

EXPRESSING THE INEXPRESSIBLE:
DON JUAN AND THE LIMITS OF FORMAL ANALYSIS

'it is no good asking what this mystery is apart from the endeavour itself'.

(I. A. Richards)

I

The ethnography I am going to discuss, Carlos Castaneda's A Separate Reality (1971), is the record of a confrontation between two very different ways of approaching the world. Don Juan, a Yaqui Indian from north western Mexico, is familiar with a 'world view' which appears unintelligible to us westerners. Castaneda, a young anthropologist from the University of California, found himself in the following sort of situation. Under don Juan's guidance and under the influence of a drug called 'the little smoke', he feels that he has changed into a crow; he even flies. Discussing this experience later, Castaneda asks, 'Did I really become a crow? I mean would anyone seeing me have thought I was an ordinary crow?' Don Juan replies, 'No. You can't think that way when dealing with the power of allies. Such questions make no sense, and yet to become a crow is the simplest of all matters.' (1969: 183).

This is startling enough, but the possibility of anthropology becomes even more problematic when we turn to the central activity of 'seeing'. Don Juan distinguishes 'seeing' from 'looking' (1971: 16). When we 'look' at the world we perceive and conceptualise what might be called the everyday world, but when we 'see' the world we notice a very different type of reality. Though the practitioner uses drugs he does not 'see' hallucinations. Instead, he 'sees' real things: 'Men look different when you 'see''. The little smoke will help you to 'see' men as fibers of light ... Fibers, like white cobwebs. Very fine threads that circulate from the head to the navel. Thus a man looks like an egg of circulating fibers. And his arms and legs are like luminous bristles, bursting out in all directions' (33).

Apart from describing 'seeing' in terms of what is 'seen', don Juan elaborates the distinction by opposing 'thinking' and 'understanding' on the one hand, and 'knowing' on the other. Just as he uses the word 'looking' in a way with which we westerners are familiar, so does he use the notions 'thinking' and 'understanding'. But 'knowing' functions analogously with 'seeing'; one can only 'know' when one is 'seeing'. 'Seeing' cannot be 'understood' (see p. 102, 107, 114, 313). Consequently, when don Juan spots Castaneda cogitating upon the nature of 'seeing' he chastises him: "You're thinking ... what 'seeing' would be like. You wanted me to describe it to you so you could begin to think about it, the way you do with everything else. In the case of 'seeing', however, thinking is not the issue at all, so I cannot tell you what it is like to 'see'".

Anthropology, then, comes face to face with an inexpressible ethnographic 'fact'. And it cannot be ignored, for a great many of don Juan's activities revolve around 'seeing'. What are we to

make of such a phenomenon? I want to argue that Castaneda's work presents anthropology as it is currently conceived with a fundamental challenge. Put very bluntly, is our 'anthropological semantic' up to the task of examining modes of constructing the world which taboo our proceeding as we are usually accustomed to do?

The best way to approach this issue is to regard anthropology as an 'additive' discipline. Butler's dictum - 'Everything is what it is and not another thing' - will hardly do as it stands, for it is impossible to make a clear distinction between what something is and how that same thing is to be identified and interpreted. Since interpretation has to be in terms of whatever schema is brought to bear on the subject matter under consideration, we cannot escape the fact that the universe is a relational affair; things are only things relative to other things. Thus all identification and interpretation necessarily involves an additive procedure. It is only when we can locate something within a general framework of ideas that we can say it is one thing and not another. The anthropologist does not trip over 'brute realities'.

So we are inevitably led to the central question of our discipline: what is the nature of the 'something' which we bring to bear on our subject matter? Developing a series of distinctions made by Ferre (1970), we can say that a system of 'mystical' beliefs can be approached in four ways: (a) strongly theory-dependent interpretation, when sociological or psychological theory is applied to say, for instance, that god is society or that ritual symbolises the social order, (b) weakly theory-dependent but ethnocentric interpretation when the aim is to criticise the beliefs by comparing them against the criteria governing science or common sense (this is how logical positivists or intellectualists approach religious beliefs), (c) the same, when the intention is not so much criticism as it is reinterpretation (Braithwaite, MacKinnon, Bultmann and to a lesser extent Leach all reinterpret religious discourse to emphasise what this discourse has in common with more general modes of thought), and (d) fideistic interpretations of such a kind that will 'preserve a faithful understanding of its own mysterious topic' (Ramsey 1964: 44).

Thus the anthropologist has four options; he can add four schema, comprising scientific theories, the model of scientific discourse, the model of more familiar ways of facing the world, and a model which is somehow part and parcel of the reality under consideration. In its purest form the last solution is probably the most difficult to use (it is all too easy to say that language games are not distinct entities, etc), but all the other options are demonstrably wrong if the goal is the exegesis or recreation of semantic systems.

Applying this to don Juan, we can easily say how we should not proceed if we want to understand his system. Take Leach, who together with the other 'symbolists' (Beattie, Firth, Douglas) sometimes appears to confuse what ritual and myth mean for the participant with what might be called sociological meaning (1964:14). Whatever the case, it does not really further our understanding of don Juan's universe to be told, for instance, that the ambiguous nature of 'seeing' reflects the dispossessed nature of the people who hold this belief. No doubt this might be an interesting observation, but it presupposes an understanding of 'seeing', and is not really talking about participant meaning.

Even worse, take Spiro. As befits one who finds problems of meaning to be 'intellectually trivial' (1967:5), he attempts to refute the symbolists by employing a crude 'at face value' thesis. Referring to the Trobriand Islanders conception beliefs, he observes that 'in the absence of any evidence which indicates the contrary, it is gratuitous to assume that this cultural belief does not mean what it says so it would seem not unreasonable to assume that it enunciates a theory of conception' (1968:255). Bharati, who cites Spiro in this context, takes crude scientific ethnocentrism (our second type) so seriously as to claim 'we might be better off if we jettisoned symbol talk altogether in the investigation of religions that do not use 'symbol' emically - which means all religions except salon Judaeo-Christianity' (1971:262). So much for Nuer Religion, and so much for don Juan, unless we are to assume that he understands everything that he says in a literal and explanatory fashion.

These mistakes are typical of those who do not pay enough attention to conceptual matters. Even Godfrey Lienhardt, infinitely more subtle and fideistic than any of the anthropologists we have mentioned; runs into difficulties. He argues that our distinction between metaphorical and literal discourse cannot adequately be applied to characterise such Dinka assertions as 'Some men are lions' (1954:98, 99). So he applies the notion of analogy to describe this belief (106). We need only ask, in what sense is the notion 'analogy' somehow immune from the criticism's directed against 'metaphor'?

Let me now try to state what I take to be the best general way of interpreting don Juan's semantic universe. For various reasons, it seems to me that strong fideism is ill suited for the anthropologist. We have a duty to mediate between different ways of interpreting the world. We have an equally strong duty to grasp and recreate alien modes of expression. For the second reason we have to be fideistic. For the first, we have to be prepared to introduce distinctions and characterisations which the participants might not themselves use. Strong fideism, which does not allow this type of addition, is ruled out because what we want to understand has to be what we can understand. This, of course, is not to deny that we should make an effort to widen our frontiers of understanding to meet the alien. Indeed, it is precisely this operation which gives the type of anthropology of which I am speaking its great value.

Granted all this, where should we find our basis for interpretation? A basis which is faithful to the alien, and yet which is also intelligible to us. One of don Juan's crucial dicta, let us recall, is that reasoning cannot be applied to 'seeing'. Here we have a characteristic clash of language games. I say 'characteristic' because exactly the same clash frequently occurs within our own culture. Think of Blake's disparaging remark: 'I have always found that Angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise. This they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning'. Or think of Huxley's remark, 'we must preserve, and if necessary, intensify our ability to look at the world directly and not through that half-opaque medium of concepts, which distorts every given fact into the all too familiar likeness of some generic label or explanatory abstraction' (1954:59). Or think of Goethe's characterisation of the intellectual as the man who feels that 'what we perceive by eye is foreign to us as such

and need not impress us deeply'. But most of all, notice the Christian tradition. It is true that we do not find the same reliance on the indirect language of sight, and so are not reminded of don Juan in exactly the same way, but the clash is still with us. Christians have to speak and reason, yet a, if not the crucial dogma of their faith is that the nature of God cannot be expressed in thought. The controversy between those who follow the respective logics of analogy, obedience and encounter (see Ferré), who follow reason, faith and experience, replicates in broad outline aspects of the confrontation between don Juan and Castaneda.

Surely, we can conclude, here is an adequate basis for our interpretation. Philosophers of religion, often drawing on linguistic philosophy for their analytical tools, theologians, who help us by emphasising the necessary fideistic stance, and poets or thinkers ranging from Blake to Huxley and I. A. Richards, have all developed procedures, distinctions and insights which we can appeal to. How have Christians and poets expressed the inexpressible? How have theologians/philosophers of religion and literary critics given accounts of this phenomena? If we are to begin to know what to add to the other worlds of visionaries, mystics, religious communities and magical practitioners in other cultures, it is at this home-based translation-point that we must begin. Unless we can open our eyes within our own cultures, we cannot properly broaden our more strictly anthropological horizons.

Before trying to give these rather outspoken remarks some substance by referring back to don Juan and Castaneda, I should like to make one thing clear. Certain anthropologists, one suspects, might not feel inclined to engage in full scale conceptual analysis. They would probably admit to worrying about defining 'religion' or 'culture', but would appear to feel that examining how we classify our discourse (literal, factual, cognitive, informative, empirically true assertions/fictitious assertions/symbolic, expressive, meditative, imaginative assertions and hybrid forms such as quasi-factual utterances, performative discourse etc), and how we use certain words (belief, religious experience, truth etc), is irrelevant to the task of anthropology. They seem to imply - they ignore these topics - that fieldwork automatically makes the 'armchair' difficulties raised by such notions as 'metaphor', or 'law' irrelevant. Leaving aside the curious concern of such anthropologists with definitional problems (due, no doubt, to their scientism), we have only to recall that there are two sides to the coin of interpretation. Fieldwork should be done in the alien context and in the home environment; the armchair is a red herring.

But there is more to it than this. Having displaced the armchair from its original metaphorical home, we can now reinstate it in a different context. For the anthropologist interested in meaning much work can be done without immediate participation. Analogously, it makes little sense to apply the fieldwork/armchair distinction to those who have tried to interpret the Bible or the Sacred Books of the East. So although I have no first hand knowledge of Mexico, in what follows I shall be trying to demonstrate that much can be achieved by sitting down and thinking about how Castaneda, don Juan and others use their words.

II

Don Juan belongs to a community of like minded practitioners. He converses intelligibly with don Genaro in such a way that we have to suppose that they both 'know' about 'seeing' and can somehow follow what we might call the 'grammar' of this activity. But how can this be the case?

When don Juan comes to talk about the 'guardian' (an entity which belongs to the realm of 'seeing'), he is lead into contradictions: 'It had to be there and it had, at the same time, to be nothing'. The conversation continues,

C.C. 'How could that be, don Juan? What you say is absurd.'

D.J. 'It is. But that is 'seeing'. There is really no way to talk about it. 'Seeing', as I said before, is learned by 'seeing'" (1971:207).

Don Juan cannot talk about 'seeing' for at least two reasons. First, he believes that 'The world is such-and-such or so-and-so only because we tell ourselves that that is the way it is. If we stop telling ourselves that the world is so-and-so, the world will stop being so-and-so' (264). Since 'seeing' is concerned with the 'sheer mystery' (*ibid*) of the world, the practitioner must stop maintaining his everyday world by ceasing to think and talk. Secondly, an essential ingredient of 'seeing' is that the practitioner comes to realise it by himself. The 'warrior' or 'man of knowledge' is a man who applies 'will'.

Granted that 'seeing' has to be learnt by 'seeing', how can don Juan's tradition maintain itself? Where is the social aspect of 'seeing', the aspect which allows one practitioner to agree with another on the grammar of the activity? Or are we to say that the social collapses into a series of private experiences?

The best way to answer this question is by describing how don Juan attempts to teach Castaneda to 'see'. His basic technique is to destroy Castaneda's faith in the everyday world of things by introducing states of consciousness which render normal interpretation inapplicable. Castaneda has to take those drugs which are regarded as vital prerequisites for 'seeing'. And don Juan places him in ambiguous situations designed to create a feeling of otherness over and against the everyday world of understanding. For instance, as the two were driving through Mexico during the night, they noticed headlights following them down the lonely road. Don Juan interprets this by saying, 'Those are the lights on the head of death' (64). Castaneda experiences a thrill of the non-natural, turns round, but the lights have disappeared.

Having established these states of altered consciousness, don Juan directs Castaneda to certain patterns and interpretations. On one occasion Castaneda perceives don Juan's face as 'an incredibly fast flickering of something' (192). Even though Castaneda does not speak, don Juan appears to be aware of what is happening because he tells his apprentice to look away. Some hours after the experience, and after Castaneda has given his account, don Juan dismisses it: 'Big deal! ... You say a glow, big deal' (194).

Teaching, then, involves verbal instruction, interpretation, and the implicit assumption that don Juan 'knows' a great deal about what is going on in Castaneda's mind. From our point of view, things

are getting even more mysterious: the teaching of 'seeing' appears to involve the idea that the teacher can 'see' into the mind of his pupil (see esp. 204).

But let us stay with the role of words and thought. Although the following dialogue involves a rather odd guide (a lizard), it accurately summarizes the role of verbal instruction in the teaching process:

D.J. 'If the lizard had died while she was on your shoulder, after you had begun the sorcery, you would have had to go ahead with it, and that would truly have been madness.'

C.C. 'Why would it have been madness?'

'Because under such conditions nothing makes sense. You are alone without a guide, seeing terrifying, nonsensical things'.

'What do you mean by nonsensical things?'

'Things we see by ourselves. Things we see when we have no direction' (1969:165)

Without a guide to prepare Castaneda for his experiences, direct him through them and discuss them afterwards, the experiences remain of no value. Instead of filling in the nature of non-ordinary reality they merely jar the everyday world. In short, don Juan interprets and directs the experiences in terms of the criteria of a cultural tradition.

This said, the fact remains that the cultural body of beliefs are of a very curious variety. We can take for our example a notion which operates within the same grammar of things as 'seeing'. 'Will', says don Juan, cannot be talked about. But he then goes on to speak of it: 'There is no real way of telling how one uses it, except that the results of using the will are astounding' (1971: 178). We should remember that Wittgenstein's principle - 'the meaning of a word is its use in the language' - must involve a social context, ('forms of life'). Thus the meaning of 'will' cannot be fully understood except by seeing what is involved in the activity of 'willing'. Don Juan can speak of this. He can say what 'will' can do, which allows him to compare the notion with what such things as courage can do: unlike courage, 'will' 'has to do with astonishing feats that defy our common sense' (ibid.).

Besides giving us some idea of what 'will' is not and what 'will' can do, don Juan can also describe what we might call the 'anatomy' of the activity. The 'will' 'shoots out, like an arrow' from the abdominal area where the 'luminous fibers' are also attached (179).

We have already seen that don Juan can describe many aspects of non-ordinary reality, ranging from the 'fibers of light' to the 'guardian' which can be 'an awesome beast as high as the sky' (147). When we add the other things which don Juan can talk about; what the activities of 'willing' and 'seeing' are not, and what they entail, we realise the extent to which these activities are culturally defined and expressible. So are we to conclude that don Juan is breaking with his 'seeing is incompatible with talking' thesis?

I think not. First, don Juan says, 'unless you understand the ways of a man who knows, it is impossible to talk about ... seeing' (20). The implication here is that once one has 'seen'

one can talk about certain aspects of the activity. The incompatibility thesis is, however, retained: just as we cannot say what love or beauty are in themselves, so don Juan cannot talk about 'seeing' in itself. In these three cases the activities can only be described by appealing to accounts of external events and things. They cannot be got at in any directly internal way, except, of course, in the form of incommunicable experience. Furthermore, don Juan does not claim to be able to say very much about the essentially incomprehensible entities called 'Mescalito' and 'the allies' (114). But what of his talk about the 'external' events and states of affairs? The forms of life specifying the activities of 'seeing' and 'willing' are not 'external' or social in any normal sense. Mescalito might be 'seen' by several practitioners at the same moment of time, but the entity 'speaks' to people privately. The environmental changes which occur when one 'sees' are not publicly observable in the same way as the physical objects of everyday reality. Thus don Juan's talk about the nature of such phenomena is strongly qualified by the grammar of 'seeing'. The publishers of the paper-back edition of A Separate Reality fall into the trap of over-literalism: the cover shows things which can only be 'seen'.

But even if we say that these 'external' phenomena are spoken of in some sort of indirect or 'metaphorical' language, the fact remains that don Juan is talking about 'seeing'. It appears that if don Juan is not to be accused of being contradictory we must somehow reformulate his apparently literal use of words like 'thinking'. Since we do not understand 'seeing' this is an impossible task: unless we can oppose 'thinking' to some known factor, the term cannot be interpreted. All we can say is this: the distinction would appear to function polemically and heuristically. Castaneda has to be told to stop thinking for the same reasons that we might tell someone who is entering a concert with an intellectual problem on his mind that he must relax if he is to enjoy the music. And from the heuristic point of view don Juan has to be able to organise Castaneda's experiences. Another consideration is that if 'seeing' involves a totally alien mental world we are left with the following sorts of problems: psychologically speaking, is it likely that don Juan can stop thinking to quite the degree claimed?; what of the fact that when he is 'seeing' he continues to use words and engage in interpretation?; if we say that don Juan 'sees' without thinking and then returns from this state to report on some sort of 'memory' basis, what exactly is he remembering?; what sort of image is it which can afterwards give him the idea of 'white fiber'?; and even if we allow that it might somehow be possible to remember and conceptualise experiences which one did not think about at the time, how can a system of beliefs be established on the basis of a series of curious memory traces?

As I have said, without knowing what 'seeing' is about, these questions cannot be answered. But by applying our common-sense criteria of how a cultural tradition must work we can conclude that since 'seeing' is taught as a cultural event, the activity must be guided by a set of beliefs and ideas. This is born out by several remarks of don Juan's. Talking of 'controlled folly' (another activity of the 'seeing' type), he meets Castaneda's lack of understanding by saying, 'You don't understand me now because of your habit of thinking as you look and thinking as you think' (106). In other words, once you have experienced the activity, the insights which don Juan is trying to express will begin to make sense.

We are now in a position to characterise the logical grammar of don Juan's discourse about 'seeing', 'will', 'controlled folly' and all the associated entities. The activities themselves, together with Mescalito and the allies, are inexpressible because they are incomprehensible. Yet they have to be taught in the sense that even if they can only be fully realised from within, some directions must be received from the cultural tradition if communication is to be protected from subjectivity. But because teaching involves expressing the inexpressible, the cultural beliefs take a curious form. They contain elements of what theologians call the via negationis (viz, saying what is the case by broadening what is not the case), via eminentiae (although the use of analogy is limited, it is present) and the analogia gratiae (Mescalito does not reveal himself or 'speak to' everyone). Above all, the beliefs are best regarded as a series of clues and hints designed to articulate the existential grammar of non-ordinary reality. As Ramsay would put it, they do not picture reality. Instead, they disclose it in much the same way as the word 'wave' says something to the physicist (1957). Jaspers' term 'cipher' is useful in this context: a cipher is a word standing for something quite incomprehensible which yet gives us some way of approaching the mystery: 'The reality of transcendence is present for us objectively only in the language of the code or cipher, not as it is in itself' (1962 II:169).

Thus the hints, clues or ciphers have to be given some substance if they are to be fully understood. In don Juan's case this entails moving beyond the manifestly objective realm of public discourse into the separate reality itself. Logically, this existential domain of sheer activity, feeling and naked reality (see 1969:143) has to be construed as 'subjective', for this is the status of experience. But we have tried to show that by regarding much of don Juan's discourse as a series of ciphers it is possible both to say that the ciphers organise the separate reality and gain their full meaning from it. Referring to Ramsay again, the odd nature of don Juan's discourse reflects the nature of non-ordinary reality and so can illuminate its broad outlines. Once the disclosure has occurred and once, in some sense of the word, the non-ordinary reality is accepted, the penny can drop, the music can speak, even Mescalito can speak like music - not to mention the hot wind 'telling' extraordinary things to don Genaro (1971:300) - and meaning is imposed on the entire discourse.

The trouble with this account of how the tradition maintains itself is that it is easy to argue that we are being too faithful to don Juan. For in order to give an account of how this sector of his discourse operates we seem to have imputed an ontological reality to his separate reality. The best way I can show what I mean by this is to refer to another arch-fideist, D. Z. Phillips. He claims that the 'grammar of ... the reality of God' is such that 'To know God is to love Him. There is no theoretical understanding of the reality of God' (1967:66, 75). Phillips, of course, has to conclude, 'This is why understanding religion is incompatible with scepticism' (79) - the equation between knowing God and loving Him means that God can only be understood in terms of loving him. How can one love something (in any properly religious sense) which does not exist?

In much the same way, if 'seeing' and the discourse associated with it is taken as a cipher pointing to a reality which has to be disclosed by taking drugs, bearing the ciphers in mind, and obeying

certain instructions, we have to say that something determinate and objective is disclosed only if there really is a grammar of experience to be articulated. If we deny this, don Juan's discourse can make little sense for instead of teaching people to act in terms of a separate reality we would have to interpret him as a charlatan engaged in indoctrination. Either there is something there to be disclosed and realised, or don Juan is doing something other than what he says he is doing.

But if we say that Castaneda cannot 'see' because 'seeing' does not exist, how are we to account for the cultural tradition and the teaching process? These anthropologists who we have called 'symbolists' locate the rationale of ritual and myth in the social order. In this way they relocate the rhyme and reason which is missing at the surface level (expressive talk is notoriously alogical at this level) at a level which really does exist. But in so doing they cease to be fideists. If, on the other hand, we want to remain faithful to don Juan, we cannot do this; we cannot account for his tradition in this way. So we have to say that 'seeing' and 'non-ordinary reality' exists, and that it is this existential grammar or series of marks which governs the rhyme and reason of the expressive cultural beliefs. In any case, this is not merely a question of the pro's and con's of fideism: at mitote meetings the participants often agree about 'seen' things, particularly those which concern the presence of Mescalito. Castaneda rejects don Juan's explanation - involving 'seeing' - in favour of a sociological theory (covert leader, cues etc). He does not join the other participants when they take their peyote buttons, but his objectivity does him no good. For not only does he fail to spot any form of covert communication; he also fails by seeing Mescalito for himself (59-74). A feature of group psychology encouraged by hallucinogenic drugs and half-remembered beliefs? Perhaps, but when the grammar of 'seeing' works so explicitly, one begins to wonder. Even more forcibly, if we are to believe don Juan when he claims that words can be infused with true meaning, no two practitioners could mean the same thing, or communicate, unless they shared some sort of grammar. They would not be able to use their words properly (i.e. in terms of the tradition). Yet don Juan and don Genaro patently do not talk like madmen; like men with purely subjective grammars or no grammars at all. Their infused language is shared.

We are back to where we began, with the two 'men of knowledge' and the problem of an objective tradition meeting what some people might call subjective realms. I suspect that the most adequate answer to the question is that don Juan's tradition rests on a set of ciphers and a set of experiences. Both are equally indeterminate taken by themselves: the experiences could mean anything, and the beliefs are virtually meaningless. But when the two are conjoined, something happens. The drug/existential world becomes organised, the beliefs become correspondingly meaningful in some sort of expressive sense. There must be some sort of logic or grammar in this synthesis otherwise don Juan and the other practitioners would not be able to use their language correctly. Whether or not this grammar is ontologically real is, in a sense, beside the point: Phillips is talking about Christianity which involves faith, but don Juan's world and its grammar, is not religious in this sense. One has to accept it (as one might accept the challenge of climbing Mt. Everest), but once one has done this the interplay of drugs, instructions, beliefs and altered states of consciousness do their work. Outside a religious system stressing faith, this is the only

way that an inexpressible activity can be maintained. The activity of 'seeing' lies close to experience itself; drugs activate the experiential font, beliefs direct the process. But full verbal expression would miss the point.

III

Understanding don Juan, it seems, involves a degree of participant-observation which many anthropologists would find unacceptable. How many anthropologists of religion have been prepared to sacrifice their normal states of mind? In a normal 'faith' type religion these difficulties of retaining participant-observation do not arise - unless, of course, one is determined to follow arch fideists like Phillips, Concluding his Nuer Religion, Evans-Pritchard adopts the only reasonable stance for this 'faith' religion: the social and cultural forms which express the relationship between man and Kwoth are the dramatic representations of an interior state which we as anthropologists cannot grasp. Even though the Nuer cannot speak of this interior state which gives their religious discourse its full meaning, Evans-Pritchard is able to give a comprehensive semantic account of their beliefs and rituals. This is because the Nuer's imaginative constructions form a systematic whole and can be interpreted in terms of one another. The expressiveness of their discourse does not intrude upon its systematic nature. Or put another way, the grammar of Kwoth does not have to be grasped through active participation if the goal is limited to showing the rationale and nature of their symbolic talk. The Winchian approach suffices for this.

But does the same apply to don Juan's universe? 'Seeing' is not like Kwoth. The Nuer experience Kwoth but this does not govern their religious discourse in any direct sense. Their tradition is too systematic for that, and Kwoth is too unknowable to fundamentally constitute religious language usage (this is why we have characterised Nuer religion as a 'faith' religion). 'Seeing', however, is a directly experiential activity and contains its own internal grammar of discourse. Whereas in Nuer religion active experience adds full meaning, experience of 'seeing' adds both full meaning and the ability to use language correctly. This is where system is restored.

It follows that observation alone, in the sense of participating without imbibing, can tell us very little about don Juan's world in the context of 'seeing'. We cannot really understand the grammar of don Juan's discourse in the same way that we can understand Nuer religion, for this logic is so epiphenomenal to and expressive of 'seeing'. Because expression dominates and disrupts logical system, one cannot become a practitioner merely by learning the cultural items. (By practitioner I here mean someone who can use the language).

If this seems far fetched, consider the following example and think of the consequences for a Winchian type understanding. Don Juan is talking about the nature of allies and Mescalito. He says that these two entities are similar in one essential respect. He then says that they are equally essentially different. So the position is, 'a' + 'b' are defined by 'c', but 'a' differs fundamentally from 'b'. Don Juan does not like Castaneda pointing this out, so he opts out from the logical (system) idiom. He tells Castaneda to stop talking, the implication being that he is being forced to talk about something which cannot be put into words (53, see also 179).

We find, then, that whenever we want to connect assertions in order to make them meaningful we run the risk of meeting the grammar of 'seeing'. Contradictions can tell the Winchian styled anthropologist a lot, but it is difficult not to conclude that their full meaning, including the reasons for their existence, cannot be grasped until the observer has experienced whatever the underlying reality might be.

Let us take a brief look at what some philosophers have had to say about the relationship between understanding something or somebody and experiencing the same things.

On first sight nothing seems more natural than to say that I don't understand what is meant by the notions 'God', 'pain', 'seeing' etc until I have experienced the phenomena which are supposedly being referred to. On this view, understanding the meaning of something is an essentially mental occurrence: words are taken to refer either to mental states or to phenomenal realities, and until these have been experienced the full meaning of the word has not been grasped.

For the last forty or so years such theories of meaning have come under heavy criticism. Words like 'mental', 'experience', and even 'referential' (as in de Saussure's view of the sign) have become objectionable. MacIntyre is typical. He refutes the position we have seen Evans-Pritchard adopting: 'the suggestion of the liberal theologian that theological expressions have private meaning by referring to private experience is ruled out by the fact that no expressions can derive their meaning in this way' (1970:167). Quite simply, 'an individual cannot recognize, identify and conceptualise his own experiences in his own private language. It is impossible for us to characterise our experiences unless we appeal to words whose meaning depends upon their being governed by rules. Yet such rules of use or meaning are by their very nature of the public, social order. 'So', continues MacIntyre, 'words like 'pain' and 'sensation' which refer to private experiences, if any words do are words in public language'. If the meaning of religious expressions is totally exhausted by referring to private experiences, communication is impossible: my experiences might well never coincide with your experiences, which means that our respective languages will never meet.'

Meaning therefore, is essentially located in the social realm where rules govern use. Meaning is to be understood by examining the limits of what can and what cannot be said in any given case, not by appealing to some mental penumbra which supposedly lies behind words and sentences. Some philosophers have accordingly excluded experience to what might appear to be an extreme degree. Developing Wittgenstein's remark 'You have learned the concept 'pain' when you learned language', Malcolm asks why this is 'startling'. His reply is, 'it seems to ignore what is most important, namely, one's experience of pain itself' (1972:56). He argues, however, that 'inner exhibition (introspectively observing our experiences) can contribute nothing to the understanding of a concept' (57). Accordingly, 'We do not know how to make a distinction between (someone) being able to use the word correctly and his knowing its meaning' (58).

Malcolm compares the man who has never felt pain with the man who is blind. Whereas the first man can use the word 'pain' correctly, and thus has a 'full' understanding of the concept (50),

the blind man inevitably makes mistakes when he comes to use colour words. He lacks the necessary experience. Waismann makes the same point for the man who is colour blind: 'We may call a language unattainable that cannot be learnt in any way. Of course, this 'unattainability' is not due to the language itself, but to us and our experiences. Thus we cannot learn or translate a language which is used to describe experiences from which we are completely cut off, just as a colour-blind man cannot learn our language' (1968:253). There are, as he puts it, 'no bridges of understanding' between the 'different worlds' and 'different languages' of colour-blind and normal men (250).

Thus far we have covered two positions: (a) the meaning of some concepts is strictly equivalent to learning how to use them, and (b) the meaning of other types of concepts should still be understood in terms of use, but certain experiences have to be present before one can apply the words properly. There is, however, a third category. Talking about words like 'homesickness', Waismann writes 'Someone who feels homesick for the first time will probably say 'So this is what people call 'homesickness'; now for the first time I am beginning to realise all that that word connotes'. It is as if he previously knew the word only from the outside and now suddenly understands its inner meaning' (265). Experience is as important as in our second category, but instead of performing the function of providing the necessary conditions for language use (we can certainly speak of 'homesickness' even if we have never felt it) experience now serves to fill out the full meaning of the word. Thus Waismann continues, 'But what is here called 'understanding' is not only a capacity to react to the word with certain definite feelings, but also the ability to describe imaginatively all the subtle implications of the word' (266).

So understanding the meaning of an assertion is not a clear-cut business. Since Waismann's last remark could also be applied to Malcolm's 'pain' example we must distinguish between 'meaning-use' and 'meaning-existential realisation'. We must also distinguish between those situations in which direct experience is necessary for use and those in which it is not.

We can now develop what we have said about the nature of don Juan's discourse in the context of 'seeing'. Castaneda is early told that 'You must feel everything, otherwise the world loses its sense'. Faced with this, Castaneda replies that one does not 'have to get an electric shock in order to know about electricity' (1971:13). Castaneda soon realises that this will not do. The meaning of don Juan's discourse lies too close to reality and experience for the 'meaning is use cum knowledge' argument implied in Castaneda's electricity example. Thus when don Juan claims 'When I say that the guardian is really blocking your passing and could actually knock the devil out of you, I know what I mean' (155), we would be missing the point unless we shared don Juan's experiential universe. In this context, correct use signifies correct understanding, but the understanding itself is another matter. It certainly cannot be got at by observing rules of use. To take an analogous example, when someone says 'I love you' this will, in a valid sense of 'mean', mean something different depending on whether one is in love or not. This sort of meaning has something to do with public rules (we can see whether the person really means it by observing future behaviour), but cannot readily be identified in terms of them. In don Juan's case, however, we do not even have

this easy bridgehead ... unless we experience 'seeing' for ourselves, we are unable either to establish the existential connotations or to specify rules of usage. The expressive nature of the discourse entails that meaning cannot be understood as use when full meaning is merely a matter of full experience. Waismann's 'homesickness' example does not apply. Nor does Malcolm's 'pain' example. Re-emphasizing our comparison with Nuer religion, we again realise that the Winchian approach is more fundamentally inadequate than its inability to deal with contradiction and paradox might suggest. In the case of the Nuer, Winch stands unthreatened: the inner meaning provided by Kwoth, experience of Kwoth, or belief in Kwoth adds depth and illumination to the public language but need be of no great anthropological significance. But in don Juan's world existential realisation is the system. Bearing in mind what we have said about the interplay between culture and individual realisation, it is impossible to get away from the fact that the essence of the 'system' veers towards private language and experience.

Referring again to Waismann, we read, 'There are, however, cases especially in dealing with emotions and subjective experiences, where it is doubtful how far language fulfils its purpose, as, for example, in religious and mystical experiences' (264). Later on he construes language 'as a bridge built by the mind to lead from consciousness to consciousness' (268). So we see that a linguistic philosopher working within the Wittgensteinian 'meaning is use' tradition has to admit that in certain situations words have to do with the conveyance (264) of what can loosely be called subjective states.

Language does not function very well in these realms of mystics' talk, 'metaphor', poetry, existential talk and even poetry (See Waismann p. 266-268 for examples). By this I do not mean that, for example, poetry is a misuse of language. For it is perfectly clear that language is performing valid functions within these realms. Given this, it is not even true to say that language being 'stretched': symbolic or indirect discourse is a language game in its own right. What I am saying is that language does not function very well by itself. Malcolm's *sui generis* concepts have to be relocated within experience, for this is where indirect language is often directly embedded.

IV

The limits of formal analysis are soon met when we try to understand don Juan. Structural analysis is obviously inapplicable, except perhaps when don Juan is specifying concrete spells and other procedures. For the structuralist would destroy the reality which he claims to be examining: don Juan's incompatibility dictum aside, the nature of this semantic universe counts again - at the reification and reductionism consequent upon any 'strong' structuralism. Even the 'weak' structuralism of Winch is not of much use: don Juan's verbal contradictions and utterances are not important in themselves, for it is what they express that is significant. So to learn to use and interpret don Juan's language we must follow Waismann's advice and learn to understand his sentences 'just as we understand a piece of music, entirely from inside' (363). But if 'every language in the end must speak for itself' (*ibid*).. should we not conclude that there must be as many styles of anthropology as there are ways of speaking?

The challenge of don Juan lies precisely in this. As anthropologists and individuals we belong to one tradition. Neither poets, mystics, metaphysicians or 'seers', we are, to use a phrase of don Juan's 'chained to our reason' (1971:313). Many interesting expressions of humanity contain the clause that the types of reasoning with which we are familiar are inappropriate. What are we to do?

I feel that the first thing we have to accept is that when we are faced with universes like don Juan's we must be prepared to adjust our idea's of objectivity. Ferre paraphrases Torrance's position on this as "'True' objectivity is ... the capacity of the mind to be conformed to or behave appropriately before its object' (op cit: 120). We have seen that participant-observation is inadequate; experience is imperative. This entails losing our normal objectivity (as anyone will know who has taken mescaline). It also entails accepting (understanding) that it is possible, for instance, to fly. But, it could be objected, what use are such experiences and grammars of interpretation? If we say that Castaneda was quite right to try and understand from the 'inside', do we not raise the objection that since Castaneda never learned to 'see' he was merely reporting the wrong 'separate reality' - was being positively misleading? Zaehner, in his Mysticism, Sacred and Profane, runs into trouble by trying to identify equivalences and differences at the level of mystical experience by looking at mystics language. Castaneda is faced with the same problem (unless, of course, he comes to believe that 'seeing' is a self-validating experience or encounter). However, there is one way of claiming that this identification problem is not as bad as it seems: don Juan's tradition is a fait accompli. It could be the case - although it is unlikely - that all the practitioners are talking about different experiences. Assuming this is not so, assuming that the interplay of instruction and experience can more or less automatically extend a valid tradition, there is no reason why any chosen person cannot understand the real thing. Castaneda was 'chosen', so perhaps it was his subjectivity which prevented him from realising the 'objectivity' of don Juan's system.

But even supposing that Castaneda returns to complete his apprenticeship we still have to face the second major difficulty associated with participant-observation or experience, namely the translation problem. Again, we have to adjust our normal (anthropological) language games of objectivity and understanding. This is very difficult. When don Juan says that once one has control of an ally there is no longer any need to have a human guide (1969:249) he is placing the grammar of interpreting allies on an ontological basis which we can hardly accept or understand. Apart from experiencing don Juan's world, we have to believe in it. But such difficulties aside, the anthropologist can only follow Castaneda's example - or do a little better. It seems that we should move into such systems until we meet ontological barriers. And to translate this movement we should develop what Waismann calls 'a logic of questions' (1968) with all the distinctions and characterisations that this implies.

I began this paper with an example of Castaneda asking a 'really' question and thereby committing a category mistake. Don Juan says, 'That is all there is in reality - what you felt' (op cit:143) One of the reasons why we have a distinction between

'metaphor' and 'literal' talk is that we tend to organise our language into two categories: expressive discourse and empirically informative utterances. Don Juan does not live in such a simple universe, so within his grammar of 'feeling' it makes little sense to ask many types of 'really' questions. Castaneda appears to find this out, for towards the end of his apprenticeship he no longer always approaches don Juan with the literal/metaphor paradigm of objectivity in mind. But, we can suggest, if he had read some philosophy of religion before he visited don Juan, he might not have wasted so much time and annoyed don Juan so much. We do not ask a physicist if his 'waves' really exist: he is working with a disclosure model. In the same way, much religious discourse within the Christian tradition has been construed neither as 'really true', (viz. literally applicable to God), nor as 'merely symbolic'. Within the religious language game, the metaphor/literal distinction is out of place. Disclosure discourse 'symbolises' the inexpressible, but just as poetic metaphor somehow signifies real insight, so does the religious model make what have been called 'quasi-factual' claims about the nature of religious reality. However, because religious discourse 'participates' in its divine subject matter in a way which most poems do not aspire to do, we cannot usefully apply the word 'metaphor.' It has literary connotations, and who could seriously contend that it makes sense to ask don Juan if he understands his 'fibers of light' in a metaphorical or in a literal manner? His 'metaphors', if such they are, are literally laden.

To conclude, It is not, as I have emphasised, easy to remain fideistic to don Juan. Admitting that understanding the meaning of something is not necessarily equivalent to learning how to use words, we have had to go a step further: in don Juan's case one has to grasp 'seeing' before one can use or existentially realise much of his discourse. We cannot 'see', so any interpretative anthropology must be wrong. Additionally, our training as anthropologists and our duty to our readers mean that we have to apply our criteria of understanding to some extent or another. In this paper we have asked questions about the status of 'seeing' and the possibility of a tradition, questions which don Juan would not approve of. If we read that the existence of 'mental' words depends on the association between subjective experience and bodily symptoms or activities (Waismann op cit: 258), then it is not at all easy for us to refrain from applying this argument to 'seeing'. Perhaps this is not a bad thing. Such approaches, however, should be combined with attempts to recreate the existential import of don Juan's world. Even if the anthropologist can only partially grasp 'seeing', he can still try to make the weak bell chime as loudly as possible. He can do this, it seems, by turning to those areas in our own culture where roughly the same bells are to be heard. Is anyone going to deny that I. A. Richards' interpretation of Shakespeare's 'The Phoenix and the Turtle' will not help put us in the right frame of mind to approach don Juan? Or that Macquarrie's characterisation of the nine different modes of discourse to be found in Saint Athanasius' De Incarnatione is not a useful preparation? (1967). If don Juan is to ring a bell - which is what understanding him is basically about - then these are the territories to explore. And if we are to characterise his universe, instead of turning to the *Année Sociologique*, it might be more fruitful to use such terms as 'disclosure model', 'convictional', 'connotation/denotation', 'reference range', 'qualifier', and so on.

Clearly, if anthropology is regarded as the vital recreation of how others have conceived their realities the task of translation can never end. There is always a new balance to be struck between the extension of our ethnocentricity (called understanding) and the atmosphere of our sensitive subject matter. The confrontation is perpetual; but the appeal is tremendous, for what is at stake is the assimilation of alien systems of experience and interpretation. This is why anthropology must adjust itself: in the last resort, what is the use of continually extending our traditional objectivity into other worlds? Don't we know too much about the functions of religion, and all too little about religion itself? Why, one wonders, have anthropologists been so loathe to accept other realities? Why have they all too frequently reduced them to the canons and ethnocentric circularity of science? So many people try and understand how Christians can think of their God, but how many have extended this activity to other cultures? 'Sociological' explanation is not equivalent to understanding, for does not the all absorbing interest of don Juan lie in his ability to make us aware of the existence of realities which confound our reason? Formal analysis, it seems clear, can tell us very little about the interplay between apparently concrete events of an absurd nature and our western rationality. We need other models of interpretation. Even though the disclosure model cannot really help us understand the nature of things 'seen', it at least makes some sense of the teaching process, the status of various aspects of don Juan's discourse, and the balance between cultural objectivity and private experiences.

Paul Heelas

Bibliography

- Bharati 1971 'Anthropological Approaches to the study of religion' in Siegel, B (ed.) Biennial Review of Anthropology.
- Castaneda, C. 1969 The Teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui way of knowledge
- " 1971 A Separate Reality
- Ferné, F. 1970 (org. 1962) Language, Logic and God.
- Huxley, A. 1954 The Doors of Perception.
- Jaspers, K. 1962 'Myth and Religion' in Bartsch H-J (ed.) Kerygma and Myth (vol II).
- Leach, E. 1964 (org. 1954) Political Systems of Highland Burma
- Lienhardt, G. 1954 'Modes of Thought' in The Institutions of Primitive Society.
- MacIntyre, A. 1970 (org. 1957) Metaphysical Beliefs
- Macquarrie, J. 1967 God-Talk
- Malcolm, N. 1972 Problems of Mind.
- Phillips, D. Z. (ed.) 1967 Religion and Understanding.
- Ramsey, I. 1964 Models and Mystery.
- " 1967 (org. 1957) Religious Language.
- Spiro, M. 1967 Burmese Supernaturalism
- " 1968 'Virgin Birth' Man,
- Waismann, F. 1968 (org. 1965) The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy