

Duality, Good and Evil, and the Approach to Harmony

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Summary

Christianity and other western religions regard evil as a real force and morality as a choice with only one permissible outcome. However, the Qabalah treats evil more as an unresolved imbalance: the failure to resolve pairs of opposites. The Qabalists go further than the Buddha, whose Noble Middle Path is central to eastern religion: they acknowledge advantages in experiencing the opposites—even over a period of more than one lifetime—before bringing them into harmony. Similarly, Ger-

man philosopher Hegel observed that cycles of thesis and antithesis may continue for some time before new synthesis is achieved. Theosophical teachings—particularly those of the Tibetan Master—draw attention to the mediating roles of the fourth ray of Harmony through Conflict and the second divine aspect of Love–Wisdom. These teachings may offer a way to reconcile Christian and Qabalistic teachings on good and evil.¹

Duality often presents itself in the form of incompatible or conflicting pairs of opposites. It is easy to make a value judgment, identifying one as “good” and the other as “evil.” However, from a different perspective, pairs of opposites provide opportunities for exploration, for experiencing the consequences of each and learning the importance of balance.

The Nature of Evil

Philosophers have long debated whether evil is a real force, is simply the absence of good, or is no more than a human projection of distaste, outrage or even self-loathing. Western religions have generally taught that evil is real, associating it with the influence of malevolent entities. A common belief, at least in ancient

times, was that good and evil gods are locked in mutual conflict. The bad god might be defeated from time to time but will not be destroyed until the end of the world. In the ancient Vedic religion of India, the warrior god *Indra* battled the dragon *Vrtra* to establish order out of chaos. And in the teachings of Zoroaster *Ahura Mazda* was pitted against the evil *Ahriman*.

Christianity, influenced by Zoroastrian dualism, associated evil with Satan—whose prototype was probably Ahriman. After being

cast out from heaven, Satan resolved to divert humanity from its destiny and take as many souls (and bodies) as possible with him to hell: “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.”² Human weakness—aggravated by the inherited sin of Adam—makes

this unfortunate fate all too likely, despite the redemptive act of Christ and the ministrations of the church. Unceasing effort is needed to keep the faithful on the straight and narrow road: “Defraud ye not one the other... that ye

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may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.”³

The devious Satan assumes many deceptive guises: “Satan... is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore... his ministers [may] be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.”⁴

We can learn much about evil from the Qabalah. The Qabalah’s origins lie in Judaism although, through accretion, it has embraced other systems of esotericism to become a central element of the Western Esoteric Tradition. It teaches that the pure spirit of the Godhead, or *Ain Soph*, manifests through a series of ten *sephiroth* extending down to the material world.⁵ *Sephirah* (Hebrew: ספירה), the singular of “sephiroth,” literally means “number,” but in the Qabalah it denotes both an expression of the divine essence and the form, or “vessel,” through which it manifests. The combination of the life and form give each sephirah a distinctive “flavor.” Qabalistic teaching will be discussed later in this article, but its explanation of the origin of evil is relevant here.

Like most Jews and Christians of the time, medieval Qabalists believed that evil stemmed from Adam’s disobedience. But its disruptive effect was not confined to our first parents or even to humanity. It spread upward from the world of human activity to the higher worlds because of the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm. “When Adam sinned,” we read in the *Zohar*, an authoritative 13th-century text, “he caused a defect, separating the Woman from Her Husband. The fault of this defect stood out in the moon.”⁶ “The Husband,” the Holy One, is identified with the central sephirah, *Tiphareth* (תפארת, “beauty” or “harmony”). “The Woman” is identified with the lowest sephirah, *Malkuth* (מלכות, literally “the Kingdom”), or more precisely with the *Shekinah* (שכינה), the divine feminine presence associated with it. Adam’s sin tore the very fabric of creation.

Later Qabalists theorized that evil came not from human failure but from the act of creation itself. The initial descent of divine essence

was so powerful that the vessels were broken.⁷ What we call “evil” is an unfortunate—perhaps even unforeseen—side-effect of manifest existence. Theosophical writers express similar views. For example, Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846–1888) explains:

Evil is the result of Creation. For Creation is the result of the projection of Spirit into matter; and with this projection came the first germ of evil... [E]vil is the result of the materialisation of Spirit... It is... true that God created evil; but yet it is true that God is Spirit, and being Spirit is incapable of evil. Evil is... purely and solely the result of the materialisation of God. This is a great mystery... Without evil... God would have remained alone.⁸

Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul speaks of cosmic evil whose origins lie beyond humanity or indeed beyond the planet. Cosmic evil is associated with powerful, intelligent beings, comprising a “Black Lodge,” who seek to retard human evolution. They work in opposition to the Planetary Hierarchy, the Great White Lodge, whose mission is to promote human progress: “Just as the White Lodge is the representative or correspondence of the cosmic centre of light... the Black Lodge is... representative of ancient and cosmic evil.”⁹

Like the battle between mythological deities, the balance of power between the Black and White Lodges tilts one way and then the other. Toward the end of the Atlantean civilization the forces of evil gained ascendancy, using human agents to promote extreme materialism and selfishness. The Black Lodge was defeated, but at the enormous cost of destruction of Atlantis and withdrawal of the Planetary Hierarchy from day-to-day involvement in human affairs.

The Planetary Hierarchy has assumed the major burden of protecting humanity from cosmic evil:

The main task of the spiritual Hierarchy has ever been to stand between the Forces of Evil and humanity, to bring imperfection into the light so that evil can “find no place” for action, and to keep the door open into the spiritual realm.¹⁰

However, the Black Lodge exploits human weakness in much the same way as does Satan in Christian doctrine:

The Forces of Evil sought for those leaders and groups who are the materialistic correspondence to the spiritual leaders and those who seek to guide humanity along right lines.... [They are] intelligent evil, unloving, hateful Individualities who are to the world of selfish and material focus what the Hierarchy of Masters, working under the Christ, are to struggling human aspirants.¹¹

In its choice of methods the Black Lodge purposely disregards constraints which its white counterpart voluntarily accepts for humanity's benefit. The Tibetan explains:

The power of these evil forces is enormous, for they recognise no restrictions or ordinary decent, human limitations; they work through violence, coercion, cruelty, hate, terror and lies; they aim to subjugate the human consciousness through the complete control of men's minds, through the withholding of good and the promulgation of evil. They stimulate the brains of men through the extent of their evil and magical knowledge; I mean this literally and physically.¹²

An important concern for religious teachers and philosophers is whether evil, human or cosmic, is eternal or only temporary. Church father Origen (185–254 CE) was of the opinion that both Satan and the damned one day will be saved: that God's infinite love could not tolerate eternal rejection of a portion of creation. Fifteen hundred years later the Universalists would express similar views. Christian doctrine insists that Satan will finally be defeated in the battle of Armageddon: "I saw an angel come down from heaven... And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more."¹³ However, his punishment and that of all who disobey God will be eternal.

Religious teachers and philosophers also have long debated the apparent conflict between

God's infinite goodness and both the pervasiveness of evil and eternity of hell. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) explained that by nature evil entities were—well—evil, and "If evil were completely eliminated from things, they would not be governed by Divine Providence in accord with their nature; and this would be a greater defect than the particular defects eliminated." He added darkly: "the good of one cannot be realized without the suffering of evil by another."¹⁴ Four centuries later Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646–1716) concluded that there is no theodical conflict because we already live in the best of all possible worlds.¹⁵

The Greeks never considered evil to be a real force; nor did they attach much significance to evil behavior. Philosophers from Pythagoras to the Neoplatonists discussed the interplay between spirit and matter; but these were not necessarily in conflict. The Logos mediated between spirit and matter at the macrocosmic level, and the human soul at the microcosmic level.¹⁶ Plato's later works betrayed a growing belief that matter is intrinsically corrupt; for example, "Socrates" speaks of the physical body as a "mass of evil," "a source of endless trouble," and something to be "cast off" as soon as possible.¹⁷ The Stoics continued to believe that we act in accordance with the necessity of reason; in a deterministic universe there are no choices, moral or otherwise.¹⁸ But even they prized wisdom and reason over ignorance and passion.

Greek philosophy did produce the interesting notion of the *Demiurge* (Δημιουργος, literally "craftsman"), a lesser and somewhat inept deity who created our imperfect world. The idea that the world might have been created by a lesser god or even a devil was not new; according to early Zoroastrian texts the evil god Ahriman participated in creation.

Others have denied the existence of evil altogether or attribute its effects—suffering, for example—either to human ignorance or to random environmental factors. The view that evil has no intrinsic existence has gained acceptance in recent times, largely in reaction to a perceived naiveté in traditional religious doctrine. For example, New Thought asserts that what we call "evil" is simply the absence of

good: an infinitely good God could not create evil, but some situations, things and people express less divine goodness than others.¹⁹ Christian Science, the Unity Church of Christianity, and Religious Science—all of which trace their origins to the New Thought movement—espouse such views.

Qabalah and the Pairs of Opposites

The Qabalah was influenced by Pythagorean and Neoplatonic philosophy, but its interpretation of evil took on a special character. Qabalistic teaching views good and evil as one of many pairs of opposites.

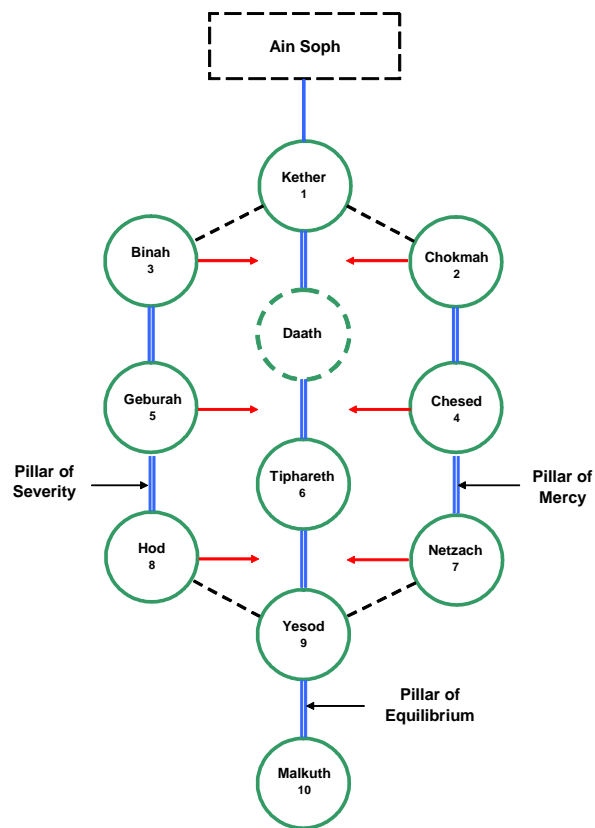
The sephiroth were identified in a text that may date back to the earliest centuries of the Common Era; but their spatial relationships were not explored until much later. In the early 17th century Jewish scholars of the Safed community in Palestine arranged the sephiroth in the familiar pattern known as the Tree of Life (Figure 1).²⁰ The Tree consists of three vertical “pillars.” Four sephiroth: *Kether*, *Tiphareth*, *Yesod* and *Malkuth* (together with a later addition, *Daath*), lie on the middle Pillar of Equilibrium. Three lie on each outer pillar: *Chokmah*, *Chesed* and *Netzach* on the Pillar of Mercy, and *Binah*, *Geburah* and *Hod* on the Pillar of Severity. The whole structure of the Tree of Life emphasizes the tension between polar opposites, including the ultimate, “vertical” polarity of spirit and matter and “horizontal” polarities associated with sephiroth on the outer pillars

The sephiroth can be viewed not only as divine emanations but also as opportunities for human experience, in isolation or in relationship to contrasting experiences. Accordingly, the horizontal pairs of opposites are of the utmost importance to our theme and will be examined in turn.

Chokmah and Binah. This first pair of opposites represents the polarity of gender—at every level of reality, including the human. Chokmah (Hebrew: חכמה, literally “Wisdom”) and Binah (בינה, “Understanding”) are the primal masculine and feminine energies: the giver and the receiver of divine force.²¹

Chokmah represents pure, untamed potency, while Binah represents the form which receives and contains its energy. Chokmah’s energy would be wasted if it were not captured and nurtured in the “womb” of Binah. On the other hand, without the potency of Chokmah, Binah would become a lifeless vessel, mired in inertia. We are reminded here of the *rajas* (Sanskrit: रजस, “activity”) and *tamas* (तमस, “inertia”) of Hindu philosophy.

Figure 1. Tree of Life.
Tension between the Pairs of Opposites



Chokmah–Binah polarity can be seen in the quest for controlled thermonuclear energy. The ability to detonate thermonuclear devices, releasing enormous amounts of energy, was demonstrated more than 50 years ago; but we still do not have the means to harness it for

constructive purposes. The polarity remains unresolved.

Chesed and Geburah. Chesed (חסד, “Mercy”) is the source of blessing and grace, while Geburah (גבורה, “Judgment”) provides necessary, but occasionally forceful, limitation. Their mutual tension can readily be understood at the human level. Chesed is represented by indulgent, permissive parents, Geburah by harsh, demanding ones. The first would spoil their children; the second would produce cowering, insecure children. In a balanced environment, children grow up feeling loved but also accepting boundaries and developing values.

The tension between Chesed and Geburah can be seen in government welfare programs. Such programs are well-intentioned, and they meet real need; but they can also result in waste, abuse and corruption. Public policy often fluctuates between a desire to alleviate hardship and a desire to “tighten up” on eligibility and strengthen the work ethic.

Netzach and Hod. Netzach (נצח, “Victory”) and Hod (הוד, “Splendor”) represent the enthusiasm–caution polarity. Netzach overflows with passion and imagination. It stimulates creativity, but with no thought of what might be practical and oblivious to failure. In an extreme form Netzach could produce manic psychosis. Its opposite, Hod, introduces a note of realism. But Hod lacks vision and by itself it is overly analytical and pessimistic: “We already tried that; it won’t work.”

Good illustrations of the Netzach–Hod polarity are the economy and its leading indicator: securities prices. During periods of economic expansion, businesses invest in plant and equipment and hire additional employees. Stock prices are bid up by what Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank, once called “irrational exuberance.”²² But expansion cannot last forever, and eventually the bubble bursts. Fears of inflation cause businesses to pull back, people are laid off, consumer spending declines, and the stock market goes into a tailspin.

None of the sephiroth on the Tree of Life is considered “evil.” Rather, the experiences they provide are available, even *necessary*, to express human potential. In due course the pairs of opposites are brought into harmony; the outer sephiroth are resolved on the Pillar of Equilibrium. The Chokmah–Binah polarity is resolved in “birthing” all the lower sephiroth, and the tension between Chesed and Geburah is resolved in the harmony and beauty of Tiphareth.

The tension between Netzach and Hod is resolved in Yesod (יסוד, “Foundation”), the seat of emotion and desire. And here the Tibetan’s commentary on magic is pertinent:

[E]very thought-form which [the disciple] builds is built under the impulse of some emotion or of some desire; in rarer cases it may be built in the light of illumination and embody, therefore, some intuition. But with the majority, the motivating impulse which sweeps the mindstuff into activity is an emotional one, or a potent desire.²³

Emotion serves to energize and propel creative thoughtforms toward their destination: the physical plane of Malkuth. Importantly, Malkuth corresponds to the physical world, but it is still permeated by the divine force: in this case the feminine energy of the Shekinah. In Malkuth–Shekinah we find the immanent deity, contrasting with the transcendent deity of Kether.

On the other hand, balance is not always attained. Evil, in Qabalistic teachings, is an unbalanced force, an unresolved polarity. For example, the aggressive judgmentalism of Geburah, unrelieved by the compassion of Chesed, can produce religious crusades, witch hunts, and terrorism. And, as we have seen, there is still no effective way to control (Binah) the potency of nuclear fusion (Chokmah); instead of having an endless supply of “free” energy, humanity is threatened by thermonuclear war.

According to Qabalistic teachings, God reconstructed the sephiroth after the primeval “breaking of the vessels,” but they remain in a somewhat fragile state. Redemption continues through an ongoing process of purification,

like the refinement of metal in a furnace.²⁴ Either the discarded original vessels or the dross associated with refinement of the present ones—depending on which authority is cited—comprise the *qliphoth* (singular: *qliphah*, קליפה, “husk” or “shell”). In the *Zohar* we read: “For this light... lowered itself and diminished its own radiance while the qliphoth were established in their places. This gave place to the emerging of the qliphoth.”²⁵ The qliphoth can be viewed as a parallel set of sephiroth. They are forms that once served a useful purpose but have become detached from the Tree of Life. Normally, a discarded or outworn form disintegrates, but sometimes it retains enough residual life—or is artificially sustained—to continue exerting negative influence. The qliphoth are to the sephiroth what the wraith is to a living person.

It is not difficult to identify outworn or unbalanced forms associated with the “horizontal” polarities. For instance: the “Jehovah–God” of fundamentalist religion can be associated with Chokmah and/or Geburah; Socialism with Chesed; 1960s “flower children”

and commodities traders with Netzach; and sterile academic research with Hod. Qliphoth can also be found on the middle pillar. Un-grounded mysticism can be associated with Tiphareth and Yesod, and materialism with Malkuth. In these cases the imbalance is “vertical;” for example, materialism is the failure to allow life to penetrate and ensoul physical reality.

The notion of the qliphoth as outworn forms finds a strong echo in the Tibetan’s teachings. For example, with respect to esoteric organizations, he insists: “The principles of the Ageless Wisdom must be preserved, but all outworn forms must go,” adding that the leaders of one such group were “too old for the work of re-

construction and too crystallized.”²⁶ With regard to obsolete theological constructs:

I have called to your notice the urgency of the incoming life, producing tension, spiritual recognitions of a far-reaching nature, the immediate overthrow of false Gods and standards, and the destruction of outworn and crystallised interpretations...of the spiritual realities. By these means, the way is cleared for a new and simple recognition of divinity which will satisfy not only the heart of the simplest person, but which will meet the need of the most intelligent.²⁷

Moral Choice

Confronted by behavioral opposites, an obvious strategy is to choose one and reject the other. The choice can be made on the basis of

desire (I prefer one over the other), economics (what will each cost?), or safety (I might get hurt). It may also be based on ideological or moral considerations, implying categories of “right” and “wrong.” A strongly dualistic notion of good

and evil leads inevitably to dichotomous moral choice. Thus Christianity has developed an elaborate structure of sin: “any transgression in deed, or word, or desire, of the eternal law... which requires the preservation of natural order, and forbids the breach of it.”²⁸ Sin requires individual contrition as well as Christ’s collective atonement; otherwise the unrepentant sinner is destined for eternal punishment (I may really get hurt). The very simplicity of dualistic morality has appealed to people throughout the centuries, providing a firm basis for ordering their lives. Buttressed by organized religion, and provided with clear moral law, people have only to obey the rules in order to “do the right thing” and secure eternal salvation.

The same kind of dualistic mindset encourages rigid positions on ideological and social issues. We are exhorted to stand firm on such religious-social issues as abortion, stem-cell research, and same-sex marriage. Earlier polarizing issues were the use of anesthetics, racial integration, and the threat of Communism. There is no middle ground; wavering plays into the hands of the enemy. In the words of Barry Morris Goldwater (1909–1998): “Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice. Tolerance in the face of tyranny is no virtue.”²⁹

An alternative strategy is to try to bring the opposites into harmony, whereupon moral categories become less relevant. Teachers from the Buddha, to Jewish “scholastic” Moses Maimonides (1138–1204 CE), to Christian mystic John of the Cross (1542–1591) argued for compromise between worldliness and extreme asceticism. Best known is the Buddha’s Noble Middle Path:

Monks, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth as a wanderer. What two? Devotion to the pleasures of sense... [and] devotion of self-mortification, which is painful, unworthy and unprofitable... By avoiding these two extremes [the Buddha] has gained knowledge of the middle path which giveth vision, which giveth knowledge, enlightenment, [nirvāna].³⁰

In due course the Buddha and his followers would apply the principle of the middle path to many other pairs of opposites, and it became a cornerstone of Buddhist teachings. But where is the middle path, and is it the same for everyone? Might different “middle paths” apply to different kinds of people: hermits, soldiers, welfare workers, politicians, college professors? Other difficult questions are whether excursions from the middle path are permitted, and if so in which direction? What are their ethical implications? Mild expansions and contractions benefit an economy by reallocating resources. So perhaps a spiritual path that includes dark nights as well as bright days can offer invaluable experience, appreciation of alternatives, and understanding of people whose middle paths happen to lie the “right” or “left” of our own.

Qabalists urge us to experience the horizontal polarities on the Tree of Life: the optimistic vision of Netzach as well as the pessimistic caution of Hod, the generosity of Chesed as well as the suspicious—even spiteful—judgment of Geburah, the potent masculinity of Chokmah as well as the receptive femininity of Binah. To live in the energy of one of the outer sephiroth can provide rich learning opportunities, so long as we also experience its opposite and, in due course, bring the two into balance on the Pillar of Equilibrium.

We may experience the opposites concurrently as we strive toward integration of the personality. We all have characteristics—latent or actualized—of both Chokmah and Binah, Chesed and Geburah, Netzach and Hod. The latent ones may be repressed into what psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) called our “shadow.”³¹ The shadow is the totality of instincts, impulses and drives that we find unacceptable and cannot admit into the fragile persona we seek to construct. We may repress one half of a polarity: for example, our Netzach characteristics, while trying to convince ourselves (and others) that we are totally driven by Hod. Or we may suppress our Binah characteristics while frantically accentuating those of Chokmah. What we repress we may also project out onto other people and call it “evil.” The attitudes and behavior we most angrily condemn in others may lurk in our own shadow.

We may also experience the opposites serially: at different times of our lives or perhaps even in successive lifetimes. Tenth-century texts indicate that many Qabalists were moving toward belief in reincarnation—or *gilgul* (literally “turning over”).³² The belief, which may reflect Neoplatonic or Gnostic influence, is discussed at more length in the *Zohar*.³³ Reincarnation remained anathema to mainstream Judaism; and, even among the Qabalists, the doctrine was never developed to the level found in Hinduism and Buddhism. Opinions varied among early Qabalists concerning the applicability and extent of reincarnation: whether it applied to everyone or only to the wicked, as an alternative to hell; and how many lifetimes might be permitted.³⁴ Those

who saw reincarnation in a negative light speculated that the souls of the wicked might merit rebirth as a Gentile or even an animal. Certain rabbis speculated on which Old Testament characters might have been incarnations of earlier ones. Some linked Abel with Moses, while others saw a link between Adam, Moses, David and a coming messiah.³⁵

Safed scholar Isaac Luria (1534–1572) hypothesized that all souls are fragments of Adam's and that the fragments inhabit a succession of bodies.³⁶ He appealed to an analogy dating back to the *Bahir*, likening rebirth to donning new clothes. Over time people reach the perfection that was lost in the Fall, where "perfection" means illumination by the *Shekinah*, the immanent Glory of God.

Qabalists never quite abandoned the notion of a "last judgment." Nor did they embrace the highly developed doctrine of reincarnation and karma found in the eastern religions. Importantly, they never lost sight of the moral imperatives of Mosaic Law. In addition to experiencing the outer sephiroth—or perhaps as a result of doing so—the seeker strives to move from the lower to the higher sephiroth, to return to the divine source of all life.

Mediation and Harmony

We speak of bringing pairs of opposites into balance, but what precisely does this mean? Is the objective to produce static equilibrium: a kind of uneasy truce in which the opposites are neutralized? Is it a dynamic equilibrium with cyclical excursions about their median? Or is it new synthesis to which the strengths of the polar opposites are united and given new expression?

German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) observed that currents of philosophical opinion ebbed and flowed throughout the ages, as different schools of thought gained ascendancy for a while, only to decline in influence and be superseded by others. Ungrounded superstition, dogmatic religion, and scientific materialism all had their turns. At times people enjoyed freedom of thought, while at other times they endured censorship and repression. Ages of enlightenment, creativity, idealism, and confidence fol-

lowed dark ages of ignorance, totalitarianism, and disillusionment. Times when technology threatened to destroy the world interspersed times of unjustifiable optimism that it could solve all our problems.

These observations led Hegel to formulate his dialectical theory of history.³⁷ It involves three factors, which he called thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. *Thesis* represents a political, religious, philosophical or social mindset fashionable at a particular time. After it has held sway for a while, a contrasting mindset, *antithesis*, challenges it and attains a position of dominance. Hegel also recognized that the mutual tension between thesis and antithesis occasionally produces creative *synthesis*, a new paradigm. In his words, spirit "is indeed never at rest but always engaged in moving forward." However, it does not necessarily move forward at a uniform rate; long periods of lethargy may be punctuated by spurts of rapid progress. Dramatic change can sometimes occur: "The gradual crumbling that left unaltered the face of the whole is cut short by a *sunburst* which, in one flash, illuminates the features of the new world."³⁸

If the Qabalah provides a static model for examining the pairs of opposites, Hegelian dialectic provides a dynamic model, one which emphasizes the resolution—gradual or explosive—of the opposites into new synthesis. It also brings into sharp focus the struggle and conflict that may be necessary before harmony and synthesis are achieved.

In his discussion of pairs of opposites the Tibetan touches on what we have called the "horizontal" polarities; but more often he focuses on the "vertical" ones lying on the matter–spirit continuum. Tension between pairs of opposites can occur at any level. For example, on the physical plane tension exists between the dense physical and etheric natures. However, conflict is most marked on the sentient ("astral") plane, making it a prime target for the powers of light and darkness. This plane, the Tibetan explains:

with its instability, its storms, its tranquillities, its overwhelming emotional reactions and its pliability, which makes it such a

good agent for the deceptive thought-forming faculties... [I]t is the agent... of deception when manipulated by the Black Lodge, or of aspirational reaction when influenced by the great White Lodge.³⁹

He characterizes the sentient plane as “that whereon... the pull of the great dualities is most potently felt... Light and darkness interact, as do pleasure and pain; good and evil meet and form the playground of the Gods.”⁴⁰ The Tibetan relates pain to imbalance: “Pain is the effect produced when the astral or emotional body is wrongly polarised. Pain is the outcome of failure to balance correctly the pairs of opposites.”⁴¹

The Tibetan frequently likens conflict on the sentient plane to the mythical battle of Kurukshetra, where Arjuna of the *Bhagavad Gita* stood between opposing armies. “[T]he true kurukshetra... is fought out in the astral nature, between

the pairs of opposites which are distinctive of our solar system.”⁴² However, the opposing forces can be brought into balance, to good effect:

[T]he secret of liberation lies in the balancing of the forces and the equilibrising of the pairs of opposites. The Path is the narrow line between these pairs which the aspirant finds and treads, turning neither to the right nor to the left... [W]hen a man balances the forces of his own nature, then he can work with the world forces, can preserve the balance and the equilibrium of the energies of the three worlds and so become a co-worker with the Masters of the Wisdom.⁴³

From the sentient plane, the battle moves up to the mental plane where different polarities present themselves.

Through dispassion and the balancing of the pairs of opposites [the disciple] has freed himself from the moods, feelings, longings, desires, and emotional reactions which characterise the life of the average man and has arrived at the point of peace. The devil of pride, the personification of the misused mental nature and the distorted perceptions of the mind, are overcome.⁴⁴

Harmony through Conflict and Love–Wisdom

The Tibetan Master’s teachings on the seven rays made a major contribution to esoteric knowledge. The rays comprise “the totality of

energies which circulate throughout our planetary form.”⁴⁵ Particularly important is the role of the fourth ray of “Harmony through Conflict”—the median of the seven—in resolving pairs of opposites. In the

The fourth ray of Harmony through Conflict is the median ray; but Love-Wisdom is the median aspect of the trinity, and it too plays a special role in the resolution of opposites. The Second Aspect of deity is the origin of all duality, but it is also the force that brings the opposites together.

Tibetan’s words: “The fourth ray is essentially the refiner, the producer of perfection within the form, and the prime manipulator of the energies of God.”⁴⁶ He calls the fourth ray the ray of the seeker and the “ray of struggle.”⁴⁷ Disciples are pulled one way or the other by a variety of forces. On the other hand, the fact that the fourth ray is “the ray which teaches the art of living in order to produce a synthesis of beauty”⁴⁸ should come as no surprise when we recall that beauty and harmony are the qualities of Tiphareth, the sephirah lying at the very center of the Tree of Life (see Figure 1).

The fourth ray of Harmony through Conflict is the median ray; but Love-Wisdom is the median aspect of the trinity, and it too plays a special role in the resolution of opposites. The Second Aspect of deity is the origin of all duality, but it is also the force that brings the opposites together. This duality and resulting mu-

tual attraction manifests in numerous ways, including gender:

I should like here to approach the problem of sex from another angle and point out that it is a basic symbol... of an inward and spiritual reality... the reality of relationship. It is a relationship existing between the basic pairs of opposites—Father-Mother, spirit-matter; between positive and negative; between life and form, and between the great dualities which—when brought together in the cosmic sense—produce the manifested son of God, the cosmic Christ, the conscious sentient universe.⁴⁹

Duality will only be transcended when the created universe passes into pralaya. At that point gender will no longer be a factor. The Tibetan turns to an alchemical symbol to describe this end state:

All that remains is a point of light. This point is conscious, immutable and aware of the two extremes of the divine expression: the sense of individual identity and the sense of universality. These are fused and blended in the ONE. Of this ONE the divine Hermaphrodite is the concrete symbol—the union in one of the pairs of opposites, negative and positive, male and female.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, “Compassion,” the expression of the Second Aspect expressed *par excellence* by the Buddha, “is essentially the right use of the pairs of opposites.”⁵¹ And love, whether it is the love of man and woman or the universal love for humanity, “is the great principle of attraction, of desire, of magnetic pull, and (within our solar system) that principle demonstrates as the attraction and the interplay between the pairs of opposites.”⁵² Chokmah and Binah are eternally united.

Conclusion

Except at the highest levels of the Godhead, duality is inherent in creation. The very word “existence” is derived from the Latin *existere*, which means “to stand apart from.” Duality implies “otherness,” but it is also the basis of consciousness, relationship, and the universal force that seeks to overcome separation.

At levels of reality relevant to the human journey, duality often presents itself in the form of incompatible or conflicting pairs of opposites. It is easy to make a value judgment, identifying one as “good” and the other as “evil.”

However, from a different perspective, pairs of opposites provide opportunities for exploration, for experiencing the consequences of each and learning the importance of balance. Until balance is attained, suffering and other “evils” can be expected.

Philosophical systems as disparate as Buddhism, the Qabalah, Hegel’s dialectic theory, and the teachings of the Tibetan Master provide insights into the pairs of opposites and our responses to them. What emerges is the possibility that, by transcending duality, new harmony and synthesis can be achieved. In the process, consciousness may be raised to a new vantage point from which the opposites can be seen as part of a larger holism. One of the first people to grasp this truth was Giordano Bruno (1548-1600): “[W]e contemplate two principles which are one; two beings which are one; two contraries which are harmonious and the same... [W]e see that contraries do truly concur.”⁵³ The Tibetan tells us that, at the buddhic level, “the plane of essential harmony,” there is no duality, and “the forces are evenly balanced.”⁵⁴

We may feel free to explore the horizontal pairs of opposites, but between the vertical ones there is a preferred direction: “up.” This is the direction of human evolution. Correspondingly, “down” could, with due caution, be labeled “evil.” Distinguishing the horizontal from the vertical polarities may offer a way to reconcile alternative perspectives on good and evil. Interestingly, Theosophist Geoffrey Hodson discusses the role of the “Inverse Sephiroth” in the involutory process of birth in a physical vehicle.⁵⁵ Birth, of course, is only temporarily involutory; the experience of physical existence is not an end in itself but a phase in the long journey that will take us from Malkuth to Kether.

Meanwhile, spirit and matter still need to be brought into harmony, and, as the Greeks understood, the Logos and the soul perform this role. And the Qabalists are quick to remind us

that the material world is not evil but is the realm of the Shekinah, the immanent presence of God.

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- ¹ This article was completed before its author became aware of the existence of Dr. Assagioli's article included in this issue.
- ² *Luke 22:31* (KJV)
- ³ *1 Corinthians 7:5*.
- ⁴ *2 Corinthians 11:13-15*.
- ⁵ The sephirah were first identified in the *Sepher Yetzirah* that may date to the first or second century CE. For an extensive commentary see: Aryeh Kaplan. *Sefer Yetzirah: the Book of Creation*. Weiser, 1977.
- ⁶ *Zohar. 1 Bereshit, 1:53a*. (Transl: Daniel C. Matt.) Stanford Univ. Press, 2004, p. 294.
- ⁷ Gershom Scholem. *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*. Schocken, 1991, pp. 59ff.
- ⁸ Quoted in: Alice A. Bailey. *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. Lucis, 1925, p. 835fn.
- ⁹ Alice A. Bailey. *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*. Lucis, 1957, p. 688.
- ¹⁰ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Healing*. Lucis, 1953, pp. 666.
- ¹¹ Bailey. *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 425.
- ¹² *Ibid*, p. 425.
- ¹³ *Revelation 20:1-3*.
- ¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas. *Compendium theologiae*, ch. 142. (Transl: Cyril Vollert.) Sophia Institute Press, 1273/1993, p. 159.
- ¹⁵ Gottfried W. von Leibniz. "Essay on the Theodicy and Goodness of God, the Liberty of Man, and the Origin of Evil," 1710.
- ¹⁶ John Fideler. *Jesus Christ, Sun of God*. Quest, 1993. See also: John Nash. "Plato, a Forerunner." *The Beacon*, July/August 2004, pp. 18-24; *The Soul and Its Destiny*. AuthorHouse, 2004, pp. 124ff.
- ¹⁷ Plato. *Phaedo*, 66B, 67A. (Transl: G. M. A. Grube.) *Plato: Five Dialogues*. Hackett, 1981.
- ¹⁸ See for example: Bertrand Russell. *History of Western Philosophy*. Simon & Schuster, 1945, pp. 252ff.
- ¹⁹ New Thought is generally traced to the work of the New England idealist Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802–1866)
- ²⁰ See for example: Arthur E. Waite. *The Holy Kabbalah*. Citadel, (undated, c. 1910); Dion Fortune. *The Mystical Qabalah*. Weiser, 1935, 1998; Leonora Leet. *Secret Doctrine of the Kabbalah*. Inner Traditions, 1999.
- ²¹ The literal translations of the sephirothic names are given for reference; however, they fail to capture the richness of the inner meanings. The Hebrew names are greatly to be preferred.
- ²² Alan Greenspan. Speech. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Washington, D.C. December 5, 1996.
- ²³ Alice A. Bailey. *Treatise on White Magic*. Lucis, 1934, p. 484.
- ²⁴ The refining process can be depicted as either chemical or alchemical.
- ²⁵ *Zohar. 2 Bereshit, A :10*. Worldwide Zohar Project.
- ²⁶ Alice A. Bailey. *Discipleship in the New Age*, II. Lucis, 1955, p. 85.
- ²⁷ Bailey. *Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 423.
- ²⁸ Augustine of Hippo. *Reply to Faustus*, XXII-27. (Ed: Philip Schaff.) Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I Vol. IV.
- ²⁹ Barry M. Goldwater. Acceptance speech. Republican National Convention. San Francisco, July 17, 1964.
- ³⁰ The Buddha. *The Book of Kindred Sayings*, V. (Transl: F. L. Woodward.) See: Gard. *Buddhism*, p. 128. See also: Moses Maimonides. *Mishneh Torah*. Book 1, "Ethical Ideas," Ch. 1. (Transl: Philip Birnbaum.) Hebrew Publ. Co., 1944, pp. 11-12; John of the Cross. *Dark Night of the Soul*. Image, 1959, p. 54.
- ³¹ Carl G. Jung. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton, 1959. See also: Marie-Loise von Franz. "The Process of Individuation." *Man and His Symbols* (Carl Jung, ed.). Dell, 1964, pp. 171ff.
- ³² Verses 121-122 of the *Sepher ha-Bahir* can be interpreted as disclosing belief in reincarnation. See for example: The *Bahir* (Transl: Aryeh Kaplan). Weiser, 1998, p. 46.
- ³³ *Zohar*, 10. *Parashat Mishpatim*. This chapter of the *Zohar* is attributed to an old sage named Saba.
- ³⁴ Scholem. *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 207-212.
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 212-216.
- ³⁶ Isaac Luria & Chaim Vital. *Shaar ha-Gilgulim*. (Transl: Yitzchal bar Chaim.) Thirty Seven Books, 2003.
- ³⁷ Georg W. F. Hegel. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. (Transl: A. V. Miller). Oxford Univ. Press, 1807/1977.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 6-7. Emphasis added.
- ³⁹ Alice A. Bailey. *The Rays and the Initiations*. Lucis, 1960, p. 674.
- ⁴⁰ Bailey. *Treatise on White Magic*, p. 225.
- ⁴¹ Alice A. Bailey. *Light of the Soul*. Lucis, 1927, p. 71.

- ⁴² Alice A. Bailey. *Glamour: A World Problem*. Lucis, 1950, p. 87.
- ⁴³ Bailey. *Treatise on White Magic*, p. 225.
- ⁴⁴ Bailey. *Light of the Soul*, p. xiv.
- ⁴⁵ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Healing*. Lucis, 1953, p. 695.
- ⁴⁶ Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Psychology*, I. Lucis, 1936, p. 50.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 206.
- ⁴⁸ Alice A. Bailey. *Destiny of the Nations*. Lucis, 1949, p. 143.
- ⁴⁹ Bailey. *Esoteric Psychology*, I, p. 285.
- ⁵⁰ Bailey. *The Rays and The Initiations*, pp. 105-106. Emphasis in original.
- ⁵¹ Alice A. Bailey. *Discipleship in the New Age*, II. Lucis, 1955, p. 661.
- ⁵² Bailey. *Esoteric Psychology*, I, p. 336.
- ⁵³ Giordano Bruno. *De la causa, principio et uno*. Quoted in: Tobias Churton. *The Gnostics*. Barnes & Noble, 1987, p. 127.
- ⁵⁴ Bailey. *Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, p. 660.
- ⁵⁵ Geoffrey Hodson. *The Kingdom of the Gods*. Theosophical Publishing House, 1952, pp. 173, 242.