Shades of Experience

A Manual for Life

Jesse Yoder

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Duonyms
Flow Research
27 Water Street
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This book is dedicated to Belinda Burum.

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Preface

This book represents the results of more than 30 years of research. I first became interested in philosophy in 1969 as a freshman at the University of Maryland. While I began by studying political philosophy, I decided early on to make philosophy of mind my central area of interest in philosophy. The discussion of rules in Chapter Three goes back to my college honors thesis on the nature of rules. I chose this topic in an effort to clarify the private language argument. I developed some of the ideas in this book while a graduate fellow at Rockefeller University from 1973-1975. I am indebted to Donald Davidson in particular for tutorial discussions in philosophy of mind and anomalous monism.

I developed other ideas while writing my PhD dissertation on the mind-body problem. My philosophy, called viewpoint pluralism, states that there are indefinitely many points of view of any subject or object. I developed viewpoint pluralism in part as a generalization of Donald Davidson's argument for conceptual dualism (see Chapter Three of my PhD dissertation entitled A New Perspective on the Mind-Body Problem, 1984, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan). When we take a new point of view, we may find that existing words are inadequate to express it and we may need new words.

The idea of that we may need more names for different shades of color occurred to me one Spring morning in 1986 as I was driving to my Introduction to Logic class at the University of Lowell. I was driving north of Boston on a road named 495, when I noticed that the trees to the right and left of the road had many different shades of green. At that point, I wondered how someone could pick out and identify all these different shades of green. I then realized that there may not be sufficient words in the English language to identify all these different shades of green. After thinking about this, I realized that the same argument could be applied to any color, and that this same

argument could apply to other areas of experience besides color. Thus was born the idea of "Shades of Experience."

Chapter One contains a statement of the philosophy of viewpoint pluralism. Even though there are some antecedents to this philosophy in the writings of other philosophers such as Leibniz, this is, to the best of my knowledge, a new philosophy. In this chapter, in addition to giving a statement of viewpoint pluralism, I have provided some of the practical applications of this philosophy. Many of the ideas in this chapter are drawn from my own personal experience.

I have based most of my life on viewpoint pluralism, and I have come to believe that this is a very exciting philosophy that can add a great deal of value to any life. I have used viewpoint pluralism in market research to approach the subject of research from many points of view. Much of the discussion in Chapter One is based on my own experiences in applying viewpoint pluralism. This includes the discussions of specialist vs. generalist, viewpoint integration, and connecting the dots. I hope that readers will find these ideas useful.

Chapter Two, which is entitled "From Conceptpoor to Experience-Rich," states the philosophical basis for the dictionary of duonyms that is contained in Chapter Three. I am hoping that, after reading this chapter, people will become more aware of the details of their experience. While I have found that some people object to being labeled "conceptpoor," this is not intended as a comment on them, but is rather a result of the nature of our language. At the same time, the chapter provides guidelines that anyone can follow to become "conceptrich" and "experience-rich." If have found that many people find this idea of being more conceptrich and experience-rich to be one they can readily adapt to their own lives.

Chapter Two also contains three rules of language that will, I believe, increase the descriptive power of language. While I am quite happy with what I call the "Twice as

Much" Rule and the "Duonym Rule," I have never found a completely satisfactory way to present the "Rule of Degree." This is the rule that, in effect, proposes that we incorporate into our language a rating system (e.g., from 1 to 10, or from 1 to 100) for words that admit of degree (e.g., 'hot,' 'cold,' 'happy,' 'beautiful,' etc.). Even though I am not completely satisfied with the method I have proposed of implementing this rule, I still think it is worthwhile to present the idea.

Some of the words contained in Chapter Three, "A Dictionary of English Duonyms", are already widely used, though they do not yet appear in more traditional dictionaries. Other words are proposed words that express a point of view that some people have and that is worthy of expression. Students in my philosophy and logic classes submitted some of these words. While there are many duonyms in the English language, I have tried to select some of the more interesting ones.

The discussion of self-integration in Chapter Four is the result of applying some of the philosophical ideas described in this book to personal experience. This discussion describes a path to personal integration that anyone can easily follow. I believe that anyone who follows the suggestions in this chapter will experience positive results that are similar to the ones I experienced.

The discussion of the definition of philosophy given in Chapter Five is an edited version of a paper I used in my philosophy courses over a period of ten years. I usually used this paper as a backdrop for a discussion of the idea of philosophy of life. In my philosophy classes, I usually gave as the first assignment to students to write out their own philosophy of life. This almost invariably proved to be one of the better-liked assignments of the semester. I have given some guidance in this chapter for anyone who wishes to determine or discover their own philosophy of life.

The discussion of philosophy of mind and the mind-body problem in Chapters Six and Seven represent my best attempt to explain the concept of mind, and of mind-body interaction. Even though I have been thinking about these issues off and on for over 35

years, I find that a final solution is still elusive. There is still a great deal of ongoing research into the nature of mind and brain, and I am hopeful that many of these philosophical issues will either be resolved or become clearer. These two chapters represent my best attempt at this time to explain these issues.

Chapter Eight contains a discussion of the idea that self-expression is the meaning of life. Self-expression as a philosophy came into vogue in the 1960s, but has not, to my knowledge, been discussed very much in philosophical circles. It does have some resemblance to earlier philosophical ideas, however, such as John Stuart Mill's conception of individuality. Even though the topic of the meaning of life is obviously a difficult one, I am hoping that some people will find this perspective a useful one.

Chapter Nine contains two poems that I wrote several years ago. These poems describe several important experiences in my life.

The Appendices contain some additional material that fit better at the end of the book than as standalone chapters. Appendix A contains a statement of circular geometry. I have discussed this and related ideas in the geometry forum at http://www.geometry-research@mathforum.com. A related issue discussed there is the idea that points have area, although this is not discussed in Appendix A. Appendix B contains an original proof that God exists. Appendix C lists the philosophy and logic students I taught over a period of ten years.

Many people have contributed to my understanding of philosophy. These include Peter Goldstone, Joel Feinberg, Harry Frankfurt, Donald Davidson, Saul Kripke, Gareth Matthews, Vere Chappell, and Cynthia Freeland, all of whom were excellent teachers.

The people who have contributed the most to the development of the ideas in this book are the students listed in Appendix D. Professor Gareth Matthews of the University of Massachusetts Amherst served as chair of my PhD dissertation committee, and has continued to provide helpful comments on my written work since I received my degree in

1984. Martha Bednarz has been a wonderful source of inspiration and support for many of the ideas expressed in this book, and I am grateful to her and to her husband Joe Levine for scanning the drawings in this book. I would like to thank my mother, Lois Yoder, and my father, Allen Yoder, for reading through an earlier version of this book and making some helpful suggestions on content. I am also grateful to my parents for their support over the years in helping me get a good education. Urbane Peachey helped inspire me by ordering a copy of my PhD dissertation and challenging me to explain my views on the mind-body problem. I am indebted to Mrs. Betty Hollander of Omega Engineering for her encouragement and assistance in getting this book published. Finally, I would like to thank Belinda Burum for her spiritual encouragement and enlightenment over the past 17 years.