tation of interpretations. The trout lives in a world of stimuli and responses; nontrouts live in a world of meanings. Even if it is called "verbal behavior" in an attempt to bridge the worlds of animal and human life, *language* as a mediation differs profoundly from *language* as a system of signals. The retinal cells act according to certain codes that are stored neurologically, but when we look at something, when we see relationships, there are numberless other intervening acts by which the brain/mind transforms signals into symbols. Throughout this book there are passages from the writings of psychologists and philosophers about the nature and character of those transformations; for now, what we need to note is that interpreting our interpretations is made possible because language gives us a means of making meanings.

1. "No chimpanzee thinks he thinks": that is the poet W. H. Auden's way of putting the point about the world of meanings in which we live. Thinking about thinking; observing your observations; interpreting our interpretations: How would you explain these formulations?
2. What's the difference between Kenneth Burke's trout and a trout in a Walt Disney animated cartoon? What does *animation* mean?
3. How would you explain the difference between Morse *Code* and a *code* of ethics?

4. Form Finds Form

When you're faced with a blank piece of paper, what you need in order to get started is not philosophy but a method; nevertheless, if a method is not going to degenerate into a set of do's and don't's, it must have a philosophical foundation. A method should be grounded in certain principles that can account for what you do when you compose. Those principles all concern the making of meaning. Here they are in summary form:

The composing process by which we make meanings is a continuum. We don't take in the world like a camera or a set of recording devices. The mind is an agent, not a passive receiver; experience isn't poured into it. The active mind is a composer and everything we respond to, we compose.

Things are "really" there, but what is "really" there we can't see. For instance, you look in front of you and see a solid object—say a table, which is usually the philosopher's favorite example. Modern physics tells us that this table is really an event, but we don't see electrons moving in that frenzy of activity that makes the table an event. We do not have eyes that can take in that scene; if we did, it would be quite a focusing job to move from submicroscopic levels to those required to see objects in space. An electron microscope, which transforms in an exceedingly complex manner, could give us a picture of one infinitely small portion of that excited mass, but it would be in no way relevant to the experience or knowledge we have of the piece of furniture we put the cups and saucers on. We don't have x-ray eyes, because human life does not require such vision and indeed would be impossible if we saw inner structure rather than contour and color. We can judge dimension and mass and depth of field because the space in which we move requires such perception. The brain puts things together, composing the percepts by which we can make sense of the world. We don't just "have" a visual experience and then by thinking "have" a mental experience: the mutual dependence of seeing and knowing is what a modern psychologist has in mind when he speaks of "the intelligent eye." That is very ancient wisdom: our word *idea* derives from a Greek word that originally meant both *I have seen* and *I know*.

Meanings are relationships. Seeing means "seeing relationships," whether we're talking about seeing as *perception* or seeing as *understanding*. "I see what you mean" means "I understand how you put that together so that it makes sense." The way we make sense of the world is to see something *with respect to, in terms of, in relation to* something else. We can't make sense of one thing by itself; it must be seen as being *like* another thing; or *next to, across from, coming after* another thing; or as a *repetition* of another thing. *Something* makes sense—is meaningful—only if it is taken with *something else.*

Now, just as the retinal cells and the rest of the brain compose the relationships we see/perceive, so the active mind composes the relationships we see/understand. Relationships, whether perceptual or conceptual, are compositions. We perceive and understand relationships in terms of space and time and causality. The way we *know* reality, the ways we have of seeing relationships, are encompassed by those three terms, space, time, causality: they are what the philosopher Kant called the "categories of human understanding." We see/know outline, contour,

color, texture; we judge size, volume, distance, rate of speed, direction; we apprehend succession, whether it's a chain of happenings—"one damned thing after another"—or a complicated story or play or joke; we can figure out the cause if we see the effect, and we can guess the effect if we know the cause. Of course, we will be frequently mistaken (Is it a man or a bird?); having the capacity to understand means having the capacity to misunderstand. The categories of understanding are not guarantors of the truth; that is why we need to be critical in our thinking, to learn a method that will guide us in interpreting our interpretations.

There must be a means of making meanings. One of the chief meanings of meaning is *mediation,* "the means by which." We can neither apprehend (take in, gather, make sense of) reality nor express an idea without a means of doing so. Everything we know, we know in some form; there is no *im*mediate knowledge. (*In-*, which can be a sign of the negative, changes to *im-* before *m.*) We don't "have" meanings that we then put into words. Language is not a set of pigeon holes into which we put things, ideas, feelings. We discover meanings in the process of working (and playing) with the means language provides.

Language is our readiest means of making meaning. Linguistic forms correspond to perceptual forms. Seeing that the circles move out from where the stone is tossed is comparable to saying/thinking: "If I toss the stone in the pool, it will then mark the center of a series of expanding circles." Or, more simply, "Look what I can make happen!" Making meanings with language is like making sense of the world. Telling left from right is like telling beginnings from ends, both when we watch something happen and when we tell a story about how it did happen. Differentiating dark from light, figure from ground, the shore bird from reeds and grasses may take practice and experience, but it involves the same acts of mind as are involved when we follow an argument or answer a question.

The way meanings are put together by means of language matches our experience of how things are related in time and space and the way causes and effects reflect and control one another. *Form finds form* is a short-hand way of saying all this. It's a way of representing both *feedback*—the guidance we get from the means we are using—and what one philosopher (I. A. Richards) has called *feedforward*—the capacity to formulate the choices we make when we are putting things together, seeing relationships, interpreting our experience, making meanings.