

Philosophical Contemplations

2023 Revised Edition

by

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Preface

I was around age 25 when I finished writing *Philosophical Contemplations* back in 1996. There was a long gap before the urge came to write the follow-up, which was *The Edge of Enlightenment* in 2022. It seemed fitting afterwards to go over this 'old' book and revise it. So that's what you have here, the original book with a few minor changes completed in 2023.

I've kept the use of Unity in place within the book as it originally was, although the term Singularity is a more accurate term for what is meant. Unity can imply a joining together as one, whereas Singularity is unambiguously singular. The Unity here I mean is really a singularity, the unchanging permanent one without separation. Words are never going to be accurate enough, but it's okay.

It's worth pointing out that when the book talks about 'the philosopher,' it means you, if you are seeking to know the answers of life and the universe.

Here and there I've made some minor changes, usually around terms such as 'Godhead' and 'individual identity', and more space has been added. We mustn't overlook the importance of space.

On reading this book again after many years, I notice the subtle humour throughout. Although the book talks of some important philosophical and spiritual insights, the reader will find there's a quirky poetic writing style which doesn't really take itself too seriously. The subject matter is of vital importance to understanding humanity and the universe, but we should still have some fun whilst we consider this stuff.

The introduction from 1998 is kept here, as it shows some insight into the origins of the book.

Dave Hall 2023

Introduction

Philosophical Contemplations is a book I wrote in 1995/6. It is a collection of ninety contemplations organised into four chapters: The Universe, Patterns, On the Soul, and The Philosopher.

The work came about quite naturally. Whilst writing poetry I had jotted down a few thoughts and theories on philosophical issues, which were a lot more serious and direct than my poems. These were concerned with issues that came to mind during my everyday experiences and meditations.

As time went on I sensed an eventual purpose in what I had been writing and soon developed ideas for further contemplations, which I began setting time aside to consider. Before I knew it I had a large collection of contemplations waiting to be organised and tidied up.

What you'll find in these pages is the end result of my tidying up of what is in some ways a personal exposition of my own inner beliefs influenced by the world around and within me.

Since originally writing these contemplations my time has been taken up with other concerns and interests, but my belief in what I have written has never swayed. In these days when I have little time to sit and contemplate as I used to, these contemplations serve to remind me that the world is still a world of mystery and there is a path and direction in all that we do.

I hope that you enjoy the book and that each contemplation will light the spark of inquisitiveness in you to seek the answers that are still to be found. Following that spark leads to the engulfing light of Truth.

Dave Hall 1998

The Universe

The Law of Opposites

The Law of Opposites implies that every out must have an in, every in an out, every left must have a right, every right a left. In the balance, every low swing must have a high swing, and vice versa. Every force must have an equal but opposite.

What goes out must come back in. What rises must fall; what falls must rise. What has a beginning must have an end. This is the Great Law of the manifest universe. A law that shows itself in all the flowerings and wiltings of the world.

No word can be spoken to deny the Law of Opposites without it being confirmed; the Law allows opposition, Lawlessness, although this is superficial. It is inherent in communication, in speech and hearing. This page of text shows it, no matter what is written.

It's a law of reflections: what is right, what is not right; what is substantial, what is not substantial; what is significant, what is not significant. It's a way to show the Invisible, but it only really shows us a reflection.

So the Law of Opposites is itself only a reflection. By its own direction it contradicts and negates itself, showing us a Unity we cannot see.

Stillness and Change

Heraclitus wrote, 'You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing on', and yet 'it is the same thing in us that is quick and dead, awake and asleep, young and old.'

There can be no movement without stillness. For if a thing is to change, transform, it must remain inwardly the same. The inner essence of the flitting butterfly is that of its former caterpillar-self.

And Heraclitus wrote of those things quick and dead, awake and asleep, young and old, 'The former are shifted and become the latter, and the latter in turn are shifted and become the former.'

Within the world of change there is an eternal stillness.

The World of Motion and the World of Stillness

The world we see is the World of Motion; we cannot see the World of Stillness. The World of Stillness is the World of One; the World of Motion is the World of Opposites. Though the World of Motion may change its appearance, it always has a constant. Yet any stillness perceived in the World of Motion, like the firmness of the earth, is an illusion. The World of Motion is always moving on.

Infinity

Infinity cannot be defined. It's there wherever we look. Attempting to describe it is like trying to describe silence with spoken words, or to convey stillness in dance.

Infinity cannot be understood. The humourless man who seeks to learn laughter from reasoning and intellectual books fails ever. Yet laughter comes naturally to the man whose head is not filled with serious thoughts.

Separateness and Connectedness

If there existed two points of light, A and B, in a void, then A might be said to be separate from B, implying a plurality. But if A and B are separate, separated by the void, then it is this same void which connects them. And if A, the void and B are connected, there is no true division between them: they are a unity.

So, to say that A, the void and B are separate is untrue. And to say that A, the void and B are connected is equally untrue. Stating that things are separate implies they are connected, and saying that things are connected assumes they are separate. Neither can be correct.

The error lies in the vague assumption of 'things' as distinct items. Though useful as an aid to understanding, the idea of discontinuous things is ultimately flawed. But recognition of this failure points us in the right direction.

Silence

Silence is best described by not describing it. Spoken words may pass on an understanding of it, yet in so doing they conceal it. One may whisper, but that will not suffice. Best to let silence speak for itself and experience the real thing!

The Tao-te-Ching states, 'Stillness is that which cannot be heard by listening to it'. But what we hear when we sit quiet is not true silence; there is always some hum around us, the beating of the heart or the passing of breath to and from the lungs. True silence can never be heard. Yet all the while the storm spins, calm is at its heart.

Beginnings and Ends

Measurements are the means by which we gauge portions of infinity.

They are useful tools, but we create them in our imagination. They are dependent on our understanding.

When we say the earth takes one year to revolve around the sun, we mean it takes one year to return to a starting point we impose upon its endless ellipse. We say that a year begins with January and ends on December, but that's just something we've made up.

All beginnings and ends, like those of colours in the spectrum, are necessarily vague. Truly, the beginning comes from the Infinite, the middle spans the Infinite, and the end fades back into the Infinite.

Did Everything Come from Nothing?

Did everything (that is, the universe) come from nothing? The question is perhaps more appropriately put, 'Was all that has become once nothing?' It depends what's meant by 'nothing'.

The universe once was locked up like an acorn in the dark earth. Now it stands like the great oak, its many branches reaching out from its aged centre. And sometime in its distant future it will fall back like the old oak to its grave. But the life force will never end.

So did everything come from nothing? No. Everything has always been. But sometimes it looks like the giant oak and sometimes it's closed up like the acorn.

The Acorn and the Oak

Which came first, the acorn or the oak? The oak is in the acorn; the acorn is in the oak. From the seed of nothing come the branches of everything, and in the branches of everything is the seed of nothing. What was before will come after.

Before the Beginning

Assuming that the universe burst forth in a cosmic explosion - as with the modern-day big bang theory - one might be tempted to ask what was before this, what was before the beginning. But of course, since the beginning of space-time is commensurate with the big bang, there was never a time before it.

Moreover, it remains rather questionable whether the universe ever did in fact begin. It seems that the universe has always been, that all substance in the universe now was ever in the universe. The universe appears different, more fragmented, now than before the big bang, but the substance is essentially the same. The universe, whether as we perceive it now or as an imperceptible unity, is still the universe.

Time began the big bang and the big bang began time; but where time is change, time is dependent on a constant (one thing cannot become another, since it remains essentially the same). The universe in its entirety is timeless, without beginning, without end. Before and after are dancing birds.

The World of Opposites

The World of Opposites is the world of many, or the world of many and one. It is the world of appearances; the world we live and die in. It is the world of stillness and change, where change is the apparent reality and stillness is an illusion. The World of Opposites.

Separateness is its key, unlocking the door that opens the rift between high and low, near and far, many and one. Through its far-reaching ramifications this world has become the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil where life and death are the obligatory two sides of the coin. Each is dependent on the other.

Nothing can be evident without opposition. No quality, such as stillness, goodness or oneness, can be discerned without its opposite quality to distinguish it. So the World of Opposites makes perceptible what is otherwise unknowable. But it must be remembered that the World of Opposites is, along with separateness, the flip side of the coin of truth. Truth is the unseen, underlying Unity.

The World of One

The World of One is Parmenides' Sphere of Being. Nothing lies outside the Sphere of Being; what is not does not exist. Nothing is 'within' the Sphere of Being, since it can have no inside without an outside. What is, is.

The metaphoric shape of the Sphere of Being is necessarily endless and self-consistent. Being never arose from non-being, but has always been, is, and always will be. The

World of One is truly changeless. There is never more and never less than what there is now.

God

God is in all things; all things are in God. God is the beginning of love and the end of strife. Whereas we live in a world of sometimes strife and sometimes love, God is wholly Love without ambivalence.

God is the Immanent Transcendent, the high standard against which all qualities are weighed.

God is dark and light, infinitely mysterious and simply beautiful.

God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the complete circle, beginningless and endless. The eternal centre of stillness.

The Purpose of the Universe

The universe has no purpose, it is enough just to be. Any purpose is secondary to being. The universe is complete in itself, and only in being is there contentment.

Yet why all this, a world of diversity? And where is it going? What is the aim of the unfolding universe?

The universe is the eye of God - dilating and contracting - seen in the mirror of reflection. God is the sublime contemplative, whose mind reaches out through his own creation, being at the same time both the Causeless Creator and the created.

The universe seeks to know itself. It gazes out into the mirror of its own mind and looks back at itself. It wanders outwards as in a dream, striving as an acorn strives to become an oak, seeking the end of its development, the fulfilment of its destiny.

The aim of the unfolding universe, then, is to express, to explore and to understand. And having understood, it returns to itself, turns inward its gaze, and settles in the stillness of being.

Unity

The undifferentiated Unity that was in the beginning is the measure of all things. All negative contraries have fallen from it, all lows from its High, all illusions from its Reality, all opposites from its Singularity.

Unity is the True Good; goodness tends towards it, badness would break it and wrench a rift in it. But Unity cannot be broken. Only by guile may it seem to fall. Thus only as illusion may illusions be extant; they do not exist. Reality is what is; what is not does not exist. Wrong is wrong, right is right.

True Unity cannot be seen, for who can look at it from outside? Neither can Unity be felt, it is always present. Yet when the errant sense of separation subsides in a moment of peace, Unity is realised.

Unity is the unseen Reality, of which the manifest world of opposites is a reflection. But separateness does not exist. Whatever appears to be, Unity is always. No matter how many there seem, there is only ever One.

The Meaning of Life

What is the meaning of life? Why is the world as it is? Where has it come from and where is it going? What is its purpose?

Well, if I were a child I might say that the world is a yo-yo. It falls out of its compact state of equilibrium, unravels, then rolls itself back up.

If I were in the outback I might say that the world is a boomerang, thrown out far, making many revolutions, coursing a wide circle and coming back.

But seeing as I am no longer a child and am far from the outback, it being on the opposite side of the planet to me, I must say that the world is neither a yo-yo nor a boomerang, although these are astute metaphors, but a place of falling and rising and remaining the same, of coming and going and not moving at all. Its purpose, I deduce, is to show with the aid of reflection what is not otherwise perceptible. And just as the seeker seeks the meaning of life, so is the world searching for its own answer, which is, of course, always evident and yet ever elusive, as plain as the nose on my face.

Instantaneous Creation

In Instantaneous Creation both Creator and Creation arise simultaneously. It is separation, a division falling from an unmanifest Unity, whereby a distinction between centre and surroundings, seer and seen, appears; such that we may now say that there can be no centre without surroundings, no seer without the seen, and vice versa.

But no Creator without Creation? Certainly before Creation (or Separation) there was no distinguishable Creator since such a being would be all and therefore unlimited, undefined. Then from the moment Creation arises, the Creator becomes distinct. Hence there can be no Creator without Creation.

It is the Creation which defines the Creator; the Creator which defines the Creation. But clearly this defined Creator is not quite the same one who was before and who will remain after. No, just as when the swirling surroundings of a duality are returned to the centre neither centre nor surroundings exist and yet all is centred, so in the end will the Creation return to the Creator, where neither will then exist and yet (from our present point of view) all will be the undefined Creator.

Is the undefined Creator, then, made less by His Creation? Is His wholeness broken throughout the existence of Creation and only regained when Creation comes to an end? Of course not. For in reality neither Creator nor Creation exist. Separation never did and never will take place.

Creation/Destruction

There can be no creation without destruction. Creation and destruction arise simultaneously. For the very first creative act was also destructive, in that it broke the peace and silence and disturbed the calm eternal - timeless - waters, sending out ripples and waves of vacillation across the once tranquil ocean of being.

Henceforth the world has been rocked between opposing forces, perpetuating the duality of creation and destruction - both being aspects of the same process. The world is continually and continuously being created and destroyed, such that creation and destruction are always simultaneously now.

Although in the drawn-out world creation and destruction can appear as two distinct slow, gradual processes, as in the blossoming and wilting of a rose, each moment in either is an instant of both. That is, every moment during the gradual creation or destruction of a thing is an instant of creation/destruction whereby what was is replaced by what has become, and this creation/destruction we call change.

Furthermore, these slow, long-term changes, these steadily progressing creations, sustentations and destructions we see all about us in this world of evolving forms - as in the rising and falling of an empire or in the life of a sparrow or a burning star - are drawn-out expressions manifesting further the inscrutably timeless state or instant of creation/destruction.

Gain and Loss

In the closed system, every loss gives an equal but opposite gain (which is which being subjective). Therefore, as the term 'closed system' implies, there is truly neither loss

nor gain. So if we consider the whole universe as a closed system, nothing is ever gained and nothing is ever lost.

Also, of what we might call on the one hand the 'gain' and on the other the 'loss', neither arises first; both must exist simultaneously. And both must cease to exist simultaneously. We can't have one without the other.

But of course, as I have said, neither of them truly exists. They are concepts accorded by a limited perspective. And yet things do seem to come and go. Their coming and going is a condition of manifestation, a balance of separated forces continually in flux within the span of time.

A balanced perspective sees that both the negative and the positive are manifest aspects of an unmanifest whole which stands ever unbroken outside and astride time. It makes no difference to this whole if it appears divided, it has nothing to lose, nothing to gain.

The Will

There is no will but the Will of God, the Will of the Good. Yet in the world of opposites another will is present: the will against the Good, the will in contravention; though even this aberrant will owes its power to and is therefore subservient to the one Will, which allows this seeming contrariety to persist. Thus there is no will but the Will of God, and none can go against it but that they present it.

The Will is a fiery, directing force descended from the primal creative act, and even from the first must have encountered some resistance. Indeed, resistance brings limitation, elsewise Fire is interminable and thus no manifestation is possible. The Will, in exerting itself, for the purpose of Creation, cedes omnipotence and gives existence to that which is not the Will. God knowingly takes on the burden of limitation, sacrifices part of Himself, for the blossoming of the world.

However, the Will is the Way of Truth and eventually all contrary wills will find no real appeasement in the delusive contravention of the True Will within them, and will re-merge with the Will of the Good. Furthermore, although God sacrifices part of Himself and bears the burden of limitation, He nonetheless remains whole and untainted. In this is the mystery of the soul.

Love and Strife

Love is the force which draws all things together; strife is that which wrenches them apart. Never will strife be overcome but that it be consumed in love. And never shall love disappear except strife ceases to exist. For the end of strife is love, and the end of love is the end of strife. When all things are drawn together and made one, no longer are they held apart.

Whether the relationship between two or more separates consists predominantly of love or strife (for both are present in every relationship) depends on closeness. The close relationship has a strong bond of love, while the more disparate is made mostly of strife and incompatibility, a repulsion the extreme of which is a harsh dissociation and violent opposition.

The extreme of the attractive pull of love, however, results in the dissolving of boundaries and the consummation of separates into a unity. Yet this does not happen on a physical level. For instance, the sexual attraction between a man and a woman, which is a form of love, cannot truly dissolve their physical constitution when consummating their love and make the two parties one. They remain separate, due to the resistant nature of matter itself, whose boundaries are fixed with the stubbornness of strife.

True consummation of love and the end of strife must exist beyond this world of frequencies and opposites, and although in such a realm no love nor strife is to be found, one can only imagine it as being complete timeless Love. A Love with no lover, no loving and no loved. Only Love. The Absolute.

The Infinite

Nothing is inside or outside the Infinite. In the Infinite there are no things; there is only the Infinite. In this sense the Infinite is one, indivisible.

No division exists in the Infinite, though through the mystery of its limitlessness it allows illusory limits to be perceived. No motion exists in the Infinite, no coming or going, though through the mystery of its boundlessness it allows illusory motion to become apparent.

The Infinite defies any definition of itself. For although it is limitless, it is not bound by such a delimitation. And although for it little is impossible, yet it cannot be anything other than what it is.

Chaos

There can be no chaos without order. A chaotic scene, like a disorderly jumble sale of things, must consist of things orderly in themselves (in this case the pullovers, trousers, dresses and the like). Chaos is order in disguise, and ergo does not exist.

This applies also to the notion of randomness. Order is in all things; in the orderly universe chance and chaos can only be as superficial illusions, appearances feigning the opposite of that of which in reality they are made.

Before the beginning there was absolute order, and from this the illusory reflection chaos seems to have come, whirling the world with chance and randomness. But Order is its source, sustainer and nemesis. Without the solidity of Order, chance and chaos have no revolving wheel to play upon.

But what of Order without chaos - can it exist? Order without chaos is the Absolute, and only the Absolute exists.

The Expanding Universe

Creation is separation. Manifestation requires it. From the first there must have been substance and no-substance, the significant and the insignificant. So when we conclude that the universe is expanding we mean the substance.

The substance itself may be thought of as separate, or porous, having particles and no-particles. When it expands the particles are spread further apart, the spaces between them - the no-particles - becoming wider. Furthermore, each particle expands, the lesser particles of which each one is made becoming more diffuse. And so on.

It seems, then, that the expanding universe is infinitely divisible and this division is really what expansion is. But actually division is a non-reality, an impossibility. It is an illusion commensurate with the Law of Opposites, which separates and unites all things. And thus expansion, obeying Law, will turn eventually to contraction as the divided world of appearances returns to its natural state of unity and rest, towards which it is inevitably drawn, like a boomerang to its thrower.

Nothing expands but that it contracts, one could say, because expansion is separation and separation is an imbalance which needs to be redressed. And though we think of the universe as expanding, as a totality it is not. Unity is the absolute reality, from which all substance seems to have come and to which all substance will seem to return, but in which all substance ever abides.

The Four Elements

The four elements - Fire, Air, Water and Earth - are the basic descriptive characters of substances. However, they are not set apart definitively. Each flows into the next.

Fire is the seed of the other three elements, which form as gradual condensations. It is the creative and directive force, sending itself outwards. Being closest to the beginnings of motion, it is the swiftest of the four.

Next comes Air, symbolising imperceptibility and lightness of weight. Air has some small resistance.

Water follows, heavier than Air and, though still transparent at the most refined end, more obvious to the visual senses. It has greater resistance than Air and holds a manifest reflection - the mystery of the elements' formation.

At the bottom of the list is Earth. Earth lands with a thud at the limit of condensation. Hard, squeezed dry and slow moving, it represents the dark end of the spectrum. Set

opposite Fire, it has receptive qualities and can be a container of the lighter elements. It may absorb or reflect.

This all said, truly the four elements are continuous gradations of one pervasive element, as are steam, water and ice the same substance at different levels of vibration. Fire, Air, Water and Earth, then, are the varied and opposing qualities of the one unending substance.

The Quintessence

Just as light can be understood either in terms of particles or waves and is truly neither, so may the Quintessence be understood through the four elements whilst truly being beyond them. The Quintessence is the heart of the elemental cross, the still centre of the revolving sunwheel.

Fire is like it, for it blends all elements into a unity; it consumes and creates. Air is like it, for it cannot itself be seen, though present all about. Water has penetrable depth like the Quintessence, which is endless. And Earth is like it, being composed and unchanging.

The manifest elements are the Quintessence in a state of separation. But the Quintessence is never broken, since it is the separating elements as well as the separated. It is the beginning, the middle and the end, remaining a unity always.

The Ultimate Answer

Whenever man looks through a lens, whether microscopic or telescopic, he gazes into eternity. He will never find a definitive beginning or end. As long as he looks and strives there will always be more to look for and more to strive for.

Every sincere question seeks an answer. And when a fitting answer is found and the two are brought together, a new question is conceived.

When will man realise that nothing in this world has a beginning or an end, and that there is no irreducible particle? Will man be always splitting the atom, always searching for the ultimate answer?

Yet whenever man looks through a lens the ultimate answer is there - staring him in the face. Why does he overlook simplicity and seek complex answers that never assuage his striving need, only palliate it?

Patterns

Patterns

Whirls and spirals are patterns of nature. They are often encountered in seemingly dissociated instances: in a thumbprint maybe, or a chameleon's curled-up tail. Patterns conform to and display the laws of nature, and as the laws of nature operate throughout, there is a high probability of similar patterns cropping up all over the universe.

There is coherency and there are laws in the universe underlying the formation of all bodies such that similar patterns and characteristics may - will - arise in different places and at different times regardless of distance. Yet the universe is a world of variety. No two bodies can be identical. So although formations may follow a strict pattern, each has its own variations, each is unique.

Patterns evolve; evolution being a pattern itself. But there is no random selection as such. Even in discordant patterns nature's laws are evident, not least because they are formed of smaller, orderly patterns. Every body, be it a cloud of smoke, a building of man's own invention, or whatever, must be formed according to the laws of nature. Thus patterns do not arise randomly - unless randomness be a condition of nature's laws.

The philosopher should observe these patterns, looking to see what lies behind them. For instance, he should be able to see in the daffodil its geometric pattern, and in that pattern, which is more orderly than the physical flower, the universal laws of formation.

The pattern is the visible expression of the invisible laws which underlie it. Furthermore, there is a Great Law which has given rise to these lesser laws and to which all patterns may be ultimately traced. Arrival at this greatest of laws, by which all others are understood, is the contemplative philosopher's most noble and worthy aim, whichever pattern he studies.

Harmony

Harmony is the peaceful and pleasing relation that may exist between two or more things - persons, sounds, colours and so on. It may appear to a greater or lesser degree by making a comparison, at which we say something is more harmonious or less harmonious accordingly.

But Socrates would be quick to remark that all apparent harmonies partake of the abstract absolute Harmony, of which they all fall short. The more harmonious a relation, the closer it is to absolute Harmony; the less harmonious, the further away.

From this it is clear that the term 'less harmonious' is quite interchangeable with the term 'more discordant', and what we call discordant is merely a level of harmony at the far end

of the spectrum; just as one might wittily say that distance is a kind of closeness, only far displaced.

Equally, and perhaps more accurately, we could say that the absolute Harmony is the only true harmony, and all perceptible 'harmonies' as we call them, are imperfect and therefore discordant to greater or lesser degrees. However, the discerning philosopher will realise that although all relations in the imperfect world are to some extent discordant, nevertheless disharmony only exists in comparison to a supreme and incomparable Harmony, the sublime perfection.

This absolute Harmony is totally free of discordancy and is the point at which there is no variance between things, that is, when they are indistinguishably one. Absolute Harmony is ever imperceptible.

Likeness

When something partakes of an absolute it may be said to be like it to a certain degree, whether more or less. For instance, when a woman displays goodness she is, to a greater or lesser degree, like the Good. Her actions tend towards the Good, bringing her closer in likeness to it than if she were to act otherwise.

Likeness is akin to equality, the highest ideal of both being absolute identity or sameness - that is, absolute undifferentiated Unity. So everyday likeness, as we might call it, is also unlikeness, since if absolute identity is its most accurate state then all else is less than the same. Something is only fully like another when it *is* the other; otherwise it is different.

When two things seem the same they are necessarily not the same, since, as I have said, they are two things, and two things cannot be one. True sameness is one, and yet then there is no sameness. This absolute Sameness, the same as absolute Equality and absolute Likeness, is inevitably imperceptible, even unattainable, since two things cannot be the same unless they are not two things but one, and if one then there is no other as which to be the same.

So in the world of things there can be no likeness without difference. But the true, absolute Likeness is an unmanifest ideal which is beyond the realm of opposites where neither likeness nor unlikeness exist - where there are no differentials and thus no similars. A state impossible to describe without contradiction, it is an absolute undifferentiated Unity. This description, I concede, although close in likeness, is inevitably different from the truth!

Flux and Mutability

Flux and mutability are characteristics of our unfolding universe. Every moment, I could say, is a moment of flux and mutability. But in fact there is only one moment - Now. Upon this moment change rides, like cinematographic images upon a screen.

It is not that flux and mutability are characteristics of existence, but rather they are expressions of manifestation. Manifestation must be impermanent, as only the unseen reality is eternally unchanging and manifestation, which is the reflection of the Unmanifest, must needs display change - for it is necessary that both sides of the coin be expressed.

Timelessness is mirrored in the flowing water of time, changelessness in the rolling sphere of mutability. Change must return to where it began, while through its motions the various hues of its complete spectrum are individually and progressively brought to light and phased out.

The beginning, the end and all that flows between is a complete whole refracted and separated through the lens of manifestation. And though to our senses the silver moon is sometimes new and sometimes full and sometimes old, we know that this is just a play of light and shadow.

The Dynamic Force

The Dynamic Force is the power that exists between opposing poles and pervades the universe, giving rise to manifestations that express it. It is the unseen energy that shapes and devours all forms, constantly flowing through them in undulating pulse. Hence all forms are its personifications or expressions - none more concise than the mythic dragon, descendant of the primaeval stirring of energy.

It speaks through fire, breathes through air, swims powerfully through water and asserts itself authoritatively in earth. It condenses and expands, and continually creates through the interaction of opposites. All planetary formations are the result of this force. Mountains, valleys, storms, seas, plants, trees, reptiles, mammals, birds, fish, insects. Through it all planets and stars are fashioned and dance according to its surreptitious sway.

The Dynamic Force can be sharp or blunt, smooth or rough, slow or fast, each necessary in its correct place. To go against the Force, to turn it against itself, is to use its qualities wrongly; that is, to use the right quality in the wrong place, or the right quality in the right place but at the wrong time. To master the Force one must listen to it, ride with it, sing when singing's due, fight when fighting is right: receptivity and resistance each in its proper place - though moving all the time, rigidity and permanence not being lasting characteristics of the Dynamic Force.

It is the shaping wind that invisibly blows all evolving life along, from the beginning to the end. All its whirling patterns open out to the world, then coil back into eternity and the invisible.

Patterns within Patterns

It is understood that our sun and solar system is a comparatively insignificant part of the greater Milky Way galaxy and that we are in orbit about the galactic centre. We know also that our planet, Earth, orbits the sun while spinning on its own axis, about its own centre, many times per revolution.

This is a pattern of patterns within patterns, of patterns repeating themselves within themselves, in the smaller as in the larger. One is reminded of Hermes Trismegistus' old but astute maxim: As above, so below.

Earth goes through glacial and warmer periods, we know, making water levels fall and rise, fall and rise, over thousands of years. Within these greater ages tides continue to rise and fall many times through the days and nights. And if we sit by the shore watching the tide come in or go out we see the restless waves repeatedly pushing the shoreline forward and pulling it back, as the tide slowly and gradually rises or falls.

Again this demonstrates the pattern of patterns within patterns, a law-abiding characteristic we would do well to note. By observing the smaller, one may understand the larger, and by observing the larger, one may understand the smaller.

The Essence of the Oak

One cannot hope to understand the oak without taking into account the acorn, nor know the acorn without knowledge of the oak. For the essence of the oak is its totality, from its rising to its falling, its complete circle of expression. Or to be more exact, its cycle of expression demonstrates in the drawn-out manifest plane the different aspects of its unseen essence.

The essence is to us unmanifest because it exists in a state where its beginning and end constitute a unity; it is in effect locked up like a closed acorn. Put another way, the life and death of the tree of our perceptions is a protracted version of its essence, which exists beyond this frequency of slowed time and distanced polarity such that it is invisible.

Thus the tree of our perceptions is not only an expression of its essence, but also an expression of the process of expression in this plane. The tree demonstrates to us opposing aspects of its essence which are otherwise unmanifest, and also - inevitably - the method by which it is made manifest.

The essence, then, can exist regardless of any manifestation, and yet the motions of manifestation - burgeoning and passing away - are enclosed potentially within it. The acorn is thus closer to and more like the essence, while the oak is its full-blown expression.

The Many and the One

In the thinking mind single objects or concepts may be broken down into many constituent elements. For example, one hour is sixty minutes, one minute is sixty seconds. Likewise, many separate objects may be thought of collectively as a singular term: many towns make up a country, many countries a continent. But these are imagined classifications, they are not real.

For there to be many there must be one, since many implies many of a kind. 'Sixty minutes' means sixty of the type 'minute'. Even 'sixty' alone means sixty of the type 'one'. So the many are dependent on the one, as the spokes of a wheel are dependent on the hub, or the branches of a tree are dependent on the trunk.

Yet if there is only one (the many being imagined classifications that the thinking mind imposes on the world it seeks to comprehend) then number does not exist at all, rendering 'one' inaccurate. This error arises because we are still attempting to impose a concept on the world when the world simply is what it is. Concepts will always fall short of Truth.

But if we are to describe the world then 'the One' is closer to the Truth than 'the Many', and so the philosopher accepts it as a near-accurate expression.

The Rising and Falling

Judging by the way and ways of the world, there seems to be a kind of undulating force flowing through the universe, certainly through this revolving planet at least, that makes formations to rise and fall. Who can not have noticed the rising and falling tide, the rising of steam and falling of rain, the apparent rising and setting of the sun, or the moulded hills and valleys of a rolling landscape?

This unseen pulse underlies the visible world, shaping the forms that arise and making them to arise in the first place, as well as causing them to fade away afterwards. Take the instance of a man, who rises up from birth, as in the manner of mankind's evolution, and falls at the last. Throughout his life his lungs are filled and emptied, his chest rises and falls, he rises from sleep and lies down again at night, he is sometimes tall and healthy and sometimes confined to his bed with fever, and even in his sexual life the same force is evident.

The rising and falling is a pattern produced by the vibrant interplay of opposites, which is so much a part of the manifest world. Having traced this pattern to the greater pattern of the interplay of opposites, we must follow the line further if we seek to know its ultimate cause. From where does this interplay arise?

Arise? But the interplay of opposites itself gives rise to arising! Is it, then, its own cause? It would seem so.

The Interplay of Opposites

The world is an interplay of opposites, a characteristic which can be observed or detected throughout, in all that has been, all that is and all that will be. Why is this, and what does it tell us?

Well, pairs of opposites - such as high and low, light and dark, good and evil - are made of two qualities, each dependent on the other. Highness without lowness, lightness without darkness, and goodness without evilness are impossible to comprehend; the opposite quality is necessary if each is to be understood.

With this in mind, it is quite conceivable that the world is making use of opposites, as a skilled illustrator might, to manifest a quality that is otherwise not perceptible, bringing it to the foreground by use of a background.

But the world is an interplay of opposites I said, not static but flowing and vibrant with motion. Its revolutions lift and lower, separate and unite; and this interplay may itself be rightly regarded as a natural consequence of a world of opposites.

Now if manifestation necessitates opposition (that presented against that which it is not) then the manifest world of interplaying opposites is itself the opposite of an unmanifest quality, and that which is the opposite of opposition is known as unanimity. It is clear also that in no other way than by a duality may unity be expressed or understood.

The interplay of opposites, then, with all its separatings and unitings, arose from the initial cleaving of opposites from unity, a motionless unity without beginning, without end. And the cleaving of opposites? This arose from a point where cause and effect are one. The cleaving of opposites is both the cause and the effect of itself. Before it there was neither cause nor effect. In fact, there was nothing 'before' it. Indeed, one wonders how, if at all, it ever happened.

Natural Selection

'This preservation of favourable individual differences and variations, and the destruction of those which are injurious, I have called Natural Selection, or the Survival of the Fittest,' wrote Charles Darwin in his great work *The Origin of Species*. Organisms best adapted to their environment are the survivors.

Natural Selection follows the pattern displayed in the structure of a tree. Existing species are like the green and budding twigs and may be traced back through perhaps many ramifications, noting where species diverged and, further down, where genera also parted. Many species branch out from a genus, and many genera also diverge from a single source.

It is a pattern perpetuating many-from-one, where each of the many is like its parent, one, and so in turn produces many of its own, and so on. Each of the many is both like and unlike its parent and both like and unlike its siblings, the same yet different. So over time the slight variations between siblings, if such variations are conducive to the survival of each (remembering that weak branches are more likely to fall), may become great

distinguishing features in their distant descendants. Great variations are made through the slow progress of slight variations.

This pattern of many-from-one can be seen in both the small and the large, in the forms and in the formation of forms. From millennia of random variation and natural selection, for instance, forms have arisen such as fingers from hands, limbs from a torso, petals from a stalk.

The question is, is natural selection truly random? Or do forms arise by design? In other words, is there an orderly agency by which the variations and the selections of variations are influenced? And if so, to what extent is evolution determined?

Evolution

From the very beginning (conceptually speaking, of course) the universe has been evolving. And within this great evolution there have been many minor evolutions and involutions, and many within these also. Evolution is clearly a universal pattern: all things in the universe are evolving (involution being considered a relative and necessary aspect of the broader term 'evolution').

More down to earth, the life forms on this planet are following the universal pattern of progressive change. But this progression is not random; there is always an end goal, and besides, forms evolve according to natural law, shaped by the designs that nature's laws promote. No form ever arose that was not built on law.

So, many evolved forms are to be expected, and may even be predicted, if one understands the laws of nature that apply universally and locally. Perhaps it could be called 'Natural Design', since it is not impossible to find argument with the supporter of the design theory and with the advocate of natural selection, and yet to agree with both. Natural selection is actively influenced by the laws that design the motions of the world. And if you believe in a Creator, it is obvious to you what - or rather, Who - set these laws in motion.

Most importantly, evolution in forms can present us with a glimpse of the invisible - the unseen force that pervades the cosmos. Just as we can see the direction of the wind by the effect it has on a weather-vane, so in evolved forms may we discern the natural laws that shaped them. All may be traced back to the source.

Manifestations of the One

There are many manifestations of the One, each unique and displaying a different aspect. And just as the One may be broken down into many, so may each of the many be broken down into further units, ad infinitum. Truly though, no matter how many there seem, and no matter how much we care to divide the world, or the world appears to divide itself, there is only ever One.

Illusion

From the singular Real came its reflection, duality, and this consisted of one formed in its likeness and another its opposite. Hence now it is said we have truths and untruths, realities and illusions. But this duality is the reflection of the Real. It is by nature illusory.

So both the truths and untruths, the realities and illusions we have are not real. They are themselves illusory. This is borne out by the fact that if we analyse a 'truth' - one plus one equals two, for instance - we find that it is dependent on other accepted 'truths' (in this case, that a discrete quantity of one exists and that plurality is possible) and these hold each other up like a precarious house of cards. If the foundations are faulty, as I am suggesting, then all will topple.

However, we might choose to call these 'truths' lesser truths, since they are not absolute Truth but are clearly closer in likeness to it than the untruths. This is fine. Lesser truths are, say, the representatives of Truth, while untruths oppose it. But to what extent is illusion a reality?

The lesser truths and the untruths, I have said, are not real, they are illusory. But is this illusion then a reality? Surely not. Illusion is itself a lesser truth, not real; as is any accurate statement I care to make.

This seems to be the problem. In fact though, there is no problem. There is no illusion, no reflection, no duality. There is only the Real.

Dreams and Visions

Perceptions beyond our mental grasp may appear to us as dream images or visions. That is not to say that all dreams and visions are caused by real perceptions. Some are most certainly fabrications and projections of the mind, and these we call hallucinations or idle dreams.

Some dreams and visions come through as bungled messages of subconscious intuitions; we see illusory images, symbolic representations of intuited realities, perceptions just outside the range of our everyday senses. There is a reality behind them beyond our grasp, but what we see is a symbolic image selected by the brain through tentative association.

To understand these perceptive dreams and visions one must also understand the dreamer, the person for whom the symbolic representations have associative significance (albeit often subconscious). Many people may perceive the same subtle stimulus differently. Some more accurately than others, perhaps. But to arrive at a greater understanding of the event one must also observe the observer, recognising that his or her perceptions of the event are deeply personal.

Through dreams and visions we can perceive with our mind's eye a little of what the cruder and more solid sense organs can never detect. But they need to be translated, by one who knows their language and who can distinguish acutely between reality and illusion, knowing that all perceptions are inevitably tainted with subjectivity.

Imperfection

The perfect geometrical form is never manifest but exists, as Plato rightly understood, as the unseen Idea, of which the lesser, imperfect form we see is a manifestation. And though tangible matter strives towards this Idea, matter is matter and never will be identical to, and thus will never reach perfection as, the Idea. Perfect harmony cannot be attained in the manifest world.

The most perfect thing in the visible world is that most like its invisible design; all visible forms are inferior counterparts, inevitably imperfect, of their unseen designs. The imperfect is like a close veil that hides the visage of perfection yet hints at the real beauty of the unseen.

So matter (or the expressed form) strives towards its unseen Idea as an artist strives to complete his work. The original Idea is the goal of its evolution. And so by comparison only the Idea is perfect, all expressions of it are inadequate representations.

In the manifest world of imperfections, then, it would seem that perfection is impossible. Yet contrary to this, it is imperfection that has no concrete substance, since it can only exist as a concept in comparison to perfection. Perfection is the Real.

Essences

There are many absolute essences that pertain to the same Idea. The essences we refer to as Truth, Right, Real, Good, Peace, Calm, Beauty, Love and Perfection are not many at all, but are the one great absolute essence - Unity. It has many names and aspects, but all may be traced back to the complete perfect absolute reality.

Truths represent realities. Right actions are good and bring peace of mind and calm relations, and love is manifest in the bonds of such close communions. Beauty is perfection, and the most perfect is the most good and right and real.

All these terms, which are only a small handful of many, relate to different aspects of one Idea. This I have said is Unity, though 'Unity' is itself another such term, but one here used to give a more accurate understanding of the Idea.

To say, then, that there are many essences (or absolutes or Ideas) is not strictly true, unless one assumes that there is an Essence of essences, an Absolute of absolutes, or an Idea of Ideas above and beyond these lesser many - and this might be a useful theory, until one wished to make clear the extent to which an absolute can truly be absolute.

So I say this, that there are not many essences, but only one true essence, to which all the greatest qualities refer (and they are deemed great exactly because they refer, most directly, to this one great essence). Opposite qualities such as falsehood, evil and hate do not have real absolute essences of their kind, nor is there an absolute Opposition in existence. Rather, these are all qualities far from the one true essence, which, being one, I name Unity.

The True Essence

Both the mind and the world have a tendency to group together and separate certain forms according to kind, or essence. And each kind may in turn be further classified as belonging to a greater group sharing a common essence, and so on, forming a grand hierarchy, at the apex of which is the True Essence common to all.

The True Essence is the only eternal essence, and all its lessers are its forms in that they are different aspects branching out from and returning to it. The further from the apex, the less the resemblance, although all are expressions of the same and none can be totally devoid of the True Essence.

Now, that is not to say that the True Essence is greater in some forms than in others, but rather that some forms, all being expressions of the True Essence within them, are closer in purity and thus resemblance to it, whilst others express it less accurately.

The Theory of Ideas

Plato's Theory of Ideas holds that there are types and classifications of things in this world and that each type is a representation of its unseen Idea. For example, the letter A may be written in many different ways, but nevertheless an a is an a. They all represent the same Idea A, an abstract universal without physical substance and which exists independent of its manifest forms.

All the letter A's we can see are inevitably imperfect since the true, real letter A is the unseen Idea. All representations are lesser versions, imitations of the perfect A which is the Idea itself. But despite the shortcomings of perceptible forms, claimed Plato, it is still possible for man to know an Idea - through the agency of the intellect. By observing and understanding the lessers we may comprehend the greater, of which they speak.

And so to love. Love takes many different forms, a whole spectrum from the highest and most honourable to the lowest. But the most perfect, the mother of love, is the absolute Idea Love, higher than the highest and beyond honour. It is not a love of this or that, but Love in itself. Absolute Love.

Plato averred that there are many eternal Ideas untouched by the imperfections of this world, and if we are to find true knowledge we must look beyond the imitations that so

readily present themselves to our passive senses, and seek, through contemplation and intellectual endeavour, those more elusive realities, the essential Ideas.

The Idea of Ideas

Plato's Theory of Ideas is not perfect. This is a world of imperfections and any theory herein is unavoidably flawed (even the theory that this is a world of imperfections). Every 'Idea' that can be imagined or reasoned is imperfect, not the real thing, and if an 'Idea' is known then it cannot be the true Idea.

The theory is an imitation of reality, it has its imperfections. For instance, it assumes that plurality is a reality, and because there are many there are many of a kind, and because this is possible there are many kinds. Then behind each kind or class is its Idea. Thus there are many Ideas - and all eternal at that.

But wait. There is an Idea behind these Ideas, as Plato knew, and each sub-Idea (as they may be called) is to this Supreme Idea as each perceptible form is to the sub-Idea. This is fine, but it does not seem reasonable that these sub-Ideas are eternal. Plurality implies limitation, and if there are no limits, as one would expect in the realm of an eternal, then there is no plurality.

These lesser Ideas that I have called sub-Ideas may span a very long time, the length of the manifest universe even, but, like souls, they are not eternally real. Plurality is a non-reality, and only the Supreme Idea is eternal. The Supreme Idea is the Idea of Ideas, the immutable origin of all, of whom Love, Beauty and Perfection are its closest imitations, nay, intimations. The Idea of Ideas is the Real.

The Worse and the Better

The worse falls from what is better and the better, being previously unnoticed or undistinguished, is then known by comparison, in contradistinction to what it is not.

Beauty Subjective

The learned connoisseur and the everyday sort of fellow will both have their different views as to what is beautiful, and the sincere student is more likely to give credence to what the connoisseur has to say. But many could find argument with the connoisseur, objecting that beauty is subjective, is 'in the eye of the beholder', and that both they and the everyday fellow perceive beauty according to their own idiosyncrasies.

So we find ourselves in a quandary not unlike that encountered towards the end of Plato's *The Cratylus*, though there it is brought on by conflicting theories for the origin of names. What should we believe? Our whole understanding of right and wrong is brought into question. Is truth and morality merely subjective, our ethical idea of propriety dependent only on custom and convention?

To be sure, all our perceptions are inevitably subjective. Yet while the object is what it is, our perceptions of it may be accurate or inaccurate, close to reality or far from it. Our subjective notions of an object may be closer to or further from truth, according to how well we comprehend it.

Thus the beauty of an object can only be perceived subjectively and the subject's perceptions are conditioned by their state of awareness or ignorance - the height of awareness being the ideal point at which the subject completely comprehends the object. Beauty is not subjective, it is only our perceptions of beauty that belong to the realm of subjectivity.

Beauty Objective

The beauty of an object exists independent of the subjective views of observers. The everyday fellow might pass it by unawares while the learned connoisseur stands awe-struck. Or, quite the opposite, the connoisseur might be biased against it or reject it, while the everyday fellow quietly and simply admires it for what it is.

There is subjective appreciation, where the observer deems an object beautiful according to their own biased, conditioned principals, and there is objective appreciation, the ideal of which is where the observer admires without bias or condition - that is, without self interfering - the inherent beauty of an object. The latter is, of course, superior and should be the aim of every striving connoisseur concerned more with accuracy than opinion.

What is it, though, that makes an object beautiful? A broken vase can be considered less beautiful in itself than a faultless vase of the same kind. And maybe some forms are more beautiful in themselves than others; the bullfinch is possibly more beautiful than the earthworm, for instance. So objective beauty, it seems, like height, is dependent on comparison with a lesser, regardless of subjective views.

In the world of opposites the beautiful and the non-beautiful contrast each other, and for each it is necessary that the other be also somewhere manifest. Thus there are hierarchical grades of beauty, ranging from the most beautiful to the least. The more beautiful an object, the closer it is in the hierarchy to that which is most beautiful.

Beauty Absolute

The bullfinch can be considered more beautiful, objectively speaking, than the earthworm, while the snail is also more beautiful than the worm, but less beautiful than the bullfinch. Each takes its place in the extensive hierarchy of beauty.

But the bullfinch is by no means the most beautiful of forms. Indeed, the bullfinch may be relegated to a position as comparatively low as the earthworm is to it, by a form more beautiful again. What, then, is the superlative, the most beautiful? What is the most perfect expression of beauty, through which one may perceive most clearly the nature of beauty itself?

This is a difficult thing to ascertain in such a vast universe, and what with the self promulgating its subjective views. It is easier, perhaps, to establish what is the most beautiful of a kind rather than of all kinds, for the most beautiful of a kind must surely be its most perfect example. For instance, the most beautiful recitation of a delicate piece of music is that which most perfectly, effortlessly and fully presents it, while the least beautiful is that which most awfully misrepresents it.

Even in this, though, there is a problem, since, as far as misrepresentation is concerned, the most perfect, effortless and full misrepresentation of the piece is clearly a great deal less beautiful than that which only slightly misrepresents it. So the most perfect of a kind is not necessarily the most beautiful.

Thankfully, however, it can be stated, with honest morality intact, that the most beautiful of a positive kind is certainly its most perfect example, while the most beautiful of a negative kind is its least 'perfect' example - that is, when perfection has been turned on its head and is misrepresented, so that its high is a low and its low is a high.

This confusion aside, and accepting that the highest point of perfection cannot truly change and become the lowest, the most beautiful of a kind is that closest to real perfection. Thus the most beautiful of the beautiful is that closest to the perfection of beauty, and none is more perfect as regards beauty than beauty itself.

Beauty in its purest form is absolute Beauty, which is ever formless and, being without form or imperfection, remains eternally constant as the standard of perfection by which all lessers are objectively contrasted. And it is through these lessers only that the perfect and imperceptible majesty of the absolute Beauty may be - albeit indirectly - tantalisingly glimpsed.

The Hollow Hat

Nothingness is the magic of the world, the full emptiness. It is the infinitely mysterious black hole. In it no thing exists, not even itself, not even the notion of existence. Nothingness is a complete undifferentiated unity.

One could call it dark or light, it makes no difference. It may be thought of as full or empty, it makes no difference. It may be understood as +100 plus -100, +3 plus -3, +1 plus -1, or simply 0. Whatever.

In the manifest world it is expressed as the hollow, an empty space within a necessarily closed shape (although, as in the case of wind instruments, this closed shape may be open-ended); without enclosure emptiness cannot be displayed. And all the ubiquitous hollows of the world - underground burrows, in veins and arteries, in funnel clouds, in things man-made as well as natural formations - hint at and are formed because of an underlying, unseen Nothingness.

The Hollow Hat is full of nothing, empty of everything, full of everything, empty of nothing.
The Hollow Hat is neither full nor empty.

On the Soul

The Existence of the Soul

Having known sound, one may then discern silence. Having experienced limitation, one may then comprehend and value freedom. Through the movements of the visible, one may perceive the invisible.

This manifest world of opposites, then, is surely a reflection of an undistinguished, invisible Unity, an imperfect expression of an unseen faultless Perfect, and through its comings and goings we may comprehend a changeless Permanent.

So too with the body, which comes out into the world from the womb, rises up, becoming more articulate and aware, and finally falls back to the earth from which it had risen. The body must be driven through these changes, and the further continual changes throughout, from beginning to end by an unseen permanent which existed before the body and will necessarily outlive the body.

This unseen permanent would influence the formation and development of the body, which would inevitably express, albeit in a lesser, imperfect and inverted fashion, the nature of its unseen guiding force. And when the body became worn and ceased to function, as is the wont of imperfect things, at the point of death its vital essence, the unseen permanent, would no longer be able to guide and animate it and so would leave it fall to its element.

Sound would fade to silence, limitation would fall to freedom, and the unseen permanent, the soul, would close its eyes to the visible world of the bodily senses and drift into the invisible. The hand that filled the glove leaves it lifeless and moves on.

Immortality

The soul may exist independent of a physical body just as a thought may linger without being spoken. And if incarnate, when the body dies the soul moves on, like a hermit-crab that has outgrown its shell. But to what extent is the soul immortal? Does the soul live eternally?

Clearly the soul is not born when the body is born, nor does it die when the body dies. In this sense, the soul is indeed immortal, compared to the short life-span of the burdensome body. But as for it existing eternally, there is a snag. Whatever has a beginning must have an end, or so the ubiquitous Law of Opposites states. Hence only that which is uncreated can live eternally. And there is truly only one Uncreated.

Individual souls, sparks from the supernal flame, must have their limits, however slight, if they are to exist as distinct entities. They are eternal only inasmuch as their beginnings

arise from the infinite and their ends return to the infinite. The individual soul as a distinct being is not an eternal reality.

All souls, then, must die in the light of the Real; their limits must fall to the infinite. The only eternal Truth is the Uncreated. All else is spurious.

The Body and the Soul

The body is like an upturned cup. As soon as it brakes and crumbles, the soul floats away free. More accurately though, the body is like a diving-suit the soul wears when descending to the lower regions. On returning to the upper air the soul has no need for heavy weights and equipment.

There is a vast range of clothes for the soul to wear: some are close-fitting, others loose; some are multi-coloured, others dark or bland; some are heavy and cumbersome, others more revealing. And when a garment is worn-out the soul lets it go, whereat both body and soul, having no longer any attractive bond, return to their elements, the body falling and the soul rising, spiritually speaking.

The naked soul cannot be seen with mortal eyes. Only if it is wearing some garment or other, flimsy or thick, may its invisibility be discerned. And whereas the body needs an indwelling soul to function, the soul does not necessarily need a body, though certain situations require certain modes of dress.

The Shouter and the Whisperer

People are more willing to listen to the shouter than the whisperer. For the shouter is more forceful in his speech - more forceful but less thoughtful, while the whisperer is more careful in what she says and her words are closer to the truth.

Why then do people pay more attention to the shouter, when he speaks with such great passion but little substance? Why do people take more notice of the heavy than the light, the hard than the soft? In a way it seems quite natural, since the heavy, the hard and the loud present themselves more readily to the senses. But yet it is most insensible.

The whisperer is the soul, the shouter the body with his needs and demands. The wisdom of the whisperer is often overshadowed by the weight and attractive influence of the shouter. He must needs be seen and heard! The whisperer is content in herself.

The followers of the whisperer, though few and themselves seldom noticed, are concerned more with reality than affectations, and they know the tricks and appealing guiles of the shouter. They are not fooled by his crude eristic and inflated rhetoric. And though the voice of the whisperer is difficult to perceive and she herself even more difficult to find, they shun the arrogance of the shouter and seek only the wisdom of the soul.

Fire and Ice

A man believing that this material world is all there is, is like a polar bear believing there is only coldness and ice, concluding that no great warmth or heat exists. His view of the flaming sun is thwarted by the violent winds and snowstorms that sting his eyes and cumber his vision.

Of course, we know that this is a world of opposites and for coldness to be perceived heat must exist also. The polar bear may be unaware of it, but there are parts of the world that are positively boiling. However, keeping the source of our analogy in mind, would we be right in saying that ice existed first and then as the temperature rose during the creation of the universe fire came to be? Or is it the other way around - to wit, first there was fire and then as the temperature fell during the formation of the universe ice crystallised far away from the flame?

Well, this is a difficult question. Which came first, the fire or the ice? But although heat and coldness cannot be perceived one without the other, it seems quite likely that first there was great heat at the heart of the universe, then as the universe expanded cooling took place and lesser heat condensed to coldness. So first there was fire, then came cooling, then ice.

Returning to the source of the analogy, what is suggested is this: the material world of solid forms cannot exist without the ethereal and fine world of spirit, from which it has fallen into denser manifestation and (presumably) to which it will return come the world's winter's end, and all that we can perceive here is like bleak darkness compared with the brilliant and uplifting light of the spiritual realm.

Death

To some of us death will come like a glass of water in the desert. Death will come to us like a small oasis and a shady palm under which to rest a while. Death will come like a cool stream to lead us on. Death will come to us like a surging river and carry us to the sea.

To some death will come like a jealous thief in the night and steal away our wealth and possessions and all that we held meaningful in life.

To others death will come like a boat to a drowning man and bear them safely to the shore; though, loving the lure of the sea, they often swim out again.

To others still, death will pass by.

Reincarnation

What is there to suggest that the soul takes on a body at birth (or before this), leaves it at death and later takes on another, and so on through 'many lives'?

Apart from the convictions of millions over the millennia and the many reported cases of past-life remembrance or reminiscence, there is also a more simple observation. The world is cyclical: beginnings come where endings go and endings go where beginnings come; the circle is an expression of eternity.

And there is law in the comings and goings of the world, the Law of Opposites. The soul longs like the sea to reach the shore, then longs to return whence it came. Nature's push and pull is in us all.

We fall like rainwater and rise like vapour. We linger in the upper atmosphere like pensive cumulous clouds, then descend again like drops of rain. Reincarnation is the play of nature it seems, wheeling the soul through cycles of experience, continually sending her out into the world then calling her back.

To the Hindu and the Buddhist this is the wheel of karma, or samsara - the wandering through - the endless chain of death and rebirth. To escape from the wheel is to transcend duality, to know that one was never caught in it, to realise Enlightenment.

The Scattering

The Scattering is a universal theme, a perpetuation of the initial creative act. From the One came the many. From the Centre of Light, or at least from what can now be called the Centre of Light, the seeds of fire were scattered outwards into the dark.

And as seeds are scattered on the wind, so were the souls of light blown far from the Father, some eventually to land and become buried in the womb of the earth. Yet from the darkness all seeds rise up and open out, till they reach the light and scatter further seeds like golden rays.

The sound of the first ocean drop ripples out across the universe, and deeper into the darkness the signal fades, itself becoming more diffuse. The souls stream out like spokes on the turning wheel, becoming more distant from each other as from the Hub, yet each a little wheel itself. And deeper into the cold the wheels slow, as running water slows to ice, where the secret light of the soul lies darkened and dormant in the hard shell of matter.

But the spring of the soul comes when winter's incubation is done and the soul finds itself turning back towards the light. All the scattered seeds when they mature are gathered in and taken home. For the Gathering is another universal theme.

The Gathering

Clearly there can be no gathering without previous scattering, but equally there can be no scattering without subsequent gathering. When the world passes away no soul will be left outside the fold. Indeed, the world will only pass away when all are gathered in.

From the many comes the One. The reason for the Gathering is simple. In the One there is neither scattering nor gathering, yet if from the One many appear to be scattered, a compensatory force must appear to arise to neutralise this anomaly. The One is ever the One.

So the Gathering arises as a natural consequence of the Scattering, to counter imbalance and to return all to the original and real state of Oneness. All the scattered many are drawn towards their fulfilment in the Heart of Unity by the effortless power of the One. But remember, Unity is always present and exists in the world of many as the Centre of Being. Here. Now.

The Journey of the Soul

Every soul is on a journey, a quest for knowledge, each going its own way; no two journeys are the same. We are flames from the Burning Wheel of God, sent hurtling outwards into the world to explore, to learn and to understand.

Our travels take us through countless rolling landscapes, one long flood of continual flux that is the dance of life, the dance of many dances. We pass through darkness and pass through light, adjusting to the varied rhythms of the universe, resonating and moving on.

Although the journey of the soul may sometimes seem to have its set-backs, the soul is nonetheless always progressing, always in motion towards its destination. And although every soul and every journey is unique, the destination, the goal, is the same. For each wandering soul's odyssey consists of many revolving circles spiralling through a greater circle, an elongated ellipse which brings the soul back to where it began, back to the Heart of the universe, the sublime Centre which we can maybe call the Godhead.

Yet, this all said, the wise wanderer knows that he can never be anywhere other than where he always is. None ever left the Godhead.

No Colours

There are no colours, there is only an endless spectrum that strides the infinite. We talk of blues and greens and turquoises, but the colours we name are not definitive, they blend continuously without separation. Our vague naming and division of colour is useful but not truthful, making distinctions that are not strictly correct.

Similarly, there are no living beings, there is only an endless flow of life. There is no death, no partition that separates life from life. Life is infinite. The divisions we make of it are only notions and concepts, useful but ultimately inaccurate.

None can say where life begins or where it ends, nor where one colour becomes the next. It is impossible. There is no beginning nor end, and there are no colours. There is no separation, no division, no plurality!

Religion

A religion is one of many; religions are many of one. God is, and has always been, in all places. God's voice is heard in the 'language' of the region, and no 'language' belongs exclusively to God.

Truly, the free spirit needs no religion but may find therein a pathway to God. And there are many pathways, some wide, some narrow: the soul must choose which to follow, though all roads lead to God.

No one religion can claim a hold on Truth, for Truth is in all places. And no religion which seeks to unite all in common worship will ever succeed, for this is a world of diversity and different people have different temperaments and different needs.

God is the centre of the world of diversity, and unity in God is enough. No gods other than the One God exist, so who can be called enemy? God is opposed to enmity. God is unity, and we are God's blest diversity. Yet religion need not distance us. We need not distance ourselves.

Salvation

As surely as the body will die will salvation come to the soul, and no soul will be left unsaved. The universe will not be content until the end of suffering.

Salvation is not for the good and righteous alone, but also - of necessity more so - for the wrongdoers. Who is in more need of salvation, the pure of heart or the corrupted? The honest person is more deserving, certainly, but it is the far-fallen soul who is more in need.

But in a way it is only the good who are saved, because the honest soul is closer to salvation and the fallen soul must first embrace goodness before salvation can be reached. So what is this salvation?

Salvation is the freeing of the soul from confinements physical, mental and spiritual. For the only way to transcend truly and permanently the fetters of the material body and its world is to transcend also those of the soul. Salvation is the death of the individual identity, its merger with the world, its absorption into endless life.

Until this is realised and the soul is no longer thought of as a separate entity in the world, she will swing between the duality of limitation and freedom, never finding a permanent peace. She will fall again and again, until salvation is truly realised.

The Centre of Light

The Centre of Light is the burning heart of the universe. It gives and receives. All are descended from it and all will ascend to it. Any body straying from this Centre of centres becomes dense, cold and hard. Any body returning to it leaves heaviness behind and merges indistinguishably with the Light.

Those closest to the Centre of Light are most like it, reflecting its radiance to the greatest degree. Those furthest away are most unlike it, they reflect its radiance to the least degree and linger in a world of darkness.

The Centre of Light is the blazing Truth that dark ignorance is too dull and blinkered to see. Density clouds the soul's vision, and only by letting go of the heavy chains that weigh her down may she ascend and reach true clarity. The Centre of Light is the destiny of all souls, their origin and their end, the *sine qua non* of life. Without it nothing - not even darkness - could exist.

The Philosopher

The Philosopher

The philosopher is a knight in search of his Holy Grail. All dark fortresses he encounters along the way he assails with his sharp sword of discernment. He looks for any weakness in their defences and brings the walls tumbling down. Any barriers that would hold him and others back, blocking the way to his goal, he topples.

And if a castle of any kind, of the passive, the indulgent or the barbarous, can be brought to ruin he does so; in this he is ruthless. For better that he should expose the faults than allow delusion to continue. He will not allow any to abide within the blind walls of ignorance nor under the roof of false security.

Any opponent he comes across on the path he challenges: if he wins he continues on; if his fight is well met and matched he respects his fellow knight and honours his views; and if his fight is met, matched and overcome in all fairness under the code of chivalry, having expended his greatest efforts he humbly kneels and bows to this supreme knight and opens his heart to a wisdom greater than his own.

He knows that all knights are on the same quest and that all their challenges serve to lead them on. But a time will come when the might and sharpness of his weapons will avail him no more, they will serve then only to weigh him down and prevent him from reaching his goal. A time will come when he must lay down his arms and surrender to Truth.

The True Philosophy

The True Philosophy is nothing new but that which has always been and will continue to be. Whether it is known or unknown, acknowledged or scorned, makes no difference to it, it still holds strong.

The false philosophy, on the other hand, must fall, as an ill-designed tower must fall, pulling down with it those that swear by it to the end. But watch for the signs - the inconsistencies and faulty links, the growing cracks and unstable foundations. These are the marks of error.

The philosopher of the True Philosophy admits the inadequacy of his words, the contradictions that arise when attempting to define it. Plato wrote, 'There is no way of putting it in words like other studies,' and yet still he wrote.

The True Philosophy is beyond words, perfect Truth. Only in its expression is there room for improvement and refinement of details, and this is the task passed on to the student, to bring the imperfect closer to perfection. Expressive and descriptive philosophy can only point the way and praise the ineffable beauty of the True Philosophy ever beyond the grasp of the senses.

Inner Wealth

It really makes no difference whether the philosopher is rich or poor. What matters most is inner wealth and well-being. If he receives a rich windfall but has not inner wealth it will avail him none. Whereas even if he suffers great ruinous material loss and yet has inner wealth, it does him no deep injury.

But inner wealth is not something one acquires. It is always there, waiting to be acknowledged; the hidden store in every being; the forgotten reserves buried under the weight of material possessions; the priceless antique undervalued and overlooked, locked away in an abandoned recess.

Inner wealth is the rich papyrus rediscovered after millennia hidden discreetly in some dark niche. To those who recognise its true worth it is great and beautiful beyond all compare. Those who would only scribble on the back of it, ignorant of what they do, are themselves 'in the dark' as to where wealth and happiness truly lie.

Happiness is in the heart. It is not dependent on externals. True, some externals evoke happiness; some others do not; but always happiness is in the heart. Lasting contentment and satisfaction is not to be found in external ephemera; only when its secret hiding place is discovered will the lure of desire be truly quenched. Till then, inner wealth is unwittingly traded for meagre somethings.

Goodness

Follow the sweet track of goodness, goodness for goodness' sake. Goodness is an expression of your true nature: what is good is right, what is right is true. Truth is the Good.

Right is right and wrong is wrong. Goodness is deemed good simply because it tends towards Truth and the Real. Badness is that which goes against the Real, and to do evil is to wrong one's own true self and to wear a pretence.

Goodness leads to Truth; badness leads to lies and deceit. But do not be good because you are told to, or commanded to, or because of the ill-fortune that will befall you otherwise. Be good simply because you are. As the Indian sage Ramana Maharshi said, 'Be as you are.'

Ownership

Does the migrating swift, passing over fields and farms, forests and cities, country borders and the countless fences man puts up between himself and his brothers, look down and see separate lands and lands within lands owned by separate people? No, all he sees is the great expanse out and over the horizon.

How foolish it is to claim ownership of anything, let alone the land. Even the humble pen with which I often write is not mine. If it were to be stolen would it then belong to the thief? Surely not. Only if it is given as a gift, purchased, or maybe won somehow may it then rightly belong to another. But were not the elements which make up the pen taken from the land?

Possession is the hoarder's delusion. Nothing is or ever can be owned by anyone; ownership does not exist. My writing pen, as I call it, is a portion of the All in my care, an object trusted to me to use wisely. I never gained it, nor will I ever lose it though it slips from my hand.

And the borders and fences that limit our countries and gardens are acceptable only if they protect the lands in our care and allow them to grow towards Beauty. Although eventually all walls must fall. Untruths cannot last, and professed ownership is doomed to be overthrown. Let the wise man cling to nothing uncertain or transient, lest he should fall with it.

The Ego

The ego is an elusive phantom, a thief in the night. Try to catch him by torchlight and he quickly slips away. For he is a thing of shadows and cannot stand in the glare of Truth.

No discrete entities exist; any separation in the Whole being an illusion. Therefore the ego can only be present as a vague misconception. And whereas the aim of the ascetic may be to extinguish the ego, this will not be accomplished - what does not exist cannot die. True annihilation of the ego is the uprooting of the conviction of it ever existing.

But yes, the selfishness of the ego may be seen as opposing the selfless nature of God and all that is godlike, where God stands for the right, the real, and the true Will. For the part is error and the Whole is Truth. The True Self is No-self.

The Philosopher's Humility

There is nothing the philosopher can know which is not already known, and he cannot expect to express a truth that is not already or has not been previously expressed.

The greatest truths are demonstrated everywhere. All the philosopher does is translate them, or point them out.

The philosopher knows that truths are evident all about him. His aim is to perceive them more clearly and to present them to his fellows in a more accessible manner, always seeking greater accuracy and simplicity. Yet it makes no difference to him whether his fellows deride, ignore or acknowledge; truth is with them whatever, and they will only realise it when they are ready. He neither craves admiration nor fears disparagement.

And it matters not to the philosopher whether he remains silent, speaks a truth or tells a joke. Whatever, whenever and wherever, Truth is present and truths are displayed. This is the philosopher's humility, that although he cannot express the Great Truth, it is nonetheless present in all he does.

The Base Instincts

The person who is dominated by the base instincts is like someone who takes his dog out on a lead, only to be dragged here and there by the wild hound.

The person who is struggling to master the base instincts is like someone who takes their dog out on a lead, but, even though the hound may tug ceaselessly, they keep him close to the clear path.

But the person who is master of their own has no such problems. They are like someone whose dog walks with them over the field and through the wood; an obedient dog who needs no lead, a strong dog but one who can run and play harmlessly, a friendly companion and a noble guard. They do not subjugate forcefully the base instincts, but they leave them in their proper place. For in the human being intelligence has risen and must needs be the guide.

The Independent Philosopher

The Independent Philosopher clings to no creed, holds no theory as without fault, adheres to no transient doctrine. Theories are only tools pointing towards ineffable Truth: they may prove useful in everyday life, but must eventually be cast aside when entering the Infinite. The walking-sticks of life are not for those who have freed their wings.

The Independent Philosopher is a student of life and all that life contains. Therefore the philosopher is not limited to any particular science or religion, for to do so would prevent them from seeing the whole picture. And Truth is a whole.

The philosopher's studies encounter and encompass all sciences and all life's religions, past and present. Although open and receptive, the philosopher is also discerning and is not taken in by spurious beliefs. Truth is the philosopher's guide. Truth is their goal. The philosopher may rest upon a theory a while, exploring its possibilities, but is never held

back from their search. Not until Truth, in all its omnipresent simplicity, is realised will the philosopher arrive at their goal.

Meditation

Meditation is the practice of sitting in silence, letting go of thoughts and letting thoughts go. Relaxing the body in a comfortable but firm position allows the mind also to relax, although it may at first, out of habit, take the opportunity to think of the sundry things previously put on hold when the body was too busy to consider them.

Concentration keeps the mind single-minded. When the meditator becomes aware that they are drifting along with idle thoughts they return their attention softly to the heart of being and continue concentration. There is a fine line to seek where concentration is effortless, where the attention is not lax but alert, and not active but attentive.

Aiming for this, bringing the attention to the heart of being, allowing the mind to be, will in time allow the philosopher to sink into the heart of being. Being present in the heart of being brings about clarity in the mind. When the mind is clear, the philosopher will see the truth with simplicity and without confusion.

If a philosopher's mind is full of uncontrollable thoughts they are like a charioteer who has let go the reins, a helpless passenger to whim and circumstance. The philosopher must take charge of their life and regain their rightful position as master of the mind's thoughts. Meditation is the pathway to this, the walking-stick that must one day, like all things and theories, be thrown aside.

Experiencing the Essence

If one has truly experienced autumn, one has experienced the autumn in all things. Therefore, it is not necessary to encounter all possible situations to garner wisdom. If one could fully experience the present situation, here and now, whether cruel or harmonious, one would attain wisdom.

The philosopher, then, should be fully present at all times, like a patient astronomer who watches the night sky waiting for the clouds to pass that he may glimpse the object of his observations. For there are moments when the light of wisdom flickers through the haze and can be discerned more easily.

If one has truly experienced the essence of anything, one has experienced the essence of all things, since the essence at the very heart of any thing is existence itself, Being. Thus the philosophers who seek to know the essence of their subjects or sciences, though they may each look in different directions, will all reach the same conclusion, arrive at the same point of understanding. The many sciences are different aspects of one essence which is the search for knowledge, and the essence of knowledge is pure comprehension.

So the philosopher who seeks wisdom should aim to experience the Essence. Knowing the Essence, all aspects are understood.

Union with God

The pilgrim soul and the ascetic holy man seek union with God. But although the philosopher may at times walk with the crowd and may often sit alone in quiet meditation, they know that union with God is unattainable. The philosopher knows that God is Unity itself and there never were any outside God.

In their travels - wandering, studies and searching – the philosopher seeks only to end the ignorance that clouds the vision and prevents them from realising the Truth. Clear is the glass, whether clean or unclean: divine unity is always, it is just that false notions of separateness delude the mind. When the accumulated grime of ages is wiped away, the glass is seen to have been transparent all along.

By the steady process of elimination, the searching philosopher rids their mind of error and deceit until all that is left is naked Truth. There is only God. God is.

Truth

Philosophers, seek Truth rather than answers to questions. Answers may be right or wrong. Truth is Truth. One may find the right answers and still not know Truth. Seek Truth - knowing Truth, no questions arise and no answers are needed.

Truth is. There is nothing other than Truth. Even when a lie is told, Truth is present. But this Truth is not something you can put your finger on; it is neither revealed nor concealed. It is imperceptibly always. Your finger is always on it.

But, philosophers, as long as we seek Truth it will ever elude us. We may see the leaf-laden branches of the silver birch blowing, but will never catch sight of the wind. We may hear the faded echo of our own voice, but will never find the distant caller.

So seek Truth, philosophers, as far as you can. But know that the Truth you seek cannot be found; if it could it would not be the ever-present, eternal, whole Truth. Where is Truth? Has it not been with you always?

Relative Truth

All things are founded on Truth, and Truth pervades all things. Yet inasmuch as things express this all-pervading Truth they are inevitably faulty, imperfect. Hence no statement can be irrelatively True; Truth cannot be presented without contradiction, as it is always present.

So all statements are erroneous as far as real Truth is concerned. But although all statements are unsound, some are closer to Truth than others. In the world of opposites and relatives we have relative truths and falsehoods. 'Truth pervades all things' is a relative truth, not absolutely true but an apt enough expression.

Of course, all this that I have said is unavoidably flawed; unavoidably, that is, if I am to pronounce at all. There is no 'closer to Truth' if Truth is everywhere present. There can be nothing other than Truth, notwithstanding conceptual whims. Relativity is erroneous, falsehood untrue.

Laughter

No serious discourse can touch laughter. Laugh, laugh, laugh. Situations permitting, of course.

The philosopher should neither laugh too loud nor too quiet, and should laugh when laughter arises comfortably with the least of effort. And although he may find the words and actions of others simply silly or preposterously pompous, above all he must be able to laugh at himself, at his own fickle foibles and fancies.

If one cannot laugh, all one's seriousness is not worth a jot!

Right and Wrong

It is good and virtuous to do what is right; dishonourable and unjust to perpetrate a wrong. But on some occasions it is good and right to do what would be otherwise wrong, and wrong to do what is otherwise right.

This does not mean that right and wrong are capricious fancies. Quite the opposite, since the bare Ideas right and wrong remain constant. It is only their outer forms and appearances and applications that change relative to the situation.

The high Idea of the Right holds fast throughout. The same cannot be said of the Idea of the wrong, since whereas the Right is the Real and thus self-sufficient, the wrong is assumed to be something other than the Real and therefore dependent. Of course, the wrong is error, the Right is Truth.

Never Give In

Never submit and succumb to the beguiled rule of ignorance. In the fight for freedom and truth, never give in. You cannot. For until you have overcome all ignorance and situated yourself in the Seat of Truth, there will be no rest. You must overcome. You cannot lose.

Any submission to ignorance is only temporary, as truth must eventually prevail. All difficulties must be overcome, they are impediments to progression. And all impediments to progression must fall. The pull of destiny is against them.

But never give in to the errors of enmity and opposition, philosophers, for if you have enemies then enmity exists in yourself, and division is contrary to Truth. Never requite wrong with wrong, nor think that you can quash ignorance with error.

Always seek freedom and truth, for yourself and for the whole, whatever difficulties stand in your way. And tackle all obstacles without anger or impatience - these being obstacles themselves - in the knowledge that goodness will prevail and Truth stands eternally without flaw. Never give in and settle for anything less than Truth.

Surrender

Surrender only to Truth, philosophers. And surrender to it you must. For who or what is greater than Truth?

In your fight for freedom and truth you must seek to overcome all ignorance. But be prepared to surrender your arms when Truth beckons. Do not lose sight of the goal and in your fighting forget peace. True peace was never won without the laying down of arms. Likewise Truth will not be realised without the letting go of error.

Truth makes no demands for surrender. Yet all who have ever opposed it in their ignorance will in time see the folly of error and surrender their souls willingly to the just rule of Truth. The Kingdom of Truth is ever open to those who have surrendered their arms of opposition outside the gate. Only those souls who persist in the ways of ignorance will find no entry, for the ignorant soul is his own enemy.

So lay down your errors, your transient notions and worldly beliefs, your thoughts of possession and your longing for freedom. Let fall the man-made walls and the barbed fences that fiercely define who you are and who you are not. Truth has no limits, no distinct doctrine, and Freedom can never be realised without letting go.

Renunciation

'One who renounces desires actually merges in the world and expands his love to the whole universe,' said Ramana Maharshi. While one should not abandon the world,

mental desires and attachments are a hindrance to the realisation of Truth and the philosopher would do well to renounce them.

The philosopher need not spurn what the strict ascetic might call 'the mortal shackles of the material world' and live a penurious and isolated life doting on his soul, but neither should he crave unnecessaries which only distract him from his goal. It is quite acceptable for the philosopher to have some material comfort if this allows him to pursue his art and settle his awareness in Truth more readily.

True renunciation is not of the objects of desire but of desire itself and its henchman, attachment. The philosopher, however, should have learned by now that bodily desires serve only to please the body and that the striving of the soul is for a higher purpose. And in discovering this he is already putting the needs of the soul above those of the body; for the body is not much concerned with the whys and the wherefores of its existence, until in it the pull of the soul begins to stir.

Eventually, though, the striving of the soul, which disciplines and guides the body towards the true good, must achieve its aim of total renunciation and drop the imagined boundaries that have prevented mergence with the world. Whether the body is alive or dead, active in the world or in spiritual retreat, makes no difference to such a one. He is as he is.

The Philosopher and the World

The philosopher should not abandon the world. Whether he lives alone or with a close-knit community, the world is with him. And although he may view the world of the senses as imperfect and impure and may regularly turn his mind inward in search of perfection, his aim must be to embrace the world wholly and without vexation.

Moreover, since the perfection which he seeks is ever untainted and untouchable - as Unity endures seeming separates - and is at the heart of his being, and the world, it should cause him no great concern whatever the circumstances. He should tread the path fate lays for him with steady resolution and cheerful acceptance, all the while attentive to unflinching Truth.

It makes no difference to Truth whether a lie is told or not. Therefore the soul of the philosopher need not shun the mundane, but should see the spark of Beauty and Truth reflected in all things of the world, in all parts of the whole. His own body he should seek to raise up closer to the Light and his own senses sharpen, and he should take his place in the evolution of the material world which is always progressing, always moving on.

In raising his human-self out of ignorance and towards the perfect he is completing his allotted task, fulfilling his assigned contribution to the betterment of the world. What is truly beneficial to the individual is also beneficial to the whole.

Alive

All is alive; it is just that some things appear less alive than others. There is only life. What we term 'lifeless' or 'dead' is a state at the far end of life's spectrum that is nevertheless a part of life, partaking, albeit in a diminished degree, of the essence Life.

In the world of opposites life expresses its reflection, death - though only superficially, since death is played upon the stage of life and is made of the stuff of life and existence. Even when a form is void of independent animation, the spirit of the world is in it.

Life is the reality and truly has no opposite with which to be contrasted. Nothing exists which is not in life and has not life in it. And though it seems there is a hierarchy ranging from the most alive to the least, this is illusion, since there is no place where life is anywhere lacking. Lifelessness is both in life an illusory affectation and in the mind a false concept. Like non-existence, it is the means of distinguishing what is otherwise an undistinguished reality.

The Philosopher as Translator

The philosopher is a translator, he understands the language of the cosmos and translates her subtle speech into the words of man. The majority of mankind cannot comprehend the parlance she speaks. Some do not believe she speaks at all, they hear only gibberish and meaningless noise.

But the philosopher looks for patterns in that noise, and through patterns he deciphers meaning from what had previously appeared meaningless or baffling. He makes sense of the seemingly senseless. He listens and learns. He makes mistakes sometimes, but that is part of the course.

The role of the philosopher is to teach man what is being taught him already, to convey to man what is already being conveyed but which he does not hear. The philosopher speaks to man in his own language, the language he is more responsive to, communicating the wisdom of the world.

The philosopher is a translator, but he is always eager to turn the mind of man towards the original text from which he reads. Man should not settle for translations, but should learn the language of the cosmos himself, so that he may know firsthand and fully comprehend the essential meaning of the world's tremulous song.

Interpretations of Religious Writings

There are several ways of interpreting and understanding religious writings. For example, the Old Testament of the Bible tells of how Jonah, having been cast into the

sea, was swallowed up by a great fish, wherein he remained three days and three nights before being jettisoned safe upon the shore.

To some who follow a particular faith this is exactly how it was. To others it is pure fantasy and a blatant falsehood. Others might see it as a storyteller's exaggeration of an actual event. Some may see it simply as an allegorical tale of Jonah's doom and salvation. And some may read in it a symbolic description of an esoteric event, Jonah's death and rebirth.

The trick is discerning which of the above five options applies when reading a particular passage in religious texts. Certainly, not one of them applies all of the time. The scriptures, passed down through the years, are, like myths, a mixture of truth, falsehood, exaggeration, allegory and esoteric symbolism. Therefore the student of religious texts, and for that matter mythological accounts, should be aware of these possibilities and treat any interpretation judiciously.

The Real

There is only the Real. Nothing can be outside the Real, since what is not real does not exist. Therefore the Real is all-inclusive.

The Real is Truth. The Real is One. Yet the greatness implied in the term 'the Real' can only stand in contradistinction to the fallibility of that which is not real. But 'the unreal' does not exist, so as a concept it is erroneous.

Concepts may be right or wrong, accurate or unfounded, but are always faulty. Their error lies in their not being all-inclusive, since a concept stands out in the mind distinct from what it is not. The Real, on the other hand, is a complete whole which allows no other or opposite, but in conceptualising and expressing it we must needs contradistinguish and inevitably contradict it.

The Real, then, cannot be conclusively known by humankind, for as long as there exists the notion of a distinct knower, the marring blemish of error is still present. The Real can only be 'perceived' when all errors are abandoned. This is the goal of the philosopher.