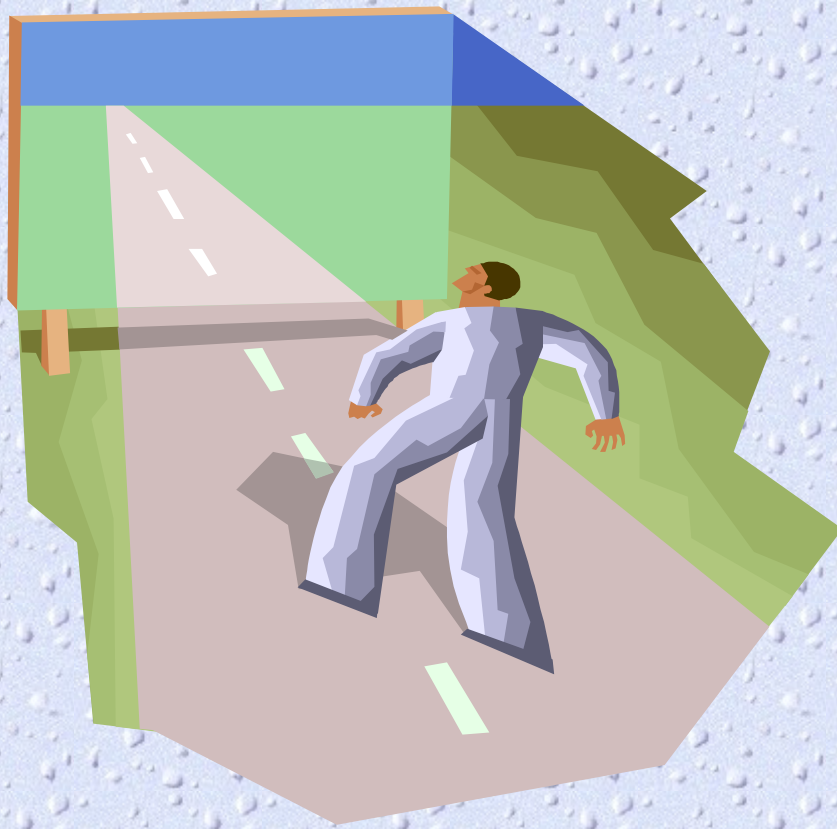


THE ILLUSORY TRUTH

A volume of dualistic philosophy by
JOHN O'LOUGHLIN



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PREFACE

Also divided, like *Between Truth and Illusion* (1977), into three parts, of which the first is by far the longest, this companion volume to the aforementioned example of multigenre philosophy expands on the dualistic theories outlined before, abandoning the more literary and even discursive approach of the previous book for an essayistic and aphoristic purism in which I began to develop an almost existentialist awareness of the extent to which many so-called truths are founded upon illusory concepts and, to that extent, are not really 'true' at all.

John O'Loughlin, London 1977 (Revised 2008)

PART ONE: APHORISTIC ESSAYS

THE PHILOSOPHER AS MAN, NOT MACHINE: How often should a philosopher actually allow himself to think, if he is to remain a relatively sane, active, healthy individual, and not degenerate into some kind of impersonal thinking machine? Should he go out of his way to think objectively when there is no apparent necessity for him to do so (as, for example, when he isn't officially working), to drive his thought patterns over the bounds of moderation to such an extent that he defies the urge to variety in life and is eventually consumed, like Nietzsche, by an obsession with thought, becomes saddled, as it were, with a plethora of intellectual superfluities?

Undoubtedly, a man who regards himself as a thinker must think sometimes. But an over-fastidious approach to thinking, an over-obdurate inclination to think at any cost could very soon render him anomalous, foolish, trivial, stolid, boring, and unbalanced - to name just a few things. For whether or not the most thought-obsessed people realize it, there is more to life than thinking, and a need certainly exists in people for adherence to a given physiological situation - as, for example, in refraining from thought when the need to do so is patently obvious.

If, therefore, a so-called thinker is to avoid becoming an intellectual crank, he must respect his periodically natural inclination to thoughtlessness and not endeavour, by contrast, to continue thinking when the energy or requirement to do so is no longer there. Otherwise he may subsequently degenerate, if he doesn't suffer a mental breakdown, into some kind of intellectual freak - in other words, into someone who imagines that he ought to think as much as possible, no matter *what* the circumstances, in order to remain a philosopher, a man of genius, a cut above the common herd. Philosophy, however, refuses to take such nonsense seriously! For the true philosopher always goes his way as a man, *not* as a thinking machine.

TWO TYPES OF THINKER: It is wrong to assume that a man obsessed with thought is necessarily a thinker, a philosopher, a genius. For when a man is compelled to think out of habit from fear of not thinking, of not appearing to be enough of a thinker in his own eyes, there is a reasonable chance that he is less a philosopher than a dupe of his own illusions, a slave of a mentality which assumes it necessary for a thinker to think as much as possible, regardless of the subject or context, if he is to remain a philosopher and not degenerate into an average mind. The

idea of thinking, in such a head, is ultimately more important than *what* is actually being thought about.

For it must be admitted, from the converse standpoint, that a genuine thinker - a man, in other words, who thinks not merely for the sake of flattering his ego or filling a vacuum but, more importantly, in order to discover something new about the world he lives in and the best methods of adjusting himself to it - will always stop himself thinking beyond a certain length of time simply because experience and common sense will have taught him that that is the best course to follow if he is to remain relatively natural, sane, perceptive, lucid, and mentally resilient. As a thinker, in this context, he will know that his chief duty is towards himself, and not only for himself but inevitably for the sake of other people as well; that his intelligence should therefore be used to his advantage - as, unfortunately, is rarely the case with the other type of thinker, a type who, obsessed by the urge to think, is essentially a pathological phenomenon, scarcely a man of wisdom. For philosophy should have earnest connections, after all, with the art of living wisely.

THINKING SHOULD BE DIFFICULT: It is just as well that, for the vast majority of people, so-called objective thinking is so difficult, that even those of us who habitually regard ourselves as 'thinkers' are normally compelled to fight and sweat for our deepest thoughts. Were this not the case, were we not the hard-pressed slaves of thought, it is highly probable that thinking alone would preoccupy us, and to such an extent and with such intensity that we would be left with little time or inclination for anything else.

Indeed, those of us who make a daily commitment to putting thoughts on paper are only too aware of how difficult serious thinking really is, and consequently of how pointless it would be for us to complain against this fact or to criticize ourselves for not thinking well enough. Yet if work were always easy, if brilliant ideas invariably came to us without any difficulty, what challenge would there be in doing it? And how many of us would really care to have above-average thoughts flowing through our heads all day anyway, thoughts which never allow us to rest but, as though prompted by a psychic conveyor-belt, continue to plague our consciousness from morning till night?

If, as Bergson contended, the brain really *is* a limiting device, an organ which, in addition to storing verbal concepts, usually prevents us from thinking too much too easily and too continuously, then it is just as well that it actually works, that we aren't subjected to an unceasing barrage of brilliant and highly irrelevant ideas all day, but are forced to put some effort into extracting any worthwhile thoughts from it. Was

this not the case, I rather doubt that I should have found either the time or the inclination to record such seemingly gratified thoughts as these!

