

EXPERIENCE AND DIALECTIC: A STUDY  
IN DIALECTICAL INTERPLAY

In the intellectual history of the West and the East the words “experience” and “dialectic” have been used in various senses. Their respective roles in knowledge have been differently conceived—depending invariably on the meanings given to the words “knowledge” and “experience.” The problem of the mutual relationship between experience and dialectic is at bottom that of the relation between experience and reason. Reason can be understood in a static sense and a dynamic sense. It may stand for that human capacity which apprehends formal logical relations between certain propositions and deduces conclusions from given premises. Or it may refer to that dynamic effort of the human mind to *articulate*, to grapple with and render intelligible the immediately felt experience. In this latter sense reason is involved in a dialectical and dramatic *process* which aims at recapturing, as it were, the felt unity and totality of experience. That is why underlying the diverse uses of “dialectic” one can discern in the concept a common flavor which is a unique combination of the

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rational and the dramatic, the intellectual and the imaginative, the discursive and the non-discursive. Failure to understand the proper relation between experience and dialectic has given rise either to “insoluble paradoxes” or to grandiose, “metaphysical,” over-all solutions which are hardly convincing. In this paper I intend to bring out, what seems to me, the proper way of understanding their relation through a critical consideration of the dialectics of the famous Mādhyamika dialectician Nāgārjuna, of ancient India, interspersed with incidental remarks on some Western dialecticians.

Nāgārjuna (c. 150 A.D.) has been held in high veneration as the most acute, penetrating and invincible dialectician of the Second Century of the Christian era in India. He is believed to be the author of *Mūla-Mādhyamiks Kārikās*, *Sūnyata Saptati*, *Vigrahavyāvartani* (*Refutation of Opposition*), *Vyāvahārasiddhi* and a few other works. It is said that Nāgārjuna did not put forward any philosophical view (dṛṣṭi) of his own but, being confronted with rival doctrines, exposed them all to a searching and incisive dialectical criticism revealing their “Sūnyatā” (“hollowness”). The word “Sūnyatā,” we are warned, does not connote any “view” of reality because it is maintained that the real is “Sūnya” in the sense that it is devoid of all empirical characterizations and that it transcends all conceptual attempts to grasp it. In another sense phenomena are “Sūnya” because they lack an *intrinsic nature* (svabhāva) of their own. They are “niḥsvabhāva” because they are essentially *relative* and dependent on one another. Different interpretations of Nāgārjuna’s Sūnyavāda have been given. The well-known Advaitic philosopher Śaṅkara dubbed his doctrine as unadulterated nihilism. Professor M. Hiriyanna regards Sūnyatā as the same as Nothing.<sup>1</sup> Dr. S. Radhakrishna is non-committal when he says, “To call it being is wrong, only concrete things are. To call it non-being is equally wrong. It is best to avoid all descriptions of it.”<sup>2</sup> Professor T.R.V. Murti<sup>3</sup> is the most enthusiastic and unequivocal interpreter of Sūnyatā as an *absolutistic* doctrine and not a nihilistic one.

<sup>1</sup> M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> S. Radhakrishna, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. I, pp. 663-6.

<sup>3</sup> T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1955.

In examining such a doctrine there are some initial difficulties because in ancient India philosophical doctrines were invariably bound up with religious ones. The Vedāntins like Śaṅkara and other regarded themselves as commentators on what are known as “revealed” scriptural truths. In the same manner, various schools of Buddhism such as Sarvāstivādins (realistic pluralism), Mādhyamikas (Śūnyavādins) or Vijñānavādins (the Idealists) always had to refer to what they thought to be the main teaching of the Master Gautama, the Buddha. This does not mean that they did not indulge in genuine philosophical discussions but only that their freedom of thought was not unlimited.<sup>4</sup> However, all agree that Buddha had taught the four Noble Truths but had parried all speculative questions by keeping a studied “silence” born out of wisdom. Questions, such as whether the world is eternal or not, or both, or neither; whether the world is finite (in space) or infinite or both, or neither; whether the Tathagāta (the Master) exists after death, or does not, or both, or neither; and whether the soul is identical with the body or different from it, were regarded as “avyākṛta” or the “inexpressibles.” According to the Abhidharmic interpretation Buddha (Tathāgata) had revolted against the Upanisadic doctrine of Reality as permanent and eternal known as Brahman or Ātman. In this repudiation he was guided by his insight (prajñā) that all misery (dūkha) is caused by attachment to things regarded as permanent. He “saw” in a moment of “bodhi” or insight that everything was impermanent, nay momentary. Existence was nothing but a series of independent, momentary, discrete particulars. And, secondly, he discovered that every existent was governed by the causal law “pratīyasamutpāda” or dependent origination. Thus the earlier realistic schools of Buddhism interpreted the Master’s doctrine as non-substantiality (“puḍgalanairātmya”) denying the reality of a permanent Ātman or Soul. They understood that Buddha asserted only a changing series of momentary elements (“dharma”), each arising out of the previous one, as it were, and yet not *connected* to it by any inner bond. The causal law is however pivotal to the entire teaching but such a doctrine of momentary unique particulars (svalakṣaṇas) coming into being in

<sup>4</sup> On this point see Dr. Daya Krishna’s “Three Myths about Indian Philosophy,” *Diogenes*, No. 55, Fall 1966.

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dependence upon the antecedent ones and giving rise to other particulars as consequents could not be but unstable. In the Prajñāpārmīta as well as in the works of Nāgārjuna the intellectual difficulties involved in such a doctrine of discrete particulars as well as in the rival doctrine of a permanent soul were realised giving rise to a “dialectical” denial of both. Nāgārjuna’s dialectic does not advance any view of its own, it only brings out the dialectical difficulties in characterizing the real in any way whatever. It makes use of the famous “four-cornered” negation adumbrated by Buddha in connection with the “avyākṛta” or the “inexpressibles.” The real is neither Sat (“is”), nor Āsat (“not-is”), nor both, nor neither. In short, as Professor Murti says, in the works of Nāgārjuna and in the Prajñāpārmīta “the one basic idea that is reiterated *ad nauseum* is that there is no change, no origination, no cessation, no coming in or going out; the real is neither one, nor many; neither ātman, nor anātman; it is as it is always. It is utterly devoid (“śūnya”) of these and other conceptual constructions; *it is transcendent to thought and can be realized only as non-dual knowledge—Prajñā or Intuition, which is the Absolute itself.*”<sup>5</sup>

According to this interpretation the doctrine of “pratītya-samutpāda” is not to be considered as the temporal sequence of independent, unique and particular entities (dharmas) but their essential *dependence* upon one another. In the Vigrahavyāvartani Nāgārjuna, while rebutting the charges of the opponent, gives a criterion of reality as that which has an *intrinsic nature* (svabhāva) of its own. He says, “A thing which is found to come into existence in dependence upon an antecedent fact must forfeit its claim to intrinsic reality... Now, Śūnyatā is *nothing else than the fact of this Dependent Origination.*”<sup>6</sup>

In Chandrakīrti’s (early 7th century A.D.) exposition of this dialectic we learn that all knowledge of the real through the usual categories is foredoomed to failure. “The absolutist does not believe in the ultimate validity of these sources of knowledge

<sup>5</sup> T.R.V. Murti, *op. cit.*, p. 86. The italics are mine.

<sup>6</sup> Satkari Mookerjee, ed., *The Nava-Nalanda Mahavihara Research Publication*, Patna, 1957, vol. I, p. 17. The italics are mine.

and their testimony, but concedes to them all the validity that is necessary for the theoretical and practical purposes... The ultimate truth can be realised by a suprarational organ... And the so-called instruments of knowledge find their validity only so far as they can operate upon knowable data. They are interrelated and interdependent both for their function and existence. *Things which are interdependent in their being cannot be considered to be self-existent. And what is not self-existent cannot be real.*<sup>7</sup>

It would appear from all this that the Mādhyamika dialectician is asserting that the Real or the Absolute cannot be comprehended in any manner because thought, functioning with its categories, is caught up in self-discrepant and conflicting formulations. His Absolute or Sūnyatā is nothing else than the intuitive realization (Prajñā) of the essential relativity of all phenomena. He subscribes to the criterion that that alone is real which is completely independent self-existent—possessing a nature of its own. Does it mean that through a dialectical criticism he is asserting a Noumenal Reality? If so, in what significant way does the doctrine differ from that of Śankara's Absolute (based on Upanisadic teachings) as an eternal Being (Brahman or Ātman)—which also is essentially uncharacterizable? On this interpretation the entire Buddhist revolt would appear pointless. If, on the contrary, the Mādhyamika denies that such is the case, does it mean that his philosophy is pure nihilism (“no-reality” doctrine)? Moreover, it is pertinent to ask: how does the Mādhyamika get its criterion of the real as totally independent absolute, unrelated and unconditioned? Does it not amount to a mere verbalism to say that the Sūnya or Absolute is the Absolute and nothing further can be said about it. Nobody would controvert this tautological statement. After all, to consider the real as completely unrelated and unconditioned is to make room for caprice and to invite a kind of totalitarianism in philosophy which we rightly condemn in the so-called “phenomenal” world. I would make an even stronger assertion that such an unconditioned and unrelated Absolute is purely *subjective* because it is the outcome of the absolutist's subjective will—unrelated to anything whatsoever. In a very significant manner only the related is real and objective. It may be mentioned however

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 56-7. The italics are mine.

that it is a controversial point whether the Buddhistic causal law refers to the essential dependence of things on one another for their *temporal existence* or for their *essential nature* (svabhāva) or both.

There might be a way out of this impasse if we interpret Nāgārjuna's Sūnyatā or Absolute to imply that the very *realisation*, through Prajñā (intellectual intuition), of the *essential relativity* of phenomena is *transcendence* itself without there being any transcendent Reality. Dialectical awareness of such Sūnyatā or mutual dependence of things *is* transcendence. Thus aware a person attains an "absolute" point of view, as it were. If so, it is an individual attainment of a kind of insight—a wisdom—a way of understanding the phenomenal things in their proper perspective. Such an *understanding* would act as a great corrective to partial and exaggerated claims of any aspect of the phenomenal world. This would put all our human concerns and pursuits in proper focus. But in that case there will be no need to deny the phenomenal world its reality unless one were precommitted to a *subjective* criterion of the real as something absolutely independent or self-existent. One does not encounter such an unconditioned self-existent reality in one's experience anywhere.

Professor T.R.V. Murti makes a brave attempt to show that Sūnyatā is not nihilism. He says, "In fact, the Mādhyamika does not deny the real... When the entire conceptual activity of Reason is dissolved by criticism, there is Prajñāpāramitā."<sup>8</sup> Again, "Non-dual Knowledge (Prajñā) is *contentless* Intuition... The mind as it is freed of impediments (āvarṇas) is perfectly diaphanous, transparent. In that state it is non-distinct from the real, and a description of the one is thus a description of the other. *Intuition is the Absolute*."<sup>9</sup> Any wholesale denial of the phenomenal order on grounds of "dialectical" criticism is bound to appear unconvincing and in the normal course of things should lead one to an examination of one's own criterion of reality and of experience. It is interesting to note that both in the Eastern as well as the Western philosophical traditions the nature and the function of the "dialectic" has depended on one's view of reality and expe-

<sup>8</sup> T.R.V. Murti, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 219-20. Italics mine.

rience. Plato's view of the dialectic is essentially related to his view of experience, knowledge and reality. He, as is well-known, accepted the Parmenidean view of Reality as eternal and timeless and a Heraclitean view of sense-experience as mere flux or change. If this is so, then dialectic for Plato is a *process*, at once intellectual and imaginative, of ascending from shifting sense-experiences, which constitute mere opinion, to eternal and timeless realities which comprise the realm of knowledge proper. Plato, artist-philosopher as he was, employed the dramatic dialectical method of pursuing truth, for he believed that truth could not be attained in a ready-made manner but was to be *arrived at* by the dramatic-creative process of inquiry through the balancing of rival opinions. And since he was committed to the view of reality as timeless eternal Forms he conceived his "dialectic" both (i) as a disciplined *technique* of establishing definitions through question and answer; examining rival hypotheses in the light of their assumptions and consequences, and resolving conflicting intellectual formulations, as well as (ii) an *imaginative vision* (Noesis), an intellectual intuition of the Intelligible Ideas and finally the Idea of the Good as the ground of being and unity. Not only sense-experience but even discursive reason (Dianoia) is incapable of grasping the real and that is why Plato has made an effective use of myth and metaphor to communicate the truth in a dramatic, imaginative manner. Dialectic, for him, is knowledge itself in its highest form. Thus Plato's view of dialectical knowledge is influenced by the Parmenidean theory of reality as eternal Being, his total repudiation of change associated with sense-experience as *mere* appearance and lastly a "spectator-theory" of knowledge in its highest form. His version of knowledge of ultimate Ideas (the "archai") implies that knowledge is a kind of "seeing"—a contemplative vision of an unchanging and timeless realm of Forms. The Mādhyamika dialectic in its technique bears a close resemblance not to the Platonic or Hegelian variety but to the Kantian and Bradleyan one. Just as Kant was confronted by the Humean sceptical thesis that, "all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences"<sup>10</sup> so also the Mādhyamika dialectician had to cope

<sup>10</sup> Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Selby-Bigg's Ed., Appendix, pp. 635-6.

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with the Ābhidharmic view of reality as a succession of unique and distinct particulars (svalakṣaṇas). But whereas Nāgārjuna performed the admirable task of pointing out that such a succession of discrete and independent particulars could not be articulated through intellectual categories including that of causality which was the pivot of the Buddhistic system, Kant, the critical philosopher par excellence, uncritically accepted the Humean view of experience and yet felt the need to justify Newtonian Science (which could not be questioned either). Kant's view of Transcendental Dialectic is an offspring of these two acceptances. If sense-experience gives us only discrete particulars and yet if Newtonian Science is valid, there must be a way of justifying the latter. He therefore "discovered" that all principles of order, relation and organization were introduced into the chaotic sense-particulars by the "mind" in the form of the categories of the understanding. It appears that Kant was trying to do the magician's trick of producing these categories from the subjective mind. Were it not for the fact that he actually got them from Aristotle's Table of Judgments, his Transcendental deduction of the Categories would appear truly mythological. Kant, instead of critically examining Hume's theory of experience, lent his massive support, with the usual "profundity" of the German mind, to Humean scepticism because these categories had no application beyond experience, and any attempt to use them trans-empirically gave rise to Transcendental illusion. Hence theoretical Reason was declared incompetent to grasp the "thing-in-itself" and answer ultimate "metaphysical" questions. The Mādhyamika dialectician did not try to justify any view of experience or knowledge but criticised them all in the Bradleyan fashion by pointing out that reason, in its attempts to apply the rational categories of substance and attributes, cause and effect, self and not-self, subject and object, change and permanence, one and many etc., to the real, inevitably got into dialectical difficulties and thus gave us appearance and not reality. But there are significant differences between the two. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* is an excellent study in the kind of dialectic which arises when two seemingly opposite criteria for the real are accepted. Bradley accepted from Hegel the *rationalistic* criterion that the real must be intelligible through reason and must be an all-inclusive har-



monious whole. Such a totality could never be anything except the Absolute. And yet Bradley realised, in contradistinction to Hegel, that the real must also be *akin* to our *experience*. The only unity we humans experience is the unity of *felt* experience in its immediacy. Therefore, for Bradley, the Real must be Absolute Experience—at once intelligible and immediately felt. How could this be possible? There is a constant tension between these two criteria in his system and Bradley grapples with it with great earnestness. And yet a sustained dialectical criticism of all the categories of articulating experience convinces him that *thought* is essentially relational. The Mādhyamika dialectician arrives at a similar conclusion on the basis of a single criterion of the real as that which has a nature of its own but which can never be consistently formulated in a rational, intelligible manner. The essence of Bradley's dialectic is that, "Relation presupposes quality, and quality relation. Each can be something neither together with nor apart from the other; and the vicious circle in which they turn is not the truth about reality."<sup>11</sup>

With a Hegelian background Bradley, however, felt that in the Absolute these apparent contradictions and dissonances are "somehow" transmuted, transcended and retained to enrich the harmony of the whole. It is important to note here that both Bradley and Nāgārjuna have shared a common concern. Bradley realised that the real must possess the *immediacy* of experience—which thought attempted to "grasp" unsuccessfully. And Nāgārjuna felt that the real must have a nature of its own (*svabhāva*)—an *immediacy* which again thought could not "grasp" without falling into insoluble dialectical contradictions. The difference is that whereas Bradley spoke the language of experience, Nāgārjuna spoke the language of being in mentioning the real. And yet both committed the egregious error of failing to realize that the function of thought or reason is to *articulate* experience or the real and no to "digest" it in a mystical manner. To *have* an experience or to experience the real in its felt unity is different from understanding it with the help of Categories. They were both wrong in thinking that the categories of thought are supplied by the "mind" to bear on the real or on experience in an

<sup>11</sup> Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 21.

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*external* fashion. Truly speaking, categories are *distinctions* which thought makes *within* experience which is primarily “had” in an inclusive unity. To think of “mind” or “mental categories” as something external to the real experienced is misleading. Externality can only be a relation between physical objects and not between a “mind” and physical objects. Obviously there is a confusion of categories in such a view.

Indian Absolutistic systems have tended to identify all “real” experience with ultimate intuition and the latter with absolute knowledge. This assumes a theory of knowledge as identification of the knower and the known, of subject and object, in pure ineffable intuition. Silence—perfect mum—is the only attitude consistent with such a doctrine. However, the phenomenal world was granted by the Mādhyamika, though grudgingly, some kind of reality known as Samvṛtti (conventional truth). It is essentially relative, it *covers* up the real nature of things, and is of pragmatic validity only. The ultimate truth (Tattva) is regarded as transcendental, unconditioned and absolute (“nirvikalpa” and “nisrapanca”). But once the doctrine of double truth is acknowledged on whatever grounds without there being any *relation* possible between them, there is a likelihood of the mind being troubled not only on theoretical grounds but more so on practical grounds. This has a tendency to leave the “phenomenal” world without any critical and rational control and guidance. In the last verse of the Vīgrahavyāvartani we learn that, “All activities and interests will remain in a secure position for a person, who believes in the ultimate truth of Śūnyata, as expounded in this work. Nothing will be sage and secure for the man who does not subscribe to Śūnyata as the final estimate of truth.”<sup>12</sup>

Certainly Śūnyata may give one wisdom born out of withdrawal from the rough and tumble of the “phenomenal” world and inculcate a spirit of resignation. In life, often a temporary withdrawal and even an attitude of detachment from immediate concerns may be needed but not as a prelude to total resignation but only as means of summoning up inner resources to participate in the wise management and direction of social and personal affairs.

The question remains: can we have a theory of experience

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

and dialectic which will take care of all the aspects of our varied experience and will adequately evaluate the role of dialectic in the critical evaluation and guidance of it? It may be remembered that the word "dialectic" is derived from the original Greek "dialego" which means "to discourse." Discourse presupposes something to talk about. *That* which is talked about, which is articulated in language with the help of symbols is called experience. Experience is the basic fact, the given, the datum. Though we have used the singular form, we find that there are various types of experience such as sense-experience, scientific experience, historical experience, artistic experience, moral experience, the experience of personal encounter in intimate love and friendship, and religious experience. All these forms of experience are not passive ways of receiving discrete particulars (Hume and Buddhists notwithstanding) nor are they merely subjective (pure feeling). All experience is dynamic and transactional (not disconnected). The person is *involved* and *engaged* in an active adventure—an encounter having a unique pervasive quality of its own. When we articulate that experience, when we talk about it in human discourse we use categories and symbols *adequate* to type of experience "had". There is, therefore, no *fixed* set of categories somehow contributed by the "mind" from its subjective depths in a mysterious manner as Kant imagined. Categories and symbols are evolved in human interaction to meet the needs of an ever-growing experience with its diversity, richness and variety. There is no need to draw categories only from the cognitive field as they are involved in sense-experience or scientific experience. Experience of friendship, artistic experience and religious experience will have their own symbols and categories to articulate them and render them intelligible. All dialectical distinctions of subject and object, one and many, identity and difference, change and permanence, form and substance (in the experience of a work of art) are discriminations *within* experience and not something which an aloof "Mind" brings to bear on an otherwise disjointed, chaotic succession of particulars. What is called "reason" is not a mysterious faculty residing somewhere in the innermost recesses of "Mind" but it is a name for the capacity of man to articulate his experiences with the help of an imaginative use of symbols. Ernst Cassirer has rightly said that

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man must be defined as a symbol-making and symbol-using animal. Man lives, in a most real sense, in a symbolic world of science, art, language, myth and religion. The world of symbols adds a new dimension to human existence which is capable of indefinite extension. But once these symbolic worlds come into existence they assume a kind of independence, an autonomy which is easily misunderstood as constituted by mysterious categories having their source in a subjective "Mind". But however flexible, inventive and imaginative our symbols may be, they are no substitute for the vivid and the dynamic feeling of a concrete experience. Hence all symbolic articulations are to be tested at the bar of infinitely growing experiences. Once experience and reason (with its dialectical distinctions of categories) are understood in this active and organic interplay, the question regarding the source of knowledge can be easily answered. Knowledge need to be confined to merely abstract conceptual one. Nor should it be supposed that Reason (with a capital R) with its subjective categories somehow organizes the confused mass of sense-particulars. These various forms of experience are at the same time various forms of knowledge when they are articulated and formulated in symbolic categories adequate to their particular quality. Experiences as *expressed* in language of symbols constitute various kinds of knowledge. All such forms of knowledge involve dialectical discriminations or polar formulations. In "knowing" man is actively engaged, he discriminates as well as unifies through *insight* the discriminated elements and he feels that unity in a unique manner. Such a knowledge is not merely verbal but modifies his whole outlook, behavior, demeanor and mode of responding to the world of nature and society. A man who is perpetually growing, who is ever sensitive to the various types of experience encountered, who has an "existential knowledge" rather than a verbal one, will organize these various strands of knowledge in a characteristic unity having the flavor of his mature personality. Such a unity of outlook will be a matter of *dialectical* interplay between various experiences. Knowledge is not a body of dead propositions frozen in ice-cold archives but a living personal acquisition through active and concrete experience. A man who has merely scientific or mathematical knowledge and is innocent of the rich world of esthetic experience would be

blind to that aspect of reality which can be experienced or “known” through feeling and imagination only. Sensitive and imaginative feeling is capable of revealing a dimension of reality which a mere training in intellectual and scientific pursuits can never give. In the same manner a person who has never undergone a genuinely religious experience, who has never felt the “presence” of an encompassing reality, who has never experienced the mystery of existence or never felt lonely in the midst of an active worldly life, who has never heard the call of transcendence—will, to that extent, remain impoverished in experience and knowledge. How these various forms of experience and knowledge are to be unified in each person is a matter of individual opportunity, ingenuity and capacity. Here culture plays an important part. Human beings may experience a dialectical unity by “sharing” common experiences expressed in articulated symbolic systems, by participating in an active “give-and-take”—a kind of free dialogue in which each is at once a teacher and a learner. Such a unity is a matter of living, active, social experience. It is not dead uniformity but a living unity-diversity. Experience and dialectic (in the sense of symbolic articulations) are not in irreconcilable conflict but are in a constant dialectical interplay mutually influencing each other—resulting in the continuous growth of individuals. The forms of discourse do not falsify the real encountered in experience because they are patterned after the “intelligible structure” of the world. There is no irreducible conflict between the various formulations in language and the experienced aspects of the real. All seeming “paradoxes” arise because the dialectical distinctions in discourse are distorted and misconceived. It is wrongly supposed that they can be a substitute for the living unity of felt experience. A few illustrations will help to bring out this point.

Take the polarity of appearance and reality. The distinction between appearance and reality falls *within* experience. What is “false” experience can be corrected by better informed, reflective and critical experience. Experience as it is “had” cannot be “unreal” in itself. When we say, for example, that our experience of the rope as snake is a “false” experience we do not mean to deny the experience as such but we call it an experience of an “unreal” snake in the light of further and better informed

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experience. In other words “real” and “unreal” are adjectival terms raising the questions of “real what” or “unreal what.” To raise these terms “real” and “unreal” to the level of substantives and to write them as Reality and Appearance in capital letters is to hypostatize adjectival *distinctions* legitimate only in human discourse.<sup>13</sup> Let us consider another example from the field of esthetics—namely the distinction between *form* and *substance* in a work of art. Nietzsche conceived a total opposition between Apollonian and Dionysian art. But if, in a work of art—a painting, a symphony or a dramatic work—form is taken to be something which the “mind” contributes to a ready-made subject-matter, there will be no possible way of reconciling the “dialectical” opposition between form and matter. Plato grappled with it in the *Parmenides* unsuccessfully. The artist, however, does not bring out forms from the “mind” as the conjurer brings out rabbits from his hat. In creating a work of art he has to deal with natural subject-matter which is *transformed* into the *substance* of a work of art as the creative artist molds the material through imaginative vision to give it a significant form. Thus “substance” and “form” are legitimate distinctions in any formulation of an esthetic experience—which, as it is “enjoyed,” is a whole with a unique quality of its own. The “substance” of a poem is the poem itself as “trans-formed” by the poet’s vision. It should not be forgotten that all adequate *articulation* in any field of experience is a creative process which tests the ingenuity, the felicity and the inventiveness of the person involved. It is a common experience that often we have no words, no discursive symbols to articulate those shades and nuances of feeling which are really ineffable. That is why the so-called creative arts exploit non-discursive symbols to express such ineffable experiences. The dialectical difficulties involved in articulating our experience of change and time are well-known. Zeno’s arguments are a standing challenge to any adequate and “intelligible” formulation of our experience of time. And yet in the light of our actual experience of time as *passage* Zeno’s arguments sound so unconvincing—though very tempting. All

<sup>13</sup> For further elaboration of this point see the author’s “The Persistent Problem of Appearance and Reality. A Reappraisal,” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Amalner (India), April 1965.

sentient experience is *directly* of *transience*, *passage* or *duration* (as Bergson called it). The attempt to formulate it in language is to misrepresent its *felt* nature. It is because of the failure of discursive symbolism to articulate our most intimate and significant experience, that the non-discursive symbolism of pure music has been invented to represent our sense of temporal passage experienced in the form of felt tensions and resolutions—the flow and the speed, the excitement and the calm, the urgency and expectancy of a “lived” time. It would not be out of place here to mention that Hume’s attack on the *connection* between cause and effect and Nāgārjuna’s attack on the Ābhidharmic notion of “*pratītyasamutpāda*” (dependent origination) show how a discursive formulation of our experience of change or passage gives rise to “dialectical” difficulties. Once we accept with Hume and the early Buddhists that experience gives us nothing but discrete and unrelated particulars there will be *no* way of discovering any “causal link” between what we have called “cause” and “effect.” The only way out of this “dialectical” impasse is to assert, against Hume, that *causation* is not to be *inferred* from our supposedly independent and discrete experiences of two events (called “cause” and “effect”) but that it is *perceived* or *experienced* as *continuous change or passage*. When such a change or passage is experienced under almost experimental conditions we are justified in using the categories of cause and effect to articulate that experience. For example, a child throws a stone at the glass window-pane and the latter breaks. Here what is actually experienced is a continuous *process* of change in our experience, namely that of the “window-pane-breaking.” We do not experience first the striking of the stone against the window-pane and then the breaking of it as *two* separate disjointed events. Only when this experience of continuous change is articulated in discursive symbolism we say that one called the “cause” (stone striking against the window-pane) produces the “effect” (the breaking of it). But such a formulation is the very condition of articulating our experience and as we have said, puzzles arise when the role of linguistic formulation of *felt experience* is misconceived.

To conclude, “dialectic” and “experience” if properly understood are not in irreducible conflict. In the sense in which we have used them there is a continuous give-and-take, a mutual

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interplay between any experience *directly* “had” and its articulation whether discursive or non-discursive. The final unifying category in such a “dialectical” growth is certainly *wisdom*—an attainment which does not repudiate and condemn any aspect of the experienced world as unreal and mere appearance, but which recognises each as partial in itself and as contributing to the harmony of the whole personality. Surely in that sense we can agree with Socrates when he says in the *Republic* that “the nature of knowledge can go no further.”