THESIS

SOCRATIC MORALITY AND DIALECTICS.

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A man, who "lived well spoke well and died well" is worthy of praise. He who first laid a foundation for morality, who first gave a method for logical thinking to the modern as well as the ancient world, is not only worthy of praise, but of careful study. Who that man was, doubtless all unprejudiced readers of history will agree; that it was Socrates, a perusal of his life, and a study of his dialectical method of reasoning is a proof. His life was a light to pagan darkness, an example of morality to all ages; his method of reasoning an intellectual liberator of the modern as well as the ancient world. His peculiar religion feeling together with his intellectual originality produced a wonderful effect in the pagan world. True, his morality and reasoning, his doctrine
and method may seem nothing grand—may seem even light and superficial in this age of advancement, yet it is well to remember that it is always not only interesting, but quite satisfactory, to most of humanity to search who may have been the originator of that which has brought about directly or indirectly our prosperity. For indeed our prosperity depends mostly upon the way, manner or method in which thought and passion have ruled the world in the past.

Socrates lived seventy years, 469–399 B.C. His father was a sculptor, and Socrates followed for some time the same trade and became a sculptor of no mean dignity. His whole life was passed in extreme, but contented poverty. His physiognomy was very homely, but he was robust, strong, healthy and could endure
extreme heat or cold. He believed that according
as the wants of the body were less, the nearer
one could approach the perfection of the god;
that the body should be a slave to the soul
and not the soul to the body; that the plea-
sures of the soul were retarded by the gratifica-
tion of the wants of the body. Hence when he
saw in the world around him all men dwarfed
by their physical desires, he deemed it a
happy opportunity to "sculpture souls rather
than stones. And he sought to find in the
mind beauty as the artist reflected it in
marble." He shewed how insignificant in the
body in comparison to that inner self
when "he extracted the purest moral beauty
from his graceless form."
His life, from the manner in which he
lived, directed, controlled and moulded the
character of his fellowmen. He practiced what he preached.

Now, when, what to do was an especial peculiarity of Socrates. From childhood he declared he had heard a voice which acted in the way of prohibition or restraint, never in an urging manner. He did not give this prohibiting voice a name, but called it a "divine sign" while others called it the daemon. Whatever was Socrates' idea of this power, whatever other thought of it, however absurd and unreasonable it may seem to me today, yet when it is rightly considered we must know that a power, not unlike that of the daemon, restraining, divine acts upon all souls, if they only would heed the warning.

Socrates in pagan darkness had but a vague idea of just what this power was,
for in his system of doctrine he seems to
leave out the influence of the "divine sign", and makes reason the entire foundation.
But Socrates was doubtless of that class of
whom St Paul speaks— "grooping in the dark,
if haply he might find." Surely "Socrates would have been a Christian
if he had had a chance." This daemon could
have been nothing less than the "saving
grace" which Christians believe can restrain
man from evil when but a knowledge of
what is right and wrong can not.
Many even in this enlightened age are not
able to recognize God as a moral governor—
may many have as vague an idea of a Supreme
power as the pagan did two thousand years
ago; many do not understand the power
of divine grace as well as Socrates did in an
age of ignorance and superstition; many can
not understand that human reason has its
limits and that intellect is not the only
power that moves men, and that without the
Socratic daemon, frail human nature and
knowledge is powerless when temptation
comes.

Thus acting under a divine restraint, and
an acute original reasoning all the time,
Socrates was the person to do a great good,
and he had a grand opportunity living in
the place and at the time he did.

The condition of the world presented him a
large field in which to work.

Athens was rich, earless, idle. She was in
intellectual darkness, indulging in all sorts
of beliefs and wild dreams of speculation.
The Sophists were the money loving philosph
era, the superficial teachers of the time. They had no foundation for what they taught, and they themselves knew not the first principles of what they pretended to know and teach. They pretended to teach science, but they knew not how to solve the problem of the universe although they claimed they did. Yet in spite of all their ignorance and pummel the people were deceived and lied by them. But Socrates once now as Grote says like a "moral phenomenon," he disdained the idea of the study of science, and can we wonder that he did when we know how long the question had been studied, and that it had been studied by the most advanced men of the time, and yet all was confusion and doubt, in regard to it. 

Can we wonder then at him exclaiming
that science was a mystery which the gods did not intend for human minds to solve and that the proper "study of man is mankind." We therefore substituted for the study of science the study of self. He was thus the first to turn men's thoughts in upon himself in order to investigate his nature and measure his possibilities and capacities. While others estimated outside life of most consequence, Socrates thought the reverse—that the interior, the heart, mind, soul was the part of man which needed cultivation as through them the true essentials of right living would come. The inscription upon the temple of Apollo, "Know Thyself," was to Socrates a sacred motto. He interpreted it to mean that man was to realize as far as human power...
could what it was to be a man, that man should search to find his relation to his fellowmen, and to the world in general. At that time, if men knew definitely about anything it was usually the trade in which they were engaged, and when it came to the question of right doing they were always at a disadvantage. Socrates showed that it was just as essential to know definitely what right doing was, as to know definitely about something which ministered to bodily pleasure. I would be able to teach B right from wrong as well as to teach him any trade, provided I would examine himself and know in the true sense of the word what right consisted. In all his teaching Socrates aimed to make evident that morality was
not all theory, but could be and ought to be practical.

As to his theoretical doctrine of morality, it is a study of much interest and importance, when the false and the true in it are separated. Socrates may be called the "pagan preacher," who went about preaching virtue, and that the way of obtaining it was through reason.

In his doctrine of morality he taught that the trinity of the soul was happiness, virtue, and knowledge. Happiness belonged to the soul while pleasure belonged only to the body. This belief was quite contrary to that of the pagan, viz., that happiness and pleasure were identical. Further, his doctrine taught that virtue and knowledge were the same, virtue flowed from knowledge and they both
together constituted the good, the true and the beautiful. Virtue and knowledge are identical, he declares because a man, who thoroughly knows what is the right and wrong, will not go in the wrong path, because he knows the end, and that it will lead to destruction. This is where the false part of his theory comes in, viz., in confusing knowledge and virtue. And it is strange too because we have seen that he seemed to realize there must be a power behind reason in the form of a divine restraint when it came to deciding questions of right and wrong. But in his teaching, he makes his listeners believe that mind alone is the only safety; that knowledge is virtue, ignorance is vice. The emotions, the daemon is lost. He can not see that the evil men would not that they do." Men today, who claim that they thorough-
by understand an awful result as the reward of an evil life, yet can not help doing evil. The flesh is too weak to alone overcome strong temptation.

While this doctrine has its false part, as every doctrine must have in a greater or less degree, it also has its true part, which is its practicality. In every trade, in every art there is an end to be attained, and a plan by which it can be obtained. So in right doing, a sure result will follow, and there is also a plan or theory by which the result may be brought about. The latter is just as practical as the former if it were only made so. While his foundation for Ethics was defective, yet it was a foundation, a beginning which led up to the grand system of morality embraced under Christianity. Whether Socrates was greater as an
example of morality, as the one who first laid the principles of morality, or as the originator of a new method of reasoning, a system of dialectics, makes little differenced us the happy combination of the two woe what caused him to be the light and life of pagan antiquity, of pagan immorality, of pagan Sophistical ignorance.

To know his worth in this new method, we must know the blind way in which his predecessors attempted to trace the causes of things. The pre-Doratic philosophers studied only problems of the material universe as we have learned. The way such problems were studied is sufficient evidence why the results arrived at were so vague, obscure and inadequate. "Ethics, physics, man and nature were blended into one whole." Effects were given hard
study, but no perfect result could be arrived at, as the causes were never given analysis. They believed the same cause produced different effects, and if that cause must constitute some grand mysterious system which they were ever trying to explain, the thought seems never to have occurred to them of dividing and subdividing causes or vice versa.

With all these confused ideas, when men were unable to arrive at logical conclusions, and they themselves knew there must be something wrong with their ideas, yet not unlike much of our modern knowledge, it was feigned. They declared they knew a thing when they were acquainted with the first principles of it. The very simplest questions that would arise in every day life, and which they pretended to know all about were the ones which
they could not explain. As the modern world has the same failing, it deserves greater condem- 
nation as we today have the advantage of know- 
ing how to think,—something which has 
been left us by our ancestors.

As the world needed a Luther “to establish 
justification by Faith,” as the world needed 
Bernard “to refute the rationalism and nomin- 
alism of Abelard,” as the world needed Socrates 
to free the human mind from its ignorance; 
to put reasoning on a scientific basis; and teach 
man how to think for himself.

All of which, me, although living twenty five 
hundred years from the time of Socrates, owe 
to him.

He is well styled the “Father of Philosophy” for it 
was his new ideas that revolutionized all 
philosophy, all reasoning, all thought.
The innovation which he introduced was needed the very most at that time, and he introduced the right thing at the right time, because many were just coming to see they were exercising a false method of thinking, and they were floundering for some light, but they knew not what it ought to be, or how they could see their way clear.

Fortunately the intellect of Socrates was original; it was capable of doing what others had never dreamed of; it was capable of penetrating the secret of a system of thinking. Something which others had tried to do, but had utterly failed. The plan is drawn from his conversations, for he wrote nothing. His system of right thinking was formulated in what is known as the dialectical method, which Xenophon describes as consisting in coming
together and taking common counsel to distingush and distribute things into Genera or Families so as to learn what each separate thing really was. This was the first step taken in logical thinking, something which was needed to untangle the mind at that time from a mesh of error, and which we depend upon today for certain knowledge.

All questions, of whatever sort they were, he resolved into individuals. His method was both analytical and synthetical—"dividing one into many and uniting many into one." Each effect he resolved into its individual cause; each cause he subdivided, thus classifying every thing into Genera and Species. He was thus accustomed in everything he did, he made his system practical. If he started to teach virtue he would start with an example of a virtuous
man, and show step by step what such a man would and would not do, and thus arrive at a general conclusion of the abstract form of virtue from the concrete example. This tie known as the Inductive System, a system which constitutes the basis of Baconian philosophy, a system from which the Baconian spirit originates. It was this system of Induction together with his definitions which Aristotle declared embraced the plan of modern scientific investigation. The two, Induction and Definitions go hand in hand. The Definitions are but a form of Induction and arose from his short questions he was accustomed to ask. He laid it down as a principle that the first thing requisite was to know exactly what was the subject under discussion. This was difficult for
man to do at that time as we have learned how confused were his ideas on any subject. Thus he said a man could not teach right from wrong when he himself did not know what was right from wrong; he could not teach physical principles when his ideas were confused and he had no idea what should be included or excluded in the question under discussion. He would ask a question on a subject to which the listener considered an easy answer could be given. Then he would ask another question to which an answer was required which would be in harmony with the first. But the conclusion thus arrived at would almost always prove a glaring contradiction. In this way, to their chagrin their ignorance was exposed and nothing could have been a better stimulus.
to arouse them from their mental inactivity; to arouse them to intellectual inquiry; to free them from themselves and serving ideas than this "cross-examining Socrates."

The questions under discussion were not of so much worth as his method of discussion. Premises were laid down by the question asked, and the listener was left to draw his own conclusion. Therefore the listener was not forced to take the belief of some one else; he was not forced to think as others thought, but as he himself saw best. He believed each man should have for himself an independent logical power of reasoning a power gained only through induction which is the basis of all right thinking. This induction, this dialectical system, the not only believed in, but did all in his power to
establish. And shall we say that he failed when we know that Bacon and the modern logicians developed his thought into a grand system of reasoning? Shall we say he failed when we know that Plato, the wisest of men, received from him the foundation for his grand philosophy? Shall we say he failed when we owe so much to him? By all means, no. We should never forget of what he was the originator; we should never forget what we owe to him.

The grand result of his morality and dialectics was brought about by the manner of his death. In ancient times as well as in modern, anyone who attacked popular beliefs, general doctrine, or public opinion suffered a severe penalty. What that penalty was depended generally upon the
Socrates was condemned to death and why? A man who had done so much for humanity, who was a teacher of morality in heathen darkness, who had put the light of originality in so many minds, who had first taught men how to know themselves was condemned on the ground of hurry and compulsory of youth— a condemnation which undoubtedly deserves the keenest disapprobation. On these grounds, he is brought before the Diakastery, which was composed of our five hundred judges, who were the leading citizens of Athens. As to the first charge that he did not acknowledge the gods of the people, it was perfectly groundless, because Socrates recognized a Supreme power if ever a pagan did. The only
difference to be seen in their belief in this respect seemed to be that while the public recognized a number of gods, Socrates recognized but one.

As to the second charge, viz., of his corrupting the youth, that also was groundless because he continually taught temperance, obedience and all the higher states of the soul. So there must have been something behind all this which was the secret of the accusation. It is easy to trace it to political feelings. He exposed to view the dark side of the political schemes concocted by the demagogues of Athens, and worked to place the government on right and reason, and not on wealth and influence. Human nature was the same then as today, and it was but natural that a hatred would be formed against him who seemed only
trying to expose the dark side of character; to expose all that was bad, mean and vile in a man. Personal dislikes became so intense that he was condemned—condemned on false grounds to satiate a political grudge.

When the time came for his defence, he acted as if he did not want to be acquitted, but wished to die. He believed he had lived long enough, had fulfilled a noble mission, and death had no terrors. He doubtless saw that his death and the manner of it would secure a final triumph of his cause and "spread a spirit of inquiries over the world." Therefore he made no pretence at defending his life, and received the sentence with the calmest satisfaction.

The manner of his death certainly did have a wonderful effect and spread the spirit of
ingines—a thing much desired. Doubtless nothing could have brought about a more powerful result of his morality and dialectics than the prison and the cup of hemlock, for they aroused a sympathy which otherwise never would have been felt. Man owes him a debt for his morality and dialectics a debt which he will never be able to realize, since it has increased so that today man himself has become a part of it.