

Philosophical Tools

and how to befriend the Truth

Part II: “Paradox, Dialectics & The Heart”

“Journeying with Deity” the soul’s vision

“The soul cannot come into the form of a man if it has never seen the truth.

This is a recollection of those things which our soul formerly saw when journeying with Deity, despising the things which we now say are, and looking up to that which really is.”

“Old Philosophers and Modern Critics” H.P.Blavatsky, 1892

SOME DEFINITIONS

A **Paradox** is a statement that seems contradictory or absurd but is actually valid or true.

The "**Doctrine of the Eye**" is of intellect; for those ‘who repeat in pride “*Behold, I know.*”

The "**Doctrine of the Heart**" is intuition; with humility they say "*Thus have I heard.*"

Dialectics are discourses to establish truth guided by *reasoned arguments*.

THE MAIN BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY

What is Philosophy? It is the rational investigation of truth; the principles of *being, knowledge & conduct*. What are its main branches? In formal terms are they not the sciences of:

- **metaphysics** (cosmology & nature of being) and **ethics** (principles of right conduct),
- **logic** (the doctrine of reasonableness) and **epistemology** (what knowledge is), and
- **psychology** (the science of the mind) & of **esthetics** (beauty & its effects etc)?

To understand each of these departments we need **tools** with which to make and check our deductions, so to solve what appear as life’s many intractable problems and paradoxes.

PARADOXES *are there to be solved, ‘lessons in perception.’*

He who tries to govern a kingdom by his sagacity (cleverness) is of that kingdom the despoiler; but he who does not govern by sagacity is the kingdom’s blessing. He who understands these two sayings may be regarded as a pattern and a model. To keep this principle constantly before one’s eyes is called Profound Virtue. Profound Virtue is

unfathomable, far-reaching, paradoxical at first, but afterwards exhibiting *thorough conformity with Nature*. (emphasis added)

Doors and windows are cut out in order to make a house; the utility of the house depends on the empty spaces. Thus, while the existence of things may be good, it is the non-existent in them which makes them serviceable.

He who is most perfect seems to be lacking; yet his resources are never outworn. He who is most full seems vacant; yet his uses are inexhaustible.

Extreme straightness is as bad as crookedness. Extreme cleverness is as bad as folly. Extreme fluency is as bad as stammering.

Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know.

Abandon learning, and you will be free from trouble and distress.

Failure is the foundation of success, and the means by which it is achieved. Success is the lurking-place of failure; but who can tell when the turning-point will come?

He who acts, destroys; he who grasps, loses. Therefore the Sage does not act, and so does not destroy; he does not grasp, and so he does not lose.

Only he who does nothing for his life's sake can truly be said to value his life.

from "The Tao Te King" or "Treatise of the Way and of Virtue" by Lao Tzu,

Lao Tzu lived fifty years before Confucius and his Tao Te King is a great system of transcendental and ethical philosophy. It relies upon intimation and paradox to convey a well-defined outline of the ancient Way.

THEOSOPHY'S AND HEGEL'S APPROACH TO "THE ONE-ALL"

On: the Absolute, the One Life, the "Whole" as a philosophical process.

The "One is All" is common to classic exoteric and esoteric perennial philosophy.

"That Theosophy which prompted such men as Hegel, Fichte and Spinoza to take up the labours of the old Grecian philosophers and speculate upon the One Substance—the Deity, the *Divine All* proceeding from the Divine Wisdom—incomprehensible, unknown, and *unnamed*—by any ancient or modern religious philosophy, with the exception of Christianity and Mohammedanism. Every Theosophist, then, holding to a theory of the Deity "which has not revelation, but an inspiration of his own for its basis," may accept any of the above definitions or belong to any of these religions, and yet remain strictly within the boundaries of Theosophy. For the latter is belief in the Deity as the ALL, the source of all existence, the infinite that cannot be either comprehended or known, the universe alone revealing *It*...

"What is Theosophy" by H.P. Blavatsky

"According to Hegel, the "Unconscious" would never have undertaken the vast and laborious task of evolving the Universe, except in the hope of attaining clear Self-consciousness. In this connection it is to be borne in mind that in designating Spirit, which the European Pantheists use as equivalent to Parabrahm, as unconscious, they do not attach to that expression of "Spirit"—one employed in the absence of a better to

symbolise a profound mystery—the connotation it usually bears.

S.D. vol I, p.51 by H.P. Blavatsky

“The history of the World begins with its general aim,” says Hegel; “the realization of the Idea of Spirit—only in an *implicit* form (*an sich*), that is, as Nature; a hidden, most profoundly hidden unconscious instinct, and the whole process of History . . . is directed to rendering this unconscious impulse a conscious one....

This vast congeries of volitions, interests and activities constitute the instruments and means of the WORLD SPIRIT for attaining its object: bringing it to consciousness and realising it. And this aim is none other than finding itself—coming to itself—and contemplating itself in concrete actuality. But that those manifestations of vitality on the part of individuals and peoples, in which they seek and satisfy their own purposes, are at the same time *the means and instruments of a higher power, of a higher and broader purpose of which they know nothing*—which they realise unconsciously—might be made a matter of question...

The fine philosophical remarks of Hegel are found to have their application in the teachings of Occult science, which shows nature ever acting with a given purpose, whose results are always dual.”

S.D. vol I, p. 640-641 by H.P. Blavatsky

“The Doctrine teaches that, in order to become a divine, fully conscious god,—aye, even the highest—the Spiritual primeval INTELLIGENCES must pass through the human stage... Each Entity must have won for itself the right of becoming divine, through self-experience. Hegel, the great German thinker, must have known or sensed intuitively this truth when saying, as he did, that the Unconscious evolved the Universe only “in the hope of attaining clear self-consciousness,” of becoming, in other words, MAN; for this is also the secret meaning of the usual Purânic phrase about Brahmâ being constantly “moved by the desire to create.”

This explains also the hidden Kabalistic meaning of the saying: “The *Breath* becomes a stone; the stone, a plant; the plant, an animal; the animal, a man; the man, a spirit; and the spirit, a god.” The Mind-born Sons, the Rishis, the Builders, etc., were all men—of whatever forms and shapes—in other worlds and the preceding Manvantaras.

This subject, being so very mystical, is therefore the most difficult to explain in all its details and bearings....

Yet, this cosmic dust is something more; for every atom in the Universe has the potentiality of self-consciousness in it, and is, like the Monads of Leibnitz, a Universe in itself, and *for* itself. *It is an atom and an angel.*”

S.D. vol I, p. 107 by H.P. Blavatsky

““Great Sifter” is the name of the “Heart Doctrine,” O disciple.

The wheel of the good Law moves swiftly on. It grinds by night and day. The worthless husks it drives from out the golden grain, the refuse from the flour. The hand of Karma guides the wheel; the revolutions mark the beatings of the Karmic heart. True knowledge is the flour, false learning is the husk. If thou would'st eat the bread of Wisdom, thy flour thou hast to knead with Amrita's clear waters.”

Voice of the Silence, p.30 by H.P. Blavatsky

“According to the great metaphysician Hegel also. For him Nature was a *perpetual becoming*. A purely esoteric conception. Creation or Origin, in the Christian sense of the term, is absolutely unthinkable. As the above-quoted thinker said: “God (the Universal Spirit) *objectivises himself as Nature*, and again rises out of it.”

S.D. vol I, p. 257 footnote by H.P. Blavatsky

"The German Transcendentalists, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, while borrowing profusely from Vedantism, Neoplatonism and the writings of Jacob Boehme, diverged widely from the primitive archaic concept of an Absolute Principle, and mirrored only an aspect of the basic idea of the Vedanta. Fichte distinguished Being as One, which is known only through the Manifold. According to Hegel, the "Unconscious" would never have undertaken the laborious task of evolving the Universe except in the hope of attaining Self-consciousness. A Vedantin would not accept that idea, although he would agree with Hegel that "nature is a perpetual becoming." Although Schelling and Hegel drew copiously upon Jacob Boehme's *Mysterium Magnum* for their inspiration, the truly occult theories of this great mystic are most faithfully mirrored in the works of the "unknown" philosopher of the eighteenth century, Louis Claude de St. Martin."

Ancient Landmarks, "From the Neoplatonists to H.P.B." Theosophy Dec 1939

THE 'DIALECTIC' & THE 'ERISTIC' ~ *concerning the Absolute*

"The crest wave of intellectual advancement must be taken hold of and guided into spirituality. It cannot be forced into beliefs and emotional worship."

Master K.H. in the 1900 letter

[**A commentary:** The enquiring method of the Adepts, as the dialectic method in classic philosophy, are opposed to the eristic method and attitude. When the sophistications of the reasoning process serve the eristic "mind set", then there is obstruction to the knowledge of the truth. Plato (Republic, 454a-500b) warns about the conflict between love of victory (philonikeia) and love of learning (philomatheia). A selfish motive makes a dialogue an eristic trap made of prejudices or a vicious circle, while the unselfish aim to share knowledge in order to approach the truth creates ways to help humanity for its emancipation.]

Eristic is a competitive disputation in which opponents battle to defeat their disputants. Each side is convinced of the rightness of its own opinion and of the other side's error. Notice that *eristic* always involves the assertion of mere opinion as the truth. Typically the dominant emotion is anger, and each side will argue using the most uncharitable construction of what the opponent is saying. Both sides suspect the other of bad motives and reject any argument which reaches a conclusion different from the claim they are defending. Therefore, neither side opens themselves up to refutation. The disagreement offends both parties, and the only form of agreement that is acceptable is the surrender of the other. The *eristic* mind-set is governed by a simple heuristic: a friend is one who agrees with me, an enemy one who disagrees.

Dialectic is a cooperative search for the truth beyond opinion. Lack of agreement is a welcome opportunity to test one's own opinions/beliefs for error. Common agreement is sought and it doesn't matter to either party which initial opinion is closer to the agreed-upon conclusion. Anger is not a characteristic of dialectic. Thoughtful consideration of the other's beliefs and arguments, even when they would put one's own at risk, is the chief characteristic. Each side is willing to state their true beliefs and expose them to the hazard of refutation. Friendship is no longer contingent on agreement/disagreement but is based on a mutual willingness to help the other and be helped by him/her."

<http://woodybelangia.com/2014/05/06/good-and-bad-motives-for-argument/>

On Renouncing Victory... and Personal Gratification of Vanity

“It would be a great mistake to suppose that it is sufficient not to become personal yourself. For by showing a man quite quietly that he is wrong, and that what he says and thinks is incorrect — a process which occurs in every dialectical victory — you embitter him more than if you used some rude or insulting expression.

“Why is this? Because, as Hobbes observes, all mental pleasure consists in being able to compare oneself with others to one’s own advantage. — Nothing is of greater moment to a man than the gratification of his vanity, and no wound is more painful than that which is inflicted on it. Hence such phrases as “Death before dishonour,” and so on.”

Arthur Schopenhauer, The Art of Always Being Right

The Error of Dialectical Materialism

Dialectical materialism is the philosophy developed by Marx and Engels. From Hegel they derived the conception that *all material and mental phenomena constitute a single system*, developing through the tension between opposites, which resolves itself in a transition to *a higher form of organisation*.

But reversing Hegel’s view, dialectical materialism teaches that matter came before mind, that in the course of evolution it gave rise to life, and subsequently to mind, and that the mental always remains a function of matter. (This is the physicalist’s view, common today.)

Hutchinson’s New 20th c. Encyclopedia, (1964)

"Three Great Ideas"

Among many ideas brought forward through the theosophical movement there are three which should never be lost sight of. Not speech, but thought, really rules the world; so, if these three ideas are good let them be rescued again and again from oblivion.

The first idea is, that there is a great Cause - in the sense of an enterprise - called the Cause of Sublime Perfection and Human Brotherhood...

The second idea is, that man is a being who may be raised up to perfection, to the stature of the Godhead, because he himself is God incarnate. This is the idea of human perfectibility. It will destroy the awful theory of inherent original sin... of Christian nations.

The third idea... is that the Masters those who have reached up to what perfection this period of evolution and this solar system will allow *are living, veritable facts*, and not abstractions cold and distant. They are, as our old H. P. B. so often said, *living men*.

Let us not forget these three great ideas."

"Three Great Ideas" by W.Q. Judge

Introductory reading from the Katha Upanishad

The *better* is one thing, the *dearer* is another thing; these two bind a man in opposite ways. Of these two, it is well for him who takes the better; he fails of his object, who chooses the dearer.

The better and the dearer approach a man; going round them, the sage discerns between them. The sage chooses the better rather than the dearer; the fool chooses the dearer, through lust of possession.

Thou indeed, pondering on dear and dearly-loved desires, O Nachiketas, hast passed them by. Not this way of wealth hast thou chosen, in which many men sink.

Far apart are these two ways, unwisdom and what is known as wisdom. I esteem Nachiketas as one seeking wisdom, nor do manifold desires allure thee....

The *great Beyond* gleams not for the child, led away by the delusion of possessions....

That is not to be gained even for a hearing by many, and hearing it many understand it not. Wonderful is the speaker of it, blessed the receiver; wonderful is the knower of it, taught by the blessed.

Not by the lower man is this, when declared, to be known.... even by much meditation. There is no way to it unless told by the other, very subtle is it, nor can it be debated by formal logic.

The understanding of this cannot be gained by debate; but it is declared by the other, dearest, for a right understanding. Thou hast obtained it, for thou art steadfast in the truth; may a questioner like thee, Nachiketas, come to us.

Know that the Self is the lord of the chariot, the body verily is the chariot; know that the soul is the charioteer, and emotion the reins. They say that the bodily powers are the horses, and that the external world is their field. **When the Self, the bodily powers and emotion are joined together, this is the right enjoyer**; thus say the wise.

But for the unwise, with emotion ever unrestrained, his bodily powers run away with him, like the unruly horses of the charioteer.

For him who is wise, with emotion ever restrained, his bodily powers do not run away with him, like the well-ruled horses of the charioteer.

He whose charioteer is wisdom, who grasps the reins—emotion—firmly, he indeed gains the end of the path, the supreme resting-place of the emanating Power.

The impulses are higher than the bodily powers; emotion is higher than the impulses; soul is higher than emotion; higher than soul is the Self, the great one.

Higher than this great one is the unmanifest; higher than the unmanifest is spirit. Than spirit nothing is higher, for it is the goal, and the supreme way.

This is the hidden Self; in all beings it shines not forth; but is perceived by the piercing subtle soul of the subtle-sighted."

from Selections from "The Upanishads and the Tao Te King" pp 38-39 & 42-44