



**Dustin Pickering**

### **Seeking Justice, Not Absolutes**

Contrary to popular belief, Freud was not hostile to religious experience. He writes in his essay *On Narcissism*, "...an anchorite of this kind, who 'tries to eradicate every trace of sexual interest' (but only in the popular sense of the word 'sexual'), does not even necessarily display any pathogenic allocation of the libido. He may have diverted his sexual interest from human beings entirely, and yet may have sublimated it into a heightened interest in the divine, in nature, or in the animal kingdom, without his libido having undergone an introversion into his phantasies or a return to his ego." His focus in criticism of religion seems to stem from a clinical perspective. The experience of God is not forbidden, but substitutes are an illusion.

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, in his oft quoted speech states with fervor:

*"To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them..."*

This is from Hamlet's "get thee to a nunnery" scene. Is it appropriate for this sudden expression of the death instinct to come insulated by religious intimation? Is Hamlet shunning Ophelia in an attempt to divert his sexual passions? Why does he place this line of demarcation between himself and his love?

“To be or not to be” also implies Aristotlean logic. In *de Interpretatione* Aristotle writes, “Universally, indeed, as has been said, one must treat ‘to be’ and ‘not to be’ as the subjects, and these others must be joined on ‘to be’ and ‘not to be’ to make affirmations and negations.” He further notes distinctions between “possible-not possible, etc” therefore offering that, logically speaking, something cannot both be and not be. However, in Buddhism there is an exposition of truth involving the famous liar’s paradox. Something can be both true and false as in the statement, “This statement is false.” The statement is true because it is self-referential. However, it creates a shady area where its reference is actually its opposite as well.

When it comes to states of being, however, can something truly be both possible and impossible? For instance, can there be an afterlife? We are not aware of one from positive experience, but it may exist. How could it be proven otherwise? The burden of proof lies with the skeptic. Life is composed of binaries: plus and minus, female and male, war and peace, destruction and creation. The contemporary world now juxtaposes such binaries and confounds them in such examples as transgenderism. In the words of Heraclitus who states war is the father of all things, “All things contain their opposites.” Even in depth psychology the male contains the feminine and the female, the masculine.

Perhaps there are gray areas that Western logic has not considered thoroughly. We are busy separating the chaff from the wheat in our moral distinctions. The politically correct engage in the most embarrassing irony when they court cultural relativism. They acknowledge the grayness of moral distinction, but still engage in a battle of absolutes. “All is permitted,” they may offer, “except tradition, except what we have come to know.” Revolutions are messy and apparently not entirely without their logic.

In this period of universal turmoil and uprising, it may be wise to consider the future we wish to establish. Human nature is a diverse, often delinquent and dismissively prejudiced thing. In itself, it is relativistic and people suit their relations to their environment—perhaps? Or perhaps, not? Who knows?

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