

## WISDOM VERSUS PHILOSOPHY

*I love wisdom more than she loves me.*

– Lord Byron

That which is lacking in two and a half millennia of western philosophy (φιλοσοφία – *philosophia* – “love of wisdom”) is very strangely – Wisdom. Among these many famous scribes and self-pronounced “lovers of wisdom” is not to be seen one wise man. Certainly not Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), considered a major 20th-century philosopher. Today he represents a modern parenthesis demarcating millennia of philosophers that began with the ancient parenthesis: Plato (ca. 424-347 BC).

Within this long and tedious parenthetical expression drawn-out over centuries, *Wisdom is absent*. Socrates (ca. 470-399 BC) never wrote a line of it. The fundamental idea of Plato that logic, mathematics and abstract thinking form a secure foundation for philosophy – an idea shared by Wittgenstein and his mentor Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) – is not shared by the historical Socrates, who must be distinguished from the coy homosexual given the name “Socrates” in Plato’s fictitious dialogues, flirting in the *Symposium*: “One must look one’s best when one is going to visit a good-looking man.”

Similar coyness is revealed in the “good-looking” title of Wittgenstein’s major work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (an allusion to Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*). What reason could there be to give a modern work, written in German and translated into English, an obscure ancient-sounding title in Latin? To serve Wisdom or – affectation? Or is it meant as a joke? Indeed, Wittgenstein himself implies as much in *Tractatus*: “Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical.” (4.003) For example:

*Thus the proof of the proposition  $2 + 2 = 4$  runs as follows:  $(/v)n'x = /v x u'x$  Def.,  $/2 x 2'x = (/2)2'x = (/2)1 + 1'x = /2' /2'x = /1 + 1'/1 + 1'x = (/1)'(/1)'x = /1 + 1 + 1 + 1'x = /4'x$ . 6.3 (Tractatus, 6.241)*

There is almost no incentive for those of us who have language as a sacred calling to read such “nonsensical” works of philosophy, especially considering Wittgenstein’s admission: “I see and understand the value of things in an erroneous manner.” (Diary entry April 1937) This corroborates the observation of Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) when he wrote:

*I often see that images of life are proposed to us which neither the proposer nor the listeners have any hope of following, nor, what is more, desire. (Essais III:ix)\**

Montaigne’s observation can apply to the reception given *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* by the German philosopher Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) in Jena, who threw the book against the wall in frustration, writing to the much younger Wittgenstein: “I was offended already from the first sentence,” a reference to the first of seven propositions in Wittgenstein’s 50-page opus magnum:

*Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist.  
(The world is everything that happens to be the case.)*

Fellow philosopher Frege had no desire to proceed further into Wittgensteinland. Not being a member of this brotherhood, I always assumed that the philosophers – at least – were well-versed in one-another’s works and the history of philosophy as a whole. After all, if other philosophers do not read Bertrand Russell’s two-thousand-page *Principia Mathematica* (another coy reference, this time to Newton’s *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia*

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\* *Je vois souvent qu’on nous propose des images de vie, lesquelles ni le proposant, ni les auditeurs, n’ont aucune espérance de suivre, ni, qui plus est, envie.*

*Mathematica*), then who on earth does? And yet, his Austrian protégé Wittgenstein, while taking the liberty to harshly criticize Russell's opus magnum, did not even read it according to Wittgenstein's biographer Sten Andersson: "It is not believable, but rather very improbable that Wittgenstein ever was able to read [*Principia Mathematica*]."

Further investigation into this specific moment in the history of western philosophy reveals the delusional situation of the emperor's new clothes. Not only did Wittgenstein not understand Russell, Russell did not understand Wittgenstein, as Andersson writes: "The bitter truth was that not a single soul understood his book." In 1922, after many refusals from publishers, and only with the promise of an introduction by the famous Bertrand Russell, would the German editor of a scientific journal publish Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* as an "article" among other articles dealing with ammonia and nitric acid. Despite writing a very lengthy and tedious introduction (abhorred by Wittgenstein), Russell in fact did not understand *Tractatus*, as Andersson writes: "Nor is it to Russell's advantage that he had the nerve to write a voluminous introduction to a book that he himself did not understand."

The emperor's new clothes scenario is predicted in the very first line of Wittgenstein's preface to *Tractatus*: "This book will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it." That is, only Ludwig Wittgenstein himself could understand his book (if even *he* could). The threads in the emperor's new garment were simply too microscopically fine to see: "My work consists of two parts: the one which is here, and everything which I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one."

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\* *Filosofen som inte ville tala, Ett personligt porträtt av Ludwig Wittgenstein*, Sten Andersson, Norstedts, Stockholm, 2012.

(letter to Ludwig von Ficker 1919). This second “important” work of Wittgenstein is even woven with finer threads than the first, infinitely finer than one zillionth of a quark’s diameter, a garment beyond invisible – the absolute best book he never wrote. Sten Andersson sums up: “And it is just this which is the fundamental error with his work: the book has actually no readers.”

What is more odd, although Wittgenstein was known to be proud of the fact that he had not studied philosophy, Russell declared his young homosexual disciple the greatest philosopher of the century. In 1912 Wittgenstein registered as an ordinary student of philosophy at Cambridge university. The following year, the year of his father’s death, his megalomania leads this beginner to think himself the greatest living philosopher. Russell and certain of his famous colleagues believed him. Andersson writes of this time in Cambridge: “Things were completely crazy and upside down. Everyone had been afflicted with a sort of paralysis. [...] Not even at the end of his life, after having held the professorship [at Cambridge] for ten years and afterward resigned, had he acquired any deeper knowledge in the history of philosophy.” Sten Andersson does not hide his astonishment that the normal curriculum for a student of philosophy at Cambridge was in fact beyond the abilities of this “boy from Vienna’s upper class,” and quotes Wittgenstein biographer Ray Monk: “And even if he had succeeded getting over the first hinder, he would have been obliged to do something that in reality he had never done in his life, namely, study the classic philosophers.” Russell’s unexplainable assistance (also known as cheating) allowed his Austrian student to hop over tedious studies that were required of his other students. With unabashed pride, the con-artist Wittgenstein later boasted: “Here you have a former professor of philosophy who has not read a line of Aristotle.” Wittgenstein had disdain for books of philosophy: “I discover this every time I read a book of philosophy: it does not make my thinking better in the

least – it makes it worse.” He preferred detective novels to books of philosophy. When Wittgenstein’s sister Hermine visited him in Cambridge, Russell said to her: “We believe that the next big step in philosophy will be taken by your brother.” Almost four decades later, in his *A History of Western Philosophy* (in which Wittgenstein, who was supposed to take “the next big step in philosophy,” is not mentioned), Bertrand Russell wonders if there even is such a thing as wisdom, or if it is merely “the ultimate refinement of folly.” His blind faith in a proud 23-year-old aristocrat from Vienna who was ignorant of western philosophy and astronomically rich after the death of his father, is indeed refined folly. But where is Wisdom to be found in this comedy of errors?

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The notion of philosophers as the spokesmen for Wisdom is not a self-evident fact, and indeed is very doubtful if they like Russell do not even know what it is. Philosophers pretend to be spokesmen for Wisdom like art-dealers pretend to be spokesmen for Art. Wisdom has so little importance in *A History of Western Philosophy* that it is not even included in the very extensive index, although Russell deemed “wine” and “witchcraft” important enough to be included. One should be cautious being instructed on the essence of Wisdom by a philosopher who later refuted the thesis of his opus magnum (*Principia Mathematica*) as Sten Andersson writes: “[Russell] thus distanced himself considerably from his earlier ideal that philosophy is healthiest when it is based on mathematics and science.” His adored disciple soon followed suit, and Wittgenstein also “abandoned the mathematical-logical project.” The copious writing that obsessed him up to his death (around fifty thousand pages) he did not want published, and reveals what Andersson calls an “abuse of philosophy” (as in “abuse of drugs”). Three of Wittgenstein’s brothers committed suicide and he himself was suicidal. Work was a way to ward off

suicide, even if it was meaningless: “Despite his enormous productivity, he does not get said what he wants to say, perhaps because he does not know what he wants to say. [...] Since it is the *work process* itself that protects him, he is not equally interested in the *work result*.” (Andersson)

The pride of Russell and Wittgenstein lay in how much knowledge they possessed. At the core of this pride lurks *vanity*, as Wittgenstein even admits: “Everything or almost everything I do, even these very notes, are colored by vanity.” (Diary, May 1930) However, Wisdom is knowing how little we know:

“*To know is to know that you know nothing.*” (Socrates)

“*Real knowledge is to know the extent of one’s ignorance.*” (Confucius)

“*The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man  
knows himself to be a fool.*”

(William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*)

If Wisdom is a process leading to the optimal use of intelligence, Russell’s *Principia Mathematica* does not qualify, considering that its author later refuted its major thesis, and wondered if there even is such a thing as Wisdom. Nor can Plato’s *Republic* qualify, considering that its call for the banishment of poets and totalitarian government was later realized in Stalinist Russia, the Third Reich and Maoist China, ruled by Platonic “philosopher kings” – murderous psychopathic tyrants. (Stalin was the self-styled Great Teacher, Hitler was the philosopher of *Mein Kampf* and Mao was the philosopher of the “little red book.”)

Although Socrates was notoriously poor, Plato, like Wittgenstein, was from the aristocratic wealthy elite who held the power, and whose lives were devoted to keeping the power. (Even though Wittgenstein gave away his massive inheritance – not to the poor but to his already excessively wealthy siblings – he remained part of the ruling elite of academia, accepting their

favours and hand-outs.) Socrates was *not* a member of this brotherhood of philosophers, just as Buddha was *not* a member of the brotherhood of buddhist monks who followed him. Two and a half millennia have not brought philosophy closer to Wisdom, defined by the Oxford Dictionary as the

*capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgement in the choice of means and ends; sometimes, less strictly, sound sense, esp. in practical affairs: opp. to folly.*

A quest for Wisdom led Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) to the dead end of christianity: "The eternal wisdom of God... has shown itself forth in all things, but chiefly in the mind of man, and most of all in Jesus Christ."\* Where the philosopher Spinoza found it mandatory to associate Wisdom "most of all" with Jesus, the poet Goethe was "fed up" with Jesus: "I am by now so fed up with the story of the good Jesus that I do not want to hear it from anyone except maybe himself."\*\*

The obvious fallacy of Wisdom being associated "most of all" with Jesus, as many devout christians believe today, is that the existence of Socratic Wisdom hundreds of years before Jesus must be in questionable form, if it existed at all. Non-christians who do not agree with Spinoza that Wisdom is to be encountered "most of all in Jesus Christ," seem to be denied access to it by christians.

The source of Wisdom for the historical Socrates was not religion, logic, mathematics nor abstract thinking, but his "inner voice," his *daemon*. The *daemon* of Socrates, which first began to speak to him when he was a child, never commanded him, but always forbid him to do something he was about to do. For example, he stated at his trial (if we are to risk believing Plato):

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\* Letter to Henry Oldenburg, November 1675.

\*\* Letter to Charlotte von Stein, April 6, 1782. As printed in *Goethe: A Psychoanalytic Study 1775-1782*, K.R. Eissler, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1963.

“This voice is what defers me from being a politician.” The presumably *historical* Socrates asked various Athenian politicians who were soon to condemn him to death: are you wise? Socrates received as answer something to the effect: “Yes, of course I am wise.” For the proud, wisdom is a name they apply to their ignorance. The right name is placed on the wrong thing, just as Socrates is the right name placed on the wrong thing: Plato’s flirtatious literary creation advocating Plato’s own abstract thinking and pedophilia: “A man of this sort is at any rate born to be a lover of boys.” (*Symposium*)

This criminal aberration was a practice accepted by Athenian democracy, with at least one exception: Socrates. Perhaps to cleanse himself of his own guilt, Plato included his alter-ego, a fictitious character called “Socrates,” in his famous dinner party for pederasts described in the *Symposium*, a work of fiction. For two millennia to come, Plato’s malicious lie led the entire occident to believe that Socrates was a pederast. But in the pages of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (a work of non-fiction), Socrates is remembered as likening pederasts to pigs. Along with many other Athenian males of “good standing” the tyrant Critias practiced sodomy on boys. But when Critias paid no heed to criticism, wrote Xenophon, “Socrates exclaimed in the presence of [the boy] Euthydemus and many others, ‘Critias seems to have the feelings of a pig: he can no more keep away from Euthydemus than pigs can help rubbing themselves against stones.’”<sup>\*</sup> And yet – it was Socrates who was condemned to death for “corrupting the youth”!

Xenophon was an historian and therefore a more reliable witness to the historical Socrates than was Plato. In Xenophon’s *Economics* Socrates’ love and respect for his wife is manifest when the sage says to his friend: “Is there anyone to whom you entrust more serious things than your wife and with whom you have

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\* Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, tr. E. C. Marchant, Loeb Classical Library 1923.

fewer arguments?"\* Contrary to the advice that Plato gave two and a half millennia of civilization to follow that love of woman was "base" (shamefully presented by the fictitious homosexual whom he named "Socrates"), the wise man advocates love of woman and working together with her in partnership and understanding.

Today pedophile networks are being exposed at the highest levels of western societies, echoing those of ancient Greece, Rome and Macedonia.\*\* Powerful individuals in the royal houses of Europe, the Catholic Church, the BBC, the American, British, Dutch and Belgian governments are among the psychopathic criminals now being exposed. Even former British prime minister Edward Heath has been revealed as a serial rapist and murderer of boys. (*Daily Mail*, 3.VIII.15) Plato made pedophilia so acceptable that "Platonic love" has become an abstract, asexual euphemism, when it is pure and simple *pedophilia*. According to his biographer Sten Andersson, Ludwig Wittgenstein himself was guilty of this terrible crime against children. One of his victims was the Norwegian boy Arne Bolstad "with whom Wittgenstein had had a rather dubious relation during his first visit to Skjolden. Arne

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\* Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, tr. E. C. Marchant, Loeb Classical Library 1923.

\*\* Those people today who excuse this crime among the ancients because they had a "different" morality than moderns, willingly ignore that pedophilia has always been regarded as evil throughout time. Plutarch writes of the pedophile tyrant Demetrius the Macedonian who invaded Athens in 307 BC: "[Democles] was still a young boy, and it did not escape the notice of Demetrius that he had a surname which indicated his comeliness; for he was called Democles the Beautiful. But he yielded to none of the many who sought to win him by prayers or gifts or threats, and finally, shunning the palaestras [wrestling arenas] and the gymnasium, used to go for his bath to a private bath house. Here Demetrius, who had watched his opportunity, came upon him when he was alone. And the boy, when he saw that he was quite alone and in dire straits, took off the lid of the cauldron and jumped into the boiling water, thus destroying himself, and suffering a fate that in was unworthy of him, but showing a spirit that was worthy of his country and of his beauty." (*The Life of Demetrius*, Loeb Classical Library Edition, 1920, tr. Bernadotte Perrin.) Second in line to the US presidency after the vice president is the speaker of the house of representatives. Dennis Hastert, the longest serving Republican speaker of the house of representatives in US history, was convicted as a "serial child molester" to 15 months (not years!) in jail. (BBC, April 27, 2016) Hastert, two steps away from the presidency, raped boys from 1965 to 1981 when he was a school wrestling coach.

was then about thirteen years old, and they met a great deal and even slept together in the half-finished cottage." Returning to Vienna after years of absence, traumatized by battlefield experiences in World War I, the aristocrat Wittgenstein became a night marauder in the poor part of town, seeking boy prostitutes in Prater park.

One would imagine that a true "lover of wisdom" would be a moral person, kind, generous, and empathetic. Despite his small stature, Ludwig Wittgenstein was a bully, anything but kind, generous and empathetic, as Andersson writes: "On his path through life he trampled equally as much on near and dear, as on colleagues and strangers." He was notorious for outrageous temper tantrums that made people fear him, especially children in his classes when he was an elementary school teacher. "He hit them systematically, not only with the flat of his hand, but blows with a bare fist right in the face. Sometimes they were knocked unconscious." Wittgenstein walked past the students' desks threateningly with his cane, and the blows he delivered with it were ferocious. Long after his death one of his former students said she never saw him smile. Sten Andersson adds: "Many were the girls who had tufts of hair yanked out so that blood ran over their ears."

One of Wittgenstein's pupils in an Austrian village was Josef Haidbauer, an impoverished and sickly 11-year-old suffering from leukemia, from which he would die the following year. One day Wittgenstein went berserk in the classroom and beat little Josef in the head with his fists. The boy fell to the floor unconscious. After summoning a doctor Wittgenstein panicked and snuck out of the village, while concerned villagers attempted to have him legally prosecuted and punished for this cowardly crime. But he was never punished, for reasons that Andersson explains: "It is not altogether a wild guess that his aristocratic background, with contacts all the way to the Vatican and the school ministry, was

not a disadvantage." Yes, we are obliged to look elsewhere for a wise man than among such world famous "lovers of wisdom."

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The Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) gave the name *Homo sapiens* ("wise man") to the human species. Linnaeus had originally given humans the species name *homo diurnus*, meaning "man of the day." But he later decided that the dominating feature of humans was wisdom, and changed the name to *sapiens*. "Wisdom" is *sapientia* in Latin, as in

*Vitam regit fortuna, non sapientia.*  
(*Fortune, not wisdom rules our life.*)\*

With the biological name *homo sapiens* Linnaeus wished to emphasize humanity's uniqueness and separation from the rest of the animal kingdom. His contemporary Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), one of the wisest Europeans, believed the contrary: that humanity is integrally part of the animal kingdom, that Wisdom is absent from humanity, and that *homo sapiens* are anything but "wise." Linnaeus seems to identify "intelligence" with Wisdom, when intelligence can be said to be the path leading to Wisdom.

And if it leads to our present collapse and self-annihilation then "intelligence" must indeed be another word for *stupidity*. If intelligence can be said to be the path to Wisdom, then the frantic high-pitched mental processes that lead to the technocratic lunacy of today – the arsenals of hydrogen bombs, bio- geo- and social engineering, economic tyranny, all paving the way to ruin and self-annihilation – cannot be true intelligence. As for the mass

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\* Quote from Theophrastes (c. 371 BC) translated into Latin by Cicero included by Montaigne in Book III of his *Essais*.

application of Wisdom, Goethe teaches: "There is no more arrogant prayer than that for Wisdom, since the gods have once and for all refused it to mortal men."

Goethe's unique brilliance emerged not from the tradition of western philosophy, but from the tradition of western poetry. Plato represents the moment in ancient Greek history when abstract mathematical thinking usurped the divine insights of Homer, Hesiod and the other Greek bards which had formed the core of Greek culture for nearly a thousand years. From the seventh to the fourth century BC the Greeks laid the foundation for all western civilization. The seeds of European science, philosophy, mathematics and art have their origin in this Greek "golden age." The art of the muses – *mousiké* – provided the foundations for law, government, education, defense and spiritual teachings for centuries of European cultures to come. *Mousiké* flourished in the Eleusinian Mysteries which derived from the deep archaic Wisdom for which Homer and Hesiod were the spokesmen. The Mysteries were indeed *universities*, providing practical Wisdom for everyday life that is lacking in the tradition of philosophy that usurped the central place of *mousiké* in society.

The Greek drama known to us today began with Aeschylus, although there were unknown dramatists before him. He was born in the city of Eleusis in 525 BC. Here began the Mysteries which were held each year at Eleusis, 22 kilometers northwest of Athens. This ritual was so important to the Greeks that until the invasion of the Romans, the road from Athens to Eleusis (the Sacred Way) was said to be the only road not a goat path in all of Greece. The Mysteries celebrated the myth of Demeter and her daughter Persephone, who ascends from Hades once a year to bring spring. Little is known about the Mysteries since the initiates (*mystes*) were sworn to secrecy on pain of death. Those who participated in the Mysteries were supposedly forever changed for the better and no longer feared death.

Greek tragedy was a part of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The dramas began as one man reciting the life of Dionysos, perhaps impersonating this god of Drama. Later a second actor was added, who was called the "hypocrite." Between the dialogues a chorus was eventually added, along with additional actors. Aeschylus, who fought in the epic battles of Marathon and Salamis, traced his ancestry back to the last King of Athens. His father was an official of the Mysteries. After his own initiation Aeschylus had a dream in which Dionysos appeared, inspiring him to write tragedies. The voice of Dionysos came to him as the voice of his own inner self, as Socrates' Daemon. Here again is the link between love of Wisdom and poetry. The Eleusinian Mysteries gradually deteriorated into what pre-Socratic philosopher Herakleitos (c. 535-475 BC), himself an initiate, called "unholy disturbances of the peace." Art was no longer central to Greek thought, and was replaced by philosophy.

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Philosophy is a discipline in which language is the tool. Poets are the masters of this tool, as the Athenian giants Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus bear witness. Even the unpoetic Bertrand Russell (very begrudgingly) gives homage to the bard Byron in an entire chapter of *A History of Western Philosophy*. Plato would have deemed such bothersome poets a nuisance and had them banished, as Stalin had Osip Mandelstam and other Russian poets banished, to die in misery in the gulags. Socrates' pilgrimage to Delphi reveals that he too had close ties with the vital core of poetry, where abstract thinking and mathematics bring forth no great masters of the Word.

Considering that the most profound utterances of any language are poetic, the weakness of the utterances of philosophers will always be due to a very strict scientific use of language that is neither universal nor infused with the deep

power of poetic eloquence. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) is considered one of the “great” philosophers. However, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) criticized Hegel’s philosophy as “a pseudo-philosophy paralyzing all mental powers, stifling all real thinking.” (*On the Basis of Morality*) Something is lost in translation between the advanced mathematical language in works like Russell’s *Principia Mathematica*, incomprehensible to most people (apparently even to Wittgenstein), and the confused explanations of these works in everyday language. In the preface to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Wittgenstein proudly states that he has served philosophy so impeccably, so perfectly, that all the essential problems have been solved: “The truth of the thoughts communicated here seems to me unassailable and definitive. I am, therefore, of the opinion that the problems have in essentials been finally solved.” He totally ignores however the most essential (unsolved) problem of philosophy: the attainment of Wisdom. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) coined the famous term “the thing-in-itself” (*das Ding an sich*). In western philosophy there is much discussion about many subjects, but “the thing-in-itself” – Wisdom – is hardly even considered in the ocean of abstract thinking over which it navigates.

Although he had definitively solved the essential problems of philosophy, the philosopher Wittgenstein did not like philosophy. He believed that philosophers were dishonest and advised his (philosophy) students at Cambridge to be factory workers, day-laborers – anything but teachers of philosophy or philosophers. One of his students said: “He would have rather seen me become a thief.” Philosophers are dishonest. Wittgenstein was a philosopher. Thus, the classical paradox reveals that even if he is being honest, he is dishonest.

As Wittgenstein’s tragic hubris demonstrates, philosophy as a discipline is equally as suspect as psychology. It is not a repository for Wisdom, which is its supposed *raison d’être*. One of

the major philosophers of the 20th century, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), was a member of the German Nazi party and a hater of Jews. (This did not prevent him from having an extra-marital affair with the Jewish writer Hannah Arendt.) What reason would someone on a quest for Wisdom have to begin reading the nearly 100 volumes of Heidegger's opus, even considering that his best known book, *Being and Time* (1927), is considered one of the most important philosophical works of the 20th century?

A quest for Wisdom does not lead to the abstract logic of Heidegger, Wittgenstein nor Russell. This quest has instead led me to poetry, where Wisdom has not been betrayed as it has been by philosophy. Plato's philosophy scorns a man's love of woman, encourages pederasty, banishes poets, discourages families (the State shall be the parent) and paves the way for two millennia of tyranny in his *Republic*, where poetry, the veritable repository for Wisdom, is vilified. This quest leads instead to a man whom Russell did not even consider a philosopher: Michel de Montaigne. Montaigne wrote that the most pertinent admonition (*avertissement*) from the ancient philosophers could be reduced to "be wise," just as the physicians' admonition could be reduced to "be healthy." (*Essais III:ix*) Montaigne wrote that the admonition "be wise" (*Soyez sage*) is beyond Wisdom. It is the very "work and product" of Wisdom. Montaigne lived after this principle, understanding that Wisdom is meaningless unless there is someone who obeys the admonition "be wise." "It is a healthy precept, certain and easily intelligible." Montaigne continues: "Accomplishing it, however, is neither easy for the wisest people nor for me."

*It would be desirable that there was more proportion between the command and obedience to it. (III:ix)\**

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\* *Il serait à désirer qu'il y eût plus de proportion du commandement à l'obéissance.*

This practical contact with Wisdom in clear and simple language is totally lacking in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which is merely an abstract intellectual game. Sten Andersson even uses the word “joke” to describe it: “What Wittgenstein writes is not only incomprehensible, but also consciously incomprehensible. A two-sided joke.” Montaigne’s *Essais* are down-to-earth, practical and wise, devoid of the coyness and affectation of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein echoes Plato’s obsessive belief in logic and scientific clarity in written thoughts: “Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries.” (*Tractatus*, 4.112) These “sharp boundaries” delineate a “truth function” which Wittgenstein pedagogically reduces to the following “distinct” term:  $\bar{p}, \xi, N(\xi)$ . Very few, if any, of his readers have any idea what he means. Seeking the atomic and subatomic particles of language like a physicist in his laboratory, Wittgenstein tried to reduce words down to their elemental quantum mechanics, revealing a fundamental misunderstanding and abuse of his tool: Language. The philosophers have not mastered this tool as have the poets. Looking for an elementary particle in language, René Descartes (1596-1650) as well came up with a “distinct” proposition: “I think therefore I am.” This nonsensical phrase is equally as valid as “I eat therefore I am,” “I defecate therefore I am,” and countless other “self-evident truths.”

For Montaigne, the object of philosophy is Wisdom. For Wittgenstein, it is different: “The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts.” (*Tractatus*, 4.112) This “clarification” oddly results in murky concepts like  $\bar{p}, \xi, N(\xi)$ . Wittgenstein disguises his murkiness and lack of clarity with deceitful propositions: “Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly. Everything that can be put into words can be put clearly.” (4.116) Clarity, however, is not Ludwig Wittgenstein’s strong point.

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In *Sophistical Refutations* Aristotle identified fallacies of argumentation. He divided them into two types: arguments depending on language and those not depending on language. These fallacies Aristotle called “verbal fallacies” and “material fallacies.” A material fallacy is an error in *what* the arguer is talking about, while a verbal fallacy is an error in *how* the arguer is talking. Verbal fallacies are those in which a conclusion is obtained by improper or ambiguous use of words, as in Wittgenstein’s famous “The world is everything that happens to be the case.” However, if we compare *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* with another work in German by a contemporary of Wittgenstein, the *Duino Elegies* of Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) – where sharp scientific boundaries are non-existent – we see that the latter is a great masterpiece of the written word, and the former a minor work of little worth when compared to the poet’s. (In his notes, time and time again, Wittgenstein wrote how much he disliked Shakespeare.) The benefit that Wittgenstein’s 50-page opus magnum brings to human culture is dubious even to his biographer Sten Andersson, who writes: “We are obliged to live in an imperfect world and speak an imperfect language. There is accordingly a fundamental error of thinking in *Tractatus*.”

Thus, Wittgenstein’s transformation into a trendy cult figure worshipped by modern intellectuals has less to do with greatness or talent than with a quirky personality, much like the cult figure Andy Warhol. Having created nothing to equal the genius of 20th-century masters like Picasso, Rilke or Shostakovich, Wittgenstein (like Warhol) played the role of genius. His aristocratic demeanor and *übermensch* hubris allowed him to manipulate and control people almost to the point of hypnotism, as Andersson observes: “There was apparently something in his personality that demanded such incomprehensible respect that he bewitched those around him and could get away with anything.” He bewitched

working class young men whom he seduced into loving him, abandoning them when he tired of their company. The tragic case of his young lover, Francis Skinner, makes Andersson moan: "It is so sorrowful that you can weep." He bewitched upper class men like Bertrand Russell into anointing him the greatest genius of the century, or philosopher George Edward Moore (1873-1958), who docilely became his stenographer. He even bewitched the surgeon and staff of the British hospital where he underwent a gallstone operation, who refurnished the operating room with mirrors according to Ludwig's instructions so that he also could "instruct" the surgeon as he scrutinized his own operation, with no anesthesia. Wittgenstein's focus on the "nonsensical" does not include seeing himself as *nonsensical*. Although he claimed to believe that humility is a requirement for greatness, Andersson reveals this as hypocrisy and *nonsense*: "He could be accused of many things, but not that he was endowed with a surplus of humility. He therefore did not go very far in his own self-examination."

From the nonsensical it is a short step to pure evil, as in this belief of Wittgenstein's mentor, famous eugenicist and "lover of wisdom" Bertrand Russell: "It seems on the whole fair to regard negroes as on the average inferior to white men, although for their work in the tropics they are indispensable, so that their extermination [...] should be highly undesirable." (1929) Or this belief of Russell: "Gradually, by selective breeding, the congenital differences between rulers and ruled will increase until they become almost different species. A revolt of the plebs would become as unthinkable as an organized insurrection of sheep against the practice of eating mutton." (*The Impact of Science on Society*) (1953) This deranged elitist thinking has not changed in essence since philosophers began contemplating eugenics starting with Plato, whose *Republic* also advocates a state-run program of "selective breeding" intended to strengthen the elite ruling class

and discourage “a revolt of the plebs.” The newborn children were to be taken from their mothers and reared in special nurseries in a separate part of the city. Plato discouraged family life since homosexuals could not build families, which he saw as a distraction from the business of governing and defending the State. Russell, who thought that exterminating black people was undesirable only because they could work in very hot climates to make profits for the white elite to which he belonged, also advocated that the State should issue color-coded “procreation tickets” to prevent the gene pool of the elite being diluted by inferior human beings. Those who conceived children without “procreation tickets” would be punished with a heavy fine.

From Plato to Russell, Wittgenstein and Heidegger – Wisdom has been betrayed. None of these “lovers of wisdom” were able to accept Montaigne’s challenge: *be wise!* Instead they became obsessed with mere abstract games of logic and mathematics. Whereas the “inner voice” of Socrates showed him the right path by instructing him what *not* to do, Heidegger, in his diary from 1933, wrote: “For the first time I have acted against my inner voice.” Yes, the “lover of wisdom” had officially become a member of the German nazi party. Professor Hans Ruin from Sweden’s Södertorn College continues: “He betrayed friends, colleagues and students by not clearly standing up for human decency and philosophic knowledge of right and wrong.” (*Dagens Nyheter* 11.VIII.14) Ethics is a major branch of philosophy, but it is merely “studied” and apparently did not provide the eugenicist Russell, the pedophile Wittgenstein, nor the nazi Heidegger with a personal moral code. Peter Trawny, director of the Martin Heidegger Institute at the University of Wuppertal, Germany, and editor of Heidegger’s “black notebooks,” gave a talk at the Goethe Institute in New York in 2014, where many Heideggerians had gathered. The German scholar admitted that it had been “very painful” to read Heidegger’s notebooks. After commenting on

reading the philosopher's thoughts about Hölderlin and Nietzsche, Trawny continued: "But then, suddenly, a passage about the Jews.... You think, Okay, whatever.... And then suddenly you have the second, and you have the third, and you have the fourth, and you have the sixth, and you think, What the hell! Why is he doing this?"\*

The moderator of the talk was Jewish, as well as other members of the audience. Under discussion was the question: "Is Heidegger's opus contaminated by nazism?" It became clear that the answer is "yes." The Jewish moderator read a sentence from the infamous "black notebooks" revealing Heidegger's hatred of Jews. One member of the audience later commented: "That sentence strikes me as somehow so deranged, so alien to a sense of the real... Anyone who is capable of that sort of argument cannot be trusted to think."

Heidegger's supporters (among whom was Hannah Arendt) defend him by saying that his anti-semitism was a "flaw" in an otherwise great philosopher. However, there is a distinct difference between a literary work being "flawed" and being "contaminated." The ancient Greek writer Longinus (1st or 3rd century AD) wrote of "flawed sublimity" in *On the Sublime*, which he contrasted with "flawless mediocrity." He believed that it is in the nature of great works to be flawed. Being "contaminated" however is much more serious. Medically speaking, contamination permeates the entire organism, requiring confinement and quarantine. In literature it brings doubts to a reader as it did for the audience member at the talk in New York above, who believed that such contamination means that a person "cannot be trusted to think." Thinking is what philosophers do. Their first duty as writers is to inspire trust in the reader. If their legacy to posterity is to inspire mistrust, their role as spokesmen of

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\* *The New Yorker*, April 28, 2014 "Is Heidegger Contaminated by Nazism?" Joshua Rothman.

Wisdom is doubtful, and their works can more easily be construed as Wittgenstein saw them: “not false but nonsensical.” In the history of occidental philosophy, there is one person who clearly stands out as a man of Wisdom: Socrates. The “Socrates” in Plato’s fictitious dialogues, the pederast dandy who believed that “one must look one’s best when one is going to visit a good-looking man,” is very clever like Plato himself, but clearly not a wise man. However, the real Socrates as described by his friend Xenophon, both of whom were veterans of the battlefield, was indeed a wise man: “He was certainly not foppish or ostentatious either in his clothing or in his footwear or in the rest of his daily life.”\* Xenophon wrote of an encounter between Plato’s elder brother Glaucon (who was not yet twenty) and Socrates. Glaucon, although a nincompoop with a big mouth (“he was always getting dragged off the public platform and laughed at”), was shown fatherly patience and sympathy by Socrates, who demonstrated to the arrogant Glaucon that he was wrong in basically everything. Plato was at that time a teenager.

Plato’s powerful cousin, Critias, a notorious pedophile, was the leader of the Thirty Tyrants who murdered and banished thousands of Athenians. Socrates, who had openly criticized Critias for pedophilia, would also face the death penalty. Both Critias and Plato (members of the elite ruling class) are said to be “pupils” of Socrates, although Xenophon emphasized that he was *not* a teacher, but simply told young men “that if they took themselves in hand they would become decent citizens. *At the same time he never undertook to teach how this could be done.*” Critias and Plato (now in his twenties) were among the ruling elite present at the trial of Socrates. Plato’s *Apology* appears to portray the historic Socrates, who provided the literary material for the writer’s fictitious character whom he named “Socrates.” This

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\* *Greek Literature*, Penguin Classics, Middlesex, 1973, translated by Hugh Tredennick.

problem, called by Bertrand Russell “the insoluble question of the relation of the Platonic Socrates to the real man” (*A History of Western Philosophy*), has not been adequately dealt with by scholars. While Buddha and Milarepa enjoyed the love of their brethren while they were alive, mean-spirited Greeks, in the spirit of democracy, harassed and murdered Socrates: “If you put me to death, you will not easily find anyone to take my place.” (*Apology*)

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Truly loving Wisdom, truly knowing right from wrong, Socrates went to his death because he would not betray Wisdom. This courageous stance was too uncomfortable for Martin Heidegger, and so he joined the mob who adored Hitler. Of course, being a famous philosopher, he could not share the “donkey-like” anti-semitism of the hoi polloi, so he construed his own anti-semitism as being grounded in scientific logic at the core of eugenics and race biology, much as did Bertrand Russell. This reasoning occurs at the same moment that brutal violence against the Jews is being carried out all over Germany, beginning the horrifying years of transports to the death camps.

Thus, for 2,500 years philosophy has merely been paying lip-service to Wisdom, while in truth it has served ignorance more faithfully. The philosophers love wisdom like the promiscuous rock star who sings “I will love you ee-tern-ah-lee” while going through a harem of mistresses, abandoning one after the other with no commitment whatsoever. Near the end of his 762-page Wittgenstein biography, Sten Andersson reaches the conclusion that “you do not become a better person by studying philosophy. Morality is not more prevalent among philosophers [...] than among plumbers or bank employees.” This fact reveals the impotency of philosophy. Its value to humanity is dubious.

In his essay *On Truth: The Tyranny of Illusion*, Canadian philosopher Stefan Molyneux (1966- ) writes of two major disciplines to better grasp reality: “The first discipline is *logic*, which is the process of organizing our thoughts in a systematic and non-contradictory manner. The second is *science*, which is the testing of logical theories against empirical observations. The union of these two disciplines is *philosophy*, which is in its fundamentals the testing of theories of knowledge against both logic and empirical observation.”\*

Molyneux’s “systematic and non-contradictory manner” of organizing thoughts can be compared to Wittgenstein’s desire in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to “make them [thoughts] clear and to give them sharp boundaries.” However, a thought is not like a hard cut diamond lying on a glass surface with its “sharp boundaries,” but more like a cloud with little or no boundary between itself and the sky. As nuclear physics proceeds into quantum physics, the very idea of “sharp boundaries” in thought becomes less and less relevant. Quantum physics evokes Bob Dylan’s lyrics: “something is happening here / but you don’t know what it is.” In this case “something” is a great mystery. It will never be known. There will never be “sharp boundaries” to define it. This is the essence of Socrates’ message.

Despite Molyneux’s uncompromising demand for a “systematic and non-contradictory ” methodology, the sub-atomic particles at the core of existence behave in a very unsystematic and contradictory manner. In *The Grand Design* Stephen Hawking writes of “the uncertainty principle” in quantum physics, and how *probabilities* are expressed rather than “non-contradictory” thoughts with Wittgensteinian “sharp boundaries.” To better understand nature is to know that it is “a process that is

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\* *On Truth: The Tyranny of Illusion*, Stefan Molyneux, The Freedomain Library, Volume 1, 2007.

fundamentally uncertain.” Stephen Hawking continues: “For example, according to the principles of quantum physics, which is an accurate description of nature, a particle has neither a definite position nor a definite velocity unless and until those quantities are measured by an observer.”\* The very building blocks of reality are illogical. And yet, logic is the foundation of philosophy and science. Science is the foundation of the global arsenals of atomic, biological and chemical weapons which assure the reign of terror oppressing us today, as well as the psychopathic intrusion of geo-bio- and social engineering into human society. Philosophy also is the foundation of eugenics programs promoted by philosophers from Plato to Russell, demented ideas of social engineering that result in murderous tyrannies like the Soviet Union and Communist China, as well as deranged ideas of racial purity like those of the “lover of wisdom” Heidegger that foster mass-murder and genocide. Auschwitz was dependant on logic and science to operate as efficiently as it did, and on the research, development and mass-production of Zyklon B, the cyanide-based gas used by nazi Germany to murder millions of people in gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek, and other extermination camps. Logic and science are thus disciplines that can serve both good and evil at whim. Such is not the case however with Wisdom. *Wisdom cannot serve evil.*

“Love of wisdom” need not be based on logic nor on science as Molyneux believes. For Michel de Montaigne, it is much simpler: “Being a philosopher is learning how to die.” (*Essais I:xx*)\*\* Bertrand Russell mentions Michel de Montaigne twice en passant in *A History of Western Philosophy*, giving him not even a paragraph. It is as if Russell believed him to be irrelevant to western philosophy. That is, one of the wisest men of our civilization was not deemed important enough by Russell to

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\* *The Grand Design*, Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, Bantam Books, London, 2011.

\*\* *Philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir.*

include in *A History of Western Philosophy*. "I am not a philosopher," wrote Montaigne in the *Essais* (III.ix). Montaigne read the philosophers, confronted them and compared them to himself. But he was not fooled by their systems nor their pretended demonstrations. He wondered why one should become a philosopher and succumb to the abstract illusions of philosophy? Montaigne loved Wisdom as a non-philosopher, down-to-earth, lucid, cheerful and playful.

Wandering into the domain of Art, Stefan Molyneux loses his navigation: "In fantasy, there is only isolation and pretence. [...] Imagination is a creative faculty that is deeply rooted in reality. Fantasy, on the other hand, is a mere species of intangible wish fulfillment." These statements lead into Molyneux's chapter "Imagination versus Fantasy" in *On Truth: The Tyranny of Illusion*. There is nuance and subtlety to language that a poet is more inclined to "feel" than a philosopher whose guiding light is science and logic, and whose prose is dominated by the tedious "if...then" reasoning of Plato and Aristotle.

Without using syllogisms it can be argued that fantasy and imagination are synonyms. Surely Molyneux would not believe that Frederic Chopin's *Fantasy on Polish Airs Op. 13* is "a mere species of intangible wish fulfillment" because it is not named *Imagination on Polish Airs*. Imagination is not always "deeply rooted in reality" as Molyneux believes. Someone who is mentally imbalanced is often said to be "imagining things," not in contact with reality. In Art, fantasy (or imagination) is the prime mover. Molyneux believes that imagination is "deeply rooted in reality," but fantasy not. He gives Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* as an example of the former. Most people would have no problem saying that this novel is equally as much a result of Tolkien's fantasy as it is of his imagination. However many decades of study and writing devoted to it, *Lord of the Rings* is not reality, it is an elaborate

falsehood. It is fiction. It is the author's wishful thinking of good triumphing over evil. Although Art is "rooted in reality," it is not reality, but a distortion of reality – a lie, as Picasso stated: "Art is a lie by which we come closer to the truth." To base a Plato-like "if...then" argument on a non-existent black-and-white dichotomy between "imagination" and "fantasy" is intellectual nit-picking. Molyneux is imagining things.

Molyneux writes: "The basic knowledge that our beliefs are mere prejudices, inflicted on us by parents and teachers, is a fact that, deep down, we are all perfectly aware of." His specific prejudice is *logic*. In philosophy the "parents and teachers" are Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Descartes, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Russell, Wittgenstein, etc. One of the prejudices they taught was *logic*. Most of the philosophy of the last 2,500 years is indeed "mere prejudices" inflicted on posterity by these "parents" – meaningless verbiage bringing nothing to humanity. These "mere prejudices" of highly respected philosophers leading to dead ends indeed fit Stefan Molyneux's definition of fantasy – "intangible wish fulfillment" – although they are the fruits of logic and seemingly not fantasy.

Aristotle believed that Earth was the immobile center of the universe. He was certain that if the Earth flew through space, then objects in the air would be left behind. Using *logic* Aristotle verified this by noting that birds are not left behind in flight, thus the Earth is immobile. Logic was also the foundation for Aristotle's theory of gravity, which states that objects fall at speed relative to their mass, later disproved by Galileo. "Most of the ideas of the ancient Greeks would not pass muster as valid science in modern times." (Stephen Hawking, *The Grand Design*) Logic led to the hubris and mental illness emanating from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and the ideas of white supremacy and eugenics of Russell and Heidegger. And yet, if these worthless ideas are derived from *logic* and go by the name *philosophy* they seem to be

more acceptable to Molyneux than if they were merely the “intangible wish fulfillment” of that wicked thing: fantasy. Even logic itself leads to the deduction that logic is not a good tool in the quest for Wisdom. Looking back through the centuries of western philosophy, the Belgian poet-painter Henri Michaux (1899-1984) called it “the canonization of error.” There are no spiritual teachings of value to be found here. It has all been *beside the point*.

Nonetheless, many modern mathematicians and physicists agree with Plato that mathematics is the foundation of the universe. Today, cosmologist Max Tegmark, along with other scientific scholars, believes that everything in the universe is structured on mathematics – in fact, says Tegmark, “everything is mathematical.”\* Like Newton, Tegmark ignores the importance of esthetics (Art) and the bigger picture which is the real (unknowable) universe. It would be like an orchestra, choir and audience gathering in a cathedral to hear Bach’s B-minor Mass, and, after proudly verifying that all the instruments were tuned perfectly according to mathematical principles, everyone goes home before even the first note of the concert (the universe) has been played. Mathematics may be the grammar of the universe, but the sacred poetry of the universe is beyond the scope of mathematicians.

When western intellectuals speak of great “thinkers” they refer to scientists, mathematicians and philosophers. Master composers like Debussy, Mahler and Shostakovich – as well as the master painters and poets – are subtle “thinkers” who go far beyond the philosophers. In his famous *Journal* Eugene Delacroix erupted: “O philosophers with no heart nor imagination! You think humanity to be a machine like your machines.”\*\* Johann

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\* Max Tegmark, *Our Mathematical Universe: My Quest for the Ultimate Nature of Reality*, Knopf, 2014.

\*\* *O philosophes sans cœur et sans imagination! Vous croyez que l'homme est une machine, comme vos machines.*

Sebastian Bach and all the great western composers are in fact the true “lovers of wisdom,” those closest to that evasive thing – Wisdom – which has so long evaded logic-addicted philosophers who lack profound music in their souls. Charles Ives believed music to be the highest expression of Wisdom, more spiritually meaningful to humanity than philosophy or religion, transcending itself to become “a conception unlimited by the narrow names of Christian, Pagan, Jew or Angel! A vision higher and deeper than art itself!” His wife was named Harmony.\*

The discipline of Art is hardly mentioned in Stefan Molyneux’s essay *On Truth: The Tyranny of Illusion*, and yet, “love of wisdom” in its purest state is to be found in ancient Greece – not among the philosophers – but in the art of Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles and the other Greek masters of language. I believe that these great bards had closer contact with Reality and with Wisdom than did Plato and Aristotle. That is, “love of wisdom” – philosophy – can be a synonym for Art, with all of its illogical and unscientific foundations. Montaigne believed that poetry is “the first philosophy” (*la première philosophie*):

*J’aime l’allure poétique, à sauts et à gambades.*

*(I love the demeanor of poetry with its leaps and gambols.)(Essais III:ix)*

Montaigne compared the “demeanor of poetry” (*l’allure poétique*) with “the Demon of Socrates” lying at the very core of western philosophy, misinterpreted, sabotaged and derailed by logic from its original (poetic) path. *Poetry and Truth* is the title of a classic work by Goethe, again revealing the connection between “love of wisdom” and poetry. According to Molyneux, philosophy rejects “the primacy of emotion” in favor of logic. A more complete view is seen in Chinese taoism, in which emotion is

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\* *Essays Before a Sonata and other Writings*, Charles Ives, edited by Howard Boatwright, W.W. Norton, New York, 1970.

valued equally with logic. The ancient taoists speak of the Two Minds using the analogy of the Monkey for “emotional mind” (*Xin*) and the Horse for “wisdom mind” (*Yi*). They work as a team, with the Monkey riding the Horse. Should the Monkey (emotions) run wild, the Horse’s steady pace calms him down. Should the Horse (logic) become sluggish, the Monkey helps him to get into a playful and creative gallop.

Although it can be the cause of much turmoil and chaos in a person’s life, for the taoists emotional mind (*Xin*) is “the master of the entire body, the commander of a hundred spirits. When it is calm, then wisdom is generated, when it is acting, then confusion is originated.”\* It is easy for westerners to believe the contrary – that logic is the master. But it is not logic that regulates the myriads of functions in the human organism in wakefulness and sleep. Emotional mind is the regulator of these processes which occur without our knowing. Wisdom mind – logical mind – means very little in this regard. Maintaining personal hygiene, physical training, education, eating habits, muscle control, grooming – all these are done with wisdom mind. But this is *very* little compared to the unconscious functions of the body: the beating of the heart, the rejuvenation of the cells, the immune system, the circulatory system, the nervous system, the digestive system and much more, down to the cellular, molecular, atomic and sub-atomic levels of the metabolism of our bodies over which we have no control. Emotional mind (*Xin*) is “master of the entire body” but can be very volatile and erupt into self-destructive behavior when not calm. As written in the taoist scripture above, when the emotional mind is calm, it generates Wisdom. (As Montaigne observed, it is easier said than done.) The function of wisdom mind (*Yi*) is to instill calmness in emotional mind, while having no control over

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\* *Tao Scriptures*, tr. Yang Jwing-Ming. *The Root of Chinese Qigong: Secrets for Health, Longevity and Enlightenment*, YMAA Publication Center, Wolfeboro, NH, 1997.

the unconscious bodily processes the latter governs. In the ancient discipline of qigong regulating the mind is about harmonizing the Two Minds: emotional mind (*Xin*) and wisdom mind (*Yi*). After decades of studying taoism, tai chi, qigong and meditation, I can't help noticing that such steadfast Wisdom is absent in western philosophy and religion. Going back one, two and three thousand years in China, these teachings are still fully functional and wise, whereas going back equally as far in western tradition, we are obliged to reject most of the teachings as useless. In my previous book of essays I wrote of the call for a "spiritual science" by the master of qigong, tai chi and shaolin, Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming (who also has a degree in physics). Originally from Taiwan but now an American citizen, Dr. Yang states that when it comes to understanding spiritual realities, "the East has developed far beyond the West."

Religion in the west tells us that an invisible man in the sky inseminated a young virgin woman using an unexplained process which is called "immaculate conception" since sexual intercourse is considered by christians as "maculate" or "dirty." Later, as an adult, the woman's son is tortured to death and his material body ascends into the sky to join with the invisible man who "immaculately" sired him. What use he could have in heaven of his physical body and all its organs and bodily functions is left unexplained by his high priests. The man is expected to come back from the dead from out of the sky and return to earth and punish his enemies and reward those who believe his myth to be real, evoking the similar myth of the invisible man named Zeus inseminating the virgin Leto to conceive Apollo, and punishing those who did not believe in *this* myth.

Philosophy in the west began with logic and the idea that our senses are not to be trusted, that only abstract mathematical thinking can be trusted. So, if you touch a red-hot iron and your senses provide you with the instantaneous knowledge that it is

hot, you should not trust it until abstract mathematical thinking provides you with the knowledge that it would be best for you to remove your hand. Logic, mathematics and science have produced positive innovations in our society: improved health through sewage systems, plumbing, hot and cold running water, medicine, as well as electricity, telephones and wireless communication. Amazing scientific feats have produced transplants of hearts and other organs, placed machines on distant planets and moons, and on earth produced computers and robots well on their way to artificial intelligence. But one of the most intelligent men of the scientific elite today, Stephen Hawking, warns: "The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race."

Considering that Intelligence is the path to Wisdom, what has been known as "intelligence" in the west is often revealed as merely deranged cleverness – in truth stupidity – that could mean the self-annihilation of our species. The millennia of teachings in the West have misled us to an insane degree. The teachings of the East, with the Wisdom of Tao, yin and yang, emotional mind and wisdom mind, and all its other nuances still shine with utility and Wisdom, offering humans a far better choice than the collapse and ruin to which western philosophy, science and religion have led us in the west. However, one western teaching that still conveys Wisdom after 3,000 years is the credo of Poetry engraved on its shrine at Delphi: "know thyself" (*gnóthi seautón*). That this credo is identical to Wisdom was also known in ancient China:

*Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom.*  
— Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*

Curing soulsickness is found in the most intelligent two words ever joined, "Know thyself." The patient and the doctor are one and the same person. Plutarch, whose workplace was the temple at Delphi, wrote: "Perhaps, however, if the command

'know thyself' were an easy thing for us all to obey, we might not take it as the word of the god." (*Life of Demosthenes*) Montaigne also saw its intrinsic difficulty:

*We go forward with the current, but to turn back towards oneself, our course is a distressing movement. (III.ix)\**

Montaigne wrote that knowing yourself brings you into contact with your vanity – which is an ever increasing obstacle the more you are entangled in worldly affairs, taking you further and further away from your self:

*Look into yourself, recognize yourself, keep close to yourself: your will, your spirit, which are being consumed elsewhere – bring them back into yourself. (III:ix)\*\**

Montaigne did not consider himself a philosopher. The keen Wisdom that permeates his *Essais* is not part of the tradition of western philosophy. Being the real thing, it is devoid of the hubris and megalomania prevalent from Plato to Wittgenstein. Identifying Poetry as a source of Wisdom, he tells the reader:

*You are the investigator without knowledge, the magistrate without jurisdiction, and in the end, the fool of the farce. (III:ix)\*\*\**

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\**Nous allons en avant à vau-l'eau, mais de rebrousser vers nous, notre course, c'est un mouvement pénible.*

\*\**Regardez dans vous, reconnaissez-vous, tenez-vous à vous : Votre esprit, et votre volonté, qui se consomme ailleurs, ramenez-la en soi .*

\*\*\**Tu es le scrutateur sans connaissance, le magistrat sans jurisdiction, et après tout, le badin de la farce.*