

DIALECTIC AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY

by

Donald D. St.Clair

B.S., Kansas State University, 1953

---

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Philosophy

Department of History, Political Science, and Philosophy

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

1961

LD  
2668  
T4  
1961  
S25  
c 2  
Document

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
THE PURPOSE OR FUNCTION OF PHILOSOPHY . . . . .	3
"IMPULSE TO INSIGHT," A MOTIVE WHICH OPERATES IN INQUIRY . . . . .	9
THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH PHILOSOPHY MUST WORK . . . . .	23
The Nature and Mutual Relations of "Common Sense Judgments" and "Scientific Judgments" . . . . .	23
The Impact and Influence of Historical "Persuasions" Upon Science and the Nature of Science . . . . .	27
A View of Social Phenomena . . . . .	32
A STUDY OF DIALECTIC . . . . .	48
Socratic (Plato's) View of Dialectic . . . . .	52
An Example of Dialectic . . . . .	75
REFORMULATION AND CONCLUSION . . . . .	84
Reasons for Inquiry Proceeding Dialectically . . . . .	84
A Value of Conflict . . . . .	88
Conclusion . . . . .	91
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	92

## INTRODUCTION

In the history of philosophy, there has been a great deal written on the subject of dialectic. It is by no means possible to cover every usage and application of the concept. An adequate treatment of this alone would require a book length development. Even then, the justification and grounds for dialectic would have to be ignored.

Another approach, therefore, has to be chosen. Instead of a presentation of an historical survey or account of dialectic, a particular thesis has been adopted by the writer. Generally, the theory that is developed in this treatise is as follows: (a) dialectic refers to a set of principles and processes found in inquiry; (b) the principles and processes grow out of a set of environmental factors, and (c) the process of inquiry is exhibited in certain types of recorded conversations. The general task, then, of this thesis is to study first, the grounds or basis for inquiry; secondly, to examine an actual process of inquiry; and finally, to state the principal characteristics of the process.

The writer soon discovered that, of all the material written on the subject of dialectic, very little of it was concerned with epistemological problems involved in dialectic. Little of the available material has been usable. The writer

has been forced to ignore many treatments of dialectic because they were not relevant to the problems to which he had assigned himself.

In the first three sections of the thesis, a general survey of human and social phenomena is scrutinized. Many problems arise which cannot be resolved in the space allotted. The problems are not ignored, in the sense that the writer is unaware of them. They are, rather, "sacrificed" for the sake of business at hand. At other times, the writer makes an assumption of his own and proceeds. However, problems felt to be crucial to the thesis being developed in this treatise, are discussed in detail.

The same thing is true in the last half of this treatise. In particular, the problem of Plato's theory of Forms is left unresolved. That is to say, the writer does not adequately treat the subject. Plato's Forms are not the concern of this thesis. However, an assumption is made by the writer and the assumption, moreover, is not generally accepted by most philosophers. A detailed justification for the writer's position is not given. It would take too much time and space, and would not contribute to an explication of dialectic.

In summary, this thesis is concerned with dialectic as a method of inquiry. Material not directly related to the process of inquiry lies outside of the scope of this study.

## THE PURPOSE OR FUNCTION OF PHILOSOPHY

Every school and perhaps every philosopher implicitly or explicitly holds its or his own views as to the goal of philosophy. This goal is intimately bound up with the world view held by each school or philosopher. The variety of goals is as impressive as it is complex and intricate. Obviously, we cannot concern ourselves with these to any great extent, nor can we try to achieve in this treatise a synthesis upon which all will agree. What we can do is to state, in a very general way, a general function of philosophy. This will introduce us to a number of topics directly relevant to dialectic.

With this in mind, let us turn to a few remarks by Bertrand Russell:

Philosophy arises from an unusually obstinate attempt to arrive at real knowledge. What passes for knowledge in ordinary life suffers from three defects: it is cocksure, vague, and self-contradictory. The first step towards philosophy consists in becoming aware of these defects not in order to rest content with a lazy skepticism but in order to substitute an amended kind of knowledge which will be tentative, precise, and self-consistent.

The philosopher's work is, so to speak, at the second remove from crude fact. Science tries to collect facts into bundles by means of scientific laws; these laws, rather than the original facts are the raw material of philosophy. Philosophy involves a criticism of scientific knowledge, not from a point of view ultimately different from that of science, but from a point of view less concerned with details and more concerned with the harmony of the whole body of special sciences.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Bertrand Russell, Philosophy, pp.1-2.

Russell apparently is suggesting two areas of philosophic inquiry; the area of knowledge concerned with social, moral and ethical problems, and the area known as "science" which is concerned with problems in chemistry, physics, etcetera.

Knowledge in the first area "suffers three defects," he relates; "it is cocksure, vague, and self-contradictory." This kind of knowledge presumably consists of 'common sense' judgments of ordinary people. "Scientific" knowledge, for Russell, would not be guilty of the gross errors found in the first area and one would suppose that for him there is a qualitative difference between the two areas--if not a definite cleavage.

It will be granted that common sense judgments differ from scientific judgments; however, the writer will argue that the two are difficult to distinguish--especially when they become the subject matter of philosophical inquiry. With this qualification, we might reformulate "the philosopher's work" as a natural movement from the "cocksure, vague, and self-contradictory" to a more rigorous and meaningful statement of things, to a "tentative, precise, and self-consistent" statement. The philosopher is "at second remove from crude fact," his "raw material" being the "laws of science" and judgments of common sense, his activity the examination and interpretation of these two factors. He takes neither a "common sense" view of the world nor a "scientific" view, but a philosophical view which, in Russell's words, "is less concerned with details and more

concerned with the harmony of the whole body of science."<sup>2</sup>

If we accept this as a statement of what philosophy aims to do, we are still ignorant of the process or means to that end. This, then, brings us to the scope of this inquiry; to attempt an explanation of the process which results in comprehensive understanding of facts, phenomena, or things.

An inquiry of this kind should inevitably consider and account for the role of modern logic in understanding. Unfortunately, this lies outside the bounds of our study. Here we are concerned with an area that one might call pre-formal or extra-scientific. That is, we are concerned with an area where a 'loose' variety of logic is used, as opposed to a rigorous system of logic where the propositions must be relatively simple in order that the particular logical calculus may work. We are supposing that if a rigorous logic aids inquiry, it does so in the later stages of the process of understanding.

We are concerned here with the early stages of the process. To clarify what is meant by 'stages' we might chart them as follows:

(1) The realm of the "unknown" i.e. the unstated, undescribed, the vague or ambiguous, and what might be called inadequate descriptions.

---

<sup>2</sup>This is not to suggest that philosophy is "unscientific"- if this term is to mean the contradiction of "exact," "true," etcetera. We do imply by this statement that there exists a difference between philosophical ends and scientific ends. The activities of inquiry, on the other hand, are seen to be similar.

(2) The realm of dialectic, of the act of examining, describing and interpreting the unknown and the vague.<sup>3</sup>

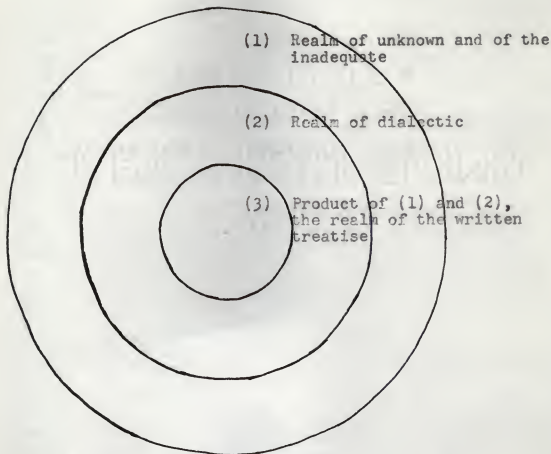
(3) The realm of the written treatise, the written statement that we find in essays, papers, and books.

It is proposed that there exists a movement from the nebulous area of impressions and vague ideas in area (1) to area (2), where the act of inquiry occurs, to the product of (2), which consists of a new statement of a problem: the statement being, in Russell's terms, "tentative, precise, and self-consistent." The product of (2) becomes the content of area (3). The movement might be diagrammed in this manner:

<sup>3</sup> John Dewey's classic "five phases of thought" present a view that can be included within stages (1) and the conclusion of stage (2). His description, it is proposed, represents a more static, fixed statement of the progression of thought in which the actual process involved in inquiry is obscured, but a dialectic process is implied in his description: He writes: "In between, as states of thinking, are (1) suggestions, in which the mind leaps forward to a possible solution; (2) and intellectualization of the difficulty or perplexity that has been felt ... into a problem to be solved, a question for which the answer must be sought; (3) the use of one suggestion after another as leading idea, or hypothesis, to initiate and guide observation and other operations in collection of factual material; (4) the mental elaboration of the idea or supposition as an idea or supposition ... ; and (5) testing the hypothesis by overt or imaginative action." (John Dewey, How We Think, p.107.)

This thesis does not reject Dewey's "five phases," but translates them, so to speak, into the activity of inquiry and clarifies the nature of the actual process.





The hypothetical point in the center of the circle might represent a value of truth or "impulse to insight." It is because of this value that movement from the outer circle to the inner circle is possible: This value supplies the motivation for any inquiry. Socrates' "lovers of opinion" might be thought of as those people who inhabit a no-man's land in between (1) and (2). They are static and fixed in their positions because of the absence of the impulse which leads to critical scrutiny of the beliefs they have.

This thesis would, like most written material, fall into the third realm or area. Its object of study is primarily

area (2) and the relationships it may have with areas (1) and (3). That is to say, this thesis represents the product of an inquiry; not all of the elements, thoughts, and ideas involved in its development are included. Moreover, most written treatises are eliminated as potential materials, for in them the process of inquiry cannot be observed. What, then, remains to be studied?

One answer to this question constitutes the purpose and task of this thesis: It will be the argument of this treatise first, that in area (2) there exists a process which expedites and promotes discovery or insight. Second, that there are in existence, written works which do exhibit the thinking process; for example, the dialogues of Plato. Finally, that inquiry proceeds dialectically and that cognizance of the principles found in dialectic can lead to discovery or to the solution of problems.

Plato's dialogues have been selected for two reasons: He has tried to recreate and dramatize in them actual arguments in which his teacher, Socrates, participated. Also, he utilized a dialectical method to achieve understanding. Plato's predilection for dialectic is seen to be an aid rather than a hindrance, for Plato has recognized and used certain principles of inquiry which aid and promote discovery.

The legitimacy of the conclusions drawn from the Platonic dialogues will be based largely upon the authenticity, verisimilitude or correspondence of the dialogues with actual, ver-

bal encounters and exchanges of ideas.

The supposition is that we may "capture" the thinking process in this area, and that Plato has dramatized the thinking process. If time and space permitted, other examples could be used. For instance, soliloquies in literature could be offered as models of a dialectical process in which characters "think out loud."

Fortunately, concentrated examination of only one "dramatist" of dialectical thinking can be justified by a study of conditions under which inquiry must take place. Dialectic, when viewed in terms of causes found in objective reality, is not an imaginary or arbitrary device which has sprung from the mind of Plato or the author of this thesis. Dialectic is, rather, grounded in and determined by certain necessities of man's existence. The following two sections of this thesis are concerned with environmental factors which inquiry must meet if it hopes to be successful.

In the concluding section dialectic is proposed to meet the above requirements.

#### "IMPULSE TO INSIGHT," A MOTIVE WHICH OPERATES IN INQUIRY

In the Republic, Socrates and Glaucon discuss what constitutes a philosopher. He is seen as a lover; and just as a lover of wine, for instance, is "glad of any pretext of drinking any wine," so the philosopher "has a taste for every sort of knowledge and ...

is curious to learn and is never satisfied."<sup>1</sup> His mistress, so to speak, is "truth" or the "vision of truth."<sup>2</sup>

As the inquiry proceeds, Socrates makes a distinction between the conception of truth or "knowledge" and its opposite, "ignorance." There is found to exist an intermediate entity called "opinion" which is half-way between "pure being," *i.e.*, absolute truth, and "absolute negation of being," *i.e.*, ignorance. Opinion is seen as "darker than knowledge, but lighter than ignorance";<sup>3</sup> opinion is neither knowledge nor ignorance, but a mixture, a combination of what one might call "half-truths." We have then, knowledge, opinion, and appearance, with the philosopher striving to purge his mind of opinion and ignorance, and to achieve knowledge of "pure being."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Republic, V, 475; translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 478.

<sup>4</sup> The Cornford translation reads "the perfectly real" instead of Jowett's "pure being", and "the utterly unreal" instead of Jowett's absolute negation of being." Jowett's translation stresses Plato's mystical side and, if taken too literally, can be misleading. However, the mysticism is certainly present, even though Cornford's translation obscures it. Cornford, moreover, is aware of this aspect of Plato, for in Cornford's preface to this section, he relates the following: "Knowledge is infallible ... ; Belief may be true or false. ... Knowledge, by definition, is of unique, unchanging objects. Just in this respect, the Forms resemble the laws of nature sought by modern, natural science: a law is an unseen, intelligible principle, a unity underlying an unlimited multiplicity of similar phenomena, and supposed to be unalterable."

Inseparably connected with this argument is Plato's theory of Forms and the role which they play in appearances. Appearances participate in pure being, but they are illusory, because imperfect (that is, not perfectly real). Opinion, because it accepts appearances as the truly real, is mistaken. "Lovers of opinion," therefore, accept a world which is characterized by a mixture of positive and negative factors. Beauty, for instance (for lovers of opinion), is never pure but is associated with ugliness. Insofar as appearances partake of Absolute Beauty, the man of opinion is correct in his perception. He is not a true philosopher, however, until he appreciates the absolute:

Those who see the many beautiful, and who yet neither see absolute beauty, nor can follow any guide who points the way thither; who see the many just, and not absolute justice, and the like,--such persons may be said to have opinion but not knowledge. ... But those who love the truth in each then are to be called lovers of wisdom and not lovers of opinion.<sup>5</sup>

---

The Forms, however, are not laws of the sequence or coexistence of phenomena, but ideals or patterns, which have a real existence independent of our minds, and of which the many individual things called by their names in the world of appearances are like images or reflections." The Republic of Plato, translated by F. M. Cornford, p.181.

It would seem, therefore, that the Forms function in actual practice like an "unseen intelligible principle" or "law of nature," but refer, at the same time, to eternal substances. That is to say, Forms, as such, are independent, "real existences." An "Idea" in the mind of man refers to (a), the eternal Form and (b), sensible appearances. This treatise is concerned with (b) and the function of the concept of Forms as an "intelligible principle." Jowett's usage of terms such as, "pure being," "absolute," etcetera, are permissible as an interpretation of Plato, as far as this thesis is concerned; for the actual function of the concept of Forms, even in Jowett's translation, is that of a general, propositional principle.

<sup>5</sup>

Ibid., 479-480.

At this point, I am not concerned with the problems connected with universals and particulars. These become relevant later, in our analysis of Plato's dialectic; in particular, in showing how his view of the One affects the nature of his dialectic. Now, our concern is with a value judgment found in the foregoing quotations. Plato's view of "being" or "reality" is separated from the conception he has of a value which orients, or ought to orient, a person to reality. This value, when present in human affairs, leads to understanding and wisdom; when absent, to confusion and ignorance. We shall call this value a "cultivated impulse toward insight."

It seems to me that a value of truth is implied in such metaphorical phrases as "lovers of wisdom," or lovers of the "vision of truth," and "love of wisdom" leading necessarily to a psychological state of "truthfulness" in the individual. "Lovers of wisdom," says Socrates, "will never intentionally receive into their mind falsehood, which is their detestation, and they will love the truth."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it is the love of truth which "ought to" motivate an individual's life. "The true lover of learning then must from his earliest youth, as far as in him lies, desire all truth."<sup>7</sup>

What Plato has written as "love" and "desire" is not necessarily a part of the nature of human beings, but a value which

---

<sup>6</sup> Republic, VI, 485; translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit.

may or may not operate in individuals. It is a value which we may cultivate and make a part of our consciousness. Briefly, this value is a desire to know the "truth" about things--all things; it is a desire to understand, to gain understanding about the world in which we live. Among other things, the value of truth entails an activity, the activity of inquiry. The cultivation of a value of truth is, at the same time, a cultivation of the habit of inquiry. The term, "impulse to insight" is employed to designate the value of truth and the activity of inquiry.

For an individual who sees no Forms or Absolutes operating in knowledge, but a world of theories about reality, some in partial agreement, some contradictory, still others so dissimilar that they defy comparison, the "impulse to insight" still operates. In such a world, admitting that one theory is better than another and that theory is an aid to understanding, the impulse to insight motivates one to examine each theory, to accept and refine theory, or perhaps to construct "new" theory which explains things better. The impulse to insight, it will be argued, is very essential to dialectic or, for that matter, to any serious inquiry, and provides motivation for the process of examination.

One might object that this is trite--an obvious truism. All people accept this value. However obvious, this value entails more than is suspected at first glance, especially when

a certain amount of humility accompanies it. The attitude of humility found in the dictum, "No man has the whole truth," is exemplified in Socrates. After the Oracle of Delphi said he was the wisest of men, he reportedly set about to find men who were wiser than himself. Upon investigation, Socrates found that those who had reputations of wisdom really knew nothing although they thought that they knew much. But he, Socrates, "neither knows nor thinks that he knows."<sup>8</sup>

The above statement of Socrates, as he defended himself against his accusers, elicits a smile from those who are acquainted with his usual devastating attacks on his antagonists' views in other dialogues. Yet, even though Socrates displays a vast fund of knowledge and "always wins," a spirit of humility coupled with a desire to learn seems to permeate his discussions. It is a democratic spirit, which represses the tendency to bigotry and promotes inquiry into new ideas and development of the ideas of others.

Briefly, the impulse to insight accompanied by a recognition of the fallibility of ideas brings about an attitude in the individual which leads to a type of activity which in turn, results in attainment of understanding. This attitude in Socrates so impressed Santayana that he made the following remarks:

---

<sup>8</sup>

Apology, 21-22, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.



The Socratic method is the soul of liberal conversation; it is compacted in equal measure of sincerity and courtesy. Each man is autonomous and all are respected; and nothing is brought forward except to be submitted to reason and accepted or rejected by the self-questioning heart. Indeed, when Socrates appeared in Athens mutual respect had passed into democracy and liberty into license; but the stalwart virtue of Socrates saved him from being a sophist, much as his method, when not honestly and sincerely used, might seem to countenance that moral anarchy which the sophists had expressed in their irresponsible doctrines. Their sophistry did not consist in the private seat which they assigned to judgment; for what judgment is there that is not somebody's judgment at some moment? The sophism consisted in ignoring the living moment's intent, and in suggesting that no judgment could be wrong: in other words that each man at each moment was the theme and standard, as well as the seat, of his judgment.

Socrates escaped this folly by force of honesty, which is what saves from folly in dialectic. He built his whole science precisely on that intent which the sophists ignored; he insisted that people should declare sincerely what they meant and what they wanted; and on that living rock he founded the persuasive and ideal sciences of logic and ethics, the necessity of which lies all in free insight and in actual will. This will and insight they render deliberate, profound, unshakable, and consistent. Socrates, by his genial midwifery, helped men to discover the truth and excellence to which they were naturally addressed. This circumstance rendered his doctrine at once moral and scientific; scientific because dialectical, moral because expressive of personal and living aspirations.<sup>9</sup>

The absence and distortion of a value of truth results in another set of conditions. For example, in the Sophist we see impulse to insight and honesty in thought contrasted with individuals motivated by other values. J. K. Feibleman summarizes

---

<sup>9</sup> George Santayana, The Life of Reason, Vol.V, p.242.

the differences established in this dialogue between an "honest" and a "dishonest" approach to inquiry:

Particularly, the idea of elenchus is relevant. The meaning of elenchus is the eliciting of truth by cross-examination. ... The pitfall, according to Plato, is the opposite of elenchus and is termed eristic. Its aim is not to exhibit fallacies by eliciting contradictions, but rather to secure personal triumph by winning arguments ... The practitioner of elenchus pretends to no knowledge, but strives to show the untenability of the position of an opponent; while the practitioner of eristic pretends to superior knowledge and only seeks in refutation the defeat of his opponent. The practitioner of elenchus is a teacher and his method is the primary one of education; the practitioner of eristic is a competitor whose weapon is controversy.<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of inquiry, then, is the attainment of truth, and any factor that would inhibit this is to be avoided--including one's "ego involvements." But the pretence of men of knowing the truth could be interpreted as an expression of "hybris" by Plato; it should evoke a note of caution in the reader. If the principle of humility in ideas is extended to exclude anyone's holding ideas, then we must reject this aspect of it as interfering with the quest for truth.

Plato comes close to saying this in a passage of the Republic, where he uses the analogy of the young and uninstructed in philosophy as "puppy-dogs" who indiscriminately tear ideas to pieces for the sport and delight of destruction.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> J. K. Feibleman, "The Therapy of the Dialectic," Journal of Philosophy, September 30, 1943, 40:566.

<sup>11</sup> Republic, VII, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

Presumably, for Plato, there are ideas which "ought not" to be mutilated by profane questions, by people who promiscuously tear ideas to pieces for the sport. Plato is justified in objecting to "argument for argument's sake" or argument for destructive purposes alone. But Plato approaches another extreme which is equally undesirable; he suggests that ideas are sacred.

This extreme is a misuse of the value of truth. The value no longer entails inquiry, but entails placing an excessive preference upon results of inquiry. Future dialectical inquiry is thus halted or severely crippled, for the process depends upon a given statement being treated as tentative in nature. We must, then, make clear our definition of "truth" so that any value that is attached to it does not inhibit our attainment of truth.

Of course it would be commonplace to observe that beliefs have a way of becoming precious, and this phenomenon is in no way restricted to non-dialecticians. We shall see later how the Socratic method of dialectic has been rejected as spurious because it has led to arbitrariness in certain philosophers and philosophies. It is proposed that such a condition does not arise from a dialectic process but rather from certain assumptions which are either presupposed or thought to be established. Absoluteness and arbitrariness, as such, does not arise from a dialectic process but lies outside it. We shall emphasize the

fact therefore that "impulse to insight" is spelled with a small "i". That is to say, we do not mean to imply that there exists a comprehensive truth or a set of static "truths" that must be grasped by the mind and which will explain the nature of things.

Here "insight" is defined as that symbolic propositional statement which, on the basis of existing evidence, best describes and interprets a given condition or existence. An insight, then, is a superior propositional statement ( a statement which interprets, clarifies, and explains phenomena). The "impulse to insight" in its entirety refers to a desire in an individual for superior statements and the activity of developing superior statements.

Before we move into a slightly different area, a few words are in order concerning an adjective used in connection with the value, "impulse toward insight." It was stated that this value is "cultivated." This implies that the value is not an innate or inherent gift possessed by all people from birth. We shall suppose it is, rather, something that is acquired. In Socrates' opinion it is indeed very rare:

Everyone will admit that a nature having in perfection all the qualities which we have required in a philosopher, is a rare plant which is seldom seen among men.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>

Republic, VI, 491, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

However, Socrates may be eliminating the majority of mankind by listing too many ideal qualities. Socrates, himself, if confronted with his ideal, might well have denied that he fulfilled all the requirements of the ideal. Supposing the "desire" or value of truth is one of the important qualities of a philosopher, to what extent is it present in man?

For Socrates, it would appear that a desire for truth is more prevalent in man than is the propensity for ignorance. Take, for instance, the reasons Socrates gives for the scarcity of the philosopher. The chief factors appear to be: (a) "people's own virtues, their courage, temperance," (b) the "goods of life-- beauty, wealth, strength, rank," etcetera, and (c) "the flood of popular opinion" which runs rampant in the market place, assemblies, theaters, and "other popular resorts." These destructive elements are not seen as "natural" to or inherent in the nature of man, but "corrupting and distracting" conditions of man's environment.<sup>13</sup> In this passage, it would appear that man is deflected from the pursuit of "truth" by the conditions of his life in society.

Other writings of Plato seem to conceive of the "desire" or "impulse to insight" as basic to the human being. In Protagoras, Socrates argues that "no human being errs voluntarily or voluntarily does evil and dishonourable actions; but they are very

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 492.

well aware that all who do evil and dishonourable things do them against their will.<sup>14</sup> Evil and vice for Socrates are equated with ignorance; virtue and justice are synonymous with knowledge.<sup>15</sup> It would follow that if man naturally abhors evil and seeks virtue, he also has a natural desire for knowledge. Evil is, therefore, a "defect of knowledge."<sup>16</sup>

A. E. Taylor has summarized this view of man by summarizing Aristotle's comments on Socrates' moral teachings. They are:

(a) virtue, moral excellence, is identical with knowledge, and for that reason, all the commonly discriminated virtues are one thing; (b) vice, bad moral conduct, is therefore in all cases ignorance, intellectual error; (c) wrong-doing is therefore always involuntary, and there is really no such state of soul as Aristotle calls "moral weakness" (acrasia), "knowing the good and yet doing evil."<sup>17</sup>

Although Taylor goes on to use this view, a commitment that this writer does not share, his interpretation of Socrates' teaching is relevant. Taylor holds that Socrates did not necessarily mean that when a man knew a given act was "wrong" he would not commit the act. What Socrates meant was that:

<sup>14</sup> Protagoras, 346, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>17</sup> A. E. Taylor, Socrates, The Man and His Thought, p.141.

A man often enough does evil in spite of the fact that it is evil; no man ever does evil simply because he sees it to be evil, as a man may do good simply because he sees it to be good. A man has temporarily to sophisticate himself into regarding evil as good before he will choose to do it.<sup>18</sup>

We cannot say that all who commit evil do so only despite the fact it is evil, for psychiatry could produce specimens who do what they hold to be evil because it is evil, for doing evil is satisfying to them. Certainly in fiction devil-figures which illustrate this have been used (characters such as Conrad's Mr. Jones, A. Huxley's Spandrell). Still, for most people--psychiatrists among them--such a person is ill, or diseased of mind, perverted; which is a way of saying that it is abnormal or unnatural for man not to desire virtue and goodness.

The question of whether or not an "impulse to insight," as it has been defined, is present in man, hinges upon whether virtue and knowledge are, or are not, synonymous terms. If the former, then we could safely suppose that impulse to insight is present in all men. If the latter, the problem becomes more complex. Let us assume that the latter is the case: that virtue and the desire for virtue are related to knowledge synthetically. Furthermore, let us suppose that knowledge makes it possible for an individual to distinguish between good and evil. It would follow that the desire for good or virtue is one of the bases for the desire for knowledge and would parallel what we

---

<sup>18</sup>

Ibid., p.142.

have called "impulse to insight."

A second question presents itself. If the desire for goodness or virtue is present in man, whence does it arise? The conditions under which all men live might be cited as a source. The desire grows "naturally" from certain necessities of survival and avoidance of pain. Achievement of these goals depends, in any community, upon (a) instruments to control, manipulate, and harness nature for the benefit of man, (b) kindness--the reluctance to harm or to see harm done to others and a reciprocal generosity (agape)--which gives birth to concepts such as justice and integrity, and (c) hard work--a productive activity that is personally useful, as well as beneficial to others. A value of truth may arise from these "necessities," and might be further refined as that desire for a conceptual apprehension of theories that will lead to more satisfying realization of (a), (b), and (c). If this is true, then it is no accident that, as the pragmatists have pointed out, the "truth" of theories has been judged in the long run by their results--and for good reason.

We might conclude this observation by recalling that in mental illness, a primary cause of neurosis is repression of thoughts about which we feel guilty. A second cause is an inability to rationalize any given action--especially one concerning which there is doubt about its desirability. Could



it be that mental illness increases when the organization of a society promotes actions contrary to (a), (b) and (c)? The values in such a society would, by virtue of propaganda, threat, violence and unemployment, place an individual in a compromising situation. Questioning the dictums of his society would lead the individual to feel that he was "outside" or alienated from his world.

In summary, whether an impulse to insight is inherent, natural, or a cultivated value, it is an important element for anyone who seeks "to know," "to learn," or to "achieve understanding or wisdom." In our development of dialectic as a mode of inquiry, we shall therefore place this value first, and acknowledge it, if not as that "which saves from folly in dialectic, then at least as that which minimizes folly, as Santayana believed.

#### THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH PHILOSOPHY MUST WORK

The Nature and Mutual Relations of "Common Sense Judgments" and "Scientific Judgments."

There is a way in which Plato's "opinion" corresponds to what goes under the name of "common sense" today. For Plato, opinion occupied a status on the positive side of ignorance but inferior to knowledge. Assuming that the two terms, common sense and opinion, are interchangeable, we might look at a few remarks made by contemporary thinkers concerning the relation-

ship of these terms to "real" knowledge or "scientific knowledge."

"Common sense ideas exhibit a curious mixture of wisdom and bias," write the authors of Knowledge and Society. The "man on the street" takes these judgments for granted, and only when systematic questions and tests, or logical analysis are employed does the individual "embark on the voyage of reflective inquiry that leads to philosophy and science."<sup>1</sup>

"The persuasions of common sense precede those of science and philosophy in order of time as well as in order of evidence." That is, "science and philosophy are of comparatively late origin, both in the history of the race and the growth of the individual."<sup>2</sup> In regard to the latter, our chief concern, it is stated that: "all of us begin and most of us end, with the persuasions generated by daily experience and action."<sup>3</sup>

It is argued further that: common sense is not only first in the order of time, it is first in the order of evidence. ... Both science and philosophy start with the things which everyone runs up against and of which all alike must take cognizance.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adams, et al., Knowledge and Society, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.5.

This assumes, as the authors point out, that "things" exist, are antecedently given in the world of "common sense," and that it is to these things that hypotheses refer.

Philosophy, they continue, "does not create worlds without end" but ... must begin by plunging in medias res. It presupposes, as a mental climate, the accumulated persuasions of its age ... These persuasions constitute its point of departure.

No doubt this needs some qualification. First, this argument suggests either that philosophy and science use common sense judgments as first premises with which critical inquiry begins, or that the philosopher or scientist receives his impressions of concrete reality in the same form as the "ordinary" man on the street. It may be argued, in regard to the latter, that a "scientifically" trained man will have entirely different impressions than the layman. Undoubtedly, there is merit in this objection. However, it may not be true in either case that anyone is "free" from the "persuasions" of his age; that current suppositions color and shape one's conception of one's impressions of things. This will be dealt with later on.

Generally, this view holds that the great fund and reservoir of common sense judgments furnish a suggestive basis for

---

<sup>5</sup>  
Ibid., p.6.

inquiry and is, in the last analysis, the area in which all theories are grounded. We see this illustrated in the idea that there are two kinds of data: "pre-analytic data" -- that which objects are "taken to be by common sense" and prior to investigation, and "post-analytic data"--what ideas "become as a consequence of scientific or philosophical inquiry." The "post-analytic data" result from a process of sophisticated inquiry which "consists principally in analysis or discernment of the objects of common sense."<sup>6</sup> Finally, because of the reasons given,

between pre-analytic data and post-analytic data there can be no break in continuity, for the latter are derived from the former. This is but a technical way of stating the fact that ordinary experience furnishes the point of departure for both science and philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

According to this view, "common sense" and philosophical judgments (a) are inextricably bound together, with the latter derived from the former as a result of rigorous inquiry, and (b) are never free from the "persuasions of the age." In other words, men's judgments are affected by certain presuppositions found operating in one's culture; even their percepts are, in part, determined by what they think they should see in reality.

Before this section is concluded, an ambiguity should be clarified. In regard to (a), is it meant that philosophical

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.13.

judgments are (1) derived from common sense judgments of the layman, or (2) derived from common sense judgments of the "expert?" If the answer is, "Both (1) and (2), for they are essentially the same," then the answer would appear to contradict empirical evidence. A cursory look at common sense judgments will disclose disagreement among them on most things. If it is countered, "yes, but we mean sensory impressions are the same for all men," then the problem has been pushed back into a non-rational area.

When sensory impressions are transformed into a symbolic conception, there arise disagreements, contradictions and ambiguities (it is nonsensical to say that sensory impressions agree or disagree; ideas and propositions "agree" about the nature of sensory impressions). Then, common sense judgments, whether of (1) or (2) are "similar" in that they are characterized by contradictions, disagreements and ambiguities. If all scientific and philosophical judgments are derived from common sense judgments, then it would follow that inquiry begins with the ambiguities, contradictions and disagreements. The process of inquiry must, therefore, have a method of handling these characteristics.

The Impact and Influence of Historical "Persuasions"  
Upon Science and the Nature of Science

The problem of why common sense judgments disagree is an interesting one. It can be argued that all men's "experience"

of an object differ; that one individual's perception of an object is different than another's perception of the same object. From these different perceptions grow individual theories about the object. This view can be accepted as one of the factors which results in different theories but it cannot be accepted as the only factor. Presuppositions found in one's culture also enter into the problem. Moreover, they enter into "scientific" as well as common sense judgments.

Philipp Frank, in a chapter called "Theories of High Generality," has pointed out a few of these factors which influence the acceptance and use of scientific "laws." He writes:

Scientists and scientifically-minded people in general have been inclined to say that these "nonscientific" influences upon the acceptance of scientific theories are something which "should not" happen; but since they do happen, it is necessary to understand their status within a logical analysis of science. We have learned by a great many examples that the general principles of science are not unambiguously determined by the observed facts. If we add requirements of simplicity and agreement with common sense, the determination becomes narrower, but it does not become unique. We can still require their fitness to support desirable moral and political doctrines. All these requirements together enter into the determination of a scientific theory. The firm conviction of most scientists that a theory should be accepted "on scientific grounds" only, forms a philosophy which they absorbed as young students in the period when they started to acquire knowledge about the world; this philosophy claims that a "true" theory gives us a "picture of the physical reality," and that this theory can be found on the basis of observed facts. If a theory built up exclusively because of its agreement with observed facts told the "truth" about the world, it would be foolish to assume seriously that the acceptance of a scientific theory should be influenced by reasons of simplicity and agreement with common sense, let alone moral, religious, or political grounds. However, we have learned that "agreement with observed facts" never singles out one individual theory. There is never only one theory that is in complete agreement

with all observed facts, but several theories that are in partial agreement. We have to select the final theory by a compromise. The final theory has to be in fair agreement with observed facts and must also be fairly simple. If we consider this point it is obvious that such a "final" theory cannot be "The Truth."

However, this metaphysical concept of a true theory as a "replica of physical reality" is not prevalent in the scientific philosophy of today. A theory is now rather regarded as an instrument that serves some definite purpose. ... The scientific theory is, in a way, a tool that produces other tools according to a practical scheme. Scientific theories are also accepted, however, because they give us a simple and beautiful world picture and support a philosophy which, in turn, supports a desirable way of life.<sup>8</sup>

A "pure science," therefore, is seen by Frank as impossible; impossible because of the nature and function of theories. "Extra-scientific" factors enter into theories by virtue of the fact that for any given phenomenon there exists not one theory by many theories. We have, so to speak, a pluralistic universe of thought and discourse, and because we select one theory in preference to others, we need some sort of criteria. Social and political values seem to furnish criteria. The question then becomes one of identifying "extra-scientific" factors, of stating them objectively, and of discussing them philosophically to arrive at an intelligent compromise. To suppose that "extra-scientific" factors "ought not" to influence decisions, and to insist, moreover, that they "will not" is only to force these factors into another form; this results in the social factors masquerading under other names and operating on an unconscious level.

---

8

Philipp Frank, Philosophy of Science, pp.355-356.

A case in point can be found in the reasons scientists give for preferring "simple theories."

Some scientists say that they prefer them because "simple" formulae allow easier and quicker computation of the result; they are "economical" because they save time and effort. Other authors, however, say that simple theories are more "elegant," more "beautiful"; they prefer simple theories for "aesthetic" reasons. However, we know from the history of the fine arts that a certain aesthetic preference is the result of a certain way of life, or a certain culture or social pattern.

Concepts in science, then, like "simplicity" and "agreement with common sense" have, in Frank's words, "always played their role and brought some sociological and psychological reasons into the decision of scientists."<sup>10</sup>

One conclusion that may be drawn from these observations is that any method of inquiry must be able to handle and cope with sociological and psychological factors that figure in any subject matter. It means, among other things, that limiting philosophy to logical problems of syntax will render it incapable of dealing with the problems mentioned above. We must then expand the use of the philosophical method; our mode of inquiry must be of such a nature that such problems may be dealt with.

Max Black, aware of the problems of science, rejects any attempt to reduce inquiry to a pat formula. He accuses those

---

<sup>9</sup>  
Ibid., p.350.

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid., p.354.



scientists who attempt the above of seeking an Aristotelian "immutable essence." This he feels to be erroneous.<sup>11</sup> Black recommends what he calls a "range definition" of inquiry which includes:

- (a) a description of the main factors engaged
- (b) determination of their relative "weight"--or importance
- (c) an account of their interaction.<sup>12</sup>

Mr. Black objects to any hard and fast definition of the scientific method because this results in excluding many of the procedures of science and stops or inhibits further reflection upon the process of inquiry itself. Of the latter, he writes:

My own contention [is] that the very principles of scientific method are themselves to be regarded as provisional and subject to later correction, so that a definition of "scientific method" would be verifiable, in some wide sense of the term. To the degree that the definition is framed in the light of our best reflection about past knowledge--seeking activities, with the intention that it shall guide our further pursuit of knowledge in the future, we can properly claim that the procedure is rational. For to be rational is to be always in a position to learn from experience.<sup>13</sup>

Now to propose that Max Black is arguing for a dialectical process would be to foist something upon his writings that was never intended. We need not do this in order to appreciate the relevance of his comments. Three points require emphasis: The process (1) is complex and dynamic (2) it should be flexible, and (3) it should not be bound by predetermined formulae.

<sup>11</sup>

Max Black, Problems of Analysis, p.13.

<sup>12</sup>

Ibid., p.14.

<sup>13</sup>

Ibid., p.23.

Even though Black was not arguing that inquiry is necessarily dialectical, his observations indicate and suggest a dialectical process. As it will be seen later, the foregoing points can be said to characterize a dialectical process.

Now, let us turn to a slightly different area of social phenomena. In passing, it should be mentioned that a detailed summary of the material just studied will be deferred until the end of the following section.

#### A View of Social Phenomena

Thus far in this section, our attention has been confined to problems found in the "physical sciences." It has been observed how social and psychological factors influence "scientific" judgments, but the social world itself has not been considered. In this section, we shall have a look at social phenomena and try to extract a few generalizations that may have some bearing upon our problem. Unfortunately, this area cannot be covered with great thoroughness, but must be restricted to a short study of a few salient aspects of the social environment. With this goal in mind, the following remarks made by William James will furnish a comprehensive review of social phenomena:

... there is nothing final in any actually given equilibrium of human ideals, but that, as our present laws and customs have fought and conquered other past ones, so they will in their turn be overthrown by any newly discovered order which will hush up the complaints they give rise to, without producing others louder still. The pinch is always here ... See the abuses which the institution of private property covers, so

that even today it is shamelessly asserted among us that one of the prime functions of the national government is to help the adroit citizens to grow rich ... See the wholesale loss of opportunity under our regime of so-called equality and industrialism, with the drummer and the counter-jumper in the saddle ... See everywhere the struggle and the squeeze; and ever-lastingly the problem how to make them less. The anarchists, nihilists, and free-lovers; the free silverites, socialists, and single-tax men; the free-traders and civil-service reformers: the prohibitionists and anti-vivisectionists; the radical darwinians with their idea of the suppression of the weak--these and all the conservative sentiments of society arrayed against them, are simply deciding through actual experiment by what sort of conduct the maximum amount of good can be gained and kept in this world.<sup>14</sup>

There are a number of things being said and implied here. The most obvious might be simply, "things change." But we all know that things change. The question, it would seem, is not whether things change, but (1) how do they change and (2) how may or ought they change. In (1) the word "do" is used in preference to "have" for the following reasons: When we ask "how have things changed?" we are asking for an historical account of all those antecedent factors which resulted in certain events. All factors are thereby excluded which do not explain the historical event. In other words, our problem focuses, not upon explications of historical events but upon the social process in which the events occur.

---

14

William James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy, pp.206, 207. It is interesting to note that the latter part of the quotation is "dated." James mentions groups of people no longer significant in our social pattern--this evidences the truth of his own statement.

In order to answer our two questions, let us make an assumption: Let us suppose that (a) institutions, organizations and actions come into being because of conscious and unconscious beliefs held in a community of people, (b) that men are causal agents in a complex of causes which result in a given event.<sup>15</sup> This assumption will allow for whatever actual "choice" man may have in any event, and also allow for non-human determinants and the interactions of both.

The first part (a) of the assumption becomes exceptionally pertinent to philosophy and furnishes an area for inquiry. It is relatively easy to see how consciously held beliefs may lead to concrete actions and organizational institutions. But unconsciously held beliefs are more subtle. However, psychiatry has shown that it is by no means uncommon for people to hold beliefs of which they are entirely unaware.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> That is to say, non-psychological factors enter into this "complex of causes" and set certain physical limitations and offer certain alternatives. Part (b) is meant to include the non-psychological factors.

<sup>16</sup> I agree with psychiatry that some unconscious beliefs are more or less unique to particular individuals and are not universal in character. However, I propose that some unconscious beliefs are more or less "universal"; that is, they are held in common by a group of people. Moreover, the source of those unconscious beliefs held in common is found in social behavior.

Now "belief" is defined as a tendency to act in a specific way: A consciously held belief would be a tendency to act in a specific way; plus a state of mind which is rationally aware of that tendency and in which the tendency to act exists in a propositional language form. An unconscious belief would be a tendency to act in a specific way, with the individual unaware of that tendency and unaware of the meaning or significance of his resultant behavior. If this definition of belief is granted, then it would follow that acts or behavior embody beliefs. By studying behavioral acts, one can be cognizant of existing individual and collective beliefs. Furthermore, in that some beliefs are unconsciously held by many people, the only method of discovering these particular beliefs would necessarily be through studying behavior.

The propositional form of beliefs is peculiarly valuable because it is capable of rational justification or examination if some doubt arises concerning the desirability of the belief. On the other hand, the unconscious belief, as long as it remains in a non-rational, non-propositional form, is incapable of justification or examination. The unconscious belief, moreover, what one may designate as the "unknown" in the original scheme, occupies the "nebulous" area, (1).<sup>17</sup>

---

17

See page 5 of this thesis.

It is now possible to answer the question of "how may (or ought) things change?" (At this point, we only may answer this within scope of part (a) of our assumption on page 33). If our foregoing suppositions are correct, things change because of either (1) unconscious beliefs which lead to public, concrete manifestations, or because of (2) a mediating process in which beliefs are postulated symbolically, examined, and a choice made between existing alternatives. The latter is preferable because it gives us control. This then is how things ought to change. Philosophical inquiry, then, should strive to identify the unknown and unconscious beliefs implicit in individual and institutional acts, to transform the beliefs into propositional form.<sup>18</sup> Uncontrollable, unconscious beliefs are thus forced into a rational form where they may be examined, refined, rejected or discarded.

Non-psychological factors which bring about change have not yet been discussed. Perhaps the best way of introducing this subject is to recall the phenomenon of "cultural-lag." According to the theory explaining it, technological innovations in society bring about a qualitative change in the social con-

---

18

The problem which concerns philosophy is not identifying unconscious beliefs for purposes of administrating individual "therapy," but rather identifying group beliefs for the purpose of analyzing them with regard to their desirability for future action.

ditions such that it affects behavior. People resist or ignore the innovation by failing to alter their thinking and institutions.<sup>19</sup>

An example of a non-human event, a technological innovation, is the atomic bomb. This particular event shall be used to avoid the "historical question" previously discussed.<sup>20</sup> The dynamics of the social process is seen best in context of the

19

The phenomenon of new social factors and conditions bringing about a qualitative change in the conditions of social existence and "determining" the nature of social consciousness or beliefs in a community was first developed by Karl Marx. An example of the social process which exhibits this fact is seen in Marx's Das Capital, pp.343 to 353, where an historical survey of economic modes of production traces large-scale manufacture back to its handicraft origins.

The theory of "cultural lag" popularized by Ogburn and other sociologists parallels the Marxian theory, if it is not the same theory masquerading under a different guise. The difference, if any, is to be found in the sociologists restricting their use of the theory to individual, social innovations like the telephone, automobile, etcetera.

Ogburn's definition of cultural lag is as follows: "Where one part of culture changes first, through some discovery or invention, and occasions changes in some part of culture dependent upon it, there frequently is a delay in the changes occasioned in the dependent part of culture. The extent of this lag will vary according to the nature of the cultural material but may exist for a considerable number of years, during which time there may be said to be a maladjustment." William F. Ogburn, Social Change, p.200.

20

An "historical question" is seen to be a question which "asks" only for those factors which were directly related to the event in question after that event has happened. The actual process which preceded the occurrence of the event is obscured. This is not the fault of the historian but a result of the goal with which the historian is concerned. Also, most of the process is unrecorded. To see the actual process in operation one must focus upon present events. The atom bomb is such an event.

atom bomb, for the final social adjustments to the atom bomb are still embryonic. That is to say, the final complex of behavior and the belief it embodies, exists now as but one alternative among many beliefs and modes of behavior (or, perhaps, "will emerge in the immediate future," in which case, the problem is the same. There will then exist one more belief.)

The event of the existence of the bomb, for example, may mean possible alternatives: (1) the banning of the bomb and utilization of the principle for peaceful purposes; (2) military preparation against the use of the bomb and (3) use of the bomb (in which case the cultural lag may be the cultural demise). In the event of any of these possibilities, certain social and individual changes must necessarily occur; indeed some have already occurred. In other words, the fact of the bomb exists; it will remain; the question becomes, how should it be used and what form shall social and individual adjustment assume? Things must change whether we like it or not, for present beliefs and institutions are no longer useful.

This provides an example of how environmental factors may set limitations to beliefs, and produce changes in beliefs. Also, this demonstrates how beliefs concerning environmental factors can lead to a number of particular forms which a neutral existent, such as the bomb, can take. The fact of the bomb fosters a pluralistic world of new beliefs but just what the beliefs are and the final beliefs will be, no one is certain just



Now let us apply these assumptions. We can see that old beliefs (personal as well as national and international) and institutional organizations are inadequate for the treatment and the solution of the problem of the bomb. The bomb represents but one of the causal agents for a change of some kind in social beliefs and institutions. At least two other factors operate, namely, unconscious and conscious beliefs toward the bomb. The latter is relatively easy to deal with because it is known. If, for instance, someone says, "let's use the bomb now;" people can take steps to inhibit his action. But suppose that some, indeed many, people unconsciously believe that the bomb should be used? If the belief is unconsciously held, how may one know of its existence? The answer is furnished by our assumption; the nature of the belief can be known by the nature of the act. Therefore, one must look for actions that are oriented around and toward the bomb and postulate the beliefs that they embody. If the unconscious belief betrays in action the tendency to use the bomb, then one can safely assume that sooner or later the bomb will be used: For the belief results in institutional behavior, creating more social factors which lead to the ultimate use of the bomb.

Now, it may be the case that if people were aware that some of their actions incorporate the belief that the bomb will be used, they would be shocked and indignant. They might reply, "I don't believe that at all. I believe that the bomb ought

now. Cultural lag, however, indicates fixity and permanency of beliefs, especially when we look at history, at events that have already taken place and reached their terminating points.

Here the concept of cultural lag as it is commonly used becomes misleading because it ignores the emergence of new, implicit and explicit beliefs which accompany the introduction of new, social events such as the atom bomb or the telephone. To say merely that people resist a social innovation is to understate the case, it ignores the subtle changes that have already taken place in behavior and beliefs. Furthermore, this way of speaking leads one to suppose, mistakenly, that what happened did so because it was the only event that could have happened. Cultural lag, therefore, successfully points out how conscious, explicit beliefs are carried over in the face of social innovations but it fails to demonstrate how the old beliefs exist in conflict with new, implicit beliefs, and how the latter lead to particular, social manifestations, in spite of old beliefs. We can demonstrate how this happens by referring again to our example of the atom bomb.

Things change, it has been proposed, because of (a) unconscious beliefs which lead to public facts, or because of a mediating process in which beliefs are postulated symbolically, examined and a rational choice made between alternatives; and because (b) men are causal agents in a complex of causal agents.<sup>21</sup>

---

21

See page 32 of this thesis.

not to be used." This answer would indicate, if our suppositions are correct, that a conscious belief exists in isolation from beliefs implicitly embodied in a mode of behavior--there is a separation of theory and practice. It could be said that there exists a conflict of beliefs; there is a conflict between consciously held beliefs and unconsciously held beliefs; and a conflict between tendencies to molar and verbal action.

But is the assumption valid? Do acts embody and imply beliefs? Many agree that they do. Here I wish to cite the views of two individuals who hold this theory. The first to be cited is an anthropologist, E. H. Hoebel, who reports observations that have grown out of his studies of primitive societies.

Hoebel relates how, for a primitive society to exist, a society must select a group of relatively homogeneous modes of behavior. These homogeneous modes of behavior constitute a primitive society's "culture."<sup>22</sup> One of the significant features of a culture, i.e. of a homogeneous mode of behavior, lies in the fact that it embodies beliefs. Hoebel writes regarding this:

---

22

E. H. Hoebel, "Authority in Primitive Societies," printed in Authority, edited by Carl J. Friedrich, p.223. In Hoebel's words, men in a primitive society "perforce fix upon a limited number of patterns for behavior, thereupon quite arbitrarily ruling out and suppressing a much larger corpus of possible patterns of behavior, so far as its membership is concerned. The resulting nexus of permissible patterns for behavior is what anthropologists have come to identify as the culture of a given society ..." (p.223)

Underlying every culture is a body of basic postulates implicit in the world view of the members of the society in question. These are broadly generalized propositions as to the nature of things and what is qualitatively desirable and what is not.<sup>23</sup>

The given members of a primitive society may not be conscious of "the world view" implicit in their behavior but nevertheless, the world view or beliefs are there: The question is not whether the beliefs are present, but whether they are consciously present.

In a primitive society, things change at a slower rate than in a more advanced, complex society. It is relatively a static, a less dynamic, social universe; and it is characterized by more homogeneous beliefs and behavior. An advanced, complex society, on the other hand, is characterized by heterogeneity. The difference between what is called "primitive" societies and "advanced" societies, then, lies mostly in the degrees of complexity, heterogeneity and rate of change. Relationships between beliefs or world views and behavior, however, would remain substantially the same.

The foregoing view is shared by J. K. Feibleman. He defines "a culture" as a "kind of concrete system."

When a system is so large that we call it a culture, the consistency has to rest on some very wide base, nothing less, in fact, than an ontology. We call the ontology of a culture its implicit, dominant ontology

---

23

Ibid., p.225.

because it is assumed and often unknown ... Implicit, dominant ontologies become social philosophies when they are adopted by societies as the result of some kind of shock.<sup>24</sup>

The important observation is that new social philosophies usually appear first in modes of behavior; the philosophy is implicit in the behavior. If this is the case, behavior and individual acts, as such, rest on certain beliefs.

Furthermore, Feibleman, agreeing with Hoebel, feels that these implicit beliefs can be identified:

The implicit, dominant ontology is a concrete ontology, yet a transparent ontology. It lies deeply imbedded in cultures and permeates every corner of them, and the bare bones do not protrude. A certain amount of searching is necessary in order to detect its presence. It comes closest to the surface and may be discerned best in five places: in the rational, social unconscious of the human individual, in the hierarchy of institutions, in customs, in the kind of art which is prevalent, and finally in questions of taste as exhibited in the adopted set of preferences.<sup>25</sup>

Of these five areas, the present concern is with the first-- "the rational, social unconscious of the human individual." For Feibleman, this consists of beliefs that people take "for

24

James K. Feibleman, "The Social Adaptiveness of Philosophies," Ethics, January, 1960, 70:147. Incidentally, the latter part of this quotation should be qualified somewhat. A social revolution may not necessarily precipitate or cause an adoption of an "implicit, dominant ontology." A social revolution or convulsion marks a point where a qualitative change in society is most noticeable.

25

Ibid., p.147.

granted" and "when confronted with them, the individual is likely to express surprise that anyone would ever question their truth, as though they were held by all members of all societies."<sup>26</sup> The way, then, to identify or to discover belief in the individual is to study behavior.

But Feibleman's view does not account for conflicting beliefs that a person may have. Unconscious beliefs leading to behavior in direct contradiction to conscious beliefs may be held by the same person. We may account for this by remembering the roles played by social innovations. The individual may be forced into behavior independently of conscious belief. The new mode of behavior necessarily carries a new belief with it. Hence, a conflict exists between an implicit belief embodied in a new behavior pattern and an explicit belief based upon old behavior. A person, therefore, when confronted with a belief that his new behavior implicitly embodies, would be "shocked" --shocked because he could not allow that anyone would believe such a thing.

Suppose, in our projection of the possible events concerning the atomic bomb, that the bomb is used; suppose that some individuals survive, and upon reflection are "shocked" at the behavior that led to the use of the bomb. They might ask themselves, "how could that behavior have existed, for all believed

---

<sup>26</sup>

Ibid., p.148.

that the bomb should not be used?" Our answer would be that there existed an unconscious belief that it would be used, that all of the behavior before the use of the bomb embodies the implicit belief that it would be used, and that the use of the bomb was an effect, in part, of these beliefs. We could point to the installation of ICBM's at launching pads, the arming of planes with bombs, the digging of bomb shelters, the military alliances and the behavior at international conference tables, as evidence of the predominating belief that the bomb is to be used.

Feibleman's remaining four categories are all areas in which beliefs implicit in current behavior exhibit themselves. Unfortunately, we cannot deal with each in turn. The grounds for each of the areas depend upon specific formulations of the nature of behavior and its relationship to belief. The most dubious of the areas, perhaps, might be "the kind of art which is prevalent." However, if we accept forms of art as behavioral acts, then we must admit that art embodies beliefs; and if a particular school of art is dominant, then a particular, social belief is dominant also. As we have shown, beliefs may be unconsciously present; the artist or the connoisseur of art may not be aware of them, but the beliefs are nevertheless present. Furthermore, they may be extracted, placed into propositional language, and examined.

Feibleman's final area, the area of "taste" or aesthetic preferences, strengthens the above view of art. For "aesthetic preference," if not restricted to art, is widely employed in art. Aesthetic factors, Mr. Frank remarked, help determine for scientists the choice of one theory over another. Mr. Frank proposed that an aesthetic "taste" was an expression of a way of life--an outgrowth of social predispositions. If aesthetic preference of taste is an outgrowth of social predispositions and if, in art, the selection of art objects depends upon "taste," then art objects and especially dominant kinds of art objects exhibit beliefs. Furthermore, by virtue of the extravagant dependence upon "taste" in art, we could conclude that art presents an area where new beliefs first emerge, find their first expression and exist, moreover, on an unconscious level. The examination of taste, therefore, is a crucial and important area of inquiry.<sup>27</sup>

---

27

John Dewey has this to say about "taste": "Expertness of taste is at once the result and the reward of constant exercise of thinking. Instead of there being no disputing about tastes, they are the one thing worth disputing about, if by disputing is signified discussion involving reflective inquiry. Taste, if we use the word in its best sense, is the outcome of experience brought cumulatively to bear on the intelligent appreciation of the real worth of likings and enjoyments. There is nothing in which a person so completely reveals himself as in the things which he judges enjoyable and desirable." John Dewey, Quest for Certainty, p.252. Briefly, Dewey's comments are identical to the argument that has been pursued in this section--viz., beliefs affect or determine behavior; some beliefs are unconscious, but can be discovered if behavior is scrutinized. Aesthetic taste is a kind of behavior which manifests those unconscious beliefs; by studying preferences of taste and "disputing" about them, the implicit beliefs are exposed and examined rationally.



The time has come in an already too ambitious section to sum up the observations we have made. Generally, the following review can be said to apply to both "scientific" phenomena and social phenomena. It can be said that any given problem, regardless of the area or discipline it may fall under, is characterized by the following:

(1) There is a pluralistic universe of conscious thought in which many common sense judgments, opinions, beliefs and theories exist concerning the problem, no one of which accounts for the problem in its entirety.

(2) Accompanying the conscious ideas, there is a world of unconscious beliefs introduced by new forces and innovations intruding into the environment.

(3) The upshot of (1) and (2) is contradiction between beliefs, conflict between beliefs, inconsistencies and confusion.

(4) The history of events demonstrates not the absoluteness of "laws" or things in general, but change, flux and altering circumstances. In the social sphere, environmental factors change rapidly and manifest those changes in behavior, institutions, art, and in aesthetic preferences, i.e., in taste.

At this point, a generalization is possible. We may approach the generalization by asking the question, "from where will the raw material come for constructing new statements?" The answer, it would seem can only be "from areas (1) and (2) and the conflicts and contradictions they generate." That is to say, we must look particularly at the "place where the shoe

pinches." In particular, inquiry must be concerned with all those opinions, beliefs, unconscious as well as conscious, which cluster about problems. This does not mean that only a particular set of "homogeneous" opinions, beliefs and theories is to be studied. Furthermore, since each member of the cluster of beliefs and theories may contain a partial or half-truth, there must be "communication" between them. In other words, the process of inquiry must allow for the interactions of beliefs; and this, as we shall see, is one of the first tenets of dialectic.

#### A STUDY OF DIALECTIC

Philosophers who have employed a dialectical method have, at the same time, held fixed notions concerning the nature of being. Many of the notions, like Hegel's principle of Identity and Plato's theory of Forms, have ceased to be significant in the present stage of knowledge. However, the dialectical method employed to arrive at theories about the nature of things is not necessarily outmoded. We are concerned with dialectic as a method of inquiry, not a "dialectical account" of history, of economics, etcetera. Ordinarily, the latter involves presuppositions on the part of the dialectician about history or economics (as such), in addition to the process of dialectic as a method.

The problem, therefore, in developing a description of the

process of inquiry is to eliminate assumptions and presuppositions that are not related to and essential to the dialectic process itself. Assumptions or theories about non-dialectical existences are the subject matter for the process;<sup>1</sup> confusing one with the other often results in discarding the method because of disagreement with propositions arrived at by the process or with apriori presuppositions adopted before employing the process. A considerable amount of evidence would suggest that dialectical inquiry has been rejected because of views held by dialecticians, especially when we recall that in the contemporary social world, there is a "conflict" in what has been called, by some, "basic ideologies."<sup>2</sup>

The evidence to support the above hypothesis is meager and subtle. No one overtly rejects dialectic on the grounds that some "erroneous" beliefs have been held by dialecticians. However, this attitude seems to be implicit in many philosophers' reactions to dialectic. For instance, note the alarm in a remark by Richard McKeon:

---

1  
For example, the Platonic doctrine of Forms, in which Ideas are seen to be comprised of eternal substances, is a theory that is a subject for dialectical examination. Rejection of the doctrine does not necessitate a rejection of the process.

2  
Another factor enters when we recall that most of the "great dialecticians," such as Socrates, Hegel, Marx, and the contemporary dialectical materialists have been concerned with explaining social phenomena. An assumption dialectically derived in this area and transformed into an action which causes social injustice is more likely to evoke a negative reaction to the method than would be an assumption in "scientific areas."

The dialectical invocation of truth as a guide in action and in use of power is easily transformed into the assumption that those in power possess wisdom and defend truth (totalitarianism) or into the use of power (as in the dictatorship of the proletariat) to establish conditions of "freedom" which have no clear connection with the common good ...<sup>3</sup>

A comment concerning dialectic, almost apologetic in tone, by Edward Ballard is nearly identical to McKeon's. He begins his article by saying "dialectic like love, has a good and bad reputation." In the next few sentences, Ballard mentions two notable champions of dialectic, Plato and Hegel, and two antagonists of dialectic, Aristotle and Kant. Ballard concludes his introductory survey by remarking:

The varying estimates of its value appear to stem from the recognition that the mind easily misuses this instrument and produces seductive illusion instead of clarifications. Dialectic is a dangerous instrument.<sup>4</sup>

---

A "bad" assumption in physics doesn't result in universal alarm nor is the method chastised because of the "erroneous" assumption. It would seem, since social injustice is by no means restricted to dialecticians, that a social system which states its assumptions explicitly and in which the relationship of the assumption and concrete action is clearly perceived, is superior to a system in which a systematic formulation of social assumptions is largely ignored and the connection between behavior or concrete action is that observed, so that the resulting social melee appears to be superior to the latter, for "mistakes" are obvious and therefore changeable.

<sup>3</sup> Richard McKeon, "Dialectic and Political Thought and Action," Ethics, October, 1955, 65:24.

<sup>4</sup> Edward G. Ballard, "On the Nature and Use of Dialectic," Philosophy of Science, July, 1955, p.205.

The argument apparently consists in rejecting "dialectical reasoning" on the grounds that those philosophers and laymen who have acclaimed themselves to be "dialecticians" have made grievous errors in their judgments; and, to make matters worse, they have justified social atrocities by "dialectical" methods. As the argument stands, it would appear to be a curious mixture of the argumentum ad hominem and the fallacy of diverting the issue. The problem before us is the nature of the process, not theories that have grown out of a process of inquiry.

Mr. Ballard, after sufficiently impressing upon the reader his humbleness in approaching this "dangerous instrument," goes on to suggest that:

Dangerous or not, though, it is probably a defensible, historical thesis to hold that a fairly stable meaning has been associated with this term (dialectic) throughout philosophical history, even by those who disapprove of its use.<sup>5</sup>

The particular meaning associated with dialectic is seen by Ballard to lie in its reference "to the actual processes of the mind in its attempts to clarify its concepts and to acquire knowledge; it seems to refer to logic in actual operation."<sup>6</sup>

Ballard restricts himself, as the foregoing comment indicates, to dialectic as a process of inquiry and proceeds to

5

Ibid., p.205.

6

Ibid., p.205. This implies that all people are dialecticians. The only qualification that is necessary is to point out that all people when they engage in critical thinking proceed dialectically.

make a few interesting comments which will be referred to later. Presently, our concern is with one of the first articulate usages and conceptions of dialectic found in Plato's dialogues. This study is comprised of (a) Plato's description of dialectic and (b) an example of dialectic which demonstrates the principal characteristics of the process.

#### Socratic (Plato's) View of Dialectic

In the Platonic dialogues, several descriptions and definitions of dialectic are found. The conflicting views have been described by one writer as a conflict between Plato and his master, Socrates.<sup>7</sup> Other explanations attribute the differences to fundamental changes in Plato's thinking as he grew older and became more critical of his former teacher. When the latter

---

7

Julius Stenzel divides the Platonic Dialogues into two periods: the 'Socratic period' in which Plato presented his views through the mouth of Socrates, and a later period in which Plato's own views predominate. (See page 28 of Julius Stenzel's book, Plato's Method of Dialectic). In the first period, Stenzel thinks Plato still leaned toward Socrates' thinking, for example, he writes: "The Good, which to Socrates had remained a postulate, was to him Plato an object of actual knowledge; it was the duty of the individual to realize the Good in his life. He thought of the Good as given in a vision or intuition ..., and he had necessarily to bring 'Socrates' within sight of this vision. What Socrates views as possible, Plato postulates as necessary. Socrates knows nothing, Plato has a positive metaphysical doctrine. One falls short of the mean, which the other goes beyond." (See page 31 of Stenzel's book)

position is adopted, the question arises as to what Plato's final attitude was concerning the nature of dialectic. In order to settle this question, one must establish the order or sequence in which the dialogues were written. Although this question is an interesting one, it is not necessary to this thesis nor crucial in solving problems about the nature of dialectic. The present problem focuses upon a development of principles found operating in a process of inquiry, not upon deciding which view of dialectic Plato really believed. Therefore, a proper approach to the problem would be, given a number of views concerning dialectic, which of them is most relevant to the process of inquiry? This thesis is, therefore, concerned with a development of the relevant views.

Originally, "dialectic" in Greek referred "to a well-regulated conversation in which the participants, by the exchange of information and ideas, brought each other into a state of agreement."<sup>8</sup> Mr. McKeon offers a definition which is more specific; he writes:

The original meaning of "dialectic" is discourse or intercourse between two or more speakers expressing two or more positions or opinions. This conception of interpersonal thinking, or thinking based on a clash of opposition or paradox, is not only imbedded in the term but is also reiterated in the early history of the method.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Ballard, op. cit., p.205.

<sup>9</sup> McKeon, op. cit., p.3. (Italics by McKeon).

"Dialectic" referred, according to this definition, to a process which comprised an interplay and exchange of ideas through conversation. Conversation, in a dialectical sense, was not "just talk," but a particular kind of talk which was, in Ballard's terms, "a well-regulated conversation" and in McKeon's words, "interpersonal thinking ... based on a clash of opposition or paradox." That is to say, a dialectical conversation proceeds along specific lines. It is not "just talk" or what we might call "ordinary conversation." Dialectical conversation is characterized by a different set of principles.

One way of illustrating how dialectical conversation differs would be to describe ordinary conversation. Contemporary "realistic" fiction furnishes abundant examples. First, the basic unit of speech seems to be the phrase, not a sentence (long and involved sentences seldom occur in ordinary conversation). Secondly, ordinary speech is not concerned with self-consistency, with logicity, or with problem solving. It jumps, so to speak, from one topic to another according to what one might call a principle of association. For example, in a gathering of Mr. and Mrs. X and Mr. and Mrs. Y, Mr. X begins by remarking that before he came to the party, he discovered the neighbor's garbage scattered over his lawn. Mr. Y is reminded of dogs in his neighborhood and promptly holds forth on how he is going to shoot a few mongrels if they don't stop littering his lawn. Mrs. Y, a humanitarian, reacts to her husband and



interrupts him by telling the group of a woman she saw in the doctor's office that day who had obviously been beaten by her husband (she has associated her husband's threats with the bestiality of men, which in turn, she associates with the bruised woman in the doctor's office). Mrs. X fastens upon the words "doctor's office" and associates this with her recent operation, which she forthwith brings to the attention of the group--and so on and so forth. Thirdly, the foregoing variety of conversation is rarely in overt conflict or in deliberate contradiction; when this does occur, it usually constitutes a "quarrel." Such conflict is thereby viewed as distasteful; it should be avoided for most people feel "nothing is gained, no one changes his or her mind, so what's the use of all the fuss?" The result of such "bull sessions" is, at best, a communication of elementary, existential facts and from there on, could be anything from an individual making noise to assure himself that he is really alive, to the communication of communal affection and reciprocal sympathy.

Dialectic, on the other hand, has a conscious goal which is qualitatively different from the complex goals of ordinary conversation. Dialectic's goal is problem solving and the attainment of "insight."<sup>10</sup>

---

10

"Insight" was defined on page 17 as the formulation of that symbolic propositional statement which, on the basis of existing evidence, best describes and interprets a given condition or existence.

An individual motivated by an impulse to insight starts at the point where desultory conversation ends--the point where one becomes aware of the inconsistencies and contradictions in ordinary statements, and of the controversy that results between people holding them. Ordinary conversation ends, then, where dialectical conversation begins.<sup>11</sup>

Dialectic, even though it employs a kind of conflict, is not seen by Plato as just controversy. If the discussion on pages 13 and 14 of this thesis is recalled in which the sophistic method of eristic was contrasted with elenchus, one sees a kind of dialectic which, for Plato, is focused upon controversy for controversy's sake. In that section of the thesis, the major concern was with the role that the value of truth plays in inquiry to move an individual out of this level of inquiry. However, it is important to note that the sophistic dialectic resembles the Platonic elenchus. How can we distinguish between the two?

---

11

Mortimer J. Adler makes a similar observation. He writes: "Most human conversations usually dwindle or stop at the point where profound and abstruse considerations seem inescapable if the conversation is to be prolonged; and this should be well observed, for it is this inevitable leading of discourse into dialectic, and of dialectic into philosophy. (p.35) ...

"It is largely through the event of misunderstanding, or contrariness in understanding, that human beings pass in their use of language from communication to controversy and from indefinite controversy into some universe of discourse, therein to become more or less competently dialectical." (p.99) M. J. Adler, Dialectic, International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method, London, 1927.

According to the meaning of the term eristic,<sup>12</sup> we might seek the nature of the motive operating in an individual. But this approach would only reveal an explanation of the source or cause of an argument. A given individual could have objectionable motives but have, at the same time, a valuable theory; or an individual might have the best possible motives and hold or put forth an erroneous proposition. Motives, therefore, do not furnish criteria for judging ideas.

However, the moral objection to the Sophists made by Plato is well-founded, for it involves dishonesty which conceals the real ends sought by the disputants. They were not interested, according to Plato, in achieving knowledge but in other ends which they were reluctant to admit. In this sense, knowledge was not the goal; it was a means to some other implicit end. There is no objection to using knowledge for concrete ends--this is the function of knowledge. Rather the objection lies in the refusal to examine the ends philosophically.<sup>13</sup> Insofar as the Sophists were guilty of withholding information, they

---

12

We cannot go into detail on all Plato's objections to eristic dialectic. Additional comments on eristic are found in Plato's Theaetetus; 167; Republic VII, 539; and of course in the Sophist, 230-231, 259, which have already been reviewed. In the following pages, we shall briefly examine the differences between rhetoric and dialectic as seen by Socrates; This is closely connected with the problem of "true" and "false" methods discussed above and provides a way of avoiding errors in dialectic.

13

The moral objection seems to be most prevalent in the early dialogues where Socrates dominates the conversation. For this thesis the metaphysical conflict is attributed more to Plato

were confusing the process of inquiry and preventing clarification and understanding of issues involved in the study.

An example of the sophistic "dishonesty" is found in Phaedrus.<sup>14</sup> Principles characteristic of rhetoric and oratory, which for Plato is eristic discourse, are contrasted with principles found in elenchus discourse. The topic is introduced by Phaedrus who has just heard a speech by Lysias. Lysias had held forth on the nature of love; Phaedrus read the text of the speech to Socrates. After Phaedrus finished, Socrates himself gave a speech on the subject of love, which Phaedrus hailed as much superior to the one given by Lysias. The conflicting speeches about love soon provoked an investigation about the nature of oratory and its relationship to knowledge in general. Since Phaedrus was thoroughly confused about the subject of love, Socrates selected another example.<sup>15</sup>

---

than to Socrates. Socrates, as he is dramatized by Plato, appears to be more sceptical than his student. Witness this statement by Lodge: "If we are to accept the account given by Plato, his 'elderly friend' was convinced of three things: (1) of his datum, the world of change; (2) of his problem, namely, the necessity of discovering a final ideal, which should transcend the world of change; and (3) of his own 'ignorance', i.e. his personal failure to reach a satisfactory solution of his problem." Rupert C. Lodge, The Philosophy of Plato, pp.26,27.

<sup>14</sup> Here the problem of Plato's quarrel with the Sophists; the conflict of the two views of reality and the "fairness" of Plato with regard to the Sophists' views will not be discussed. The "Sophists" here refer to Plato's description of the Sophists and the dishonesty he attributes to them.

<sup>15</sup> Phaedrus, 260, translated by E. Jowett, 3rd ed.

He gave the example of a man who upon having heard about the usefulness of a horse in war, although he had never seen a horse, went to buy one. An unscrupulous entrepreneur, perceiving the customer's ignorance, set about to sell the victim an ass for a horse. He was able to do so by virtue of vague ideas held by the victim and by exploiting the resemblance of a horse to an ass, weaving truth into falsehood. Indeed, a good rhetorician knows the difference between the falsehood he argues and the truth in reality.<sup>16</sup> In any case, the object of rhetorical discourse is not achieving knowledge but is securing another end--regardless of the truth--in this example, monetary gain. Rhetoric, therefore, is defined as:

... a universal art of enchanting the mind by arguments; which is practised not only in courts and public assemblies, but in private houses also, having to do with all matters, great as well as small, good and bad alike, and is in all equally right, and equally to be esteemed ...<sup>17</sup>

Rhetoric then, is properly called an "art." It employs knowledge but does not seek to increase one's knowledge, even though rhetoricians often pretend to be doing so.

The first obvious flaw of the rhetorician, according to Socrates, is the manner in which he defines his central idea. Like Lysias' definition of love, the rhetoricians give a vague definition which allows subsequent errors to be included

---

16

Ibid., 262.

17

Ibid., 261.

and presupposes the desired end that the arguer aims for.<sup>18</sup> If one is interested in achieving understanding, the approach is the opposite of the rhetorician's. The dialectical approach observes a principle of clarity:

the comprehension of scattered particulars in one idea; as in our definition of love, which whether true or false, certainly gave clearness and consistency to the discourse, the speaker should define his several notions and so make his meaning clear.<sup>19</sup>

The concept of the One and the Many, is undeniably present here; however, it is not necessarily predominating in light of a subsequent comment by Socrates which we shall study in a moment.<sup>20</sup>

The second principle found in dialectic follows from the first, for Socrates. It is bound up with the first in that the primary ideas clarify "the many." In Socrates' words, the second principle is:

that of division into species according to the natural formation, where the joint is, not breaking any part as a bad carver might. Just as our two discourses, alike assumed, first of all, a single form of unreason; and then, as the body which from being one becomes double and may be divided into a right side and a left side, each having parts right and left of the same name,--after this manner the speaker proceeded to divide the parts of the left side

18

Ibid., 264.

19

Ibid., 265.

20

In the above quotation, the notion of the "one idea" seems to refer to a general proposition, or what would be called a general proposition today. It may also, for Plato, refer to an eternal Form, but this is in addition to the use that actually is present in the context of the dialogue itself.

and did not desist until he found in them an evil or left-handed love which he justly reviled, and the other discourse leading us to the madness which lay on the right side, found another love, also having the same name, but divine, which the speaker held up before us and applauded and affirmed to be the author of the greatest benefits.<sup>21</sup>

Disregarding the question of love being discussed, and focusing upon the principle of analysis, the latter's function seems to consist in placing apparently incomprehensible existences into individual, formulated kinds of things--i.e. species. This does not involve severing or separating individual existences so that they are unrelated to each other, for division into "species" is possible because of a relationship the Many has with the One.

Again it may be argued (admittedly evidence points this way) that by One, Plato meant an eternal Form. If one adopts this position, then comments which point to another definition have to be ignored. For instance, the reason Socrates gives for using these two principles is not the existence of a Form, for he says:

I am myself a great lover of these processes of division and generalization; they help me to speak and to think. And if I find any man who is able to see "a One and Many" in nature, him I follow ...<sup>22</sup>

Certainly, Socrates' reason for using this technique is not that the Form, "the One," is the only criterion which can explain "the many." Socrates uses the technique because it aids him in thinking and in expressing his views. Jowett's trans-

---

<sup>21</sup>  
Ibid., 266.

<sup>22</sup>  
Ibid., 266.

lation and the substitution of "generalization" for the "one idea," then would appear to be justified, for the function of "the one" is the same as a general proposition or a concept. The fact that Socrates seems to be impressed with his own ignorance would lend support to this interpretation.<sup>23</sup> Even if Plato postulated the possible existence of a Form which, if known, explains the many, his actual use of the term is that of a general proposition which is inclusive and broad enough to account for things that at first glance appear to be unrelated.

There would appear to be sufficient grounds, therefore, for concluding that the major function of the mystical One was essentially that of a general proposition, *i.e.* a general concept which defines and interprets many diverse and apparently unrelated phenomena. A. D. Winspear, writing on Platonic thought, concedes this; "even in the clear, cold light of science," he relates, "avoiding the shadows and half-lights of mystical ecstasy, we need not dismiss the distinction developed by Greek idealism as absurd and useless."<sup>24</sup> Winspear

---

23

In Meno, 97-98, (translation by Jowett) Socrates suggests that there is no difference between "right opinion" and "knowledge," with right opinion as good a guide to conduct as knowledge. Socrates thinks there might be a difference in reality but he himself is unsure. For he says, "I too speak rather in ignorance; I only conjecture; and yet, that knowledge differs from true opinion is no matter of conjecture with me."

24

A. D. Winspear, The Genesis of Plato's Thought, p.277.



has in mind Plato's Forms--in particular, the function of the One in explaining the Many. The germ of truth Winspear attributes to the terms is illustrated in problems connected with history; he writes:

The historian who feels a sense of obligation to truth does not have a passion to learn so much what was as what happened. He does not seek to delineate a set of static institutions but to grasp the dynamics of a developing situation. It is true that for this purpose he makes the distinction between appearance and reality, but he uses the more static, the more abstract, the more universal, as instruments with which to understand the more changing, the more particular, and the more concrete. This is the profound difference between Platonic idealism and the modern philosophy of science. And yet, here, too, there is an aspect of the truth in Plato's treatment of the matter which ancient materialists necessarily overlooked.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, at one time, Plato held that all ideas should be treated as hypotheses. This view is found in the Phaedo: Here Socrates proposes that before we "see or perceive in any way," we must have "a knowledge" of the Forms.<sup>26</sup> However, men are born without any knowledge that they are aware of, and they must acquire it.<sup>27</sup> The world of things--of appearance, presents

25

Ibid., p.277. Winspear is not denying that the mystical aspects of the Forms are present, nor that the only "meaning" of the term is a general proposition. He seems to be saying that the function of the Forms, as a general proposition, is the only defensible aspect of the concept of Forms. I am willing to go further and to propose that, in the dialogues, the major function of the concept of Forms is that of a general proposition.

26

Phaedo, 75, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

27

Ibid., 73-74.

a picture of change and the individual can lose himself in this unstable realm of movement and flux.<sup>28</sup> Man's only recourse, therefore, is to adopt a method which will purify his ideas. That method, for Socrates, consists in the following:

I first assumed some principle which I judged to be the strongest, and then I affirmed as true whatever seemed to agree with this, whether relating to the cause or to anything else, and that which disagreed I regarded as untrue.<sup>29</sup>

We must conclude then, that for Socrates, ideas in the mind of man are not eternal Forms, for he "assumed some principle." In other words, whatever Socrates postulates concerning the existence of eternal forms, the idea in the mind of man is a tentative propositional assumption. It is as if Socrates, in his many arguments, discovered that a general idea or assumption, like that of cultural lag, for instance - enables man to understand the nature of things a little better by virtue of its ability to explain, categorize and relate many apparently diverse phenomena. At the same time, being impressed with the confusing world of concrete reality in a state of perpetual change, he was tempted to view his instrument as divine: for when faced with the complex problems of isolated percepts, the occurrence of a comprehensive idea which accounts for them might well appear as a "revelation."

---

<sup>28</sup>  
Ibid., 79-81.

<sup>29</sup>  
Ibid., 100.

In summary, it can be said, agreeing with Socrates, that one of the procedures of inquiry is to assume a general principle, define it as clearly as possible, then to follow out the implications, dividing into "species according to the natural formulation, where the joint is." We shall call this the "process of division to generalization"<sup>30</sup> and shall suppose, moreover, that one of the goals of inquiry is to develop general "laws" of nature.

The definition given to "laws" can be demonstrated by an additional explanation of the process of generalization to division. Inquiry, so to speak, "moves" alternatively in two directions. It may proceed according to a loose "deductive" mode--generalization to division. How, in a particular stage, inquiry happens to move, depends upon what the problem is centered around at the time. If the inquiry is concerned with a set of particular facts, then it will proceed from division to generalization; if, on the other hand, inquiry is focused upon a generalization, it will move toward division.

Here it is assumed that (a) existential facts exist in

---

30

"Generalization" is not meant to indicate the strict scientific usage of the term. The term is used in a more ordinary sense to denote the act of deriving a general principle from a set of particulars.

certain relationships with one another and that (b) a generalization is the conceptualization of that relationship. If one is dealing with a generalization, then it is "natural" to apply this to individual facts which we call the process of generalization to division and, if one is concerned with a set of facts, the movement is toward the formulation of a generalization. A more detailed account of the relationships of facts to the generalizations of those facts is given by Stephen C. Pepper.

Pepper divides reality, generally, between "hypotheses" and "facts" with both "facts and hypotheses (cooperating) to guarantee the factuality and truth of each other."<sup>31</sup> According to Pepper, a given set of facts embodies a particular relationship which "inspires" an hypothesis; the original set of facts being the hypothesis' "root metaphor."

The root metaphor theory is the theory that a world hypothesis to cover all facts is framed in the first instance on the basis of a rather small set of facts and then expanded in reference so as to cover all facts.<sup>32</sup>

The difference between our terms, division and generalization, and Pepper's terms lies in the fact that ours is translated into terms of action. The last quotation of Pepper's,

<sup>31</sup> Stephen C. Pepper, "The Root Metaphor Theory of Metaphysics," The Journal of Philosophy, July 4, 1935, 32:367.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.369.

translated into action, (or rather into the activity of inquiry) would appear as follows: (1) a problem arises concerning facts (let us suppose the facts are human behavior of a particular kind), (2) we study the behavior and find a particular condition (let us suppose a particular belief), and (3) we state that belief in propositional terms, then "expand" it "so as to cover all facts." Then, (4) we apply it to other more unrelated facts (behavioral acts), and finally, we (5) revise or reformulate the original generalization in light of discoveries made in stage (4). The movement of the entire process then reads thus: It begins with a process of division to generalization (stages (1) through (4)); Somewhere in stage (3) it shifts to its opposite and proceeds from generalization to division (stages (3) through (4) ). The last stage (5) represents a process which resembles that of division to generalization but differs qualitatively, so that it is more properly called a process of reformulation.

The next process of dialectic to be considered is the process of question and answer. This aspect of dialectic can cause a certain amount of confusion if we take too literally a few statements by Plato which seem to identify dialectic and the process of question and answer. It could lead one to mistakenly suppose that dialectic consisted solely in posing and answering questions, and cross-examining. To avoid this error, one must carefully study the contextual situation in

which the association of question and answer with dialectic is made.

In the Apology, for instance, Socrates explains to his fellow Athenians how he has invoked the wrath of many influential people who pretended to knowledge but who really knew nothing. These pretenders were exposed by cross-examination.<sup>33</sup> But here, Socrates is calling attention to one aspect of dialectic, not to the whole of dialectic. To see how this fits into the whole, we should recall Socrates' objection to the eristic method of conversing and the nature of rhetoric in general. The rhetorician refuses to define his central idea and by so doing allows and introduces error.<sup>34</sup> The process of question and answer is a method of insuring that a minimum of error occurs.

A good example is found in the discussion between Protagoras and Socrates. After discussing virtue for a time, Socrates forces Protagoras into a position that the latter dislikes. Protagoras, instead of demonstrating logically how he thinks Socrates is in error, resorts to a rhetorical method, giving a long and involved answer in which certain, dubious assertions appeared.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup>

Apology, 33, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

<sup>34</sup>

Another example of the rhetorical method to which Socrates objects can be found in Gorgias, 448-449. Polus, when asked a question, makes a speech which fails to define the terms in question. Socrates begins the process of question and answer to discover what Polus means.

<sup>35</sup>

Protagoras, 333-335, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

Socrates objects to this method, and eventually a compromise is reached and the inquiry is resumed. The following excerpt demonstrates how the question and answer principle is used and how it comes to be employed:

I answer, Socrates, he said, that all these qualities are parts of virtue, and that four out of the five are to some extent similar, and that the fifth of them which is courage, is very different from the other four, as I prove in this way: You may observe that many men are utterly unrighteous, unholy, intemperate, ignorant, who are nevertheless remarkable for their courage.

Stop, I said; I should like to think about that. When you speak of brave men, do you mean the confident, or another sort of nature?

Yes, he said; I mean the impetuous, ready to go at that which others are afraid to approach.

In the next place, you would affirm a virtue to be a good thing, of which good thing you assert yourself to be a teacher.

Yes, he said; I should say the best of all things, if I am in my right mind.

And is it partly good and partly bad, I said, or wholly good?

Wholly good, and in the highest degree.

Tell me then; who are they who have confidence when diving into a well?

I should say, the divers.

And the reason of this is that they have knowledge?

Yes, that is the reason.

And who have confidence when fighting on horseback—the skilled horseman or the unskilled?

The skilled.

And who when fighting with light shields—the peltasts or the nonpeltasts?

The peltasts. And that is true of all other things, he said, if that is your point: those who have knowledge are more confident than those who have no knowledge, and they are more confident after they have learned that before.

And have you not seen persons utterly ignorant, I said, of these things, and yet confident about them?

Yes, he said, I have seen such persons far too confident.

And are not these confident persons also courageous?

In that case, he replied, courage would be a base thing, for the men of whom we are speaking are surely madmen.

Then who are the courageous? Are they not the confident?

Yes, he said, to that statement I adhere.

And those, I said, who are thus confident without knowledge are really not courageous, and being the most confident are also the bravest, and upon that view again wisdom will be courage.<sup>36</sup>

In this excerpt, Protagoras states his position. Before he goes on, Socrates interrupts with a question. Protagoras answers and this is followed with another question and so on. By successive stages, the implications of Protagoras' definition are delineated. Without the question and answer interval, these implications could have gone unnoticed. However, the process of question and answer occurs within the larger framework of generalization and division. It is, more or less, definitive of a phase of division whether that division is proceeding from a former generalization or to a new generalization. Therefore, the process of question and answer can be subsumed under the larger process of generalization and division.

Finally, the last quotation in the selection represents stage (5) the culmination of the process of reformulation. Socrates' new position in a sense depends upon the results of all the previous discussion. Previous generalizations of this

---

36

Ibid., 349-351.



point are reduced to a more elementary status and become the basis for the reformulation of stage (5). The actual process of reformulation "reaches back" or overlaps the other areas and incorporates the results of the previous processes with the final reformulation depending upon the previous comments. In any given inquiry, a problem is raised; it is defined and then examined: During the examination, the original definition is found to be untenable and, or the basis of the new information derived from the examination, we are led to a new position or a new definition of the problem. At a given stage, the discussion can be said to be leading to this reformulation; there occurs, in short, gradual, minute changes until a qualitative change in the nature of the inquiry can be seen. That is to say, at a given point, the observations in the inquiry are "moving" toward a reformulation; hence the third and last process is the process of reformulation.

Dialectic, therefore, consists of three major processes, (1) the process of generalization and division, (2) the process of question and answer, and (3) the process of reformulation. These processes are not different kinds of dialectics but aspect of a single dialectic in which each individual process overlaps and intermingles with the other, so that we cannot divide a dialectical inquiry into hard, fast categories.

Bearing in mind the qualifications placed upon Plato's

doctrine of Forms and the observations made about the nature of the dialectical process, let us now turn to a few general views of dialectic found in the Republic. Socrates describes to Glaucon how dialectic achieves knowledge, as follows:

... reason herself attains by the power of dialectic, using the hypothesis not as first principles, but only as hypotheses--that is to say, as steps and points of departure into a world which is above hypotheses, in order that she may soar beyond them to first principle of the whole; and clinging to this and then to that which depends on this, by successive steps she descends again without the aid of any sensible object, from ideas, through ideas, and in ideas she ends.<sup>37</sup>

Again, be it noted that the notion of Plato's Forms has been discarded and the position has been taken that, insofar as Socrates (Plato) has insisted that he "knows nothing," i.e. has never attained or achieved pure knowledge, his use of a "first principle" was essentially that of a tentative, general proposition.

There seems to be a "faith" that the eternal Form exists but seldom, if ever, is the actual existence of the Form given as grounds for dialectic. One last example should be sufficient to establish this point. Therefore, let us look at a mystical recapitulation of this "hope" found in Socrates' summation of the highest ascent of dialectic: he relates:

---

<sup>37</sup> Republic, VI, 41, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

And so Glaucon, I said, we have at last arrived at the hymn of dialectic. This is that strain which is of the intellect only, but which the faculty of sight will nevertheless be found to imitate; for sight, as you may remember, was imagined by us after a while to behold the real animals and stars, and last of all the sun itself. And so with dialectic: when a person starts on the discovery of the absolute by the light of reason only, and without any assistance of sense, and perseveres until by pure intelligence he arrives at the perception of the absolute good, he at last finds himself at the end of the intellectual world, as in the case of sight at the end of the visible.<sup>38</sup>

But Socrates, when questioned by Glaucon about the paths to this "absolute," fails to produce any concrete suggestions, and comments that he fears Glaucon is not capable of following his thoughts. Instead, Socrates proposes that people who hold unexamined opinions fail to perceive whatever unifying idea there may be implicit in their opinions. This man cannot be said to have knowledge:

For when a man knows not his own first principle, and when the conclusion and intermediate steps are also constructed out of he knows not what, how can he imagine that such a fabric of convention can ever become science?<sup>39</sup>

In other words, the grounds for the use of dialectic are to be found in the clarity achieved by the use of a central idea. The grounds for dialectic are not necessarily the existence of Forms, although if forms did exist, they would give additional

<sup>38</sup> Republic, VII, 532, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 533.

force to the argument. Dialectic, then aids one in developing a general proposition which accounts for immediate, sensible appearances.

Whatever the case may be about the substantial existence of Forms, the practical existential use of this doctrine, for Plato, is the development of a general concept. Dialectic, then becomes a means to that end:

Dialectic, and dialectic alone, goes directly to the first principles and is the only science which does away with hypotheses in order to make her ground secure; the eye of the soul, which is literally buried in outlandish slough, is by her gentle aid lifted upwards; and she uses as handmaids and helpers in the work of conversion, the science which we have been discussing.<sup>40</sup>

One other distinction made by Plato, I believe, might be dubious. He seems to insist that ideas are separate from sensible data; this insistence could be interpreted as meaning that one need not ultimately refer one's ideas to concrete, sensible entities. This approach would represent one extreme. On the other hand, we have the Baconian empiricist method of "sticking to the facts," which would represent a polar opposite. The position of this thesis is seen to be a middle course in which the "One and the Many" are inseparable. This view was expressed in the section dealing with the process of generalization and division (see comments about Pepper's "Root Metaphor" theory) and in the section on "the Goal of Philosophy"; it need not, therefore, be discussed here.

---

<sup>40</sup>

Ibid., 533.

### An Example of Dialectic

An example of part of the dialectical process in relation to the process of question and answer has been studied. Now, we are ready to look at a more complete section of dialectic. This presents certain problems, however, for the process is long and one cannot reproduce an entire dialogue. Since this is out of the question, a compromise must be made. A feasible alternative is to select a part of a dialogue which illustrates the principle features of dialectic. With this in mind, let us look at section 494-497 of Gorgias.

Soc. ... And now would you say that life of the (494) intemperate is happier than that of the temperate? Do I not convince you that the opposite is the truth?

Cal. You do not convince me, Socrates, for the one who has filled himself has no longer any pleasure left; and this, as I was just now saying, is the life of a stone; he has neither joy nor sorrow after he is once filled; but the pleasure depends on the superabundance of the influx.

Soc. But the more you pour in, the greater the waste; and the holes must be large for the liquid to escape.

Cal. Certainly.

Soc. The life which you are now depicting is not that of a dead man, or of a stone, but of a cormorant, you mean that he is to be hungering and eating?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. And he is to be thirsting and drinking?

Cal. Yes, that is what I mean; he is to have all his desires about him, and to be able to live happily in the gratification of them.

Soc. Capital, excellent; go on as you have begun, and have no shame: and first, will you tell me whether you include itching and scratching, provided you have enough of them and pass your life in scratching, in your notion of happiness?

Cal. What a strange being you are, Socrates! a regular mob-orator.

Soc. That was the reason, Callicles, why I scared Polus and Gorgias, until they were too modest to say what they thought; but you will not be too modest and will not be scared, for you are a brave man. And now, answer my question.

Cal. I answer, then even the scratcher would live pleasantly.

Soc. And if pleasantly, then also happily?

Cal. To be sure.

Soc. But what if the itching is not confined to the head? Shall I pursue the question? And here, Callicles, I would have you consider how you would reply if consequences are pressed upon you, especially if in the last resort you are asked, whether the life of a catamite is not terrible, foul, miserable? Or would you venture to say, that they too are happy, if they only get enough of what they want?

Cal. Are you not ashamed, Socrates, of introducing such topics into the argument?

Soc. Well, my fine friend, but am I the introducer of these topics, or he who says without any qualification that all who feel pleasure in whatever manner are happy, and who admits (495) of no distinction between good and bad pleasures? And I would still ask, whether you say that pleasure and good are the same, or whether there is some pleasure which is not a good?

Cal. Well, then, for the sake of consistency, I will say that they are the same.

Soc. You are breaking the original agreement, Callicles, and will no longer be a satisfactory companion in the search after truth, if you say what is contrary to your real opinion.

Cal. Why, that is what you are doing too, Socrates.

Soc. Then we are both doing wrong. Still, my dear friend, I would ask you to consider whether pleasure from whatever source derived, is the good; for, if this be true, then the disagreeable consequences which have been darkly intimated must follow, and many others.

Cal. That, Socrates, is only your opinion.

Soc. And do you, Callicles, seriously maintain what you are saying?

Cal. Indeed I do.

Soc. Then, as you are in earnest, shall we proceed with the argument?

Cal. By all means.

Soc. Well, if you are willing to proceed, determine this question for me:- There is something, I presume, which you would call knowledge?

Cal. There is.

Soc. And were you not saying just now, that some courage implied knowledge?

Cal. I was.

Soc. And you were speaking of courage and knowledge as two things different from one another?

Cal. Certainly I was.

Soc. And would you say that pleasure and knowledge are the same, or not the same?

Cal. Not the same, O man of wisdom.

Soc. And would you say that courage differed from pleasure?

Cal. Certainly.

Soc. Well, then, let us remember that Callicles, the Acharnian, says that pleasure and good are the same; but that knowledge and courage are not the same, either with one another, or with the good.

Cal. And what does our friend Socrates, of Foxton, say--does he assent to this, or not?

Soc. He does not assent; neither will Callicles, when he sees himself truly. You will admit, I suppose, that good and evil fortune are opposed to each other?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. And if they are opposed to each other, then, like health and disease, they exclude one another; a man cannot have them both, or be without them both, at the same time?

Cal. What do you mean?

Soc. Take the case of any bodily affection:- a man may have the complaint in his eyes which is called ophthalmia?

Cal. To be sure. (496)

Soc. But he surely cannot have the same eyes well and sound at the same time?

Cal. Certainly not.

Soc. And when he has got rid of his ophthalmia, has he got rid of the health of his eyes too? Is the final result, that he gets rid of them both together?

Cal. Certainly not.

Soc. That would surely be marvellous and absurd?

Cal. Very.

Soc. I suppose that he is affected by them, and gets rid of them in turns?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. And he may have strength and weakness in the same way, by fits?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. Or swiftness and slowness?

Cal. Certainly.

Soc. And does he have and not have good and happiness, and their opposites, evil and misery, in a similar alternation?

Cal. Certainly he has.

Soc. If then there be anything which a man has and has not at the same time, clearly that cannot be good and evil--do we agree? Please not to answer without consideration.

Cal. I entirely agree.

Soc. Go back now to our former admissions. - Did you say that to hunger, I mean the mere state of hunger, was pleasant or painful?

Cal. I said painful, but that to eat when you are hungry is pleasant.

Soc. I know; but still the actual hunger is painful: am I not right?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. And thirst, too, is painful?

Cal. Yes, very.

Soc. Need I adduce any more instances, or would you agree that all wants or desires are painful?

Cal. I agree, and therefore you need not adduce any more instances.

Soc. Very good. And you would admit that to drink, when you are thirsty, is pleasant?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. And in the sentence which you have just uttered, the word "thirsty" implies pain?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. And the word "drinking" is expressive of pleasure, and of the satisfaction of the want?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. There is pleasure in drinking?

Cal. Certainly.

Soc. When you are thirsty?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. And in pain?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. Do you see the inference:- that pleasure and pain are simultaneous, when you say that being thirsty, you drink? For are they not simultaneous, and do they not affect at the same time the same part, whether of the soul or the body?--which of them is affected cannot be supposed to be of any consequence: Is not this true?

Cal. It is.

Soc. You said also, that no man could have good and evil fortune at the same time?

Cal. Yes, I did.



Soc. But you admitted, that when in pain a man might also have pleasure? (497)

Cal. Clearly.

Soc. Then pleasure is not the same as good fortune, or pain the same as evil fortune, and therefore the good is not the same as the pleasant?

Cal. I wish I knew, Socrates, what your quibbling means.

Soc. You know, Callicles, but you affect not to know.

Cal. Well, get on, and don't keep fooling: then you will know what a wiseacre you are in your admonition of me!

Soc. Does a man cease from his thirst and from his pleasure in drinking at the same time.

Cal. I do not understand what you are saying.

Gor. Nay, Callicles, answer, if only for our sakes;- we should like to hear the argument out.

Cal. Yes, Gorgias, but I must complain of the habitual trifling of Socrates; he is always arguing about little and unworthy questions.

Gor. What matter? Your reputation, Callicles, is not at stake. Let Socrates argue in his own fashion.

Cal. Well, then, Socrates, you shall ask these little peddling questions, since Gorgias wishes to have them.

Soc. I envy you, Callicles, for having been initiated into the great mysteries before you were initiated into the lesser. I thought that this was not allowable. But to return to our argument:- Does not a man cease from thirsting and from the pleasure of drinking at the same moment?

Cal. True.

Soc. And if he is hungry, or has any other desire, does he not cease from the desire and the pleasure at the same moment?

Cal. Very true.

Soc. Then he ceases from pain and pleasure at the same moment?

Cal. Yes.

Soc. But he does not cease from good and evil at the same moment, as you have admitted: do you still adhere to what you said?

Cal. Yes, I do; but what is the inference?

Soc. Why, my friend, the inference is that the good is not the same as the pleasant, or the evil the same as the painful; there is a cessation of pleasure and pain at the same moment; but not of good and evil, for they are different. How then can pleasure be the same as good, or pain as evil? And I would have you look at the matter in

another light, which could hardly, I think, have been considered by you when you identified them: Are not the good good because they have good present with them, as the beautiful are those who have beauty present with them?<sup>41</sup>

At the beginning of the selection quoted, Socrates restates Callicles' view, namely, the intemperate life is the good life. Socrates has just cited a myth used by Euripides to illustrate how the intemperate man is like a leaky vessel which can never be filled.<sup>42</sup> Callicles, as his comments reveal in the selection, is unshaken in his belief. Finding that Callicles is still convinced of his belief, Socrates begins questioning him and elicits an admission which allows Socrates to make a point (495a-c). This portion of the selection demonstrates the process of generalization to division. In 495d, Socrates puts the generalization into concrete terms, demonstrating to Callicles the absurdity of his generalization.

The mode of progression through 495 is by the process of question and answer, which occurs within the context of the more general process of generalization and division. The process of question and answer continues through 495 to 497, getting further away from the original generalization. In 496, there is a perceptible change. The discussion is now moving from division to generalization. For instance, an "inference"

<sup>41</sup> Gorgias, 494-497, translated by B. Jowett, 3rd ed.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 493.

is made by Socrates at the close of 496: That is to say, a new generalization has been made. And here, too, the mode of progression has been by question and answer.

When the conversation reaches 497b, it is evident that another change has occurred. Callicles himself is aware of this, for he says, "I wish I knew, Socrates, what your quibbling means." At this point, the process of reformulation evidences itself. When our attention is focused on this particular aspect of the discussion, it can be seen how it "reaches back," so to speak, and utilizes all previous findings of the inquiry. Not all of the elements of the former discussions are present, but they are "present" in the sense that they were necessary to the development of the final statement.

The three processes, generalization to division or vice versa, question and answer and reformulation, are not hard fast categories. They overlap each other and are inextricably bound up together such that they cannot be separated. The processes are aspects of a single process of inquiry to which the term, dialectic, is applied. The entire process of inquiry can be broken down into these three major processes for purposes of clarification, but the process is not divisible into three separate entities.

There are several factors operating within the major process which furnish the basis for the process of inquiry. These factors are as follows:

- (1) a concern with a common problem
- (2) two or more opinions concerning the problem
- (3) each participant must honestly give his true opinion about the problem
- (4) the opinion should be clearly defined
- (5) there is an interaction of opinions
- (6) a new opinion is evolved.<sup>39</sup>

It is hardly necessary to study each of the factors in detail; for the reading of the selection from Gorgias should make most of them obvious. Therefore only one example of each factor shall be cited.

Factor (1) and (2) can be seen in 494 where the problem of the "good" is raised and Callicles' position concerning the problem is stated. At this point, Socrates' final position is not yet evident for, at the moment, he is objecting to Callicles' view (Socrates' "view" is here a reaction to Callicles' position). However, there exists a problem with which the two are concerned and two different views of that problem are presented.

Factor (3), each person must give his honest view or opinion about the problem, is especially important. Now, it would appear that (3) is only another facet of (1), the concern with a common problem. However, "concern" is not always interpreted by people to entail the divulging of one's honest

---

39

These six factors roughly correspond to an observation made by another writer: Cecil Miller sets forth five "features" of dialectic-viz., "(1) It involves two or more points of view (2) concerned with a common problem so stated that (3) each viewpoint modifies the problem and also (4) develops as the problem becomes clearer, until (5) a comprehensive solution is discovered." Cecil H. Miller, "Dialectical Reasoning," Unpublished Manuscript, Kansas State University, n.d.

opinions about a problem. The addition of factor (3) is, therefore, justified. The end result of not observing factor (3) is the withholding of information, and the impairment of inquiry. Socrates recognizes this and twice in 495a-b, he remonstrates Callicles for not being earnest. Finally, we should mention that this factor is one of the manifestations of the value of truth discussed in the first section of this thesis.

The next factor, (4), clearly defining one's opinion, has been discussed in detail in the section of the rhetorician's method of argument. Here we need only point out Callicles' reluctance to admit what his generalization means in concrete terms to see this factor working. Socrates breaks down Callicles' idea into definitive cases (494a-c). Callicles rejects this, accusing Socrates of "quibbling" and of being vulgar.

The next factor (5) is to be seen best in passages 496 through 497. For instance, in 496b-d, some of Callicles' ideas are intermingled with views of Socrates. At this point, the two philosophers are admitting previous assumptions--some of which have been made by Socrates and others by Callicles. To point to a specific case, let us review the following:

Soc. If then there be anything which a man has and has not at the same time, clearly that cannot be good and evil--do we agree?

Cal. I entirely agree.

Soc. Go back now to our former admissions. Did you say that to hunger, I mean the state of hunger, was pleasant or painful?

The first statement originated with Socrates and to this Callicles agrees. The second statement was originally Callicles' and Socrates bring this into a relationship with the first. Finally, both cooperate to produce the later generalization.

The last factor (6) the solution to the problem, is the most obvious. It is hardly necessary to discuss it. We shall, rather, turn to an evaluation of dialectic in relation to the other sections in the thesis.

#### REFORMULATION AND CONCLUSION

##### Reasons for Inquiry Proceeding Dialectically

In the first section, it was argued that certain conditions found in our social environment produce a value of truth in people. The desire for truth, we argued, emerged from a set of factual necessities, focusing around (a) knowledge to control nature, (b) kindness and (c) hard work. All of these are essential for physical survival and avoidance of pain.<sup>1</sup>

The preceding discussion of dialectic demonstrated an insistence on the part of Socrates for the disputants to be "truthful"--to honestly put forth their actual opinions on a subject. One of the important factors found in dialectic is, therefore,

---

<sup>1</sup> See page 20 of this thesis.

number (3); one must honestly give his true opinion. Not only does the value of truth start or begin inquiry, but it maintains and preserves the inquiry until a solution is reached. Moreover, if, as it has been argued, many people hold beliefs unconsciously by virtue of their social behavior, then the value of truth operating in inquiry could be instrumental in forcing this belief into a conscious form. And cognizance of the existence of unconscious beliefs promotes inquiry so that beliefs can be consciously known. In the section, "Conditions Under Which Philosophy Must Work," the following conditions were found to characterize reality:

(1) There is a pluralistic universe of conscious thought in which many common sense judgments, opinions, beliefs and theories exist concerning the problem, no one of which accounts for the problem in its entirety.

(2) Accompanying the conscious ideas, there is a world of unconscious beliefs introduced by new forces and innovations intruding into the environment.

(3) The upshot of (1) and (2) is contradiction between beliefs, conflict between beliefs, inconsistencies, and confusion.

(4) The history of events reveals a world in a perpetual state of change with new environmental innovations introducing qualitatively new conditions. Finally, it was concluded that if "truth" is to be achieved, at least one requirement must be met: there must be some sort of interaction or "communi-

cation" between diverse theories and beliefs.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when the dialectic process is studied, two factors are most obviously present--viz., there are two or more opinions present and those opinions interact with one another. Dialectic grows, so to speak, out of the social universe and the conditions found therein.

One of the first conclusions, therefore, from the evidence put forth is that inquiry is social in character. Inquiry is primarily social for three reasons: First, because of the pluralistic world of discourse in which opinions and ideas are partially correct and partially wrong. Second, because of the phenomena of social innovations introducing new factors which necessitate a change of some kind in behavior and beliefs. And third, because of the necessity of "communication" between the existing, diverse theories and beliefs. The dialectical method of inquiry exhibits the social characteristics proposed by the conditions mentioned above. A more correct way of stating this would be that dialectic is a set of conditions brought about by a problem arising in a set of social circumstances in which two or more opinions about that problem interact and finally go through a metamorphosis in which a "new" opinion is evolved.

---

2

See page 45.



Dialectic is a name that has been given to the processes that result from the interactions of ideas and beliefs. It is discovered in conversations which are concerned with problem solving. Not every conversation, as we suggested, embodies the necessary conditions, for not every conversation is concerned with achieving understanding. However, probably all conversations which purport to discover solutions to problems incorporate some dialectical principles. Unfortunately, adequate documentation of this is not possible in this thesis. One interesting manifestation of this can be seen in the role that soliloquies have played in literature. The reason for this would seem to lie in the fact that the soliloquy answers to a method that people employ in solving problems. An author recreates the "clear thinking" of the soliloquizer--and it proceeds dialectically. It is thinking "out loud"; that is to say, conversation and "thinking" are simultaneous.

One objection could be raised at this point, viz., the soliloquy is a "private affair" and dialectic is a social entity. However, this is not an insurmountable problem. An individual can solve problems without the actual presence of men who hold contrary opinions. The individual assumes a position or adopts an hypothesis, defends it, criticizes it; assumes another position and applies it to the problem. In

short, he attempts to do the same thing that a group of individuals would do if they were collectively working on the problem.<sup>3</sup> The reasons for the individual proceeding dialectically are the same as for a group; given a problem and given many opinions about the problem with some right and some wrong, there must ensue an interaction of the opinions. The process remains primarily a "social process," for the opinions with which the individual begins, originate in his environment and finally the last opinion he evolves is eventually modified by other people's criticism (presuming he will make public his ideas.)

#### A Value of Conflict

After studying the characteristics of inquiry, it would appear that one other "value" should be added. This will be called the value of conflict. The discussion of this value has been deferred until now because it arises from a recognition of all the factors of our social environment and the process of inquiry itself. The value can be contrasted with its opposite, the value of harmony. Harmony is used most frequently in the social world to secure agreement on "important issues;"

---

3

An example of a "private dialectic" is to be found in 355-356 of Plato's Protagoras. Socrates assumes the positions of other people and carries on an imaginary conversation.

with the end result of this over-insistence upon harmony, the ignoring of serious problems that exist in a world. This value keeps opposing opinions segregated and eliminates the possibility of an interaction of beliefs which is necessary to the solution of any problem.

The value of conflict, on the other hand, leads people to intentionally bring together opposing, contradictory opinions. With the value of truth acting as a balance, there is a check on the unfortunate extreme that conflict of ideas can assume. The history of any culture demonstrates the fact of conflict; often, unfortunately, in the form of war or domestic strife. Undoubtedly, all varieties of conflict are suspect because of the results of the more undesirable conflicts.

An alternative to emphasizing the opposite, harmony, is to utilize conflict by elevating it to a desirable status where it can be controlled. Once conflict is sophisticated, a factor is introduced which promotes inquiry into problems which will, in turn, provide a means of solving problems tending to precipitate physical strife. For instance, when an individual adopts a theory or an idea about something, he will keep that theory until he finds it inadequate. However, if the individual is cognizant of the likelihood of his idea being partially wrong, and cognizant of the value of conflict with other views as leading to a clarification and reformulation of his idea; he then will "expose" his ideas, preferably to

those who disagree with him.

The value of conflict can be seen in the nature of the process of inquiry itself. Participants of dialectical reasoning, it has been shown, take a position, define it clearly and give their honest opinions concerning their position. In other words, every participant tries to honestly defend his position, abandoning it only when the evidence points in another direction. As Mortimer Adler states the case, dialectic "requires partisanship." His comments on the aspect of conflict in inquiry seem, in my opinion, to be very important. He writes that:

Actual controversy occurs when two minds are engaged in dispute. It is evident that such dispute could only occur because the two individuals in question are in some way partisan. They have taken sides; they are defending or attacking beliefs or propositions. Partisanship, then, is an essential factor in the event of dialectic. But partisanship does not necessarily imply an actual duality of individual minds; it exists wherever opposition occurs in discourse and remains unresolved. The appreciation of such opposition, and the attempt to resolve it requires partisanship, whether the appreciation be the act of a single mind or the result of two minds in intellectual conflict.<sup>4</sup>

It may be concluded then, that because of the value of truth and the conditions under which "truth" is achieved, one must include into the universe of discourse a value of intellectual conflict: For intellectual conflict is necessary to the attainment of a better statement of the nature of things.

---

<sup>4</sup>

Mortimer J. Adler, Dialectic, p.29.

Conflict, on the level of inquiry, leads to agreement or "harmony" with the latter a result of conflict.

### CONCLUSION

The name of dialectic has been given to the actual process and activity of inquiry. In summary, the chief characteristics of inquiry have been outlined and discussed; they can be listed as follows:

- I. (1) the process of generalization and division
- (2) the process of question and answer
- (3) the process of reformulation
- II. (1) a concern with a common problem
- (2) two or more opinions concerning the problem
- (3) each participant must honestly give his true opinion about the problem
- (4) the opinion should be clearly defined
- (5) there is an interaction of opinions
- (6) a new opinion is evolved
- III. (1) a value of truth
- (2) a value of conflict

To conclude, the term dialectic refers to a set of conditions which, when entering into a contextual relationship with each other, clarify existing opinions, alter inadequate ideas and evolve new ideas. Moreover, dialectic is essentially a never-ending process; with new statements being only temporary terminals to be one day re-examined when new problems arise which question their adequacy.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Books

- Adams, G. P., D. S. Mackay, W. R. Dennes, P. Marhenke,  
J. Loewenberg, S. C. Pepper, E. W. Strong. Knowledge  
and Society. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938.
- Black, Max. Problems of Analysis. Ithaca: Cornell Univer-  
sity Press, 1954.
- Buchler, Justus, editor. The Philosophy of Peirce.  
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1940.
- Burke, Kenneth. A Grammar of Motives. New York: Prentice-  
Hall, 1945.
- Dewey, John. How We Think. New York: D. C. Heath, 1933.  
———. Logic-The Theory of Inquiry. New York: Henry  
Holt, 1938.  
———. Quest for Certainty. New York: Minton Balch,  
1929.
- Dialogues of Plato. Translated by B. Jowett. Two volumes.  
New York: Random House, 1937.
- Ducasse, Curt John. Philosophy as a Science. New York:  
Oskar Piest, 1941.
- Frank, Philipp. Philosophy of Science. Englewood Cliffs:  
Prentice-Hall, 1957.
- Friedrich, Carl J., editor. Authority. Cambridge: Har-  
vard University Press, 1958.
- Geiger, George Raymond. Philosophy and the Social Order.  
Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1947.
- Gellner, Ernest. Words and Things. London: Victor Gollancz,  
1959.
- Hook, Sidney. Reason, Social Myths and Democracy. New  
York: John Day, 1940.

- James, William. Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy. New York: Dover Publications, 1956.
- Lodge, Rupert Clendon. The Philosophy of Plato. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956.
- Marx, Karl. Capital. Translated from third German edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. Volume I. New York: International Publishers, 1947.
- Ogburn, William F. Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature. Second edition. New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1922.
- Republic of Plato, The. Translated by F. M. Cornford. New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.
- Russell, Bertrand. Philosophy. New York: W. W. Norton, 1927.
- Santayana, George. Winds of Doctrine. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1913.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Life of Reason. Volume V. New York: Scribners & Sons, 1948.
- Stenzel, Julius. Plato's Method of Dialectic. Translated and edited by D. J. Allen. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
- Taylor, A. E. Socrates, the Man and His Thought. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956.
- Winspear, Alban Dewes. The Genesis of Plato's Thought. New York: The Dryden Press, 1940.

#### Periodical Articles

- Ballard, Edward G. "On the Nature of Dialectic." Philosophy of Science, July, 1955, 22:205-213.
- Cohen, S. P. Martin, R. Johnson. "Toward the Development of Dialectics." Science and Society, Winter, 1958, 22:21-43.

- Dickinson, John. "Epistemological Development of Dialectics." Science and Society, Summer, 1958, 22:207-217.
- Feibleman, James K. "The Social Adaptiveness of Philosophers." Ethics, January, 1960, 70:196-154.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Therapy of the Dialectic." The Journal of Philosophy. September 30, 1943, 40:566-575.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Genesis of the Dialectic." Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, June, 1948, 8:658-678.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Preventive Psychiatry." n.p., December 15, 1943,
- McKeon, Richard. "Dialectic and Political Thought and Action." Ethics, October, 1954, 65:1-34.
- Pepper, Stephen C. "The Root Metaphor Theory of Metaphysics." The Journal of Philosophy, July 14, 1935, 32:365-374.
- Popper, Karl R. "What is Dialectic." Mind, October, 1940, 49:403-427.

#### Unpublished Material

- Miller, Cecil H. "Dialectical Reasoning." Unpublished essay written at Kansas State University, n.d.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Is Loyalty to Democracy Philosophically Justifiable?" Unpublished essay written at Kansas State University, n.d.
- Nelson, John. "The Inadmissibility of Quantifying Inductive Generalization." Unpublished paper presented at the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association in Chicago, Illinois, May, 1960.



DIALECTIC AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY

by

Donald D. St.Clair

B.S., Kansas State University, 1953

---

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Philosophy

Department of History, Political Science, and Philosophy

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

1961

The purpose of this thesis is to account for the nature of the process of inquiry. It is argued that inquiry proceeds dialectically and that cognizance of the principles found in the process leads to discovery and insight. Generally, the theory developed in the thesis is as follows: (a) dialectic refers to a set of principles and processes found in inquiry, (b) the principles and processes grow out of a set of environmental factors, and (c) the process of inquiry is exhibited in certain types of conversations.

The procedure of the thesis is, first, to study the grounds or basis for inquiry, secondly, to study an actual process of inquiry, and finally, to state the principle characteristics of the process of inquiry. The first three sections are concerned with human and social phenomena which set limitations to inquiry and furnish a set of conditions which promote inquiry. Among the latter, there is seen to be an "impulse to insight" which promotes or starts the problem solving process and maintains the activity until a satisfying solution is evolved.

The social phenomena under which inquiry must work are characterized by four conditions:

- (1) There is a pluralistic universe of conscious thought

in which many common sense judgments, opinions, beliefs, and theories exist concerning the problem, no one of which accounts for the problem in its entirety.

(2) Accompanying the conscious ideas, there is a world of unconscious beliefs introduced by new forces and innovations intruding into the environment.

(3) The upshot of (1) and (2) is contradiction between beliefs, conflict between beliefs, inconsistencies and confusion.

(4) The history of events demonstrates not the absoluteness of "laws" or things in general, but change, flux and altering circumstances.

For truth to be achieved in such a world of discourse, an individual cannot select a set of homogeneous opinions or beliefs. Since each member of the cluster of beliefs and theories may contain a partial or half-truth there must be "communication" between beliefs: the process of inquiry must allow for the interactions of beliefs and theories.

When the dialectical process is studied, two factors are most obviously present-viz., there are two or more opinions present and those opinions interact with one another. Dialectic, grows so to speak out of the social universe and the conditions found therein. Dialectic refers to a set of conditions which, when entering into a contextual relationship with each other, clarify existing opinions, alter in-

adequate ideas and evolve new ideas. The chief characteristics of dialectic are as follows:

- I. (1) the process of generalization and division  
(2) the process of question and answer  
(3) the process of reformulation
- II. (1) a concern with a common problem  
(2) two or more opinions concerning the problem  
(3) each participant must honestly give his true opinion about the problem  
(4) the opinion should be clearly defined  
(5) there is an interaction of opinions  
(6) a new opinion is evolved
- III. (1) a value of truth  
(2) a value of conflict

In conclusion, dialectic is seen to be a never-ending process; with new statements being only temporary terminals to be one day re-examined when new problems arise.