

# METAPHYSICS: "THE PROBLEM"

(part 1)

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*"Metaphysics is a great light.....and like all great lights.....it attracts a lot of bugs!";* so said the late great Sufi teacher, Murshid Samuel L. Lewis, and no truer words were ever spoken. It is equally true whether it is applied to metaphysics per se, or to Sufism itself, or to Theosophy, or to Occultism, and that is the clear fact that the "bugs" are:

## "THE PROBLEM"

The objective of finding and implementing a solution to that problem **must** be contemplated by any serious and stable student of the subject, by anyone who believes that it is important that the light of metaphysics not be hidden under a bushel of both fantasy and in all too frequent cases, actual insanity.

The light that is metaphysics, and by that I mean the abstract perceptions that are included in the over-all study of speculative metaphysics, is literally the most important factor in the evolution of human consciousness, and that is why "The Problem" is a dire problem indeed.

Far too much that calls itself "Metaphysics" is nonsense. But then what **IS** "Metaphysics per se"?

I am going to quote from my definition in my Introductory Essay on Speculative Metaphysics.

""Metaphysics", and I want to make clear immediately that the word is **NOT** a euphemism for "religion", is the intellectual and speculative synthesis of several philosophical disciplines; and, in our time period: of some scientific disciplines as well, and they are distinctly "hard" sciences too!

"Metaphysics" is the methodology which intelligent human beings utilize to answer all their most basic questions regarding the "Nature of The Human Condition", their individual relationship to that condition, the place or context into which the Human Condition "fits" in the universe which is slowly being revealed to us in response to diligent scientific effort, and most important of all, to enable human beings to understand "What it all means". In other words, metaphysics is a methodology to try to answer humankind's most urgent existential questions.

There is a justly celebrated definition of "metaphysics" expressed by Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924) who was an influential British Philosopher of his time associated with the Absolute Idealist Movement. In 1893 he defined

"Metaphysics" as: *"Metaphysics is an attempt to comprehend the universe not simply piecemeal or by fragments, but some how as a whole"*.

Another famous definition is that of William James who said: *"Metaphysics is nothing but an attempt to think things out clearly to their ultimate significance, to find their substantial essence in the scheme of reality and, thereby, to unify all truth and reach that highest of all generalizations which constitutes philosophy"*

In our times, serious metaphysical speculation includes the following concepts:

substance, essence, accident, form, matter, actuality, and potentiality, To this must be added speculations on the perception of "beginnings" and "endings", life and death. Speaking more academically, the disciplines covered by the term "Metaphysics" include, Cosmology, Theology, Ontology, Epistemology, and Eschatology. But I find the simpler terms easier to deal with as they don't scare anyone off. Also, and this is only in our times, we cannot intelligently discuss these subjects without adding the input of scientific disciplines such as Quantum Theory and Scientific Cosmology which deal with precisely the same speculations from the scientific point-of-view.

For instance: Werner Heisenberg's "Uncertainty Principle" is clearly metaphysical in implication while totally scientific in nature. We also, of necessity, must include the very copious "hard" information coming to us through the Hubble Telescope and other astronomical-cosmological devices.

The term "metaphysics" is a gift to us from Aristotle, but his "metaphysics" (and his "physics" too) were limited to the parameters in which his tremendous and fertile intelligence was confined. Most of his speculations, both physical and non-physical were based upon his tremendous powers of observation and synthesis, much of those were related to extrapolations derived from his extensive botanical and zoological work. We are infinitely luckier than he, for we have the most advanced efforts of our modern quantum theorists, scientific cosmologists aided by their "super-computers" to help us in our speculations in our effort to understand "The Nature of the Human Condition" and it's relationship of the whole of which it is a part "

Now to the extent that anything which calls itself "metaphysical" differs from that definition it is NOT speculative metaphysical philosophy but fantasy and delusion!

So then, what I am saying is that metaphysics is a branch of philosophy. What is "philosophy" then? It's a common word, but listening to people use it glibly makes me wonder if they really know what the word means to say.

The late Manly P. Hall defined it this way: *"Philosophy is the science of estimating values. The superiority of any state or substance over another is determined by philosophy. By assigning a position of primary importance to what remains when all that is secondary has been removed, Philosophy thus becomes the true index of priority or emphasis in the realm of Speculative thought. The*

*mission of Philosophy a priori, is to establish the relation of manifested things, to their invisible ultimate cause in nature".*

That though, while Mr. Hall appears to be speaking of all speculative philosophy, might also serve as a really excellent definition of "metaphysical philosophy".

The best definition of Philosophy that I have ever seen is Will Durant's:

*"Science seems always to advance, while philosophy seems always to lose ground. Yet this is only because philosophy accepts the hard and hazardous task of dealing with problems not yet open to the methods of science - problems like good and evil, beauty and ugliness, order and freedom, life and death; so soon as a field of inquiry yields knowledge susceptible of exact formulation it is called science. Every science begins as philosophy and ends as art; it arises in hypothesis and flows into achievement. Philosophy is a hypothetical interpretation of the unknowable (as in metaphysics), or of the inexactly known (as in ethics or political philosophy); it is the front trench in the siege of truth. Science is the captured territory; and behind it are those secured regions in which knowledge and art build our imperfect and marvelous world. Philosophy seems to stand still, perplexed; but only because she leaves the fruits of her victories to her daughters the sciences, and herself passes on, divinely discontent, to the uncertain and unexplored.*

*Specifically; philosophy means and includes five fields of study and discourse: logic, esthetics, politics, and metaphysics.*

- 1. LOGIC is the study of ideal method in thought and research.*
- 2. ESTHETICS is the study of ideal forms or beauty; it is the philosophy of art.*
- 3. ETHICS is the study of ideal conduct.*
- 4. POLITICS is the study of ideal social organization.*
- 5. METAPHYSICS (which gets into so much trouble because it is not, like the other forms of philosophy, an attempt to co-ordinate the real in the light of the ideal) is the study of the "ultimate reality" of all things; of the real and final nature of "matter" (Ontology), of "mind" (Philosophical Psychology); and of the inter-relation of "mind" and "matter" in the processes of perception and knowledge (Epistemology)"*

Now as I see it, Dr. Durant has left out one of the most important disciplines in metaphysical speculations and that is the study of "end's and beginnings" or "Life and Death" (Eschatology).

But this, I believe, makes it clear that "Metaphysics", for all of it's special nature, is still a Speculative Philosophical Discipline and nothing else. Now it is also clear to me that anything which is "speculative" implies and requires the use of intellect

to make the speculations. In this regard I have to say that it is a lack of clear definitions that makes up an important aspect of 'THE PROBLEM'.

Metaphysics is not "channeling", it is not "Occultism", it is not "Magic" or "Magick" those things are belief systems, those things are religions, or at least they act **LIKE** religions in that they are irrational, and precisely because they are both irrational and anti-rational they are intrinsically oppressive of their "believers".

The possession of intelligence and the ability to reason are one of the most important factors in sentience.

But, it is precisely those utterly irrational things that have become confused in the public mind with the careful and rational approach to philosophy that is speculative metaphysics. This is a tragedy!

There is an important corollary to what I've just said, and intrinsic to that corollary there is an extremely insidious trend in the entire metaphysical Community. It is particularly active and most obvious in the "Occult" and "New Age" community. But, as I have indicated elsewhere, this trend is, while not nearly as obvious, certainly more pernicious in the Academic and Scholarly Communities themselves. This "trend" is an outgrowth of the Deconstructionist-Relativist Movements, and it is one of the most destructive and harmful movements ever to confront Human progress.

Metaphysics, if it matches the two quoted definitions given above, and it does, and if it is truly a speculative investigation as to existential realities, and it is; in that case it is primarily an intelligence based process, rational and intellectual in nature. As I see it this is true even though metaphysics speculates on abstractions. But precisely because its focus is abstract, it requires the highest and most acute intellectual perception to deal with it.

Now, given that the foregoing is true, and I firmly believe it is, the insidious trend is the constant and powerful denigration of intellect and intellectuality in the communities in question. The "New Age" and "Occult" communities, and almost every other group dedicated to what might be called "the pursuit of metaphysics", ridicules and berates, in the strongest terms, anyone and anything which they deem intelligence based. These people preach an emotion based approach to metaphysics, which they do not see as speculative at all. And that is a colossal error. This utterly fanatic anti-rationality is the principle cause of "The Problem"

It may seem incongruous to connect Deconstructionism-Relativism with an anti-intellectual movement because this movement presents itself as an entirely advanced intellectuality, but that is a complete fabrication. All of Heidegger and Derrida's pseudo-philosophical premises are, at their intrinsic level of meaning, totally anti-rational and anti-intelligence. "Intellectual" is what they pretend to be, but it is an "Alice in Wonderland" intellectuality in which reality and facts are "stood on their heads" in favor of consciously and willfully pernicious nonsense. Deconstructionism-Relativism is actually societal nihilism.

"The Problem" has its roots in two separate but inter-connected things. One is an almost complete misunderstanding of the nature and reality of what were called "The Mystery Schools" in the Classical World. The other are the various permutations of Manichaeism which was itself a misperception of Gnosticism which was itself a misunderstanding of the Mysteries of the Greco-Roman World. This misunderstanding was unfortunately combined with an equal misunderstanding of the Chaldean Mysteries of Babylon.

### **ALL OF MODERN OCCULTISM AND MAGICK" PROCEEDS FROM THIS BASIC SOURCE.**

It's all horrendously dualistic. Though to be truthful, I'd have to say that "dualistic" doesn't barely describe the infinite multiplicity of their fantasies.

Perhaps, I'd best define the meaning of what I said above. All of it!

What were "The Mystery Schools"?

I ask this question because I think I've already made it obvious that I consider the almost total misunderstanding of the reality behind this oh-so-misleading nomenclature is the basic cause of most of the problem.

One of the biggest problems we face in dealing with a rational discussion of the so-called "Mystery Schools" is lack of hard data regarding them. While certain hard facts do exist, they are entirely overwhelmed and engulfed by clouds of fantasy. A really large amount of what people believe about the "Mysteries" comes from what is called "channeling" or "revelation" and this is entirely invalid as history. It is enjoyable and amusing as fiction, but it is dangerous when taken as fact.

The thing that makes all "channeling" or "revelation" invalid is the simple fact that such data can neither be proved nor disproved, therefore it is irrelevant. It's just that simple.

Rational beings cannot and must not base their belief systems or world views on irrational data.

So then, what do we actually "know" about "Mystery Schools"?

Well, The Druids had centers for the study of the "mysteries" at Glastonbury (Glastonbury) and Karnac in Brittany. These two are known to all. There were other centers in Ireland, Northern Spain (Galicia), Wales, Scotland, Germany, Scandinavia, and at a few centers in the Slavic Lands. Where ever the Celtic peoples were found, so too were the Druids and the Druidic "Mysteries".

In the Classical milieu (i.e. The Mediterranean Basin) the Mystery Centers were: Eleusis in Greece, Delphi in Greece, Samothrace, in Greece, Dordona in Ionia, Sais and Heliopolis in Egypt, and prior to the advent of Zoroastrianism, the Mazdazdians had a center in Babylon. After the advent of Zoroastrianism that

school was moved to Shiraz, in Persia, where it eventually became associated with the Sufi order.

How did these Mystery Schools differ from the Cult Temples?

Well, primarily it was a matter of direction, purpose served, and orientation. The Cult Temples were places of worship, the Mystery Temples were the providers of various degrees of knowledge. What kind of knowledge? This is important to our discussion because it is from the public perception of the nature of the knowledge so carefully dispensed by the mystery Priesthoods, and the almost total lack of either knowledge of, or comprehension of, HOW they dispensed that knowledge and to whom, that the myth of "occultism" arises. What happened is that the Mysteries became "magical" which is exactly what they weren't.

I think it should be pretty clear that what were called "Cult Temples" were the ancient equivalent of our modern Churches. They served the cults or myths of the Gods and Goddesses, they were centers of worship and veneration of those "Divinities", and they were the only providers of social services in that period. They were the Religious Institutions or Churches of their time and place.

So then, I ask once again: what were the "Mysteries" if they were, in fact, other than "occultism" has made them seem?

The Priests and Priestesses who served in the Mystery Temples were selected through a process that was elitist and exclusionary in the extreme. The candidates were chosen from among those who presented themselves at the Temples with the desire to become "Mystae" or "initiates" in the "wisdom" (knowledge) preserved and passed-on by the Priests of those temples. Some of the wisest and greatest of the Human Race served in these temples, and some individuals, like Plato and his Grandfather Solon were initiates into most of the different "mysteries" available in their period.

These Priests were not "magicians", they were scholars, they were the anthropologists, and the scientific cosmologists and particle physicists of their times, they were also the only historians of their times! The "mysteries" they guarded and dispensed so carefully were simply the comprehension of the nature of the human condition, the nature of the greater reality outside of the human condition, and the nature of the inter-relationships between the two.

***IT WAS THEIR METHODOLOGY WHICH LED TO THE PROBLEMS THAT EXIST TODAY REGARDING "OCCULTISM".***

The knowledge and understanding they possessed were not then, and are not now, attainable by the ordinary person. In reaction to that fact, the "Mystery Temples" dispensed their knowledge in carefully "graded" doses, and the entire content of their data-base was kept rigidly secret from all but the highest level of their Priest-Initiates. Why? Well because *knowledge of things one is incapable of comprehending is dangerous* and more so to the person who gains that which is utterly beyond them, than to anyone else. "A Little knowledge is a dangerous

thing" and, by extension, " a lot of knowledge is an extremely dangerous thing". Especially to those who are incapable of comprehending what they are taught. And so the content of their instructions was held rigidly secret. Both by those who taught it, and by those who received it. That is the only reason why they were called the "Mysteries", it was because they were hidden or secret.

Their teachings were, in fact, available on a very low level to all who applied to the Temples of the Mysteries for "Initiation", in the form of dramatic presentations which demonstrated symbolically, certain truths or facts about the human condition. By people's reactions to those demonstrations, the Priests knew who might be appropriate for further instruction.

The Mystae were first and foremost scholars. Their knowledge and wisdom were the only source of "power" they possessed and that is equally true of their successors to this day. They are not magicians, they are not alchemists, they are simply knowledgeable!

Now popular metaphysics-occultism arose out of total mis-perceptions of the "Mysteries" which as time passed gave rise to "Manicheanism" and Gnosticism" , in passing I really have to note that far too much of mainstream Judeo-Christian-Islamic Theology arose from the same misunderstandings. Now all of these belief structures, the Judeo-Christian Islamic "Triad", Manicheanism, and Gnosticism were more intimately connected with the Pre-Zoroastrian Mazdazdian belief structure than they were or are with the Mysteries, but as time passed the Mysteries became blended with the Dualists and today are almost entirely inseparable from them.

The Mazdazdian original was the basis for all dualism, it's emphasis on the "war between light and darkness" or "good and evil" have disfigured all metaphysical thinking in a religious context since. Manicheanism, Gnosticism, and the Judeo-Christian-Islamic Triad are all simply minor variations on the Mazdazdian Dualistic theme It is entirely wrong and so are they.

How does all this history pertain to what I call "The Problem"? Well, it is because if you review what has long gone on in the community which claims to be Metaphysical and if you extend that review to the current state of affairs in the so-called metaphysical community it will be very clear to you that the basic reason metaphysics is in such a parlous state is the total misconception of what the study of metaphysics implies and entails, and the fact that many of the individuals I define as "bugs" are entirely tainted with not simply misperception of WHAT it is that metaphysical philosophy is, but a totally irrational and unbalanced view of themselves and their connection to metaphysics.

To any reasonably sane person who is intrigued by the fascinating speculations which are part and parcel of the study of metaphysical philosophy it is a source of great sadness and frustration to know full well that to the great majority of people on this planet, the study of metaphysics is entirely identified with "channeling", "terrestrial communications", angelic communications", even "Dolphin

Communications", to which is added idiocy like "ascended Masters", "initiates", and clap trap like the "Golden Dawn", "OTO", and all of Aleister Crowley's Thelemic "fun and games".

Now, the fact of the matter is that none of these bits of nonsense have any connection with the serious study of Metaphysical Philosophy whatsoever. But most people believe they do, and that perception is far stronger than reality.

So then, that is the problem. If you consider yourself to be a serious student of metaphysical philosophy, as I do, then it is not simply "The Problem" no it is OUR PROBLEM.

What, in the name of sense and sensibility, do we do about it?