PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWLEDGE

Good Shepherd College, Fatima

INTRODUCTION

I want to lead you to discover for yourselves the philosophy of knowledge. You will have to do a series of exercises which I am going to set for you.

Some of these can be found among the 24 readings which I have just distributed, and which are identified and given a number on the first page ("CR UF 1"). Some of these consist of only one page, others of a number of pages stapled together, but in each case the identifying number can be found in a square drawn on the top right hand corner of the front page of each reading as distributed.

In case you want to find immediately the position to which I hope to lead you, then you can read packet 14, "Rediscovering Philosophies through Cognitional models", and perhaps go on to packets 12, 11, and then 8. If you do not grasp the point of these at first reading do not worry, but you can worry if you still do not grasp the point after you have gone through the other exercises that I am going to set.

I don't demand that you read any of those four articles yet, but I would like each of you to read packet 9, written by Chesterton, as soon as possible.

And when reading it try to answer some of the nine questions, which I call a method of "Textual analysis". These are given on the back of that front index page, CR UF 1.

We will discuss this reading in our second class on Wednesday, because I hold that Chesterton, in talking about the secret of his fictional detective Father Brown and his fictional criminal Flambeau, is giving us the very secret of knowledge and the answer to the most pressing philosophical questions about knowledge.

FIRST EXERCISE

1. *Suggest some possible answers to the question: What am I?* .... (Don't worry too much at present about getting the answer right.)

1.1 *What questions can I ask about any of these answers?*

What does it mean?
Why do you do it?
What is the source of that power?
How can we do it?
How am I sure that I am that sort of thing?

1.2 *Where do the answers come from?*
1.3 *How can I know that you can ask questions?*
1.4 *How many questions can I ask?*

SECOND EXERCISE

Our first exercise was in answer to the teacher s question, *what am I?*. Members of the class suggested about fifteen answers.

2. *What was the source of those answers*

THIRD EXERCISE

3. *Show that you too can ask questions.*
3.1 *How many questions can I ask?*

Members of the class have asked about twenty questions,and we have them before us on the blackboard.

FOURTH EXERCISE

4. *What similarities can we find in those questions?*
4.1 *How can we classify questions?*

(HINT: What words showed that there was a question at all?)

4.2 *What sort of answer would be appropriate in the case of each of the questions that has been raised?*

(HINT: Start by considering differences in the length of the answer required.)

4.21 *Which of those questions seem to demand a very short answer?*

4.22 *Which would normally require a rather longer answer?*

4.23 *Which questions can best be answered by gestures rather than by words?*

4.231 *What name do we give to a particular type of word that can take the place of such gestures and that gives enormous flexibility to answers to the sort of question concerned?*

(HINT: Though this is quite a straightforward question, it might also be considered a trick question, as in a sort of way it contains its own answer.)

4.24 *Are there some questions whose answer depends on the person concerned?*

4.3 *Can I ask a question?*

4.31 *What was special about that question?*

4.311 *Was it a legitimate question with a genuine answer?*

FIFTH EXERCISE

For some questions the appropriate answer is just Yes or No.

5 *What alternatives are there to answering Yes or No?*

5.01 *Are you a student?*

Are you a bishop?

5.03 *Is it going to rain tomorrow?*

5.1 *Are these alternatives to Yes or No genuine answers?*

5.11 *If not, how could we describe them?*

5.12 *Do we have many ways of giving tentative answers, instead of definitive answers?*

5.121 *What does this fact show about the power of a simple Yes and a simple No?*

SIXTH EXERCISE

6 *What new answer can I now give to the question, What am I? when I reflect on what we have been doing in exercises 3,4 and 5?*

6.1 *When you want to ask a question in class you put your hand up. Do you formulate all the words of your question then, or do you sometimes wait until the teacher accepts your request to speak?*

6.11 *If you don't have the words ready, what do you have?*

6.12 *Do words such as inquiry, wonder, a desire to learn, signify something prior to the formulation of a question, something that prompts us to ask the question?*

6.2 *Are you an inquirer?*

6.21 *Are you a wonderer?*

6.22 *Is this something quite important that should enter into an answer to the question, What am I?*

SEVENTH EXERCISE

7 *Can we correlate the distinctions of types of questions that we arrive at by considering the various question-words and by considering the types of appropriate answers to questions?*

EIGHTH EXERCISE

8 How do people who speak the language of your own village indicate that they are asking a question?

8.1 Do you have question-words in your own language?

8.2 Do you change the order of the words when asking a question?

8.3 Do you change the tone of your voice to ask a question?

8.4 Can you recognize in your language the distinctions between the four types of question that we have arrived at in class?