The mathematics teacher will labour to cause in them the question about the rule in a series of numbers or of probability distribution. A historian or biographer will labour in order to communicate questions about the connections between events in history or in the lives of individuals. A philosopher will labour to communicate what Socrates meant by justice or Kant by regarding persons as ends in themselves. Religious educators grapple with problems such as, what did Kierkegaard meant by faith as the highest human passion? But is the causing involved more like bringing a horse to the water rather than making it drink? In teaching it is possible to bring the student to the question. But in an absolute sense can anyone cause in the sense of make the student engage in a question? Against this, would not simply saying the words of a significant question to someone who understood their meaning and significance involve them in the question? Once the words were said could the person avoid the question? But would this not presuppose a certain disposition? For some might the cause be the motivation involved in doing well or passing or not passing an examination?

The teacher is trying to get something to happen in the students. But far from drawing their attention to something going on inside themselves he draws their attention to states of affairs, situations, texts. There can be various degrees of response from the class. Some are lost from the start and soon become bored. Some become interested for a while, but eventually their interest fades. Others become alive; they become interested in the details. They exclaim, ah yes, I see what he was getting at. They attend to details, follow up significant clues and leads, and eventually come to concentrate on resolving the problem. As the teaching continues there comes a time when the teacher says, 'This student has really grasped the question and is questioning. He or she is not acting or trying to gain attention or merit. The presented state of affairs is the source of a riddle. The student's spirit of inquiry has really awakened to it. He is truly trying to find the rule in the mathematical series, the historical question, Kant's and Kierkegaard's meaning'. Other students might have some familiarity with the elements of the problem and yet be oblivious to the riddle. Why does a question get started or not get started in us? Why does one question get started in me and not in you, and vice versa?

Questioning is not a once off thing. Rather it is something like a disposition or a habit or even the seed of a quest. So there arises the wider aim in education of causing or evoking, not simply a particular question in a student, but the awakening of the disposition or habit as a whole, the fertilization of the seed. The educators' job is to make the student a self-starter, autonomous, not in regard to everything that can be questioned, but in the appropriate fields of interest for the person or group. Then the teacher can retire and it is up to the individual to become responsible for his or her own

The Questioning Imagination

wonder. If, as some hold, the questioning activity is a significant transforming force in our lives as individuals and communities, a vital principle of personal and social growth, then coming to own it and taking responsibility for it could have important consequences.

Taking responsibility will involve discerning between a cynical and destructive orientation of the disposition, on the one hand which would undermine genuine achievements of the human spirit, and a creative non-naive visionary and critical orientation on the other which would master the natural and human world and criticizes human blindness, prejudice, bias. Like all major human attributes, human wonder can be a force for good and evil, for creativity and destructiveness, for progress and decline. Given the many dimensions of the questioning activity the present essay will address itself mainly to the manner in which questions get started? What causes them to grow and what causes us to persevere with them is a further and deep question beyond the present limited exploration.

What can happen in the more formal educational process also happens in a more spontaneous and uncontrolled way in life itself. Life itself can replace the teacher and provoke us with its questions. When he was three years old Martin Buber's mother simply walked out and he never saw her again for twenty years.¹⁰ The experience put a fundamental question to him about meetings and mis-meetings. It was to find a partial answer in his I and Thou. In Guildford the Legal Aid Clerk rang up Alister Logan at ten in the morning and asked him if he would take a legal aid certificate for one of the Guildford 'bombers'. He declined. Two hours later the clerk called back saying that no one would take the case. Would he? This time he consented to a question about guilt and innocence that had sought him out in his life and that would come to dominate it for the next fifteen years, at times involving threats to his life.

Slowly a young person discovers that they have a talent for a particular field, be it economics or biochemistry or whatever, and that certain questions in those fields seek them out and become their responsibility. A believer witnesses an innocent child suffering and doubts the existence and goodness of God. A person finds himself at the end of a chapter in his life. It is difficult because the present involvements, commitments, directions will not help. He comes to wonder, where is my life trying to go next? Life's questions seek us out. Welcome or unwelcome they turn up on our doorsteps. There is no chapter in our lives, which, if we are genuine, does not have its own particular and unique questions for us to grapple with. Our response can to a large measure determine the path of our personal growth.

The present essay will suggest that experience and the imagination are immediate and direct, but partial causes of human wonder and questioning.

The Questioning Imagination

The terms, experience and imagination, suggest a relation to the world made present to us through the senses and imagination. But a distinction should also be drawn between the experience and imagination of a very young child and that of an adult. We talk about a person being experienced in a field, say family therapy or homelessness in the cities. Equally the potential to be imaginative can progress through many related transformations arising out of one's experiences, as expressed for instance in the work of novelists. We could talk about levels and depths of experience and imagination. There is the level of the beginner in chess and that of the grand master. The level of experience and imaginative development attained becomes the starting point for the next level of questioning.

Experience or imaginative evocation are necessary for questioning, but not sufficient. They are necessary because if they do not exist the questioning cannot get started. But they are not sufficient as they may exist but other factors, such as fear or prejudice, a need to be more attentive, more open, might block the process. The behaviour of a loved one or a friend might be unambiguous in its implications yet one might not want to believe that there might be a question there to be faced. Everyone has their own question agenda and that will be a factor in determining what experiences they will attend to questioningly. A full explanation of the causes of questioning is a vast undertaking. None the less it will be our contention that without appropriate experiences or developed imaginative contexts the questioning cannot happen. In this sense it is a partial and necessary cause.

That human wonder and related questioning are directly and immediately related to experience, and imaginative presentations might strike some as obvious. Still such recognition is one thing, understanding the precise nature of the interaction, the causal structures, is quite another. For what is involved here is the nature of the relation between the physical and the mental or spiritual and that is puzzling, even mysterious. None the less there is the fact that much education, with its emphasis on conceptual analysis, on critical thinking and on logical consistency, can educate us out of our senses and imagination. I would wish to make clear that I am no opponent of analysis and critical thinking. The present reflections are to be seen as complementing such methodologies. But I would strongly argue that one cannot enter into a question purely on the linguistic level, on the level of familiarity with the words which express it and their conceptual web. The more deeply we enter into a question the more deeply must we enter both into the related experiences, imaginative contexts and linguistic web. Collingwood holds that all questions find their resolution in words.¹¹ Out of developed experiences and imaginative contexts, new language and discourse emerges through the operation of the questioning activity. It follows that to explore the nature of the link and causation between experience and questioning is to study a central element in the link between experience

The Questioning Imagination

and language, between the physical and the mental, the point of intersection of the timeless with time.

III

Much traditional Western thought has regarded questioning as an active operation. It is considered as bordering on a form of interrogation, of interrogating our world. This was underlined by Aristotle who divided the intellect into an active and a passive or receptive element.¹² The active, which became known as the agent intellect, can be identified with human questioning. As active it could be understood to operate on the world. The receptive element, the possible intellect, was the understanding which in contrast with almost everything which has been said since Descartes, received something, forms or relations, from the world. It was acted on by the world. The active nature of questioning was underlined by Augustine and Aquinas' intellectualism and modern science since the Renaissance. As Bacon put it, science is a matter of putting nature to the question. The modern view would surely be that experience is passive in the face of the question. The educational role is simply to develop questioning skills, largely linguistic or verbal, and then play out the hand in different situations which have to be questioned. In science we interrogate the data. In history we cross-question our sources and witnesses. In biography we interrogate the subjects in order to make them confess their secret. Questioning is very much something we do. It is active. The world is its patient. As questioners we are in control of the situation. Philosophy, through its explorations of wonder and questioning, ought to enforce the control.

That questioning is significantly an active process is beyond dispute. But is that the whole of the truth? When the relation between questioning and the imagination is explored the issue arises, is questioning in its origins, beginnings, active or receptive in relation to what it is the imagination or experience presents? I am thinking here of the role of the data which the imagination presents in the business of starting or sparking off a question. Central in the sparking off of questions can be the experience of anomalies. In the Conan Doyle story, *Silver Blaze*¹³ the fact that the owner's dog did not bark during the robbery of the racehorse and that three of the sheep had gone lame were significant anomalies. There are the various anomalies which so fascinated Richard Feynman.¹⁴ When, as a small child, he pulled a wagon along with a ball in it he noticed that the ball moved to the back. When he stopped it the ball rolled to the front. Why is this so he asked? His father replied that inertia was a puzzle. Throughout his life grappling with profound technical problems in physics Feynman came to affirm that the thing that doesn't fit is the most interesting.¹⁵ Do such anomalies act on us or us on them? The suggestion will be that although questioning might be active in

The Questioning Imagination

aspects of its unfolding, in its origins it might be passive, receptive. Those passive moments could be repeated from time to time as the questioning deepened within an inquiry.

Fred Frank made the discovery that very many people could not draw because they could not see.¹⁶ Once they had learned to see, properly to look at shapes, then they could draw them. The same point can be true about teaching mathematics, in particular geometry. Students, it could be suggested, do not properly raise the questions because they do not see the related spatial shapes. Early education in geometry can begin with terms and definitions - point, line, plane and so forth - and move on to prove various theorems, in the course of which diagrams are employed. Circles, triangles, ellipses, parabolas, and so forth are named and defined. The naming and defining, especially in Cartesian geometry where one defines a circle in terms of an equation, can lead to a neglect of attention to the spatial shapes. Now it is my contention that if one becomes aware of the details of the contours of the spatial shapes, allows one's eyes to contemplate and follow their outline, especially of unfamiliar geometrical shapes, eventually the shape will pose the question - what is the point of this shape? What is the point of uniform roundness, of triangularity, of ellipticality? So the image of the circle, far from being a shape about which one has to learn something off by heart becomes a datum which questions one, what is the point about this shape? Do the shapes put the question to us or do we put the question to the shapes? Understanding the origins of questioning in experience and the imagination will require that we live in and own our senses and imagination more than is normal.

One of the problems here is that education in many instances rushes into the words which express the question before the student has focused on the point of the experiences, the point that gives meaning to the question as framed in words. Questions which ask for a why or for a definition or law are focusing on a point in the given data. Questions such as - why is this a circle rather than a helix, what is the definition or law or relational nature of a parabola - as questions derive their meaning from some point in spatial shapes. The same holds true for fields other than geometry. There is then an attentiveness to experience and imaginative contexts in general whose product is questioning and the eventual framing of the questions in words. But before the question became framed in words it existed in a relationship of puzzlement about the point of an experience. Education ought to cultivate that pre-verbal attitude. It should allow students to discover how the meaning of questions which are verbally framed is given initially in the experiences.

A system such as Euclid had its origins in an interplay between the spatial imagination and questioning. But the questioning power goes beyond the imagination in that it frames what it is looking for, answers, in language, in

The Questioning Imagination

definitions and propositions. In time language use itself can become a virtual image, the source of further and deeper questions. So the operational and linguistic images that arise on the level of doing arithmetic, adding and subtracting specific quantities etc., constitute the source of a further question which finds its answer in the basic laws of algebra: $axb = bxa$, etc. The image of doing arithmetic stands to the questions and rules of algebra as the image of uniform roundness stands to the question and definition of the circle as the locus of coplanar points equidistant from a fixed surface. As arithmetic and algebra develop the virtual image expands and generates a further question which finds its resolution in the basic propositions of group theory.

This interplay between image, question, and system repeats itself at all levels in mathematics. Students ought to be allowed to experience how imaginative experiences on one level give rise to the questions which find answers on another level. But if the evocative role of the image is missed then the different levels of development or stages in mathematics can appear to be so many isolated and unconnected language games. Only if the lower level images are seen as the source of the questions which give rise to the higher level systems will the thread of development which throws up a linked series of language games be mastered.

Biography is a further field which opens up the active and passive interplay of questioning and the imagination. Whether the biographer seeks out the subject or the subject the biographer is an interesting question. Once the decision has been made to embark on the research the questioning as active directs an enormous amount of research activity. But consider the moment when the biographer has completed all his or her research into the events in the life. Assume for the moment that they have become very familiar with all the various details but have not yet started to write the story. The point now becomes simply, does the biographer put the 'story question' to the events, or do the events put the 'story question' to the biographer? Do we interrogate the events or does the dynamic image that is contained in the sequence of events in the life put the story line question, the question about plot, to us? I would like to suggest that the greater the ability of the biographer to become contemplative in the presence of the sources, to dismantle his or her questioning ego and let the sources themselves pose the question about the life story and plot, the more will the biographer enter into the life in depth and capture its meaning. The alternative is to allow one's questioning ego to get in the way of things, as a result of which one ends up writing how one decides the life story ought to be rather than allowing it to disclose itself.

A good deal of philosophy of mind takes place on the verbal level. One asks: what is the meaning of thinking, understanding, judging, asserting? In response one attends to the philosophical grammar of the words. The peculiar

The Questioning Imagination

grammar mirrors the peculiar concepts. Still the fact remains that what the words, insight or understanding, refer to is not more words, but an experience. What experience do they refer to, something inner and private and indescribable? Or do they evoke the image of the ideal detective, the scientist in discovery, the crossword puzzle solver, the computer guru, the smart investor, the sensitive counsellor? What images and experiences does one associate with the failure to be insightful and understanding in life?

In life situations one image of understanding is the emergence of the ability to be able to go on with things, to be able to speak where before one was unable to do so. Understanding makes the difference between being blocked and being able to go on. So it is through correct understanding that counsellors or lawyers or doctors understand what to do in a particular human situation. The same is true of computer users and programmers, taxi drivers, technicians, financiers, politicians. Before one has had a more or less correct insight the situation is dark and how to handle it a mystery. Once the insight has emerged then there is effectively no problem and what has to be done is transparent. It can be said, articulated, communicated. The question about the nature of human understanding has its source and origin, not in books and analysis and criticism, but in experiences like these. Unless, on some occasion, such an experience stands out as puzzling and in some way makes an impact on us we might engage in a language game about human understanding, but the question would have no experiential roots or foundations. The deeper we enter into the experiential context the better will be the question.

What is true about the word understanding or insight is also true about the term, self. Precisely what images or experiences does the word suggest? It is a term that can be used in an existential context with an emphasis on freedom and decision making. But a fuller context for the word is the experience and image of all the powers of human consciousness, of which understanding or insight is one. So behind talk about selves is the human experience of a set of powers that are conscious, the senses, imagination, wonder and questioning, understanding, conceptualizing, thinking, all the way up to profound existential decisions about our ultimate concerns. Much philosophical analysis of conscious powers, because of a hesitation about the label of a certain kind of behaviourism, has tended to neglect the imaginative and behaviouristic counterpart of the powers it investigates.

As there are the powers of the self so also there is the question of the identity of the self through time. There are many studies of self identity in time among philosophers, notably those Strawson, Shoemaker and Williams.¹⁷ That the imaginative context of autobiography might be an appropriate background and starting point for the question does not seem a strong theme in their writings. Morris and Weintraub, on the other hand, who specialize in

The Questioning Imagination

autobiography, maintain that that field has a significant contribution to make to the problem of self identity.¹⁸ Morris and Weintraub generate basic narrative images in time which give a certain meaning to the philosophical question and discourse. The imaginative context within which Weintraub and Morris use the term self is significantly different from that of Strawson, Shoemaker and Williams. Those different imaginative contexts determine the types of questions that will emerge. If the images are impoverished then so also is the questioning and analysis. Again there is a suggestion that if the appropriate imaginative source of the question is eliminated the research will wither away. This is also particularly true in philosophical thought about intersubjectivity. Reading drama can open up the imaginative starting point.

Further illustrations could be generated from the field of cosmology and religion. There is a suggestion in Aquinas and others that the universe as a whole constitutes the most perfect likeness or image of God.¹⁹ From Genesis we learn that the human person is the most compact likeness of God. It follows that the better our imaginative awareness of the universe or of the structure of the human mystery the better will be our wonder about God. The less developed is our cosmic or our human imagination the more impoverished will our explorations be. But there is a difference here in the role of the image. Normally its role is to promote knowledge, to arrive at understanding, to eliminate the unknown. But as Karl Rahner suggests, God is in a sense unknowable.²⁰ It follows that the role of the image in that situation is to underline and affirm mystery, the unknowable, not to promote knowledge of it.

Human questioning, though distinct from the experiencing and imagination in that it anticipates new language, is directly and immediately related to what we sense and imagine. This relation holds at all levels of experience, all developed imaginative contexts, all levels of questioning and of its growth. If at a certain point sensitivity to a wider field of experiences or an enlarged imaginative context ceases to expand the questioning will stagnate. It follows that the available images and experiences which an individual or a group have at their disposal and which they control, consciously or unconsciously, determine the possible questions they might raise.

The major focus so far has been on the role of experience and the imagination in starting off, in sparking questioning and questions. But that is only one element or level in the relation between the two. For once the questioning starts then it seems to work quite actively with images in somewhat the same way as an artist, inspired by an aesthetic experience, works with his materials. Lonergan puts it:

Sense is only the materia causae of our knowledge. The object of understanding is supplied and offered to us, as it were materially, by the

The Questioning Imagination

imagination; formally, as object of understanding, it is completed by intellectual light. Perhaps, agent intellect is to be given the function of the subconscious effect of ordering the phantasm to bring about the right schematic image that releases the flash of understanding; for agent intellect is to phantasm, as art is to artificial products.²¹

That active manipulation of the imagination in the movement towards the right schematic image for insight by wonder occurs both on a conscious and on a depth level, where the term depth is being used strictly in the sense of Progoff.²² For him it is at the depth level that the next chapter of our conscious living is taking shape in a twilight way. Like the development of the acorn, those depth processes know where they are trying to grow to.

On a conscious level Feynman played with the image of a rotating and wobbling plate on which was inscribed a blue Cornell University sign.²³ There was some relation between the rapidity of the wobble and the rotation of the blue sign. Without in any sense being aware of it at the time his playfulness prepared him for the solution, later, of a not unrelated problem in electron spin for which he won the Nobel prize. A classical example of the depth process would be Kekule's discovery of the structure of Benzene.²⁴ Working consciously on the problem got him nowhere. So he relaxed by the fire and dreamed. In his dream a serpent began to twist and wriggle. Eventually it circled around on itself and grabbed its tail. With a start he woke up recognising that the solution was not a linear molecule, but rather a ring. The precise nature of that depth manipulation of the imagination by wonder needs much further study. Its goal is to generate the right image which makes the solution to the problem transparent. As the story of the discovery of the double helix in DNA illustrates, once you get the right image then the solution apprehended by insight becomes quite transparent.²⁵

A first moment in the relation between questioning and the imagination is in origins. A second is in active manipulation, a third in getting the image right for the emergence of an insight. On this level a tentative solution is put forward in words. A fourth exists in the manner in which the imagination is used critically to confirm or refute a possible answer to one's question. As the imagination plays a crucial role in the movement towards understanding, so also does it play a similar role in the criticism of possible insights, in identifying further unanswered questions? If it is not allowed its proper role the criticism will be impoverished.²⁶ As there is a role of the imagination in coming to a judgment of cognitive fact, so also is there a use of the imagination in arriving at an ethical decision. A final relation exists in the way in which images are used to communicate to others what one has understood, judged, decided.

The Questioning Imagination

The present essays deals largely with the first relation. The iconic imagination has informed us that as well as looking at pictures actively, there is a sense in which the picture can put the question to us.²⁷ Equally the present suggestion is that the 'interrogation' notion of wonder is not the whole truth. Wonder in some of its aspects seems to be passive in relation to the world, the patient of experience. In other aspects it would seem to be active in relation to the world. The suggestion is that there is a significant sense in which the world, reality, the human situation, or whatever, puts its question to us. It seems recurrently to break through our linguistic and interrogative web. The metaphysical implications of this position need to be worked out.

At each level experience and the imagination is the bedrock of human questioning. Deepening of the questioning involves entering into a deeper relation with experience and the imagination. Educators have the task of building up that context in order to lead students to the questions. It is the foundation on which formalized questions, systems of answers and the whole methodology of critical thinking, logic and dialectic, stands. Education which glosses over this intimate link between questioning and experience will rest on inadequate foundations. The implications for ontology or metaphysics are enormous. If one holds that questioning is a personal and autonomous activity whose business is to interrogate the world, then the criteria for reality are internal and everyone will develop their own. The meaning of questions need not necessarily contain any external reference to the world. We decide on the meanings in our own minds or internally within language. On the other hand, if in its origins questioning is passive in relation to the world, then reality puts the questions to us. The meaning of the questions and related language is then directly derived from the meaning of the world. A fundamental task of metaphysics or ontology will be to explore how questions derive their meaning from the world.

IV

Recurrently, at significant moments in our lives and their creative relations and projects, at the end of a chapter or prompted by an ultimate situation,²⁸ the question is provoked spontaneously, where is my life trying to go next? Usually it arises out of changes in personal relations, work projects, bodyliness as we undergo the ageing process, changes in social loyalties or a changing sense of meaning in our lives as a whole. Questions about adjustment occur, for instance, when the children leave home or when an illness or accident calls for a radical change of work patterns, or when the moment to retire formally from work arrives. Personal relations or our creative works can reach significant growth or breakdown points through which we have to navigate our way. Each of these situations, to the extent that it calls for adjustments in our present life style, can be viewed as a threat or as an

The Questioning Imagination

opportunity. We may make efforts to avoid or ignore or suppress the emerging situations and their questions up to a point, but in the longer term we do so at our peril.

Progoff's journal technique was developed, among other things, for working and dealing creatively with such situations and moments. Central in the process of allowing the question to open up and flower is our self-image, self-understanding and related dream and its project. For, whether we understand it or not, the self-image with which we operate can radically control the process. From our family or elsewhere we could have inherited the image of ourselves as hero, master, scapegoat, invisible, mascot, or whatever. We could remain consciously or unconsciously imprisoned in it, or have grown out of it. As in the other cases discussed, so here the imaginative context controls the way the question emerges. One of the helpful things about Progoff's methodology is that it is concerned with improving that imaginative context.

That self-image and understanding could be limited consciously to our immediately present sense of self, excluding the element of personal history. Then immediate and usually pragmatic criteria will be brought into play in dealing with life's questions despite the efforts of dreams, sometimes, to bring us back to times in our past to get our bearing. Protecting our self-image will be high on the list of criteria. On the other hand, it could come from a sense of our self that is present in our whole unfolding personal history and our ownership of it. One way to build up such a self-image is to write down the Steppingstone events, the roots through which our lives unfold and, through a meditation on the list, let the self-image contained in them emerge.²⁹ Usually we find that that self-image can be at odds with our more immediate sense of ourselves. Trying to become attuned to the direction that is unfolding in one's life is something like trying to tune into the plot of a detective story. If you come in in the middle and try and pick up the pieces from there without reference to the past the problem becomes intractable. On the other hand, if you remember the key moments involved from the beginning, then you can begin to pick up a sense of the key structural features in the plot, even though one does not know how it is going to end. The same I believe to be true about one's unfolding life.

The challenges of a particular relationship and problems of adjustment within it can give rise to the question, where is this personal relation trying to go next? It could be dealt with within the present immediate experiences of that relationship alone or expanded to include some sense of its story within the life. A wider imaginative context could be established by considering it also within the framework of the total significant cast of persons that have made up the life so far. Writing down the list of the names of the cast so far, the aggregate of persons who have significantly shaped the meaning of the life,

The Questioning Imagination

is a basic exercise in coming to know one's present context. Within that cast each significant personal relation has some point and creates and contributes to the meaning of the life. Developing a sense of the image of the cast of one's life and of the point of each significant person in it could greatly modify the manner in which one might respond to the questions posed by a particular present personal issue. The question might come out quite differently from the viewpoint of the total canvas of relations. The better the image, the better the related question.

A problem of adjustment within the works which are important in one's life or in the growth processes in one's body could equally provoke the question. The same point applies in each instance. It can be approached and mastered from the imaginative context of the present alone. Or the image can be enlarged to include the thread of the story of the works in one's life, or of the growth and development, ageing etc., of one's body. Needless to say this meets with more than a little resistance. But without the most appropriate image can the present question be dealt with in any truthful manner?

For Progoff consciousness is like a seed that unfolds, effectively a story seed. He quotes Eckhart to the effect that pear seeds grow into pear trees but God seeds, the human psyche, grow into God.³⁰ In a sense the psyche, like the acorn, knows where it is trying to grow within the field of the cast and works of a life. But we, the subjects of consciousness, are not necessarily in touch with the growth processes that are taking place on a depth level. To the extent, and it will always be partial, that a person is in touch with the direction that is trying to unfold in their lives as conscious, that person is attuned. Such attunement, which involves being in touch with inclinations towards both good and evil in oneself, with inner discord as well as with the thread of one's personal history, is a form of personal appropriation.

Now as the sense of one's personal history enlarges and develops, through journal keeping or in related ways, out of that developing imaginative context the question arises, what is the role and significance of questioning itself within the unfolding life? How does it fit in, match, develop with and accommodate the growth process that gives rise to the overall story? It is a question that does not arise in classical thought with its emphasis on mental attributes as faculties. But as Progoff's story seed image enlarges our sense of consciousness through time it also provides a more adequate image of the proper stage on which the questioning activity itself arises, that of the life story. For now questioning is to be apprehended, not as a faculty or a disposition, but rather as an element, and possibly a core element, in the seed process itself, the unfolding of consciousness in time. The fact that much psychotherapy involves recovering and working through repressed experiences and their related questions, would seem to support the suggestion. Wonder, the source of

The Questioning Imagination

questioning and questions, could in turn also be a kind of story seed, the seed of an intellectual quest to make sense of experiences within the life as a whole. It does not run parallel with the processes of our personal relations, works and body, but rather operates within them. Every significant turn in our personal relations poses questions. The same is true for the development of our work and the growth of our bodies. How within our story we respond or not to those questions can to a large extent determine how we act out the next chapter.

It follows therefore, that just as we can attempt to go over in memory the cast and plot of our personal relations in our lives so far, so also for our wonder and its expression in questioning and questions arising from developments within our lives as a whole. The discovery will be that each of us has a question history that unfolds spontaneously within our lives. In relation to it there will be teachers, mentors, wisdom figures, works we have read, persons we have consulted for guidance. So if initially we can consider the relation between questioning, experience, and the imagination in relation to particular issues in our lives, ultimately the issue can be widened to consider its place and relation within the total life.

Finally, just as the journal process can invite us to take responsibility for our lives as a whole in a deeper way as we get more and more in touch with the plot of the story, so also for questioning itself. As we come to understand our question history within our lives, so within it we come to understand the questions that have sought us out in our lives and for which we ourselves are uniquely responsible.

Footnotes

1. The story is reprinted in The Red Petticoat, Dublin: Moytura, 1955.
2. J. Campbell with B. Moyers, The Power of Myth, New York: Doubleday, 1988.
3. Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird, London: Pan Books, 1974.
4. Lee (n.3) 14.
5. Lee (n.3) 19.
6. Lee (n.3) 80.
7. For the text consult Prince Bluebeard's Castle, Market Drayton: Tern, 1979.
8. See J. Welch, Spiritual Pilgrims, Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila, New York: Paulist Press, 1982 for an analysis of the castle symbolism which Jung maintains is a mandala.
9. J. Miller, 'Wonder as Hinge', International Philosophical

The Questioning Imagination

- Quarterly, 29(1989), 53-66.
10. See pps 3-4 of his 'Autobiographical Fragments', in P.A. Schilpp, ed., The Philosophy of Martin Buber, Illinois and London: Open Court, 1967.
 11. R.G. Collingwood, An Autobiography , London: O.U.P., 1939
 12. De Anima, Book III, Chapter 5, 430a, 10f.
 13. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, The Complete Sherlock Holmes Short Stories, London 1928, 1971, 305-333, especially 326-7.
 14. R. Feynman 'The Pleasure of Finding Things Out', The Listener, London, 26th November 1981, 635-6.
 15. Feynman, (n.14)
 16. F. Franck, The Zen of Seeing, Seeing/Drawing as Meditation, New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1973 .
 17. S. Shoemaker, Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity, Ithaca and London; Cornell University Press, 1963; R. Strawson, Individuals; An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics, London: Methuen, 1959; B. Williams, Problems of the Self, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.
 18. K. Weintraub, Value of the Individual, Self and Circumstance in Autobiography , Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978; J. Morris, Versions of the Self: Studies in English Autobiography from John Bunyan to John Stuart Mill, New York: Basic Books 1966.
 19. Summa Contra Gentiles, New York: Doubleday, 1955, Book I, Chapter 85, paragraph 3. See also Chapter 78, paragraph 4.
 20. See his 'The Hiddenness of God', published in Theological Investigations, Volume 16, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979.
 21. B. Lonergan, Verbum, Word and Idea in Aquinas, D. Burrell, ed., London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1968, 81.
 22. I. Progoff, The Dynamics of Hope, New York: Dialogue House, 1985, 12-13 and all of part I. In his Depth Psychology and Modern Man, New York: Mc Graw Hill Paperbacks, 1959, Chapters 8 and 9 there is the seed of an analysis of the depth dimension of discovery.
 23. Feynman (n.14) 635.
 24. D.L. Hurd and J.J. Kipling (Eds) Origins and Growth of Physical Science, Volume 2 , Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964, 124 for his account of the discovery. See Progoff, Depth Psychology and Modern Man, Chapter 9 for a discussion of the depth dimension.
 25. J. Watson, The Double Helix, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968,

The Questioning Imagination

141-155 on the manipulation of images towards the one in which the solution becomes transparent. The non scientist can be familiar with the images and be ignorant of the set of relations which are apprehended in them through insight.

26. See Lambert, Tansey and Going, eds, Caring About Meaning, Patterns in the Life of Bernard Lonergan, Montreal: Thomas More Institute Papers 1982, p19 where he remarks: 'In "Finality, Love and Marriage" I have a vertical finality. The unconscious is the start of that; it is the source of relevant images. And images are the source of your insights. When you are making a judgment, you get contrary instances tossed up, and your conscience (that top level of consciousness) is a peaceful or troubled or uneasy conscience, and your subconscious is playing there, and perhaps scrupulosity'.
27. See M.P. Hedderman, 'Cinema and the Icon,' in M.P. Hederman and R. Kearney, eds, The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies, Volume 8, no 2, Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1984, 90-99, especially 95. I am indebted to Laurie McRobert for drawing my attention to the iconic imagination.
28. K. Jaspers, Ways to Wisdom, Yale: New Haven, 1954, Chapter 2.
29. I. Progoff, Life Study, New York: Dialogue House, 1983, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 for illustrations of Steppingstones. Chapter 13 entitled 'Nine Questions for a Life/Time Unit' is also helpful background reading for the present considerations.
30. Progoff (n.29) 24-5.