



DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720

16. July

Dear Joske -

you are a wise man - and I am not joking. Of course, you are completely right, I don't understand white students either, I don't even understand myself, but in the case of the black students this is occasionally brought home to ~~me~~ and a guy like me who often makes superficial judgement then thinks there is a special problem. ~~It~~ ^{Then} is a special problem ~~in some sense~~ nevertheless for there are people here from gettoes who for the first time enter intellectualist surroundings and for me this is a severe test of intellectualism, and especially of my intellectualism, for, let's face it, I am an intellectual, unfortunately, though I try to make the best of it. These people who have seen misery and deprivation now are offered what? sophistications and it is a severe test for ~~everyone~~ who has been brought up in an atmosphere full of these sophistications and has been writing papers such as - well, you know them. For the last two hours I have been discussing Evans-Pritchard's beautiful book on the Azande (I admire this man beyond measure, almost) and I asked myself: assuming one of the Azande comes to Berkeley, to a philosophy-class - what will he think of it? You see, the situation is not quite the same as the situation with white upper middle class kids. This is a test much more severe. Moreover, I have discovered (I don't know whether I can say "discovered" for it is just an idea which just occurred to me) that many of these black people are much more mature than the white people of the same age, especially the women in whose presence I sometimes feel like a little boy (which, incidentally, is quite a nice feeling) - but I think that I have overcome my first fright and am now sailing along well. It sounds idiotically sentimental, but I like every face in front of me and I wish I could do more of this kind, but I cannot for as I told you once I have to live like a one-man-closed-society in order to be able occasionally to live in a many-man-many-women-open-society. Last time a black woman who must have been about 40 years came up to me and said: "why do you come always so late to the lecture - we want to hear more of you" and I confess I was very happy - not, because of my success as a lecturer, though that is nice, too, but because I had found another friend. You see, another thing that makes it difficult for me to lecture is that I know more and more people (students) personally (especially girls, as you will understand), I have lunch with them, as a matter of fact I am now every day on campus from 1-2.30 (about) having lunch on the open terrace and yelling at people passing by to come and join me. And I find how much more mature these people are than I was when I was 20. And I sit with them and ask them questions, not because of curiosity, but because I want to know a little more as to how to ~~live~~ live. So I learn from them, and then I am supposed to climb up this pulpit and "teach". It often makes me feel very strange. Of course, you do it differently, you discuss. This I cannot do unless there are only about 15 people

and then I am very good

in the audience (now I have 350). So I give a sermon, but it is a sermon in circus style, with lots of entertainment, so it does not move in on people as I still think you do. There is one element about your relation to your students about which I am still not clear and which makes me feel a little uncomfortable. I don't know what it is. I still think that you never step back, and when you do step back, this is just another way of stepping forward. Let me tell you something else about myself (today I am in a gabby mood again, on account of being full of pills but I like to let myself go in a letter to you - this is a matter I cannot do with Imre because I think he still needs to be liberated from something, he knows it, and only very very occasionally speaks about it, obliquely). When I was in Alpbach about 20 years ago I was a real pest. I got up after every discussion and zeroed in on the speaker, I was absolutely fearless, outwardly (although I was dying a thousand deaths inside, not for fear of being wrong, but for fear of making a fool of myself). Four years ago, I think, I came back to Alpbach) and was supposed to discuss in front of TV with Carnap, Feigl, Bloch (a top Marxist who fled from the East) and ~~other~~ other big animals. Now these people started talking and when my turn came I asked myself: what am I doing here? There are serious people discussing serious matters, and I have absolutely nothing to say. Exactly the same feeling hit me the last time I was in England. After Karl's seminar I went to the coffeeshop to sit down on the side of Imre who sat on the side of some Professor from Harvard (who had given the talk - I was not present at the talk), then there was Karl, John, etc. etc. and when I arrived they were all deep in some very serious problem. Serious men discussing serious things. Suddenly the guy from Harvard turned to me and said: "Professor Feyerabend - I know you have been working on precisely the things we are discussing here, your valuable papers - etc, etc. - so ~~what~~ what, from your point of view etc. etc. do you say?" And then everyone looked at me expectantly and I suddenly felt that I was regarded as another serious man dealing with a serious problem and I felt like a man from Mars instead, so all I could say was "no comment" which offended Karl because he did not know why I said it. Now, I am also ambivalent on these matters, I think I have got something which is my own, some very little thing, and which no one else has and I don't know what to do with it. I get constantly invitations to travel around and give talks - but I cannot do it. what I think I must do is I think write a little book which should be like a long letter to a person I like very much - but perhaps I never write it. And then I sit down and write a heap of shit like my Bohr paper which could have been so nice because it was written for the love of Bohr, exactly ~~in~~ ^{for} this way, because it was written against a man, Karl, who, I thought, was not generous while Bohr was and what I managed to do is to write another nasty, ungenerous paper. You are right, Joske, and I know it when I talk to the 20 year old here. Anyway: Brandeis has invited me to debate with Imre Lakatos when he comes to Boston. I am reluctant to do it, perhaps I should do it; what do you think: would you be prepared to participate in the debate. Imre would love it, because he loves a circus and he also loves being talked about and he says so and so there is nothing wrong about it. And I should learn talking nicely about difficult matters. What do you think? Anyway - this is the end of this letter and thank you for writing, and thank you for being there. One of these days I must write a letter to Judith, too, about Cohn-Bendit and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. I would like to be on his side, and I would like her to be on his side. Greetings, to Judith, to Aaron and, of course, to Penny (tell her, if she gets divorced, I want to be the first in line for her second marriage)

is a joke

next to me (I am a nice as money is so far)

What is Inge doing?

From Feyerabend and wife Hankie