to make choices when you face the need for them. You may have a policy of taking your holidays in the spring or autumn, rather than summer. That is not an invariable rule but a guideline. It saves you time because you don’t have to think each year from scratch.

Policy-making is clearly important, whether it is done by an individual or by the leaders of a corporate body. To repeat the point, it is not the same as a strategy, although it may be related to it. Your policies are a body of principles that guide action.

Looking upon policies in this way prevents them from becoming settled courses of action, definite procedures or routines. No one case is the same. The value of having policies, however, in the context of this book stems from the fact that decision-making is a time-consuming activity. If you can cut down time spent in agonising over every problem by making some generic decisions it will set you free.

A policy is not the same as a rule. For example, a company may announce that its rule is not to give or receive bribes. Theoretically there is always the possibility of an exception but no exceptions are envisaged. A policy is a guide rather than a rule. It implies that the person applying it will use discretion and judgement.

Policies like rules should be absolutely clear, since their prime purpose is to prevent confusion and time wasting. A policy does not last forever. When in doubt it must be reviewed. When outdated or shown to be wrong it must be changed. If it is changed too often, then it fails to serve its purpose and actually causes confusion and wastes time. Order — counter-order — disorder.

KEY POINTS

- The comparison of life to a journey is a powerful metaphor. Seeing your life in this way can be a positive help.

- Some journeys have objectives and routes; others are explorations into the unknown.

- Policy is not the same as strategy. You may be able to make progress without a strategy. When you encounter obstacles, problems or crises it is useful to have some clear policies as guides.

- A sense of purpose and a sense of direction can be developed. They come from the mental effort of trying to identify at least some strategic goals and then pursuing them energetically. You can always modify or change them in the light of experience.

- Know your values, for they govern the direction and the manner in which you spend your time. Review them annually, setting aside some time to do so. Imagine them as the stars by which you are navigating the ship of your life.

- Don’t interfere unnecessarily with the values of others. ‘God knows well who are the best pilgrims.’

‘If you do not know where you are going you can take any road.’