

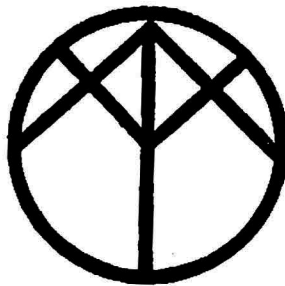
PYTHAGOREAN METAPHYSICS AND ESCHATOLOGY

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PYTHAGOREAN METAPHYSICS AND ESCHATOLOGY

By HOBART HUSON

In response to the request of an inquirer living in a remote part of the world I have been asked by the Program Committee to specially prepare and deliver a paper on the subject of the *esoteric* philosophy of Pythagoras ; and this I shall endeavor to do as nearly as may be done and my understanding will permit.

It should be realized at the outset that *all* philosophy, --- that is all *true* philosophy, — deals only with knowledge of *immaterial* and *eternal* things ; so that, in a way *all* true philosophy is in nature *esoteric*. However, much of the metaphysical, eschatological, and of Pythagorean Philosophy, is not, strictly speaking, *esoteric*.

Pythagorean esoteric philosophy similarly to other ancient Mysteries has for its purpose the enabling of man to live a better life and to die with a better hope ; or, stated, otherwise, to assist man in becoming the likeness of God. In drawing aside the veil which obscures the mystery and purposes of man's existence, it undertakes to reveal to its initiates knowledge of Self and of the world in which man lives, and of the immortal destiny of which his nature is capable of realizing. Time is the essence of the phenomenal universe ; and it is the quality of Time that it has beginning and end. Perhaps the most comprehensible as well as the most beautiful expression of the Sage's teachings on the subject is preserved by Ovid. Thus ¹ :

«There is nothing in all the world that keeps its form. All things are in a state of flux, and everything is brought into being with a changing nature. Time itself flows on in constant motion, just like a river. For neither the river nor the swift hour can stop its course ! but as wave is pushed on by wave and as each wave as it comes is both pressed on and itself presses the wave in front, so time both flees and follows and is ever new. For that which once existed is no more, and that which was not has come to be ; and so the whole round of motion is gone through again ***

«Nothing retains its own form ; but Nature, the great renewer, ever makes up forms from other forms. Be sure there's nothing perishes in the whole universe ; it does but vary and renew its form. What we call birth is but a beginning to be other than what one was before, and death is but a cessation of a former state. Though, perchance, things may shift from there to here and here to there, still do all things in their sum total remain unchanged.

1. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV. 176 ; 252 Loeb II 377, 383.

«Nothing, I feel sure, lasts long under the same appearance ¹.

When the veil is drawn aside there is presented for immediate comparison and consideration two worlds, — the phenomenal world and the intelligible world, with their relative possibilities. The phenomenal world, which the philosopher calls the *Kosmos*, is a world of Beauty, a world of form and matter, a world of sense-perception. Moreover, it is the world whose processes are meted and metered by Time : a world of Beauty and Order, operating according to scientific principles and laws, but nevertheless a world in which all form is in a state of continuous and everlasting change or flux, where nothing material and temporal «continueth not long in one stay.» «All things are in a state of flux, and everything is brought into being with a changing nature. The heavens and whatever is beneath the heavens change their forms, the earth and all that is within it. We also change, who are a part of creation, since we are not bodies only but also winged souls.» ²

In juxtaposition the lifted veil reveals the intelligible world as a world of Truth, of immaterial being not subject to Time or change, a world of an everlasting Now, having neither the beginning of Time nor the end of Days.

These two worlds are encompassed and permeated by a world of Goodness, and it by a world of Divinity; all four worlds in fact being a seemly unity; all being constituted of the ineffable being of God.

In contemplating the phenomenal and the intelligible universes, the Sage points out that one is Real Being, and that the other is Unreal Being; and it might be said that this concept forms a basic ingredient of the esoteric philosophy. By «Unreal» the Sage does not mean that form and matter do not have actuality of existence as such during their season, but that they have no permanency of duration, but are transitory and fleeting, and disappear in Time. That being is Real only that has everlasting existence.

Thus, he explains, «What may be perceived by the senses undergoes continual change. It is the incorporeal things which are unchangeable and are therefore real.» ³ «*Beings* are immaterial and eternal natures, and alone possess an efficacious power, such as incorporeal essences. But the rest of things are only homonymously beings, and are so denominated through the participation of real beings, and such are corporeal and material forms, which are generated and corrupted, and never truly are. Wisdom is the science of things which are properly beings, but not of such as are homonymously so. For corporeal natures are neither the objects of science nor admit of a stable knowledge; since they are infinite and incomprehensible by science, and are,

1. *Pythagoron*, 16, 18-21.

2. *Pythagoron*, 15.

3. *Pythagoron*, 40-41.

as it were, non-beings when compared with universals, and are incapable of being properly circumscribed by definition. Therefore, it is through the mind *nous* we see and hear all things: all else is deaf and blind.»¹

Man, whose *palingenesis* is the principal object of the philosophy, is declared to be a composite, in a smaller scale of the four worlds of which he is part. «Man is a Mikrokosm, because he is a compendium of the universe: not because, like other animals, (even the lease), he is constituted by the five elements, but because he contains all the powers of the universe. The world contains God and the five elements, the animals and plants, which emanated from God. All of these powers are contained in Man. However, in each of these he is inferior to the others. Containing God, he is inferior to God; and having less of each of the elements, is inferior to any of them. Constituted therefore of different powers, Man has a difficult life to live.»²

In brief, Man is tripartite, being composed of soul, mind, and body: thus he is constituted of both Real and Unreal being as conceived by the Sage. Within this purview the sensory corporeal body of Man is Unreal Being, and is no different to all other manifestations of form and matter. Thus, as said by the Sage, «Our own bodies also go through a ceaseless round of change, nor what we have been or are today shall we be tomorrow»³. This idea is elaborated, and explained Pythagorically by Plutarch in a well-known semite: «A river flowing onward continuously replenishes itself and undergoes constant change; so that at no time and place is it the same river which it was in the beginning, or was a moment before, or will be an instant hence; so that it is impossible ever to step into the *same* river twice. Thus mortal Man, is not the same man he was the instant before, or will be the instant hence. He changes like all things, imperceptibly but continually; and he that is changed is never the same person; but unlike matter which revolves around and slips away, Man grows up many around one appearance and common model. So why then, should man fear one death when he has already died, and will die, so many.»⁴

In the eternal scheme of things, when the corporeal body, and all that is associated with it, comes to its appointed time, it undergoes change of form, from that by which it was proximately known, and reverts into the elements. That, Pythagorically, is the last of the human body as a unique individual identity. We call this transition *death*, yet it is impossible in the essential constituency of things for anything ever to cease entirely to live; it merely changes

1. Pythagoron, 41.

2. Pythagoron, 49.

3. Ovid. *Met.*, XV. 214 Loeb II, 381.—Pythagoron, 15, 20-21.

4. Pythagoron, 23-24.

form, but never ceases to live in some other continuously changing form¹.

Perhaps, in the Pythagorean concept of God as a living God, and as the source and giver of life, and never the giver of absolute death, and of the universe as a living, breathing, vibrant, being, and of life, not death, as the eternal norm, and the regimen of every being and thing we have another basic philosophical ingredient².

Unstrange to doctrines with which most of us are familiar, the entire universe is constituted of worlds, or planes, or levels, containing being and forms of life of graduating rank, ranging from the gross corporeal, to the divinely aethereal. Each of these worlds, or levels, or heavens, if the word be more expressive, is governed by principles and regimens appropriate to itself, and which, although related, are not common to the others. The supernal levels are incorporeal, immaterial, and spiritual, and the beings which are at home there necessarily are aethereal, intelligible being, whose mode of life or being is incomparable with that which we know in the terrestrial life³.

Hence, Pythagoras teaches that «flesh and blood cannot inherit the supernal regions»⁴; and that «no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.»⁵ Consequently, of the tripartite constituency of Man, only the immaterial and incorporeal constituents alone possess the capacity for transition continuance of life in the supernal; — a region which, it may be remarked, is not designed to support corporeal life in flesh, blood, and bone. The corporeal body be regarded as an incumbrance or handicap to life in spiritual form. The Sage exhorts, «O race of men, stunned with the chilling fear of death, why do you dread the Styx, the shades and empty names, the stuff that poets manufacture, and their fabled sufferings of a world that never was? As for your bodies, whether the burning pyre, or long lapse of time with its wasting power shall have consumed them, be sure they cannot suffer any ills. Our souls are deathless, and even, when they have left their former seat, do they live in new abodes and dwell in the bodies that have received them.»⁶

We come now to a consideration of Pythagoras' concept of the nature of the Soul of Man and her possibilities as an eternal Ego of intelligence and spiri-

1. Pythagoron, 21.

2. Pythagoron, 15, 21.

3. *Pearls*, I Corinth 15; II Corinth 12: 1-5.—*Romans* 8: 38-39.—*Ephesians* 1: 20-21; 4: 16.

4. *Pearls*, 12.

5. *John*, 3: 13.

6. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV. 153.—Loeb, II, 375-377.—Pythagoron, 30-31.—*Pearls*, 12-13.

tual power. The Sage taught that God is *one* ; that God and the universe are *one* ; that the universe is an infinite unity of the One and the Many, all bound by Divine Harmony. Although Pythagoras teaches that the universe in all levels and in all manifestations is constituted of God, through *hypostases*, and that God permeates all his creation entire, yet this doctrine is a far cry from what we term pantheism. Pythagoras regarded Deity as being both immanent and transcendent ; and the classical Pythagoric illustration of this mystical doctrine of the universe being a portion of God who is nevertheless distinguishable from his works, is that of the Sun and its rays, used by Plotinos. Another familiar Pythagoric similitude is that of the candle-flame, embodying in itself all degrees of intensity, being distinguishable apart from its ever receding, graduating, degrees of light, and smoke and soot ; all of which are an indivisible unity, yet the source is distinguishable from its emanations. Under this concept there is a common participation of The Many in Unity and in each other, which Pythagoras allegorizes into the Triangular Friendship.

Pythagoras conceived the Soul of the World, which is the creator and vivifier of the world of sense and form, — the World of Beauty — the Kosmos. The Soul of the World is a unified mass, intelligent throughout and as a Soul Mass. Everything which pertains properly to the phenomenal universe *participates* in the single Soul of the World, as an entirety ; the same as all earth creatures live in the same world, participate in the same sun light, and breathe the same air.

The relation of all creation to a common Soul is analogous somewhat to the Kyklopes who possessed but one eye, but more rather to sponges lying on the ocean's floor, which participate in a single reservoir, and are emersed in and saturated by it ; or again to myriads of people bathing in a common ocean. The last two cited examples further illustrate the concept, in considering the relationship between the individual sponges or individual bathers to the common reservoir. It is obvious that during the while of their respective participation the water in their immediate proximity, or which adheres, or inheres to them in particular, might be regarded in a measure as their individual ocean. However, when the sponges are taken out of the ocean, or the bathers take themselves out of the ocean, the water drains or evaporates from them and returns again into the common water-mass or reservoir, without evidence of the prior association. The same notion serves to illustrate what we understand to be the Pythagoric view of the relationship between the individual man and the mass of the Soul of the World. Like all creation, even the least, (for this reason it is said that animals have souls)¹. Man participates *as man* in the common soul so long as he remains in the form of man. When he ceases in

1. Pythagoron.

that form, he ceases to participate in that form in the common soul, and, like the bather who comes up out of the sea, the area of Soul which he especially enjoyed drains back into the Soul-Mass. Hence, the Pythagoric declaration, «when a man dies his Soul retreats into the Soul of the World.»¹

It may be interesting to observe that although Pythagoras regarded Soul as immortal and indestructible, *as a mass*, he declared it to be *not Real Being*, but «only homonymously being, and as so denominated through the participation of *Real Being*.»² Life is a substrate of Soul ; Soul is a substrate of *Nous*, which is Real Being ; *Nous* is a plane next lower than Spirit, which is the highest degree of Real Being, next to Divinity. Only Real Being has the quality of eternal existence impressed like wax with individual *Ego* ; hence, such area of the Soul Mass as shifts about or inheres in, or grows up, «around one appearance and common model»³, in the form of a living mortal man, does not alone have such eternal quality.

Pythagoras did not conceive the individual soul of mortal man as an entity immured in or confined to the corporeal body ;⁴ but as a system extending from God Himself to man⁵, like a silver cord, and which he divides into three section of unity, the lowest level of which he calls the «subsidiary part», or *mortal soul*⁶, and the highest level of which he terms the «divine part», or the *Divine Soul*⁷. This Over-Soul, or Shining Self, does not descend to the level of the phenomenal world, but descends to and remains in the intelligible, as man's Genius, or Guardian Angel, or Daemon. The Divine Soul is Real Being, — the Son of God ; — the «man who descended from heaven», and the only man to whom ascent into heaven is possible⁸. Hence mortal man has one foot already in heaven.

Pythagoras teaches that in order to attain eternal life as a spiritual *Ego*, of intelligence and power, it is requisite that man raise himself to his Divine, or Shining Self, and fuse his mortal soul with its divine part. To accomplish this, man must first of all become morally regenerate, by undergoing *palingenesis*, or rebirth. He then undergoes *anastasis*, rising from lower to higher soulular and spiritual levels, undergoing, a series of what Pythagoras terms «philosophical deaths», until the glorified Soul reaches the Intelligible, and becomes illumined. Lying still ahead are possibilities of beatitude and deification.

1. Pythagoron, 29.

2. Pythagoron, 41.

3. Pythagoron.

4. Pythagoron, 27.

5. Pythagoron, 34.

6. Pythagoron, 27.— *Pearls*, 9.

7. *Pearls*, 10.

8. *St. John*, 3 : 13.— *Pearls*, 9-10.

The province of Pythagorean philosophy, and of the Way of Life which it engenders, is to raise man to his Divine Self, and enable him to live a better life and to die with a better hope of immortality. When in the process man is brought to *Know Himself*, and to know whence he comes and whither he goes, he comes to know that the *Real Man* is a Soul and not a body, which is only a possession of the Soul; and to know that in the World of Reality the body is the horse, and the Soul is the rider¹. He comes to realization that he is a mikrokosmos, and contains within his constituency all of the powers of the universe². With these realizations he applies himself assiduously to the practice of Virtue.

Pythagorically, the term *Virtue* includes that moral virtue which produces *sophrosyne*, and which is a requisite to every philosophical life,³ but has the unique and deeper meaning of *Spiritual Power*, or the raising of the mortal soul to its Divine, Shining Self, in the same sense as *Mark*, 5:30; *Luke*, 6:19; 8:46.⁴

«The Pythagorean Virtues also divided into two grand divisions, (1) *Human Virtue*, and (2) *Divine Virtue*. *Human Virtue*, also called *Practical*, is subdivided into (a) *civic, civil, or practical virtue*; and (b) *purificatory, or Cathartic, or theoretic, virtue*. The former is also called *Paedeutik*. The latter is also called *mystical*, and «the Sciences.» It is sometimes referred to by some authorities as *contemplative virtue*. ***

«*Divine Virtue, or Celestial Virtue*, is likewise divided into two: (a) *contemplative, or intellectual, or mystical*, and (b) *paradigmatic, exemplary, or celestial*. *Divine Virtue* is *Intellectual Virtue*, and belongs to *Mind*, and not to *Soul*. ***»⁵

«The Virtues are in a sense a preparation for contemplation (*theoria*).»⁶ Contemplation has as its objective oneness with God, or assimilation to divinity. «Thus the *practical virtues* make man virtuous; the *purificatory virtues* make man divine; *** the *contemplative virtues* deify; while the *exemplary virtues* make a man the parent of divinities.»⁷ As Reuchin remarks, the Virtues are mystical. The theoretical branches of Pythagoreanism involve true mysticism, as distinguished from self-hypnosis and sublimation.

¶ The approach to the Virtues are through the *Mathematical disciplines*, which were designed by Pythagoras for the edification of his pupils. On this subject the Sage declares: «Neither art nor wisdom can be acquired without preparatory learning. As the Lesser Mysteries are to be delivered before the Greater,

1. *Pythagoron*, 29.

2. *Pythagoron*, 49.

3. *Pythagoron*, 79, 95.

4. Huson, *Philosophy*, ch. ix.—*Pythagoron*, 50.

5. Huson, *Philosophy*, ch. ix.

6. Plotinos, *Enneads*, apud. Inge.

7. Huson, *Philosophy*.—Porphyry, *Intelligible Natures*.

thus also discipline must precede philosophy. Great and necessary is the attention which should be paid to disciplines as introductions to philosophy.»¹

In the *Golden Verses*, the disciplines and the Virtues are briefed, and the assurance is given those who heed their injunctions, that

65. If thou hast a share in ought of these, thou shalt master the things which I bid thee.

66. Having healed thy soul thou wilt save it from these pains.

68. And both in the purifications and in the deliverance of the soul, do thou discriminate, giving heed to each thing:

69. Having established noblest reason as a charioteer from on high:

70. And when, having put aside the body, thou comest into the most pure aether,

71. Thou shalt be a god, immortal, imperishable, and death shall have no more dominion over thee.»²

Perhaps the best summation of the objectives and aspirations of Pythagorean philosophy in its esoteric branch is to be found in the words of the Philosopher himself:

«As there is but One God, there is one universal Soul diffused through all things — eternal, invisible, unchangeable; in essence like Truth, in substance like Light; not to be represented by any image; to be comprehended only by the *Nous*. Not, as some conjecture, exterior to the Kosmos, but in itself entire, pervading the sphere which is the Kosmos; for all Nature is animate.

«The Soul is extended through the nature of all things and is mingled with them. The Soul extends into Men, and there is a relationship between Men and God, because men partake of the Divine Principle and are Sons of God; God being eternally in us, with us, about us, and above us.

«By our extension from the Deity we gain the wings which raise us towards Celestial Being, though we are preceptuated into the region of death where all so-called evils dwell. But by putting away earthly passions and devoting ourselves to virtue, our wings will be renewed, and we shall rise to that immortal existence where we shall find the true good without any admixture of evil.

«Man is perfected first, by conversing with God, which he can do only in the language of Truth and by abstinence from evil, and by striving to resemble the full perfection of the Divine Nature, Secondly by doing good to others, which is an imitation of God; and, thirdly, by leaving the mortal body.

«Likeness to Deity should be the aim of all our endeavors. The nobler, the better the man, the more godlike he becomes. The greatest honor which can be paid to God is to know and imitate His perfection.

1. *Pythagoron*, 7.

2. *Pythagoron*, 194-195.

«Whatever we see when awake is death, and when asleep is a dream. Be sleepless in the things of the Spirit, for sleep in them is a kin to death.»¹

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1. *Pythagoron*, 189-190.

PYTHAGORE & L'ARITHMÉTIQUE.
 PARALLÈLE ENTRE PYTHAGORE & DESCARTES

PAR M. CAMILLE GUYARD

Doyen de la Délégation de France au Congrès Mondial Pythagoricien
 Athènes 1955

Des 4 points cardinaux du Monde, des Délégations ferventes apportent aujourd'hui à la Grèce leur tribut de reconnaissance pour avoir donné à l'humanité le grand Maître : Pythagore, fils, selon la légende, du Dieu Apollon et d'une beauté grecque Pythaïs, femme de Mnésarque.

Pythagore, chronologiquement et géographiquement se situe il y a 2.500 ans à Samos au carrefour des époques de la mythologie et de la raison ainsi que sur la route des grands souffles de l'esprit parvenus des Indes, de Perse, d'Arabie, de Judée, de Phénicie, d'Égypte, de Rome et de Gaule pour contribuer à la formation de la Civilisation Méditerranéenne, synthèse des civilisations antiques et creuset des civilisations modernes.

Je me sens particulièrement honoré d'être investi du redoutable privilège d'apporter un tribut d'hommages à Pythagore, le grand érudit, père d'une philosophie universelle et immortelle.

Je le ferai donc au titre du plus modeste fils du pays de Descartes, lointain mais fidèle disciple de Pythagore, mathématicien et philosophe français dont l'influence, ces 4 derniers siècles, a été assez déterminante sur la formation des esprits et le comportement des générations contemporaines.

Descartes, à plus de 2000 ans de distance, a repensé la doctrine et la méthode de Pythagore en recherchant la Vérité en dehors de tous les préjugés, dans la pleine Liberté et par la primauté de l'Esprit.

Aujourd'hui, il reste encore à prouver que la méthode de Descartes, basée sur la raison, l'analyse et la synthèse, mais dégagée des influences mythologiques et magiques connues de Pythagore, constitue un progrès certain sur la doctrine antique ?

Nous rechercherons donc, non pas ce qui paraît opposer ces grands Maîtres, mais ce qui les réunit.

Descartes et Pythagore ont, tous deux, bénéficié des dons exceptionnels de l'Esprit, ils ont beaucoup voyagé et leurs méditations les conduisirent à la connaissance des Lois de la Sagesse et pour tous deux par les voies de la Mathématique.

C'est, en effet, leur commune curiosité des Nombres, de l'Arithmétique et