

**CONSTRUCTION OF PERSONAL WORK-THEORY IN THE YOUNG
ADMINISTRATOR**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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VOLUME 1

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Statistical predictive validity has regularly been demonstrated for the complex selection procedure by which young high-potential administrative entrants are recruited to the Civil Service. There is, however, a largely unexplored qualitative aspect to recruitment as well. For most successful candidates, taking up appointment as trainee administrators represents a major life-transition - from full-time education to full-time employment.

What is that experience like? How do they go about making sense of their new circumstances?

Six trainees took part in the enquiry, which centred on a series of interviews carried out over the course of their first year at work. The focus in this ideographic study is on the individual as learner in a natural setting. Analysis of the accounts produced is set in a social cognition framework, and something of the approach of the ethnographer is also brought to bear. Particular attention is paid to the status of narrative as knowledge. A simple model is outlined for narrative-based reflection as a means to development, with the prospect of the individual acting as his or her own mentor in the process.

CAVEAT

The study reported here concerns the work of six real-life Civil Servants, and indeed is written by another. In talking about their work, they express opinions, recount their experiences, give expression to perceptions of what their Departments do, and how and why they think that it is done.

It must therefore be emphasised that, throughout, these opinions, experiences, perceptions, explanations are all personal to the individuals concerned, or else to the author. In no sense is anything set out here to be taken as official policy or as an official view.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

"People matter; people differ." So ran the unofficial motto of the small central research division that I joined when I entered the Civil Service in 1973. I added - "people change". And this is the fundamental postulate on which the work reported here is based. But before going further into the theoretical and practical considerations that underlie it, it will probably be helpful if I set out the context, both personal and organisational, within which it was carried out.

The division that I joined as an occupational psychologist in 1973 was the Behavioural Sciences Research Division (BSRD), which formed a small part of what was at that time a fairly new government ministry - the Civil Service Department (CSD). The CSD itself was created at the centre of government as a direct result of recommendations arising from a wide-ranging examination of the mid-20th-century Home Civil Service undertaken by a team led by Lord Fulton. The research division had as its immediate fore-runners a similar outfit restricted mainly to recruitment issues that had been set up in the Civil Service Commission shortly after the Second World War, and a small development unit working in broader management and organisational areas.

However, we have to go a little further into history if the context is going to be properly understood. This could, if we were not careful, easily take us back to Tudor times or before. But the kind of Civil Service that we have now - and although much of what I am talking about applies too to the Diplomatic Service, I am nevertheless restricting myself exclusively to the Home Civil Service - is a result of major developments in the 19th century. It is possible to identify a clearly defined central government structure by the early 18th century, responsible for raising revenues, for aspects of defence, for certain legal functions, and so on. But it differed from that to which we have become accustomed in one major and apparently unequivocal way in that appointments to government service were made by the political party in power at the time. I say "apparently unequivocal", because the insecurity of tenure that such a recruiting system would seem to imply was in many instances obviously seen as a challenge by the officers concerned, and their flexibility and adaptability did much to reduce any such effect as they rose to meet it. That amazingly long-lived gentleman of the folk-song, the Vicar of Bray, epitomises the administrative style of the more adaptable. It would seem that government posts often came to be regarded as the freehold property of their occupants, presumably sold off in lieu of a formal pension to the highest bidder when the time to retire eventually came. And bidding would appear to have been brisk. Advertisements were regularly carried in the Times promising handsome recompense to any who would act as agents for the securing of a post - one hundred pounds, for example, to "any person who can procure the advertiser any

Permanent Place under government where much writing is not required"; or even five hundred guineas for a situation "of proportionate value where not more than three hours' daily attendance is required"; both of these from the Personal Columns of Thursday 16 April 1801.

However, certain strands of reform begin to become apparent from about the beginning of the 19th century. Payments from the public purse clearly have to be related at least in some measure to the work carried out by the incumbents of government office, and this began to emerge as a clear principle. Emphasis began to swing much more in the direction of permanent as opposed to political appointments. A proper pension provision for those retiring from government office was presumably considered a moral obligation as well as an obvious way of reducing the incentive to sell off one's post. Abolishing the sinecure abuse could only be achieved by increased control over manpower and costs, and by increased accountability to that public purse from which the costs were paid. (See, for example, Russell-Smith, 1974.)

Parliamentary control in fact crystallised out into control by the government of the day acting through Cabinet, with the Treasury becoming the responsible department and the Permanent Secretary at the Treasury becoming the senior official in, and hence Head of, the Home Civil Service. His counterpart in the Foreign Office headed the contemporary equivalent of the present Diplomatic Service.

Nevertheless, these reforms were evolutionary rather than revolutionary, and could not by themselves produce the conditions for mid-19-century government to cope effectively with the problems of the day. The economic principles of laissez-faire and the dominance of the market-place naturally spoke for less rather than more central government intervention in the workings of the country. But the Industrial Revolution had produced social conditions the like of which had never been experienced before, and colonial aspirations had the nation extending its reach way beyond its own shores. The greater the demands placed on central authority - from localised issues like coping with an outbreak of cholera, to national matters like provisioning an Army engaged in warfare thousands of miles away - the clearer the inadequacies of that central authority became.

Eventually, in 1853, a two-man commission was set up to investigate the Civil Service. The two were Sir Stafford Northcote, who was at one time Private Secretary to Gladstone, and Charles Trevelyan, brother-in-law of Macaulay the historian, who was himself leading a committee at about the same time to examine the workings of the Indian Civil Service.

The terms of reference for Northcote and Trevelyan instructed them to examine the organisation of government departments in the light of the overall objective "that the business of the public should be done in the best and most economical manner", paying particular attention to recruitment and promotion. This they did. The most fundamental recommendation in terms of the conditions

of the day was for entry henceforth to be by means of competitive examination, and for the subsequent promotion of officials to be dependent "entirely on the industry and ability with which they discharge their duties".

Emphasis was laid on training young men who had been selected, certainly for the superior posts, by examinations that were to be "on a level with the highest description of education in this country". These examinations were to be wide-ranging in context, because the Report's authors felt that "men whose services would be highly valuable to the Country might easily be beaten by some who were their inferiors, if the examination were confined to a few subjects to which the latter had devoted their exclusive attention." Furthermore, different profiles of ability, as we might now call it, might be shown up more readily by a broad coverage. They also wanted to have included "some exercises directly bearing on official business" - something that might nowadays come under the general heading of job-simulation. And it was important "to test the intelligence, as well as the mere attainments, of the candidates" - again, a familiar present-day competence/performance distinction.

What all these recommendations led to in practice was the setting up of a Civil Service Commission responsible directly to the Crown for the administration of entry by Competitive Examination, and hence, by virtue of its status, safe from interference in its selection-decisions by the other than totally disinterested. The Commission at this present time is comprised of

three full-time Commissioners, two part-time, and a permanent staff numbering 250-300. Apart from the two part-timers, specially recruited on short contracts from industry, commerce, or the academic world, all are 'established' civil servants. For the Commissioners, though, in addition to the responsibilities that they have in the normal way of things to their departmental ministers, there is this direct independent line, nominally to the Crown but in effect to the country at large, that is intended to safeguard them from interference and partiality in the way that they go about their recruiting.

To go back to tracing our way through history, though, the next point of particular interest in setting out the context of this study comes immediately after the Second World War. After Northcote and Trevelyan, recruitment to the highest 'generalist' class - the Administrative Class - had settled down into a system that consisted of the high-powered written examination for which they had called, combined with a panel interview. Candidates had to possess, or achieve, an honours degree for full eligibility. But the disruption caused by the war created special circumstances, and a three-year period of 'reconstruction' was established in 1945. Something different from the accepted selection procedure was needed in order to cope with the fact that most of the likely candidates would not have been able to complete degree-studies.

As it happens, a serious problem had arisen early on in the war with respect to the selection of Army officers. A new system had been devised in 1942, consisting of a series of job-simulation tasks

(getting an imaginary field-gun over an imaginary ravine and the like, all effected by means of baulks of wood and lengths of rope), objectively-marked and standardised pencil-and-paper tests of basic intellectual abilities, personality measures, interviews, and so on. It had proved very effective, as evidenced by a dramatic drop in what had been an entirely unacceptable training failure rate. With the official title of War Office Selection Board, it became universally known by the acronym WOSB - pronounced 'Wosby'.

Sir Percival Waterfield, First Civil Service Commissioner at that time, decided to pursue the idea of adapting this approach for selection to the Reconstruction Civil Service Administrative Class (see Chapman, 1984). This too proved highly effective, as various predictive validity studies down the years have suggested - starting with Vernon (1950) and his examination of how recruits were faring two years into the job. The adapted procedure - without the physical simulation tasks for example, but with something designed to simulate administering a small imaginary island colony somewhere in the South Pacific - was used for recruiting to the grade of Assistant Principal, the bottom rung of the Class. At the top, the new recruit's ultimate aspiration, stood the Permanent Secretaries, working direct to the department's Minister. Beneath them came in true bureaucratic hierarchy the Deputy, Under, and Assistant Secretaries, and beneath them the Principals. A study of progress over a life-time career for most of the Reconstruction entrants through this, the Civil Service Selection Board procedure (CSSB or, of course,

'Sisby'), showed that whereas about half of those entering with the minimum acceptable markings had progressed to no further than Assistant Secretary, fully two-thirds of the career-completers who had entered with the highest predictions attached to them had made it to one or other of the top two grades, Permanent or Deputy Secretary (Anstey, 1976). (See McLeod, 1982, for an account of procedures and research.)

However, in the late 1960s came the 20th century's own great look at the Civil Service. Just over 100 years on from the Northcote-Trevelyan Report, the Fulton Report was published. This recommended a major reorganisation of the structure of classes and grades, and within this restructured service a major shift of emphasis towards much more effective development of the people - human resource - that go to make up such a large bureaucratic machine. I use 'bureaucratic' in the formal Weberian sense, not pejoratively - though maybe Blau's definition is crisper, with bureaucracy characterised as "an organisation designed to accomplish large-scale administrative tasks by systematically co-ordinating the work of many individuals" (Blau, 1956).

This is not the place to comment on the Service's reaction to the Fulton Report as a whole, save maybe to note that objectives like the sweeping demolition of vertical barriers between classes - in particular, between the administrator-generalists and the professionals or specialists - have been very slow to develop. The recommendation for a reduction in the number of horizontal gradings also failed to be implemented in any noticeable manner.

Within the generalist area itself, Fulton's 'preference for relevance' was turned down. The gifted amateur, or cultured dilettante, with a background in the Classics, educated at a 'good school', and possessed of a lightness of approach and deftness of touch that positively frowned on commitment ("pastrop de zele"), was always probably something of a caricature. But there was though enough there in the way of reality under the exaggeration to disturb Fulton. His solution was for a concentration on two still broad areas of administration - financial-economic, and social - and for recruitment to, and development in, these areas to take due account of previous study and experience. His recommendations failed to carry the day on this one.

Where there was in fact some early commitment, though, was in that area broadly denoted 'management'. In particular, the Civil Service of the early 1970's started to try and take career-management seriously. First-line responsibility for career-development, along with performance appraisal and planning, was pushed out firmly into line-management where it belonged, and training packages for supervisors were designed for imparting the necessary skills. Steps were also taken to examine the new procedures themselves. There was quite a batch of studies into the efficiency and outcomes of the formal job-appraisal interviewing of staff that is typically undertaken by the superior officer once removed - 'grandfather', in organisational terms. Concentration on resource-management may, by comparison, have been a little less obvious. But this changed markedly in the mid-1970s, with the economic difficulties of that period forcing government into a

cash-limit approach to the control of departmental resources. Still talking in very broad terms, the focus of management might be said to have swung, in the course of the decade, from a concentration on the management of people to a virtual obsession with running-costs that had any considerations of direct attention to developing the human resource taking a very firm back seat. But whether the emphasis is on man-management or resource-management, or indeed, on a sensible integrated balance of the two, 'management' as something that civil servants have to do was now clearly acknowledged and here to stay.

The one big structural change that did take place as a result of Fulton was the merger of the Administrative, Executive, and Clerical Classes into a continuous Administration Group. The traditional barriers between the policy-makers, the programme-managers, and the clerks, that had been surmounted in the past only by class-to-class promotion, were now down. The entrant at Clerical Assistant now had a notional direct route, through step-by-step promotion, all the way through to Assistant Secretary at the top of the Group. Above that lay the Open Structure - the Permanent, Deputy, and Under Secretaries. The Open Structure is in the process of being extended downwards one step, but at the time of writing that part of the Service from Under Secretary up is the one part where the vertical barriers between generalist and specialist have indeed been effectively demolished. Below this, the merging of the three original generalist classes into the one Administration Group had if anything had the effect of reinforcing the barriers at these levels

between generalist on the inside and specialist on the outside. This may seem at first sight somewhat peripheral to the thrust of a study into the early work-experience of a small selection of administrators - but it is important to remember that it was as generalist administrators that they took up duty, not as professionals or specialists, and that it is this that starts to define for them their roles and their self-perceptions.

The inception of these structural changes was accompanied by an expansion in Civil Service numbers and, quite importantly, by a now stabilised expansion, post-Robbins, of the university and polytechnic graduate population. Traditionally, the entrant to the old Administrative Class coming in through CSSB as an Assistant Principal (AP) to be in effect apprenticed to a Principal for his or her early years, was always a graduate. Entry to the Executive Class as an Executive Officer (at roughly the same starting pay as an AP, incidentally) was open to those who only had GCE A-level qualifications. Clerical Officer was, and still is, the O-level entry-point. How could the expanded graduate population best be tapped? By opening up EO-entry overtly to graduates, maybe? Well, no. The solution arrived at was to widen the generalist graduate entry by widening the 'administrative' entry-point. The resulting scheme was aimed at recruiting graduates to a new grade named Administration Trainee, to replace the old Assistant Principal. They were to be recruited in sufficient numbers to provide an entry, after from two to four years in the Service, to a grade-skipping fast-stream that would take them through a Higher Executive Officer (Administration) grade direct to

Principal, and from there in reasonably quick time to Assistant Secretary at least. But there were also to be sufficient numbers for the rest to provide a strengthening in due course of middle-management in the main Executive stream. Some two-thirds of the graduate Administration Trainee (AT) entry were expected to be 'main-streamed' at the 2-4 years streaming point. Meanwhile, the EO-entry at A-level would continue separately as before.

As it happens, the scheme lasted only a little over a decade. Long before it came to an end it was apparent that, first, the need to attract a wider graduate entry in a sense no longer existed. By the end of the 1970s, something like a half of the direct EO entry consisted of graduates - an entry numbering, incidentally, anything from 1500 to over 5000 a year all told (up to more like 8000 in the very early years of the decade in fact). The AT-entry at its height aimed at 250-300. So the objective of tapping the widening field of graduates was being met more effectively by other means than the AT-scheme. EOs would naturally go on to fill middle-management posts, and a route was open to them, once in the Service, to apply for the AT-scheme with its grade-skipping fast-stream prospect.

It was the post-entry streaming of ATs that was the other main feature contributing to the scheme's eventual demise. The control that one has over manpower-flows at a recruitment point was missing once they were in. An expectation of about one-third of AT entrants moving into the fast-stream turned out in practice to

be nearer two-thirds. Put crudely, the young entrants rose to the challenge of streaming in far greater numbers than had been expected. Other dysfunctionalities of streaming systems are doubtless there to be detected by the enquirer with an eye for these things - self-fulfilling prophecy effects not the least amongst them. (For a straight-forward and readily accessible account of the ill-effects of streaming in education - only another example of a developmental setting, after all - see Jackson and Marsden, 1966.) This, however, is well beyond the terms of reference that I set for myself here.

Back then to the early 1970s, with a new AT-scheme producing two or three hundred entrants a year. The selection method used was the CSSB 'extended procedure' first designed for the Reconstruction APs - or rather, an up-to-date version of the same basic design. EOs on the other hand were selected by means of a short cognitive test battery and a 30-minute panel interview. For the AT there was first a written qualifying test lasting a day-and-a-half, consisting of a mixture of essay-type papers and cognitive tests. This was for sifting out the obvious non-runners. The main stage was two days at CSSB in a group of five, working to three assessors. The successful then went on to a 35-minute panel interview chaired by the First Commissioner - the Final Selection Board. At CSSB, a mixture of attainment and aptitude information, relevant to the qualities demanded by the job and career, is elicited. There are simulation tasks ("analogous exercises") both written and live; more cognitive tests; and one-to-one interviews with each assessor.

The job that I was called upon to do when I joined the research division in 1973 was a predictive validity study, or 'follow-up', of AT selection. There were highly respectable precedents for a study of this kind, as I mentioned earlier. Although, after some early wondering, I was quickly persuaded of the merit of a form of replication of these earlier studies, I nevertheless became concerned about some of the more fundamental aspects.

The follow-up study could proceed in a relatively straight-forward fashion by means of statistical analysis of the relationships between performance ratings achieved at CSSB and subsequent job-related ratings at work. But that seemed to me inadequate. Of course, any selection procedure validation study is going to have to cope somehow with the fact that a marked change is going to come about in an individual's life-experiencing, by very virtue of the decision having been made actually to select him or her. It seemed to me that for the AT this was a particularly dramatic feature. The larger part of our successful candidates were going to take up duty in government service as their first ever 'proper job'. They were, in fact, just popping out of the end of the educational pipeline and entering the world of work and a career for the first time. No matter how assiduous the CSSB procedure and its assessors were in eliciting detailed and germane evidence from the candidate about his past and present life, both working and social, the fact is that we know full well that many of the successful ones are going to change in some quite marked ways once they get to grips with the world of work. How, though, and in what ways?

There are also some other rather more specific areas of interest regarding the civil service administrator and his or her mode of work. As civil servants they have to operate in a concentratedly political environment, yet they are not expected to be 'political' - certainly not in any party political sense. Any philosophy of work that they might construct for themselves has to cope with this, which means operating at a level of abstraction higher than that demanded of most other people. The civil servant's 'theory of work' just has to have other lesser theories subsumed within it, so that he or she may in a sense choose the one by which to work depending on occasion, demands, and so on.

The idea is elaborated by Wilding (1979). He points to what is for him the necessary absence of any received 'professional ethic' to which the administrator should work. There is no room, he says, for "a self-regulating profession of administration with a philosophy of behaviour or a set of values of its own". As an official, recruited by the Civil Service Commission, but appointed by his or her Minister, "there is no basis on which the civil servant can seek to impose his own values on the course of Government action". Energy is essential, but total commitment to any one piece of policy, commitment up to "the last ounce", can be undermining; the total commitment has to be to "the idea of service itself". There will of course be common practice in the conduct of work, but the philosophy or set of values that would regulate this, and which would in fact apply to the whole arena of political life and work, has to develop at the level of a meta-theory.

So the aim of this study is principally to look at the nature of the very earliest experience as an embryonic administrator, just out of the educational pipeline, and to do so by trying to see how personal theories of work do start to be built. I will obviously be going into much more detail as we progress, but the basic study consisted of my having six young ATs talk to me, individually and regularly, about that work and their perceptions of it over the first year ever in full-time work of any sort. Three came from each of two large Departments of State - the Department of the Environment, and the Trade and Industry group. The period covered was the year 1979, each of them having entered straight from university through the previous year's competition.

To fill in the final little bit of personal context, I should perhaps say that the research division that I originally joined was disbanded in 1977 as an economy measure, and that I and a small number of colleagues took up post in a new Recruitment Research Unit within the Commission. A promotion half-way through the field-work added to the difficulties, welcome though it was. The Civil Service Department also disappeared, late in 1981, parts of its functions being transferred to the Treasury, and parts to a new Management and Personnel Office.

The rest of this report consists of a setting-out first of considerations concerning theory and practice, followed by an account of my work with each of the six ATs. The concluding sections will deal with what the work conveys as regards the very early building of personal theories of civil service work amongst these six young administrators, and with what can be learned and inferred of a more far-reaching nature from this.

Chapter 2 - Theory

In this and the next Chapter I am going to consider issues of theory and practice respectively. The essential indivisibility of their effects I would really rather like to take as axiomatic, though we may have to try and do some pre-axiom exploration to establish the justification for such a stance. However, axiomatic or not, if the two subjects are indivisible it is obviously an artifice to treat them separately. It is for all that a useful one.

As it happens, simply considering the notion of 'theory' here has us immediately plunged into a differentiation of levels. There is the broadly speaking 'developmental' theory that I am going to be seeking in some measure to articulate. There is a theory about what is good theory - operating at the epistemological level and helping us to consider whether or not knowledge accounted for by the developmental theory in question (or any other theory, come to that) could in fact actually **be** knowledge. Then the developmental theory that I want to pursue will treat individuals as 'personal scientists' - people, that is, are held to have their own theories about what they do. We have already touched on personal theories of work held at at least two different levels - the lower 'party-political' level and the higher 'public service' level, or the theory of the work-place and the meta-theory that adumbrates a variety of such. So we ought to do something about defining our terms. What exactly do we mean by a 'theory'? And what do we definitely **not** mean?

First, with Bannister and Fransella (1971) we do not mean a notion or concept, we do not mean a dogma, we do not mean simply an explanation of some 'thing'. Bannister and Fransella are positively scathing, for example, in their castigation of "cognitive dissonance" as an example of the notion dressed up as theory. All that cognitive dissonance says, they suggest, is that people find it uncomfortable to try and entertain two conflicting ideas at the same time. That, they imply, is not so very surprising, or rich in explanatory power or capable of articulation into finer detail - it is simply a notion. Nor do I think that I would want to accompany Wegner and Vallacher (1981) very far down their list of examples of the 'explicit theories' that individuals derive for understanding social behaviour. I shall most certainly want to come back to Wegner and Vallacher, in fact, and to pursue something of their general approach, but for the moment the aim is to set out a few examples of what theory is **not**. They instance (p.232) an individual who goes about "inferring that beautiful people are friendly". They go on to suggest that the person concerned could have "an explicit theory that corresponds with this inference ('I think attractive people are friendly'); he could have an explicit theory that says nothing ('I think attractive people are good looking'); or he could have an explicit theory that opposes the observed inference ('I think attractive people are snobs')". None of these for me is going to constitute a theory, any more than 'cognitive dissonance' does for Bannister and Fransella. What these three examples represent for me are at most hypotheses or notions, and hypotheses or notions emerge from theories.

Neither, though, am I going to use 'theory' in the colloquial sense of referring to unsupported conjecture. "That's only a theory"; or, "this is all a bit theoretical". The sense in this case is of some postulated explanation for a set of circumstances, or prescription for a course of action, that has no contact with reality. It says anything from, "that is too abstract to be of any practical relevance in these particular circumstances", to something more like, "you are simply guessing at an explanation". No, 'theory' in the sense in which I wish to use the word is in turn both practical in application and grounded in action.

We could of course go on defining what 'theory' is **not**; and we might also find that if we kept on uttering the word over and over it would start to lose whatever meaning it might originally have had - intoning it ceaselessly like a mantra could rob it of contact with our world and leave us totally stranded. So let us see if we can begin to pin down some meaning. We need to consider laws, and theory, and hypotheses, explanation, and prediction - all those concepts so familiar to the natural scientist, and such a trap for the unwary in the social sciences.

A useful place to start seems to me to be in the realm of twentieth-century analytical philosophy, exemplified for instance by the careful elaboration of that field by Hospers (1967). I work simply on the presumption that some general agreement about what different kinds of knowledge might look like, and what we might mean by the different verbal tags applied to various aspects of knowledge, can only stand us in good stead as we pursue our path through my area of exploration.

The idea of regularity is of course a commonplace one. Rocks are always hard; sand is either soft or gritty; crows are black (except for 'hoodies'); fish live in water; frogs hop; people are either happy or sad, depending on their circumstances - and so on. Regularities help. As William James once pointed out (and I am not going to presume to produce the exact reference, merely the gist); "if an amoeba ever had a feeling come over it of the sort 'Hullo! There goes old what's-his-name again', we should have to accord it conceptual thought".

The most regular of our regularities are what we call the laws of nature. A law of nature, of course, is descriptive or explanatory. The prescriptive sorts of law are the man-made ones designed to regulate social behaviour. Laws of nature are human constructs too, but only in the sense of being formulations of the particular kinds of uniformity that would exist whether or not we were here to give expression to them. It is worth taking note, at this point, of the pre-supposition that there is indeed a world 'out there'. Nature (with us in it) exists. The solipsist view is not worth elaborating, if only for the fairly obvious reason that it would not be worth writing any of this down if it were. More seriously, though, the veridical regularity of the world out there, particularly the social world, is something to which I shall have to return in a while.

The laws of nature are characterised by a number of different features. Parenthetically, the nature about which we are talking includes human nature, although it is unlikely that anyone would

want to allow that the social sciences had yet produced anything that might be considered a law in these terms - for some very good reasons, to which, again, I will come in a while.

The first characteristic of the laws of nature is that they are true universal propositions. This of course leaves a lot unsaid about what one means by 'true', though this is more a problem to do with establishing and, universally, agreeing a description of the particular naturally occurring uniformity under discussion. Presumably it does not take too much human effort and enterprise to agree, universally, on a proposition of the sort that Hospers cites - "all iron rusts when exposed to oxygen" - not **some** iron, nor this piece or that piece, but **all** iron.

A departure of a sort from universality appears to be allowed for in the kind of formulation so familiar in the social sciences, the statistical law. This is the kind that says that some impressive proportion - 90% shall we say - of p's are q. Even here, though, there is the prospect that trying to understand why the other 10% of p's are not q as well will eventually lead to a reformulation that achieves universality. It would be of the sort 'under conditions r, all p's are q'.

Universal propositions that count as laws come expressed in the form of hypothetical statements, in the sense that "all iron rusts" is more formally expressed as "if it is iron, it rusts". At first sight, this appears to let in elements of fantasy - "if it is a mermaid, it will have a fish's tail". But the status of law is saved

from vacuity of this sort by the co-existence of other laws bearing in one way or another on the phenomenon and forming an inter-relating network. The inter-relatedness works both ways of course, as it must, and serves not only to exclude from the status of 'law' hypothetical statements upon which no other laws bear, but also excludes as laws statements whose negation would have no noticeable effect on other laws in the set. They must bear on each other, and hold each other up.

The universality of application has also to be a real universality across time and space. "If p, then q" has to be applicable under the conditions "if p, no matter when or where, then q". All iron, no matter when it comes into contact with oxygen, or where, must rust - so that the law is a statement much more far-reaching than a simple aggregation of historical observations.

A final condition is that a more general proposition will normally take precedence over a more specific one. That plane trees shed their leaves in winter may indeed be universally true, but it would be the more generally applicable statement about deciduous trees in temperate zones doing this that would be accorded the status of a universal law of nature.

So, universal truth, a hypothetical formulation that reaches beyond mere historical aggregation, a true universality in time and space, and a general rather than a specific formulation - all these are conditions for the status of 'law'. There are not too many of these in the world of the social sciences, if any at all. Though

something along the lines of "if it is a human, it will try to establish universal laws of human nature" might well qualify.

I have to say that I am, however, just a little wary about the distinction in analytical philosophy between 'law' and 'theory'. This seems to be, in essence, that laws are discovered, theories constructed. I used the expression 'construct' just now when contrasting laws of social regulation and laws of nature. I will cheerfully acknowledge that the regulations referenced by our laws of nature could be out there going on being regular whether we were here to notice them or not. But it does seem to me that there is an important element of construction - I said 'formulation' earlier - in the so-called discovery of laws of nature. I am in a sense going on ahead of my exposition a bit here, and reflecting something of what, for instance, Piaget was saying when he asserted that "the formation, the development and the epistemological aspect of all science are essential manifestations of man's activity" (Piaget 1972 p. 103); and again, the report of his quoting with approval someone else's observation that "Every time you teach a child something you keep him from re-inventing it" (Phillips, 1965 p. 170). The emphases here are on 'activity' and 'invention' - one might even go so far as to suggest that teaching, or telling, still demands an element of re-invention, of a vicarious nature admittedly, but active for all that. My slight unease, therefore, is not so much about theories being constructed as about laws being 'discovered'.

The construction of theory, for the analytical philosopher, involves some degree of going beyond the observable, beyond the established. There is a sense of 'not yet a law' about it. And there is more than a sense, there is a very clear admission in Hospers, of a vagueness about the distinction between law and theory. Theory, however, is there to be tested - which, as a statement, in no way precludes the testing of law. It is just that theory is always going to be under test, whilst law may not be.

The main characteristics at which we have just arrived for laws of nature will be shared by theory, though on that 'not yet fully observed, or not yet fully established' basis. Thus we would look for a theory to possess characteristics of a general rather than a specific formulation, to have a universal reference (qualified or conditional, maybe) and to do more than simply act as a collection of historical events.

Hypotheses, however, are not universal in reference. The hypothesis is in essence a conditional statement related in some distinct way to a theory of interest that can either, by going beyond the so far historically observed, predict a particular fact or event, or can in conjunction with that particular fact or event test out the theory. The 'either/or' formulation here is very much a matter of the 'theoretician's' purpose - both happen whenever an hypothesis is raised. The thrust of the activity may however be almost entirely predictive, whereupon support lent to the theory by the prediction being confirmed is likely to go unnoticed. It can on the other hand be more concerned with theory-testing, in which

case hypotheses that put the theory under some kind of strain will be chosen, and the actual prediction of an event will be of interest only for its testing ability - indeed, the event that does not occur as the theory-cum-hypothesis combination would predict is the one that most powerfully tests the theory, to the extent of calling for its refinement.

More or less in passing, though germane for all that, it is worth noting that hypotheses can be entertained in a probabilistic sense. That is, it is entirely plausible to say something to the effect that it is more likely than not that under certain circumstances such-and-such should occur. There is a convention in much statistical elaboration of social science theory that maintains that an hypothesis can only be true or not-true, and that probabilities can not therefore legitimately be ascribed to hypothetical statements. This is either an over-simplification or a confusion. Of course it is true to say that either a predicted event, or datum, will occur or that it will not occur. After the test we will know with certainty. But that is in no sense grounds for denying that prior to the test we can hold a degree of belief about the event's forthcoming occurrence or non-occurrence.

Before moving on, via further scene-setting, to the use that I want to make of this fairly low-level exercise in defining terms, maybe a simple example of theory in action will help to fix the definitions. Fodor (1968), talking about simulation as an explanatory device, points out that a tape-recording of speech, whilst it may be entirely faithful in its reproduction of what **has**

been said, can do nothing about what has not yet been. This is of course more generally the point made above about a law/theory having to be something more than a simple aggregation of historical events. The distinction in psychology between competence and performance refers to the same kind of idea, with the former referring to the domain of capability under a particular heading (language, maybe) and the latter to all that which has been enacted within the domain up to a particular point in time. Thus, given a record of all the utterances produced to date by the speaker of a particular language (performance, or the aggregation of historical events) we would be in a position to note certain inter-relationships, recurrent elements, juxtaposition, and so on, and to systematise these into some form of structure (indicative of the competence area, or our theory of that speaker's language behaviour). Given this structure, or theory, we could go on to predict that, under certain conditions, and with certain linguistic events leading up to a particular point, then the probabilities are that such-and-such a further utterance will occur. Put at its most banal it could be something along the lines of - "given that the speaker has just uttered in English the indefinite article form 'an', we predict that the next word uttered will be either an adjective or a noun and that it will start with a vowel or a vowel-substitute". That is our hypothesis, our prediction. The datum is the speaker's next word. If it does not conform with the hypothesis, something is wrong with the underlying theory and it will need adjusting in some way. If the event does conform with the hypothesis, however, then we have another piece of confirming evidence for our theory, and another successful prediction of a future event to our name.

We noted in passing just now that, certainly as regards law - and so by extension as regards theory - the kind of proposition about which we are thinking does not exist on its own. That is, an additional kind of test to that implied by checking data against hypothesis is that which checks on the theory's relatedness to a network of other laws or theories bearing on relevant issues. This, recall, was typical grounds for not entertaining laws that are, in logic, internally consistent and of the correct form, but which have no connection with anything else - the fantasy laws of the sort that would deal with mermaids and their tails. This suggests that there is built up over time an interlocking, inter-related set of law/theories that is in its own terms internally coherent in ways similar to the way in which any one law/theory will itself be. The security of the existence of such a set, even for natural-scientific, physical laws, can not - because of the essential social formulation or construction of even something as regular as the law of gravity - depend on reference to some external criterion of ultimate truth. If there were such a criterion, accessible enough to act as a reference for the law/theory, then it would itself be the law/theory responsible for testifying to the regularity in question. Thus, even for 'hard' science and still more for the 'soft' areas of social science, the criteria for maintenance of a set of laws or theories are couched in terms of the stability of the structure of law/theory that refers to the particular regularities under consideration. This is the concept of the nomological network - the structure that hold itself up. What this means, of course, is that there is always the possibility that eventually some new formulation, law, theory, or construction of a

new regularity will occur that, whilst it bears on the domain of the existing nomological network nevertheless disrupts the existing equilibrium. The analogy of a house of cards comes to mind. Doubtless this is essentially the same phenomenon detailed by Kuhn (1970) in his description of ways in which an existing 'scientific paradigm' may come to find itself challenged by new constructions to the point where it has in some sense to be dismantled and reformed in a different way. The classic example, of course, is the Copernican revolution, where astronomical thought had to undergo a drastic transformation with the realisation that the world did after all go round the sun, not the other way round.

Let us pause briefly here just to take stock of what we have decided that we do after all mean by 'theory' - in the words of Bannister and Fransella (ibid), the term "should be reserved for extensive and elaborate systems of ideas cast in terms of an integrated language formalized structures of ideas that have a wide range of convenience such that they may ultimately explain much that is not even envisaged at the time they are constructed yet always the explanations must be derivable from, and relatable to, what has gone before" (p 14). In the language of analytical philosophy - a genuine, though maybe qualified, universality ("range of convenience") that is general rather than specific ("extensive and elaborate") and which is more than a collection of events ("explain much that is not even envisaged"). They are likely to cluster so as to form nomological networks or paradigms which may eventually come under such strain that they collapse and have to be reformed in a new way.

So far, what we have been thinking about does not really call for any differentiation between 'hard' and 'soft' science, between the 'natural' and the 'social'. The examples that come to mind - some very simple metallurgy and a little fanciful marine biology - are clearly natural science. There is an important difference between the natural and the social domains, even though both are in essence social activities. As I said earlier, even the most regular of regularities in the natural world has to be constructed rather than discovered. At the more obvious levels of communicability and expression, the laws and theories exist in the social world, that part of the world which Popper terms 'World III', in just the same way as social science constructs do. The difference, though, centres on what happens when one embarks on the business of science in each of the two cases.

In essence, science of the theory-building sort about which we have been thinking involves that business of deriving appropriate hypotheses for test from the theory, establishing what empirical evidence ought to look like, and then going looking for it to see what happens to the hypotheses when you have found the evidence, or failed to. The practice of hypothesis-testing - whether for explanation-seeking or event-predicting purposes - involves changing things, moving them around, or yourself in relation to them; in a word, 'transformation' of some sort. The practice of your scientific endeavour is going to be a function of something about the theory that originated the hypotheses; and the end-result in terms of putting the theory to test or in terms of achieving a satisfactory prediction, will itself be a function of

aspects of the theory and the practice adopted for testing. This, of course, is the "essential indivisibility" of theory and practice that I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.

A colleague and I once wrote, not very originally, in the following terms:-

"..... the social sciences differ from the natural sciences in that the operations that go to make up the practice of social science are operations on and in a socio-political reality, whereas those of natural science are rooted in the physical reality of rocks, chemicals, neurones and the like. The natural scientist transforms his scientific reality by tapping specimens, mixing compounds, measuring knee-jerks. We transform ours by asking people questions, subjecting them to stress, fooling them occasionally, altering their jobs. All these are operations performed on interpersonal relationships - operations which thus take their place within a social and political reality, not within a physical one." (McLeod and Exley, 1977).

Obvious enough, but there are two important aspects to this difference. The first involves underlining what is implied by the last sentence - it is a 'small-p' political transformation that forms practice for a social-scientific investigation. Other people are doing something, because of you, that they would not otherwise have done, or - at the least obvious level of intervention - they have their social relationships changed by your now being part of those relationships, even if you are only watching unnoticed. The

second is that, in the great majority of cases where unnoticed observation is not the style of the investigation, the 'personal scientist' in the individuals of interest - to call back an expression that again I used at the beginning of the chapter - will first of all possess, and quite probably be in the process of testing out, his or her own theories about whatever is at issue, and he or she will most certainly possess some kind of theory about **you** and what **you** are doing, at the same time as you are conducting what you thought was **your** hypothesis-testing. This is something that rocks, chemicals, and neurones do not do. It is quite likely to be the underlying reason for the absence in social science of laws of the 'if-it's-iron-it-rusts' sort that I also mentioned earlier. The social world does exist; solipsism is untenable; there are indeed what I called veridical regularities; but the changes that take place in those regularities as a direct result of one's moves to study them and to formulate the appropriate law tend to militate against that very formulation.

Writing elsewhere on the same theme, I also went on to say - talking about the kind of predictive transformation that hypothesises 'if we do this, things will be better' -

"Human value-systems will resist any attempts to induce change from without - even if the 'without' is by its own lights perfectly respectable, coherent, internally consistent, and above all 'right'. We are all familiar at a level of daily experience with the forms that this resistance takes. They range from outright rejection of the would-be change-inducer's credentials to what one body of

theory would call 'rationalizing away' the problem posed to the organisation by his presence. The administrator, executive, manager, foreman, worker, who flies comfortably by the seat of his pants is by **his** own lights doing so to a flight plan that is perfectly respectable, coherent, internally consistent, and 'right'. His resistance is thus understandable and justifiable. An evolving body of theory that starts from within the working experience - from the flight plans, as it were - and develops interactively with those doing the work is far better placed to influence and bring about change in human value systems" (McLeod 1977).

So there are subtle differences between the practice of natural science and the practice of social science, no matter how much recourse practitioners in the social sciences may take to white coats, computers, and the like.

The differences between **theories** in the natural and social domains may seem more subtle still - until you take a pace back and think about it. A theory of some sort that explains or predicts something concerning rocks, chemicals and so on is a theory held by people. Its content conveys to other people something about rocks and the like; it says nothing direct about the theory builders. If a theory that focusses on people is a good theory under the conditions that we laid down above - universality, generality, more than an aggregation of events - then, as it is also held by people, at the same time as it conveys to others something about its own focus (people), it must this time also say something about the theory builders. The most extreme case, of

course, is theorising about theorising. Then, total reflexivity is a must. Theories of how other people come to know things about the world have to account not only for those other people, they have to account for the theorists' knowing things about other people, knowing things about the world. This is probably quite good for epistemology in general. An epistemology derived from theorising about the natural, non-social world would not acquire the sharpening up that the need for true reflexivity provides. As we noted just now, rocks, chemicals and neurones and the like do not, as far as we know, go in for theorising about **us**, so that our theorising about **them** can ignore that angle. With people as both object and subject of study, the story is different.

This means, of course, that psychological theories have to be able to account for themselves - an all-pervading feature that is at its starkest in the realm of cognition, learning, explanations of thought and knowing. I do not want to exclude feelings, emotion, values, will-to-action, and so on, nor really to distinguish much between any of these and thought or knowing. But it is simpler to keep thinking for the while about 'knowing'.

A very straightforward epistemological analysis can have as its criteria two pairs of elements. First, there is consideration of the part played by the subject as opposed to the object of knowledge. And second there is some idea of stasis as against growth - a static/dynamic dimension - where the question is whether there are in some sense eternal, abiding frames of knowledge or whether knowledge is essentially, in all aspects, open to change.

This provides us with four abstract cells in a 2x2 matrix. Let us first dismiss the object-prime/static cell as being logically impossible to fill. It would need an eternal but external structure of knowledge, which I myself find impossible to conceptualise. However, the object-prime/dynamic cell is energetically occupied by the behaviourisms. The primacy of the object over subject is implicit in the conditioning model, where knowledge is determined by reward or reinforcement schedules controlled by the world out there. The dynamic or growth takes the form of an indeterminate plasticity, whose pattern is subject only to the whim of the 'experimenter' - or, more sinister still, of the power-figure in the society where reinforcement of 'correct' response is the tool for controlling thought. If knowledge really did conform in its acquisition to this kind of epistemological account, there would be nothing to stop a pre-school infant being conditioned to operate formally within a syllogistic framework. Things do not happen that way, though, and the object-prime/dynamic cell cannot provide anything in the way of a satisfactory account of 'knowing'.

Where the subject has primacy in determining the form and content of knowledge, we immediately find ourselves in all kinds of difficulty trying to account for 'inherited knowledge' in some way or another. The static form of a subject-prime account is probably easier to deal with than the dynamic. As examples of the former there would be Kant, with his centrality of "I" in accounts of knowing, through to Chomsky with his innate linguistic structures. In the subject-prime/dynamic cell, however, we might locate the approach exemplified by Miller, Gallanter and Pribram,

with their basic cognitive TOTE Unit - a unit of logical operation working at a very simple level to guide behaviour by means of a Test-Operate-Test-Exit rule. The difficulty here, despite the cybernetic attraction of such a neat rule, is to account for its provenance. It is an abstraction, a 'mentalism', and again one is forced to require that mentalisms themselves be inheritable.

However, with an account in terms of dynamic subject-object interaction, such as that developed by Piaget, the difficulty is resolved. For Piaget, knowing is rooted in action - indeed, knowing and acting are to all intents the same thing. Knowing acts are built on other simpler knowing acts in a genuine development, through which an orderly progress can be traced. This in fact is the 'dynamic' - though this is not the term that Piaget himself used. He described the evolution of knowing structures within the individual as 'genetic'; this is more correctly the term for the opposite end to the static pole on that static/dynamic dimension above, but I wanted to be careful not to introduce it too soon in case we confused it with the more commonly met with connotation of inherited by one individual from another; and I am trying to dismiss that particular conceptualisation as any possible basis for explaining knowledge. No - for Piaget, the simple reflexive act is the basis for all knowledge. That much, yes, is inherited - the capacity to act physically upon the world, and a very simple grasping or sucking reflex may indeed be 'wired in'. But the whole thesis of what has come to be more correctly called 'genetic epistemology' is that the individual builds up active knowledge for him or herself, working on the world 'out there'.

The interactive genetic or evolutionary approach to knowing requires nothing more than inherited 'physicalisms' as a basis to all thought; it needs no 'mentalisms'.

Descartes - subject prime and static - finished up with a structure that was reduced in essence to "I doubt". Meyerson (1964), in his study of science, seems to have distilled everything down to a basic tautology in his attempt to account for our ability to produce the kinds of law of nature that we were considering earlier. Chomsky has postulated innate deep structures of 'grammar' as explanation for human language. But the ability to produce or, it might seem, to 'find' the kinds of regularity that we were considering earlier does not need to be posited either on a propensity to discover 'real' regularity in the world out there or on an innate mentalism. The regularity occurs by virtue of its being a commonality, a common construction. People the world over construct the same kind of conception of gravity, and produce shareable theories about gravity because they all act on a world in which, from that point of view, pretty much the same thing happens when they do so. However, it is we - people - who say it is the same, and while we find that we can usefully go on saying it, we have that regularity. But the regularity does not **itself** have to be out there in the world; nor does it need to be imported into our heads; we do not need to inherit even a simple Cartesian 'doubting structure' and certainly not any innate language-structure, no matter how deep. All we need is to start with simple activity, and from there to go on constructing our ever more elaborate structures of operations, or actions, upon the

world, building up internal representations of those actions as we go.

Note how easy it is to slip into using the words 'we' and 'our'. An indication, maybe, of how difficult it is (artificial, actually) to try and maintain a differentiation between the activities of the fully paid-up professional social scientist or theorist and the activities of the amateur social scientist who is his object of study. What we have just been doing in effect is bringing to bear criteria derived from our earlier exposition of what we are prepared to take the law/theory concept to mean, and using these criteria to subject different kinds of psychological explanation to test. In essence, we conclude that theories - of the professional theorist sort - that require innate mentalisms smack too much of the mermaid's tail; whereas the infinite plasticity of the behaviourisms allows for no regularity other than that which undoubtedly exists in the mind of the 'experimenter'. The individual subject of the professional's explanations, acting on his or her world, is going to be acting in such a way - wittingly or unwittingly - as to establish individual universals, general enough in application to be of use to that individual going about his or her business, and with that aspect of 'competence' about them that will enable predictions on beyond an aggregate of occurrences to be made. The basic 'knowing act' is 'establishing regularity'. In other words, the individual behaves in a number of identifiable ways very much as the professional theorist does. And thus we are led to a view of the individual as 'personal scientist', the individual as knower, as actor/doer, as philosopher, and maybe

even as 'personal epistemologist' - but **not**, it must be stressed, simply the individual as ponderer, reflector upon external action.

In this conceptualisation, work, 'transformation', action is the stuff of knowledge. The view, as summarised by Furth (1969), states that "... knowledge is ... an activity in the creative sense of the term. It does not merely act on things. It transforms them and turns them into objects of knowing." The kinds of operation on the world that we are considering will be ordering, seriation, classification, separating, and so on and so forth. They must fit together in an interlocking way, the true meaning of the much abused word 'structure' being a set of operations inter-relating in an internally coherent way (rather like our 'nomological network'). Development to higher-order, more stable structures takes place when aspects about an existing one are put under strain by the attempt to accommodate to something as yet unassimilable - and here the similarity with Kuhn's scientific paradigms changing as they come under strain is of more than passing interest.

So the 'theories' of the world entertained by the amateur, unpaid theorist will consist of structures of operations upon the world, more or less in equilibrium within themselves, and between themselves and the assimilable world outside.

This is the point at which, I think, it will help to call back into play the idea of levels, of hierarchisation, that we noted earlier on. It might even be useful to think partly in terms of the classical distinction between 'form' and 'content', acknowledging its undoubted over-simplicity as we do so.

First, it seems to me that Piagetian genetic epistemology presents an account of human knowing at a fundamental level - a 'micro' level as it were. The basic building blocks of the theory are, as I have just said, actions - actions upon the world. With repetition, very simple acts begin to assume a representation, or better an internalisation, of the act. The way in which an internal scheme (in Furth's terms, "the internal general form of a specific knowing activity") becomes established will vary as the individual develops, becoming, in essence, less dependent on a concrete-physical act. The schemes or operations will 'fit together' in a reasonably coherent way, and develop in richness, in formal complexity, and in an increasing ability to function without recourse to the concrete physical world. The development of formal complexity - extremely well documented from birth to the acquisition of an ability to function at a fully logical 'hypothetico-deductive' level in adolescence - is marked by more or less abrupt transitions. The transitions themselves come about when, in some sense or other, the developing child 'realises' that his or her present mode of operation leads to paradox - eventually, for example, experiments with soft drinks and different sized glasses result in acquisition of the structure of conservation of liquids, and no longer will the imposition of the regularity that says "taller glass means more orange squash" be tolerated. This is one sense in which the environment in that organism/environment interaction plays its part - it has indeed been constructed by the individual, but now the things that it presents to him or her demand a fundamental re-organisation of the knowing structures.

At what seems to me to be one level of abstraction up from this - that is, at a more 'macro' level - we have the Kelly school of Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955, of course - Bannister and Fransella, op cit; and many others). The by now familiar fundamental postulate is that "a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events"; and as Bannister and Fransella put it (p.20), the import of this is that "man is in business to make sense out of his world and to test the sense he has made in terms of its predictive capacity". The building-blocks this time, though, are bi-polar "constructs" - tall-short, fat-thin, bright-stupid, or what have you. The business of making sense is conducted in terms of these, and the activity involved has the global term 'construing' applied to it. As we construe our world we build up and we elaborate systems of constructs which we use both to predict and test out features of the world with which we go on to come into contact, using the system, on a 'like-this-unlike-that' basis, to organise our way about in what is - by definition - a continuously new world. The ideas of regularity, range of application, of strain as 'fit' fails, are all fundamental to this formulation - hence, indeed, the tag coined by Kelly, 'man-the-scientist'. But the act of construing does not possess the degree of specificity of the actions-on-the-world of Piagetian theory - combining, separating, repeating, parting, placing in order, substituting, and so on. To my mind 'construing', the psychological channelizing in terms of the bi-polar construct building-blocks, is a kind of meta-action relative to these. Indeed, the Piagetian actions-on-the-world I am inclined to think of as the very processes that are

"psychologically channelized" according to the Kellian fundamental postulate. That, in a sense, makes construct theory - relative to genetic epistemology - more of a 'psychology of results'. And indeed, though construct-systems are almost immeasurably refinable, and capable of aggregation into hierarchies, the aspect of transition from one logical form to another does not seem to be present in the same way as at the Piagetian level - development is much more of a smooth incrementalism as new ways of construing one's world are evolved.

These two approaches - or as I think I would like to see it, these two aspects of one general approach - are essentially 'form' oriented rather than 'content'. In neither, for example, would there be any suggestion of postulating as a necessary part of the theory some explicit link between early toilet-training practice and anal regression as a specific pathological presenting symptom in the way that there might be in Freudian theory. One other approach that, whilst congruent with Piaget and Kelly, begins to blur the form/content distinction a little is that developed over recent years by Jacques and his co-workers (eg, Jacques, 1978). Here he charts developmental progress - into and through adulthood - in terms again of a sufficient degree of specificity for discrete logical structures to be identifiable. The thrust, though, is more in terms of identifying progress through from a concrete-boundedness to a high level of ability to function in the abstract - an obvious parallel with the Piagetian view. The 'content' element centres on the theory's work relatedness, and work moreover in hierarchical bureaucratic organisations - not, of course, that it is

intended to be limited to this, but having developed in the work context it understandably talks in these specific terms. The main progression across stages develops from the ability to work only by means of physical contact with the concrete world, through to a level of genuine abstraction "in the sense of being able to work at specific and concrete problems without dependence upon mental contact with existing things" (p. 291), and on beyond to general theory- and policy-building capabilities. By 'theory' here, Jacques refers to that level of generality of application that allows the individual "to function with what might be called one-time contact with the concrete".

Stamp, (1978) elaborates this fundamental stage-dependent development specifically with respect to managerial capacity and defines it in terms of degrees of rule-boundedness. At the most basic level of capacity, the 'concrete' is equated with action anchored in a given rule. Development is seen as progression through to a level at which underlying systems of rules are actively sought out, and on from there to one at which the rules are themselves actually constructed by the individual - Jacques' theory-building level.

Whereas, of course, it is not difficult to reconcile activity at these higher levels of capability with an overall view of the individual as 'personal scientist' or 'personal theoretician', the lower, more concrete levels might at first sight seem less amenable. But, as the emphasis is on the individual at work, and hence on adulthood or emergent adulthood, the expectation must

be that they will have achieved at least in some measure the ability to function at the 'formal operations' level described by Piaget. (The individual, in fact, may acquire this ability at different times in different domains of knowledge, as suggested by Hallam, 1969, and his demonstrating that it may not be until about the age of 16 that it emerges for the study of history.) Even when the individual's work capacity is bounded by the given rule, though, he or she will clearly be capable of operating in a hypothetico-deductive, syllogistic, 'if/then' manner - indeed it is implicit in the ability to follow the rules. More generally, as Stamp puts it, the 'capacity-theory' approach concerns "different ways of organizing action and experience into structural wholes, total ways of viewing the world and responding to it." The low-level, concrete, rule-bounded way is just one of these, and as such, for the individual concerned, it will serve exactly the same purpose as does any one of the higher-order, more abstract levels for the individual capable of operating at these latter. For the higher-capacity individual 'looking back', as it were, at the functioning of someone operating in a more concrete way, it will appear that that lower order capacity lacks in effective regularity, universality, generality, and predictive and explanatory power. It may be theory, but it will be poor theory. For the individual concerned, though, as far as his or her experience goes, the organizing capability will indeed meet just those needs - until 'strain' sets in, that is, and the 'goodness of fit' between that way of viewing the world and what the world is demanding starts to fail. The high-capacity, 'super-observer' surveying all possible levels of capacity is of course justified in saying that reliable

theories do not start to emerge until such-and-such a level has been attained but here the test is more of the social Kuhnian universal - 'real theory', as it were, with a truly extensive universality applicable to the constructed regularities involved.

Although in considering an interactively evolving knowing account I have tried to stress the social construction nature of knowledge, we have so far been thinking, implicitly maybe, mainly in terms of knowing in some way or another about the specifically concrete physical world - rusting iron, mermaids' tails, rocks, chemicals, neurones. If it is reasonably straightforward to grasp the concept of a subject-object interaction in knowing the physical world, it is of course simplicity itself to accept interactivity in knowing the social - the effect to which I drew attention when contrasting natural and social sciences a little while back. Any study of socialisation ever conducted is likely to have at least some element of interactive knowing about it. Harre (1981) goes so far as to argue that "not only is much of our social knowledge socially located, but that some very important cognitive processes are not inner and private, but public and collective", and he goes on to demonstrate his point by describing episodes where the production of meaning involved in 'statement-making' and the understanding of meaning in 'interpreting' both have a clearly socially-shared and composite nature - almost, in fact, a case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

Levels at which social knowing - or any other kind - may exist for individuals can be thought of as implicit or explicit, suggest

Wegner and Vallacher, as I mentioned earlier. I may in fact have been slightly over-critical in my observation that, for example, the assertion 'attractive people are friendly' hardly constitutes a theory. Taken on its own, I will continue to maintain my case. But as one of many relational statements cohering to form a structure of relations in equilibrium, then of course - provided that our criteria of a sufficiently general and universal regularity, transcending mere historical record, are met - the whole structure could reasonably be construed as a 'theory'. Where hierarchisation enters in is in the differentiation of social theories of this sort into the implicit and the explicit.

The implicit is that theory of social action, or social knowing, which intrinsically structures the behaviour and knowledge of the individual. It is in essence that which is only discernible to the outside observer. Hence it is likely to be that to which the fully paid-up professional social scientist observing, explaining and accounting for the way in which that individual gets about in the world will be paying attention.

The explicit level, though, is that at which the individual him or herself constructs relatively coherent accounts about his or her own, or others', behaviour. It is, as it were, the level at which the amateur scientist operates when concentrating on being a scientist, as opposed simply to getting on with living in the world.

The distinction, at its most succinct maybe, is between how people think about the social world, and how they **think** they think about it.

However, this distinction when subjected to scrutiny turns out to be not quite as distinct as all that. How, for instance, does one render an implicit personal theory concerning social knowing and acting explicit? In a figurative sense, you get it out on the table and have a look at it. But what is it that implicitly structures the knowing involved in 'having a look'? Another higher-order **implicit** theory, of course. That is, in order to make an implicit theory explicit, it is necessary to have a higher-order way of considering it, which entails a higher-order implicit theory, and in order to render **that** explicit there must be a yet higher-order implicit one, and so on into infinite regress. (The comparison with construct-laddering is worth noting.) Provided that the customary conventions for the testing and elaboration of **any** theory are observed, and the social and individual emphases both allowed for, the rendering explicit of the implicit social theory of an individual represents a route to self-knowledge - indeed, is a more effective and more highly elaborated set of high order theories about the world.

Let me summarise where we have got to so far.

By theory we mean a structure of knowing-acts or operations that has a degree of internal coherence and has as its focus the construction of a regularity that is, under defined conditions, universal in application, general rather than specific, and which applies to more than a simply historical account. Hypotheses can be raised to predict, to explain, or to subject the theory to test, depending upon circumstances.

We have thought in terms of various levels. Epistemologically, a theory of knowledge, of knowing (of human activity), to account for available evidence must be by nature interactive as between subject and object of knowing, and dynamic or evolutionary ('genetic') in the sense of accounting for learning and development.

This leads to theories that fit the individual as object of study on to the individual as subject - the 'personal scientist' type of theory.

Here we find new levels. As regards theories of form, there is the Piagetian approach at a micro level ('micro' only in the sense of the level of operations that it addresses - but at the same time 'macro' in being a genetic epistemology rather than a simple psychology of development), and in terms of processes, the Personal Construct approach at a level of abstraction higher than that of Piaget - simpler forms, with nothing in the way of transition from one structure to a logically different one.

Along with levels, there is the Piagetian concept of transition across stages, a conceptualisation shared by the Jacques school of capacity-theorists. Here though - moving towards content - the personal scientist under the microscope is the individual at work in a large bureaucracy.

Individuals will also entertain at any one time - that is, independent of transition or development across stages in a

longitudinal sense - 'theory' at differing implicit levels - the implicit, only ever known to the outsider whilst implicit, giving way to the explicit as higher-order implicit theories are made available.

In the next chapter, I am going to pursue the content of individual theory, as regards the young administrator, in more detail; and I am going to set out some of the choices for action in the pursuit of understanding their early experience, describing the particular choice that I made - in other words, 'practice'.

Chapter 3 - Practice

There is one difficulty about trying to conduct any straight-forward study of how the typical young administrator learns the job in his or her early days. This is that it is impossible to specify any obvious, generally applicable content to what it is that they are going to have to be learning. There is the highly specific content of an individual task, or the specific demands of an individual post, and we will see shortly that for the young administrators in our study this ranges across financing British Rail, the policy problems of shipbuilders, practical issues concerning private rented accommodation, protecting ancient monuments, trading with foreign countries, and so on. But the kind of study that might examine the learning processes of art students, of student nurses, architects, post-graduate research students, and the like, is just not applicable in our case.

In studies such as these - all of which are in fact examples of work broadly within the framework of personal construct theory - the interest will have been in part on the content and its structuring, and in part on the structuring and its content. Content, in a sense, has been of interest maybe only partly to understand the way in which the structure develops as the student grapples with that content. Some fairly broad generalities of form can emerge - one can identify sequences of loose construing followed by tight, or of provisionality followed by

certainty, say. It becomes possible to make statements about how structure develops in the context of a particular content and maybe more generally, even when in essence the structures are no more than varyingly complex assemblages of simple bi-polar relationships.

Different poles on a content-form dimension might for example be represented by Phillips (1981) on the one hand, and Glanville (1981) on the other. In her work with PhD students Phillips shows that they need to be able to develop an ability to evaluate their own work, an ability that interacts with dependency on the supervisor. Glanville on the other hand develops an alternative to cluster or factor analysis techniques that, entirely independently of any specific content, provides a way of examining what he chooses to call 'heterarchies' amongst constructs previously elicited by standard methods.

The formal nature of the kind of development that I want to consider is, as I have just been saying in the previous chapter, general enough to be encapsulated in the phrase 'the individual as scientist', and more particularly, in this setting, as 'social scientist'. I will not want to proceed either at the more molecular Piagetian level or at that of the even more explicitly longitudinal capacity theory. I will, however, be viewing the individual within that interactive constructivist framework which is common to these various levels, and viewing him or her as the constructor of implicit and explicit theory about the work that comes their way. The content of their work has its own intrinsic interest for us,

and an interest in the sense of helping to discern something of the individual's structuring of theories about the world. It is the apparent lack of commonality across various content-areas that inspires the view that the specific content of interest is in a sense 'formless'. So we have a study where, in essence, the approach is one of a primacy - not a total supremacy, but a primacy - of formless content over form. Nevertheless, let me not exaggerate the formlessness of administrative work. The new recruit enters knowing something, maybe not much, but something of what he or she is going to have to call on in terms of individual ability.

In the course of the 1970s, the administrative job-description came to place an increasing emphasis on management - both of resources and of staff - as compared with the earlier almost total concentration on administrative work - which in the Civil Service is still taken to imply to a greater or lesser extent policy-formulation, advice to ministers, and so on. Another change was the slow and gradual introduction of a requirement that administrators be at least generally numerate, as well as continuing to be, of course, literate.

As far as the six young trainees who were the centre of interest of this study are concerned, what they would have had available to them as basic information about their prospective careers was set out in the memorandum published by the Civil Service Commission describing the recruitment scheme for 1978. Each had appeared at CSSB as a final-year undergraduate during that year,

and had taken up duty some time after graduating - hence 1979 is their first year of work, and the year during which we conducted our study. The job-description aspect was covered thus:

"The work of administrators in the Government service is demanding, responsible and varied because the activities of departments touch every aspect of the national life and because of the wide range of administrative work within a single department. Administrators can be concerned with policy and planning work or the drafting of legislation or the detailed management of an executive programme in which large numbers of people are employed. Much of an administrator's work is done on paper but there is a great deal of personal contact with other government departments, local authorities, both sides of industry, and members of the public."

It went on to explain that:

"Often they work alongside economists, lawyers and scientists and other specialists as members of a team and they may well after their early years themselves specialise in a particular area of a department's interests or, for example, in personnel management or the applications of computer science."

This explained, then - in somewhat bare outline - something of what they would be expected to do, and in what contexts. The

aptitudes needed for the successful conduct of this sort of work were themselves depicted thus:

"A capacity for dealing with other people at all levels is an essential quality, as is also the ability to present and defend a case lucidly and persuasively. Other qualities called for are powers of critical analysis, sound judgement, a willingness to accept responsibility, and a capacity to work hard and quickly."

As I said, there is nothing very specific there, no obvious content to be learned by the newcomer. One interesting feature is this. First, there is what may be for many the attraction of 'policy and planning' or the 'drafting of legislation'. Here surely is political involvement of a high order at a national level. What an attraction that could be. But - there are the constraints. Not surprisingly, of course, given our career service and the eschewing of party political appointments, there is a further piece of information in the Commission memorandum that reminds all candidates that "in general Administration Trainees and those in equivalent grades are precluded from engaging in political activities" The point is that those cases mentioned above that the trainee might be called upon to present and defend "lucidly and persuasively" will most often be someone else's - always the case, given political ownership of policy by ministers as of constitutional right, and frequently the case when one's own inevitable political theories fail to match those of the ministerial line. Administrative folklore abounds with its anecdotes of civil

servants who were assiduously turned about-face with the arrival of a new Administration and have set to to undo that which they had been so carefully designing or planning up to that point.

This, of course, is about as much as the trainees might be expected to know about the business of becoming an administrator before they actually 'take up duty'. What, though, might administration 'really' be about? In other words, how much more about their prospective jobs may other people know and take for granted than they themselves can possibly know at the outset? Well, there is no dearth of material in the literature that pertains to administrative work and its ethos - starting with Plato and moving onwards, via, of course, Macchiavelli and 'The Prince', right up to the present day.

The graduate trainee entering the Administration Group of the Civil Service is in fact confronted with prospects of a career in which experience may span the whole length of what can be thought of as a continuum from 'administration' to 'management'. The same doubtless holds good for entry into a wider variety of organisations, bureaucratic in structure in the main, where coordination of organisational purpose and of means to attain that purpose is demanded. Hodgkinson (1978) suggests that in essence the administration end of the continuum is characterised as strategic and concerned with values, the management end tactical and concerned with facts. Dulewicz and Keenay (1974) found that at the time of their study, the work performed by occupants of senior posts - Principal through to Under Secretary - could be

divided quite readily into sixty percent that was clearly administrative, and forty percent that they decided to call 'management'. The administrative work was typically concerned with policy-making, advice to ministers, legislative issues generally; management was distinctly oriented towards the use of personnel and other resources.

Hodgkinson (pp 16, 17) summarises the distinctive elements of the administrator's position as first, being "an interface at the nexus of organisation and environment"; next, as being "continuously concerned with linguistic 'intelligence'"; and third, requiring that he or she become a "specialist in generalism".

The capabilities directly demanded by these role-definitions are, in turn, "those skills which can enhance the organization's prospects of survival the skills conventionally associated with diplomacy"; the skills of "communication, both reception and transmission from the ability to articulate with some fluency to refined skills of analysis which may be quasi-legalistic or philosophical in scope"; and those skills implicit in "a range of decision making functions from the rapid, the reflective (sic), the 'tactical' to the laboured, the reflective, the 'strategic'". (I assume that the first 'reflective' should read 'reflexive', if the sense of antithesis between the immediate and the carefully thought-out is to be properly achieved.)

Winter, McClelland and Stewart (1981) in a study of the outcomes of that broad 'liberal arts' type of education that has traditionally

been held to prepare a young man or woman for the practice of this specialised generalism, list the following attributes as the goals of this kind of education (the list being a compilation from authorities extending as far back as to Plato himself):

- "1. Thinking critically or possessing broad analytical skill
2. Learning how to learn
3. Thinking independently
4. Empathizing, recognising one's own assumptions, and seeing all sides of an issue
5. Exercising self-control for the sake of broader loyalties
6. Showing self-assurance in leadership ability
7. Demonstrating mature social and emotional judgement; personal integration
8. Holding equalitarian, liberal, pro-science, and anti-authoritarian values and beliefs
9. Participating in and enjoying cultural experience"

This is, of course, something of a formidable array. But to my mind it is not difficult to achieve a mapping, even if only a coarse one, between the Commission's specification, Hodgkinson's requirements, and these generalist educational goals.

In addition, an interesting example of a statement of requisite management skills is the taxonomy developed by Burgoyne (see, for example, Burgoyne and Stuart, 1978), in which at the 'lowest',

most immediate level of demand there are the abilities associated with technical knowledge, familiarity with the setting, and an ability to 'read the environment'; at the next level there are those which have to do with problem-solving, decision-making, working with and through other people, maintaining a sense of personal stability, and so on; and at the highest level come the skills or capacities associated with creative thought, learning to learn, and self-development in a fundamental sense. Again there is little difficulty mapping this on to the other specifications, all of which suggests strongly that the skills and abilities required of the administrator and those required of the manager differ in no very material respect.

Where there is in fact a difference is in the broader statement of function, summarised by Hodgkinson - again, on a continuum - in terms of there being a range of administration/management that "extends from a surface concern with the managerial-technical to a depth concern with organisational purpose - from philosophy at the centre of the sphere to action at the surface". There is here an interesting twist to the philosopher-king concept. For Plato, it seems, only philosophers could be kings; now we find ourselves promulgating a view that even 'kings' can be philosophers. But, whether it is the administrator-philosopher dealing with the "formulation of purpose, the value-laden issues", with organisational ends, or whether it is the manager-technologist dealing more with means-to-ends, and with aspects which are "more routine, definitive, programmatic, and susceptible to quantitative methods", they both must share in those qualities of

the scientist that we have already considered. As they go about the business of making sense out of and acting upon their world, the construction of regularities, generally and universally applicable, and possessing competence as opposed merely to performance features, will characterise both.

Much of this has been of general applicability. When we come back specifically to the administrator-manager operating in our Civil Service there are two distinctive features, both touched on in my introductory chapter. The first can be presented in the form of a simple syllogism - if this individual has been recruited to the Administration Group he or she will be engaged in administration/management. One important logical deduction from this is that if we know that someone is engaged in administration/management - and particularly management - we can not infer that we necessarily have an individual recruited to the Administration Group. Specialists and professionals outside this Group can also to varying extents, when engaged in work on their disciplines, be seen to be doing work that has both administrative and managerial aspects to it. Some may join promotees from the Administration Group in the top rank Open Structure. Another deduction emphasises that the Administration Group recruit does not do the work of a specialist or professional from one of those many and varied areas outside the Group. His or her work is defined as administration/management even if that definition has little generalisable in the way of specific content, as I pointed out earlier. The second distinctive feature is the 'upper bound' on the formulation of organisational purpose, on the value-laden issues. The focus of that organisational purpose for the Civil Service

administrator is, by and large, the polity. It can be argued that when he or she is focussed upon the Civil Service itself, then it is management that they are doing rather than administration - an effectively organised and efficiently run Civil Service is after all the means to the wider ends of serving government and the country. But, of course, the formulation of ends with respect to the polity is the job of the elected politician - and we come back to Wilding's point about the administrator having to hold back from total personal immersion in specific policy-making or advice.

I suggested earlier that the administrator has to be capable of developing a meta-theory of work that in a sense adumbrates those theories of administrative purpose that are distinctively party-political. The similarity of this notion to the Wegner and Vallacher explicit/implicit distinction in personally held social theories is worth noting. The distinction made by Argyris (1980) between 'espoused theory' and 'theory-in-use', of course, has its own marked similarity in turn to the Wegner and Vallacher formulation, though Argyris appears to be more interested in the extent of mismatch between the theory of action that an individual might maintain he or she has regarding particular issues, and the theory that observation shows them to be using when they are actually called upon to perform. But as regards the in some ways simpler distinction between the explicit and the implicit personal theory and the way in which the idea applies to administrators, it would make sense to postulate that success in the job might be related to the extent to which the individual can make those distinctively party-political theories of action upon the

polity effectively explicit. That would not of course be to ignore the possibility of the 'higher-order' implicit theory that he or she uses to cope with the 'lower-order' explicit theories of concern itself being available for explicit articulation at some point - indeed, that is clearly how Wilding is operating as he himself makes his own particular observations. (What is intriguing is what the implicit theory that copes with or handles this latter looks like.)

However, as I pointed out earlier, our new trainees need not be expected to have had access to much in the way of this kind of detail - though the possibility is not necessarily totally excluded. What we can in fact say about the social world of work into which they were making their transition from education is that the job-description would have given some idea of broad organisational goals (very broad - activities touching "every aspect of the national life", "policy and planning", "detailed management") and the specification of requisite capacities would provide some idea of the way in which they were going to have to work to help towards the achievement of those goals ("dealing with other people", being called upon to "present and defend a case", deploying powers of "critical analysis, sound judgement", and so on). How, I wished to know, do they go about making that transition? What does the process look like? How does it feel? What kinds of possibly embryonic personal theories of work - explicit or implicit - can one see them developing?

The next question is - why should I want to know? In part, the answer is that I wanted to know from practical points of view

connected with the actual process of selection, or to a less immediate extent with training and career-development. In part, of course, there was the prospect of adding a little to the broad theory, or body of knowledge, concerning human learning - more specifically human adult learning and more specifically still, human adult learning at a major life transition-point. So in my own role as scientist the aim, as regards these particular trainees, was understanding - not prediction, certainly not control, simply understanding. What I wanted to do was to try and find out something about how they themselves started to develop as personal scientists in the domain that I have just been describing.

I touched earlier on on the way in which the Civil Service approaches the business of finding out about candidates for recruitment and making selection decisions about them. The annual Administration Trainee scheme in operation in the mid-1970s was a three-stage procedure designed to identify the 200-or-so candidates with the highest potential, from a candidate field of about three thousand.

The dimensions measured by the first-cut qualifying stage are purely intellectual - partly discursive papers marked anonymously by a panel of academics, partly cognitive tests marked at that time by clerical staff against a key. The content of the battery of course is designed to predict aspects of administrative job-performance, and the whole exercise is statistical and probabilistic - higher test scores are associated empirically with higher job-performance ratings. The measures, though, are in

essence 'measures of yield' rather than indicators, say, of intellectual dynamics. At the selection board stage proper, more cognitive tests take their place alongside written and live job-simulations that do in fact provide a means of both observing problem-solving in action and making an assessment of its products. There are, too, the insights to be gained into aspects of the ways in which the candidates interact with each other. One-to-one interviews with each of the three assessors in turn serve to augment these kinds of view and, moreover, in the case of the one interview that each candidate has with the psychologist assessor on the team, to provide a more specifically longitudinal, biographical view, of a distinctly qualitative nature.

Looking to see how the transition on acceptance comes about, therefore, could have been conducted by means of repetitions of this kind of process, or its derivatives, made at intervals over a period. Needless to say, anything remotely approaching such a procedure was for a start entirely impracticable. Nevertheless, some kind of measurement model for tapping progress against pre-established criteria of development could have been set up, a survey conducted, and statistical aggregations produced as answers to the developmental questions. It should be clear from the previous chapter, though, that a positivist approach of this kind would not have been considered suitable. The statistical aggregate and probabilistic decision is almost certainly fair and acceptable when a selection choice has to be made from competing candidates against specified criteria. The more highly refined the procedure the better the probabilities. But for a study of how

people learn, develop, make a transition, cope with a major change in their lives, this kind of approach could only possibly be viewed as in some sense 'impositionist' and hence, quite apart from any ethical considerations, epistemologically unsound.

To try and understand something of what happens as people develop, as they themselves go about the business of trying to understand and make sense of the changing conditions in which they find themselves, demands an approach that is suited to "revealing information about complex subjects", and that whilst doing this does so in such a way as to "encourage the greatest possible freedom and honesty of expression" (Selltitz, Jahoda, Deutsch and Cook, 1965). As the Allport quote in Selltitz et al has it, if we want to find out about what makes people tick, "why not ask them?" So something like an extension of the psychologist-assessor's interview was called for.

Each trainee can be thought of as being engaged in a form of 'dialogue' with his or her work and the working environment. When I discuss - or even just think about - that 'dialogue' I am myself engaged in another 'dialogue' at a different level. This higher-order, or higher level of abstraction dialogue is higher not in any evaluative sense, but simply in the sense that it contains or is about the lower-order trainee/work dialogue. Naturally, it is entirely possible for the trainee him or herself to engage in this more abstract level of dialogue, and indeed that is exactly what we did when they talked with me about their work and the kind of experience that it represented for them. The two levels of

dialogue to which I am referring are of course in essence Pask's conversational languages L and L* (Pask, 1975), the one being the language in the 'experiment' and the other the language about it. Our trainees' dialogues with their work - in the language L - are likely for the most part to concern their explicit theories of work and working life; dialogues with me in L* are where the implicit theories ought to start to develop.

All these considerations of course put a limit on the size of my sample. It also presented a challenge to any considerations of generalizability. It seems to me that for any one study and its implications for understanding, theory-building, hypothesis-testing, prediction, control or whatever other aim there might be, there is going to be an interweaving of inductive and deductive inference, with the sample size having some kind of effect on just how the interweaving takes place. Basically, a statistically representative sample from a general population provides data from which inductive inferences to that whole population can be made, after which deductive inference back down to the individual case is possible. Possible it might be, of course, but the point that I made, in passing, in the previous chapter about there being very few laws in the social sciences testifies to the difficulty of saying anything very interesting on the basis of this deductive approach. On the other hand, the inductive inference out to the population is highlighted - imperilled? - by very small or unitary samples. Where the generalisation is hazarded - to the population, or even to elements of the singular process in which one individual finds him or herself that have not yet occurred - then the deductive

solution will be offered. Far better, it seems to me, to set aside these issues and deliberately choose not to try to make the generalisation. The one thing about the very small or unitary sample is that the data-content may be very rich, in comparison with whatever is retained in the statistical sampling approach. To limit one's aim to describing the single case, or small group of cases, and offering that up as a single playing-card towards building that house of cards of the paradigm seems to be a worthwhile approach. This means that other cases, other groups, other settings, bearing on the same or similar issues will be what together contribute to a coherent, internally consistent body of theory.

This then is the background to the approach that I adopted. In practice, as I mentioned in my introductory chapter, I was able to secure the willing cooperation of six new AT entrants, three each from two very large Departments of State - both of which represent by themselves something of a complete Civil Service in microcosm. For each of these entrants this was their first job - apart from the odd bit of filling in to earn a modest wage during university vacations, of course. They had thus all six literally just popped out of the end of the educational pipeline. For them, this was likely to be the big transition.

The trainees were of course the centre or focus of attention. For each, it was his or her learning processes, the explicit - and maybe implicit - theory-building in which I was interested. Furthermore, the trainee-ship was not for any of them so highly

specified, planned, or designed as to constitute a process in which an original purpose could be clearly stated. Of course, as regards the content of each particular task there would have been a more or less clearly stated objective in terms of coming to grips with the material involved. But as regards the 'being there' of the emergent administrator, learning was very much retrospective. Thus, for the 2x2 matrix constructed by Thomas and Harri-Augstein (1977) and which consists of a simple teacher-prime/learner-prime construct cast together with an original-purpose/retrospective one, the trainees fall fairly categorically into the learner-prime/retrospective-assessment cell. Though it was I who generated the original interest, and though I had a legitimate part to play in those L* dialogues about their experience, the work that they had been doing and about which we had those L* conversations had itself been conducted as an L dialogue between the trainee and that work. I had no direct place in this - only indirect communication about it. The L* dialogues with me were equally all retrospective, and all in all the learning or developmental process was in essence (and in so far as I was successful in achieving the aim) conducted as what Thomas and Harri-Augstein signify by the tag LR - learner-prime/retrospective.

Pulling in another strand of contemporary social psychological thinking, I think I can say that the way in which I went about conducting my own end of the L* dialogue was of a piece with most aspects of the kinds of approach outlined by Armistead (1974). His aim was to design a method of social psychological enquiry that would not get caught up in the positivist practice and

impoverished products of so much of the research in that area that he identified about him at that time. More directly the way in which I went about my L* dialogue was also intended to be a product of the kind of theoretical stance that I outlined earlier. Theory and practice must at least be mutually consistent with each other.

For Armistead, accounts of social processes have to be acquired from those participants in them, and the meanings of such accounts established, with checks back to their originators. Attempts to classify and generalize follow on, again through negotiation of some sort with the originator. In essence, Armistead argued, social psychology should concern itself with "people's experience in everyday life" - "asking people is the crucial methodology" (shades of Allport, of Selltiz et al) - "accounts constitute public evidence" - "classification, generalization and explanation will involve some interpretation of meaning" - "explanation of experience should move in a societal direction". In other words, evidence and material for theory-building, can be elicited by asking people about the area of interest - bearing in mind always that one is after all engaged in an interactive enterprise.

I should say that for me one of the difficulties was touched on by Armistead in his cautionary reference to power relations. He says (p 126) that "the power to make one's own definition [of social situations] stick" exists in various spheres, including the kind of setting in which there is an organisational senior exerting that

kind of power over a junior. Why it was particularly difficult for me was because of a tendency amongst some of the trainees to be deferential towards my position on, I believe, these very grounds. However, we did work, over time, some way towards what Armistead describes as social psychology becoming "much more like what we do every day of our lives - talking to people, finding out what they think and why in a rather more formal and systematic way and attempting to make generalizations and explanations that are valid and widely acceptable" (shades quite clearly now of our earlier work on 'theory'). I think it will become clear as the story unfolds in the next few chapters that this suggestion of role-deference did little to inhibit them in their observations, interpretations and explanations of working life as embryonic administrators - but the dialogue was always very clearly in L*, my access to the details of the L dialogue entirely through the higher-level medium. This virtually has to be, as Pask's model implies - the important thing is to remember it, and to keep the two levels distinct in the mind.

I started this chapter by pointing to one difficulty as regards setting out to try and understand how the young Civil Service administrator starts to learn about his job, and that concerned how to define the job in a generalizable but detailed way. As I turn to a simple description of the practicalities of our enquiry, there is another problem worth noting. It concerns time. Yes, I regard as fundamental Piaget's observation that "Even in the restricted field of psychology proper, the necessity of looking at every problem from the developmental angle has not always been

understood ..." (Piaget 1972). But what quite does that entail? Our young administrators are, we assume, going to be developing personal theories about their world of work in interaction with that work through time. The object-prime epistemologist might refer to the 'process' in which they find themselves, emphasising the extent to which it is the world 'out there' that extends control over their development. The subject-prime view might centre on praxis - "the engagement of an active subject with his or her environment" (Armistead). Our interactive constructivist view will probably mean avoiding both words, unless we can allow the term 'developmental process' to refer specifically and uniquely to the way in which our interactive structuring develops and changes through time. The problem though, as I said, concerns time.

An almost classic example that pinpoints the problem perfectly is drawn from music. One is invited to contemplate the analysis of a particular chord, on a particular beat in a particular bar, taken from a score. It can be described in terms of how loud or soft it is, how many instruments are engaged in it, what the various notes are and their inter-relationships, and so on. Exactly the same exercise can be applied to a subsequent chord - several pages further on, say. The two can then be compared, and we might find that the instruments have increased in number, that they are playing louder, say, and that the notes and inter-relationships between the notes can be related in some way to the structure of the first chord from those however many pages back. But none of this, no matter how meticulous, can tell

us anything about what has been happening in between and, more importantly, how what has in fact been happening leads in carefully constructed ways from the one chord to the other. The same holds good for most developmental studies, particularly where they might have proceeded by a series of structural analyses - using elicitation of construct-systems at different intervals, for example. My own hope was to achieve some kind of view along the developmental process, so that I could, figuratively speaking, actually see the flow of that process. How successful we were remains to be seen.

Once under way our overall approach centred on work-diaries. I aimed at a target of one individual interview per month for each trainee over his or her first year. For the week prior to the date arranged for a session with me, the trainee kept a simple diary in which he or she recorded the working activities in which they were engaged. The diary in fact consisted very simply of one single sheet of blank A4, divided up into five days.

When the trainee arrived, armed with the diary, I took a photocopy and cut it up into individual items. Interviews then centred, not exclusively but to a considerable extent, on their clustering the items freely, or under various sub-headings.

The overall structure - which will become apparent in much more detail in the following chapters - was broadly this:

Interview 1 - mainly a preliminary going over of experience to date (each had in fact been in the Service for a few months before we got started), together with aspects of university life prior to joining

Interview 2 - concentrated on the week's work-diary, grouping items freely and then going into details of the work and how it was experienced for each item-group. In addition, we paid attention to simple 'input/output' aspects, in terms of the personal resources called upon and difficulties met with on the one hand, and satisfactions, dissatisfactions and 'learnings' on the other

Interview 3 - as the first two had been largely factual, this aimed to get in behind some of those facts; the method adopted on this occasion was the focussed grid, administered in its pencil-and-paper (and scissors) form (see Thomas and Harri-Augstein, and for more detail see below in the relevant section). Elements for this single occasion on which a repertory grid method was used were drawn from this and the preceding month's work-diaries, and from university. The intention behind this was to begin to get some insight into the flow of the developmental process across time

Interview 4 and subsequent interviews grouped diary elements either under the sub-headings 'organisational aims', 'individual activity', 'individual feelings' or under more or less the same three but with individual 'outcomes' in place of feelings. The structure either way is a simple theory/practice/product one. Reviews were undertaken occasionally, and a new background interview was called for when there was a job change

Last interview - after a short work-diary session, looked back to compare personal resources, 'learnings', satisfactions and dissatisfactions gained overall, and again at that point in time compared with at the outset.

All our information was elicited from the trainees themselves. None was sought from their departments, nor indeed from the CSSB archives. The focus after all is on the trainee in dialogue with his or her workplace and less on the full extent of that dialogue, down to management views, say, of the diary-experience - this in no way denies the interactivity emphasis, but it does purposely centre on the one end of those interactions. Still less did I consider it legitimate to go to the CSSB archives and draw upon views reported by the assessors who had taken part in the selection of these trainees - this lay beyond the bounds of the study's focus, and beyond the bounds of what I had negotiated at

the outset with the trainees themselves. (Curiosity may impel me to take a look when all this is signed, sealed, and delivered - but not until then.)

The aim of monthly interviews over a year was not completely met, which was no surprse. However, the record shows one AT for whom we only achieved seven in the course of twelve months, two with nine each, two with ten, and one with eleven - making a grand total of 56 interviews, each lasting about two to two-and-a-half hours, spread over the period 1 March 1979 to 27 March 1980.

Now we turn to the product, then to analysis. Five of the full accounts are presented separately as appendices in Volume 2. One, as an exemplar, is set out in Chapter 4. Early attempts to render the participants anonymous introduced a distinct sense of artificiality. The sometimes fairly detailed descriptions of work in which they were engaged would probably allow someone familiar with the setting to identify individuals anyway. So I have adopted a policy of blurring identities instead. Each trainee I refer to by first-name. No colleague, boss, or other individual is named at all. The sections, branches, divisions in which they were working are given general descriptions rather than their specific titles. The aim all round has been to save any possibly embarrassment, though I doubt very much that there is cause for any anyway. Naturally, I take responsibility for any that might nevertheless occur.

Chapter 4 - John - Mostly about ships

First interview - 5 March 1979

His university choice had not been imposed on him because that would suggest that he had gone unwillingly. However, it had been his school Classics master who had been keen that he should try for Oxford. He himself had known very little about it. He arrived at Oxford in 1974 and got something of a feeling that many of the other people there knew an awful lot more than he did. This was probably pretty general. The people with whom he had associated at university were probably good people to be with. In his final year he sat the Civil Service Appointment-in-Administration Qualifying Test (QT) which was something that a lot of people did - he had thought it worth doing because he thought that the Civil Service was worthwhile. Nevertheless the QT was not something to which you necessarily committed yourself - for example, he was also thinking about staying on to post-graduate work. But he had not been able to find a subject that appealed both to himself and to any possible supervisor; and he had also thought that it would be a good idea to get out and do something that was practical, something in which you actually had to **do** things. It struck him it would be a good discipline for him to do something that was slightly different from the purely cerebral - the Civil Service seemed to be a good

place because the writing and brainpower aspects were called for but practicality was in demand as well. By the time he got to CSSB it all seemed a bit more serious. The CSSB experience involved something of what he thought he would be having to do in terms of the actual work in which he might be employed. He had quite enjoyed managing the committee and so on. He was more pleased to have got through that than getting through the QT - because he was doing things of which he had not done very much up to that time. For example, he had not been on student committees to any extent - at university he had gone to concerts and played football but he was not involved in politics. The FSB had been the least pleasant of the experiences and he did not think he had done particularly well - but then he had had no way of comparing his performance with others. When he got the acceptance letter he was pretty sure that this was what he wanted to do. He had in fact still been toying with the idea of staying on to do post-graduate work; and in addition had tried for a job in a computer firm after doing a computer test. The interest here is that he had always found a certain fascination in mathematics and logic and had been attracted by the kind of problems that a systems analyst deals with. But he had now come to the conclusion that he preferred jobs where he had to "use his judgment". In fact at one stage at university he had contemplated changing to mathematics and philosophy. He now considered that he preferred the kind of judgment that one might make about literature, where there are disagreements, where everyone knows that there is no formula, and where each individual makes his own claim for his own judgment. Even in History, where the evidence

may be objective, interpretations are subjective. It is this latter way of thinking that he found attractive, and there seemed to him to be scope for it in the Civil Service. As for his choice of employment area, the main one had been the Department of Employment group - which he did not get. He had chosen this on the grounds that, as unemployment was going to be a very big problem in the future, it would be interesting to get involved in it. But they had pushed him into the Department of Industry and he was now enjoying it. Having some contact with an AT who worked in the Department of Employment, even though she too was enjoying it, he entertained no great feelings of regret.

Now he was in a division involved in shipbuilding policy. It was headed by an Under Secretary, to whom worked four Assistant Secretaries. In true hierarchical style there then came a number of Principals, and John worked with one of two such who together with an Executive Officer and a Clerical Officer formed his small branch.

The division was concerned mostly with the work of British Shipbuilders. The only other large chunk at that time was Harland and Wolff in Northern Ireland, for whom the Northern Ireland Office and the Department of Commerce in Belfast were jointly responsible (although on occasion they came to his division on topics to do with the EEC). There was in addition a tiny private sector. The work of the Division was interesting because it was almost entirely concerned with this one large nationalised industry. John's own particular place was on the international desk, and 60-

70% of his work was to do with the EEC regulations, constraints, negotiations and the briefing on these. The EEC aspect was particularly important with respect to shipbuilding policy because of the Intervention Fund and subsidy element which needed vetting. There was therefore a certain amount of work on individual cases, and not just on the principles of schemes.

The concern was with getting cases through the Commission, and there was rather more general principles work than casework. This had been especially so recently. He also had to keep up-to-date on other countries' situations - first with respect to their yards and orderbooks, and second with the extent to which other governments were aiding their industries. The actual work was supplemented by helping with briefs on all of this. Briefs were needed for Ministers and senior officials going overseas on visits, and for the occasions when foreign government officials were visiting this country. They also briefed in the normal run of events for Parliamentary Questions and so on.

Of the two Principals in his branch, the one to whom he did not in fact work directly was concerned solely with the redundancy payments scheme, which represented something of an odd joining together as the work that his own Principal was engaged in was basically completely separate. Other branches appeared to be fairly similar. He rather thought that his own had peculiarly little support at any level under that of Principal, something about which the other Principal was certainly unhappy. His branch was responsible for the European and international aspects of

shipbuilding policy. Another branch dealt with corporate planning. One had marketing responsibilities - and this latter was held to be slightly less prestigious in that their work was not so much policy as casework, involved in handling intervention cases at UK government level before these went to John's branch for them to put to the EEC for approval. The fourth had what he called responsibility for odds and bobs - ship repair, liaison with military shipbuilding, and the sponsoring of yards not covered by the third division. He appeared to be surrounded by people who had spent quite a lot of time overseas. He had joined the branch in mid-September 1978.

Since that time he had been involved in two major jobs. The first of these had centred on getting up-to-date on exactly what other governments were doing to aid their shipbuilding industries and to what extent their industries were contracting. This information was needed for the work of a Parliamentary Committee on the future of British shipbuilding. The background to this was that British shipbuilders' were to submit a re-organisation plan by the end of 1978, and the government needed an informed opinion on the context of this plan before it arrived. In addition they were unlikely to go on aiding the industry unless they produced suitable re-organisation plans approved by the EEC, and this was urgent. Before his own arrival in 1978 things had been particularly busy on the EEC side. Firstly there had been an EEC Directive in April on aid to shipbuilding industries, with a rather vague clause concerning the attainment of restructuring objectives that was necessary before any aid could be allowed. This appeared to be

rather woolly. What happened in fact was that governments submitted plans, which did not have to have been acted upon yet, and the Commission then allowed the government to grant aid to their industries - a control by the Commission over national spending. Then in September, just before he arrived, the Council had agreed a resolution, which he counted as an anodyne document, dealing with the need for contraction, but the need also for maintaining an eye to the long term demand and forecasts. This document instructed the Commission to come up with its own proposals. The UK Government had opposed this resolution in its original form, as it started out with an actual contraction figure (40%), an aspect that was subsequently toned down by member states - the UK Government included. In short, the background was, from both documents, that contraction in the shipbuilding industry was on the way and in addition that there had to be government plans for such contraction. The UK Government accepted this in principle but was not keen on planning an announcement of large-scale redundancies in advance.

John's own involvement in this had centred on gathering information. He had sent lots of telegrams to Embassy posts in Western Europe and Japan. This could in fact be quite exciting - "who's replied today?". He had then had to collate the incoming information under various headings - aid, contraction, plans, and so on. This had then proved to be his first of experience of the savage cutting of a long document, written by his Principal and himself, to produce a single table on one page. His assumption was that the Committee Secretariat and his own Assistant

Secretary would have been responsible for negotiations over the way in which the information was presented.

The other major topic concerned the same subject but was not directly to do with the Committee. The subject was credit terms and what would be beneficial to the shipbuilding industry. Terms that government can guarantee for export of ships were tougher than for virtually anything else: there was more in the way of down-payment demanded, and a shorter pay-back period. This was governed by the "OECD understanding on export credit for ships". All the previous year, it seemed there had been mutterings in OECD and the EEC for a softening of these terms. The idea was to improve the order situation thereby and to make the trough that had been predicted for the next few years somewhat less awful than it was otherwise going to be. There was however opposition to both method and principle. The proposed method was to abolish the understanding and bring ships under the general "arrangement". This would have been no good because the arrangement differentiated terms by country or buyer, and shipping companies could therefore shop around. As regards opposition on the principle, there was a strongly held view that softening the terms would not produce new orders, as there was basically no need for new ships. John had attended an EEC co-ordinating meeting for OECD - the EEC countries liked to present themselves as a solid bloc even if they were not. It was clear at the EEC that France had wanted to soften terms but virtually no-one else had. He and his Principal had been continuously concerned with this topic - with meetings on it representing the

UK line, and with keeping the UK Civil Service informed (Treasury, ECGD, the Department of Trade, and various others). The question was again in the Agenda for the meeting to which he was going this very afternoon in Paris. In fact the whole thing was now being conducted at a higher level than previously - there was a Cabinet Committee charged with the responsibility for making decisions, based on the 1978 Corporate Plan, about ways of securing orders for British shipping, something which included consideration of export credit terms. So now the work was being carried out at a very much higher level than just that of the individual Minister. There appeared to be within the Government a firm conflict of interest between the shipbuilding side, who would have liked to see softer credit terms and who believed that these would produce new orders, and the relevant policy division in the Department of Trade which envisaged extra competition for UK fleets if the UK exported new ships to other fleets. The Treasury was also opposed on the grounds that the enterprise would be too expensive for the relatively small benefit that would accrue. The Department of Trade argument was not a simple discrimination one; the UK fleet at the moment did not need very much in the way of ships, and hence might suffer from competition with "irresponsible" operators from other countries. Until a decision was reached in the Cabinet the UK line at EEC meetings on the subject was to do nothing until a Ministerial decision was given - that is, to stall until the Government had decided. For example, they would say that the UK had not yet made up its mind and would propose a meeting the following month.

As to his own specific involvement in this work, he wrote up all notes of meetings to which he went - not that there were hundreds of these because most of them were abroad. It amounted to one or two a month, not all of which were export credits, though a fair percentage of them were. He also helped in briefing, for example, if the Assistant Secretary was going abroad and needed something in writing - this was not often the case as the Assistant Secretary knew it all far better than he did. However, he might have had to provide something on a technicality - for example, a recent EEC meeting had had on its agenda an item concerning the monitoring of all ship exports, the aim of which was to ensure that there was no break in the understanding. The EEC Commission was going to do the monitoring. John was charged with the task of finding out what ECGD thought on the matter and whether they believed it to be a good idea or a bad one. So he talked to a chap from ECGD to find out exactly what happened at the present time, and was told that the EEC Commission already had all the information they were now trying to seek all over again. In addition, monitoring of credit by the EEC's DG4 would duplicate OECD's work. The UK Government view therefore was that this represented an unjustified further extension of Commission powers of oversight of the member States. John attended this particular meeting with his Assistant Secretary, and although the Chairman did not believe that the data came in the proper form and the proposal was to do with control anyway, most of the member States stamped on the project.

One Weeks's Work

First of all, he had been involved in a lot of travel arrangements with respect to the meeting that he was attending that afternoon. His Assistant Secretary, Principal, and himself were going - first to Paris and then, without the Principal, on to Brussels. As this came about through a change in plans as the week went on, he had been delegated with getting it straight.

Then he had had to do the first draft of a brief for a meeting between the Secretary of State and the Shipbuilding Engineering Unions - the CSEU which was virtually all the unions with which British shipbuilders negotiate. Various European issues had arisen previously and would re-arise, which meant there would be a substantial contribution from his own branch. Part of the contribution centred on a proposal known as 'Scrap and Build'. This was a subsidy scheme whereby shipowners were subsidised on new tonnage provided that they scrapped twice the amount of the new tonnage that they were buying. It was pretty expensive, especially as it was additional to any present subsidy arrangements. It was a major topic with which his own branch dealt. He had had to write a piece on the background and the line to take - which was that the idea should itself be scrapped. There was then another topic - segregated ballast tanks. Whereas all new oil tankers were to have separate ballast tanks, the idea that modifications along these lines should be made to existing tankers - the implications here being more work for the present workforce - was, in his opinion, a dead duck. Nevertheless it

would be discussed at the forthcoming meeting. Then there was another paragraph on the credit terms issue. And a proposal from the unions for a grand conference at EEC on the future of shipbuilding was something on which the Department was not keen, so he had to phrase a polite rejection.

He then would have spent a certain amount of time reading technical journals, four or five of which came to the branch and through which he had to read quickly and mark up for his Principal.

Finally, on Thursday there had been the leak in the Guardian about the cost of certain aspects of Government support to British industry - the bit that concerned his branch being that which dealt with the Polish shipbuilding order. It so happened that the matter that was of concern was not the first order that did go through, but a second one that had not. It had not gone through on the grounds that it was too high a man-job subsidy. He spent a good deal of the morning looking through Hansard trying to find Conservative politicians making statements about the need to maintain the shipbuilding industry. He had found nothing exciting.

Second interview - 16 May 1979

Looking over notes on the first interview he was unable to discern anything in the way of major themes, apart from a certain amount of bitterness - particularly in comparison with his university experience. At university an essay topic led to reading directions

which in turn led to a self-contained piece of work. The bitterness in the present job was to do with being involved at different stages with different jobs, and was also a function of his junior status - or so it seemed to him.

The week's work

This was a week in which his Principal was away, and during which on occasion his Assistant Secretary was also absent.

European policy issues -

instructions from his Under Secretary to find out whether the UK had the best order book in the Community, and whether the £'s appreciation made British shipbuilders' prices less competitive than in, say, July 1978; the purpose of both inquiries - to begin formulation of a case for renewal of the Intervention Fund.

This was a fairly typical piece of work in that it involved his first attempt being flung back at him. With respect to the order book situation, the Division had statistics available, for example, in the form of compensated gross registered tons of shipping. The UK had a pretty large number of orders still on its books. To attain some sort of perspective, however, required estimates of the various shipbuilding capacities in various countries. The relationship between order book and capacity clearly determines how quickly the orders will run out. Capacity estimation is a

problem. In the past it had been dealt with by looking at the highest annual production figure, which John did on this occasion; but this time he added a note of caution on the effect of contraction of industry in Member States. Making inter-state comparisons on the basis of highest annual production figures assumes a uniform contraction across all Member States, which was not in fact the case. One of the delicate issues here was that even if a short term detailed study were to show that UK order books were not as large as they appeared, the fact that UK capacity had not contracted as greatly as other states had meant that other states were then going to argue that the UK industry should have contracted. In other words, any argument had to be couched in terms that would put our position in the best possible light. He noted that this was an aspect of work in the Civil Service that differed from the CSSB exercises - at CSSB one was acting as a judge, here at work he was acting as a lawyer. At the end of it all it appeared that the UK came somewhere in the middle of the range despite all the reservations.

With respect to the appreciating £, he decided at the outset to adopt a simple approach and take figures from newspapers. He compared figures from a photocopy of the Times which he had from about a year previously with those obtained from a Guardian of recent date. He then simply compared what the £ bought then and what it bought now. This did not satisfy his Under Secretary however. His view was that looking at newspapers was too rough and ready a way of going about it - and furthermore it did not show what he wanted it to show. So John then went to the

Department's Library seeking Government statistical publications which would show the strength of the £ against other countries over time. This was available but only to February 1979. He then rang the Central Statistical Office who provided figures up to March 1979, but the £ was still gaining and it would be advantageous to show the latest figure. (This was all on Thursday, 12 April.) He therefore asked the CSO for a contact and they gave him one in the Bank of England, whom he rang and from whom he got the Exchange Rate of the previous day. He was then able to draw up a table showing the Bank of England as his source, which had the effect of making the exercise look better. It also had the effect of showing what the Under Secretary wanted it to show. The point was to justify keeping a 30% subsidy when the European Commission wanted to reduce to 25%. Our argument was that as the £ had appreciated by 5% it would be unfair to make this reduction in the subsidy.

European case-work -

The UK Representative in Brussels rang to say that the Commission was about to open a 93(2) procedure against credit terms for a dredger. What arguments could he use to halt this? John had not heard of the case, so made contact with ECGD (this was in fact their problem, but he had been lumbered with it). The real problem was the definition of a dredger - was it a ship? If so, then Understanding Terms applied. If not then Consensus Terms (which were softer). We wanted to apply Consensus Terms.

Brussels was briefed (a) that it was not a ship; (b) there was no EEC competition, therefore no effect on intra-Community trade. There was also a letter containing a Danish claim that their engine builders were discriminated against. This was passed to the relevant branch to discern facts, and the reply discussed with the AS.

Here he had had a 'phone call in the morning, and had to make a case by mid-afternoon. He had not actually heard of the issue at this point. As it was credit rather than subsidies this was in fact principally an ECGD issue. John, however, was familiar with the 93(2) Procedure, which had the effect of putting stuff on ice while people argued. However issues undergoing a 93(2) Procedure were published and this can be embarrassing politically. Clearly the UK did not want too much of this sort of thing going on while it was trying to be a good EEC Member State. The argument that he used was that the dredger concerned was not a ship. Simply, there were tougher terms on ships. He put the minute to his Under Secretary saying that it was not a ship because it was not sea-going, having got this point of view from ECGD. He and the Under Secretary then looked it over and came to the conclusion that 'sea-going' was a bit of a vague term. The Under Secretary sent him back, and he re-rang ECGD. This type of dredger would not normally go to sea, but the question was could it? None of it proved very satisfactory. The specialist view was that the vessel could not work at sea because it was not bottom-emptying. The second argument, put by the US, concerned competition. Subsidies that distort intra-Community

trade are not allowed. The dredger was going to Brazil, and there were no other European bids. However this argument usually has a come-back on 'long term issues'. In the event they were not successful in stopping the 93(2) Procedure - it was under way anyway.

On the engine builders issue he did not actually have a lot to do but passed it to the specialist branch.

Contributions to international shipbuilding aspects -

China - would admission to the Generalised Scheme of Preference harm UK shipbuilding interests - (i) finding out from the relevant division what the tariff situation was and (ii) asking for an opinion on engines, equipment, and so on.

The EEC proposed to admit China to the scheme of preferences. This raised the issue of the abolition of tariffs on Chinese ships and ship parts. First of all he checked on the tariff position and established that there was no tariff at all on ships at the time anyway, but that there was 6 to 7% on associated machinery. As shipbuilding rather than ship parts was his Division's main interest, he was able to write that as there were no tariffs there was no alteration in the situation. The view with respect to the machinery was that again there was no problem and no harm would be done. He then added to his own piece words to the effect that anything of a goodwill gesture towards the Chinese would be beneficial in the long run with respect to any sales that we wished to make to them.

Ship repair assessment -

Work on a minute about EEC Member States aid to ship repair - with respect to British shipbuilders. There were complaints of large subsidies, which had involved asking posts for their comments.

Comments had been coming in from posts in the past and all he had to do on this occasion was to collect and collate information and to put it into one neat little minute. The practical relationships between shipbuilding and ship repair had a confusing effect on the subsidising situation.

Coping and satisfaction

We then considered four questions concerning the resources that he had drawn on in performing the week's work, difficulties that he had met with, the satisfactions and dissatisfactions arising from doing the job and what he had learnt from it.

Resources

The first that came to mind was persistence. He certainly needed to draw on this resource for finding material that was suitable and accurate enough for the requirements. With respect to the £'s appreciation, it was not good enough to go just to the newspapers, so he had to make sure that he found the most authoritative source. This involved him in a bit of purely mechanical bother. Also with respect to the dredger, trying to

extort information from ECGD and from their contacts, in a double line of communication, involved him in a considerable amount of persistence.

This was related to a determination to get a thing completely right once it had been pushed back at him. Another resource was problem-solving. The work on the dredger involved thinking about how to present the issue - it was up to him to get back to the UK Representative by mid-afternoon. In addition there was thinking about finding out how to do the job - how to approach the problem in the first place. There are two sorts of thinking - thinking about how to do the job, and thinking about how to present the result.

Difficulties

Whom to contact and where the information is. These are the principle differences from his university life, where although one is not spoonfed, the channels and the places to go to are much less complex. One learns the ropes however. He coped basically by keeping his ears open about what people might give him in the way of hints. He cited, as an extreme case of the difficulty of not knowing where information is, an instance from more recently. Here he was working under time pressure and had to seek some information that his Division was supposed to know about. He went to the Registry, hunted for files, asked Archives to send material over which arrived too late, ran around asking people

who ought to know. The Department's Solicitor claimed ignorance, but when he returned to somebody else this other person's memory was jogged and eventually it proved that the Solicitor had originally written a minute on the issue some years back. Here was an extreme case of no-one knowing anything.

Another difficulty stemmed from simple lack of experience. He could not always put things in context. This is a case of trying to judge the suitability of the arguments that you use. It is not simply ignorance of the way the Civil Service works, but more a lack of experience about what arguments will persuade people. For example, would a technical argument about whether a dredger is a ship actually work or not?

Satisfactions and dissatisfactions

There was satisfaction on the dredger job in acting as the originating point for briefing someone who was more experienced than himself - 'becoming a bit of an expert'. 'With our Under Secretary there is a fair deal of satisfaction in getting something to him that is not chucked back in your face.' The dissatisfactions centre on a more formal hierarchy than he was used to at university. For example, with respect to the EEC competition argument, he went to the Under Secretary, thinking that a particular argument was not clear-cut, but he disagreed. John believes that there are limits to the extent to which one can, in the hierarchy, maintain a serious position against someone who is more experienced and more senior than oneself. There is also the

old dissatisfaction about one's notes of meetings being re-drafted to the point where they are worse than they were when you started. But he could not say anything because he was in no position to do so. He claimed the dissatisfactions to be more with himself for not having matched up in the first instance, against judgements which in retrospect he agrees with.

Learning

'One thing which does get battered into you and in which I feel I am not as competent yet as I would like to be, is not being satisfied with any assumptions.' For example what does 'sea going' mean? And the sources he used for the appreciation of the £ proved to be too rough and ready. In each instance he felt rightly chastised. People understandably expect you to go into the last detail and to keep the pressure up until you are satisfied that what you have got is the best possible. This involves (a) thinking about how to approach the thing and (b) picking up the 'phone and actually getting through to somebody. You have to take as many measures as you reasonably can to check that it is all correct, and you have to do this through multi-link communication chains. At the same time you have to be wary about absolving yourself of blame when things go wrong on the grounds that it was somebody else who said it. It is important to make sure that your original question is explicit enough. Additionally, in the course of the week, he had learned yet a little more in the gradual process of coming to know how Whitehall works. In a sense this reflects back on the difficulties - the 'reading the environment' issue.

Third interview - 13 June 1979

This was the one interview that took the form of eliciting and then focusing constructs by means of formal so-called 'repertory grid' procedure. (It was also the first after the 1979 change of government.) First, the events of the week's diary were taken and freely categorised, producing this set of five sub-headings -

EEC Meetings - attendance at, preparation for, contributions arising out of.

European policy - the work to do with the Intervention Fund renewal.

Drafting external correspondence - the occasions when he was delegated for 'a first stab' at material which had to go outside the Department.

Contacting people - 'phoning London from Brussels on the Thursday in order to get things moving on the Intervention Fund case and the subsidy element involved in credit; it also included a 'phone call to the Association of Western European Shipbuilders.

Briefing and de-briefing.

To these five we added the four from the second interview and three arising from his university background. These latter

Constructs

[—○ means constructs operate very similarly over the range of elements]

Representing the institution externally

∨
Acting internally, within the institution



Lawyer

∨
Judge

Creating, originating

∨
Working with given material

Working alone

∨
Working with other people

Giving authoritative answer

∨
Channelling material

Limited to immediate aims

∨
Wider issues involved

General consequences

∨
No general consequences

Satisfying

∨
Dissatisfying

Elements

[—● means elements construed similarly
○//○ means elements construed differently]

European casework

↓
European policy II

Reading Classics



international shipbuilding



Drafting external correspondence

University life-style

European Policy I

EEC Meetings

Ship repair

∨
Contacting people

Translation

∨
Briefing/debriefing

consisted of 'reading Classics', 'translation' (for example, from Greek to English, from Latin to English, and so on), and 'university lifestyle'. Under the first of these he already had some ideas about the theoretical and philosophical differences between university work and work in a department - for example, the kind of hedging that one becomes used to dealing in in an academic discipline just has no place in the Department.

The full focused 'grid' is set out in Figure 1. Eight constructs emerged - with some hard work on his part. The picture is like this.

Construct 1

Creating, originating as opposed to working with given material - a construct based on a pairing of the later European policy work and drafting external correspondence, against EEC meetings. 'University lifestyle' was difficult to fit on to this construct.

Construct 2

Working alone vs. working with other people - derived from drafting external correspondence and briefing/de-briefing, as against contacting people. This is to do with things one can do on one's own as opposed to having to get in touch with others. As regards reading Classics, although there are contacts with other people, the responsibility is one's own.

Construct 3

Representing the institution externally vs. acting internally within it - derived from EEC meetings and drafting external correspondence, as opposed to briefing/de-briefing. This is to do with presenting a public institutional face at a meeting or in correspondence, and working as a member of, for example, the UK Government. It is not the same as contacting people in British Shipbuilders, say, for information - on occasions like that he was not acting as a representative or a delegate. The Intervention Fund policy work, although internal, was a bit difficult because when the job was finished it would be part of the UK submission to the European Commission and therefore become more of a representational item. The European case-work element involved speaking to the UK Representative, but he would then pass on what John had said word for word, which meant that he, John, had had to make the case himself. This was thus very much representational. There was nothing representational about his university experience. There is a significant distinction here because some people at university do fulfil a rather more representative role than he did; for example, they sit on committees and so on. Despite his playing a bit of football for his college then, this becomes a non-representational item.

Construct 4

Giving an authoritative answer vs. channelling material - derived from European casework and international shipbuilding as opposed to European policy. This proved a difficult construct on to which to attach a label. The way in which the pair formed was that it involved giving a response to somebody outside the Division, but here not thinking about representing the institution but rather briefing those who do not know as much as one knows oneself. On the European policy point, it involved finding out details that his superior officers did not have to hand. On this occasion he did not feel in any position of an expert. There is some element here of becoming or being an 'expert' as opposed to merely delving - a case of 'the thing stops with me' as opposed to just being the medium through which stuff is channelled. The three university experience elements could not be fitted on to this construct. They are not so concerned with feeding information to somewhere else and therefore application of the dimension was very limited. He felt that this probably follows on from the fact that at university one is not in an organisation with corporate aims, and therefore this kind of distinction cannot work. You hope that what you do is correct, but if it is not, there is no come-back. There is no concept of providing official information. This probably has some bearing on the point made earlier about scope for hedging in university work.

Construct 5

Limited to immediate aims as opposed to wider issues involved - defined by European casework and ship repair aspects as against international shipbuilding. Reading Classics at university had implications for John himself beyond the immediate work.

Construct 6

General consequences vs. no general consequences - based on the three university-time elements. Reading Classics and his university lifestyle form the pair. They have a large scale; they interlock; they have implications beyond the most immediate ones for the way one thinks about things, and about one's general approach - all in a way in which the translation work does not.

Construct 7

'Lawyer' vs. 'judge' - defined by European casework and EEC meetings as opposed to reading Classics.

Construct 8

Satisfying vs. dissatisfying - defined by university lifestyle and international shipbuilding, against European Policy II. There was a certain amount of difficulty here because the European Policy item was as yet incomplete, and the dissatisfaction was borne of this.

Only two of the eight constructs elicited were strongly related to each other. Representing the institution externally as opposed to acting internally within it acted in very much the same way as 'lawyer' vs. 'judge'. The other six were relatively independent of these two and of each other. It is therefore not surprising that he found the elicitation such hard going.

The elements show a somewhat greater degree of inter-relationship.

Reading Classics was construed in very much the same way as the work on international shipbuilding - they both involved acting internally within the institution, acting as a judge, doing something creative and originating, with general consequences, having wider issues involved, and were both satisfying. They only differed in that reading Classics was more working alone, whereas the international shipbuilding involved working with others.

University lifestyle was also like international shipbuilding in the sense that, again, both involved acting internally within the institution, being a judge, having some kind of general consequence flowing from them, involving wider issues, working with other people, and again being satisfying. They only differ in that no creating or originating was involved in the lifestyle element.

The international shipbuilding was very unlike the work done on drafting external correspondence. The drafting work involves representing the institution externally, being a lawyer, having no

general consequences, being limited to immediate aims, working alone. They are only similar in that they are both concerned with giving an authoritative answer, and were both satisfying.

The European casework from the second interview is construed similarly to the European policy work from this one. The only way in which the two differ is that the casework was satisfying, policy work not.

The work on ship repair investment was like that of contacting people, in that they both involved acting internally within the institution, being a judge, channelling material, having no general consequences, being limited to immediate aims, working with other people, and were both satisfying. They differed only in that contacting people was more creative and originating and ship repair more working with given material.

Contacting people itself resembles the translation work at university. Here again one is acting internally, within the institution, as a judge, but creating and originating, although again there are no general consequences; it is limited to immediate aims, and it is satisfying. The translation involves working alone.

Translation itself is seen similarly to briefing/de-briefing. Again they are both acting internally within the institution, acting as a judge, they have no general consequences, and they are limited to immediate aims, they are satisfying, but they both involve working alone.

Only the European policy work from the second interview, and the EEC meetings work from this one are seen totally separately from each other and from the rest.

When focused, the system shows a fairly high degree of differentiation - there are few major blocks. However, the idea of representing the institution externally, of acting as some kind of lawyer, and of giving an authoritative answer at the same time as being creative and originating, were all seen to go together within the context of European policy work from this latter interview, with European casework, with drafting external correspondence, and to a lesser extent with the EEC meetings. Acting internally within the institution and as some kind of judge is the way that reading Classics at university, translation work at university, and university lifestyle were seen, together with international shipbuilding aspects, ship repair assessment, contacting people at work, and briefing and de-briefing - in addition the ship repair contact work was seen as involving channelling material. Drafting external correspondence, briefing/de-briefing, and the university translation work, were seen as involving a limitation to immediate aims, working on one's own, but at the same time as being satisfying.

A further thought on the difference between university and work occurred to him some time later. When writing an essay in history, one acknowledges that one's own interpretation may be wrong but one nevertheless pushes it for all its worth. At work though the consequences seem, at least superficially, to be rather

more devastating if one is wrong. Thousands may lose their jobs, or millions of pounds may be wasted. So although you may feel justified, you have got to allow more weight to the possibility of being wrong at work.

Fourth interview - 29 July 1979

This was the point at which we changed - in a fairly simplistic way, it must be admitted - to enquiry based on his account of what he reported himself to have been doing, the context in which he construed himself as having been doing it, and the outcomes in a personal sense. We called it work-activities, organisational aims (where the organisation was more or less as far as he could reliably perceive and meant in fact the branch), and feelings about how he was doing, what he was doing. The simple structure held in the background was 'theory - practice - product'. Although we rang the changes from interview to interview in terms of the order in which we took these sub-headings, the logic that I have chosen to impose on his accounts has them running in the order - activity (practice), organisation aims (theory), feelings (product). There is of course - implicitly or even explicitly - a theory or theories about activity and about feelings. But the main structure in terms of what he felt he was doing, why, and what it was like for him holds good. (And I should say that in following chapters the same structure will hold good for his colleagues in this study too.)

First then, we took his week's diary and John ordered the items in groups according to what he had perceived himself to be doing. Next, he re-ordered them as necessary to accord with what he perceived the branch to be doing, or aiming at. And a final re-ordering was made in terms of freely elicited feelings about his work.

In terms of work activities, the grouping came out thus:-

1. - Checking -

British Shipbuilders statistics;

Intervention Fund renewal - paper, figures checked on orders;

Projected completions

2. - contacting people for information -

Intervention Fund renewal - shipbuilders' relief, phone-call from Central Statistical Office;

Checking IF figures for new orders (Cayman Islands);

Denmark (contact with banks);

Finding out employment figures in mixed yards

3. - calculating -

Calculating exchange rates;

Denmark - calculation on bond rates

4. - asking experts' view -

Seeking economist's view on exchange rates.

5. - Co-ordination - getting the thing ready in time -

Preparation of brief for meeting on Thursday -
assembling of papers.

I then asked him to take us through the way that he thought about this working activity, and we did it by means of his undertaking a pair-wise compare-and-contrast exercise so as to complete in effect a two-way similarities/differences matrix. This in fact became a regular approach to considering work-diary structure for him and for his fellows.

For this occasion, and for the sub-heading 'work activity', the dimensions that the matrix suggested that he found himself using go rather as follows -

working to a greater or lesser extent on his own;

going to see people and consulting about a task or being at the centre;

having other people in close proximity, even though he might be in a position of less authority - when checking figures, for example - and being in different authority relationships

depending, say, on whether he was checking on what someone else had done for him or asking an expert's advice on some matter;

allied to this was trying to ensure that someone else was right as opposed to acting as a fundamental information source himself (on checking work), and closely tied to this 'finding truth' rather than making work easier elsewhere;

there was being the expert rather than calling one in, and taking the first step in preparing opinion rather than obtaining authoritative opinion from another;

there was trying to ensure that everything fitted together, as in checking and co-ordinating work; there was making sense of statistics, and paper coming from all sides;

there was stuff coming in and stuff going out;

taking initiatives or not;

piecemeal work rather than that which one can organise into a consistent package;

policy-making in a broad sense when asking for expert opinion, as opposed to the management nuances of co-ordinating work.

The common theme there seems to be clearly something to do with relations with other people, and a second with getting the work done.

Next, we looked at the way in which he perceived the Departmental aims being structured in terms of the work.

1. Government aid renewal -

Intervention Fund renewal and checking of figures;
Calculating exchange rates and getting an economist's view;
Finding out employment figures in mixed yards;
Projected completions

2. Contact with industry -

British Shipbuilders stats - percentages

3. Briefing -

Preparation of brief for a meeting on Thursday - assembling
of papers

4. Getting information (on other countries) -

Denmark - Merchant Bank, Scandinavia Bank, Bank of
England;

Denmark - calculation on bond rates

The most striking dimension turns out to be one of inter-dependence, logical relationship and chronological relationship;

At the same time, there is the need to take an initiative;

There is the business of representation;

There is working to someone higher up;

There is representing the UK Government or not.

Although again, as with the construct elicitation, there is a fair deal of differentiation, there is nevertheless just the main strand to the experience. For John this month it was checking on British Shipbuilders statistics, which led to a need to make contacts with industry, and which did in fact seem to prove 'satisfying' - his own words.

Pursuing this last further, I again asked for a freely structured view of 'feelings', which came out as follows:

1. Satisfaction -

British Shipbuilders statistics;

Checking Intervention Fund figures on new order;

Finding out employment figures in mixed yards

A discrepancy in the percentages was something he had pursued off his own bat. No-one else had properly explained the reason for what had been noticed. It was he who found out what was wrong and explained it to people who needed to know. There was additional satisfaction here in that the Department was right, and further that it helped the Department's own cause with respect to the EEC in asking for a 29% rather than a 24% subsidy. The Cayman Islands' job emerged from a great list of figures that they had had to prepare referring to the order book situation. The figures did not add up for a number of very good reasons. They did not wish actually to doctor them, but inquiry showed that it was possible to exclude some figures on the basis that the ships had been built in the Cayman Islands rather in GB. It made the figures look nicer. The mixed yards figures involved producing tables, on the basis of looking through files, etc, and producing a reasonably persuasive presentation of the results. All of this was very satisfying. It is interesting that figures were involved quite a lot, which is not unrepresentative - they are always having to prove how their industry is contracting, etc. Although he enjoys working with figures, the satisfaction is very much more a case of satisfaction with a job properly completed.

2. Misgivings -

Projected completions

The misgivings here were not born of his own inadequate performance, but more of concern over satisfactory compilation.

They still had to re-present data after contacting their Statistics Division. Showing projected completion of shipbuilding is very difficult because organisations like the BSB and their own specialists do not update their statistics very often; so as, say, completion dates slip, they get a bulge of orders which make the figures look very messy. His Assistant Secretary and he had to play around with these a bit - not exactly fiddling, and indeed the end result probably showed a less favourable picture than they would have liked. He was not completely happy with the eventual tables, though.

3. Frustration -

Denmark and its banks;

Denmark and the calculation on bond rates

Trying to get someone to tell you something, or do something, or to find out something - particularly with respect to Denmark - can be very frustrating. He was trying to calculate the subsidies involved in soft credit terms operated by the Denmark Government with respect to shipbuilding. What was the theoretical basis for the figures? Given that, how to get at the information? The whole thing was exacerbated by being outside the UK, and by the very long nature of the loan making it difficult to pin down the interest rates that were being operated by Danish banks. And the calculation itself, given an unsound basis, and the fact that the discount tables were not available in sufficient detail, was all made rather difficult. They were not

very accurate. In other words, he had not too much confidence in the end result, and a considerable degree of difficulty in getting hold of it.

4. Neutrality - performed in the course of duty -

Intervention Fund renewal work;

Calculating exchange rates and seeking CRS view;

Preparation of brief

In general, ringing somebody up for something is no great achievement, and involves no great initiative. The briefing could on other occasions have given satisfaction but this particular one was not particularly arduous and involved him in very little - it had no lasting impact. Checking figures comes out neutral because the boredom of actual checking was counter-balanced by relief when they added up.

Fifth interview - 20 September 1979

This time, working activity was grouped like this:

1. - Co-ordinating -

briefing on the union-originated 22-point plan for avoiding redundancies in shipbuilding (co-ordination and provision);

Preparation of brief for Wednesday's multilateral meeting.

2. - Passing on Information -

doing a piece for European Communities;

reply to a letter asking for details of UK shipping subsidies;

summarising information on fishing subsidies.

3. - Drafting original pieces of work -

credit for ship conversions (research for a minute);

European Regional Fund - draft minute setting out divisional views;

reply to minute on ship financing (advice from Branch 3);

draft reply to letter to Minister on shipping subsidies

The dimensions in terms of which he was perceiving the work started again with -

working alone as opposed to needing to contact others.

Passing on information found him more on his own, summarising, clarifying information, information that they had for some

particular contact that had asked for it - in this case an in-house magazine on developments in Europe; a request from the Canadian Embassy on UK shipbuilding subsidies; material on international fishing vessel subsidies for his Under Secretary. In comparison with that the co-ordinating work - the preparation and co-ordination of a brief - involved him in some work on his own, but there was a lot of ensuring that other people were going to contribute. This comes at the stage before you present it as your own. For the drafting, he was again alone to an extent, 'thinking up original thoughts'.

Then there was:-

initiative, exercising thought over an approach as opposed to summing up existing information.

In the drafting work, clearly, he exercised initiative in the sense of thinking of ways to tackle the problem - something that did not arise to and regret in either the co-ordinating work or passing on information.

Then -

the more individual approach to thinking about how you are going to answer something was contrasted with the more management task of getting people to do things - as with the co-ordinating;

there were the writing skills needed in part of the work, calling for clarity, conciseness, and absence of long-windedness in expression;

and again there was the perception on interdependence in the sense in which co-ordination work may well - though not necessarily immediately - lead on to informing.

Looking next at the wider organisational aims, we have -

1. - Keeping people within the Civil Service informed on subjects on which the Branch had particular expertise -

the piece for Euro-Communities;

summarising information on fishing subsidies

2. - Representing the organisation's point of view (Division, Branch, or what have you); that is, not letting people ride over them - but still within the Civil Service -

credit for conversions;

Euro Regional Fund - draft minute;

reply to minute on ship financing;

3. - more governmental - representing Government policy to the outside world -

briefing on the 22-point plan;

preparation of brief for the multilateral meeting;

reply to letter asking for details of UK subsidies;

draft reply to letter to Minister

These showed -

concern with and interaction with the rest of the Civil Service;

telling people so that they are informed, as opposed to 'having an axe to grind' - the defensive nature of the second group would come out in picking a particular point and saying 'Don't do this' - and telling openly as opposed to defending a stance can apply to outside contacts too, whereupon the 'defensive' activity can assume a propaganda-like quality;

different levels, and different styles - on the whole, even if pleading a case, one is more cautious about what one says in public than about what one says within the walls - certainly as things stand. This is a machinery of government point

rather than a point to do with specific issues such as content of the problems to hand. So, to other Government Departments, one does not usually worry and say 'Gosh am I supposed to say that?' It should be a lot less opaque.

The strands, such as they are, showed that - not surprisingly - informing others in the Civil Service was firmly linked to his passing information activities, whereas the representational aim entailed all drafting when it was directed at the Civil Service, and a bit of everything when it was to the outside. In fact, he gained his main satisfaction from representational drafting for the Civil Service. Co-ordinating and passing information also had its satisfying elements, with the only dissatisfaction coming from passing information on to elsewhere in the Civil Service. Looked at more carefully, the feelings about the week's work came out as follows -

1. - Satisfaction/Enjoyment -

piece for Euro Committees;

research on credit for conversions;

draft reply to letter to Minister;

briefing on 22-point plan;

Euro-Regional Fund - draft minute setting out division views

The piece for European Communities offered him an opportunity to indulge his journalistic skill (such as he has). This was the case of writing a piece for an in-house magazine. In addition to the satisfaction derived from indulging such skills, this was the only opportunity he had of getting a thing in a magazine like this with his name underneath. His contribution centred on shipbuilding and the trials and tribulations involved in securing Commission approval for funds and so on - a summary of his Branch and Division's work.

The work on credit for conversions involved him in 'research'. They had been asked by people introducing some legislation what constraints they would be operating under with respect to shipbuilding directives. The enjoyment that he gained was in threading a tortuous passage through all the difficulties and putting down on paper why the whole thing was so complicated. It was called 'research' because he did a minute for his Principal on the basis of which the Principal would reply to the original query. It was an interesting intellectual exercise trying to pick his way through.

A Minister of State had received a letter from ship owners complaining about the state of subsidising shipping in other countries. It is both a challenge and good fun to write a letter that your Minister is going to send to someone else, and shipping subsidies was something that he could get his teeth into because his Branch represented the few people in the whole business who could understand what was going on. What John had to do was to

draft a minute to the Minister via the Assistant Secretary with a draft letter to send on to the ship owners. He was somewhat chagrined that his draft minute was considerably reduced by the Assistant Secretary - this was a bit of a pity. The letter though was not much altered.

The 22-point plan originated with the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Trades as a means to avoid the redundancies that had been put up by British Shipbuilders in their proposals to contract the industry. The satisfaction was derived simply from getting the stuff done. As part of the work came from the Department of Trade, there was also some satisfaction for him in getting two Principals in Trade to do his work for him - although he did do some himself.

The draft on the Euro-Regional Fund minute was interesting because it required thinking about. They had been asked their opinion about a proposal from the EEC Commission to provide European funds to aid UK areas where shipbuilding was contracting. This of course was not something that had come out of the blue, though the Commission does sometimes take the initiative.

2. - Neutral Feelings -

preparation of brief for Wednesday's multi-national meeting;

reply to letter asking for details of UK shipping subsidies

This compares with the previous time to an extent. It was a case of things that needed doing; there was no great difficulty about getting it done; and the preparation of a brief was not particularly arduous.

3. - Unsatisfactory for one reason or another -

summarising information on fishing subsidies;

reply to minute on ship financing

The summary of fishing subsidies information was boring because there were various ways it could have been summarised, but in the end he decided that he had to repeat the telegrams that had come in with only minor omissions. He had no time to make any more general observations about the issue. In addition the telegrams had not come back in the format for which they had asked, which made it difficult to understand quite a bit of what the senders were getting at.

The other item came from the Trade division responsible for shipping policy who were plagued by UNCTAD, developing countries and so on. They had asked for comment and he had nothing authoritative to say. So he went to the people who knew about financing, but they were not keen to say anything either. He was not very sure that the answer given was terribly relevant or very stunning. No-one was interested when it came down to it.

Sixth interview - 15 October 1979

Working activities

1. - Writing a brief -

Trade and Industry - note on credit;

brief on overseas posts for Diplomatic Service inspection;

contribution for Lord Privy Seal's review of European business - Scrap and Build;

drafting explanatory memorandum on Scrap and Build

2. - Acting as an adviser -

note on credit facilities for British Shipbuilders for incorporation in Cabinet paper;

discussion on credit for conversions;

'phone call to Northern Ireland Office on international tendering

3. - Contact with other people -

find out about French cost-escalation;

'phone call with Industry on terms of OECD

The dimensions work out to be -

giving advice, providing a view - an aspect common to all three groups;

in giving a view, particularly when writing a brief, there is more of a sense of responsibility than when simply contacting others;

writing, of course, tends towards more formality than occasional comment does;

and again there is a sense of chronology separating the giving and getting of information and exchange of views at a not very high level, as opposed to a drawing together of threads in drafting briefs once he has found out what he needs to know.

The way in which he discriminated in terms of wider organisational aims on this occasion was a little more specific -

1. - Providing information -

Trade and Industry note on credit;

'phone call with Industry on terms of OECD;

draft explanatory memorandum on Scrap and Build

2. - Deciding policy -

note on credit facility for British Shipbuilders for
incorporation in Cabinet paper;

discussion on credit for conversions

3. - Giving internal advice -

'phone call to Northern Ireland Office on international
tendering;

briefing on overseas for Diplomatic Service inspection

4. - Briefing -

contributions to Lord Privy Seal's review of European
business on Scrap and Build.

5. - Acquiring information -

find out about French cost-escalation insurance

Here there is a view of the branch doing the following -

clarifying policy to other people, as opposed to giving an
opinion - they are usually providing information on subjects
that the Government has already made up its mind about.

So providing information here is a question of making clear what Government policy is and what results can be expected from it. In deciding policy the function is broader than in providing information. The information aspect is an external function, whereas decision-making is internal. The latter is more confidential and involves giving opinions. The former is the reverse - you are providing information against firm guidelines;

specifying internal advice, detailed, and to a request to provide a piece of information, as opposed to initiating with regard to the outside world in briefing there is again a lot of information involved - indeed the briefing work has similar broad aims to those of providing information and giving internal advice, as one will have provided the background note (advising) and then a speaking note (giving internal advice) - in the fourth group, though, there is an element of putting over Government policy in a much more blatant way, writing to defend your Minister against unpleasant questions;

information - passing, receiving - contacting outside organisations - on much of which the Government is expert and the outside organisation not;

decision-making - very enjoyable, and weighty;

allied to all this, though contrasted in places, is the presentation and ingenuity called for in Parliamentary briefing - Parliament is not going to make decisions except when 'in extremis' they vote against the Government - so what you have to do is to present a case for the Minister to put up a show in parliament with;

when you are giving advice to other civil servants, you give it on the assumption that you and they share background knowledge, whereas the Lord Privy Seal is not likely to have much idea of what is happening in Scrap and Build - this ties in with how you have to sketch the situation in so that the Minister does not make a fool of himself - there are many presentational considerations;

if you are going outside the organisation, the answer will be less frank - or you have to speak less frankly - compared with when you are speaking within the organisation;

and, broadly, you only write a brief when you are an 'expert'

Overall, where the aim was to provide information, and John found himself writing briefs, then there emerged a mixture of satisfaction and neutral to boring feelings. The policy work, with him acting as he saw it as an adviser, was on the other hand interesting. Once again, pursuing the 'feelings' a little further we find four major blocks this time.

1. - Satisfaction -

dealing with a telephone call to the Northern Ireland Office on international tendering;

drafting explanatory memorandum on Scrap and Build.

The Northern Ireland Office's shipbuilding people had rung, wanting to know about international tendering. The problem had centred on some concern about the European Commission's control over tendering by ship owners for shipbuilding work, a degree of control which was anathema to individual governments. Once again he was in the position of being the expert, somebody able to give a full answer. In addition, he was talking to somebody in a more senior position, but somebody who had had to come to him rather than vice-versa - furthermore the person concerned was quite happy with what he had to say. There were two aspects of satisfaction here - one, something to do with having the answer at his fingertips, and the other, organisational relationships. The latter was not simply a petty feeling of this man being his senior and John knowing more about it than the enquirer did, but had attached to it some realisation that he had got to make a reasonably favourable impression on people with whom he was working if they were going to continue to think that he was worth entrusting with anything more serious.

The other item was drafting the explanatory memorandum on Scrap and Build. A memorandum of this sort had to be written by the relevant Division whenever a Community document came through with implications for the UK. The appropriate Minister went before a Parliamentary scrutiny committee to explain the document in order that they decide on whether a debate was necessary or not. There was just the one committee that looked at everything with policy implications. The memorandum had to explain in simple language that the scrutiny committee could understand. He started this on Friday, and it represented quite a challenge to put the rather complicated scheme down in terms that a person unfamiliar with it would in fact understand.

2. - Interest -

note on credit facilities for British Shipbuilders for incorporation in Cabinet paper;

discussion on credit for conversions;

contribution to Lord Privy Seal's review of European business - Scrap and Build

Interest

In a couple of cases, this involved his not working on his own. One of the topics was explicitly when he was called to a

discussion, and the other was the note to be incorporated in a Cabinet paper which was also a joint effort between his Principal and himself. This was thus different from the work which produced satisfaction in that one cannot take the satisfactions quite so easily. For example, the discussion on credit centred on legal complications, with three of them discussing the material. As far as he recalled it was his Principal that had hit on the crucial point - so it had not been John himself who got it right, though he was a party to the discussion. That is where the interest value lay, and the same sort of thing applied to the note on shipbuilding credit.

The contribution for the Lord Privy Seal was a draft that he did. Again, he did not have the last word on this - it was quite good fun to do without being terribly startling. He was probably a bit less enthusiastic about this than about the explanatory memorandum.

The difference between this and "satisfaction" centred on the extent to which he himself had been involved in and responsible for the outcomes.

3. - Expectation -

finding out about French cost escalation

He had been asked to find out about the system of cost-escalation insurance in France, a system which appeared to look like subsidy. They needed to know how it was established, because the UK has

something similar in shipbuilding circles and wanted to know whether they were going to have to abandon it. So he telephoned the UK representative in Brussels to ask for details; nothing had happened yet. It is in this sense that the feeling was one of expectation - there was no feeling of satisfied completion of the task.

4. - Neutral to boring -

note on overseas posts for Diplomatic Service inspection;

telephone call with Industry on terms of OECD.

The most boring or annoying item by the end of the week was to do with the Trade and Industry magazine (the same magazine referred to in the fifth interview). There had been a meeting of the Shipbuilding Working Party of the EEC in Paris, and they had agreed to change official credit terms, softening them somewhat. The softening was to bring the credit terms into line with the current desperate situation by making ships more attractive to purchasers. The magazine rang to ask for a little piece. The Branch were never keen to do this because the timing was rarely good. They were usually asked because a paper had jumped the gun and the magazine felt it should say something itself. Anyway, they agreed to give them a piece and then got a load of questions back from the magazine - questions which he was loth to answer because of the amount of time involved.

The other things were routine jobs that were not particularly exciting. For example, there was a 'phone call on the same question, because the Financial Times had reported the Paris meeting and had got the details of the terms wrong. So one of British Shipbuilders' staff rang to ask and he had to explain - a correcting exercise.

The other item involved providing information to a co-ordinating Division on what overseas posts his Division used - not difficult to answer.

Seventh interview - 23 November 1979

This was his last day in the post, and the following week he was off to the College for the first part of his more formal Administrative training. We took the week's diary in a more general way than usual and then spent some time in reflection of his expertise over the whole of his tenure of this first post.

Monday was definitely the most interesting; apart from this it had been a relatively representative sort of week, although there was nothing much in terms of scale between the big briefing job on the Monday and the little tiddly bits like that which he had to do for the TUC.

For the big job, his role had been to write the draft of a brief for the Permanent Secretary, who was meeting his opposite number from Germany. The draft was on Scrap and Build. The

Germans did not like this idea, while the UK was openly favourable. The German official had asked specifically to talk about it at the meeting.

John had the stuff at his fingertips and had no need to consult anyone else in drafting the brief. The basic aim was to sound out the Germans on their views, knowing that they were not keen. Would they, however, accept compromises on, say, financing?

The Permanent Secretary had not been involved up to that point in Scrap and Build, and had thus needed a full briefing. Apart from his Assistant Secretary adding an extra paragraph, it went up as he himself had written it.

He was very pleased with this. It was certainly the most interesting and exciting thing in the whole week. It was quite a long piece of work - four to five sides of single-spaced typing - which was why it took up the whole of Monday. The Assistant Secretary was actually quite keen on brevity, which was a problem in itself. Normally you would only need to provide a couple of paragraphs for a brief, but on this occasion John thought that they would need more and that a bit of extra information would be helpful to the Permanent Secretary.

As to results and outcome, he saw it as a further step in the continuous process of seeing what sort of thing is appropriate to what sort of occasion. He had been learning about how much detail was necessary; how much you could get away with ignoring;

and when you did have to provide substantial information, how to get it down concisely. For example, here he thought that the state of the ship market might come up, and decided that the best way to cover it was to say something to the effect that if the German official should suggest that the ship market was on the way up, simply to say that they did not believe that without going into any of the details.

All-in-all, it was something worth doing.

As for the TUC, EEC developments had involved him in writing a short brief to be sent to TUC HQ rounding them up over the whole range of industry and trade. Shipbuilding was a part of this, and he had had to produce a simple summary of developments in this area. He was in effect acting as the Government - presentationally it was not a very difficult job, but it had to be thought about. It was the sort of thing they were doing all the time.

In terms of the general outcome, it seemed that there was some law of diminishing returns at work. By the time that one had been in that job for a year it had become quite familiar. There was nothing outstanding in the week like going to Parliament; but the Scrap and Build brief was probably one of the most important pieces of work that he had done. The presentational aspect in this case was not persuading someone but informing him. It thus contributed to his own learning.

Another thing you learn, illustrated here, is not to be panicked or flapped into something. For example, a State industry rings saying that something enormous is going on that the Department does not know about; as the call has come out of the blue you don't have the facts at your fingertips; in the event you find that it is nothing enormous at all - the moral is not to panic or flap.

He also learned something extra in the week - when someone asks you to do something, make sure you know what it is before you ask someone else. The instance was the Danish discount rate, which was something that he had had to chase up the connection with worries about different levels of subsidies and so on. He himself had blithely rang the overseas post, saying "What is the discount rate?" The answer came - you can measure it five different ways; what discount rate do you want? So he had had to go round and find out just what it was he wanted to know, check back with British Shipbuilders on whether this was exactly what they had wanted (and even they proved a bit vague), and then ring the post again saying what particular discount rate it was that was in their minds. This was a case of making sure that you know what you are talking about even if - especially if - you are only acting as middle man.

Looking back over the first posting

It was a good job, and moved at quite a fast pace. This was something that had only come out when he was talking to his successor. He was telling her about the arrangements for sending

TELEXs to the UK Representative in Brussels and how the FCO handled this on the grounds that they did not believe that the Home Civil Service had the competence to interact directly with overseas representatives. It transpired that his successor had never sent a TELEX whereas he, John took sending three a week for granted. So it struck her as being a division where things happened quickly.

He had been there while they had negotiated with the EEC the two-year system of aid for shipbuilding, which had involved a lot of presentational work, and his Assistant Secretary and he had spent a lot of time drafting. Out of it, he learned what to say, what to leave out, how much people can take in - like you do not write seven pages for a Minister because he won't look at it. He thinks he probably got some way on this - it was not just a case of how the Civil Service works, but how people take in information.

As for negotiation, he had learned a lot from the meetings with Member States, accompanying people who represent the UK. He had seen the atmosphere that prevailed. At a multilateral meeting, you can get away with flannel and waffle. In a bilateral meeting with the Commission, you have to be accurate and persuasive. It was interesting when their US attended the multilateral. He did not usually go, so the Division needed to provide rather more briefing than it would do for an ordinary branch member.

At the same time he had been learning how the system works, which he thought would presumably have come from any AT job. By this he meant finding out about contacts with other Government Departments and with industry. And he would never trust a set of figures again without seeing what lay behind them. This was not only something he learned from his contacts with industry, but something he had acquired from learning to present statistical tables himself.

Having a strong working relationship with one nationalised industry was interesting. It was stuffed to a significant level with ex-civil servants who knew the system. So the Department was not working with people who did not know what was going on. One aspect of the relationship was how much you tell them. One wanted to be frank, but there were occasions when the Department did not tell the industry something or they did not tell the Department. It was unpleasant when it came out.

As for contact with the outside, he now felt less hesitant about it. For example, answering a call from a ship owner, at first you worry that you might give away some great secret that will wreck the whole of Government policy, and you have no way to judge what people can be told. He now felt much more confident about this sort of thing.

They did tell people as much as they regard reasonable - which was actually quite a lot in his estimation.

He had also become more confident simply in asking people about things, picking up the 'phone to find out who it was who had the information he wanted. Everyone of course wants to avoid looking silly but if he had learned anything it was probably the realisation that you do not often look silly just by asking questions.

His successor had just come from the Course AT(I). This was statistics and economics, and some people said the statistics was a bit devastating. Some also say that the prime reason for having to go on the course was to meet other ATs.

Eighth interview - 22 February 1980

He had recently returned from the first AT course at the College and now found himself in a new Division. We spoke first about the College, thinking as much as possible in terms of our normal three dimensions - aims, activities and outcomes.

There had in fact been quite a lot of argument about the course aims. Thinking particularly in terms of economics and statistics, he had gone assuming that the College staff were trying to give background information that would be necessary at some later stage. However there was some criticism because it was not going to be of much use in the very next job and in six months it would have all been forgotten. In his view, if you did forget it all in six months then that would indeed be a criticism. The content must go beyond the immediate job. Certainly from the economics he had felt that he got from the lectures and group

activities some idea of the different policies that it was possible to adopt in the face of a difficult economic situation - or even indeed in good times.

Statistics was more specialised. As it happened, the job that he had just moved into would be commissioning a survey and it could be useful. Before the course, he had never been involved in gathering data or thinking about error - not sampling error at any rate, more the kind of straightforward forgetfulness type of error. Although at the time he had thought quite a bit of what they were doing was too detailed, it could turn out in his case not to be.

The third part of the course was public administration and was the least well co-ordinated. This may have been because it is not so easy to classify as economics or statistics. There was a bit about law which was mostly quite interesting. As for the lectures, some of them had gone on all day, which could be a bit devastating. There were several exercises that did not quite come off, mainly it would seem because people did not know what they were doing, and one stuck in his mind that had involved briefing a "Minister".

More generally, he felt that one ought to be looking for a chance to play a role that one may get into later - like taking the lead in a group. For example, in an exercise on nationalised industries, they had been split into four groups, given problems or statements to discuss, and had then been sent away to come back and present

their findings later. He himself had 'volunteered' to be rapporteur and to give the group view in plenary session. It was quite clear that if you did not decide straight away on who was to do this you ended up not knowing what to say or how to say it and without anybody keeping notes. You needed to organise yourselves, if you were not going to present a bad impression. However, there had been insufficient constructive criticism from the staff as they went through the exercises. Little pieces of organisation that ensured that the group came to a decision had occurred, but not in the proper way of being told that they had done this or that wrong - not until right at the end of the course when it was too late. Group dynamics issues come up on all group exercises in any course sequence and could most easily be dealt with in those live situations, rather than separately.

This had in fact been the first course with formal assessment and they had noted with horror that punctuality was the first criterion on the list. It would have helped though if someone had said that when making a formal assessment they were taking the kind of individual contribution made to group exercises into account.

The New Job

The head of his new division was an Under Secretary, who had four Assistant Secretary level posts working to him, some of which were occupied by professionals. These four Assistant

Secretary commands were the four branches, and John is in Branch 3. (One of the others in our study - Edward - turned out to be in one of the other branches.)

The division as a whole was responsible for the National Enterprise Board, though John had nothing to do with that. It was also responsible for representing the manpower needs of industry to government departments concerned with education, employment, and training. In this respect, his branch dealt with higher education and in particular with the Finniston Report on engineering, which had just come out. The division and branch would be responsible for implementing the Finniston recommendations - on setting up an engineering authority, on changes in syllabuses of engineering degrees - all of which was part of the process of better utilisation, better education, and making engineering a more attractive profession.

So the broad aim of officials in the division was to try to get the Department more involved in education, like funding courses that were directed to industrial work. All of this was a bit vague, but Finniston was seen as a lever or spearhead to try and achieve changes on a wider front, and in political terms to change the anti-enterprise culture. In fact his new Under Secretary had had John and Edward both in only that morning to 'give them the works'; he was very much in favour.

As the Finniston Report would only produce the first registered engineers in about seven to eight years from then, the whole thing was very long term.

The Secretary-of-State was apparently able to reconcile 'getting rid of the anti-enterprise culture' with his Department's officials telling or inducing people what to teach and what courses to go on - correcting the bias was how he saw it. How did it feel, I wondered, to be a civil servant doing this - 'a bit odd if you did Classics!' observed John.

A lot of the people in the Division were engineers. His own Principal - to whom he worked more or less direct, with very little overlap with the HEO - had only moved over to administration work some 10 years previously and was a Principal-level member of the Professional and Technology Group. His Assistant Secretary likewise was in fact an Assistant Directing Engineer; and the SEO post in his area was occupied by a Senior Scientific Officer. The recent unsatisfactory pay settlement for the P&T group was something which was fairly close to the front of people's minds. It seemed ironic that this settlement should have taken place (with the P&T group being forced to settle at something less than equivalent rates of pay to those of the Administration Group) when the Finniston Report was urging better pay for professional engineers.

One way or another, their outlook seemed a bit different. One had to be a little bit careful about making jokes. There was certainly a lot of enthusiasm. And he was coming into it himself as a part of that anti-enterprise or anti-commerce culture that was to be dispelled, having spent his time at university thinking the very thoughts that they would not like him to have been thinking.

The week

He had come in halfway through the setting up of an Institute of Manpower Studies (IMS) survey into the kind of 'highly qualified technological manpower' other than the well-surveyed engineers - indeed, on the latter, Finniston was percolating through even to such obscure (to John) disciplines as metrologists (specialists in measurement, he had discovered). There was a broadly-based committee - 'HQTM', of course - that met once or twice a year, chaired by his Assistant Secretary, and which had recently approved the IMS survey proposal. His Principal now had the job of pushing the project through the people in Government that it needed to be pushed through to get it going.

This involved two main things. The first was to get it through Finance in the Department of Industry, there being a specific division there concerned with funds for consultancy. The other was to push the plans through the Survey Control Unit in the Central Statistical Office. These latter had to authorise any such project to ensure that the Government did not go around surveying business to such an extent that it interfered with the business was trying to do.

He had been finding out what needed doing, and using a statistician contact to help things along.

The previous day had had him filling in for his Principal - away on leave - to make sure that the Secretary of State was properly

briefed on strains in relationships between the Engineering Industries Training Board, and the Manpower Services Commission, broadly in the context of a review of the EITB in the light of Finniston. As the Secretary-of-State was shortly to be visiting the EITB it was important that he be well briefed, or the branch would take the rap.

Then he had been trying to get hold of some ancient EEC documents. There was a Brussels meeting in March to establish mutual recognition of qualifications. This appeared to be a long-running enterprise that had recently got stuck. They could decide to press on with the engineers' directive, for which the last papers appeared to have been issued in 1969 and 1971. He had been trying to get hold of copies of these, which even the Commission in Brussels did not appear to keep. It was quite an annoying little job, but had no great policy import.

One comparison with his previous job was the fact that here you were not being so tightly squeezed. Six months ahead was the end of the world in the previous job; he had thought in terms of the next week at most. Here though, they had papers thinking about 10 years ahead at least. Shipbuilding could make no confident predictions even four to five years ahead. Shipbuilding was also very much more party-political with reference to employment and so on. Here, though there would be political decisions to make, there would not be the kind of squeeze that he had experienced, say, between the trade unions and the EEC. Here it was a case of civil servants going out and taking the initiative which, as he had said earlier, was a bit odd.

Ninth and last interview - 21 March 1980

Thinking first in terms of the resources that he had had to draw on to do the week's work, he mentioned that he had had to think at quite a deep level for work on a memorandum. This was a draft to be submitted from the Department to the Select Committee at the House of Commons on Education, Science and the Arts. This Committee had been looking at the organisation of higher education as it stood at that time and had asked for a memorandum on the Department's role in guidance to higher education, the national interest, funding of courses by industry, private finance, relevance of courses to industry, manpower planning, and so on.

The issue had been bandied around a bit for some time, and John had a few working documents to go by. There was a letter that the Under Secretary had drafted earlier, and one or two other bits and pieces. So it was partly a case of his turning this letter into a memorandum, and incorporating new elements. He spent most of a day on it.

The main thing that he got out of it was becoming a little bit master of the subject matter. He was probably becoming one of the people who knew most or as much as anyone else about what the particular Select Committee had seen to date. The job involved the usual exercises of presentation, organisation, and so on. It was a sensitive topic, so on presentation they had to be very careful.

The second big job involved telephoning round. Here we had a different sort of thinking - not what ought to happen in policy terms, but what alternative actions might be. It seems that the Secretary of State had committed himself to visiting a north-eastern polytechnic to discuss the links between industry and the polytechnics. This was because he was unable to go and present their degrees in the autumn. It seemed that since the autumn, when he was still keen to change the face of the nation, he had become rather less enthusiastic about dealing with philosophical issues when there were problems like British Steel to be thought about. Furthermore, John had found out from the Private Office that he was not going to be in that part of the country anyway, and having officials stand in was just not on. He therefore had to ring the Junior Minister to see if he would be prepared to go instead.

The deadline on the whole issue was the Monday afternoon; he had sent papers to the Junior Minister for answer by Monday. But by Monday he had to ring his Private Office and had got a rather unsatisfactory reply. He then decided to draft a letter to the polytechnic on the assumption that the Junior Minister would in fact go instead of the Secretary of State and route it through the Private Office. At the same time he had contacted the North Region Office people through whom the original letter had gone out.

So one has policy thinking and getting things done thinking - and getting things done thinking involved doing them. For example,

one thinks who can go? The answer is the Junior Minister. So you have to ring him. You think who did this last time? You have to find out. This kind of thinking and doing involves persistence.

As it happens it all came back in the end; the Secretary of State was going to the north east after all and wanted to go to the polytechnics.

In terms of learning over the week, there was learning a bit more about the job itself - about the system. He had not been involved much in arranging visits in his previous job and when he had to do it here it became clear that there was a system of who expected to go, at what sort of level, whether officials should be invited, and so on.

As for the satisfactions, producing the draft memorandum on the Secretary of State's case were both satisfying in their way. There was a certain attendant dissatisfying element in the latter - he had phrased something rather badly in the draft so that it came across condescendingly to the Junior Minister. His Principal had picked it up and suggested it be changed - this was particularly galling because he had known it was wrong when he wrote it.

All in all this had been about the best week in the job so far. He had wondered if it was going to turn out to be just a selection of Minister's cases. It seemed that it was not going to

be the follow-up of Finniston that he had been told it was. Really, satisfaction and dissatisfaction have a lot to do with level, importance, and a policy-element of the work that one was doing.

The whole period

He had so far got something he had hoped he would get in terms of personal development. One reason that he had not stayed on at university to do research was that he thought it would be good for him to work in area where he was involved in getting people to do things, organising activities, and so on. This was something which he had in fact had to do - though whether as much as would be the case elsewhere he did not know. He had a couple of university friends with whom he drew comparisons - one in a merchant bank, the other in a publishers.

The chap at the publishers seemed to have got rather more independence in a large organisation in some respects comparable to the Civil Service. He seemed to operate in a rather less restricted system.

Government means different constraints - the sorts of things that one is not meant to do differ from industry. His friend is supposed not to let the publishers lose money; we were supposed not to let the Government lose face.

In drafting, so much of what we have to do is clarifying material for people who have to take it in quickly.

The chap in the merchant bank was rather harder to compare, but there might have been more similarity in some ways in the extent to which the two of them had been allowed to operate independently. Banks tended to operate in teams more than the Civil Service did.

Maybe the training system could throw ATs a little more in at the deep end. In his first job he was very rarely responsible for anything. He had had quite a gradual introduction to using the resources that he wanted to make himself use - organising things, making sure things get done, acting rather than merely analysing. There did not seem to be much scope for thinking up bright new ideas but this may be partly his fault. Some people go around thinking them up and putting them on paper all the time. It seems to take him quite a long time to assess and think his way into a new job, but then things click and he starts having ideas. As for scope for thinking up new ideas - there are two issues, one is whether there is actual scope, and the other is whether one had the ideas anyway. In his previous division, nobody had any ideas about how to save the shipbuilding industry, except doing more of the same thing. This new job may have more scope for showing whether he could use his ideas.

So, he had used some of the resources he had hoped to - though on occasion he found himself hoping his brain was not rusting up. He did not have time, or the type of task, that meant he was really going to stretch himself - it was different sort of work from producing two university essays a week.

He had also had his eyes opened to the ways of the system - not just the simple mechanics but the way people act either from self-interest or not giving proper attention to the evidence.

It was all pretty new to him because he was working with people more than he used to. There was the promotion system, and institutional views on the nature of their sister Department. The promotion system did not exactly dominate the job, but the way one talked about people was indicative - one talked about their grades, their service and you assess people on this. The attitude that one held about somebody depended on what sort of grade they were at - a 35 year old Assistant Secretary conjures up certain views and you presume he is of a certain type without even meeting him. It was all rather dangerous really.

He had been quite lucky. It was a bit unusual maybe but both of his Principals had entered the Civil Service by odd ways. The first had joined the Consulate in Hamburg and then transferred to the HCS; the second of course had been an engineer working at Windscale.

Actually working with someone older than yourself was quite a change too. At first he got a bit fed up. He was the only AT in the Division and there were only one or two contemporary with him or with shared interests. In his new Division this was less the case.

Looking back to the start

Indeed, the first impression that he could recall had to do with working with somebody quite a bit older than himself. On his third day in the Civil Service he was off to Brussels. This was exciting and introduced the job in quite a glamorous way. It was something to do with export credit guarantees on the EEC Co-ordination for OECD - and he did not even know what OECD meant. He found himself taking notes at an appallingly organised meeting without any simultaneous translation. He remembered saying to a German that he had only just joined and that this was rather like taking notes at a lecture. He did not realise how difficult it was going to be turning it into an account of a meeting. In fact he had kept that original meeting note - probably out of sheer sentiment. He remembered that he had felt that he ought to make it hard so that the reader actually got something out of reading it. It was only subsequently that he realised that people would not read it at all.

Another incident from Brussels involved travelling across the city with his Principal and, consulting the map, saying that they should turn up here. Rather than just go with him, the Principal had asked to have a look at the map to make his own mind up. John came to the conclusion that it wasn't that the Principal did not trust him but that he wanted to know what was going on. He concluded that one needed to do this sort of thing. It was not good enough to let things pass. He remembered feeling at the time that that was one of the things one had to do in the Civil

Service. One must stop people to say "I do not know what's going on - please explain it to me".

And with that little moral tale, he and I concluded our business.

CHAPTER 5 - The Psychology of Narrative

In chapters 2 and 3, I set out approaches to theory and practice in turn. In the six cases set out in Chapter 4 and Appendices 1 to 5 we have what amounts to a 'product' of theory and practice. It is now essential to examine that product more closely and to see what can be learned from it. As a lead in to this, a short resumé of the kind of framework within which we started out will be helpful.

The setting - the epistemology - is one in which the individual can be construed in some sense as his or her own scientist or theoretician. Knowledge about what it means to be at work in the organisation is constructed in interaction with the world about one, not taken in in bits and stacked up inside somewhere. The 'theory' that one builds in the process is in effect a network, or structure, or system of such operations upon the world and, of course, will include, as Piaget long ago pointed out, the possibility of operations upon operations - crudely, thinking about thinking. Whether the individual at any one time can be seen primarily as philosopher or as technician will depend upon whether he or she is operating on the values at the centre of the organisation 'sphere' or on the management of practicalities nearer to its surface.

The central feature of anything that one might want to call 'theory' is the construction of regularity that is, within its ambit, universal in application, general rather than specific, and that is

also something more than an historical account, something more than a tape-recording. From it one can raise hypotheses to predict, explain, or even test the theory. If this way of looking at how we come to know has any validity, then it should apply as much to the explanation itself as to the individual being explained - the reflexivity criterion.

The ability to be able to reflect upon one's own knowing implies the existence of some higher order way of knowing with which to do it. Here are, amongst other notions, the distinction between explicit and implicit personal theories, and Pask's L and L* languages. In the case of a Civil Service administrator, the idea has special application in the need to make room, as it were, for something other than the party political work of the day - the point about not committing oneself to the last ounce that I mentioned at the beginning. The idea of a kind of commitment to public service that is broader than commitment to any specific policy implies the ability to construct a cognitive space that is big enough to contain policy or an array of policies without being totally occupied by it or them. Here again is the concept of hierarchical knowing.

Turning from the theoretical background, my practical approach with the six young trainees aimed as far as possible at looking for signs of the beginnings of the construction of personal theories or accounts of work, and doing so in the context of flow through time. What did I expect the form and content of these personal theories to look like? For the one, it depended very much on

where I chose to pitch it, and the practical and at the same time probably the most interesting and informative level lay somewhere between the extremes of the logico-mathematical structures in terms of which Piaget elaborated his work on the one hand - that which I think of as the molecular end - and, at the molar end, structures of socialisation that would be appropriate to a more directly sociological enquiry. As to content, then the generalist nature of their work was going to have a heavy influence; but as a working summary of the necessary orientation to the job, Burgoyne's three main levels of reading the environment, problem-solving, and creativity (to paraphrase him somewhat brutally) offer a useful aide-memoire.

It would also be worthwhile to emphasise a point that I intend to develop below, that the enquiry was not designed as a sample survey. There is in no real sense any null hypothesis to test, no significance level against which to reject it. Of course, hypotheses about how other ATs may go about constructing their own theories of work arise from watching these six do so, so the probabilistic entertaining of an hypothesis that I mentioned virtually in passing in Chapter 2 has its place. But again, the kind of sample survey approach, with measurement, that would allow one to put a figure to such probabilities and to make thereby some distinctive statement about just how likely it is, given the characteristics of the sample, that such-and-such a feature might hold for the population at large is not represented here.

What we do have, though, is a set of accounts of how six young people started to make sense of their world at work. We can say, at a minimum, that here are six people for whom such-and-such was the case and that others who are like them in various identifiable respects might find it useful to use this interpretation, way of thinking, set of experiences, as a kind of touchstone for thinking about their own experience, either in early days like these or indeed further on into a career. I will elaborate on this more as we progress. At the same time, though, I have to emphasise that, null hypothesis or no null hypothesis, there has to be a question to start the process off - not just to satisfy Popper, but to make sense. Again, at the least elaborate level, the question to which all this is intended to be an answer was set out in Chapter 3 - simply, what does the process of constructing his or her own theory of work look like for the young AT? The practical approach used I also characterised as learner prime/retrospective. Of course that is largely true. But retrospective means looking back, and looking back implies the possibility of looking forward. Clearly, the view formed is retrospective only in a relative sense. The question 'where next?' is implicit throughout. To be more overtly prospective, the orientation would quite simply have had to feature such questions - 'what are you going to do?', 'where does all this lead?' - more explicitly. That was not the intention. But the point about the relativity of the retrospective as opposed to the prospective view is an important one.

I have used the expression 'a set of accounts'. That ties in, intentionally, with what Armistead advocates (qv). Recall his observations - "asking ... is the crucial methodology" - "accounts constitute public evidence". Recall too that "explanation will involve some interpretation of meaning". In the present case, the checking back with the originators on the meaning of their accounts came to an end when we had checked through the last interview transcript together. In essence, what we have in the six case studies is an exposition of each individual's own explicit understanding of what he or she was doing - material for their 'explicit theories', shall we say. Now I take over, without reference back to them and without any further negotiation. Interpretation of meaning, in the Armistead sense, naturally took place within each interview, or sequence of interviews, as we jointly checked the accuracy and intelligibility of the account. What I have in fact set out in the case study reports is considerably edited, and hence must contain more of my own perception and understanding than the original negotiated transcripts did. I did, however, do my best simply to condense, and not to edit in any sense of applying an editorial line.

The Account as Method

I want to pursue these accounts somewhat further, to see what can in fact be learned. But I want first to pursue the actual idea of an 'account' and try to see just what in general one might expect to learn from such a thing, or set of such things.

The starting-point is familiar enough - the now pervasive dissatisfaction with empiricism as both theory and practice, upon which I elaborated in Chapters 2 and 3. It will stand some further elaboration, though, for all its familiarity. It is not just a null-hypothesis significance-testing approach to social science that can produce results which, whilst doubtless 'true', are often trivial. Far from it, it is the falsification rubric itself. Certainly it must be the case in logic that one can only refine what is when one has acquired some understanding of what is not. Indeed it could be said that Kelly built his entire theory on a premise of this sort - that bi-polarity is what defines. A falsifiability criterion - that if a statement or hypothesis cannot in practice be subjected to a test to check on its truth or falsity, then it is not a scientific statement - may be essential for working at the boundaries, as it were, of what is and what is not the case. However, the more time that is spent testing those boundaries and reporting on what is not, the more likely it is that the richness of what lies within the boundary, an explication of what is, is going to be missed.

Unfortunately, it may just be the case that the tenets of generalisability, conditional universality, and a-historicity are easier to handle within a falsification model. Certainly as far as the 'rules' of significance-testing are concerned it is. Given an acceptance that the theoretically unusual does not in practice happen, then null hypotheses can be regularly disproved and it is only by the trick of having made them trivial in the first place that any progress at all is made. (See, amongst others, Bakan, 1967.) But one is not thereby actually saved from trivia. With

almost any size sample it is going to be the case that the correlation between two variables will never in fact be exactly zero.

No. The difficulty lies in the realm of rich and positive material within the boundaries. How, without significance-testing tricks, can one arrive at what is generalisable, conditionally universal, a-historic and at the same time significant in the more day-to-day sense of the word? Where measurement and number are appropriate, Bayesian inference techniques provide an alternative. But measurement and number are themselves limiting. Attempting to force the accounts that we have here, for example, into some sort of numeric framework runs the risk of losing a good deal of the richness. So how, the question becomes, does one go about handling that straining towards prediction, rather than the settling for simple understanding, that characterises the three defining tenets?

A claim could be made for the work of each of Freud, Piaget, and Kelly as exemplifying how to answer a question of that sort. Although each was in his own way rigorous almost to a fault, each continued to work on the rich area well within the boundaries of concern over falsifiability. None could be accused of being a purveyor of trivia. As I suggested earlier, the grand generalisations of Piaget's work exist at what can be seen as a relatively 'molecular' level - the formal groupings of acts of knowing, for instance. The abiding generalisation of Kelly's work is in essence the 'hollow square' of the repertory grid; when content

is added generalisability falters. And certainly at one level of interpretation, Freud's work can be seen as possessing rather too much in the way of content for generalisability to retain credibility. If there is one general observation to be made here it is, drawing on the form/content distinction on which again I reflected earlier, that the more content-oriented analyses do not lend themselves to ready generalisation - even if they are likely to be intrinsically more interesting than the less so.

The whole argument is summarised in a recent paper by Bruner (1986) as being between paradigmatic and narrative views of the business of psychology. I want to dwell briefly on what he is saying, and also to introduce an ethnographic flavour, before returning to the substance of the accounts that we have here.

The ethnographic flavour added at this point is in a sense a slight diversion, a very brief stopping-off along the way to consider a somewhat different area of activity. But the parallel of concerns is interesting. Ethnography as process is the business of attempting "a comprehensive understanding of some human group" (Agar 1981). It is a process that will typically stand in contrast to hypothesis-testing approaches though these, it seems, can regularly be encountered in more 'classical' anthropology.

The classic model of hypothesis-testing, though - in this area of social scientific endeavour as in our own - is held to be, with its small number of co-varying variables, "too impoverished a paradigm" to handle the search for pattern in the accounts given

to, or elicited by, the ethnographer in his or her activities. Those activities themselves can be presented as the activities typical of a student or apprentice - the ethnographer as apprentice to the group concerned, seeking to learn about and understand their lives, the flow of events about them, and how they, the group-members, interpret this.

The ethnographer's search for pattern may unearth the kind of background framework - the word 'schemata' even makes its appearance - through which the group interprets experience. (One might, with due humility, offer the term 'theory'.) The ethnographer will also, Agar suggests, find the well-worn concept of 'theme' still entirely serviceable, and the relationship of event to theme an important area of enquiry - one which transports fairly readily into, say, a Piagetian way of looking at things by the simple substitution of 'schema' and 'environmental disturbance' for 'theme' and 'event', or into a Kellian one with 'construct' and 'element'.

The ethnographer may very well, it seems, be reasonably content after all to settle for "accounting for things" rather than straining after prediction. It is perhaps arguable that when one has achieved an account of some social process or other in which it has been possible to trace a pattern of themes and events, to depict the circumstances or constraints under which that pattern held good, and to define why it was that one wanted to know in the first place, then the distinction between understanding and predicting becomes a little blurred anyway.

However, there is the ethnographer pursuing a path to the understanding of social processes by dint of a qualitative production and analysis of accounts of those processes, accounts produced by the people involved in them; and where pattern in terms of themes or schemata is sought in amongst the elicited accounts. Quite clearly the activity is one in which the pursuer is entirely content to look within the richness of what is, and to leave falsifiability and hypothesis-testing to others. To the extent that they succeed in achieving their sought-after understanding - maybe with an element of prediction to it as well - then to that extent they demonstrate the value and utility of the 'account' as vehicle to that understanding.

Returning to Bruner, we meet the interesting contrast that he makes between 'paradigmatic' and 'narrative' modes of thought - his terms. An important starting-point is that he sees the two modes as complementary to each other rather than in any particular kind of antagonism. Each, he maintains, provides a way of going beyond the given, but those ways are different and distinct. Clearly, the interest for me here, at its simplest, centres on the set of accounts elicited from the young ATs in the study. What might the 'narrative mode' have to offer as a means of learning something from the product of our practice? To find out means that I must attempt to present a brief summary of Bruner's case, which I now do.

Narrative and thought

First, there is the familiar paradigmatic mode. Faults with this, the now classical approach, centre for Bruner on the computational principles involved being, if anything, too powerful for ordinary use. This is of course another facet to the concerns that I was airing above. The paradigmatic can be almost too clean, too clean as it were for everyday use so that special circumstances have to be found to fit it. However, my setting out the essentials here is not intended as yet another onslaught; it is necessary simply to remind oneself of those essentials in order to be able to conduct the compare-and-contrast exercise that should bring the alternative mode to life.

So, one of those essentials is verifiability - the complement, of course, to the falsifiability on which I dwelled briefly above. Verification involves one in abstract, logico-scientific practice, centring on induction and deduction, on logical consistency, empirical correspondence and probabilistic reckoning.

It is, in Bruner's terms, overly connectionist, and the connections will be of the logical variety; where the word 'then' is met with in will be in the sense 'if x, then y'.

Products will aim for consistency and truth, for the timeless, the general, the context-independent - our old friends a-historicity, generalisability, and conditional universality in other words.

Orderly transformations will be conducted on structures, typical of which might be 'causation'.

Presuppositions have to be unpacked and made explicit. Facts are the stuff of the structures involved rather more often than feelings, beliefs, intentions are.

The aim overall is explanation, rendering a set of events into a "timeless and impersonal" form; and, of course, along with explanation goes prediction.

With that as a foil, as it were, attention can turn to the alternative mode. Here, one may start to meet a felt need for 'thick description', for something 'fuzzy' rather than clean-lined - for something, maybe, that fills in the interstices between the clean but too economical lines of a paradigmatic science and, conceivably, allows room for content.

The essence of narrative, in Bruner's terminology, is verisimilitude, not verification. The call on abstract, logico-scientific induction and deduction is lacking.

When there are connections, where the word 'then' appears, the nature of those connections is more likely to be 'this happened, then that did' - temporal rather than logical.

Consistency will be a feature, but truth need not be. Timelessness, generality, and independence of context do not represent aims

here - indeed, narrative is more likely to be dependent on specific contexts or settings than to be independent or universal.

As for the unpacking of and making explicit one's presuppositions, then narrative is characterised by a manifest dependence on there being presuppositions to be triggered - Bruner's term, again - in the reader.

Intentions, beliefs, feelings stake their claim alongside the factual - a feature that he characterises as the subjunctive.

By such devices as triggering presuppositions, 'subjunctivizing' and his use of language, the narrator sets up his landscapes - action on the one hand, and of consciousness allied to it on the other. The triggers act as cues to set up 'within' the reader what amounts to a 'virtual text' - a term of art that both refers to and stimulates the construction of the reader's own 'landscape of consciousness' in response to his reading the narrative. At the same time, the reader can be said to be engaged in his or her own 'performance of meaning' - another way of construing the activity of constructing the narrative from the reader's point-of-view.

The terms 'virtual text', 'landscape of consciousness', 'performance of meaning', do indeed all point to the fact that reading a narrative is an active business - not, as ever, a mere accruing of material. The triggers to the reader's own presuppositions set the process off, and the fact that no two readers will share

presupposition-structures means that the virtual texts, the landscapes, the meaning-performances will differ from reader to reader. The effect is one for which Bruner appears to have coined the term 'multivocality'. Here too is a trigger of undoubtedly somewhat differing presuppositions - but the clear implication is that multivocality is a polar opposite to generalisability and conditional universality.

The distinctive way in which the narrative mode differs from the paradigmatic is that the reader will be involved in interpretation of a set of events - whether indicative or subjunctive - that brings the account into line with his or her own personal experience.

Thus, where the outcome in one word for paradigmatic thought may be 'explanation', for the narrative it is 'interpretation'.

The narrative framework, as opposed to the process aspects that I have tried to depict here, can be conceptualised in different ways depending to some extent almost on which authority one looks to. But a three-way classification that Bruner develops from Russian analysts seems useful. Although he presents first the Russian, then the English translation, and then uses the latter, the fact that one of the indicators translates as 'theme' is a little awkward, as I wish to use the same label for a different purpose. Let the classification concerned be indicated here then by the Russian term - 'fabula'. It refers to what is after all the timeless aspect of any narrative - as it may be, greed, love conquering all, the

triumph of good over evil. The other two classifications are probably easier to comprehend - 'discourse', or the actual unfolding of the narrative, and 'genre', its type (biography, fairy-tale, or what have you).

Whereas 'fabula' and 'genre' may need little in the way of further analysis, 'discourse' merits an additional level of classification. Bruner mentions possibilities, but a straightforward and readily intelligible one sees narrative as needing to possess an Agent, Intention, Action, Setting, Goal and - picturesquely - 'Trouble'. A hero with some purpose in mind sets out to achieve some end under certain circumstances and meets with difficulty on the way. Of course, a more manageable approach could well be provided by simply searching the 'discourse' for the themes and events of the ethnographer.

However, Bruner's aim - one of his aims - is to consider the mental activity involved in writing or reading a story. In some sense a limited aim, it does appear to open up interesting possibilities. Not the least of these, and implicit in the very business of starting to explore this area, is that although a psychology of narrative has its own internal coherence and value, more interesting still is what it says for the prospect of narrative as psychology. And, of course, it was this that attracted my own attention to the Bruner paper in the first place. The issue becomes, as I suggested at the beginning of this short section, one of taking up the 'narrative mode' stance and working from there to see what can be learned from our ATs' individual accounts.

Before going on to attempt just that in the remaining chapters, a short summary of where this present one has led to would probably be helpful.

Summary

There is a by now respectable strand of social psychology that says (with Armistead) that "accounts matter". Ethnographers say "accounts matter". These latter may acknowledge some difficulty in handling the linkage between background knowledge, as depicted by frames and schemata, and 'the process of applying it in different situations' (Agar), but for all that, accounts matter.

Taking Bruner's 'psychology of narrative' seriously should enable one to develop an approach to psychology based on 'psychology as narrative' - in other words, to put Armistead's recommendation into effect and, maybe, even to help the ethnographer with his problem.

In essence, what counts in large measure is 'going beyond the given', virtually irrespective of who does the going and who the giving. The 'goer-beyond' and 'he-who-did-the-giving' could perfectly well be one and the same person, where the narrative was autobiography and going-beyond a form of reflection on the autobiography. Here the prospect opens up of a simple reflection process where narrative provides the mechanics instead of, say, the Repertory Grid doing so (for example, as in Thomas and Harri-Augstein, 1985). Themes and events in the narrative's

discourse may provide triggers to cue the reader's presuppositions - presuppositions differing from individual to individual. Herein lies multivocality - differing 'virtual texts' will be created in different individuals. But nevertheless congruence or goodness of fit between narrator's schemata - themes and events - and the reader's are possible and again depend on triggering by a narrator who thereby enlists the 'complicity of the reader' (Bruner once more).

The point is how to go beyond the given - whether or not towards an essentially paradigmatic generalisability, conditional universality, and timelessness - when concentrating very much more on content than on form. Generalising from elicited content in narrative form may be a possibility. It may be a possibility either from the stand-point of 'explicit theory' (Wegner and Vallacher, qv) when it involves the individual as individual, or 'implicit' when the readership is outside one. And whereas the interest may be essentially retrospective, it may also be prospective when the 'performance of meaning' has personal significance for how that reader goes on to construct his or her own 'life-narrative'.

CHAPTER 6 - Narrative as Psychology

Now I turn back to the accounts themselves - the product of that elicitation practice applied to a broad theoretical position with respect to an AT's construction of knowledge about his or her early work experience. This calls for analysis of those accounts, an analysis that should provide not only some further insight into the experience narrated by these young trainees themselves - interpretation, in the sense to which Bruner draws attention - but the prospect too of 'going beyond the given' in some manner. In other words, I take the accounts and subject them to a simple analysis that tends towards a 'narrative as psychology' position, with the joint aims of explicating their individual meanings and learning something general from them at the same time.

Up to now, the accounts have been as far as I have been able to achieve it more or less uninfluenced narratives of experience - uninfluenced, that is, except in the clear sense in which I originally set out broad agendas and subsequently involved myself actively in the elicitation process. A good case could be made out for involving the trainees themselves yet further in 'negotiating meaning' right down to the point where it was all made explicit. There are two good reasons for not having proceeded in this way. The first is a simple matter of practicality. They, and I, are working civil servants, and they had already devoted a good deal of time to the enterprise. (There is a point well worthy of note here, concerning the simple availability of time, or, 'space for oneself', to enhance one's understanding of work, its demands and

its setting, by using reflection techniques of any sort - but I will return to that later.) The second reason is perhaps subtler. It concerns the possibilities of rationalisation, in the sense in which Freud used this term. That is, there would always have been the prospect that the individual might not only have found him or herself working to render the finished account rational, coherent and internally consistent, but that he or she would have in effect adjusted that account to, in some sense, smooth out irregularities' in it. So for both these reasons, and particularly the former, the ATs themselves, as I pointed out earlier, had no further hand in it. What follows is my responsibility, my attempt to help flesh out one small example of 'narrative as psychology' in action.

Method

1. Each original account has been condensed into a much more compact version than those set out in Chapter 4 and the Appendices. These condensed versions, or precis, are characterised in part by an attempt to bring out the sense of 'flow' - the 'this happened, then that' temporal connections of narrative - and at the same time by the addition of an element of accounting in the sense 'accounting for'. That is, from time to time there is an observation of my own that has a quasi-explanatory tone to it as I pull strands together for comment. An instance might be, some three pages into John's case, where I comment - "there seems to be a noticeable tendency to blur the distinction between it [the organisation] and himself...". Obviously, John himself said no such thing, but equally obviously such an interpretation arose naturally

from the earlier setting forth of what it was that he did say and from the inspection that the condensing activity stimulated.

2. As to 'fabula', discourse and genre - first, genre is in all cases best accounted for by some such expression as 'biography', 'cognitive exploration', 'individual ethnography', or plain 'account'. The idea of 'fabula' does have a certain attractiveness to it, and at the end of each individual passage I offer my own idea of what for that narrative 'fabula' might be taken to be, what the story is 'about'.

3. The 'discourse' analysis is much more closely worked, for it is here that the steps for 'going beyond the given' are to be found, if they are there at all. I have avoided the framework that Bruner offers here - Agent, Intention, Action, Setting, Goal and 'Trouble'. At least I have avoided it at this more formal analytic stage. One reason for doing so is that, disconcertingly, inspection would suggest a certain over-inclusiveness in such a framework - the whole of human life rather than just work or, for that matter, just narrative. Instead I have borrowed the Themes and Events labelling from the ethnographers.

4. 'Theme' - first, I propose themes that appear to characterise the experience of each of the ATs in so far as that experience is represented by the condensed accounts. So each has his or her own set of themes. Moreover, my content analysis of the accounts at this stage is detailed enough to be able to set out sub-themes for each too.

5. Next, more content-analysis - this time of the first content-analysis itself - suggested a way of drawing together the six sets of main and sub-themes into one integrated array. Here we will have left the individual elicitations behind and will have instead 'created' a thematic structure derived from a notional meta-account, a meta-account that, were it written, would be the combined stories of all six trainees merged together.

6. Finally, I performed another content-analysis by inspection on the six original accounts. Here I extracted 'events'. An 'event' for these purposes is a statement of something that one of them had done - ".. it had been necessary to search through files..... and put together factual material"; or had observed -"... the powerful effect that the Under Secretary could have..."; or had felt - "... a growing sense of desperation that time was passing by..."; had discovered -".. enjoyed the experience of talking to visitors on something about which he actually knows a good deal.."; and so on. These events, and hundreds of others like them, were then sorted under the integrated themes and, indeed, by means of that sorting served to refine the themes themselves.

Analysis

The six individual precis follow, complete with a comment or two and the set of main themes appropriate to each. I suggest a possible 'fabula' for each too. The complete set of themes and their sub-themes for each individual follows in the next chapter, as does the integrated array. Themes and sub-themes from this

latter appear again in the chapter after that as headings for the groupings of specific events. I discuss my proposed purpose in setting these out in this fashion when we reach that point. Meanwhile, the narratives.

THE CONDENSED NARRATIVES

1. John

He is one of those whose choice of university studies grew out of what he was good at at school, and who was also to an extent affected by other people's views - a natural progression, pushed by past experience, rather than a case of his being pulled forward by some clearly envisaged future goal. Joining the Civil Service has a similar flavour. There was some element of choice - between postgraduate study and gainful employment. And there is also evidence of his thinking about quite what sort of gainful employment he would want - putting to use that at which he was proficient, seeking a blend of the thoughtful and the practical, being his own man. But beyond that he happily admits that his candidature was more a function of the culture in which he found himself than anything else, and that it only started to become a serious proposition as he came to learn something of the extent to which it might meet those broad aims that he had set for himself. Clearly, he took to administrative life like the proverbial duck to water. Not having taken any active part in student politics or other organised activity - football apart - we find him very early on immersed in the detail of shipbuilding policy, and able to

elaborate on it at considerable length. We have no check on the accuracy of his perception of course, but there is an impressive richness of detail in his explanation of departmental policy as seen from his end. There is a degree of enthusiasm too - even for ordinary matters like looking after the telegrams and being keen to know what they hold in store ('who's replied today?').

As to the practical activity that he was aiming at, we see him early on engaged in gathering information in support of particular policy issues, drafting briefs for his senior officers' use at meetings, taking notes, organising travel arrangements, seeking out weaknesses in the Opposition's policy statements to help defend a government line. Some of his very earliest experience had him coming to grips with the difficulties attendant upon doing something for somebody else - having it sent back, maybe repeatedly, until it met the other's expectations, going into depth and detail, questioning assumptions, using as best he could the various links in the organisational chains around him. He realised that he was going to need to draw on persistence and determination, as well as making best use of an analytical approach both to problem-solving and to the effective presentation of an argument. One problem, compared with university life, was the complexity of possible information sources. Another was what seems to have felt to him like a handicapping imbalance in power relations - an argument could not be pursued to its full effect when the other protagonist was very senior in hierarchical terms. At the same time one cannot displace responsibility, or blame, to others just because the organisation is complex and multi-layered.

Some three months into our enquiry - at the point where we conducted the 'grid' study - we still, or again, find him deeply involved, and showing a richness of perception and analysis. The sorts of construct that he is by now putting on his perceptions of work in the department have issues like relationships, responsibility, challenge clearly embedded. There is the breadth or wider applicability of the issues on which he was working.

As he saw himself either working with others or on his own, then he also saw the work in terms of its looking out, representationally, to the world beyond the department, or being involved solely with internal issues. His responsibilities he could differentiate in terms of whether he was merely acting as a communication channel, or whether he actually had some ultimate responsibility because he knew more about some issue or another than anyone else did. The lawyer/judge distinction that he drew suggests a similar difference - between advocacy on others' behalf, and the kind of 'using his judgement' that had originally attracted him. There is too a sense of some kind of opportunity for more originating or creative work as well as what is maybe the more normal working with 'givens'. But where at university he might well have pursued an interpretation of his own with all the weight that he could bring to bear, here the consequences of being wrong could be considerable - and judgement was needed.

We go on to see him continuing to develop a detailed view of the department's work. For himself, the next few months found him in a sense consolidating a view of work in terms of its relationships

with others and the variable sense of responsibility attendant upon the difference between 'being the expert', with a perceived need to come up with definitive answers, and doing his best to ensure that someone somewhere else could discharge his own responsibilities more effectively. He was also beginning to use the idea of interdependence more freely - increasingly able to perceive ways in which different aspects of the work were inter-related, though there continued of course to be some of it that he could only see as piecemeal.

In speaking of his conception of the organisation's purpose there seems to be a noticeable tendency to blur the distinction between it and himself, particularly with respect to information dissemination and its nuances - how cautious it is necessary to be in different circumstances, for instance.

The work has its satisfactions and its plain boring aspects. The former tend to centre sometimes on doing a difficult task, calling for analytic and judgemental skills, and sometimes simply on getting things done. There was also satisfaction in what might be called consolidating an organisational position - gaining other people's confidence. Dissatisfying aspects seem to have a certain 'lack of control' element to them- reorganising someone else's information, finding oneself obliged to do something that one thought unimportant but which took up valuable time.

Come the end of the first posting, he had gained in general confidence and had found - a little to his surprise - that he had

learned minor specific things like sending a telex. He had learned the importance of tailoring his briefs to the recipient's state of knowledge, interest, and ability to assimilate. He had achieved a general sense of context and balance as regards how to relate to the world around him, and to the world around the department.

In his first spell at the College he had probably learned some formal economics and statistics that would come to stand him in reasonable stead - though time, of course, would tell. There was also the important element of meeting other ATs, and some probably unintentional learning about organising small groups.

In his second job - again showing quite an impressive early grasp of detail and context - we find him not so much hesitant as a little amused at being an example of what he saw as just the kind of product of the 'anti-enterprise, anti-commerce' culture that his new division was supposed to be working against. It differed markedly in its time horizons from the previous job, where a week had indeed been a long time. It differed too in the greater initiatives that civil servants could themselves take. But otherwise, there was thinking, arranging, becoming the expert, presenting issues carefully.

By the end of one year, he was able to look back and see that he had indeed managed to do some of the organising, getting others to do things, working with, through and for others, that he had hoped to. There had been some deep thinking called for on occasion too - though sometimes he wondered whether his brain

might be going rusty. Being creative - he was not quite sure whether what seemed like lack of scope for thinking up new ideas was really lack of scope or just his own tendency to need working in slowly before the ideas started to come. On the organisational side he seems to have settled readily into a role where demands might differ depending on whether he was representing the department to the world outside, working internally, acting as a communication channel, or being an expert resource, but where, whatever the demand the one essential point was never to accept assumptions - always question, and do so as assiduously as possible. As for politics, he permitted himself a wry grin at being an exemplar of what was a perfect bete-noire to the new administration, and then got on with his small part in the task of combatting the anti-enterprise culture's worst vicissitudes.

'Fabula' and Themes

The themes that I extract from this 'discourse' centre in large part on what he was looking for. He was not in any notable sense driven by anything content-specific. Rather, he welcomed challenges of a more general sort. Thus, for example, the first aspect that arises from the analysis - in essence, the work - features more as demand placed before him by his surroundings than as something inwardly or previously determined. The main themes would appear to be these:

Demands - the thoughtful, the practical, the interpersonal.

Role - communication channel or expert resource, lawyer or judge.

Responsibility - real consequences.

Context and balance - and interdependencies.

Culturally-determined or self-driven.

In the last of these there is already an indication of the administrator's essential detachment (Wilding, qv). Entirely prepared to get energetically to grips with a mass of detail and even to enthuse over doing so, the wry grin is all that is evoked as he is put to work on a task that seems at least faintly alien to one of his provenance.

As to the narrative's 'fabula', I propose that as "what's come in today?" seems characteristic of his overall approach, then the theme-of-themes for this account, the essential 'what it is about', is "lively curiosity".

2. Trevor

Here was almost a classic case of the 'preference for relevance' expressed by Fulton. In working style, the liking for group and committee activities gained early on in life and the willingness to take on minor responsibility have a positive feel to them. In terms of work content, the broad-based social science university course,

concentrating on economics and politics, has the clear look of relevance - though even he, with a special urban economics topic behind him, had been surprised to find himself in his first posting working on matters concerning transport in towns. Further, he had a fairly clear idea of what he wanted to do in career terms when he first went to university, and that was to become a Civil Service administrator. Naturally, when it came to it he had a number of other precautionary irons in the fire too, but for him becoming an AT has a sense of ambition fulfilled.

In his early months, he had to get to grips with the practical issues that organisational work entailed - drafting, taking notes, managing his in-tray, and so on. But the content was readily identifiable, and the assimilation process rapid. We see what appears to be a clear-sighted grasp of the essentials of policy and practice in the division. Interestingly, although he counts himself adaptable, it is an adaptability that seems to have a controlled feel to it - switching from one framework of thinking to another when necessary, but having some identifiable frameworks there in the first place amongst which to switch, frameworks - or attitudes - laid down so far in his pre-Service life and experience.

Given the chance to draw on his university studies, in other words, he seems to have taken it. As far as skills are concerned, he had thought himself better at what he called 'writing to a purpose' than at creativity, and this seemed valuable. What he was having to do in his early service days was to try and adapt to the expectations of his readership or audience. He was also having to

adapt to working within constraints of an organisational nature to which he had not previously been accustomed. And there was picking up ideas about political attitudes in that organisation.

The main sense that comes through in the more formal construct elicitation that we conducted some three months in is one of personal involvement. He had come to value work where, in essence, he had scope for personal initiative - or expression of personally developed views and attitudes - and where there was a degree of significance or impact implicit in the weight of the job and its problem-solving demands, a significance that had him fully engaged. That is not to say that he did not also value the more relaxed and less fully engaged elements too, but they had their place.

For him, the formal spell of training at the College had aspects of which he was critical - mainly, insufficient attention paid to issues that were of more abiding concern. But it did nevertheless serve to focus further some of his own ideas. Principally, we see him elaborating, extending his conception of himself as the 'individual in the organisation' - what does he bring to it? what is there in the way of structure, information, background that comes to him? There is a developing view of the distinctions between analysis and synthesis, between slower and quicker reactions from the 'environment' - slower with analysis, faster with synthesis - and between the firm and concrete and the probabilistic and speculative. There were ways in which, not necessarily intentionally, departmental work was reflected in some of what

they did. One feature that did strike him was small-group work, where the lack of hierarchical structure in the College group highlighted for him the extent of unequal participation typical of similar-sized gatherings in the department. Despite the interesting aspects of this formal experience, though, he found himself wondering how it could be that being paid for studying what ought to be in one's own interests did not somehow work out.

Work becomes somewhat variable in quality and quantity in his next post, though. Again, there is what can only be a fortuitous link in the sense that the work content itself is directly in an area of personal interest. But that does not sustain him for long in the face of a lack of much in the way of challenge. Post-enactment implementation work, consisting largely of revising and checking, has its interesting aspects at the outset, but soon becomes mechanical. Left to his own devices he is clearly capable of thinking up things to do and, indeed, draws on experience from his first post - to perform some house-keeping on the files, for example. He also keeps himself and his bit of the organisation up-to-date by means of a reading programme - 'internal informing', he calls it, to distinguish it from the department's information role vis-a-vis the world outside. But the self-generated aspect of a lot of his work, and the fact that he was doing much of it on his own, means that he found it a little difficult to be clear about organisational aims other than as reflected in what he himself was doing. Sorting things out, keeping himself informed, keeping records, are seen as contributions to the organisation maintaining and developing its procedures. To an extent, he also sees both

himself and it in terms of accommodation and assimilation - the department accommodating as far as it can to the demands of a policy directive or simply taking on board comment as necessary. The idea of interdependence takes on significance, or the familiarity of repetition, too - seeing the organisation's activities in terms of relationships between, say, the development of its procedures, the internal flow of information, and continuous 'reading the environment' activity. He has a fair sense of proactivity, not just as a means of keeping himself busy, but as an administrative pre-requisite. Reading the environment thus has distinctly active overtones for him, so that when he spots something that merits attention he does something about it.

By the time we got to the end of the year's study he seems to have developed a reasonably well articulated 'personal model', as he called it - starting with basics of a mechanical nature and working up towards a more abstract organisational level. He had certainly developed a distinct view of the need for this. But there is a sense of disappointment too. Although our attention centred almost exclusively on his actual work, there was a recurrent personnel management motif in the background. The account that we have of his experience shows him very clearly working determinedly both at the day-to-day business of the department and at the personal business of actively learning about the general issues of administration. But he was so concerned about the basic thinness of his second post that the fear of not successfully graduating to the fast stream was - justifiably or not - becoming very real for him. If he failed, it would be a direct result of

central postings practice and, as he saw it, beyond his ability to influence. But if he did fail - he would leave. And that would put paid to the administration career of someone whose ambition in that direction had been long-term, well-founded and specifically based.

'Fabula' and Themes

Here there is a kind of double-level relevance. There is the generalised desire to work for the public good, and there is the very much more specific matter of finding himself engaged in work that fits in with his interests. It is this that distinguishes him certainly from John. For Trevor there is the appearance of a specific, particular interest, a sense of looking for something, whereas John was impelled by a more generalised desire for putting his abilities to good use. Trevor has all the signs of a much more highly focussed ambition. For him the main themes come out like this:

Work - its style, content and setting;

Organised self-perception - accommodating to the organisation, applying his aims;

Involvement - personal initiative and significance, being engaged in the work;

Interdependencies at the work place;

Ambition - the map between his own experience and the organisation's demands.

There is something about the narrative that, though he never used it, conjures up a phrase like "where is all this work that I've come to do, then?". Without demeaning him in any way at all, it seems to me that this tale's 'fabula' is "earnestness".

3. Toby

Although there are clearly thought-out plans behind going to Cambridge to read history, the career choice as university studies draw to a close is less goal-oriented. Rather than a positive decision, it was more a case of the Service being 'a good place' for someone like him - a historian - to work. He takes a little care - unavailing, as it happens - to try and avoid postings where personal involvement might be awkward. The transition has at first just a slight feel of bewilderment about it - though only in the implications of such remarks as his wishing he had taken a year out to find his feet between school and university, and the distinct sense of being thrown in at the deep end in the Service. Having actually been thrown in, he started to learn something of what it seemed to him that he needed in order to be effective. With his low-level responsibilities the learning to start with is largely practical - how to get information out of others, how to get the emphases right when co-ordinating information, how to process material for a PQ - but he also gained some sense of responsibility for others that was a distinctly different sense from what one experiences writing university essays.

As we go further into his construction of the work experience, it is perhaps not surprising to find two main areas of emphasis becoming clear - simply, the 'intellectual' or problem-solving content of the work, and the nature of his position in the organisation. On the former, he sees things in terms of the policy and practice constraints within which he works, of the extent to which he actually has to sit down and think, and the ownership of an area of expertise. There is a time-frame - work may have a present or a future impact, it may or may not have a continuity to it. On the latter, he himself may be acting either as a resource or as a channel of communication, and there may be either an internal or clearly external effect. There is some sense of continuity too across the university/work transition - certainly as regards the kinds of problem-solving demand placed on him by both reading history and coping with the department's work.

Over the next few months as he works through to the end of this posting his conceptualisation of the work, its aims, and his place in it becomes noticeably more finely articulated, and an increasing sense of confidence comes through. The work itself he continues to see very much in terms of whether the responsibility for both its content and its form is principally his, as opposed to its being other people oriented activities where in one way or another the most that he is responsible for is the form - 'tone', as he calls it. There is of course an interaction - from simply recording almost unselectively, to imposing order on information through the use of his own understanding of the content. The department's work, as it touches him, may be broad national and international policy

with a strong ministerial involvement. It may be concerned with control and influence over other organisations, or with the improvement of the mechanisms involved in that control and influence - either within the department or in the organisations themselves. There may be work that centres on future policy development or work that in effect defends the existing standpoint. Some will be abstract, some specific, some continuing, some one-off. Where he achieves a real sense of personal involvement and responsibility, then he also achieves satisfaction. Being on the edge of important issues - taking a note at a big international policy meeting - does not have a great deal of personal satisfaction about it because his responsibility is so limited, but actually being there is nevertheless rather interesting. The annoying and positively dissatisfying activities are those where in effect the locus-of-control is entirely outside him - working to other people's aims. There is a separate category for routine digging into files - tedium.

By the end of his first posting he has his own views of the more important aspects of development so far. There are the necessary skills, with communication high in importance - even down to using the telephone. There is a sense of involvement in the problems with which he is faced and an increasing tendency to loosen perspectives based in university days. Referents are both internal and external - how effective he is he judges both in terms of reference to what must be a sort of 'internal coherence' but also in terms partly of comparisons made with other people's effectiveness and partly of objective success. From feeling an

outsider, he now identifies very much more with the organisation. And this in turn gives him the beginnings of a confidence to make value judgements about the work. He points to two criteria - a sense of self-worth within the organisation, and a sense of organisation-worth within the community, the one nesting inside the other. The development of the one had preceded the other, and indeed the sense of the organisation's place in the polity is something about which he is rather tentative.

Over the course of the early months of his next posting, we see him continuing to work on and to be, maybe not obsessed with, but certainly most concerned about, developing his ability to communicate effectively with others. The importance of a developing sense of structure at the activity level also starts to come through. Work cannot be conducted piecemeal, just as it comes, but has to have its logical and chronological relationships properly attended to. He sees the broad aims of the department increasingly clearly in terms of the kinds of establishing future policy and programmes that goes on more at ministerial level, with the programmes having to fit properly into the administration's framework of political ideas, and on the other hand the sort of more obviously official level aims of implementing such programmes once they are in fact settled - and, indeed, making sure that at least some semblance of a programme is established by the due date when necessary. And if differing orientations within the same broad political framework produce what looks like conflicting objectives, then it is the officials' job to produce something that squares them.

At the same time, we see him also continuing to consolidate and develop a sense of responsibility, confidence, and involvement, and gaining both personal satisfaction and learning-experiences from work where he can discern some effect on the world that is attributable to his own efforts. Having technical problems to solve, being a point of contact, giving and getting advice, doing the kind of drafting that calls for something more than simply stitching together snippets of somebody else's work - all are examples of work that brings him some sense of satisfaction.

Looking back over the year at the important personal resources that he identifies, there are first the actual thinking skills - problem-solving within constraints rather more than creativity, a certain amount of 'mechanical' work, and the essential business of clear expression; there is content-type knowledge about the subject area and how the department works; there is communication; and there is working with other people - a blend of developing self confidence, flexibility, and the sensitivity to see that working with others is something that merits taking seriously. Confidence and communication are areas where he can identify some definite improvement. As to the impact that the year's work has had on him, then this seems most readily summed up as a feeling that he is engaged in something essentially worthwhile and where, despite obvious constraints, aggravations, and difficulties of various sorts, he was certainly glad to be.

'Fabula' and Themes

Although for him there was some experience in his background that might seem to have suited him for certain specific types of Civil Service work, he did not want to get involved in anything so close. His interest is general rather than specific. The themes are these:

Work - thinking skills, content, other people;

Role - his position in the organisation, together with a sense of self-worth within it and of the organisation's worth within the community;

Responsibility and involvement;

Self-monitoring - against internal and external referents.

These themes are quite specific and concrete in their way but there is nevertheless an aspect of the story that is less easy to define tightly. This looser over-theme corresponds in essence to the narrative's 'fabula' - "overcoming diffidence".

4. Iryna

Not only had she never entertained any specific desire to join the Civil Service, but when the careers adviser mentioned the AT scheme it was only with the intention of putting her off it. She

did however have a broad, generalised wish to work for the public good rather than for private profit. This, together with experience of and a liking for the administrative type of activity in which her student representation work involved her, and, of course, not forgetting the implicit challenge lying in the advice not to try for AT, had her at least deciding to have a go. She seems also to be one of those for whom the publicity angle sometimes claimed for the CSSB experience appears to have worked. Naturally, her earliest departmental experience of the committee work that she had been expecting to enjoy fell a bit flat. Nor were other aspects of her induction entirely satisfactory. For her, too, the attraction that had been sufficient to have her maintain interest throughout the selection process was based only in this broad, diffuse 'sense of service'. Family background and her own evaluation of the pattern of skills available to her served to direct her away from particular areas of work, but there was nothing that drove or drew her towards anything specific.

What she had to bring to the work she saw in terms mainly of approach and skill. Patience, a willingness to be meticulous, a sense of objectivity, clarity and coherence of thought, intelligibility in the presentation of material to others - all these feature. The feeling was one of a rather more circumscribed setting than she had been used to at university, though with for the most part a clear understanding of the nature of the boundaries around her. It is maybe unsurprising that the mapping between demand and personal resource was less than perfect - but she was surprised nevertheless to find unexpected ability

developing as this 'numerically hopeless' AT got to grips with a statistical survey. Early satisfactions centred on learning of this sort, on achieving a cogent piece of writing that met departmental criteria with respect to style, and of course in achieving anything at all that she could judge useful. But there is a strong sense throughout this early period of there not really being enough to do - periods of energetic activity on a task about whose real value she clearly harboured continuing but carefully controlled doubts are set in a context that has an empty ring to it.

Some months in, when we evaluated our one 'grid' study, showed her with a well-articulated view of the working world and her own place in it. Personal involvement, interest and stimulation, having to think hard, and at the same time a sense not only of what one can do but what one is, all feature and indeed run through from university work into life in the department. There is a structural sense too - an explicit one, in the sense of her seeing solutions to problems arising almost inevitably out of their own logic or, in other instances, as there being a sense in which one needs to impose some kind of formal structure on the work. There is an active, concrete, as opposed to reflective, abstract sense; a sense of detailed treatment - meticulousness, again - as opposed to the broad brush; aspects that may or may not produce learning outcomes; and, as ever, an appreciation of being involved in a work world where other people feature to varying degrees. Even the routine tidying up of one's desk can have a learning outcome, though it may not involve anyone else.

However, as her first posting progressed, the doubts mounted and the sense of emptiness increased. When she was in fact busy, she can be seen developing perceptions of the work that focus on the need for detail, the extent to which there may be routine or out of the ordinary - and thus more stimulating - problem-solving, and the need to communicate effectively. A sense of some structure to the department's business begins to come through, and she identifies the basic interdependencies between preparing background papers, consulting with others, and working up detailed ideas for new legislation. Where she was able to find some sense of involvement in a piece of work, when it was going to lead to something identifiable and where she was going to have to get it right, then her interest would be engaged. But too much of it, even the statistical survey, had an air of artificiality about it. And her criticisms mount. Extended out beyond her branch to the wider department, she found herself identifying a lack of vigour and will that, as a working context, made her own contributions seem pointless.

Not surprisingly, confidence faltered as this early period wore on. She exhibited the familiar sense of urgency about her prospects that the streaming system and its eventual fast-or-main decision tended to engender in ATs, and she became increasingly worried both about her own performance and the organisational setting. Insufficiently demanding work, a supervisor whose experience of ATs was itself limited, constraints placed by him on the extent to which she could exercise responsibility, a feeling of being in the kind of feedback loop where having limited responsibility leads to

increasing inability to exercise it, which in turn reduces the level available to her and so on - all this set alongside comparisons made with other ATs busily engaged in interesting and challenging work, with a previous self that took responsibility and challenge easily and lightly, and with a co-existent self taking a leading organisational part in activities outside work, was having a distinctly debilitating effect. This is not to say that she had learned nothing, of course. By the end of the first posting she had developed a reasonably clear sense of what the job was about. Maybe the enhanced clarity of perception only served to heighten awareness of what she was missing.

From this depressed point, though, we see her bouncing back to purposeful activity in the second posting. A more accepting though not blandly uncritical stance in those around her, working under rather more justifiable pressure against real deadlines, and a sense of the organisation's having a valuable part to play all contribute to a kind of unlocking, or releasing of the real her. What she finds important about the new setting is the extent to which a confident feeling of fitting-in provides her with the beginnings of an effective base from which to launch out into work with people inside and outside the department, and at different levels. The work itself she can stand back and see as having a concentrated and concrete look to it, saved from being piecemeal by the integrating theme that she detects. The organisation's role she sees as a focal point, and develops a view of relationships that extend out into local government, up to ministers, across to other departments, with information flows, decision-making direct and by

proxy, responsibility taken for ensuring that the relationships themselves are effective. In this last, research has a part to play. But, with the memory of her own survey fresh in the mind, she is wary of research - at its best it can provide the means of making a practical impact that no political speech can have, but it can also be so abstract as to be embarrassing or can result simply in reports that gather dust.

Her own personal view from the end of our year's work sees in one sense little change in the resources that she had available to her at the outset, apart from an enhancing effect brought about by their being called on to achieve results. She seems to forget having claimed innumeracy. But she does nevertheless describe the process of learning to control her own abrasiveness, and to adjust to working effectively with others, that shows - even if it had its roots back at college - clearly relevant development. Being diplomatic, she called it. Being a civil servant is what she was becoming, and determinedly.

'Fabula' and Themes

Here is someone who never intended to join the Civil Service until challenged to. In a sense, therefore, I find the first theme a little bit like John's - one where the orientation is the organisation placing things her way rather than her actively seeking to meet specific aims of her own. The themes:

Demands - skills, the content, and its setting;

Role - stimulating involvement (or not) within perceived boundaries;

Organisation role - value, focus, impact;

Structure - the internal logic of the work and interdependencies;

Self-monitoring - against internal or external referents, interest and confidence;

Goals - practical relevance.

For much of her account there is an overlay of contextual difficulty, within which her working effectiveness faltered. She objected strenuously. Face to face, she was mild, involved, serious with a touch of humour; but underneath it all her concern was such that the narrative's 'fabula' can only be "an angry young woman".

5. Edward

Being an Oxbridge modern languages graduate was something about which he clearly still felt a little, if not exactly defensive, then somehow unpersuaded. One was not to take him at stereotypic face-value. A well-developed political interest probably explains the stance, and certainly informed his career-choice. Usefulness, rather than personal gain, seems to be the way in which this

expresses itself. So the private sector was not totally ruled out, provided that whatever it was that he was doing could be seen as useful. But the public sector was preferred, even if it is not entirely clear whether his Civil Service application was carefully thought out some time ahead or whether it was merely a case of the Commission's regular Oxbridge appearances providing him with something that fitted in with the broad aim. The modern languages student's predilection for the Diplomatic Service is there to see, but came to little. However, once on course for AT, he does find himself engaged on work that is in line with his interests - having both a commercial and an international aspect. It appears to suit him; his grasp, and ability to expound on structure and detail is confident.

In the early months we see him coming to grips with what he identifies as typical AT activities, though not at the expense of the wider picture. The main theme seems to be order, or orderliness. His work consists of taking material from a variety of sources, working to a common theme, and imposing order upon it - briefing, background papers, 'research' papers. That is the essence as he sees it of this typical AT activity. The major part of course is drafting - though there are many other small jobs to be done, like fixing meetings, handling telephone enquiries, and so on. Again the slight suggestion of distancing himself from his university days appears - he did not believe that that experience had provided him with much in the way of basic resources upon which to draw for this work. Orderliness, a systematic approach, also appear in his attitude towards learning to do the job.

Learning how to impose order on diverse material for other people and to a specific purpose is something that in itself we see him taking seriously - watching how others do it, discussing objectives with his boss, setting himself timetables, even using our interviews and their notes. He is aware too of the need for an understanding of the content of the work - specific knowledge about the division's role, an appreciation of broader political factors as they pertain to his responsibilities, something of where government fits in, and relations with ministers. All this, of course, he sees in terms of its being set in an organisation full of other people, so that the sub-headings to this learning amount simply to learning about the activities expected of him, about the content of the work, about working with others, and about how best to do this learning.

Putting yet more order on his perception or construction of early AT experience, as we did in the construct-elicitation session, showed that the important ways in which he conceptualised this experience centred on the extent to which he was in active control of what he was doing or not - including higher order issues like learning how to do his job better. Learning outcomes, for instance, could arise from activity that was very much in someone else's or the organisation's control - 'being taught', as an extreme case - or they could come about as a result of his own premeditated intentions.

The other, related, main themes seem to be the entirely understandable one that concerns the range of contacts with other

people in which one is involved, together with something that indicates a sense of time-frame - though only as a somewhat undifferentiated looking back as opposed to looking forward.

As the first job runs its course, we see him consolidating the orderly approach to his own activities, and developing a sense of confidence. The personal control prospect is articulated in terms of whether work is detailed to him or whether there is an element of choice or discretion, and there is also of course a related theme in terms of working alone or in some team setting. An active sense of learning about the job has him either working out for himself what is required or consciously observing how others do it. The sense of an organisational work-setting in which he is engaged in giving advice, helping others, passing on information continues to be accompanied by a sense of time - the impact of deadlines, jobs that require an instant response as opposed to others where a longer-term build-up is more characteristic. There is too the experience of how events can conspire to turn a relatively commonplace task into something where virtual panic sets in and one finishes up having to be content with meeting only the very lowest-level of objectives in order to have achieved at least something. Again, of course, it is likely to be some locus-of-control construct at the heart of this, with freedom and a sense of individual responsibility detectable, or not, in terms both of the impact of the organisation and its structure on the one hand and of time available - or not - on the other.

We also see him working actively at acquiring a sense of the wider perspectives. Government policy of course is something that the organisation adheres to, sometimes defensively, but the only impact to be felt at this level concerns the kind of line that they have to maintain with their businessman 'customers'. The prospect of function cuts gave him some pause for thought and found him wondering quite how it was that his division had come about, detecting more an evolution of its work than anything specifically designed. Going on an overseas trip gave him a view of that work from the other end, and clearly helped in his active building up of an orderly and wide-ranging view of the organisation's aims and the contribution of his activities to them. Interestingly, we see him here not only identifying an ability to draw on experience that he has already gained in the branch - specifics of the work, and more general government-structure aspects - but also on skills in team work and dealing with other people. The basics of these latter he had laid down at university, though again not so much in the formally identified academic sphere. His French, though, does keep coming in handy. Not surprisingly, once again we also see that briefing one's successor demonstrates just how much one has learned oneself.

For him, the first formal session at the College was an opportunity both to consolidate experience to date, and to learn something specific about other people's contributions to the business of administration - statistics and economics, for instance. Clearly, the aim was less than perfectly met, but equally clearly he found value in gaining insight into some of the more specialist

economics perspectives on his own world of work. For him, too, there was the brief exchange visit to France. Seeing a little of how their French counterparts operated was valuable. So too was the opportunity to keep his French in good order.

A new post has him thinking hard about his position and how he will contribute - not least because, like one of his colleagues, he can be seen as a product himself of the 'anti-enterprise culture' that he was now supposed to be helping to combat. What it also did though was to stimulate him, maybe defensively, to look back and think about what he had in fact brought in with him, apart from the French that seems to keep cropping up. The result of this reflection was to identify at least some basic understanding of the structuralist approach and to have him hypothesising that this might provide one with a valuable basis on which to build experience - indeed, early on in this first job had seen him pondering the division's 'epistemology'.

His own overview at the end of our work together saw him thinking in terms mainly of having developed a sense of how the organisation worked, how it was structured, what the political dynamics looked like - at least from his level - where he fitted in and also of having learned both caution and confidence - in essence, two aspects of presentation. Having a clear idea of structure and dynamics is important to him, and he readily expressed distaste for muddle - in his new division, or in general career management. But given that he was able to impose a sense of order to his own satisfaction, then here was somebody who felt

that the prospects of doing something useful after all were good ones.

'Fabula' and Themes

Here is the politically-oriented young man defending against having been educated at an elite establishment. A sense of service underlies his aims. The themes:

Work - the activity and its setting;

Organisation role - how it works and where it fits into government;

Systematic learning;

Interest - being engaged in work that is in line with his interests.

A man given to deep thought about what it was that he was doing, how that fitted into his immediate environment, and how the organisation in its turn fitted into the world about him. The account here is thus in essence 'the structuralist's tale'. But the 'fabula' is hardly 'structuralism', as the tale is about the man, not the philosophy. It thus resolves into "the structuralist".

6. Fiona

The study of International Relations at Sussex that had proved to be rather more theoretical than expected came about as the result of a positive decision. The aim was to combine diverse interests instead of just continuing to pursue her old school subjects. There was rather less constructive decision-making involved in the Civil Service application. But the 'dry run for Finals' led on into gathering interest, and the academic discipline did after all seem reasonably relevant to her first choice, the Diplomatic Service. Unsuccessful in that, nevertheless commercial relations and exports also appeared to fit, from the UK end as it were. Despite that, however, what her early months turned out to be was anything but specialist international relations work. She certainly had some work that linked in in a loose sense - writing economic profiles of countries in her area - but for the most part she experienced the work as confusing, indeterminate, and having nothing with which she could identify. She also found very early on instances of working relationships where differing views led to real conflict.

As the early months progress we see her learning about departmental structure and style - whom to approach and how, how to communicate effectively but circumspectly with businessmen, banks, and so on. We see her making use of new experiences to advance her learning. Attending a meeting in her own right rather than simply as note-taker provided a welcome sense of responsibility, but at the same time taking the job seriously and responsibly helped sort out further the organisational

structure and relations with people outside, thus lessening the confusion a little. An element of repetitive work setting in in economic profiles started to introduce boredom though. And she is surprised at the degree of the feeling of continuity from academic work over into the department, not so much in terms of content - though there is of course something in that - but more with respect to working style, with papers to be written and information to be tracked down, analysed, and presented logically and coherently.

The main feature that came through when we reached the point about three months in where the construct-elicitation process was conducted, concerned the extent to which she felt a sense of identity with the work. This she achieved typically when what she was doing was something that in her own eyes she could see as worthwhile both organisationally and personally - work that advanced matters in some way, that brought about some identifiable change, and that was in some sense difficult to do and produced some kind of learning outcome. Where this was achieved, active enjoyment accompanied it. Again, there is a sense of continuity across the university/department transition - university studies, though not difficult maybe, together with student affairs, share the makings of this enjoyable identification with policy work in general and with the kind of work that involves looking beyond the boundaries of the department. The converse of all these constructive and positive feelings attaches itself to low-level organisational work - the day-to-day smooth running issues, the easy work, the business of imposing order on other people's

opinions, of simply giving advice rather than actually making something happen. All these are non-conducive to a sense of identity and not enjoyable. Reflecting, she herself noted at this point the somewhat reassuring relevance of her university studies, seeing now something in the content as well as simply in the form or approach.

By the end of the first posting, 'information' has acquired a central place in her conceptualisation of working activities. Information flow is what she sees herself involved in and the construction that she places upon it is now rather more finely articulated than it had been at the outset. It may be general or specific, and involve initiating or anticipating as opposed simply to responding. There may be a present and future orientation, or digging in the past. She may be working in a vacuum, or with others, and she may already have the necessary knowledge, or have to pick others' brains. It may involve the world outside the department or be entirely internal. And it may centre on the production or processing of straight facts, or the presentation of opinion and creation of policy. Her perception of the department's aims comes to be expressed as one very straightforward bi-polar construct - practical assistance to UK businessmen to help them sell abroad, with an emphasis on presenting straight facts, and a more general attempt to pave the way by presenting a constructive image to customer countries, with the emphasis here rather more on the general, the forward looking, on policy and opinion. She also sees a clear interdependence between the two. As for her own sense of identity, there is less reference to

concern about this as time goes by. There is much more talk about feelings of satisfaction gained from making what she could see as worthwhile contributions to either of these two inter-related aims, of irritation with routine, of anger at other people either not pulling their weight or being positively obstructive, and also of irritation with shortcomings of her own.

Formal training at the College ought to have been valuable, but failed to live up to expectations - in essence, she did not need to have the detailed knowledge of subject-matter in some of the peripheral material that was presented, and was capable of operating at a far more sophisticated level already with that which was more central.

The new job after the College provided her with a stimulating change. In the first, she had formed a clear enough view of its aims even if she harboured doubts about their being entirely worthwhile. In the second, she had no doubts about the value of the overall aim, but found no policy yet in existence. Again, she is very much involved in information-flow, and finds her general-versus-specific construct applicable in large measure - with a lot of work at the latter end. Interest centres on, in a sense, trying to establish for herself a justification with which she can feel comfortable for her attachment to the division's aims. Ministers and industry are either unpersuaded or in total opposition, but she sees other authorities providing a powerful impetus. This provides her with the rationale, and with a basis from which to work as she goes about the archetypal AT business of analysing arguments,

making cases, and thus providing an input into something that may become policy.

Clearly, by the end of our period of work together she had established herself to good effect as a useful member of the organisation. She had learned a lot about the subject-matter that made up organisational activity, but this, though it of course took time, was not something that she found particularly difficult. She herself, in fact, sees a clear continuity of approach, from university through to Civil Service work. University, she reflected, had after all been about learning to analyse material, sort it logically, and make a sound case. The continuity of content in her first job - a feature that fluctuated a little - had also helped. But the difficult part had been learning about the organisation, and in essence there is a simple movement from having worked somewhere where only people count - university - into an organisation that has a formal structure and formal expectations, and from there again on into a realisation that despite that (or because of it?) it is after all the people that count.

'Fabula' and Themes

With a background that appears to have some degree of relevance, we see in her a willingness to accommodate within the broad boundaries of that area of relevance, and a certain disappointment that that relevance had less of value to offer the early experience than she might have hoped for. The themes:

Work - the activity and its setting;

Organisation role - the presentation of image and the value of its overall aims;

Identity - from irritation and confusion through to responsibility;

Learning and continuity - about the organisation, and from university through to and in the department.

This last theme does seem to colour the whole account, and her case is quite markedly one where the temporal connections stand out. To the extent that this sense of movement, conscious movement, from 'a' to 'b' to 'c' furnishes an overall theme, an idea of what the narrative is 'about', then to that extent the 'fabula' here can be portrayed as "serial progress".

Six 'Fabula'

The narratives are therefore each 'about' something slightly different from each other - 'about' in the sense in which a tale may be about jealousy or the undying nature of hope. Our 'fabula' are less universal maybe, or less familiar, but they do carry a flavour of what the individual experience was like - even though each serves as little more than a mnemonic maybe. Here they are in table form:

John - "lively curiosity"

Trevor - "earnestness"

Toby - "overcoming diffidence"

Iryna - "an angry young woman"

Edward - "the structuralist"

Fiona - "serial progress".

In the next chapter, a short one, we go on to look at the themes in a little more detail.

CHAPTER 7 - Themes from Discourse

In explaining the method that I used for analysing the original accounts I described the basis for deriving themes and sub-themes from each. In summary, it involved broadly defined areas being taken from what I have called the condensed narratives in order to produce themes and then refining these into sub-themes by a loosely iterative grouping process with events extracted from the full accounts. An integration of the six separate sets of themes and sub-themes was produced also by content-analysis - of the six - and again the loosely iterative process of event-grouping helped with refinement.

The present chapter presents the six individual sets of themes and sub-themes, and does so in order to make clear in some detail the way in which these emerged. It goes on to set out the integrated array as overview, prior to embarking on the more detailed analysis of meaning provided by the framework of themes and events in the chapter that follows.

First, then, the six individual sets of themes and sub-themes.

JOHN

1. Demands
 - the thoughtful, the practical, the inter-personal
- 1.1 The thoughtful
 - thinking, arranging, becoming expert
 - complexity of information-sources
 - analytical approach to problem-solving
 - non-acceptance of assumptions
 - analytical approach to solution-presentation
 - formal knowledge (economics, statistics, etc)
 - breadth of application of issues
 - time-horizons
 - initiative appropriate to a civil servant
 - analysis of the 'given' versus the creative, originating
- 1.2 The Practical
 - persistence
 - determination
- 1.3 The Inter-Personal
 - working effectively, confidently with and through other people

2. Role
 - Communication-channel
 - Expert-resource
 - 'lawyer' (advocacy on others' behalf)
 - 'judge' (making one's own mind up)
3. Responsibility
 - in the light of the demands above (1.1-1.3)
 - real consequences
4. Context and Balance
 - with respect to the world about him
 - with respect to the world about the Department
 - Interdependence
 - of detail
 - of content
 - of relations
 - of responsibilities
5. Culturally-determined or self driven.

TREVOR

1. The Work
 - Style, Content, Setting
- 1.1 Work-style
 - analytic versus synthetic
 - speed of reaction
 - concrete versus abstract
 - writing to a purpose
 - creativity
- 1.2 Work-content
 - identification of issues
 - essentials of policy and practice
 - the interesting versus the mechanical
 - 'artificial' content
- 1.3 Work-setting
 - adapting to other people's expectations
 - adapting to organisational constraints
 - inequal participation in group-working
 - political attitudes
2. Organised self-perception
 - the individual in the organisation
 - controlled adaptability
 - an overall personal model
 - mechanical

- abstract
- frameworks
- switching between frameworks
- accommodation versus assimilation
 - between self and organisation
 - between organisation and environment
- organisational aims a reflection of self
- 3. Involvement
 - personal initiative
 - significance, impact of the work
 - engagement in the work
- 4. Interdependences
 - of organisational processes
 - of information-flow
 - internal
 - external
 - of actively reading the environment
- 5. Ambition
 - relevance of personal background and development
 - work-style
 - work-content
 - impact of organisational experience on ambition

TOBY

- 1. Work
 - thinking skills, content, other people
- 1.1 Thinking skills
 - problem-solving
 - sitting down and thinking
 - the ownership of expertise
 - working within policy and practice constraints
 - communication, clarity of expression
 - sense of continuity across the university-to-department transition
 - a loosening of university-based perspectives
 - articulation of the way in which work is conceptualised
- 1.2 Content
 - departmental aims
 - broad political, ministerial, developing future policy and programmes, within a political framework
 - defending present policy
 - control and influence over other organisations
 - at official level, implementing programmes, resolving conflict

- abstract versus specific

1.3 Other people

- working with others

- self-confidence

- flexibility

- taking the business of working with others seriously

- having a personal effect on the form or 'tone' of the work done for others

- articulation of the way in which a sense of relationship with others is conceptualised

2. Role

- position in the organisation

- working as a resource

- working as a communication-channel

- internal versus external

- sense of self-worth within the organisation

- sense of the organisation's worth within the community

3. Responsibility/ Involvement

- confidence

- a sense of involvement

- a sense of identification with the work
- a sense of responsibility to and for other people
- personal responsibility allowing an effect on the content as well as the form of work
- challenging work
- confidence to make value-judgments

4. Self-monitoring

- internal referents
 - coherence
 - a sense of activity-structure
- logical/chronological relationships, versus piecemeal
- external referents
 - comparison with others
 - objective success
 - having (and learning from) an identifiable effect

IRYNA

- 1. Demands
 - skills, the content and its setting

- 1.1 Skills
 - patience

 - meticulousness

 - objectivity

 - 'numbers'

 - clear coherent thought

 - intelligible presentation

 - cogent writing to criteria

 - enhancement of skill by requirement to achieve results

 - work with its own learning outcomes

- 1.2 Content/setting
 - purposeful activity versus a sense of emptiness

 - need for detail

 - routine versus non-routine problem-solving

 - need to communicate

 - acceptance by other people

 - working effectively with others

 - abrasiveness (her own)

- 2. Role
 - personal involvement
 - interest
 - stimulation
 - having to think hard
 - circumscription, and an understanding of the boundaries
- 3. Organisation-role
 - value of the organisation
 - focal point, relationships
 - information-flow
 - decision-making, direct/indirect
 - effectiveness of decision-making
 - research, practical impact or abstract uselessness
- 4. Structure
 - an explicit structural sense as regards the work
 - internal logic of problem-solving
 - imposition of external structure
 - active-concrete
 - reflective-abstract
 - detail
 - broadbrush

- integrating theme versus piecemeal
- interdependences
 - background preparation, consultation, ideas
- 5. Self-monitoring
 - interest and confidence
 - involvement, fitting in, a base from which to work with others at different levels in different places
 - identifiable outcomes
 - real consequences
 - faltering confidence
 - organisational position, personnel management, boss's low-level expectations
 - undemanding work
 - constraints on responsibility
 - external referents
 - other ATs
 - internal referents
 - her previous self
 - herself outside work

6. Goals

- public good versus private profit
- practical relevance
- content relevance
- what one is
- continuity

EDWARD

- 1 Work
 - the activity and its setting
- 1.1 Activity
 - discovering or imposing order
- 1.2 Setting
 - range of contacts with other people
 - working alone or in a team
 - locus-of-control
 - impact of the organisation and its structure
 - work detailed to him
 - freedom, sense of individual responsibility, choice
 - impact of time, time-frames
- 2. Organisation-role
 - how the organisation works
 - organisation aims and the contribution of his own activities
 - how the organisation is structured
 - his on division's specific role
 - political dynamics, broader or more specific
 - relations with ministers
 - where government fits in
 - presentation

- caution

- confidence

- organisational work-setting

- advice

- help

- information

- time-sense

3. Systematic learning - activities expected of one

- the content

- working with others

- how best to learn

- imposing order on one's learning

- active job-learning

- working out for oneself what is required

- consciously observing others

- drawing on experience

- from within the organisation, for work-specifics, government structure

- from university days, of non-formal learning in working with others

- structuralism

4. Interest

- political basis to career-choice

- usefulness versus personal gain

- engaged in work in line with his interests

FIONA

- 1. Work
 - activity, setting

- 1.1 Work activity
 - content

 - analysis

 - logical, coherent presentation

 - information-flow
 - general versus specific

 - initiating and anticipating versus responding

 - present and future versus past

 - in a vacuum or with others

 - having the knowledge versus having to pick other people's brains

 - the world outside the Department versus the internal world

 - production and processing of facts versus presentation of opinion and creation of policy

- 1.2. Work-setting
 - departmental structure and style

 - working relations
 - inside, outside

- whom to approach and how
- sorting out the organisational structure and its relationship with businesses and so on outside
- effective and circumspect communication

2. Organisation-role

- practical assistance
- presentation of a constructive image
- value of overall aims
- attachment to
- rationale for
 - external or internal locus

3. Identity

- irritation
 - with routine
 - with others who are weak or obstructive
 - with one's own shortcomings
- confusion, indeterminate work, nothing with which to identify
- low-level organisational work
 - easy jobs
 - smooth-running aspects

- imposing order on other people's opinions
- giving advice versus making something happen
- responsibility, a sense of identity, of contribution
 - work that is worthwhile
 - organisationally
 - personally
 - work that advances matters
 - work that brings about an identifiable change
- difficult jobs
- work with a learning outcome
- 4. Learning, continuity - from university through to and in the Department
 - content and subject-matter, relevance
 - approach, style
 - analysis, logical sorting, presentation, making a case
 - about the organisation
 - people-centred
 - structure-central

Integrated Array

The way in which the themes and sub-themes drawn from each narrative were then integrated was described above. The result - the 'integrated array' - is set out in the following pages.

1. Activity and Approach

- a. working analytically within and on varyingly complex information sets;
- b. ordering, thinking, problem-solving;
- c. the place of creativity;
- d. presenting intelligible, coherent, cogent solutions;
- e. work that is more or less abstract or concrete;
- f. learning from outcomes, articulating one's own conceptions;
- g. persistence, patience, meticulousness, determination.

2. Content

- a. essentials of policy and practice;

- b. broad political framework, future-oriented;
- c. practical constraints, routine;
- d. purposeful activity with real outcomes.

3. **Setting**

- a. formal structure;
- b. interpersonal setting, power relations, working with and for other people;
- c. locus-of-control;
- d. time sense.

4. **Self in the organisation**

- a. as expert;
- b. as communication channel;
- c. adaptive, adjusting to perceived demands;
- d. sense of worth, involvement with organisational aims.

5. **Structural dynamics**

a. a sense of inter-related activities, of various interdependencies

- of work

- style or approach

- setting

- in time;

b. a thematic sense.

6. **Learning**

a. self-monitoring against referents

- concrete

- abstract

- internal

- external;

b. a sense of continuity.

Summarising the main themes:

1. Activity and approach - concerns the activity in which the ATs themselves were engaged - in analysis, problem-solving, and presenting cogent solutions to problems, and doing so to a greater or lesser extent with persistence and determination.
2. Content - this, on the other hand, concerns that which they were given to do, the subject-matter.
3. Setting - centres on the experience of working with and for others.
4. Self in the organisation - this is more the 'role' that some of the individual cases identify - as expert in some content-area for instance.
5. Structural dynamics - centres on the business of identifying inter-relatedness between diverse aspects of the job.
6. Learning - has as its main indicators something concerning self-monitoring and being able to identify continuity.

There are the beginnings of some relatively general statements here, and in that sense a framework such as that set out in the

integrated array could be taken as representing the outline of a 'theory of work' appropriate to new ATs. However, as it stands it is a somewhat static product, limited in scope and thus tending towards the trivial for all the semblance of generalizability. The final two chapters attempt to redress the balance - where the general has been achieved at the cost of richness and interest - and examine ways of restoring a dynamic to the structure.

CHAPTER 8 - Analysis of Narrative

The broad aim continues to be to extract meaning from, or construct meaning on, the narrative accounts of AT-experience. Even more broadly, there is the question of how to turn an ideographic account into a useful tool, something more than simple 'once upon a time'. And this particular question applies no matter whether, as a tool, the ideographic product is going to be used by the originator him or herself, or by someone else like him or her in some appropriate respect.

So far, approaching this under conditions of 'narrative as psychology', we have in broad structural terms concluded that genre is most simply accounted for as 'biography', 'cognitive exploration', or some such term - maybe even just 'account'. At the same time, inspection and a great deal of familiarity with the material has suggested a suitable 'fabula' for each account - a tale of this, that, or the other. And as far as discourse is concerned, simple forms of content analysis have produced themes as in an ethnographic themes/events framework. What remains under this latter heading is, of course, to consider the 'events' aspect of the framework, though of course themes and events are there already - particularly the latter - in the original detailed accounts and in the compressed versions of Chapter 6.

If genre, 'fabula', discourse and theme-and-event together represent a structural framework, then - as I suggested in Chapter 5 - the 'dynamic' of narrative lies in the ways in which 'virtual

text' is constructed within the reader. Too much in the way of brevity, truthfulness and relevance in narrative can readily become, as Bruner points out (in line with others whom he cites), banal and boring. So the narrator adapts language to suit. Again - continuing to recapitulate on Chapter 5 - there are two devices that seem to stand out. One concerns transformation into the subjunctive. An instance that he cites comparing a James Joyce story with what is proclaimed as a highly literate anthropological text on a broadly similar topic finds something like four times as much recourse to the subjunctive's intentions and feelings in the former as in the latter. However, any test of that sort - even if it were possible to devise an appropriate one - hardly seems to be relevant in the present instance. Had our AT's narratives been verbatim it might be different, but as it stands the test would be more a test of my personal style of recording and, of course, of producing a precis.

The other device, that which he and his fellows in this field term 'presuppositional triggering', is potentially of more interest. In a stylistic sense - concerning that which makes for 'good' narrative almost irrespective of its content - this has to do with controlling the relationship between meaning and exposition, and in particular with effecting economies in the latter in order to engage the reader more actively in his or her own 'performance' of the former. The typical 'events' that I mentioned in Chapter 6 provide very minor but nevertheless defining examples of presupposition, and hence of the existence of 'triggers':-

"...the powerful effect that the Under Secretary could have..."-

presupposes that the Under Secretary exists;

"... enjoyed the experience of talking to visitors on something about which he actually knew a good deal..."-

presupposes that he **did** know a good deal;

"...a growing sense of desperation that time was passing by..."

presupposes that she was trying to do something about it.

Of course, 'virtual text' will have been constructed in the reader of any one of our AT's accounts almost without further prompting. But the structural features that I have already abstracted - constructed? - should help the process without necessarily imposing any constraints on 'multivocality'. That is, it is entirely open to other readers to abstract different themes from the discourse. It is also, of course, entirely proper to leave those readers with their own presuppositions built up by their own personal development to be triggered by whatever for them acts as trigger in the narrative. The wider the range, the greater the multivocality.

However, as another aim is to see to what extent the ideographic account can be turned into a useful tool, then finding a way of stimulating the triggering mechanisms more directly seems likely to be of value. Simply, the 'events' to which I referred earlier when describing the abstraction of themes do seem to provide us with just that. In essence, an array of events-under-themes is tantamount to an array of presuppositional triggers.

The provision of genre and 'fabula', of a set of abstracted themes and another of 'triggers', should facilitate the business of interpreting each set of events so as to bring them into line with personal perspectives in the reader - again, without preparing a straightjacket. Verisimilitude, it should be recalled, is a more important consideration than verifiability in the fuzzy domain of thick description. The test is not so much a null-hypothesis significance test as one of recognition - either in pursuing the meaning embedded in **these** narratives, or in reflecting upon future events in the light of them.

In the next section, therefore, I set out a sample of events-under-themes - as described earlier - but with the distinct intention of providing them, for the time being, as 'triggers'. In doing so, and from now on, I am however going to depart slightly from the specifics of the Bruner-type nomenclature in one other respect - having already elected to use the concept of 'theme' in a somewhat different fashion from the way in which he uses it. The 'presuppositional trigger' is in fact presented in a very precise way in his exposition, to the extent that he cites one authority

(Levinson) as having created a list of "at least three dozen" different sorts of 'trigger' - defining, implying, and so on. The adoption of anything so precise and multi-faceted scarcely seems appropriate to the present purpose, and would seem more likely to confuse than to elucidate.

The more general term 'prompt' would thus seem to be in order, conveying as it does essentially the same sense of function as 'trigger', but without carrying with it any associations of the specialised sort indicated by Bruner. At the same time the term may cover direct factual statements about which assumptions of shared presupposition come easily and with respect to which little effort is required of the reader in the business of active engagement in the performance of meaning.

A short summary at this point can usefully serve the additional purpose of providing an introduction to the next section where the themes/events framework is set out and elaborated. Clearly 'fabula', the themes-and-events of discourse, the presuppositional triggers or prompts are all embedded in the detailed narratives of Chapter 4 and its companions, in the precis of Chapter 6, and a version of the themes - my version - has been drawn out and set down. In this next section I again draw out and set down events under those themes, events that themselves constitute 'prompts'. The reader - whether the originator of the account or some unconnected individual - will therefore have the wherewithal to create virtual text at any one of those levels. The more articulated the level, the more the virtual-text creation, and

'performance of meaning', will be guided, influenced by the analyses provided. Nevertheless, creation of virtual text gives prospectively multivocal understanding of the narrator's account and hence of his or her action and consciousness landscapes. That takes us so far. Where might we go on to from there? Science - theory, practice, product - of even the strictly paradigmatic variety is in the end about communication. That, after all, is what generalisability as a criterion directly invokes. The special case of the one individual on a lonely planet is merely a special case - generalisability involves a 'communication' to himself about the regularity with which he may expect to encounter some phenomenon or other. The thick description of narrative offers a different sort of communication, one that is not so tightly constrained. With verisimilitude as the consideration preferred over verifiability, and with multivocality the effect of virtual-text generation in individual readers who possess differing presuppositions, then somewhat different 'messages' will be received by those different readers. But they will be messages that by definition do have meaning for each. Hence the verisimilitude test is a recognition that such-and-such 'fits' oneself, that that sequence of events has a special reality for one.

If it can happen once it can happen again, of course. The virtual text created in reading one narrative will not have just that retrospective 'once upon a time' sense about it, but must have some prospect of at least persisting. This thus speaks to the reader's future experience. Why not organise this effect in some way and use it? What that might involve is turning the virtual

text that one has constructed in response to reading the original narrative, into the beginnings of one's own narrator's text for some future reader. That new reader will then be inspired or stimulated in his or her turn into creating a new virtual text, and so on in a continuous process. This could occur as readily for fiction as for fact - but the particularly interesting prospect here is the way in which this does suggest that the ideographic account can indeed be a most useful tool. Although the process can clearly repeat over and over, the simple basis to it is this - the production of an ideographic account; the readers' construction of virtual texts; analysis to bring out specific features of those virtual texts; the use of that analysis to guide the production of a new narrator's text on a new but, say, related area; and then the use of this ideographic account as a means of initiating a further round.

Therefore, this section, a major one, has two perspectives - one back, one forward. In essence, in setting out events-under-themes as prompts one is first providing a means of sharpening up the virtual text creation as far as the retrospective look is concerned. At the same time one is providing a means of guiding the reader via reflection on into creation of a new 'narrator's text' which in its turn will merit careful reading and analysis. In all this, of course, I include amongst 'readers' those who produced the original ideographic accounts, and for them the cyclic progression can provide a means of creating a reflective approach to their own development.

Now the themes and events. The structure is set out in terms of the main themes from the integrated array; each is articulated in terms of the sub-themes suggested by content analysis; and under each sub-theme is set out a number of events abstracted from the original case-study narratives.

THE ARRAY OF EVENTS-BY-THEMES

Theme 1 - Activity and approach

This, it will be recalled, refers in essence to what the ATs actually did, and how.

1(a) - Working analytically within and on varyingly complex information sets

1. The central strand is information - gathering, arranging, passing on.
2. The necessary academic skills were those of logical ordering, fact and figure analysis, drawing conclusions from analyses, how to go about looking for sources, how to formulate questions and discard irrelevances.
3. Enjoyment gained in threading a tortuous passage through difficulties and putting down on paper why the whole thing was so complicated.

4. Keeping informed involves knowing about other people's hefty bits of work and what these contain.
5. Whom to contact and where the information is - less of a problem at university, where although one is not spoon-fed, the channels and the places to go to are much less complex.
6. One must stop people to say "I do not know what's going on - please explain it to me".
7. Keeping informed involves knowing what is being said in relevant journals by whom - to know whether a PQ is from a serious activist or not.
8. For briefs, background notes, research papers etc it had been necessary to search through files, year books, papers, reports and put together factual material.
9. Delving into files, reading up on the state of play of various major projects, and putting it all together in a neat factfilled form.
10. Digging out information in some way - to answer questions sometimes involving other departments - usually leading on to telephoning an answer or writing minutes and letters or sending telexes.

11. Digging in background papers occurs more with repetitive work than with stuff that one is going for the first time.

12. Writing within fairly defined limits means little recourse is needed to digging in background papers.

1(b) - Ordering, thinking, problem-solving

1. Judgement where there are disagreements, where everyone knows that there is no formula ... where each individual makes his own claim for his own judgement ... where the evidence may be objective but the interpretations are subjective - this latter way of thinking he found attractive and there seemed to be scope for it in the Civil Service.

2. Interesting and satisfying work - sitting down quietly to think through information gathered and put it together in an orderly fashion.

3. Initiating or not - anticipating possible questions as opposed to responding to questions raised.

4. One has policy thinking and getting things done thinking - and getting things done thinking involved doing them.

5. Telephoning round - a different sort of thinking - not what ought to happen in policy terms, but what alternative actions might be.

6. Practical approach [to a consultation exercise] - reading replies, sidelining sections against relevant directive articles, getting someone else to photocopy, cut up and stick back together under subheadings - so that she could then start to summarise, in an orderly manner.

7. You were presented with a problem, you had certain resources to deal with it, and the actual thinking process consisted of reconciling the problem with the constraints that existed.

1(c) - The place of creativity

1. The intellectually stimulating task that you do not do everyday.

2. Her boss's principle - ATs are for ideas - which means they get speeches to write.

3. There are limits to what an AT can initiate.

4. Original thinking - that's a problem, how do we solve it?

5. A case of bringing one's own view to the subject and using one's initiative within the structure of what was called for.

6. There was not a lot of creative thinking in the sense of having to come forward with ideas about how things should be done.

7. Thinking up new ideas - there are two issues, one is whether there is actual scope, and the other is whether one has the ideas anyway.

8. Creative thinking was essential, and needed breaking down in the new entrant before building up in Service terms.

1(d) - Presenting intelligible, coherent, cogent solutions

1. An awareness of presentation, thinking about implications, of how to structure things, how to wrap them up.

2. There was the sort of thinking involved in expressing ideas clearly

3. The continuous process of seeing what sort of thing is appropriate to what sort of occasion - how much detail was necessary - how much you could get away with ignoring - and when you did have to provide substantial information, how to get it done concisely.

4. It is very difficult to produce good arguments for something that you do not believe in.
5. Arguing something with which she did not herself agree - the best way is to use other people's arguments and distance herself from it.
6. Drafting - so much of what we have to do is clarifying material for people who have to take it in quickly.
7. Writing skills calling for clarity conciseness and absence of long windedness and expression.
8. "Drafting is drafting is drafting".

1(e) - Work that is more or less abstract or concrete

1. Direct control as opposed to the more abstract business of trying to improve control methods.
2. There was rather more general principles work than case work.
3. Work that was not so much policy as case work was held to be slightly less prestigious.

1(f) - Learning from outcomes, articulating one's own conceptions

1. Most of the learning that she has done was about the organisation, its structure, and the way people interact.
2. Learning relationships between political power and how policy is carried out, how it is formulated, home and away differences.
3. Knowledge of the subject area.
4. Preparing legislation helped to focus things.
5. Writing a defensive paper helped to focus things.
6. Writing a long paper [on the survey] had sharpened things a lot.
7. He was conscious of having been trying to develop a communications skill.
8. Learning things at a meeting - consciously gaining knowledge from the job - being a little starved of input from other people otherwise.
9. Learning to get her own way more by charm and persuasion than by being abrasive.

10. He would never trust a set of figures again without seeing what lay behind them.

11. Corollary to handing over was the sudden realisation of just how much about the division and his own work he had actually learned.

1(g) - Persistence, patience, meticulousness, determination

1. The patience to keep going and to return time and again to a piece of work without blowing up.

2. A determination to get a thing completely right once it had been pushed back at him.

Theme 2 - Content

If the first theme is about what they bring to their work in the way of what they do and how, this second one is about what is there to do it on - the quality of the problems upon which problem-solving skill is exercised for instance.

2(a) - Essentials of policy and practice

1. Administration is not just looking with tunnel vision at the in-tray and moving papers across into the out-tray.

2. Policy issues are broader in scope and concerned with impact at national and international level; management concerns operating within one's own department or on department-responsible business.
3. Trying to shape policy working for ministers, implementing existing policy at official level.
4. Clarifying policy to other people as opposed to giving opinion - providing information on subjects that the government has already made up its mind about.
5. Working to agreed procedures within existing policy as opposed to looking determinedly forward.
6. Concentration on techniques and analysis as opposed to broader management and administrative matters.
7. Once policy is formed subsidiary activity on development and procedures is very much more important for the organisation itself - anyone can develop policy, you have to fit it into the way the organisation works - no policy can be developed if the organisation is incapable of digesting it.
8. Trying to establish a whole range of new activities has a marked effect on the need for papers, seminars, conferences.

9. Research tends towards the concrete and impartial within practical constraints, briefing for a speech has political bias.

10. The Civil Service in written work tended not to be blunt and direct and one had to learn phrases to protect meaning and render implicit what might otherwise be explicit.

11. Putting over government policy in a much more blatant way, writing to defend your minister against unpleasant questions.

17. Government means different constraints - the sorts of things that one is not meant to do differ from industry. His friend is supposed not to let the publisher lose money; he was supposed not to let the government lose face.

2(b) - Broad political framework, future-oriented

1. Trying to improve the control and influence over outside organisations.

2. Political change bringing about modifications to an act in order that the original aims could continue to be met - on-going adjustment.

3. Although it was quite clearly the department's aim to get legislation enacted he was less sure that it was the political leadership's aim too.

4. Little policy-making at his own desk - the only effect of policy issues lower down was to dictate what to give to businessmen in the way of a government line.

5. In many ways it is more interesting working without any clear policy.

6. Projecting the image was where they were involved almost in a political exercise for the government of the day.

7. The presentation and ingenuity called for in Parliamentary briefing, presenting a case for the Minister to put up a show in Parliament with - given that Parliament does not make decisions.

8. Producing a ministerial brief - you do not need to take the individual's personality into account - you could be writing a brief for a talking computer - he would impose his own individuality on it when he came to use it.

9. Senior ministers delivering party political speeches should have political briefs - it should not be a civil servant's job.

10. Minister's speech on departmental issues is appropriate for Civil Service briefing.

2(c) - Practical constraints, routine

1. The automatic, given a political decision, as opposed to the non-automatic where the organisation might question itself.

2. The straightforward aim of the organisation keeping a record of what it has been doing.

3. The organisation informing itself in the sense of keeping a record of how a particular section of an Act was meant to apply - self regulation.

4. It seemed to him that if they did not work on files the whole edifice would crumble.

5. "The routine organisation of the department is an inert defence mechanism, involving self-protection against chaos by the copying of documents, circulation of lists, and so on."

6. The chore element - still needs organisational ability.

7. Administrative activity like having papers photocopied and circulated and a little management of clerical staff.

8. She had not expected the work to be boring and trivial.

9. The atmosphere of cuts in government expenditure does not help.

2(d) Purposeful activity with real outcomes

1. She had expected the work to be varied, interesting high-powered and high pressured.

2. Although he enjoys working with figures, the satisfaction is very much more a case of satisfaction with a job properly completed.

3. He had discovered responsibility where work had gone forward over his own name without being reprocessed further up the line - and which might actually have an effect on the world outside.

4. The price of being wrong at work may be very much greater than it is at university - this can affect the extent to which one pushes one's own interpretation.

5. Difference from university where it would not matter to anyone else if one got something wrong in one's essay.

6. He found himself in a section that was related to what he had wanted to do - commercial relations and exports.

7. The business of promoting UK business overseas - rather vague abstract feel to it.
8. Research - finding things out - interesting and productive but not in the sense of producing finished work.
9. Impact - a political speech does not have much impact for change in the real world, research does.
10. There was little drive to get down to real problems and solve them.
11. Misgivings born out of his own inadequate performance but more of concern over unsatisfactory compilation of statistics.

Theme 3 - Setting

Themes 1 and 2 can be characterised as being about the 'how' and the 'what' of work respectively. The third is the 'where'. This covers 'where' in terms of formal organisation, relationships amongst individuals, where control is felt to be exerted, and - more 'when' than 'where' - that part of the setting that concerns one's whereabouts in time rather than place. The second of these sub-themes is in fact so powerful in terms of the sheer quantity of material addressing it that it has had to be further divided into sub-sub-themes, each with its own identifier and set of events.

3(a) - Formal Structure

1. Learning about departmental structure reduces confusion in the way she goes about work.
2. He had attained a fairly detailed understanding of the structure, aims and objectives of the organisation.
3. As a division there were very few items of work that they could do on their own - the Branch was locked in and involved with the rest of the structure.
4. Working within clear approved guidelines.
5. Working within the dictates of other people's needs.
6. The level within the Department at which contacts would typically be made - indirect ground-work contacts made at fairly high and constant level, direct day-day dealings ranged from bottom to top.
7. Contact with the outside - at first you worry that you might give away some great secret that will wreck the whole of government policy and you have no way to judge what people can be told.
8. Knowing little of the department as a newcomer she spent much of her early days reading files.

9. He was losing the kind of independence gained at university and becoming more used to constraints.

10. Disproportionately staffed sections mean that larger ones attract more work to themselves.

11. Service-wide there is a large amateur aspect to personnel management, training and career development.

3(b) - Interpersonal setting, power relations, working with and for other people

(This sub-theme is sub-divided into eight sub-sub-themes)

3(b)(i) - Structure

1. You sit at the centre of your own vast spider's web - each and everyone of you.

2. A more formal hierarchy than he was used to at university - there are limits to the extent to which one can, in the hierarchy, maintain a serious position against someone who is more experienced and more senior than oneself.

3. When small groups are at work in departments the AT is bottom of the heap and has no responsibility for carrying on the business - he is just there to pump in ideas and to be a bright young man.

4. To be in a group (at the College) where you have as much right as anyone else to carry on the discussion without worrying whether you are saying enough or too much was a very valuable experience.

5. Achieving a balance between accepting and deferring to the better judgement of more highly placed people than herself and making her own point heard when there was something with which she disagreed.

6. Confidence in getting on with others characterised by being more able to convey what he thinks in a convincing manner.

3(b)(ii) Groups

1. Work involving much discussion with many other people with different views - skill in getting on.

2. Large groups form little eddies round particular issues, when controversial points are brought up.

3. In large groups discussion gravitates towards more detail, which seems contradictory but is not.

4. In small groups you can get over the small controversies rather more quickly.

5. It is possible to make wider use of a meeting note than simply providing a verbatim account - adding a comment on the problems attendant upon a particular agreed statement when you, the note-taker happen to disagree.
6. Accepting and incorporating other people's comments - a take-up of about five-eighths to three quarters fills the bill, particularly if you wish to reject some of their most important points.
7. When you are giving advice to other civil servants you give it on the assumption that you and they share background knowledge.
8. Dealing with businessmen - a standard way of saying things, of not saying things, and of half saying things - ways of telling them what you should not.

3(b)(iii) Personalities

1. The formal organisational structure has far less effect on one than does the way in which one is treated by people.
2. Personal relations - no prior explicit expectation, but an expectation that must have been there when you find yourself surprised at what is going on.

3. Personalities - how much the functioning of the organisation depends on the personality of the individuals in post.
4. The powerful effect that the Under Secretary could have on the Directorate's work.
5. Personality - a very senior official whose recent move into private industry had left the departmental view now much more kindly disposed (to a piece of prospective legislation).
6. The attitude one held about somebody depended on what sort of grade they were - the 35 year-old Assistant Secretary conjures up certain views and you presume he is of a certain type without even meeting him - it was all rather dangerous really.
7. Difficult to reconcile the detail of the demands put down from the AS with a note from private Office on how the Minister liked his briefing done.
8. Being friendly in interpersonal relations is important but keeping a certain distance is too.
9. The indefinable skill where you got others actually wanting to do things for you - organisational structure helps.

10. Never assume that people to whom work had been delegated would accord it the same priority that one did oneself.

11. Never assume that because someone says that someone else is doing something that that is in fact the case.

3(b)(iv) Help from others

1. Everyone wants to avoid looking silly but if he had learned anything it was probably the realisation that you do not often look silly just by asking questions.

2. Getting better at asking people for advice over the telephone and knowing how to approach that sort of task.

3. Typically - consults Principal on the method in the sense of where he was supposed to start and what the thing was supposed to look like in the end - talks to others in the section about how to carry the job out.

4. The possibility of reference back to people more knowledgeable than oneself.

5. To begin with she was inclined to draw on her own resources - now she was more likely to ring up others and use their ideas too.

3(b)(v) Influence of others

1. Not a great deal of job satisfaction to be got out of writing a first draft when one knew that it was going to be considerably altered.
2. Satisfaction in writing a brief that goes straight up to the Assistant Secretary untouched by her Principal.
3. A fairly typical piece of work in that it involved his first attempt being flung back at him - various subsequent attempts had the effect of making the exercise look better - it also had the effect of showing what the Under Secretary wanted it to show.
4. When somebody changes a first draft to take account of personal style they could have done the whole thing themselves.

3(b)(vi) Presentation of self

1. Important career issues - necessary for him to make a good impression on his Under Secretary.
2. Work with no immediate benefit other than increasing awareness for oneself so that one can sound intelligent and notch up brownie points.

3. Opportunity to show his own knowledge - work for a senior officer being something for which he could take responsibility at the same time as providing an outcome in the sense of displaying his abilities.
4. Opportunity to show his own knowledge - acting as direct point of contact and acting on his initiative.
5. A new boss - a newcomer will eventually be writing a report on her and would of course have been impressed by any display of knowledge and ability that had met him.
6. How would two senior officers who were not regular administrators manage writing a convincing staff report on him at the end of the particularly important second year?

3(b)(vii) Position

1. People talked to each other rather than making appointments to meet - contrast with a job where it was vice versa.
2. Her tasks were not held to be particularly special but were seen by colleagues as part of the job - time and quality pressures exist but social pressure disappears.
3. Sex-stereotyping - alarming - mostly from men, even from some who had never had a woman boss.

3(b)(viii) Summary

"You were not expected to be diffident; you were expected to come forward with your own views and argue them; you were not expected to be too quiet at meetings; you were expected to show initiative; you should not wait for other people to tell you what you should be doing; there should even be a certain amount of flair in the things you do; the prime expectation is that you get things right; your boss expects to be able to trust what you have done".

3(c) Locus of Control

This has the analysis back to the level of sub-theme - no further breakdown is necessary.

1. People tend to be protective of their patch.
2. Choosing or deciding to undertake a piece of work as opposed to being detailed to do it.
3. A feeling that she had been kept back from using initiative - so that she now dithered when her boss was away.
4. In non work situations she felt in control - Student's Union at university, running a choir now.

5. A job with more responsibility - nobody looking over her shoulder all the time - she might even be able to make a few decisions on minor matters.

6. Being at work involved the aggravation of not being in control - you could never plan your day because you never knew what was going to happen next.

7. Dissatisfaction about one's notes of meetings being redrafted to the point where they are worse than they were when you started.

3(d) - Time sense

1. Learning to work in a limited time - deadlines - it helped consciously to programme his work and to aim at getting particular bits finished by particular times of the day.

2. Analysis of what has happened as opposed to present or future events.

3. A relaxed deadline became tighter and tighter partly because of the perception of it having been an easy one to meet.

4. Duration - on the spot answers and comments as opposed to a three-week build up.

5. Time pressure - a growing sense of desperation that time was passing by without her being able to put it to effective use.

6. There is one point early on about which time perceptions pivot - from a sense of provisionality to a sense of permanence.

Theme 4 - Self in the Organisation

As Theme 3 centres on the setting in which they work, this fourth theme concerns the role that each as an individual feels him or herself to be occupying within that setting.

4(a) - As expert

1. He really rather enjoyed the experience of talking to visitors on something about which he actually knew a good deal.

2. Knowing more about the problem than the enquirer did, and the realisation that he has got to make a favourable impression on people with whom he was working if they were going to continue to think he was worth entrusting with anything more serious.

3. A case of 'the thing stops with me' as opposed to just being the medium through which stuff is channelled.

4. Information processing as directed by others and their requirements - working out the line of argument according to others' needs and tailoring what you have accordingly.

5. Keeping informed has no obvious product in organisation terms compared with administrative work which though reactive has an identifiable end product.

4(b) - As Communication Channel

1. His role was mainly that of go-between and chaser up of comment.

2. Problems of co-ordinating branch - getting the emphasis right when putting different people's reactions together - being absolutely clear about what the other person was talking about, even if it made you seem a bit simple.

3. Comments had been coming in in the past and all he had to do on this occasion was to collect and collate information and to put it into one neat little minute.

4. Sorting out which division did what, to whom you need to speak about particular issues, making sure you omit nobody.

5. Annoying and time consuming - circulating papers and all that - basically doing donkey work for other people.

6. All she had really had to do was stick together other people's contributions to form a background paper - even so, it was satisfying seeing it go into its envelopes.

7. He was getting to enjoy being the point of contact with the outside and providing those outside with the departmental line - building up a range of contacts and beginning to trust each other, getting on fairly friendly terms and asking things you otherwise couldn't.

8. Communication - being clear in your own mind what you were talking about and being able to express it clearly to someone else.

9. The telephone - sorting out ahead of time what other people's views were likely to be.

10. Distinction between working with businessmen passing on available facts and going about her own business between departments in order to provide co-ordinated advice for her Minister.

11. An aspect of his own involvement centered on liaison with other divisions on the details of meeting times, what should be said, what conclusions reached.

4(c) - Adaptive, adjusting to perceived demands

1. One had to acquire the ability to work consistently to a systematic method based on factual knowledge.
2. Looking into things and getting a clear idea about what was to be done - working on the filing cabinet in one's head.
3. Trying to work out his own approach as opposed to trying to emulate his Principal's way of working.
4. He was probably adaptable in the sense that he was able to throw away one way of thinking and shift to an entirely different one.
5. Variety produces satisfaction - but has one moving about too fast to develop competence.
6. It paid to chase things up sooner rather than later.
7. After a year he was very much more careful about what he said and when he said it.
8. Finding her interest grow in the way in which she could make use of information couched in numerical form.
9. To stand any chance of developing sensitivity to others one needs to realise that it is an important skill.

4(d) - Sense of worth, involvement with organisational aims

1. One had to form a view as to whether the Service was working in a way that was proper to government - was its influence good? Was it too secretive? Was it responsive to outside change? Was it too shielded and detached?
2. A distinct and satisfying sense that in the main the work on which he was involved was worthwhile, important and likely to achieve something.
3. Preferred the idea of working for a public concern - working for everybody rather than for shareholders and profits.
4. Experiencing a feeling of fitting in - associated with outcomes being dependent on what she actually did, rather than on what she was.
5. Satisfying work is work that does have a personal involvement and skill in it, including working to tight deadlines - also where he is learning identifiable skills.
6. Though she was confident that she would never dismiss worthwhile arguments with which she disagreed, she felt some entitlement to her own view when it was on the same side as two prestigious sets of pronouncements.

7. Enjoyable work - in essence work where his own interest could surface - being forthright about something, riding a personal hobby horse, and so on.
8. Even if she had disagreed violently with the departmental line she would still have had to turn the work out slanted the way in which it was called for.
9. Not entirely sure that the organisation itself knew what its aims were - a prime candidate for cutting.
10. Organisational aims difficult to discern when so much of the work was self generated and carried out on his own.
11. Annoying and unsatisfying work is that which does not involve him or his skills to any great extent.
12. No feeling of "this is my job" but confusion instead and difficulty in coping.
13. The AT job compared with an EO is a delayed-gratification job - it is therefore important for there to be opportunities for one to demonstrate one's claim to future challenging work.
14. He believed that a job was what you made it but was a bit unsure about not being very busy.

15. Working for the general good had its limits - an impersonal style was to be cultivated in letter writing.
16. It was a very strange feeling to think that a letter you had written would go out unchanged.
17. A PQ is the most important day-to-day thing that one has to do.
18. A PQ is a very unsatisfying thing - churning over old material and trying to be evasive.
19. She was not always taken very seriously - partly due to being female and mistaken for her Principal's secretary.
20. A couple of early papers had only been concocted to give her something to do.
21. Comparing the promise with her own experience she concludes that not only had she had no responsibility to take by herself but had lost any ability to do so anyway.
22. The lack of any perceived dynamic throughout produced a feeling of worthlessness.
23. Trying to give her successor an objective account had the effect of starting to make her feel part of the organisation.

24. She now thought of herself as a civil servant, not as an ex-student who happened to work for the Civil Service.

25. Gaining momentum and developing ambition.

Theme 5 - Structural dynamics

This centres essentially on the trainees' ability to start identifying relationships between different aspects of the job as they experience it.

5(a) - A sense of inter-related activities, of various interdependencies

1. The sort of thing that one needs to know in any job is something about the contacts and network existing behind it, together with a knowledge of the links that go on behind the subject.

2. The organisation is at the same time amorphous but with identifiable structure.

3. Organisational aims - general inter-relationships between broad categories.

4. Beginning to think of all her work activities and their outcome as part of one general undifferentiated process - aims all seemed to fit together.

5. A sense of chaos - due to work content which did not lend itself to being cut up into superficially neat bits.
6. He learned that nothing is in fact ever self-contained.
7. A general awareness of how things interact at the conceptual level - as with economic and political factors.
8. The sense of chronology separating the giving and getting of information and exchange of views at a not very high level, as opposed to drawing together threads in drafting briefs once he had found what he needs to know.
9. Background papers lead up to and throw ideas up for more detailed and specific legislative work.
10. High degree of interrelationship between development of procedures and internal exchange of ideas, with on-going monitoring also involved.
11. The complementarity of reading, informing oneself, and generating material.
12. Issues of logical relationship - interdependence between information and implementation, implications behind passing information on when that can reflect back and demand change in the organisation.

13. Having to think through a whole piece of work and keep a grasp of it together with understanding the demands of its timetable.

14. Designing a practical algorithm for finding their way through the legislation concentrated the mind wonderfully.

15. An understanding of structuralism offers some prospect of being a way of thinking that he can apply in other areas.

5(b) - A Thematic sense

1. The possibility that short concentrated concrete tasks turn out piecemeal was avoided by the sharing of a central theme - value for money.

2. Piecemeal work rather than work that one can organise into a consistent package.

3. Unable to discern anything in the way of major themes apart from a certain amount of bitterness - in comparison with university experience.

Theme 6 - Learning

This theme is not so much learning in the sense of 'aggregating information', as monitoring one's progress, feeling a sense of continuity and development.

6(a) - Self-monitoring against referents

1. Working with words and drafting is crucial - at the opposite extreme to the abstract personal model of the organisation.
2. He had started to become more aware of the skills that he needed and now analysed work in terms of a checklist of skills.
3. One important change had been a tendency to start judging experience in terms of work within the department as opposed to cross-referencing to his university days.
4. Building a personal model that starts from a mechanical structure and then working towards the abstract is essential.
5. Gradual introduction to using the resources he wanted to make himself use - organising things, making sure things get done, acting rather than merely analysing.
6. He was now more able to use internal referents for analysing and making judgements about his performance.
7. The first interview note had helped work out just what it was that he was supposed to be doing.

8. External referents now centred on observable success in carrying out tasks.

9. He had started to become more aware by making conscious comparison with other people's performance.

10. Ability growing by watching others do it and listening to people talking about it and then trying to imitate.

11. Talking to somebody with no experience at all helped her see how much she had herself gained.

6(b) - A sense of continuity

1. Surprised at the extent to which work was proceeding so very much like the way work at university had.

2. Looking back - little had changed apart from initial resources being sharpened up by practice.

3. Drawing on attitudes - he did think of himself as using preconceived ideas taken from university, from where he lived, and from his reading - they tended to form a framework for saying what the department wanted to say.

4. He had used some of the resources he hoped to - though on occasion he also found himself hoping his brain was not rusting up.

5. Resources - a lot of the resources were academic ones - it was possible to attack some of the work very much in the style of a university essay or dissertation.
6. She used university-type techniques - gathering information in her head, rather than writing notes - thinking how best to arrange it and then putting it down on paper - all with the object of persuading someone else to her point of view.
7. What he had learned at university as regards meeting people, fitting into a team, and so on.
8. Department work differed from university work in being more circumscribed and defined.
9. Problem-solving was starting to gain its own intrinsic satisfaction rather than depending upon comparison with intellectual activity at university.
10. There is an element of 'intuition' - planning ahead - an ability to question, that probably needs breaking down and rebuilding in Civil Service Terms.
11. The theoretical and philosophical differences between university work and work in a department - the kind of hedging that one becomes used to dealing in in an academic discipline just has no place in the department.

CHAPTER 9 - Narrative as Ideographic Tool

In introducing the framework of events or prompts under these themes and sub-themes I suggested that there were two perspectives to it - one back, one forwards. In this final chapter I intend to try and elaborate on what I mean with respect to each of those perspectives in turn.

THE RETROSPECTIVE

This concerns the actual experience of these ATs themselves and the business of gaining an understanding of that experience as it is represented in the narratives. From this standpoint, in other words, one is not involved in trying for too much in the way of generalisation or, still less, prediction; one is simply seeking to understand, to interpret the experience portrayed and to do so in terms that bring it into line with one's own perspectives.

The narratives have now taken on three different forms. There are the original extensive accounts based largely on the interview record that the trainees agreed with me after each of their work-diary-based interviews, and extended somewhat by the subsequent compare-and-contrast exercise conducted on issues that arose during those interviews. These, in Chapter 4 and the Appendices, are the nearest to pure narrative. Then there are the six separate 'compressed' narratives of Chapter 6, in which the original stories are in essence re-told, but with some element of comment on the unfolding of each woven into the re-telling. A suggestion as to

what each tale is about - its 'fabula' - is also made, and at this stage too I have drawn out what seem to me to be the themes embedded in each. And the third is of course the rather formally set out array of themes and sub-themes, integrated across all six of the original accounts, and containing series of events from those accounts under the theme and sub-theme headings. These events-under-themes I have characterised as prompts.

Recalling the basics of Bruner's portrayal of the mental activity involved in reading a story, the essence of it is the reader's creation of his or her own virtual text, the performance of meaning in his or her own terms, that is a function of the content and exposition of the narrative itself and of the reader's own presuppositions. The long-established observation to the effect that different readers will take away different messages from the same story is faced up to squarely here and, as I have already pointed out, dubbed 'multivocality'. Naturally, it is at the very least a good working hypothesis that the extent of multivocality will depend upon whether the narrative concerned tends more to fantasy or more to fact. The earlier brief reference to the comparison of a James Joyce text with an anthropologist's shows that it is a working hypothesis already supported by empirical evidence. Given therefore, that our trainees' accounts are intended to be fact and not fantasy - even though the facts concerned may perfectly properly be facts about opinions, beliefs and feelings as much as about things that they did or that happened to them - then the implication is that reading them is unlikely to produce a great deal of diversity of virtual text. Meaning will be relatively

easily shareable without too much constraint and without loss of richness. Therefore, the prompts extracted from the texts and set out under my abstracted themes can be 'borrowed' and used as aids in reading the originals, and for the creation of virtual text by individual readers. At the same time, the structure of themes, sub-themes and events or prompts does itself represent the outline of one complete interpretation of the meaning of the narrated experiences.

Before looking in a little more detail at the structure as interpretation, it would be helpful to consider one or two instances of how prompts or sets of prompts might be used as aids to the understanding of the original accounts.

Take first a brief extract from the General Overview towards the end of the last interview with Fiona.

"Occasionally she found herself having to persuade somebody to a point of view that she did not hold herself. A case in point was the 'state of the art' defence [with respect to product liability]... There was at present no state of the art defence in the draft directive. Ministers and industry both wanted it, officials did not. However, officials were forced to argue it with other Government Departments ... The way that she went about arguing something with which she herself was not in agreement was to use other people's arguments rather than her own - distancing herself from it. It was extremely difficult to produce good arguments for

something that you did not believe in. But somebody somewhere will presumably have believed in it and should have produced good arguments for her to pinch. And this particular issue was not black and white anyway - it was all a vast grey area - so it was usually easy to see why somebody had taken an opposite view."

There are two appropriate prompts here:

1(d) - 4. 'It is very difficult to produce good arguments for something that you do not believe in.'

and 1(d) - 5. 'Arguing something with which she did not herself agree - the best way is to use other people's arguments and distance herself from it.'

They are that way round simply because 4 is a little more general than 5. But the implication is that the meaning embedded in this short piece of text is identified by the sub-theme under which the prompts occur, namely -

1(d) - Presenting intelligible, coherent, cogent solutions;

and second by the main theme -

1 - Activity and approach.

Then a second extract, this time from the end of the account of John's third interview-

"A further thought on the difference between university and work occurred to him some time later. When writing an essay in history, one acknowledges that one's own interpretation may be wrong but nevertheless pushes it for all it's worth. At work though the consequences seem at least superficially to be rather more devastating if one is wrong. Thousands may lose their jobs, or millions of pounds be wasted. So although you may feel justified, you have got to allow more weight to the possibility of being wrong at work."

This passage generated one prompt -

2(d) - 4. 'The price of being wrong at work may be very much greater than it is at university - this can then affect the extent to which one pushes one's own interpretation.'

But the prompt that follows, derived from elsewhere, is similar in tone -

2(d) - 5. 'Difference from university life where it would not matter to anyone else if one got something wrong in one's essay.'

So the suggestion is therefore that the sub-theme addressed by the extract is-

2(d) - Purposeful activity with real outcomes;

which forms part of the theme -

2 - Content.

A further short extract, from general reflections in Iryna's fifth interview, provides prompts to two different sub-themes.

"The mounting concern was of time slipping by. There had to be a ladder of sorts leading up to the '3-year AT' with whom she was comparing her own inadequacies, but she had hardly started on it after nearly a whole year. Feeling that she had been kept back from using any initiative - 'I will have to wait for my Principal' - she had now reached the point where she dithered if he was not there."

The prompts -

3(c) - 3. 'A feeling that she had been kept back from using initiative - so that she now dithered when her boss was away';

and 3(d) - 5. 'Time pressure - a growing sense of desperation that time was passing by without her being able to put it to effective use.'

Thus the two different but related aspects of meaning conveyed by the passage are -

3(c) - Locus-of-control

and 3(d) - Time sense.

Both contribute to the major theme -

3 - Setting.

For a final short example of using prompts to get back into the original text and thus identifying underlying themes, take Trevor in his ninth interview talking about his algorithm.

It was intended "for finding their way through the legislation (though it now looked to be redundant). He likened it to an egg-sorting machine. A series of yes/no questions shuttled one through an increasingly branched decision-tree into various decision-boxes. Of these there were four - yes, a conditional yes, no and 'hearing'. The setting for this though, was the formalistic legal stance; administration ought to be more about having an inspector go and chat with the applicant and suggest putting a bend in the footpath to avoid contravening the legislation. Still, the algorithm concentrated the mind wonderfully - or at least, designing it had done."

That last observation provided the prompt -

5(a) - 14. 'Designing a practical algorithm for finding their way through the legislation concentrated the mind wonderfully.'

The sub-theme thus invoked is this -

5(a) - A sense of inter-related activities, of various interdependencies;

and this itself forms part of the major theme -

5 - Structural dynamics.

However, I also proposed that the framework of themes and sub-themes itself represents an interpretation of the narratives, and an interpretation that is reasonably shareable. Simply setting it out as a kind of 'meta-narrative' makes the point.

The 'meta-narrative'

The early experience of these six ATs was characterised by their sense of the skills and abilities that they brought to the job and the content, political and administrative, of the tasks that confronted them; there was growing awareness of the formal and informal setting within which they found themselves, together with the beginnings of the establishment of an identifiable role in that

setting for themselves; and there was also evident an inclination to note relationships between different aspects of the experience, and to take account for themselves of continuities and discontinuities in it.

The activity in which they engaged - covering skills and aptitudes - was typified by the need to work analytically, to handle complex information, solve problems, to be creative, present their solutions cogently, to observe levels of abstraction, learn from outcomes, and all along to apply themselves diligently. The content of the work had them taking note not just of the essentials of policy and practice, and of a future-oriented political framework, but also of the practical constraints within which work was set, and of its routines. There was a sensitivity to purposeful activity with real outcomes.

As for the setting, they observed its formal structure and launched themselves on the business of a detailed articulation of its interpersonal aspects, of power relationships and of the experience of working with and for other people. There was also, under this heading, a sensitivity to quite where control over their own activity lay - a locus-of-control issue - and, too, a related sense of the time-dimension within which that activity took place. As for establishing a sense of their position in the organisation, the main issues centred on becoming a subject-expert or acting more as a communication channel; on adapting and adjusting to demands as they perceived them; and developing - or failing to - a sense of involvement with the organisation's aims and their worth.

In the two more reflective areas, the developing awareness of interdependencies centred on the work, on working style or approach, on the setting, and in time. There was an emerging ability to detect, or construct themes. And finally the learning aspects, as identified by the trainees themselves, featured the extent to which they were in fact able to monitor their own activities, against referents that might be more concrete or more abstract, and more internal or more external, all allied to a sense - or, again, not - of continuity.

Retrospective understanding

The presenting of the themes and sub-themes like this serves, I think, two purposes. One - it represents an interpretation of the accounts of the six trainees, an interpretation that is in effect a re-presentation of abstractions from their narratives that can be taken to convey something at the same time more general and more formal about their experience. It does not deny or lose the richness, variety, and detail of their own individual accounts, but it offers a way of interpreting those accounts. In this sense, it is a species of 'virtual text' - a re-creation, but a re-creation made explicit. It is a setting out, if not directly a 'performance', of meaning - but meaning only in the carefully limited sense of interpretation.

Secondly, although the emphasis is determinedly on content, there is nevertheless a 'form' aspect. The themes, sub-themes, and their events or prompts have after all been set out in a simple

hierarchical structure. The important point to note, though, is that with that emphasis on content, the form of the structure is unimportant. There is no sense in which one could make a claim for have abstracted a structure that **in itself** has significance. The inter-related bi-polar dimensions that go to make up a personal construct system represent an abstraction that has interest in its own right, irrespective of content, even though this may very well have been a minor feature in Kelly's own mind as he elaborated Personal Construct theory. Similarly, the logico-mathematical structures that Piaget identified in the development of thinking have an existence of their own entirely independent of the plasticine and water that formed the concrete content of much of his enquiry. No - in our framework of meaning such structure as there is is of interest only in so far as it clarifies the content.

All in all, while still operating under retrospective conditions, we are almost by definition dependent upon content and upon time, and limited realistically as far as generalisability is concerned to the extent to which the meaning of that content has been made shareable by means of the analyses and the drawing out of themes. That is to be expected, and as it should be under these particular conditions. We can claim to be able to understand the experience of six ATs better; but so far we can claim no more. This of course is the point at which to turn to face the other way - forwards.

THE PROSPECTIVE

There are two aspects to this perspective. One centres more on the general issue of turning an ideographic account into a useful tool, and the other more on the specific matter of how such a tool might assist in AT development. The two are closely linked.

In general, we have reached a point where - given the work that we have here - one can say that the AT's early experience is divisible into six broad headings. There is the quality of the capabilities that they bring with them, the content of the work that they have to do, the setting within which they do it, the role that they find themselves adopting, their own abilities to effect relationships between different parts of their experience, and something that has to do with longitudinal, learning, continuous aspects of experience.

This statement is made on the basis of a test of verisimilitude rather than verification. In other words, there is no sense in which one is saying 'on average it is the case that ...' or 'the probability of this or that actually being the picture is such-and-such'. Any statement of that sort would need to have been derived from surveys on carefully chosen and statistically representative samples - procedures, that is to say, drawn from the paradigmatic and not the narrative mode. So one is not saying - 'this is the case, significant at this or that level, now deny it if you will.' One is instead saying - 'when six people look at their experience in this way, it comes out looking like thus-and-thus; how dear reader, does this seem to you? does it make sense?'

Now the reader, having had this question posed, may very well find that up to a point, and in many respects, yes it does indeed make sense and he now understands much more about that experience than he - or, of course, she - had done before. Furthermore, he or she is in a very similar situation and is prepared in many respects to subscribe to this account as having meaning for that situation too. However, he or she would want perhaps to add a little, or subtract a little. The essential point is that, operating in narrative and verisimilitude mode it is entirely legitimate for somebody to want to add a little or to subtract a little. However, this legitimacy requires that modifications or rearrangements to the existing narrative themselves be based on narrative. The reader, that is, has to bring his or her experience to bear, in a reasonably ordered and organised way. This precludes above all else sitting in conference and offering opinion - even if we are dealing with the fuzzy domain of thick description, it still demands an empirical approach.

This of course brings us back to the suggestion that I made in the lead-in to presenting the themes-and-events framework. There I proposed what amounts to a cycle-of-narration as the way in which the ideographic account might be used. The account - in some suitable form - becomes the basis on which reader becomes narrator of a new ideographic account; virtual text becomes the new narrative; and the prompts that worked on the reader's presuppositions to help create virtual text in response to reading the first account can selectively enter this new narrative in order to become, alongside new events, part of a new set of prompts for creating new virtual text in a further round of reading.

Context of Administration

This is the point at which to turn to the more specific issue of using this account, and using it in the case where reader-turned-narrator is, say, a typical administration trainee. First, though, why might such a trainee wish to be engaged in this kind of activity at all? When discussing the ethnographer's enterprise very briefly in Chapter 5, I listed amongst some of its features the necessity of defining "why it was that one wanted to know in the first place". This is just as important for the trainee administrator turned quasi-ethnographer as it is for the ethnographer proper or, of course, for any other social scientist in any other social scientific endeavour.

In the simplest terms, the AT's answer is 'development'. But this needs examination, which in turn needs some measure of reference back to the introductory chapters, particularly Chapter 3 on Practice. The main point is the nature of the job.

There were in essence four sources mentioned in this earlier chapter. One was the actual specification used by the Civil Service Commission in its advertising and recruitment activity. Another was the Hodgkinson view of administration as an activity that, depending on its focus, practices now technical management and now philosophy. There was the Burgoyne taxonomy with its three main levels of skilling, learning, and development. And there was the Winter et al analysis of generalist or administrative attributes.

It is of course possible to merge these with each other and, moreover, with at least some of the content of our trainees' experience. Taking Burgoyne's three main levels - skilling, learning and development - as sub-headings, for example -

'skilling'

in Burgoyne's own terms, the abilities associated with technical and content knowledge, the setting, reading the environment -

the Winter et al list has no real equivalents

the AT-experience shows many:

- 1(a) - 10. 'Digging out information in some way usually leading on to telephoning an answer or writing minutes and letters or sending telexes'
- 1(f) - 3. 'Knowledge of the subject area'
- 2(b) - 1. 'Trying to improve the control and influence over outside organisations'
- 2(c) - 4. 'It seemed to him that if they did not work on files the whole edifice would crumble'
- 4(b) - 9. 'The telephone - sorting out ahead of time what other people's views were likely to be'

6(a) - 2. 'He had started to become more aware of the skills that he needed and now analysed work in terms of a check-list of skills'

'learning'

according to Burgoyne, problem-solving, decision-making, working amongst others, maintaining one's own stability -

the Winter et al items that fit this level would seem to be:

critical thinking

recognizing one's assumptions

exercising self-control

showing self-assurance -

and a selection from the themes-and-events framework might include:

1(b) - 2. '... sitting down quietly to think through information gathered and put it together in an orderly fashion'

3(c) - 2. 'Choosing or deciding to undertake a piece of work as opposed to being detailed to do it'

- 3(b)(iii) - 9. 'The indefinible skill where you got others actually wanting to do things for you ...'
- 3(b)(iii) - 11. 'Never assume that because someone says that someone else is doing something that that is in fact the case'
- 5(a) - 4. 'Beginning to think of all her work activities and their outcome as part of one general undifferentiated process - aims all seemed to fit together'.

'developing'

the Burgoyne formulation centering on creative thought, learning-to-learn, fundamental self-development -

with Winter et al items such as these:

learning how to learn

thinking independently

mature social and emotional judgement

personal integration

anti-authoritarian values

participation in, enjoyment of, culture -

and instances from our ATs' experience:

- 6(a) - 6. 'He was now more able to use internal referents for analysing and making judgements about his performance'

- 1(c) - 7. 'Thinking up new ideas - there are two issues, one is whether there is actual scope, and the other is whether one has the ideas anyway'

- 3(b)(i) -5. 'Achieving a balance between accepting and deferring to the better judgement of more highly placed people than herself and making her own point heard when there was something with which she disagreed'.

The mapping is far from perfect, and it is not my intention anyway to examine it. The more general point is that the three broad-based levels of capability proposed by Burgoyne, dealing in turn with technical skills and content, with more abstract problem-solving abilities, and with an overall developmental monitoring within the individual, do all find themselves represented at some point or another in our ATs' experience. So too do various - most - of the features adduced by Winter et al - even down to involvement in cultural experience in the case of Iryna and her Ukrainian choir (see 3(c) - 4). The more fundamental point

still is that the specification that emerges is, despite its numbers of facets, a decidedly general one.

The Commission's published specification - with yet another ready, though anything but complete, mapping on to our narratives - speaks in essence of general intellectual aptitudes (critical analysis, sound judgement), interpersonal abilities (capacity for dealing with other people), and personal strengths (acceptance of responsibility, being hard-working). This, as pointed out earlier, is indeed a generalist specification. But it is the Hodgkinson quotation that I have already cited in Chapter 2 that sums it all up - the administrator has to become a "specialist in generalism". It is the 'becoming' that is interesting.

Developing the specialism

One of the methods provided for assisting trainees to become such specialists is of course the relatively formal teaching available at, in this case, the Civil Service's own College. We have some personal insights into a small part of that experience in our narratives. Interestingly, the experience seems to have lacked something for those of our trainees who underwent it. For instance, Trevor found himself reflecting on "how it could be that being paid for studying what was in one's own interests did not somehow work out." On the other hand Edward, whilst acknowledging that the aims of learning "something specific about other people's contributions to the business of administration" were less than perfectly met, acknowledged at the same time the value

of "gaining insight into some of the more specialist economics perspectives on his own world of work". (Both of these come from the condensed accounts of Chapter 6.)

What the College offers, and I instance some of the items not for any narrowly specific reason but to make a more general point, is courses in financial management, management of staff, economics and so on. A representative selection from a recent brochure includes -

Introduction to Administration:

Communication skills

Parliament, Government and the Civil Service

Finance and control of public expenditure

Foundation modules in:

Statistics and Government

Economics and Government

Principles of accounts

Social role of Government

Government and industry

International relations

Resource Management

Information and computers

Staff management

Resource allocation and financial management.

Under 'Parliament, Government and the Civil Service', the course aim is expressed as to "provide an understanding of the political environment in which government works". Principles of Accounts studies range across double-entry book-keeping, interpretation of financial accounts, cash flow forecasts and the like. And, to take an example from the third grouping as well, Staff Management training is aimed at equipping course-members with "the knowledge and skills which will enable them to manage staff effectively and efficiently". Going back to the first group, communication skills training centres not just on oral and written skills in a general kind of way, but explicitly and specifically on such issues as briefing Ministers and "preparing answers and supplementaries for Parliamentary Questions".

Some of the learning outcomes will of course, as with many such organised events, prove to have been largely unprogrammed - with the experience of simply being amongst others who work in similar settings, and who have similar problems and similar needs. As

John indicated, meeting other ATs was important, and the experience probably also brought on some "unintentional learning about organising small groups" (again from Chapter 6). However, if the programmed courses work, their effect will have been, I suggest, to have added material suitable for Hodgkinson's management-technical outer surface of the sphere, rather more than that which is appropriate to 'philosophy' at its core. Put another way, Burgoyne's 'skilling' level will have been more than adequately handled, and the 'learning' level issues of problem-solving, decision-making, working with others, and so on, will also have been addressed. Some of this training will be particularly content-specific and will meet its aims by 'loading' the trainee with concrete material. Some of it will be at more of a process-level, particularly the 'learning' issues, even though it may very well be - depending upon course aims and outcomes - more orientated to 'taking learned material away' than to bringing about change. All this, of course, is little more than an interpretation based on scrutiny of the prospectus plus a certain amount of personal experience. However, I am not seeking to criticise. My point is very much more that typical management or administrative training is going to find the 'philosophising' hard to handle, is going to cope but ineffectually with the 'developing' level - the level, to cite Burgoyne again, of learning-to-learn, of creativity, of balanced learning habits and skills, of - as I construe it myself - that level of individual activity that bears responsibility for monitoring one's own lower-order learning.

But - if the depiction of administrative work as typically generalist holds, and if, say, the Winter et al taxonomy is to be accepted, then it is the higher-order issues that merit attention from a personal learning and development point of view. Indeed, if the rather loosely-based analysis that I presented above does itself have any meaning then the Winter et al attributes map on to the upper two of the three main Burgoyne levels, thus suggesting that the enterprise of becoming a specialist in generalism will be most properly advanced by attention being paid to the 'learning' and 'development' levels, almost - though obviously not quite - independently of the 'skilling' activity. Typical training programmes, if the Civil Service College's prospectus can be taken as typical, will however tend to focus more on the bottom two of the three. And even then there is the age old problem of transfer of training.

It would suggest, taking this overall analysis as reasonably veridical, that the enterprise of becoming a specialist in generalism might be a little better served if those higher-order matters were to be properly attended to. Even with advanced tutoring methods, there is the constant problem of 'transfer-of-training' back into the workplace.

Just how much, however, can be expected in general of people back in their work-place? The clear-eyed observer of the management-training scene over a number of years - and this time without the Civil Service leading the way - will have noted the growing emphasis on importing responsibility for training and more

particularly development into the individual's own working experience.

The Reflective Administrator

Plowden (1985) in a discourse on the impact of change on the Civil Service in general, on the effect of such government-inspired practices as enhanced financial management and, as was claimed, of a radical reappraisal of administrative and managerial work in the Civil Service, had an interesting observation to make. The main purport of his thesis was that true reform of the Civil Service - always granted that such a thing was necessary or desirable - would need to take account of just how complex and large-scale a task it was on which one would be embarking, otherwise "it might even be better to leave it alone".

In elaborating his theme, he discusses aspects of the Civil Service and its civil servants. Senior civil servants, he points out, will typically have joined straight from university. For most people, even though some natural changes have been occurring, the work represents a life-time career rather than 'just a job'. The total neutrality in matters political claimed by the Service is intended to allow officials to serve any minister regardless of persuasion. Structures, methods, and problem-solving approaches, Plowden suggests, "change exceedingly slowly - sometimes, it has to be admitted, because they are quite effective". The culture, somewhat blinkered, is based in a Service that is "pessimistic, apolitical, perhaps cynical," and this may simply be a feature of

career-type organisations in general - low labour turn-over, career jobs. But an interesting point here is that he identifies - not at all uncritically - an effect where, as he puts it, "the citizenry can sometimes seem far away", where one of the worst crimes is embarrassing one's minister, and where the "smooth running of government is really the highest objective of all". These somewhat negative traits he offsets with the acknowledgement of a strong public service ethic, allied to what is virtually a sense of vocation, and a powerful incorruptibility.

One straightforward observation on this is that it seems obvious that the focus is somewhat on the quasi-philosopher operating at the centre of Hodgkinson's sphere - witness the distancing from the citizenry. If this is or was truly the case, it is small wonder maybe that redressing the organisational balance by some extra emphasis on the technical-managerial activities at that sphere's surface might sensibly be promulgated. Plowden in going on to assimilate this performs a valuable service by, as I indicated above, pointing out that it is a complex job.

Meanwhile, he draws attention also to some assumptions about what he calls "day-to-day behaviour". One of these is that the unwritten conventions (at the time at which he was writing) that govern such behaviour are implicitly acknowledged. Secondly, these conventions provide clear, explicit guidance for "any conceivable situation" - thus they are, it would seem, an embodiment of Weber's bureaucratic rule-structures. And thirdly, there is an assumption that the guidance will always be followed. Testing

these by asking Civil Servants to think back to 'ethical dilemmas' showed that they found the thinking back difficult, and anyway 'it would have all worked no matter what'. This provides him with his first bit of evidence of what he suggests is the typical unreflective attitude of many or most civil servants.

He raises the issue again later on in talking about an exchange that he underwent with a large retail-chain when he himself was a Civil Servant. "I am a little embarrassed," he says, "... to recall how unreflective I was about my own responsibilities as a manager in the full sense." And again, in considering pressures, he acknowledges that it is often reasonable under the circumstances to take one's cue from higher up the organisation, but at the same time suggests that this may also either encourage or be a function of "the unreflective character of many Civil Servants ...".

This seems to me to be the point. Civil Servants tend by handed-down practice to be non-reflective, or so Plowden suggests. He is supported by Hodgkinson in that the latter (op cit, p 17) makes reference to the "finding of a certain distaste for the reflective or philosophical end of the range of functions". Add to this the tendency for the Civil Servants' training as 'specialists in generalism' to be focussed on those features of working life that are the less developmentally demanding, and we have at least the basics of a justification for a little more reflection.

Some clarity over the terminology is necessary, though. When Plowden criticises civil servants for being un-reflective, the sense

comes through. But pinning that sense down is important. The antithesis to 'reflective' in Hodgkinson's thesis is 'reflexive'. As it happens, recourse to a dictionary will show a certain amount of interchangeability and shared meaning between these two terms. That could be confusing. But Hodgkinson's sense of antithesis is intended to convey something quasi-mechanical at one pole and rather more thoughtful at the other. So 'reflexive' in this sense is derived from 'reflex' as in 'reflex action' or 'conditioned reflex'. It contrasts with 'reflective' in the latter's sense of 'thoughtful, given to meditation'.

This should clearly not be taken to mean that Plowden is charging civil servants with being lacking in thoughtfulness. He would doubtless acknowledge that they are capable of giving a great deal of thought to what they are doing, whether it be at the managerial surface or the administrative core of our notional sphere. What one might not expect to find though is the 'meditative'. The specifying of exactly what meaning 'reflective' should be taken as possessing for these purposes is thus sharpened by adding in another strand - that where the connotations of 'to reflect' are 'giving back reflection or image'. I suggest that setting 'thoughtful, meditative' alongside 'giving back an image' has just about the right mixture of activity on the one hand - thinking - and focus on the other - oneself - to convey exactly what it is that Hodgkinson thinks administrators should be capable of, but which both he and Plowden believe they may be disposed to avoid or overlook.

So, if 'reflection' is to be encouraged, in an effort to develop the philosopher side of Hodgkinson's administrator, the question becomes one of how this might be achieved. And one of the answers quite possibly lies in the kind of activity that this study has been about. Put at its simplest, provided that our narratives of their early experience are reasonably faithful renderings of the accounts that the six gave of that early experience, then when they look back at those narratives they should see images of themselves in there. To reflect - going back to the dictionary again - is to 'show an image of, to reproduce to eye or mind, exactly correspond in appearance or effect to'. Just how exact the correspondence is will vary from instance to instance, but even if it is therefore something of a distorting mirror, none the less the account, having our trainee in it, will reflect him back to himself.

The activity of reflection will have two different kinds of outcome. One will centre on content, on the themes and events that go to make up the experience, and the act of reflecting will provide an opportunity for the individual to examine the experience in such a way as to allow him or her to plan how best to develop the skills, abilities, knowledge represented in it. It will not of itself determine that kind of outcome, of course, but it will establish the conditions of understanding that should facilitate it. And at the same time, the second kind of outcome could be facilitating the activity of reflection itself - becoming better at that.

This so far is a little indeterminate. How might a trainee actually go about the enterprise of starting to learn to reflect and starting to make use of reflection? Clearly, the answer to that question in the present context centres on the production of narrative. But that too is a little indeterminate. To design a complete procedure for stimulating reflection amongst administrators is beyond the scope of the present study, and would of course require a series of trials. Sketching out some possibilities is another matter, and brings us back to the 'prospective' in ideographic accounts.

IDEOGRAPHIC REFLECTION

The cycle-of-narration that I proposed above is the one reflective technique appropriate to the unfolding of this present study. It is by no means the only contender more generally, of course, and Thomas and Harri-Augstein (op cit), for example, present repertory-grid based techniques with the almost identical aim of enabling people to 'enhance their capacity to learn, and so to take better control of the direction, quality and content of their living'.

Being repertory-grid based, their methods emphasise the formal to a considerable extent even though the basic construct-system form that underpins their techniques is essentially used simply as a means to the general development aim, and the individual content of elicited systems has its own meaning in that quest. Formalisation, however, does permit the use of advanced computer-based interactive methods - though it by no means

prescribes such approaches. Clearly, with a narrative-centred method this is less likely to be feasible. Indeed, to borrow a metaphor from development politics, a narrative method can be not only 'intermediate technology' but decidedly 'low-tech'; the individual can become his or her own 'barefoot counsellor'.

Two basic models will serve to outline the possibilities for design. One is more individual-centred, the other involves others' accounts - that is, a within-individual and an across-individuals approach. The first involves, in essence, starting from scratch and following the methods adopted for this study. The second starts off from the point that this present study has reached and carries on from there.

The first thus has the individual starting with a blank sheet and then proceeding along the following lines -

1. develop a diary-format for recording work-experience, deciding such matters as the period over which it is going to apply in the first place and the frequency and length of diary entries - our trainees aimed to cover their first year, for instance, with a one-week diary once per month.
2. Establish a routine for examining diary-entries. This consisted in the present study of forming loose groupings of items under different broad categories, and then carrying out a pair-wise compare-and-contrast

exercise on the groups formed. The aim is to start to examine the meaning that individual work-items possess for the person concerned.

3. That exercise typically produces categories or dimensions something akin to constructs - taking an example at random there is, in John's fourth interview, the category 'piecemeal work rather than that which one can organise into a consistent package', which was generated by John himself as he worked his way through the compare-and-contrast analysis on the loose groupings of diary-items under the broad heading 'work-activity'.
4. Each 'session' can then be completed by compiling an account - partly tabular, partly prose, according to taste - that covers the material appropriately and that records both the descriptive and more analytic material.
5. At a point determined by one's initial intentions the complete account can be put together and, if one is following the present study's format faithfully, a condensed version can then be prepared on the basis of it.
6. Armed with the narrative, it is now possible to analyse it in the terms used here. Analysis at the level of discourse produces themes and events. Main themes will

most readily be abstracted from the condensed account, more or less by inspection. A methodical itemisation of events from the full version is a simple matter and, although it can cover material at the purely descriptive level of specific diary-items, is more likely to be of interest when taken at the kind of category-level described in Step 3 above - at the 'piecemeal work' level that is. Refining the thematic analysis and producing sub-themes is then achieved by a semi-iterative process of simply grouping items under the broad themes, forming sub-groups, re-forming them as necessary and as new sub-themes themselves become apparent, until a framework that 'makes sense' - or more formally, holds up under a verisimilitude test - has emerged and settled down.

7. By this time, an overall idea of what one's story is 'about' will almost certainly have formed. It will be worthwhile to crystallise that idea and to identify thereby the story's 'fabula'. It is unlikely that the result will often be 'courage in the face of adversity', say, but making explicit for oneself something along the lines of 'lively curiosity', as again in John's case, will have its own value in reflecting one's image.
8. 'Genre', by and large, is of little interest as it will be reasonably invariant - 'biography'. But the framework of theme-organised prompts can again be taken as the

detailed outline of 'virtual text', and put to the same use with this account of experience as that examined earlier on in this chapter with respect to our six ATs. That is, the prompts - even with one's own self-produced text - can serve as a way back into that text for the purposes, in this setting, of reflecting upon one's experience.

9. That is, of course, the retrospective aspect. Prospectively, the 'virtual text' becomes the grounds for a new narrative covering a new period of experience.

At that point, furnished with virtual text for the start of a new phase in a cycle-of-narration, we are in an almost identical position to the second kind of starting-off point, where an across-individual stance may be adopted. It is 'across-individuals' exactly because the starting-point is someone else's account. In the present example, that means starting with the theme-based prompts framework that has been produced for our six ATs. Design issues now do become particularly speculative, but the main one concerns the point at which the existing framework is taken up to stimulate the creation of new reflective material - the point at which virtual text turns round to face the other way and become the embedded prompts - presuppositional triggers - in the creation of a new narrator's text.

One method might be to follow steps 1-5 above - that is, creating a diary-based narrative up to and including the point at which both complete and condensed accounts have been prepared - and then referring to the existing prompts-framework. So the next step becomes -

6. Examine the new account for the presence of prompts from the established one and register them.
7. The aim then would be to assess how much of the new text is accounted for by the existing prompts. That implies on the one hand setting to one side those that do not appear in the new narrative and, on the other, examining such part of that new narrative that fails to accord with existing prompts and performing the same itemisation and extraction of events for this remainder as one had originally for the complete text. Sorting, as before, of existing prompts and new items under the existing themes and sub-themes might usefully follow allowing as need be for the emergence of a somewhat different framework of themes and events, where there was a merging of the old and new - of what had been, for the first narration-phase, virtual text and what is, for the second, narrator's text. This achieved, one then has the detailed outline of virtual text appropriate to the reading of this new narrative in exactly the same way as had pertained to the first phase.

8. 'Fabula' and genre have the same value as reflectors of image as had been the case the first time round.

That, then, is one possible way of picking up from a previous account - in this case someone else's - in order to base on it the creation of a new one. Very much the same approach could obviously hold good when the previous account is one's own.

There is of course a choice of the level at which one elects to incorporate the previous account. The proposal here has been that a fairly full approach to creating one's own narrative produces cross-reference to the earlier one. It might, however, be interesting to adopt a simple check-list approach - ticking off, as it were, the prompts from that existing account as one met with them in one's work-experience.

On the other hand, existing themes might structure the diary-analysis. I suggested at Step 2 that analysis of the diary contents proceed under a number of broad categories, and had in mind the three main facets of the work reported in the narrative case-studies - namely, something equating to what the organisation's aims appeared to be, what work that involved the trainees in, and what the outcomes both personal and organisational had been. Equally, though, one might elect to use, say, the main themes produced by our ATs, or by oneself in a previous phase of the cycle-of-narration, as facets under which to analyse an otherwise open and descriptive diary. The one danger with such an approach would be that it could constrain the analysis unduly to that

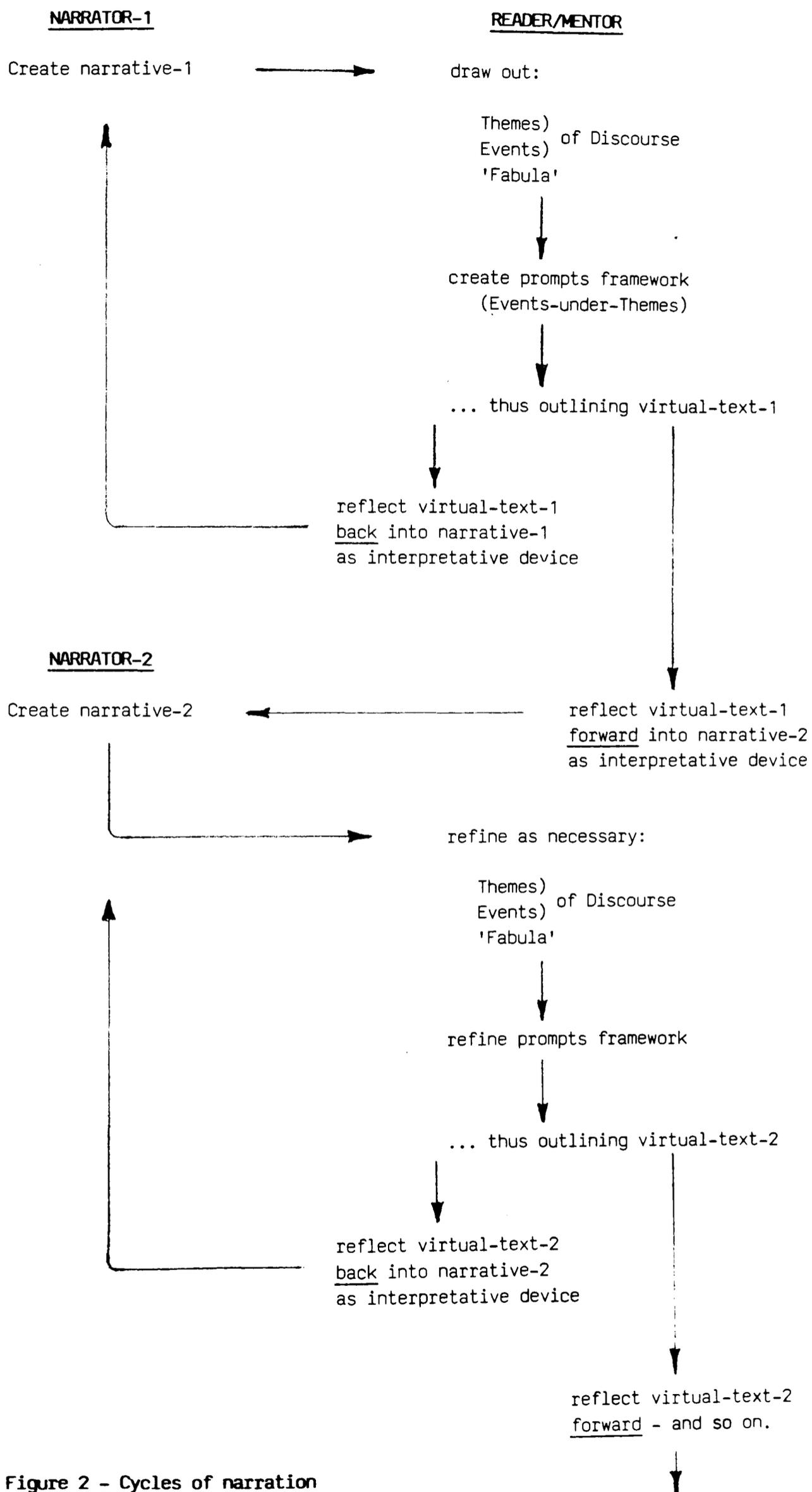


Figure 2 - Cycles of narration

theme-structure, and the individual would need to provide him or herself with a way of loosening the account-creation from too tight a framework. Adding to or subtracting from an established account on the basis of narrating new experience was, after all, how I earlier characterised one of the ways of using ideography as a tool.

The simple flow-chart in the accompanying figure (Figure 2) represents an attempt to summarise all this - both the reflecting back and the reflecting forward as means of working towards an understanding of experience. The figure separates out participants in terms of first and second narrator and of a reader or mentor character. The number of roles adopted will depend upon how many phases of reflection one is considering - combinations of within-individual, across-individual, retrospective, prospective. Clearly, narrator-1, narrator-2, and the reader or mentor role may all be occupied by one and the same individual. Equally, sharing them out allows for a mentor-figure to help just one narrator of action, or for a new narrator to pick up from a first, and so on. The figure is titled, with good reason, 'cycles of narration'; and with equally good reason it finishes up in the bottom right-hand corner with "- and so on".

Before moving on into my few final paragraphs, there is one very practical point that I also mentioned earlier. In Chapter 6, when describing the method that I had adopted I referred to the problems of finding or creating sufficient 'space for oneself' to pursue any reflective activity effectively. I return to the point

now not with any solution in mind but simply to underline the fact that, in today's terminology, the benefits that may accrue as a result of adopting the disciplines of reflection are bought at a cost - the cost of the time and effort involved. Like it or not, the reflective administrator is going to have to plan ahead if he or she really is going to take the development of the more philosophical end of their work seriously.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

At the outset of this Chapter I stated my aim as being to examine both the retrospective and the prospective aspects of the construction and use of ideographic accounts of experience. Working within what Bruner has called the narrative mode of thought, but approaching the issues from the standpoint of the narrative as psychology rather than that of the psychology of narrative, I traced the steps through which the reader can achieve an understanding or interpretation of such accounts. I have also proposed a cycle-of-narration in which the creation of virtual text in the reader in response to reading a narrator's text precedes the adoption of that virtual text as the basis for a new narrator's text, in which new experience is incorporated to extend and adapt the original account.

I went on to set out some of the circumstances under which typical administrators work, administrators such as those into whom the trainees in this study are expected to develop. In doing so I drew attention to observations by other authorities on what

could be seen as an imbalance between concentration, in training and development, on the more skill and content-centred, quasi-mechanical aspects of administrative work on the one hand, and the more developmental, quasi-philosophical aspects on the other. Redressing that balance in favour of the latter could usefully be approached, I argued, by means of making use of work-based ideographic accounts, carefully analysed and built into the phases of a cycle-of-narration.

At this point, the retrospective and prospective seem ready to re-merge. The use of the ideographic account does not after all have to be limited to the stimulation of individual reflection-based development. The account can always stand as an account and of interest in its own right. Under these conditions, further rounds or phases of narrative-based elaboration would serve to render it more general whilst retaining what has been of particular interest throughout, and that is the sense of working within the richness of content rather than with the abstraction of form.

At the outset of the study itself, I set out what seemed to me to be the essentials of 'theory'. They were that the statement concerned should be general rather than specific in its formulation, have universal reference under, maybe, stipulated conditions, and be something more than a collection of historical facts. Subsequently, I went on to confine that formulation to the domain of what Bruner has called the paradigmatic mode of thought, and with him to loosen it up considerably for use under conditions of the narrative mode. In this latter mode the narrative

may even seem to benefit from its context being defined and historicity emphasised. However, any one narrative is likely to benefit from at least possessing internal consistency, so that - in the cases set out here - the conditions requisite for theory could well apply within the confines of the case as criteria for establishing consistency. The test of verisimilitude, that is, requires that some element of consistency be present. It is not possible, for instance, for a simple verisimilitude test along the lines of "I recognise that - just the same thing happened to me", or its converse "what is happening to me is just like that which happened in such-and-such a narrative", to have any meaning without some measure of constancy over time and place - some element, that is, of generalisability on the one hand and of a meaning, on the other, that endures for longer than 'once upon a time'.

Nevertheless, this is not to propose that the conditions of 'theory' are essential to narrative too - merely to indicate that the coherence required of narrative will entail in some respects conditions of generalisability and continuity. More importantly, I have subscribed to the position of narrative as complement to paradigm. Put figuratively, the hard-edged structures of truly paradigmatic thought can be seen as frameworks around which the 'fuzzy' contents of narrative ebb and flow, or maybe as containers of that narrative. The content will naturally, even in its ebb and flow, possess its own attributes of constancy, but they will be looser and more conditional upon cases and the nature of that content.

If all this works, it does I think have interesting implications. Just one will do for the present. There is a sense in which, say, the Kellian formulation 'man the scientist' is metaphor. In another sense it is the most that can be said, or could be said at the time Kelly proposed it. There seems to have been a tendency for humankind to explain itself to itself in terms of its own constructions, particularly - and somewhat picturesquely - in terms of its own artefacts. Old books - I cite no sources in what is little more than speculative thinking - present metaphors of the mind as a series of interlocking cogwheels at a time when clockwork and machinery was in its ascendancy. Public works of the European nineteenth century were accompanied by hydraulics imagery for explaining emotional life. The telecommunications advances of the mid-20th century in their turn saw the birth of information-theoretic approaches to psychological explanation with the brain represented as some vast telephone exchange. Hard on the heels of this development came computers and hard on their heels in turn came explanations of mental life in terms of yet another human artefact or product of that mental life. Man as scientist is maybe more general, more liberating - but even then Kelly actually said words to the effect of 'consider the scientist, and see how much like him we all are'.

Although this may be itself somewhat unscientific by way of exposition it does, it seems to me, reflect one interesting truth. The Wegner and Vallacher work referred to earlier shows how the rendering explicit of implicit explanation is bound to be an infinite regress. The more general formulation, of course, is that of

Gödel's. As Piaget says (1968 p34), "Gödel showed that the construction of a demonstrably consistent relatively rich theory requires not simply an 'analysis' of its 'presuppositions', but the construction of the next 'higher' theory". Thus it would seem that man as his own self-devising artefact is forced into this position by the logic of Gödel's finding.

On the other hand, whilst this must apply to the paradigmatic, the narrative mode seems unlikely to suffer this kind of constraint for the simple reason that the quest for understanding and interpretation of the events of a narrative is not one that seeks for greater generalisability, or for accessing further levels of the implicit. Thus 'man as narrator' may have a particular attraction, relying as it does on interpretation at its own level rather than on the search for abstraction. Again, this is not to advocate the replacement of one mode by the other but it is to recommend that the view of individual as his or her own narrator is one worthy of a good deal of further pursuit.

Envoi

When reviewing the Bruner position earlier, I said I did not want to adopt the framework that he was using for analysis of discourse, but that I preferred a simpler two-level, ethnography-related categorisation in terms of themes and events. However, it does seem to me that as a kind of general programme for the individual's progress as narrator-of-self, that original framework has its attractions:

agent

intention

action

setting

goal

trouble.

As I described it at the time, "a hero with some purpose in mind sets out to achieve some end under certain circumstances and meets with difficulty on the way".

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