

26 Wade St.1

Wadestown

Wellington

Saturday, 27/8/54

Darling,

It's 2.15 a.m., & I'm at last in bed at the end of the 1st. day of Congress, wh. has gone very pleasantly.

Picked up Jack in town ~~this~~ yesterday morning & brought him up here for lunch. He was vastly struck with Elespie [2] & enjoyed the visit, & after lunch & couple of beers we proceeded to College. I put up my formulae on blackboard & started organising last night-&-this-morning's party; & then when the hour was due, delivered my piece. I felt very laboured in giving it, but was assured that it didn't look that way, & the [p.2] discussion was lively. Passmore, Jack, Ryle & I had a cup of tea in one of them little tea-shops, & then Jack & I proceeded up here. Ian [3] was late back for dinner, & so missed us, but Elespie drove us over. The speakers for the evening were Pat Hutchings & Erle Robinson, on 'Essences'. There were good spots in both, but they were shockingly long, & it was just about 10 o'clock before the discussion so much as started. And when it subsided, about 11, a mob of us started for here - Jack & George & Ryle & Passmore & Denis & Pat & Erle & Michael Shorter & Pat's girl Susan & Rosemary & her husband & Michael's hostess Mrs. Somebody & Ron Butler & Brian Stewart & sundry hosts. And everyone enjoyed themselves thoroughly, both the philosophers & Ian & Elespie. Denis said I did have nice relations & asked me how I managed it. And Ian wants Jack [p.3] across to lunch today, when he'll be home. Charles Brasch's [4] idea that Ryle was at Eunoe's wedding appears to be incorrect; but Ryle is a brother of some vastly important medico who wrote a book that Ian has & who invented the 'Ryle tube' [5] which is used in gastric lavages, & [I] will be able to tell Ann all about it & how it was invented & first tried out on the inventor's wife & all that. - Apparently Ryle's brother was, moreover, a sufferer from angina & his book contains some classical description of one of the subsidiary mental features of the condition. (I have this from Ian. It's apparently in the book he has).

1 This letter has been edited by Martin Prior, David Jakobsen and Peter Øhrstrøm.

2 Elespie Prior (born Forsyth, 1919-2013) was the wife of Ian (see the next footnote).

3 Ian Amberry Miller Prior (1924-2009) was the half-brother of A.N. Prior. He and his wife lived at the address of this letter. He was a cardiologist and a prominent member of New Zealand's anti-nuclear movement.

4 Charles Brasch (1909-1973) was a cousin of Elespie and a well-known New Zealand poet.

5 The 'Ryle tube', a thin flexible tube of rubber or plastic, which is inserted into the stomach through the mouth or nose of a patient and is used for withdrawing fluid from the stomach or for giving a test meal. [J.A. Ryle (1889-1950), British physician] (Source:

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/caregiving/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/ryles-tube>)

Day-Time (still morning – 10.40).

In the discussion of my paper yesterday, I had one occasion to mention Entities, & on this particular occasion I think the Ryleans were quite glad that I [p.4] was able to speak as I did.

There was a very pugnacious priest at the back who said that he was ‘a Thomist & a strict Thomist’, that this was the first exhibition he had seen of ‘logistics’, & that (this very aggressively & totally irrelevantly) he wanted to know if I was a ‘realist’. I had a great deal of pleasure in telling him that I was far more of a realist than he was, & that he would in fact classify me as an ‘extreme’ realist.

George Hughes was interested in the bit about the hidden assumption, in common talk about time, that it is infinite, & asked a question which got me bringing that out more fully. And Ryle asked the question I had hoped he would, enabling me to bring out the fact that there are no inverted commas implicit in my formulae. [p. 5] Jack spoke much as in his letters, being supported by Passmore, who also had a little axe of his own to grind which I was able to deal with quite amicably.

Must buzz off now & post this & meet Jack.

Love & love & love (& do get some sleep! And God I hope you’re home now – I think you will be, or there’d have been a wire or something) & love & love & love

Skig [6]

⁶ This is one of the nicknames Prior used of himself in letters. Martin recollects ‘Skiggers’ and assumes that ‘Skig’ is an abbreviation.