

**FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS: THE  
METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY AS A  
SYSTEMATIC ARRANGEMENT OF  
KNOWLEDGE**

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Fundamental problems: the method of philosophy as a systematic arrangement of knowledge by Paul Carus

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**PAUL CARUS**

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# FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS.

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THE  
METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY  
AS A  
SYSTEMATIC ARRANGEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE

BY  
DR. PAUL CARUS.

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*No Agnosticism but Positive Science,  
No Mysticism but Clear Thought,  
Neither Supernaturalism nor Materialism,  
But a Unitary Conception of the World,  
No Dogma but Religion,  
No Creed but Faith.*

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## GEMS FROM MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS.

*Ἐἴ τις με ἐλέγξει, καὶ παραστήσῃ μοι ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθῶς ὑπολαμβάνω ἢ πράσσω, δύναται, χαίρων μεταδήσομαι. Ζητῶ γάρ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὑφ' ἧς οὐδεὶς πώποτε ἐβλάβη. Βλάπτεται δὲ ὁ ἐπιμένων ἐπὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἀπάτης καὶ ἀγνοίας.—VI. 21.*

[If any man is able to convince me and show me that I do not think or act right, I will gladly change. For I seek the truth by which no man was ever injured. But he is injured who abides in his error and ignorance.]

*Ἦτοι κόσμος διατεταγμένος, ἢ κυκεών, συμπεφορημένος μὲν ἀλλὰ κόσμος. Ἦ ἐν σοὶ μὲν τις κόσμος ὑφίστασθαι δύναται, ἐν δὲ τῷ παντὶ ἀκοσμία;—IV. 27.*

[Either it is a cosmos or a chaos, driven together—but still a cosmos. But can a cosmos subsist in thee and disorder in the All?]

*Πάντα ἀλλήλοις ἐπιπλέκεται καὶ ἡ σύνδεσις ἱερά, καὶ σχεδὸν τι οὐδὲν ἀλλότριον ἄλλο ἄλλῳ. Συγκατατέτακται γάρ, καὶ συγκοσμεῖ τὸν αὐτὸν κόσμον. Κόσμος τε γὰρ εἷς ἐξ ἀπάντων, καὶ θεὸς εἷς διὰ πάντων, καὶ οὐσία μία, καὶ νόμος εἷς, λόγος κοινὸς πάντων τῶν νοερῶν ζώων, καὶ ἀλήθεια μία.—VII. 9.*

[All things are connected with one another and the bond is holy. There is hardly anything foreign to any other thing. For things have been coordinated and they combine to form one and the same cosmos. For there is one cosmos made up of all things and one God who pervades all things and one substance, one law, one common reason in all intelligent animals and one truth.]

*Ἦ τε γὰρ οὐσία οἷον ποταμὸς ἐν διηνεκῇ ῥύσει· καὶ αἱ ἐνέργειαι ἐν συνεχέσι μεταβολαῖς, καὶ τὰ αἷτια ἐν μυρίαῖς τροπαῖς· καὶ σχεδὸν οὐδὲν ἐστῶς καὶ τὸ πάρεγγυς.—V. 23.*

[Substance is like a river in a continual flow; the energies undergo constant changes and cause work in infinite varieties. There is hardly anything that stands still or remains the same.]

*Δίελε καὶ μέρισον τὸ ὑποκείμενον εἰς τὸ αἰτιῶδες  
καὶ ὑλικόν.*—VII. 29.

[Separate and divide the object in the formal and the material.]

*Ἐξ αἰτιῶδους καὶ ὑλικοῦ συνίστηκα· οὐδέτερον  
δὲ τούτων εἰς τὸ μὴ ὄν φθαρήσεται· ὥσπερ οὐδὲ ἐκ  
τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ὑπέστη.*—V. 13.

[I consist of the formal and of the material. Neither will be lost in nothing, nor did either come from nothing.]

*Ἐνδον βλέπε. Ἐνδον ἢ πηγὴ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, καὶ  
αἰεὶ ἀναβλύειν δυναμένη, εἰς αἰεὶ σκάπτῃς.*—VII. 59.

[Look within! Within is the fountain of good and it will ever well up if thou wilt ever dig.]

*Ληστῆς προαιρέσεως οὐ γίνεται· τὸ τοῦ Ἐπι-  
κλήτου.*—XI. 36.

[No one can rob us of our free will, says Epictetus.]

*Ἐκαστον πρὸς τι γέγονεν· Σὺ οὖν πρὸς τί; τὸ  
ἡδῆσαι; ἴδε, εἰ ἀνέχεται ἡ ἐννοια.*—VIII. 19.

[Everything exists for some end. For what end, then, art thou? To enjoy pleasure? See whether common sense allows this.]

*Ἡδονῶν καὶ πόνων καθυπερτερεῖν ἔξεστιν.*—VIII. 8.

[Thou canst master pleasure and pain.]

*Οὔτε ἄρα χρήσιμον, οὔτε ἀγαθὸν ἡδονή.*—VIII. 10.

[Pleasure is neither useful nor good.]

*Πᾶν μοι συναρμόζει, ὃ σοὶ εὐάρμοστόν ἐστιν, ὧ  
κόσμη. Οὐδέν μοι πρόωρον, οὐδὲ ὄψιμον, τὸ σοὶ  
εὐκαιρον. Πᾶν μοι καρπός, ὃ φέρουσιν αἱ σαὶ ὥραι,  
ὧ φύσις· ἐκ σοῦ πάντα, ἐν σοὶ πάντα, εἰς σὲ πάντα.*  
—IV. 23.

[Everything harmonizes with me which is harmonious to thee, O Cosmos. Nothing for me is too early nor too late which is in due time for thee. Everything is first to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature. From thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return.]

## PREFACE.

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ALMOST all of the essays of this book first appeared as editorial articles in THE OPEN COURT, where they had the good fortune of being exposed to the criticism of thoughtful readers. The ideas presented could thus be tested, and the views of the author received an opportunity of being further elucidated, not in futile battles against men of straw, but in discussions with thinkers who had found difficulties in understanding the solutions proposed. I here publicly acknowledge my indebtedness to the gentlemen who have favored me with criticisms.

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The author, while working out in his mind the Fundamental Problems, has endeavored to introduce as little as possible of his personality and his private sympathies with, or antipathies against, other solutions. The brain of the philosopher should be a mental alembic to clarify ideas, to analyze them, to extract their essence. His brain should work with the regularity of a machine. And among machines the philosophical mind must be compared to the so-called *precision machines*, the work of which is not measured by horse-power but by minute exactitude.

The article "Form and Formal Thought" discusses a subject which is of fundamental importance. A correct conception of form and the laws of form will clear away many mysteries; it will afford a satisfactory explanation of causality and shed a new light on all the other problems of philosophy.



The view here presented, in spite of all our differences with Kant, may be considered as the natural outcome of Kant's philosophy. But it would be wrong to represent it as Kantianism. It is rather the historical development of Kantianism broadened by later enquiries, matured by criticisms, and adapted to the needs of our time. It is a protest against the halfness of agnosticism and a rejection of the perverted ethics of shallow hedonism—of that view so popular now, which bases the rules of conduct upon man's desire for happiness.

The view here presented unites two qualities which may appear contradictory at first sight. It is *radical* and at the same time *conservative*. It is radical because it fearlessly presents the issues of philosophic thought in their stern rigidity without trying to conceal the consequences to which the argument leads. The old and long cherished errors are not passed over in silence, but are countenanced and critically explained. The view propounded is at the same time conservative because it preserves its historical connection with the work of our ancestors; it does not hope for a progress by a rupture with, but through a development from, the past, and does not come to destroy but to fulfill.

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The purpose of philosophy has often been misunderstood. It is not grand and beautiful air castles, not ontological systems of pure thought, not new original ideas of what the dreamland of the Absolute might be like, that is wanted in philosophy. Philosophy is not a profitless intellectual gymnastics, not a mere playing with words and subtle distinctions for the gratification of a few *beaux esprits* who delight in mental somersaults. Philosophy is the most practical and most important science, because its prob-

lems lie at the bottom of all the single sciences. It is the science of science.

Philosophy is more than that. It is the foundation of the rules of our conduct. Those conceptions of the world which have become the popular philosophy of the age—the so-called *Zeitgeist*—will permeate the whole atmosphere of the time and will influence the actions of men for good and for evil. The fates of individuals, as well as of nations, their prosperity and their ruin, always depended, and in future times will depend, upon their fundamental conceptions of the world, in accordance with which men naturally regulate their conduct in life.

It may be objected that Religion and Ethics, not Philosophy, are the regulating factors of morality. But are not Religion and Ethics expressions of certain fundamental conceptions of the world; are they not applied philosophy? As a matter of fact history teaches that the self-same religion under the influence of different philosophies has developed into practically different systems of morality. Mohammedanism in the golden days of the Caliphate of Cordova was different from that of Bagdad, and still more from Mohammedanism as it exists to-day in Constantinople. And Christianity, the most powerful religion in the world, shows as many different phases as it has been influenced by different philosophies or *Zeitgeists*.

We know of no decline of any nation on earth unless it was preceded by an intellectual and moral rottenness, which took the shape of some negative creed or skepticism, teaching the maxim that man lives for the pleasure of living, and that the purpose of our life is merely to enjoy ourselves.

The fashionable free thought of to-day is so closely connected

with negativism and hedonism that most people are accustomed to identify free thought with these its excrescences. In this book, however, is proposed a philosophy of most radical free thought, that is *no* negativism, *no* agnosticism, and *no* metaphysical mysticism, but a systematic arrangement of positive facts. On the ground of positive facts, it equally opposes hedonism as well as asceticism, propounding a humanitarian ethics which, if obeyed, will keep our nation healthy and must lead us not on the easy path of "least resistance," but on the thorny and steep road of progress onward and upward to ever higher and nobler states of existence.

Our fundamental conceptions of world and life, therefore, for practical purposes—for our individual welfare, for the destiny of our nation and for that of humanity—are of greatest importance. On the philosophy of our time depends the health of our religious, our scientific, our industrial, our mercantile, our political, and our social development.

THE AUTHOR.

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