

# Unit 1: Philosophy, Humanity and creativity

## Chapter 1

### The Top Hat by JosteinGarder

#### Sophie's World

1. **Sophie** doesn't tell anyone about the postcards she receives. As she proceeds with school, she begins to notice that her teachers are dull and concerned with unimportant things. She wishes they would tell her about things that really matter—what it means to be human, or what it means to exist.
2. One day after school, **Joanna** asks **Sophie** to come home to play cards. Sophie tells Joanna she's no longer interested in cards, or games of any kind. Joanna becomes annoyed with Sophie, and suggests that Sophie is in love. Joanna walks home without Sophie, and Sophie regrets being short with Joanna.
3. **Sophie** returns to her home and checks the mailbox. Inside, she's surprised to find a big envelope with her name on it. Inside, she finds a three-page letter, headed, "WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?" The letter explains that philosophy is the most abstract and yet the most useful thing in the world. Human beings have learned to provide for their material needs—they can find food and shelter. But humans also require intellectual and spiritual nourishment—this is what philosophy provides.
4. **Sophie**'s letter goes on to identify several major questions that philosophy tries to answer. These include: "How was the world created?"; "Is there life after death?"; "How ought we to live?" The letter explains that philosophers proceed like detectives: they use evidence and contemplation to solve their "mysteries." One of philosophers' favorite tricks is to answer big questions by "working their way up" from tiny details—or, as the letter puts it, "to climb up the fine hairs of [a rabbit's] fur in order to stare right into the magician's eyes." The letter ends, and there's no signature.
5. **Sophie** tries to make sense of her letter. It was probably written by someone other than the person who sent a postcard to **Hilde Møller Knag**, since there's no stamp or postmark on this most recent letter. Sophie then checks the mailbox again, and is amazed to find another large letter. She looks around, hoping to find the person who placed the letter there—but all she sees is **Sherekhan**, her cat.

6. Sophie's newest letter begins by explaining that Sophie's philosophy lessons will come in small portions. The most important thing for Sophie to keep in mind is that philosophy requires "the faculty of wonder." As people grow older, they lose their innate sense of wonder—they begin to take the world for granted and focus on smaller, more mundane things. The letter urges Sophie never to forget that she is an "extraordinary being"—her very existence is something of a miracle.
7. The letter asks Sophie to perform a thought experiment: imagine that a family of three (a mother, a father, and a small child) is eating breakfast. The father suddenly begins to fly through the room. The small child is delighted by his father's behavior, while the mother, on the other hand, is terrified. The difference, the letter suggests, is that small children are used to miracles and new phenomena—everything they see is equally surprising. By the time we get to adulthood, though, we're trained to see the world as a "matter of course." The exception, the letter argues, is the philosopher. The letter then makes an analogy. Every day, humans see incredible things—like an audience seeing rabbits coming out of top hats. Average humans become accustomed to this sight, however—in the analogy they "burrow" into the rabbit's fur, losing their sense of the big picture.
8. Sophie is fascinated by the letter. When her Mom gets home, Sophie asks her if she thinks it's an amazing thing to be alive. Mom replies, "Stop talking like that." Sophie tries to explain the letter's analogy about rabbits and fur, but Sophie's Mom tells Sophie to be quiet. She jokes that Sophie has been "mixed up" with drugs.

## Analysis

1. Sophie's traditional education in school doesn't satisfy her. It teaches her important information about math and history, but it doesn't make her feel any more confident or any less lonely. Gaarder suggests that philosophy, then, will be Sophie's *true* education.
2. Here Sophie shows her immaturity by becoming so humorously pretentious right away. One common thread of the book is that people will assume that Sophie's strange behavior or actions come from her having a boyfriend or crush—everyone assumes that a young girl must only be thinking about boys, not about life's deep questions.
3. Sophie's introduction to philosophy corresponds perfectly to the sense of frustration she felt in the classroom. School has given Sophie plenty of

information but very little wisdom—philosophy (literally the “love of wisdom” in Greek) will satisfy what Sophie feels she’s been missing. (Of course, this isn’t true for everyone, but Gaarder assumes his readers to be of a similar mindset).

4. In this letter, an unknown author spells out the basic “direction” of philosophy, and of Sophie’s education. Sophie will start with profound, mysterious questions about the universe. But in order to make broad conclusions about the universe, she’ll have to focus on the “little things” in life. Once again Gaarder intertwines a rather straightforward lesson with a mysterious, whimsical plot, and thus enriches both aspects of his work.
5. Throughout this novel, the plot of the book will mirror the study of philosophy itself—in other words, Sophie won’t just be tangling with the mysteries of philosophy; she’ll also have to solve the concrete mysteries of who’s been sending her letters, and who Hilde is.
6. This is one of the key passages of the novel—an explanation of the philosophical “attitude” rather than any specific philosophical position. There are many implications of the idea that philosophy is an act of wonder, which the novel will unpack later on. For now, though, it’s important to recognize that philosophy doesn’t just give its students information; it teaches them how to live their lives differently—with a sense of excitement and curiosity.
7. The letter clarifies its initial point by contrasting a baby’s experience with an adult’s. It’s a common trope of children’s books that adults are dull-minded and unobservant, while children are more open-minded and innocent (*The Polar Express*, anyone?). That is certainly the case in this novel—Sophie is young, but what she lacks in real-world experience she makes up for with her unique and open sensibility. Sophie will never “burrow,” we can sense—she’ll continue to explore life’s mysteries. Without Sophie’s sense of wonder, this novel wouldn’t get very far at all.
8. Gaarder presents Sophie’s Mom as a kind of foil—an example of what happens to adults when they lose their sense of wonder and curiosity about the world. Mom seems to be rather dull, but Gaarder isn’t too negative or cruel in his presentation of her—she’s just a kind of stereotypically clueless, narrow-minded parent who won’t accept her child’s fantastical experiences.

## **Chapter-2**

# **New Millennium, New human being by Osho**

This article, New Millennium New Human Being is based on the philosophical book of Osho, New human for new millennium. The book tries to create a picture of new consciousness, tries to elucidate the real essence of new man and the agnosticism where the indecisive quality or the quality where we will either support the both contradictory views and oppose them. The text being in first person narrative seems like the speech given by the author. The author of this text is Osho having the real name Chandra Mohan Jain, also known as Acharya Rajneesh from 1960s onwards.

His over 600 books, several audios and videos and led the JeevanJagriti Movement, Neo- Sannyas. Osho being a spiritual master/ philosopher had taught the explicit lessons of meditation, awareness, love, celebration, courage, creativity and humour. His philosophies have made the notable influence not only in India or it's around but to the western world of Philosophy.

### **1. Introduction with layman understanding**

The text New Millennium New Human Being is one of the revolutionary texts where it deals with the seven essential qualities. Osho says, 'it is imperative that we become new human beings as we enter the new millennium.' He elucidates the essential qualities of the new man and examines issues that have bedevilled generations: love, relationship, marriage, family, money, power, work and morality. The article has tried to deal with the contrastive analysis of the old man with the new one. The narrator is sure that as the monkey has revolution itself into a

human, the human will obviously spurt into something where he will not only a psychological being but also a spiritual being. The human being today has come to a stage where a great change is possible. The concern of this new human being will be this life as if this life is taken care of, the other life will precede their own accord. Osho has said, 'Tomorrow is in the womb of today. Take care of today and you have taken care of tomorrow.' Here we can say exactly like his words that if we worry about tomorrow, we will not only miss tomorrow but today as well. As today was the tomorrow of yesterday and tomorrow will certainly be today tomorrow means we will miss today and tomorrow both and will go on missing our whole life. He also mentions that the old man being habituated of missing becomes sad and blames samsara (this beautiful world). But, it is not so. Actually the world is beautiful, blissful and peaceful, protected by nature. Being past oriented or future oriented the old man has been in misery. He also tries to mention the fact that the new man who is coming with simply live and without belief he will come to know what truth is.

Love should be the main focus from coming out of the humanity's past of being insane. To quote Osho, he says, 'If you love, you will find so many occasions to be loved. If you are afraid, you will find so many occasions to be afraid. The main concern given in this article is about the new man who is bound to create a new society around him.

"The new man will not be a tale told by an idiot, but will be a poem sung out of wholeness, will be a dance of immense joy for god's gift of life and being..." He too says, 'get ready for something immensely valuable, so that when the gift comes, you are not fast asleep, so that when the new consciousness knocks on your door you are ready to embrace it.'

It means that the new man is coming into the existence and the first signs are already on the horizon. We should be able to open

our heart for the new, uprooting the old weeds and those old conditionings and embrace the new. At last we must know that nobody comes again as those who come are the people who live without learning anything from life.

## **2. New consciousness and new human**

Osho in this article talks about the new man who has already arrived, arrived but in fragments. He says that when one flower is there, there is the certainty that spring is nearby. The concept of new human who would be contrastively and drastically different will emerge with the new consciousness. Vidhya Frazier in her spiritual teaching tells that we are entering in the times of great transition, a new earth is emerging. People are awakening. We are in the process of preparing for a quantum evolutionary leap in consciousness. The new consciousness is dealt as non-orthodox, non-fanatic: it will be fluid. It will not react, it will respond. And, the difference between reaction and respond is great.

Reaction is always rigid, has fixed ideas and reacts out of it but the respond is different as first we listen to the questions, absorb it, see and feel the situation and out of that very living our responses arises. He also mentions that growing old is one thing and growing up is the next. Growing old is a physiological phenomenon whereas growing up means having maturity, wisdom and only those who go on flowing with life grows up. The man grown up with new consciousness won't be obedient to stupid ideas that have been given from the past. Osho questions here, 'How can a man be alive if these five thousand years old rituals surround his soul?'

Talking about new consciousness the text says first the consciousness becomes new and the society becomes new. Just as everything born in this world is mortal, the old has to die and make space for some new as he has already lived overtime. The new consciousness as mentioned will not be moralistic, will not be

puritan, it does not mean that it won't have morality but of different kind as it would be of individual kind, learned from own and not borrowed from others.

The new man having new consciousness will not look some what for god, he will look here. He will be earthly, earthly in the sense that he would be realist. He will love this earth as this planet is the most beautiful one as it is the one alive. It is the gift where Buddhahood, the salvation known as nirvana had happened. The new consciousness will help the new man to search the religion in nature, find prayers with snow, moon or stars. He will come to know that god is hidden here in this earth, in this very body. The new man having new consciousness will have no use of sham, facade or pretence. The new consciousness will not put doubletalk and hate these kinds of things with a passion. The new man will respect his freedom and respect others too.

Again, the new consciousness can have no respect for marriage. It will have to create a new kind of intimacy-friendship and have to learn to live with the impermanent phenomenon of love and of everything and again have the guts in self to change oneself as something changes. Hence Osho says, 'Only a new consciousness can deliver a man from his bondage.' This consciousness can come only through us. We have to become the womb, accept it, receive it, prepare it and only we will be able to embrace when it knocks our door.

### **3. New Religion: Agnosticism**

Agnosticism is the view that the claims of certain values about the existence or non-existence of any deity as well as metaphysical claims that are unknown or unknowable. According to the philosopher William L. Rowe, 'An agnostic is someone who believes or disbelieves in the existence of a deity whereas a theist and atheist believes and disbelieves respectively.' So, the realization of knowing that we cannot know everything is the

backbone of the agnostic belief. For example:

Christian Zealot: God loves you and everyone. He will save you.

Agnostic: prove it.

Atheist: there is no way that god can exist.

Agnostic: prove it.

Gertrude Stein says, 'there ain't no answer, there ain't going to be any answer, there never has been an answer. That's the answer.'

This above discussion says that agnosticism is the belief where you believe or do not believe on the existence of god. Here in our text, Osho has opined that the new man will have the spirit of adventure. His concerned will be towards ecstasy than security. He will try to explore. To quote Osho, '... he will go as far as life can take him; he will try to reach to the starts but will remain open. He will start not with the belief but only with the question or the quest. To start with belief is just playing a game with yourself. And, to explore being agnostic is the must.'

The capability of saying I do not know but I am interested in knowing is agnosticism. So the new man having new consciousness will have new religion where he will be a spontaneous, unpredictable and willing to risk. He will always remain available to the unknown and to the unknowable.

#### **4. New Millennium and the Existentialism**

Existentialism refers to the nature of existence. It is directly related with human characters or behaviours. It is an individual philosophy where it believes a man as everything. The individuality is greater and more important than the existence of nation and world. Jean Paul Sartre, the great philosopher of his time, also adds that 'existence precedes essence'. This means you are what you choose to be. According to Heidegger, 'Man's existence is being for death until and unless man gains self realization and self knowledge, the real knowledge is yet to be discovered.' Therefore we can say existentialism is a way of

examining life in a very personal matter. The author of the text believes that the old man was speculative but the new man is going to be existential.

“Without any conclusion one has to face existence, and then one knows what it is. If you have already concluded, your conclusion will become a barrier. It will not allow you to see the truth as your investment will be in the conclusion. You will distort reality to fit your conclusion.” This quoted idea means that the new man will simply be a window to reality. His eyes will be available, not be full of ideas. He will not want to become famous; he will want to live- authentically live. He will be ready to be nobody.

The new man will not live out of prejudices but out of spontaneous responsibility. The old man was slave but he will be free and have freedom at the very core of his being. Being explicit makes us truthful. Being truthful need not protect oneself against existence so we can be vulnerable and in that vulnerability, existence penetrates us and god reaches to our heart.

To conclude, we can say that the new man who is going to be revolutionised will have the new consciousness, the feeling of existential and create the new religion, agnosticism. He will be free from the earthly materialism and will be clear as crystal where the new man can explore be adventurous and try to live the life before the death not wonder on the life after death. He will be alive and simply be nobody creating own ideology. New man will follow what is right and oppose what is wrong. He will be truthful and able to live and love. New man being in reality will have clear knowledge about love. So he can differentiate the relation of marriage or love as real and unreal. He will understand the life as beautiful thing because there is death when life becomes beautiful and with the death there will be aliveness. He will at last understand that there won’t be any messiah coming but only the new consciousness that can deliver him from

bondage can come through us. We just needed to do is to become awoken womb to embrace it when it knocks our door.

### **The New Man (A talk with OSHO)**

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I teach a new man, a new humanity, a new concept of being in the world. I proclaim homo novus. The old man is dying, and there is no need to help it survive any more. The old man is on the deathbed: don't mourn for it – help it to die. Because only with the death of the old can the new be born. The cessation of the old is the beginning of the new.

My message to humanity is a new man. Less than that won't do. Not something modified, not something continuous with the past, but utterly discontinuous.

Man has lived up to now not truly, not authentically; man has lived a very pseudo life. Man has lived in great pathology, man has lived in great disease. And there is no need to live in this pathology – we can come out of the prison, because the prison is made by our own hands. We are in the prison because we have decided to be in the prison – because we have believed that the prison is not a prison but our home.

My message to humanity is: Enough is enough. Awake! See what man has done to man himself. In three thousand years man has fought five thousand wars. You cannot call this humanity healthy. And only once in a while has a Buddha bloomed. If in the garden only once in a while a plant brings a flower, and otherwise the whole garden remains without flowers, will you call it a garden? Something very basic has gone wrong. Each person is born to be a Buddha: less than that is not going to fulfill you.

### **What has gone wrong?**

But what has gone wrong? Why has man lived for thousands of years in a kind of hell? For thousands of years we have lived with an either/or concept of man as a kind of battleground between the lower and the higher, the material and the spiritual, the worldly and the other-worldly, between good and evil, between God and the Devil. The consequences of such have severely limited human potential.

To destroy man, to destroy his power, a great strategy has been used – and that is to divide man in two. Man has lived with the concept of either/or: either be a materialist or be a spiritualist. You have been told you cannot be both. Either be the body or be the soul – you have been taught you cannot be both.

This has been the root cause of man's misery. A man divided against himself is going to remain in hell. Heaven is born when man is no more divided against himself. Man split means misery and man integrated means bliss.

Up to now, humanity has been schizophrenic – because you have been told to repress, to reject, to deny, many parts of your natural being. And by rejecting them, by denying them, you cannot destroy them – they simply go underground. They go on functioning from your unconscious; they become really more dangerous.

Man is an organic whole. And all that god has given to man has to be used; nothing has to be denied. Man can become an orchestra; all that is needed is the art of creating a harmony within oneself.

But your so-called religions have been teaching you ways of disharmony, ways of discord, ways of conflict. And when you are fighting with yourself you go on dissipating your energy. You remain dull, unintelligent, stupid – because without great energy nobody is ever intelligent. When energy overflows there is

intelligence. Energy overflowing is what causes intelligence to grow. And man has lived in an inward poverty.

My message to humanity is: Create a new man – unsplit, integrated, whole.

Buddha is not whole, neither is Zorba the Greek. Both are half and half. I love Zorba, I love Buddha. But when I look into the deepest core of Zorba something is missing: he has no soul. When I look into Buddha something again is missing: he has no body.

A great meeting I teach: the meeting of Zorba and Buddha. I teach Zorba The Buddha – a new synthesis. The meeting of the earth and the sky, the meeting of the visible and the invisible, the meeting of all the polarities – of man and woman, of day and night, of summer and winter, of sex and samadhi. Only in that meeting will a new man arrive on the earth.

My sannyasins, my people, are the first rays of that new man, of that homo novus.

The inner division has led humanity into a state of suicide. It has created only slaves – and slaves can't really live, they have nothing to live for. They are living for others. They have been reduced to machines – skillful, efficient, but a machine is a machine. And the machine cannot have the joy of living. It cannot celebrate, it can only suffer.

The old religions believed in renunciation. Renunciation has been a curse. I bring a blessing to you: I teach rejoicing, not renunciation. The world has not to be renounced, because god has not renounced it – why should you? God is...why should you be out of it?

Live it in its totality – and living life in totality brings transcendence. Then the meeting of the earth and the sky is tremendously beautiful; there is nothing wrong. Then the

polarities disappear into each other and the polar opposites become complementaries.

But the old man was not really human. He was a humanoid, a homo mechanicus – a man who is not really whole. And the man who is not whole can never be holy.

The new man is coming, arriving, every day. He is in a minority, it is natural – but the new mutants have arrived, the new seeds have arrived. And this century, the end of this century, is going to see either the death of all humanity or the birth of a new human being.

And it all depends on you. If you remain clinging to the old, then the old man has prepared in every way to commit a great suicide, a universal suicide. The old man is ready to die; the old man has lost the zest to live.

That's why all the countries are preparing for war. And the Third World War will be a total war. Nobody is going to be a winner, because nobody is going to survive it. Not only is man going to be destroyed but all life on earth.

Beware! Beware of your politicians – they are all suicidal. Beware of the old conditioning which divides you as Indians, as Germans, as Japanese, as Americans. The new man has to be universal. He will transcend all barriers of race, religion, sex, colour. The new man will not be of the East or of the West; the new man will claim the whole earth as his home.

Only then can humanity survive – and not only survive – with the coming of a new concept of man.... The old is the concept of either/or: the new will be both/and. Man has to live a rich life outwards and a rich life inwards; there is no need to choose. The inner life is not against the outer life; they are part of one rhythm.

YOU need not be poor on the outside just to be rich in the inside. And you need not be rich on the outside and drop being rich in the inside. That's how it has been up to now – the West has chosen one way: Be rich on the outside! The East has chosen another: Be rich on the inside! Both are lopsided. Both have suffered, both are suffering.

I teach you total richness. Be rich on the outside through science, and be rich in your innermost core through religion. And that's what will make you one, organic, individuals.

The new man is no battleground, no split personality, but an image of man unified, unique, fully synergetic with life in its totality. The new man embodies a more viable, mutant image of man, a new way of being in the cosmos, a qualitatively different way of perceiving and experiencing reality. So please don't mourn the passing of the old. Rejoice that the old is dying, the night is dying, and the dawn is on the horizon.

I am glad, utterly glad, that the traditional man is disappearing – that the old churches are becoming ruins, that the old temples are deserted. I am immensely glad that the old morality is falling flat on the ground.

This is a very great crisis. If we take the challenge, this is an opportunity to create the new. It has never been so ripe at any time in the past. You are living in one of the most beautiful ages – because the old is disappearing, or has disappeared, and a chaos is created. And it is only out of chaos that great stars are born.

You have the opportunity to create a cosmos again. This is an opportunity that comes only once in a while – very rare. You are fortunate to be alive in these critical times. Use the opportunity to create the new man.

**And to create the new man you have to begin with yourself.**

The new man will be a mystic, a poet, a scientist, all together. He will not look at life through old rotten divisions. He will be a mystic, because he will feel the presence of god. He will be a poet, because he will celebrate the presence of god. And he will be a scientist, because he will search into this presence through scientific methodology. When a man is all these three together, the man is whole.

That is my concept of a holy man.

The old man was repressive, aggressive. The old man was bound to be aggressive because repression always brings aggression. The new man will be spontaneous, creative.

The old man lived through ideologies. The new man will live not through ideologies, not through moralities, but through consciousness. The new man will live through awareness. The new man will be responsible — responsible to himself and to existence. The new man will not be moral in the old sense; he will be amoral.

The new man brings a new world with him. Right now the new man is bound to be a mutant minority — but he is the carrier of a new culture, the seed. Help him. Announce his arrival from the housetops: that is my message to you.

The new man is open and honest. He is transparently real, authentic and self-disclosing. He will not be a hypocrite. He will not live through goals: he will live herenow. He will know only one time, now, and only one space, here. And through that presence he will know what god is.

Rejoice! The new man is coming, the old is going. The old is already on the cross, and the new is already on the horizon.

# Chapter: 3

## Virtue of Knowledge

According to Socrates, virtue is knowledge, because: (1) all living things aim for their perceived good; and therefore (2) if anyone does not know what is good, he cannot do what is good -- because he will always aim for a mistaken target; but (3) if someone knows what is good, he will do what is good, because he will aim for what is good.

That is the argument presented by Xenophon in his [Memories of Socrates](#) (*Memorabilia* iii, 9, 5). What Aristotle calls "the correct definition of the good" is that argument's assumed premiss (1 above); cf. Plato, *Republic* 505d-e.

Yet Socrates' view of moral virtue is contrary to the consensus of mankind, [according to Aristotle](#). And, indeed, if Socrates is correct, then why don't people who say they know what they should do (namely, what is good) not do what they say they know they should do? Is it not true that all vice is the result of ignorance, and all (moral) virtue is the result of knowledge?

### Two kinds of virtue

Note that physical strength and courage are both virtues or goods, but of the two only courage is a *moral virtue or good* whereas physical strength is a *natural or non-moral virtue*. Note that Socrates does not say that strength is knowledge, but he does say that courage is knowledge.

Man has uniquely human natural virtues such as reason and creativity, as he also has, uniquely among animals, moral virtues such as piety (correct conduct towards God), justness (correct conduct towards man), modesty (self-knowledge), self-discipline (self-control, temperance), courage.

[It was Socrates who revised the Greek concept areté ("excellence") to include moral virtue, Socrates who made the study of ethics part of philosophy (Diog. L. i, 14, 18). Philosophy's three parts, according to the Stoics.]

Moral virtue in Plato's *Meno*

**If virtue is knowledge, then virtue can be taught. But can virtue be taught?**

Plato's view is perplexing, but what it points out is even more so. He says that because things can be done or used wisely or foolishly, and that only doing or using them wisely is virtuous, then it seems that virtue is knowledge (*Meno* 87c-89a).

But, on the other hand, Plato says that even without knowing what is good, having a "correct opinion" about what is good will result in a virtuous life (ibid. 97b). In which case, virtue is not knowledge but simply doing what is good, whether from knowledge or from a "correct opinion" of what the good is.

The trouble is that if you are only guessing (which is what an opinion is) at what the good is, then you don't know what the good is. But then who does know what the good is (and therefore that your opinion *is* correct)? The one who has knowledge of the good. But if someone knows what the good is (or in other words, has knowledge of what the good is), then he can explain to you what he knows (*Memorabilia* iv, 6, 1; Plato, *Laches* 190c; cf. *Meno* 98a), in which case you will know it as well.

And in that case virtue can be taught. But if that is the case, then why does someone who has been shown what the good is not do what is good, for we observe that virtuous fathers often have vicious sons (ibid. 93b-94e)? And then it seems that virtue cannot be taught, because what can be taught can also be learned, and the vicious sons of virtuous

fathers have not learned virtue (ibid. 96c). (On the other hand, Plato's discussion does not ask whether to learn moral virtue it is enough to be taught, or whether to be morally virtuous (learn moral virtue) one must also practice [keeping watch over oneself](#) because otherwise base animal instincts and vicious habits acquired in the time of ignorance of the good will control one's life.)

For these reasons, Plato says, it seems that virtue is not simply a kind of knowledge. But, even were Plato correct, it does not follow that therefore moral virtue would be "a kind" of opinion. Much less does it follow that "virtue will be acquired neither by nature nor by teaching. Whoever has it gets it by divine dispensation without taking thought" (*Meno*, 99e-100a, tr. Guthrie), the final remark of Plato's *Meno* which claims that the dialog's discussion has overturned the historical [Socrates' great accomplishment](#), namely [making ethics thoroughlygoingly rational](#) and thereby a [part of philosophy](#). In the *Meno*, Plato has Socrates say what the Sophists were saying, namely that ethics is irrational, that moral virtue is *not* knowledge.

### **Note: True Opinion**

[Jowett renders Plato's Greek 'true opinion', which is straightforward, i.e. unlike Guthrie's rendering 'correct opinion', 'true opinion' is not like a dodge to make it appear that Plato is not talking nonsense. For as we normally use the word 'opinion', statements of opinion are neither true nor false (correct or incorrect); that is what distinguishes statements of opinion from statements of fact. And unless a criterion is set -- unless Plato sets a criterion -- for distinguishing between true and false opinion, the expression 'true opinion' is meaningless (as is 'correct opinion').]

## The good for man

And the one who knows what the good is for man, what is it that he knows? For the Greeks I think the answer must be that the good for man is living in accord with the specific excellence that is both proper and unique to man (areté and ergon), namely, Socrates said, *rational moral virtue*, because reason and moral sense are the natural virtues both unique and proper to man.

But *that is very general knowledge. The difficulty arises in the particular case where knowing what the morally virtuous thing to do may not be clear.* For example, one must be brave rather than cowardly or foolhardy, but what is the brave deed in these particular circumstances? One must be pious rather than superstitious or sanctimonious, but what is the pious deed in these particular circumstances? And similarly for being just (neither lax nor merciless) and self-controlled (neither prudish nor licentious). (This is why Plato has Socrates seek a universal standard of measurement in ethics (*Euthyphro* 6d-7d) so that one will always know what the correct thing to do is in any particular case.)

So it seems that it is in the particular case that there will be correct or incorrect opinions about what the good is. That is to say, where there is uncertainty there are opinions, not knowledge.

When Plato's Socrates says that "human wisdom is worthless" (*Apology* 23b), he does not, of course, mean that it is worthless to know that you are not wise, but only that, on the other hand, that is not the wisdom that man desires to have nor needs to have (if he is to be inerrantly virtuous).

## The irrational and ethics

There is more to wrong-doing than rational ignorance, of course; there are also (1) bad habits formed in the time of ignorance of the good (and "what we do from habit is sweet to us"), and (2) there are base instincts and appetites for pleasure in man (Aristotle's rational *animal*) that push man to wrong-doing, to greed, lust, sloth, vanity, anger, impatience.

To "know thyself" is to see this.

If man were fully rational, man would be fully virtuous, as the gods are conceived to be by the philosophers. But man is not fully rational, which Plato, in effect, says, "[The god of the other world, namely Hades] will have nothing to do with men while they are in the body, but only when the soul is liberated from the desires and evils of the body" (Cratylus 403e-404a). Plato's "the body" is, in the context of ethics, a metaphor for man's viscousness (i.e. penchant for vice through evil habits and ignoble instincts), although it has further meaning for Plato in the context of knowledge (where it means the ignorance of a soul entombed in a body limited to, and therefore limited by, sense perception).

In Plato's view the body does not belong to the essence of man, although the concept 'rational animal' is Aristotle's rather than Plato's. It does not seem that Aristotle would have held that knowledge is of little or no help to virtue, because that view would imply that man were either fully irrational or that the irrational part (the animal) must nearly always overwhelm the rational part of man.

### **Is vice caused by the body alone or are there other causes?**

And so, according to Plato, the rational soul -- but *not* the irrational soul (which Plato identifies with the body, which is "a source of endless trouble" (*Phaedo* 66c-d) to the rational soul) -- is the essence of man, that without which man would not be man. But, blinded by the body,

the rational soul very often misperceives whether a thing is good or not.

But I do not think Plato's account of the source of vice is complete, because it is not only the body's base instincts that cause vice. Quite the contrary, for it is just as often the contradictory thoughts of the rational soul that cause vice. For example, man's reasoning about what is just, as e.g. on the one hand the rational soul says categorically that "Impatience is wrong", but on the other hand it says "No, in these circumstances it is just for me to be impatient!" (which amounts to: "I am right to do wrong!") And *that* dishonesty (i.e. giving mouth honor to one thing while believing another) cannot be blamed on the body.

### ***Rational ignorance***

Further, can the body be blamed when we "don't know what to think", i.e. believe? As when in our ignorance of the facts, e.g. trust fluctuates with suspicion ("Should I feel gratitude or wariness?"), often with the consequence that we act unjustly. We say "It isn't clear to me what I feel" (feelings lacking final conviction) -- but by 'feeling' in this context we don't mean sensations or emotions, but an inclination to judge and act one way rather than another (PI § 258). What has our state of ignorance to do with the body? [What is the result of this mixing of the irrational soul [disposition] with the rational soul [reason]?]

Virtue also requires watchfulness

Regardless of the source -- i.e. regardless of whether calling it the "beast" ["animal soul"] or "irrational soul" makes anything clearer -- of man's evil impulses, if I want to be virtuous -- (But how can I want otherwise; how can I not want what is good for me? Who is "the stubborn man within"? and can I weed out this irrational root [v-x]? The irrational me (the beast [animal]) *does not want* to be virtuous; quite the opposite: its vices are sweet to it, and it wants to revel in

them) -- then I must ward off the irrational beast (the half-animal) that I am.

"Thus play I in one person many people" -- or at least two: man the rational and man the beast. It was because Socrates the beast was mastered by Socrates the rational that Socrates' companions loved him so (and why Antisthenes said (Diog. L. vi, 11) that virtue requires only the self-control -- i.e. the self-watchfulness -- of a Socrates).

If man does not keep watch over himself, forestalling the irrational inclinations to wrong-doing, he will *impulsively* do what is evil, even if he rationally knows what is good. Socrates was always aware of his state of mind, never allowing himself to drift off into unconsciousness of the present and the eternal, never acting before reflection, and never quitting reflection before he had thought things *all the way through*, arriving at conclusions that he could explain and defend in Socratic dialectic (questioning and cross-questioning to uncover unclarity or contradiction and therefore the truth).

Nonetheless, if ethics is rational, as Socratic ethics is thoroughlygoingly rational, -- then although the irrational is a stumbling block to man's living the life that is the good for man (which is the rationally-guided life, reason being the specific excellence unique and proper to man) -- the description of the irrational aspect of man (the beast) is not part of ethics. Because what could be done with such a description -- would it help man to amend his life? (Ethics *is* practical, but not in Aristotle's arid way, his method of scientific description.) Is the irrational discussed in Xenophon's Apology and Memories of Socrates? Towards what end would it be?

Vice is presumptuous ignorance

For a false wisdom first,  
Being indeed a madness of the mind,  
Tempts with a thought accursed,

And then enures to wrong the wretch of human kind.  
(Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, tr. Cookson, c. lines 221-223)

The claim to wisdom may have an explicit source, namely beliefs (whether empirical, metaphysical or religious) about reality, such as whether a god would demand the sacrifice of a child's life (*Iphigenia in Aulis*). And in that case evidence and reason may -- if we are open to Socratically examining our beliefs -- be able to overthrow a "false wisdom", namely our thinking we are wise when we are not, namely our thinking we know what the good is when we do not.

But very often the source of our claim to wisdom is not known to us, and this shows us that we do not "know ourselves" in two ways, for (1) we say that we know one thing but live as if what we knew were something else, and (2) we are unwilling to examine this contradiction, showing that we disbelieve that reason is the excellence proper to man (despite our saying that we believe it is). There is an impulse in the rational animal to willfulness ("doing whatever I feel like doing"), which like all human arrogance tends to lead to a bad end, making anything that masters that impulse repugnant to man -- as if the good were something to be feared rather than sought out.

Is it wise or foolish to seek the good, and which is philosophy -- love of wisdom or love of foolishness, love of rational self-control or love of irrational impulse? "We *say* we know one thing to be true, while *believing* its contrary is true." That belief is a "false wisdom".

Thoroughgoing virtue is dependent both on the rational soul overcoming the irrational soul -- and the rational soul sorting itself out, changing its views from belief to knowledge, so that "I know" means "I know" rather than "I really know something else".

## Noble instincts

As well as base instincts such as vanity and greed, there are also of course noble instincts such as modesty and compassion. But instincts as such are simply facts of nature -- whereas which of these instincts is evil, which good, *is judged by rational reflection* (ethics): What is the relation between natural values and human ethics?

Query: virtue is knowledge of the good and the beautiful.

Yes, but the Greek word 'kalos' doesn't exactly = the English word 'beautiful', because *kalos* is a much broader concept: 'handsome' is only one of its meanings.

"Is a dung basket beautiful then?" Aristippus asked.

"Of course, and a golden shield is ugly, if the one is well made [done well] for its special work [the work proper to its function] and the other badly," Socrates replied.

In *Memorabilia* iii, 8, 4-7 (tr. Marchant), a thing is 'beautiful' if it is 'ideal in the way that is proper' to that thing. A shield may be handsome ("beautiful") to look at, but if it does not protect its bearer from injury, then it is not beautiful (in the Greek sense of 'kalos' = 'beautiful'), because the shield has a function that is proper to it, and it does not accomplish that function: it is not excellent in the way that is proper to it: it *under-reaches* a shield.

If moral virtue is the excellence proper to man (and reason the means to that end), as the philosophers say, then a man or woman may be pleasing to look at, but if they are not *morally* virtuous, they are not beautiful. The saying "Beautiful is as beautiful does" thus uses the word 'beautiful' equivocally, in the Greek way.

## "Virtue is happiness"

Trouble is that whenever in philosophy we talk about happiness, we have to distinguish what philosophy means by the word 'happiness' -- namely, according to the Greeks, 'life in accord with the excellence that is proper to man' (which is, according to Socrates: rational moral virtue, whence "wisdom is the only good, ignorance the only evil" (*Euthydemus* 281e, tr. Jowett)) -- and 'happiness' = 'experiencing a sense of well-being, anywhere from contentment to bliss'. Only the Stoics would say those two necessarily coincide, that moral virtue is knowledge of good and evil = moral virtue is happiness (in both senses of the word 'happiness').

## Topics on this page ...

- Moral virtue in Plato's Meno
  - The good for man, according to the Greeks
- The irrational and ethics
  - Is vice caused by the body alone or are there other causes?
    - Rational ignorance
- Virtue also requires watchfulness
- Vice is presumptuous ignorance
  - Noble instincts
  - "Virtue is happiness"
- Virtue is Knowledge (It only appears contrary-wise because "I say I know what is good, but I *believe* I know that something else is". If our way of living shows what we believe)
  - "The will" - a questionable tool of thought
  - Wisdom is a virtue: *Wisdom is knowledge*, and *Virtue is wisdom*, and therefore *Virtue is knowledge* (Xenophon)

- "Knowledge is virtue"
- "I don't believe it, although I say I know it"
- In the Garden of Gethsemane ("strength of will")
- Albert Schweitzer's own Christianity
  - The Effect of Reading Nietzsche
    - Bultmann and Bonhoeffer
- Awaiting an insight, a philosophical Gestalt shift

**Context:** on this page are various topics in general philosophy, and in "logic of language": how is language with meaning (sense) distinguished from language without meaning (nonsense) in philosophical problems?

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Query: is virtue knowledge?

That is the *philosophical* question and form of expression, whereas the proposition 'Virtue is knowledge' is a thesis to be put to the test of Socratic cross-questioning, to decide its meaning, and if it is true or false.

I say I know, but I think I know something else

**Note:** these remarks continue the discussion of "know versus know-better" in my comments to Plato's *Gorgias* and "Moral virtue is knowledge".

If I know what is right, then I will *not* choose to do what is wrong (Socrates). But then why do I do what I say is wrong? I say I believe x to be the good while really believing that not-x is.

Query: what does it mean when Socrates says human excellence ("moral virtue") is knowledge? Man, know thyself.

Virtue is knowledge -- what does it mean? The English word 'virtue' is one translation of [the Greek word areté](#), but it may be appropriate only to cases where the particular "excellence" or *areté* is excellence in ethics (or, knowledge of how we should live our life; note that to "[Know thyself](#)" is to know the excellence that is proper to man, and to live in accord with that knowledge is wisdom and the good for man, in Socrates' view). If we know what to do and we are free to do it, then we do what is good. But we very often lie to ourselves, saying the words 'I know' while believing that we know something else, something better, something wiser.

This is related to [Nietzsche's demand](#) for a unity of thought and deed -- that we stop saying that we believe one thing and then live as if we believed something very different. But this is difficult, because according to Dostoyevsky, the hardest thing in life is not to lie to yourself, not to believe your own lies.

... he did not identify Ignorance with Madness; but not to know yourself, and to assume and think that you know what you do not, he put next to Madness. (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, tr. Marchant, iii, 9, 6)

He only errs who thinks he knows what he does not know. (Augustine's summary of Socrates' method, *Apology* 21-22)

My thought is that for the purpose of ethics we must reject the notion "weakness of the will" (The word 'will' is a tool belonging to our language -- [but is it a useful tool?](#) in this context). It will only make us lazy, providing an excuse [pretext] for **our laziness towards seeking to know**, allowing our ignorance to result in "I say I know, but [the truth is that] I think I know something else", which is a case of thinking oneself wise when one is not (Plato, [Apology 29a](#)), of thinking oneself to know what one doesn't know" (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, iii, 9, 6 and iv, 6, 1).

When the consequence of an action is immediate, such as putting our hand in a fire or walking off the roof of a building, nothing will induce us to do it -- i.e. "We know better than to do that". (Even someone with the thirst for money of Dostoyevsky's Rogozin will not put his hands in the fire to pull the burning stack of banknotes from it.) But when it comes to taking an extra glass of wine or crust of bread, *although we say we know it to be harmful, we think we know that it won't really harm us*, that the worst will never happen or that it will happen only at some distant time ... That is presumption (presuming you know what you don't know), and to act on that presumption is the damaging arrogance of ignorance, the consequences of which one often suffers both in mind and body. ("Conceited ignorance" versus "Socratic ignorance".)

... the good has rightly been defined as that at which all things aim.  
(Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a 1-3)

But that sounds as if all things knew what the good is, and so Aristotle's "definition of the good" must be revised to "... the perceived good is that at which all things aim", and if the good is misperceived, then the one who misperceives it is misled himself and misleads others by thinking that he knows what he does not know (Memorabilia iv, 6, 1) (namely what the good is). And so again Virtue is knowledge, because if someone does not know what the good is, he cannot do what is good, because he will aim for what he perceives to be the good (ibid. iii, 9, 5). And even if he misses his target and hits the good by accident, he will not be aware that it is the good but will instead perceive it to be the bad.

**Note:** sometimes when we say "I should" (or "I know I should"), what we mean is that it is good and desirable that it be done, but that it doesn't need to be done or does not need to be done right now. But this is not type of case I am referring to -- nor am I speaking of the case of having too much wine to drink (where the

quantity "too much" is uncertain) -- but if someone says that they are morally obligated to do something (and do it right now), but they do not do it, and they say "I know I should, but --" that is the case I am interested in, because if (moral) virtue is knowledge, then if someone does not do what they say they are morally obligated to do, then it must be that case that they do *not* know that they are morally obligated to do it (They say x, but they think they know, not x, but y to be true).

"I say I know x to be true, but I really think not-x is true." (This is a case where we can use the word 'really' in its normal -- not metaphysical -- way.) Why? Because we look at how we live rather than what we say, and we see that our deeds belie our words. In most or many cases that is the standard we use to determine the truth. *I say I know one thing, but what I believe I know is contrary to it.* I daily hear the words of one I say is wiser -- but I prefer my own.

I am a mystery to myself. I do the very things I hate.  
(Paul, Romans 7.15)

But why is this? I think it is because I believe my own lies: I say I know A to be best, yet I believe I know B to be better. And therefore I do B rather than A. In other words, the reasons for wrong-doing are: (1) we are mistaken about what the good really is (as our deeds show), but (2) because we believe ourselves to already know what the good is (although we don't do it), we do not seek to know what it is (Meno 84c), and (3) because we are careless about keeping watch over ourselves, to stop bad impulses from ruling over our life.

Socrates' thesis "Virtue is knowledge" has the consequence that the one who knows what is good, does what is good, or, the good man is the wise man, in other words. But that may apply only to when a rational choice is made, for I may also do "the very things I hate" under

the unchecked impulse of a bad habit or instinct, not only from ignorance of the good.

A contrary view is that "the will is weak", a notion which I suspect has its origin in the misreading of an ancient text.

### "The will" -- a questionable tool of thought

Query: what is the effect of good and bad habits on the will?

About "the will". Is it like "intuition", which Wittgenstein called "an unnecessary shuffle" (PI § 213)? Although I don't know what he meant by "shuffle", the "unnecessary" part is important. Why "unnecessary"? Because the notion 'will' adds nothing and makes nothing clearer -- but is instead "a refuge (hiding-place) -- a place of asylum, sanctuary (a place where it needn't face questioning before the court of reason) -- for ignorance". Just try to define the word 'will', to describe its use in the language, and decide whether it is a useful tool for thinking clearly about our life.

Like any other 'concept' = 'tool', the use of the concept (such as it is) 'the will' is discretionary: possible but not necessary. Or is 'the will' like the concepts 'object' and 'empty space', concepts that seem forced on us (cf. CV p. 86 [MS 174 1v: 1950 § 1b])?

The expression 'weakness of the will'. The "will" looks like a ghost conjured up by a false analogy: Someone may be unable to sit up because the muscles of his stomach are weak (which can be tested and exercised to strengthen), and therefore -- (the innocent-looking (PI § 308) grammatical analogy is made) -- giving way to temptation is due to weakness of -- of what? Let's call it "the will", for we might give it any name we pleased.

From muscles to a ghost -- what could our language make appear more natural. However as to exercising that ghost (Let's call it "the will")

against temptation, some sage advice: (1) "... *avoid near occasions of sin*" (Catholic Act of Contrition) or, in other words, (2) "*Don't stop to argue with temptation*" (Aesop).

Contrast that with "*Virtue is knowledge*": No one knowingly does what is evil (i.e. the opposite of good), but does evil only if he mistakenly believes that the evil is really the good. *Think the thing all the way through, trusting in the light of natural reason and experience to guide you to what is, not only perceived to be, but actually is the good.*

"I am not very good at resisting temptation." No, but why go on to postulate the existence of an inscrutable "will", the relative weakness of which is the cause of that failure? Although "if properly understood" the two forms of expression are equivalent in meaning -- for what else would they be? -- the latter suggests a picture that, like all language-induced ghosts, wounds rather than heals the human understanding. And so logic-philosophy would set both the picture and the word aside. (Of course it's true that there are countless other potential ghost-words, as e.g. 'the imagination', 'the mind', 'the conscience', 'temperament' ... The word 'mind', for example, if its grammar isn't correctly described, may wound the understanding by conjuring up the picture of ghost either within or without (Plato, Phaedo 64c) the body -- to any speaker of the language.)

**That "Wisdom is knowledge", and "Virtue is wisdom", and therefore that "Virtue is knowledge"**

SOCRATES: And what of Wisdom? How shall we describe it? Tell me, does it seem to you that the wise are wise about what they know, or are some wise about what they do not know?

EUTHYDEMUS: About what they know, obviously; for how can a man be wise about the things he doesn't know?

SOCRATES: The wise, then, are wise by knowledge?

EUTHYDEMUS: How else can a man be wise if not by knowledge?

SOCRATES: Do you think that wisdom is anything but that by which men are wise?

EUTHYDEMUS: No.

SOCRATES: It follows that Wisdom is Knowledge?

EUTHYDEMUS: I think so. (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* (tr. Marchant), iv, 6, 7; Euthydemus, a young man, iv, 2, 1; and Critias, i, 2, 29)

[Socrates] said that Justice and every other form of Virtue is Wisdom. For just actions and all forms of virtuous activity are beautiful [i.e. kalos] and good. He who knows the beautiful [kalon] and good will never choose anything else [cf. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 1145b21-29] ... the wise do what is beautiful and good, the unwise [-- i.e. those who are ignorant of (who do not know) what is beautiful and good --] cannot and fail if they try. Therefore since just actions and all other forms of beautiful and good activity are virtuous actions, it is clear that Justice and every other form of Virtue is Wisdom. (*Memorabilia* iii, 9, 5; cf. iv, 6, 6)

A man cannot be wise except by knowing, even if it is only by knowing that he doesn't know anything "worth knowing"

(Plato, *Apology* 21d, *Euthydemus* 293b), which is the wisdom that Socrates has. That conclusion is derived from "rules of grammar". When Euthydemus asks, "How else can a man be wise ...?" his question is rhetorical: it indicates "what anyone knows and must admit" (Z § 211; PI § 599); it follows from naught but tautologies -- but that doesn't make it idle (i.e. worthless to philosophy). Not at all -- because it makes our concepts clearer to us. (Conceptual clarification is logic-philosophy's task, according to Wittgenstein.)

Here seems to arise a perplexing question about Greek thought: How can wisdom, which is one of the five "cardinal virtues" recognized by the Greeks, be both one of the virtues -- and what virtue itself is?

Wisdom is a virtue *and* Virtue is wisdom. -- [This identity

is not grammatical: it is not 'wisdom' = 'virtue' and 'virtue' = 'wisdom', as if those words could be used interchangeably with no loss of meaning.] -- Is the question answered if by 'virtue' is meant only 'moral virtue': Wisdom is a moral virtue and Moral virtue is wisdom? Why is it not Moral virtue is *a* wisdom?

Query: meaning of all virtue is knowledge and all knowledge is virtue?

Note that the first, "Virtue is knowledge", refers to moral virtue, whereas the second, "Knowledge is virtue", does not. Translators use the English words 'virtue' and 'wisdom' equivocally. For instance, the artisans Socrates questioned (*Apology* 22d-e) had knowledge ("wisdom") of their respective crafts (e.g. the tinker in the English folk song knows how to mend kettles and pots), and their kind of knowledge ("wisdom") is an excellence ("virtue") proper to man -- but it is not a moral excellence ("virtue"). Man can live without the artisans kind of excellence ("virtue"); but not without knowledge (of the kind we normally call wisdom) of moral virtue -- i.e. knowledge of how man should live if he is to live the life that is the good for man.

According to Aristotle, if I recall aright (and I may not, for he may have said: the exercise of the intellect, or, intelligence, rather than knowledge), knowledge is the specific excellence proper to man. Well, but whoever gave the title "homo sapiens" to man either had never read [Plato's \*Apology\* \[23a-b\]](#), or thought he knew better than Socrates, or was being ironic, when he gave our wretched species the title "man, the sapient" = "man, the wise" = "man, the sophist". (And if 'sapiens' is rendered as 'rational' rather than 'wise', then "man, the rational" is only a half-truth.)

### ***"Knowledge is virtue"***

Query: critique of Socrates' knowledge is virtue.

In contrast I think to the proposition 'Knowledge is a virtue'. Is there a difference between "If you know what is good, then you do what is good" and "If you do what is good, it is because you know what is good" -- i.e. between the propositions 'Virtue is knowledge' and 'Knowledge is virtue'? But is knowledge a moral virtue or only a natural virtue -- i.e. is it not the pursuit of the proper kind (for there is the idle kind as well) of knowledge which is a moral virtue, not the having of knowledge?

Query: what is meant by virtue and political virtue by Socrates and the Sophist?

It's a nice question -- what does the Sophist mean by 'virtue'? Does he deny that there is such a thing as *moral* virtue [i.e. good and evil], that instead of morals there exist only customs, that for the wise man political virtue is the art of getting what you want in society, and that the Sophists are able to teach that virtue? That is one model of 'Sophism', of the views of the Sophists if indeed their way of thinking had an essence.

[**Related pages:** Can man become good through Socratic "care of the soul"? | If a donkey kicks me, I want to kick it back, although I say I know this is irrational. | Why self-control is needed to reform bad habits -- because, formed in the time of ignorance, they are akin to instincts (second nature). | Whether virtue can be taught or learned.]

Query: Socrates' view of virtue as knowledge.

Now, what is the distinction between *is* and *as* here? The query says "view", and that was what I wrote at one time (I don't know why), that *Virtue is knowledge* is only a way of looking at things, neither provable (verifiable) nor refutable (falsifiable), not a proposition that asserts a fact. Which is correct: Is 'Virtue is knowledge' a statement-of-fact or a point-of-view? Well, could the proposition 'The good [in the

case of living things, their perceived-good] is what all things aim for' be false?

Query: knowledge is virtue, and wrong doing is the result of ignorance.

We would not say that "ignorance *is* wrong-doing" unless it were culpable ignorance (e.g. not seeking to know things that are easily known (found out) and that one has a moral obligation to know), but that wrong-doing is the *result* of misperceiving the good. And so I think 'result of ignorance' is correct, as would be 'knowledge is the result of virtue' rather than 'knowledge is virtue'. Socrates in Xenophon explains what he means by 'Virtue is knowledge, and vice is ignorance'; but that statement's converse, namely 'Knowledge is virtue; ignorance is vice', is puzzling -- i.e. it demands that the reader invent a meaning for a combination of words that won't have one otherwise.

Query: why Socrates said that virtue and knowledge are the same thing.

The form of expression: '*the same thing*' -- does that mean that 'virtue' DEF.= 'knowledge'? No, we don't use those two words the same way (They are not synonymous).

In what sense are virtue and knowledge "the same thing" for Socrates? If you know what is virtuous, then you will do what is virtuous (because you will aim for the correct mark, not mistaking the bad for the good), and If you do what is virtuous, it is because you know what virtue is (If you did not know, then you would aim for the wrong mark, mistaking the bad for the good).

(That is a general statement, but according to Plato in the *Euthyphro* it is necessary to have knowledge of the particular

case if we are to do what is virtuous in the particular case. And we is often without that knowledge.)

'Virtue is knowledge' is a statement of fact -- but about reality or about the grammar of our language? It's not a definition of words -- but it can be defined in such a way as to make it tautological, as Xenophon does: If all men aim for what they "know" to be good, then if a man thinks he knows what he does not know, he will not aim for the good but for the bad. And thus someone who is mistaken about what is good cannot do what is good (Even if he tries, he will fail).

Virtue is knowledge. It only appears contrary-wise because: "I say I know one thing, but I really believe I know something else [something different] to be true instead."

Compare this to Plato and logical form: rewriting propositions to show their true grammar. Thus the logical form of 'I affirm  $p$ ' is 'I affirm  $q$  where  $q \neq p$ ', as is shown by this: that my acts are consistent with  $q$  but inconsistent with  $p$ .

[**Related pages:** Russell's Theory of Descriptions | Russell's "philosophical grammar" | Those concerned with form rather than with use (Wittgenstein's critical statement)]

Ambiguity of the English word 'is'. Saying that  $A$  is identical to  $B$  versus saying something about  $A$ . Saying that the word 'A' and 'B' are names of a single thing, as e.g. 'windscreen' and 'windshield' versus, for example, the proposition 'The sky is gray', where we are saying something *about* the sky: an attribute or quality of this afternoon's sky ('to predicate'). The distinction is between a definition of a word and a proposition about something (other than the rules of a language).

The proposition 'There are definitions of words in a dictionary' or 'A dictionary contains definitions of words' is not a statement of fact

(except about the English language), despite the word 'contains' suggesting that the proposition is stating a quality or attribute of dictionaries. The proposition is a grammatical remark.

"A chance quality versus a defined quality." But a logically necessary proposition does not state a matter of chance. Then are all tautologies explanations of meaning (i.e. definitions)? Look at [Plato's tautologies in ethics](#) for examples. (The dual role of Plato's tautologies.)

### **"I don't believe it, although I say I know it"**

The way I live, the things I do, shows that I don't believe  $x$ , although I say I know  $x$ . Aren't I being truthful (even with myself), then? Is that because I *choose* to speak of "weakness of the will", because that gives me an escape from thinking things through? Or is it instead because: **being the creature of a community of ideas, that is the way I have been brought up to think, to use that set of concepts which are our community's common currency**. Everyone in our community thinks that way -- except the one who thinks philosophically, and that means: the one who has stepped outside our community of ideas.

And so I have asked about belief, about what we mean when we say that someone 'believes' something if it makes no difference in the way he lives. If a man says he believes that  $x$  is right, e.g. that  $x$  is what he ought to do, but does not do  $x$ , then I am reminded of the words of the *Letter of James*: "Show me your faith without your works", your belief without your deeds. The question is: What does the man mean when he says he believes if he doesn't live in accord with what he says he believes? Is he deluding himself, lying to himself and believing his own lies?

I don't believe it (as my actions show), but I say I know it. I may give reasons for saying 'I know', but I myself don't find them -- as, again, my actions show -- compelling. But aren't those reasons compelling (if by

'compelling' we mean 'sufficient to prove the truth or falsity of the proposition'), then? Schweitzer speaks of "the stubborn man within". That man does not want to think things through; he does not want to examine the reasons [justification] for, reasons against x. Maybe he believes (*a priori* ("before the test of experience"), of course) that this would be fruitless (as Plato's [misologist](#) believes), or he may fear being convinced that he should not do what, in his condition of ignorance, he wants to do. That is, he has no faith in philosophy as the tool for discovering how we should live our life.

Query: I know what I think because of what I do.

There is a relation here to "I say ... but I think I know something else", but it is not always easy to deduce what I think (believe) from what I do -- i.e. to state as a positive proposition, not merely as a negation of what I say I know. Maybe it would be clearer to say: "By what I do, I know what I really think, in contrast to the thought I give mouth honor to" -- depending on the grammar we are applying to [i.e. how we are defining] 'what I really think'.

### **Ignorance and wrong-doing**

Query: according to Socrates, how can one be responsible for one's actions?

If vice is ignorance and no one is willingly ignorant, then it seems no one can be held responsible for their actions. And indeed we have the [stories about Socrates](#), "If a donkey kicks me, should I take it to court?" and "If I saw a man in worse health than myself, should I be offended?" which shows [he was merciful](#) to the ignorant.

### **A conundrum for me**

Query: meaning of to know does little or even nothing for virtue.  
Aristotle.

The reply is here: [Aristotle, the observer of life](#): an account of ethics indifferent to ethics. Contra Aristotle is Socrates: why knowledge is everything for virtue (when a rational act is made).

Query: why does one never willingly do wrong?

But if that is so, then why do I eat fish, as I do every day? For am I not willingly doing what is wrong -- 'willingly' meaning both (1) 'choosing to do wrong' and (2) 'knowing that I am choosing to do wrong'? Why do I eat fish when I would not myself kill a fish in order to eat it, because that is cruel and for now unnecessary? Or rather, *how is it that I do it?* Is it by refusing to think about it? Or is it by lying to myself, saying, "It's not so bad"? But if 'knowing that is a lie' = 'denying that is a lie', then! what is the word 'know' to mean?

Or am I one who refuses to amend his life but chooses to continue in wrong-doing (cf. Matthew 13.15)? "Neither did they repent of their murders," the chapter title was. Schweitzer's expression "the stubborn man within" is about the irrational soul, whereas my conundrum is about the rational soul.

And what of milk and butter and cheese -- I myself would never condemn a sheep or a cow to that way of life. Why, then? That is the puzzle if virtue is indeed knowledge.

Few men are good, and perhaps even fewer desire to be. Few men would choose to be morally virtuous, even if they could. Which seems a strange and disturbing paradox.

Is man a rational being capable of [discovering the good for himself](#) and living a life of moral excellence, or a [pleasure-driven animal](#) doomed to an ignorant egoism? [Man, know thyself](#), it was said at the temple of Apollo's oracle at Delphi.

## **Platonic conundrum**

For Plato, unlike for Socrates, the proposition 'Virtue is knowledge' suggests a metaphysical puzzle about the Forms. Plato asks whether virtue is a unity or a multiplicity of individual virtues (*Protagoras* 329c-d; here is one possibility). Is virtue a single Form (or is it a "blending of Forms")? If virtue is one rather than many, then virtue is knowledge of the good; but if virtue is a multiplicity, then is the good [the Good] itself one or many?

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### **In the Garden of Gethsemane ("strength of will")**

The disciples in Gethsemane, on one account, could not keep awake, because their bodies demanded sleep and would not let them stay awake, anymore than their bodies would let them fly. -- But that is very different -- i.e. that is not a "weakness of the will".

But, on Schweitzer's account (*Quest* (1910), xix, p. 392-393), the words "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" concern the expressed willingness ("the spirit is willing") of the three disciples to undergo with Jesus the trials of the last days spoken of in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6.13). Jesus is wiser, however, and himself prays not to face those trials because he believes the trials will be truly terrible and that many will fail to remain faithful (for "the flesh is weak"). The three disciples, however, do not understand just how near at hand the trials are for Jesus.

[The "nevertheless" form of expression. "Mercy is important, but ..." implying "but something else is more important". But in Christianity nothing is more important than mercy, because love is merciful. Tolstoy: "Whenever people believe there is something more important than loving one's neighbor as oneself [ibid. 22.39], that is when every cruelty becomes possible" (*Resurrection*).]

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## Albert Schweitzer's own Christianity

**Note:** this supplements the discussion [Ethical versus Explanatory Religion](#).

There are no heroes of action -- only heroes of renunciation and suffering. (Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, tr. A.B. Lemke (1990), Chapter 9, p. 88-89)

I do think that "gentlemen do not read other gentlemen's mail" and that Schweitzer's youthful correspondence really should not be nosed about in ... if it were foolishness rather than the statement of a considered world- and life-view. But it is not. Elsewhere I wrote [that both Wittgenstein and Schweitzer were Christians](#) -- *in some sense* of the word 'Christian' -- [But in which sense?](#) In Schweitzer's case in the sense of: "A Christian is one who has the spirit of Christ. This is the only theology" (*The Schweitzer Album* (1965), p. 37). And to have the spirit of Jesus far more than I have the spirit of the one I would most want to be like (sc. Socrates), because Jesus was Schweitzer's master in both word and deed (Indeed, in Schweitzer there was a complete unity of word and deed). Before they were married Schweitzer wrote to the girl he was to marry:

If I should come to the conclusion tomorrow that there is no god, and no immortality, and that morality is only an invention of society -- that would not touch me at all. (Letter, 6 September 1903) To know only Jesus of Nazareth; to continue his work as the only religion, not to bear what Christianity has absorbed over the years in vulgarity. Not to be afraid of Hell, not to strive for the joys of Heaven, not to live in false fear, not the fake devotion that has become an essential part of our religion -- and yet that one understands the one Great One, and that one knows that one is his disciple.... Yes, I serve him, because of him, only because of him -- because he is the only truth, the only happiness.

(1 May 1904) (*The Albert Schweitzer - Hélène Bresslau Letters, 1902-1912*, tr. Antje Lemke (2001), quoted in Brabazon's *Albert Schweitzer: a biography*, 2nd ed. (2000), Chapter 9, p. 150-151)

[Aside comparison. The author of a hymn attributed to Francis Xavier which is known by its Latin title *O Deus, ego amote* (the original Spanish language version in Brodrick, *Origin of the Jesuits* [1940] v, [1971] p. 180-181) says that he is not moved by the Heaven Christ has promised him nor by fear of Hell, but rather by seeing the Lord nailed to the cross, His body so wounded, the affronts to Him and His death. "I am moved by Your love."

[Mueveme en fin tu amor, en tal manera  
Que aunque no hubiera Cielo, yo te amara,  
Y no hubiera Infierno, te temiera.  
No me tienes que dar porque te quiera,  
Porque aunque lo que espero no esperara  
Lo mismo que te quiero, te quisiera.]

### **The Effect of Reading Nietzsche**

Those who were torn from their false certainty when his impassioned writings descended on the lowlands of the thought of the outgoing nineteenth century, as the south wind sweeps down from the high mountains in spring, can never forget the gratitude they owe to this upheaver of thought, with his preaching of veracity and personality. (*Civilization and Ethics*, 2nd ed. (London, 1929), tr. C.T. Campion, Chapter 15, p. 175)

What was this veracity? According to Nietzsche, although mankind *in words* upheld the Christian standard of self-renunciation, of self-sacrifice for the sake of other human beings, in practice mankind upheld the selfish assertion of one's own personality. Man lived in a condition of insincerity (the opposite of truthfulness).

## The church of Sybaris and the kingdom of God

The Catholic church next door is building -- no, not a shelter for the homeless, the "orphan men" (van Gogh) nobody wants -- but a "recreation center". When I remarked on this, I was told, "Do you want homeless people living near you? Homeless people have problems." And *this* was Nietzsche's criticism, I think, that one shouldn't deceive oneself, that one shouldn't call oneself [a] Christian if one rejects [doing] the very things Jesus called his followers to do. Jesus asks, "Why do you call me Master, but not do what I tell you?" As in the Russian saying, "man daily hears the words of Christ, but he prefers his own." There may or may not be harm in sport, but what has sport to do with the gospel of our Lord? For our Lord things are clear: you cannot belong both to this world and to the kingdom of God; you cannot have a foot in both worlds; you must choose. The church of the poor is the church of the kingdom of God. The sybarite church is the church of this world. Catholic Christianity is only too willing to allow you to have a foot in both worlds, and indeed to have more weight on the foot in this world, giving but mouth honor to the kingdom of God. (There is rhetoric and there is practice, and there is self-deception and there is hypocrisy.)

We mustn't lie to ourselves about [who] what we really are. Most of us give little more than mouth honor to our religion, regardless of which religion it is. Am I one who is sent out fishing but falls asleep in the boat, returning in the evening with nothing to offer the Lord? Am I a "a hearer of the word only" (Jas. 1.22) or one who loves both God and his neighbor as himself "not in word only but in deed" (1 John 3.18)? I mustn't deceive myself about this.

Brabazon writes, I don't know whether or not correctly, as if Schweitzer were as much a disciple of Nietzsche as of Jesus, and indeed he notes (*Albert Schweitzer*, Chapter 8, p. 129) that some critics accused

Schweitzer of presenting a "Nietzschean" Jesus in his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

... the lectures of Georg Simmel [Schweitzer attended these in Berlin in the summer of 1899 (*Out of My Life and Thought*, Chapter 2, p. 21)] seem to have relevance. Simmel was the philosopher who tried to separate the notion of self-transcendence in Nietzsche from its concomitant arrogance toward others. This would be entirely to Schweitzer's taste as he strove to rise above himself, aiming for greatness, the one who stands alone, yet still a man among men. (*Albert Schweitzer*, Chapter 9, p. 150)

On the one hand, Jesus teaches self-renunciation, but on the other hand, being truthful with oneself reveals the assertion of one's own personality. How did Schweitzer reconcile these two forces within himself? With his idea of Reverence for Life.

The ethic of reverence for life ... allows to rank as good only the maintenance and promotion of life. All destruction of and injury to life, under whatever circumstances they take place, it condemns as evil.

[The ethic of reverence for life] bids me think of others, and makes me ponder whether I can allow myself the inward right to pluck all the fruit that my hand can reach. Thus it may happen that in obedience to consideration for the existence of others I do what seems to ordinary opinion to be folly. Yes, it may even show itself to be folly by the fact that my renunciation has not been of the slightest benefit to him for whom it was made. And yet I was right. Reverence for life is the highest court of appeal. What it commands has its own significance, even if it seems foolish or useless. (*Civilization and Ethics*, Chapter 21, p. 255, 259)

This alludes to when Schweitzer gave up an academic fellowship earlier than required so that another scholar might receive it. Schweitzer thus

lost an opportunity to travel more and to study in England. But in the event the scholar for whom the sacrifice was made never claimed the fellowship. (*Out of My Life and Thought*, Chapter 3, p. 25) And so Schweitzer's renunciation of it had been "folly" [cf. 1 Cor. 1.23-24, I think].

Final remark. Would Schweitzer have said, as did [Dostoyevsky](#): "If anyone could prove to me that the truth stood on one side and Christ on the other, I would chose to stand with Christ and against the truth"? If by 'truth' Dostoyevsky meant what Schweitzer writes of above, "If I should come to the conclusion tomorrow ...", then it seems he would, and that both men found in Jesus, not necessarily metaphysical truth, but religious truth. I would say that Schweitzer's attachment to Jesus was of the same intensity as the attachment of Dostoyevsky to Christ. Both would have said, "In him I have found my master; and I want no other."

Goethe's description of a Christian in *Briefe des Pastors* (1772) as "one who calls Jesus his master" ... (Werner Picht, *Albert Schweitzer* [1959], tr. Fitzgerald (1964), p. 178)

### ***Bultmann and Bonhoeffer***

In 1941 Rudolf Bultmann presented his treatise "The New Testament and Mythology". Bonhoeffer welcomed it, although Bonhoeffer's view of the "demythologizing question" seems to have remained (mostly) contrary to Bultmann's.

I am delighted with Bultmann's new booklet. I am continually impressed by the intellectual honesty of his work.

I am one of those who welcomed the treatise, not because I agree with it ... To put it crudely: [Bultmann] has let the [liberal] cat out of the bag not only for himself, but for a great many people ... and for that I am

glad. He has ventured to say what many people inwardly repress (I include myself) without having overcome it. In that way he has rendered a service in intellectual integrity and honesty.... The questions now have to be answered plainly. I should like to talk to [Bultmann] about it, and I would willingly expose myself to the draught of fresh air that he brings. But then the window must be shut again ...  
(Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (English tr. 1970), p. 616)

Bultmann's ideas were a call to honesty with oneself (to not professing one thing, while thinking/living another), as Schweitzer said Nietzsche's ideas had been.

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### Awaiting an insight, a philosophical Gestalt shift

I was asked at table "what I was reading these days" and answered "old philosophy books, the same things over and over again, but I do not understand them". "But you understand a little more each time you read them?" No, I don't, although my understanding may shift, there is no criterion for saying which understanding the correct understanding would be (cf. the correct aspect of a Gestalt to grasp).

I think this may be a sound analogy (which doesn't make it one). One may look again and again at a figure, seeking to see a new aspect -- as one does when we look at the figures that exemplify the many kinds of Gestalt shift. But there is no necessity about the figure shifting for you to another aspect: you may never be able to see the pig's head no matter how long or often you scan the image with your eyes. And so it is in philosophy. It may seem that an insight may be needed in order to understand (cf. OC, bracketed remark between §§ 470 and 471), but it does not follow that an insight will come to you. You ask yourself again and again: Am I looking at this the right way? if there is a right way.

The universal Gestalt shift: the new way of looking at language. I am not good at inventing metaphors; nonetheless here is another. Goethe has in *Faust*: "You must either be the hammer or the anvil." Now, the old way of looking at language is that language is the hammer and you are the helpless victim of language, whereas the new way of looking at language is that language is the anvil and you are the hammer -- i.e. in the new view, language changes from having control over you to your having control over it: it becomes a tool in your hands. One has definite answers to questions such as "What is the meaning of a word?" and "What is the meaning of 'meaning'?", methods for arriving at clarity.

The change is as decisive e.g. as that from the alchemical to the chemical way of thinking. -- The new way of thinking is what is so hard to establish [It can only come from thinking about problems in a new way].

[But once] it is established the old problems disappear; indeed it becomes hard to recapture them. For they go with [or, are embedded] in the way we express ourselves ... (CV p. 48 [MS 131 48: 15.8.1946 §§ 1-2])

Do the old problems disappear because we use a new form of expression? I wonder if Wittgenstein's account is true; because I still use the expression 'in the mind' and others like it, although I no longer construe the grammar of 'mind' as if that word were the name of an object. I certainly, after Wittgenstein, think about the logic of our language in a new way, but I still use the accustomed forms of expression of our language. Maybe an example of what Wittgenstein had in mind is the change from "theory of abstraction" to similarities in plain view ("family resemblances"), because we no longer try to explain language meaning with theories or use expressions such as 'abstract object'.

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## Chapter: 5

### You cannot create until your heart longs for singing

Creative writing is not any variety of writing; it is the core and essence or the very heart of ultimate writing itself. Should one learn this, or is it acquired, or gifted? I don't know. Since I have been doing this for the last forty years, it has become an essential part of my existence. I don't think I can survive without writing or fancying I am writing or pretending that I am a writer or contemplating writing, that is, creating. By writer I mean a creative writer, so by writing I mean creative writing entirely. However, I do not remember learning any lesson on this. I just recall how I started writing the first (creative) sentences, putting simple thoughts that came out of the blue onto a piece of paper and how I failed hopelessly time and again, and how I kept struggling endlessly despite everything. I could not share this with anyone but my heart.

I imagine today it was a useless pursuit because my parents or my society didn't want me to practice composing poems, nor did the teachers expect such a thing from me, or any student like me for that matter. The society was fully unaware of such worthless hobbies. It was taken as a personal pastime. It has not changed much yet. Then it was natural for me to fail (in creative writing) because all books I read gave me lessons on how to spell words and how to pronounce, and gradually how to use them into appropriate sentences utmost. None mentioned, even in passing, about creative writing. One had and still has to nurture this art surreptitiously and privately. So the experience of failure was confined to my heart.

The knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is in no way related to creative writing. I also learned reading and writing, but the reading was just vocalization of black symbols and writing just copying of them onto my paper. This was merely an emotionless work that involved repeating a particular format or structure. My knowledge of sentence structure

never ensured my writing skills, because the knowledge of vocabulary and syntax does not involve any faculty of imagination which is the foundation of creative writing. A creation 'happens' on its own as if it were an hour of enlightenment, or illumination, therefore, even a great linguist or a greater critic dies without producing a single piece of creative work. It is not related to one's degrees or diplomas or academic accomplishments. It is solely associated with art, a discipline of humanities.

Whenever I try to define creative writing, some vague images echo in my mind and I somehow try to give them a discernible shape. I started doing this five decades ago, and I am still pursuing the same practice without knowing any better. My struggle is not over yet. The more I do, the more I feel far from perfection every day.

For me creative writing is just an art of expression, all natural, spontaneous and an inherently designed gift for human beings though this is not uniformly distributed among each and every mind or better say heart. All schools and colleges teach Mathematics and Sciences, Languages and Literatures but there is no such a course as the art of writing or say creating something with words and images, imagination and experiences. There are some but they teach answers to: *What are the features of creative writing? What are some of the best examples? What makes a writing read smooth, well worded, pleasant and elegant? What makes it enduring, what is new or experimentation? Among Somerset Maugham or Virginia Woolf or Khalid Hussini or ShankerLamichhane or ArvindaAdiga or Paulo Coelho, who would you like to chose? Give reasons why...* But this does not guarantee one that such a worldly knowledge will make him or her a creative writer. Most of those who teach this art can never put this into practice. What a great paradox! There is not any *pathshaalaa* to learn and there is no way of teaching too. It a manifestation of some innate art, I guess; it can be learned and acquired both.



One may ask me *How did you choose to be a writer then ? And how did you become one ?* No, it was not my choice, it was time's. It is the inheritance of the society in which I grew up and it is my family's legacy, especially my father's that I tried continue. All by chance by coincidence never by choice or design. My father used to sing rhythmic stanzas every morning and evening as prayer or hobby. I later on discovered there were some classic works, especially of poetry, in Sanskrit and Nepali available in our home.

Sometimes he would sing for us children in sweet musical voice:

*jayatitedikamjanmanabraja  
srayataindiraasaswadattahi*

We did not understand its meaning but we knew father was singing some great stanza in praise of young Lord Krishna from the BhagawatGeeta. With a sense of veneration, we listened to him; rapt in divine bliss, he would close his eyes and sometimes stand up and dance on the floor. His was different world. Sometimes he would sing:

*Nepalilebujhaunkrishnägeetakaarthakogati  
Geetanubadageetakogaanaagardaiyathaamati*

This came from the KomalGeeta, a Nepali version of the Geeta rendered by a great scholar KomalnathAdhikary. The stanza says: *O Nepalis, let's understand, the themeaning of the Geeta is Lord Krishna and let us sing the song of the Geeta in translation.*

Sometimes he would sing in a different language, I don't know which, may be Braj, he would sing;

*Jo sahidukhaparachhidradurawa  
Bandaneeya jai jagadiahapawa*

I could make out its sense to some extent later: *He who bears his troubles and grief and sings the songs of Lord of the Universe, will get his troubles removed with his grace.*

I can remember some hundred or more of such songs and prayers, all rhythmic, all metrical; whenever he sang, all musical. Even some Vedic richas and hymns I can still recall and recite though without making any sense.

Every morning and evening he would repeat one song or the other and gradually over a period of time, they became mine too, I inherited this property involuntarily, I internalised them naturally without realizing their value and importance. Just rhythm and music must have penetrated deep down my psyche. Not only this, we could hear people singing songs in the fields and pastures, in the *haatbazaars*, festive occasions, in the wild, at home during the day or at night. The high hills of the east reverberated throughout the year. Such a folk power must have penetrated deep down my psyche.

I try to recapitulate today-- we orientals have great appreciation for songs better say musicality, it was deep rooted since our ancestors preserved this quality through the Saama Veda which is said to have created some four thousand years ago. Saama Veda stands for 'melody and knowledge'. Only the great sages sang since time immemorial and this tradition got transformed into folk songs over a period of time.

Saama Veda survives in the form of mantra, hymn, prayer and last of all folk songs in its crudest form. This is my interpretation of why we are attracted towards musicality of language. And one day when I read Andrew Clemes's appraisal of Jane Austen's language, I thought my belief was underpinned strongly: *And I love Jane Austen's use of language too--the way she takes her time to develop a phrase and gives it room to grow, so that these clever, complex statements form slowly and then bloom in my mind. Beethoven does the same thing with his cadence and phrasing and structure. It's a fact: Jane Austen is musical. And so's Yeats. And Wordsworth. All the great writers are musical.*

Gradually I started to copy some of vague lines that my heart dictated trying to imitate my father's metrical patterns into poems. But those were ridiculous, and far from being presentable. I presented some at school level competitions yet I turned hopeless many times. But I never yielded. I continued reading some books and composing poems regularly without success until I was 21. By then I had composed quite a good number of poems, some in metrical verses others in free trying to free myself from the given models yet without much success. I can compose in metrical poems perfectly but a poem is more than one's feat performed through metre. It is the most difficult area.

Today I feel that every prospective writer in the beginning tries to grasp poetry, and every great author ends with poetry, one of the most difficult genres. In the beginning he does by imitating or copying or plagiarizing or internalizing some models. Poetry looks apparently easier and he ventures in this way. But it takes long to understand why poetry is so deceptive an art. Consequently it may read like a twisted echo, a piece of charade. You can neither struggle further nor give it up for ever. There is no school to teach how you compose a poem. One can teach feet and meters or free forms, comment and critique on a product of poem but none can teach him or her how it is manifested exactly. It is kind of self realization and never to be attained fully.

I wrote poems sparingly, which may amount to a hundred. I composed more of love poems during my youthful days, wrote some

satirical ones later, practiced soe more serious and in sublime tone after that but in total hardly a dozen of them are published. When I compare with great poems, mine read quite trivial and I feel ashamed of the creation every time. This has given me a feeling that among creative writers poets must be in the highest hierarchy because a large amount of their efforts remains submerged like an iceberg by the time they become worth reading in the society. A poet like me disappears from the scene leaving heavy load of waste material behind. You don't know where your writer fits in appropriately.

Since then I gave up poetry and switched to another genre -- novel. I wrote **Muglan** my first novel in 1974 just in seven days, got it published, editions followed and other creations followed. But I cannot say how I wrote and what made me accomplish a work that is being highly acclaimed till today. Most of my writing career is trajectory of fiction, essay and criticism with occasional toppings of poetry. Thus in creative writings there are several entries and exists, one chooses one or the other. These are poetry, essay, fiction, drama and criticism. My experience says, if poetry fails, essay, if essay fails fiction, if both fail drama and if everything fails criticism. Criticism is easier done than said. For many criticism is the first priority because they don't know anything, for some it is the last resort because they know other things. A critic may be a good preacher not an author or writer for me.

Every creative writer is a self-made person, a self-taught disciple, a self-crafted artist. I can draw from my experience that creative writing is acquired by one's own efforts increasingly over a period of time with the gradual accumulation of experiences and addition of small knowledge particles provided he or she never gives up, or never does expect for any material gain (at least in our case) and is ever ready to continue their efforts for deciphering the mystery of the world, mystery of the larger Creation. Writing is an effort to decipher Creation; it is an effort to find out man's position in this universe.

What makes one so? It is not made up of a single ingredient; it is rather a fusion or a blend of many. No book tells you which of the

ingredients to select, for which purpose, how to measure and how to apply them proportionately so as to give it a perfect taste as if it were the proportionate use of spices in Asian cuisine specially curry. It depends on individual skill, experience, art of doing this, and above all, perseverance and patience that leads you to achievement.

Creative writing is like this. It is all a question of personal choice. This makes hundreds and thousands of poems different from each other, thousands of fictions different from each other though everybody chooses the same theme -- of love, or separation, of war, revolt, or jealousy, frustration, and death or one of infinite themes available. Creative power is individual.

What is the use of such a creation? They say a creative art recreates life; it reproduces whatever man could achieve and whatever lies unattended in his mind. So they say a creative work is the replica of broken dreams and unfulfilled desires. Truly, the past focused on recreating personal dreams and desires but today with a great shift in time society is at the centre, ethnicity, community, racial identities came to the fore and so they are recreating racial memories and ethnic identities. Poetry has truly become a weapon or voice of the voiceless. See how international poetry day awakens people from their deep slumber. An individual and in the contemporary society where every body is claiming his or her identity, they need greater power. They wield the power of poetry. A great poem fights for freedom, identity, and existence. It ensures survival.

They ask : *Which language for Creation?* This is mere politics. A literary creation has no language other than that of the heart. It writes in the universal language of humanity. In Samuel Johnson's terms, 'this dress of thought' reveals and conceals both. I must quote William Hazlitt the great English essayist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: *Poetry is the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself. He who has a contempt for poetry, cannot have much respect for himself, or for anything else.*

Some ask: *In which language should I create? I answer words and images or stone, wood and clay, or your vocal cords or colours or your dancing feet. All your actions can create like a prayer to Lord Shiva*

*Yatyat karma karomitattadakhilam  
Shambhotabaradhanam*

Whatever action do I perform walking or sleeping, eating or singing or mere talking) this is your prayer only my Lord.

This may sound too vague and limitless scope of language of creation. This encompasses all art forms. Let us limit ourselves to words.

In Nepal people prefer mostly Nepali as the language of literary creation. Apart from this there are considerable number of creations available in different Nepalese languages. Some choose English too. English as a medium of creative works is a recent practice. And recently it is growing wonderfully.