

Shades of Experience

A Manual for Life

Jesse Yoder

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This book is dedicated to my wonderful friends Dave Clayton, Feroline Laughlin,
Martha Bednarz, Vicki Tuck, Steve Shannon, and Nick Limb

Foreward to the Present Edition

The following students submitted duonyms used in this (2001) edition of **Shades of Experience**:

Frances Cowhig (Crashcart)

Mitchell Eyles (Downtime)

Sharyn Ingram (Beachperson, Copyperson, Dogperson, Driftdriver, Enginehead, Hammerplayer, Jamspot, Rainair, Watchperson)

Jerome Labadini, Jr. (Beerchaser, Hangtime, Rimchaser, Tearjerker)

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Table of Contents

Chapter One – What is Philosophy?	1-1
A Philosophy of S	1-2
A definition of the second or "field of study" level	1-7
The fundamental assumptions of "second level" fields of study	1-9
Philosophical Views	1-11
What is S?	1-13
A More Intuitive Definition	1-14
What is Philosophy?	1-15
Fields of Philosophy	1-16
Philosophy of Life.....	1-17
Discovering Your Own Philosophy of Life	1-20
Mental Exercise	1-20
 Chapter Two – Viewpoint Pluralism	 2-1
Actual vs. Possible Points of View	2-6
Practical Applications of Viewpoint Pluralism	2-8
Not All Points of View are Created Equal.....	2-9
Viewpoint Pluralism in the Workplace.....	2-10
Specialist vs. Generalist.....	2-11
Viewpoint Integration.....	2-13
Connecting the Dots.....	2-15

Variety is the Spice of Life	2-15
Chapter Three – The Relation Between Language and Experience	3-1
The Nature of Thoughts	3-3
What is a Rule?	3-4
The Merits of Behaviorism	3-5
How Our Mental Language Develops	3-8
What is Love?	3-10
The Problem of Other Minds	3-11
The Nature of Sensors.....	3-16
The Nature of the Human Mind.....	3-19
Our Minds Shape our Reality	3-20
Chapter Four – How Mind and Body Interact	4-1
A New Perspective on the Mind-Body Problem	4-2
What is a Body?	4-2
What is Mind?.....	4-5
Mind as the Contents of Our Experience.....	4-6
The Role of Sensor Organs in Creating Mental Representations	4-9
Parallels Between Electronic and Biological Sensors	4-11
What is a Feeling?.....	4-15
How Experience Arises	4-16
What is Experience?	4-17
Where Our Experiences Occur	4-19

Physical Space and Phenomenal Space	4-20
The Relations Between Mind and Body	4-22
How Mental Representations are Created	4-23
Mind is a Representation of Events in the World.....	4-23
Mental Holograms	4-24
Another Look at Mind-Body Interaction	4-26
The Relation between Mind and Body	4-27
What is the Subjective Point of View?	4-29
What is the Self?	4-30
Do I Exist?	4-34
Self and Point of View	4-35
Mind-Body Interaction Reconsidered.....	4-38
Mental Events as Macro-Level Properties.....	4-43
Mental Events are the Appearance of Sensory and Perceptual Fields.....	4-45
Mind-Body Interaction Explained	4-46
Soul and Spirit	4-49
Chapter Five – From Conceptpoor to Experience-Rich	5-1
Mental Events are Representations of Physical Events and Objects	5-1
We may be Conceptpoor in Some Areas	5-1
Shades of Color.....	5-2
Emotion and Feeling	5-3
Taste.....	5-4
If We are Conceptpoor, We May be Experience-Poor	5-5

Seek out New Experiences and Become Experience-Rich.....	5-5
Create New Words to Describe Your Experiences.....	5-7
Three Rules of Language.....	5-7
The Twice as Much Rule.....	5-8
The Duonym Rule.....	5-10
The Rule of Degree.....	5-14
A Word about Hyphens.....	5-17
Duonyms and the Internet.....	5-19
Chapter Six – A Dictionary of English Duonyms.....	6-1
Chapter Seven – The Meaning of Life is Self-Expression.....	7-1
A Definition of Self-Expression.....	7-5
Self-Expression and the Meaning of Life.....	7-7
Appendix A – Circular Geometry.....	A-1
An Alternative Unit of Measure.....	A-2
Circular Mils.....	A-3
Application.....	A-4
Appendix B – A Synthetic Proof the God Exists.....	B-1
Step One: Existence Proof of Higher Worlds.....	B-1
Step Two: A Synthetic Proof that God Exists.....	B-2
Appendix C – Jesse from Many Points of View.....	C-1
Contents.....	C-1

Work Information	C-2
Favorite Links	C-2
Contact Information	C-3
Current Projects	C-3
Biographical Information.....	C-3
Personal Interests	C-7
Appendix D – Acknowledgments	D-1
Foreward to the 1986 Edition	D-1
Introduction to Logic	D-3
Introduction to Philosophy.....	D-4
Foreward to 1988 Edition, <u>Duonyms</u>	D-5
Student List – Current Edition	D-6

List of Figures

Figure 1-1. Three Levels Showing the Structure of Knowledge	1-6
Figure 1-2. The Three Levels Identified by “Philosophy of S”	1-18
Figure 1-3. The Three Levels of Philosophy of Life	1-18
Figure 4-1. A Diagram of Interaction Between Thoughts and Neural Events	4-47
Figure 4-50. A Diagram of the Relationships Among Body, Mind, Soul, Spirit, and Self	4-50
Figure 7-1. A Diagram of the Relationships Among Body, Mind, Soul, Spirit, and Self	7-2
Figure A-1. The Square Inch as the Unit of Measure for Circular Area	A-1
Figure A-2. The Round Inch is the Unit of Measurement for Circular Area	A-3

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter Five also contains three rules of language that will, I believe, increase the descriptive power of language. While I am quite happy with what I call the “Twice as Much” Rule and the “Duonym Rule,” I have never found a completely satisfactory way to present the “Rule of Degree.” This is the rule that, in effect, proposes that we incorporate into our language a rating system (e.g., from 1 to 10, or from 1 to 100) for words that admit of degree (e.g., ‘hot,’ ‘cold,’ ‘happy,’ ‘beautiful,’ etc.). Even though I am not completely satisfied with the method I have proposed of implementing this rule, I still think it is worthwhile to present the idea.

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

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

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

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

The people who have contributed the most to the development of the ideas in this book are the students listed in Appendix D. Professor Gareth Matthews of the University of Massachusetts Amherst served as chair of my PhD dissertation committee, and has continued to provide helpful comments on my written work since I received my degree in 1984. Martha Bednarz has been a wonderful source of inspiration and support for many of the ideas expressed in this book, and I am grateful to her and to her husband Joe Levine for scanning the drawings in this book. I would like to thank my mother, Lois Yoder, and my father, Allen Yoder, for reading through an earlier version of this book

and making some helpful suggestions on content. I am also grateful to my parents for their support over the years in helping me get a good education. Urbane Peachey helped inspire me by ordering a copy of my PhD dissertation and challenging me to explain my views on the mind-body problem. I would like to thank my research assistant, Kelly Deppen, for her editorial work, and for being such an inspiration to me at Flow Research. Finally, I am indebted to Mrs. Betty Hollander of Omega Engineering for her encouragement and assistance in getting this book published.