



WHO ARE YOU?

Introduction to the First Part

Who are you?

This is the question of questions.

Delphoi was arguably the most sacred religious site in Ancient Greece.

Delphoi's critical significance is revealed by the fact that it was considered by Ancient Greeks to be the centre (navel, to be more accurate) of the Cosmos, that is, of the World.

The sanctuary at Delphoi was dedicated to one of the most important Gods of the Ancient Greek Pantheon, Apollo.

In ancient Greek Mythology, Apollo is the god associated with sunlight, logic, music and many other such concepts of high significance.

Moreover, Apollo is symbolising or representing the emergence of Order out of the Universe's primordial Chaos, and the former's eventual dominance over the latter.

Coming back to Delphoi, it was also the seat of Pythia, the most famous oracle of the ancient, mythological as well as historical, world, who was consulted on virtually all important decisions taken at those times/«times»¹.

According to the Greek traveller, geographer and writer, Pausanias, when someone was entering the pronaos (forecourt) of the Temple of Apollo at Delphoi, they could observe three maxims² inscribed in it, the most famous of which was *γνώθι σεαυτόν*; that is: *know thyself*³.

When one comes across the phrase *know thyself*, its validity and significance appear to be evident, unquestionable, self-explanatory.

However, when one reflects a bit further onto these two simple words, one realises that another, not that simple, question arises: how should one go about in order to attain knowledge of oneself?

Who am I?

What do you need to do in order to answer this fundamental question that you pose to yourself?

Answering this (meta-) question constitutes the focus point of the first part of this book.

¹ The sciences of ethnology, anthropology and history confirm the knowledge empirically known to human beings since the dawn of prehistory (the latter being marked by the first emergence of human consciousness): any proper mythology's realm is by definition timeless

² A maxim is a concise, objective or subjective, expression of a fundamental moral rule or principle [Source: Wikipedia article [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxim_\(philosophy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxim_(philosophy))]

³ The other two maxims inscribed in the same pronaos were: 1) *μηδέν ἄγαν*, that is: *nothing to excess*; and 2) *εγγύα παρά δ' ἄτα*, that is: *surety brings ruin* [Source: Wikipedia article https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphic_maxims]

We will see that answering it leads to the formulation of a second, even more important, one.

CLARIFICATION ON THE PRACTICAL EXERCISES

Each of the three parts this book consists of contains six chapters.

At the end of each one of the 18, overall, chapters there is a practical exercise for the reader who wishes to test and apply on themselves the theoretical framework outlined in the respective chapter.

While the reader is not discouraged to read the entire book at the pace of their convenience (even in one go, if they wish to do so), it is nonetheless strongly recommended that they read no more than one chapter and do no more than one accompanying practical exercise per day.

In fact, the writer's suggestion is that the reader studies the chapters and does the exercises accompanying them in a period of eighteen consecutive days⁴.

It is recommended that the reader devotes not less than 20 minutes and not more than 40 minutes per practical exercise.

During each one of these exercises, the reader should make sure that they will not be interrupted until the exercise is concluded.

Other than a dedicated journal and a functional pen, no procurement or securing of further resources is needed.

Finally, no special preparation is required prior to embarking on this 18-day cycle; the willingness and commitment to engage and complete each and every exercise in line with the guidance provided in the respective chapter of the book suffices.

⁴ Two even more nuanced suggestions for the reader who is interested in carrying out the practical exercises of this book would be that they: a) start on a Wednesday in order to complete the full exercise cycle on a Saturday two and a half weeks later; and b) that they do their daily exercise either early in the morning, after they wake up, or late at night, before going to sleep

FIRST PART: INVESTIGATION

The lord whose is the oracle at Delphoi neither utters nor hides his meaning, but shows it by a sign»⁵



⁵ Heraclitus, Fragments of Heraclitus, Fragment 93, Chapter 3, Early Greek Philosophy, John Burnet, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1920

⁶ Ancient vase, depicting Odysseus on the raft after his departure from Calypso's island to, 4th c. BC Boetian black-figure pottery wine cup found at Thebes, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, United Kingdom

1A: Differentiation

The way up and the way down are one and the same»⁷



One of the most popular myths of ancient Greek Mythology has as one of its key protagonists Menelaus, the King of Sparta and legitimate husband of Helen, whose (Helen's, that is) abduction by Paris of Troy triggered the 10-year Trojan War.

Yet, one of the relatively less known, spin-off, myths of the Trojan War has the same Menelaus stranded on the mythical island Pharos, near Egypt and off the costs of the Nile Delta, together with his retrieved (almost literally, trophy) wife, pursuant to the end of the war and in the context of their 7-year quest of returning to Menelaus's home town/kingdom of Sparta.

This island happens to be the dwelling place of the primordial god Proteus⁹, the prophetic old man of the sea and shepherd of the sea's flocks¹⁰.

Proteus knows all things—past, present, and future—but dislikes divulging any such knowledge; therefore those who wish to consult him must first surprise and bind him during his noonday slumber.

Naturally, even if one is successful in catching Proteus when his guard is down, they have to prevent the sea-god's constant shape-shifting attempts at escaping (given that Proteus can assume virtually any animate or inanimate form).

⁷ Heraclitus, *Fragments of Heraclitus*, Fragment 60, Chapter 3, *Early Greek Philosophy*, John Burnet, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1920

⁸ Emblem showing Menelaus wrestling with the old man of the sea, Proteus in order for him to find his way back home, as told to Telemachus in Book IV [*Παψωδία Δ*] of the *Odyssey*, 2 January 1574, Bonasone, Giulio, [Source: Achillis Bocchii Bonon. *Symbolicarum quaestionum, de vniuerso genere, quas serio ludebat, libri quinque* <https://archive.org/stream/achillisbocchiiib00boc#page/130/mode/1up>]

⁹ According to an esoteric tradition, that is not broadly known, Proteus's number is 9 (cf. the mathematical features and qualities of number nine).

¹⁰ Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Proteus-Greek-mythology>

Nevertheless, if Proteus's captor holds him steadfastly, not loosening their grip on him for a split second, they will eventually force the god to at last return to his proper shape and, defeated, provide the answer to the question posed to him.

Menelaus has been warned about how to handle (both literally and metaphorically) Proteus ahead of meeting him.

Thus, he achieves in receiving the crucial knowledge he needs for his future endeavours and fate; knowledge, which in his case reach all the way to his afterlife.

Unsurprisingly, when considering the foretold myth, the English adjective *protean* means something that is easily assuming different forms or characters or something which is extremely variable.

In Greek, however, the root of the word *protean* is the same as for a number of words with meanings such as: *first, primal, primordial*.

In this vein, this book's definition of protean is: *The initial undifferentiated state of the world, containing everything in one non-local, timeless and infinitesimal place.*

The Beginning, the Origin, the Seed that can see everything but cannot be seen by (just) anyone.

Difference is the primary generator of meaning in this World.

One is inconceivable without Two.

Two is inconceivable without One.

Everything is inconceivable without Nothing; and vice-versa.

The identity of a thing is derived by what this thing is not and another thing is – or, better, by what every other thing is.

Of course, difference is also inconceivable without indifference; the paradox here being that the latter is, by definition, hermetically inconceivable.

This constitutes the crucial step leading one from the indescribable, imperceptible and in principle unknowable Origin of the World into the World itself.

In other words, emerging from this primal, ineffable Indifference and getting to terms with the subsequent separation from it constitutes the very first, spontaneous and mysterious, act of a human being's existence.

At the time of their birth, the newly born human entity realises their separation from the unknown and inaccessible Origin of Everything, and by violently reacting to this separation they affirm and establish both their newfound firm position as well as their unfolding trajectory (also known as Being and Becoming) in their world.

If one is cautious enough, one will notice that the first, foremost and fundamental separation (hereafter, differentiation), which kicks off a human being's life, is subsequently followed by a second one:

Who I am and (or against) what I do.

Being and Becoming.

What I am becoming is reflected in my actions towards my (for now, external) world and is crystallised in the outcome my actions bear on it.

Who I am, though, cannot be directly reflected anywhere in the first place.

It would be a paradox; like a mirror mirroring itself or an eye directly seeing itself, without, obviously, the help of a mirror.

To begin my investigation of who I am, then, I must go through a third and crucial differentiation.

I must detach myself from my Being and observe it from a distance.

One can also observe that all of these three primordial differentiations transpire automatically.

However, the human being does not automatically and consciously become aware of them.

In order to achieve this awareness the human being must engage into an introspective and counterintuitive approach, whereby instead of the subconscious knowledge becoming conscious, as per what one would by default expect, it is rather that the conscious self submerges deeply into their unconscious counterpart, in order for them to (hopefully) resurface enhanced, reinforced, even (and not so) metaphorically reborn.

For this to effectively take place, though, the human being has to go through an, unavoidable, process of growing, which is first and foremost attained through both pain and fulfilment.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE OF CHAPTER 1A

Find a comfortable place with an ideal temperature for your body and sit down.

Close your eyes and take three to seven slow and deep breaths.

Then begin a mental countdown, starting from 50 (fifty).

The countdown should ideally have a steady pace and be neither too quick nor too slow.

When you feel sufficiently relaxed and detached from the sensory stimuli of the outside world, gently stop the countdown, ideally taking a mental note of the number at which you stopped [in the unlikely event you reach 0 (zero) and you still don't feel relaxed, just start again the countdown from 50, and repeat as above until you reach your optimal state of relaxation].

Try then to remember your birth.

As it is rather improbable that you do in fact manage to remember it, you can very well imagine it, making sure you don't strain yourself too much in the process.

First, imagine yourself becoming merged with the newly born baby you were at that time.

What do you see?

Take note of the following features of the first three objects you will observe: their shape, their colour and their texture (how would they feel if you could touch them?).

What do you hear?

Take note of the sounds or voices you will hear; in the latter case, note if you can identify who is speaking and what they are saying.

Now imagine as if you unmerge from your newly born baby self and you levitate a bit until you assume an elevated vantage point (say, from the ceiling of the room where this whole scene is unfolding), observing everything from this angle.

As you observe this scene, imagine that you can see not only your baby self's external form, but you can also take a peek at their soul.

What are the key features you observe on the earliest version of yourself?

What was it there at that time that still remains a part of you?

Is there something that strikes you as odd, something that appears to be a key characteristic of yourself and which you notice only now?

If there is indeed something like that, why had you never become aware of it before?

Next, gently push yourself up and away from this scene.

As you levitate higher and higher, imagine you are surrounded by nothing but pure light.

If you remember at which number you had stopped your mental countdown earlier on resume counting from this number all the way up to 50; otherwise start from 0.

When you reach 50, open your eyes.

Write in your journal everything you can recollect from the experience you've just had.

1B: Integration

*Every beast is driven to pasture with blows*¹¹



12

Hercules (or Heracles) at the crossroads, also known as the choice of Heracles and the judgement of Heracles, is an ancient Greek parable attributed to Prodicus¹³, which became known from Xenophon.

In his *Memorabilia* [2.1.21-34], Xenophon has Socrates telling the story of how the female personifications of Vice and Virtue visit the young hero Heracles while he is contemplating his future, and offer him a choice between an easy, indulgent but also rather inglorious life (Vice) or a tough, painful but ultimately glorious life (Virtue).

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Heracles, who is undoubtedly the primary expression of the archetypal hero in ancient Greek Mythology, elects the path of Virtue.

A little reflection on the human condition and experience will reveal that every human being find themselves at the same crossroads as Heracles as soon as they become aware of themselves (cf. chapter 1A) and begin foraging outside the protective perimeter of their home or family.

And it would not be inaccurate to claim that one finds oneself at the same crossroads not just once, but time and again throughout one's life (of course, some of these occasions, and the associated choices made, are certainly more important than others).

It should also be clear that both Virtue and Vice are relentlessly persistent and pushy (albeit in their own, different, ways) towards human beings, refusing to take no for an answer.

¹¹ Heraclitus, *Fragments of Heraclitus*, Fragment 11, Chapter 3, *Early Greek Philosophy*, John Burnet, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1920

¹² Albrecht Dürer's «Hercules at the Crossroads» (1498), British Museum, London, United Kingdom

¹³ Greek philosopher and part of the first generation of Sophists (c. 465 BC – c. 395 BC)

Even when chosen, Virtue is constantly seeking for affirmation and reaffirmation and wants to be the guiding force in a human being's life through the path of ever-increasing, well, virtue.

Meaning, of course: ever-increasing pain and (but!) even more rapidly increasing fulfilment.

But even when not chosen, Virtue will keep coming back, determinedly appealing to a human being's inherent goodness and willingness to contribute to their world.

Typical come-back stratagems of Virtue in the latter case are: the «wake-up call», the «mountain of guilt» and/or the «great and/or last opportunity to repent/redeem oneself».

Whenever she is chosen by a human being, Vice also seeks to ensure that she will remain the guiding force of their life, betting on the overwhelming power of the default inertia - also known as resistance to change - which is embedded in all human minds without a single exception.

In this respect, Vice has a powerful advantage over Virtue: contrary to the latter, she offers to the human being immediate and easy gratification, with the initial price to be paid being minimal to negligible to, even, non-existent.

In this way she easily overcomes the mind's resistance to change, as what she offers is directly available and unquestionably pleasant; thereafter, once the human being has chosen in her favour, she knows inertia will naturally work for her.

And Vice will need inertia's heavy helping hand along the way, given that every time Vice is chosen gratification plummets while the price to be paid keeps on augmenting.

To the point where there's practically only a very hefty price to be paid left by the human being, with no gratification in return whatsoever.

At that point, Vice can only hope the human being is too exhausted and broken to be able to react and dismiss her.

There is, though, always the possibility of choosing another way (that is, the way of Virtue); therefore, Vice's last, desperate, resort is to have the human being under her effect believe that it is too late for them, meaning that there is in fact no other way left than her way.

On the contrary, Virtue is crystal-clear about the fact that choosing her results in the obligation for the human being to pay upfront the occasional price with an unavoidable delay of the associated fulfilment or gratification.

However, what she promises – and Virtue always delivers what she promises – is that the benefit (the «return on investment») for the human being choosing her can, and will, increase and even get better as time goes by.

Up to the point where for (what is at least perceived by this stage as) a minimal additional price, the human being receives in return non-proportionate, unprecedented, wondrous fulfilment.

It is thus clear that walking the path of Virtue is reversely proportionate to walking the path of Vice.

In sum:

Vice leads to the path of initially high fulfilment and very low pain, but also of exponentially increasing pain and exponentially decreasing fulfilment.

While Virtue leads to the path of initially low fulfilment and considerable pain, but also of exponentially decreasing pain and exponentially increasing fulfilment.

And now, finally coming to what is of particular interest to us here:

Following the path of Virtue is not only what accelerates the journey of self-discovery (that begins, as we saw in the previous chapter, with the three fundamental differentiations in the first stage of a human being's life), but is in fact the only path that enables it.

On the other hand, following the path of Vice merely obstructs and prevents a human being from getting to know themselves.

This is because seeking gratification while avoiding hassle and pain at all costs keeps a human being stagnant in their default state of conscious self-unawareness.

And it is crucial to stress and highlight in all ways possible that at this initial stage of the self-awareness journey what it is exactly that a human being is doing and/or which are the specific circumstances that surround them is of secondary importance to completely irrelevant.

What matters is that one follows the path of Virtue; in whatever one does, and wherever one finds oneself.

It is only through the uphill battle of pain and fulfilment along the path of Virtue that a human being grows.

Growing in this respect means: understanding oneself better and deeper through the overcoming of ever higher and more difficult obstacles and the enjoyment of the ever more enticing and sophisticated fruits offered to one as a result of their efforts.

And by understanding better who they are a human being is eventually becoming integrated with who they truly are.

This is the unmistakable moment when a human being has grown so much as to touch their inner core for the first time.

And touching one's inner core results in integrating with it; the process is practically automatic as of this point.

When one becomes integrated with one's core, one knows not just what they want to do.

They know what they have to do.

And it is not by chance that Virtue is such a closely interrelated concept to Integrity, one somewhat and paradoxically presupposing the other in a sort of «chicken and egg» paradigm.

Given that only a human being of integrity, being whole, composed and laser-focused, can integrate with who they truly are.

Integration, of course, with the core of one's true self is not equivalent to the knowledge of one's true self.

Because, as we will see in the following chapters, such integration does not automatically lead to the removal of elements within a human being's psychological-mental-physical complex that are foreign and/or adverse to who they really are (= meant to be).

PRACTICAL EXERCISE OF CHAPTER 1B

Start by reading the entry in your journal that corresponds to the practical exercise of chapter 1A.

Now take 5-7 minutes to reflect and write down the three to five crucial moments up to now in your life whereby you stood at the same crossroads Heracles did, and you eventually chose the path of Vice instead of Virtue.

What prompted you to do so?

What prevented you from electing the path of Virtue?

What were the consequences of your choice for Vice over Virtue in these cases?

Next, take 5-7 minutes to reflect and foresee, to the best of your ability, three to five crucial «Heracles's crossroads» moments that life will present you with in the next 6 to 18 months.

What would be the dilemmas that you will be facing in each of these crossroads?

What would the consequences be for you if you chose the path of Vice?

What commitments are you willing to take and which fail-safe mechanisms are you willing to put in place to guarantee that you will eventually choose the path of Virtue?

Finally, write down the following statement in big, bold letters: «I WILL ALWAYS DO THE RIGHT THING FOR ME AND FOR MY WORLD».

Contemplate for 5 to 7 minutes on what this statement means for you, write this meaning down and wrap up.

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