

*Philo Café August 6th, 2013 - Summary*

*Discussion Topic:*

*"False words are not only evil in themselves but they infect the soul with evil." Socrates*



*Dear All,*

*Thank you for another successful meeting.*

*I am new to this experience so here's my first attempt at summarising after being the facilitator at our last gathering.*

*We met to discuss:*

*Socrates: "False words are not only evil in themselves but they infect the soul with evil."*

*Like sculptures in words, the many quotes attributed to Socrates remain standing amongst us after almost 2,500 years. This illiterate son of a sculptor and a midwife had a great talent for putting the cat amongst the pigeons. His strident and emotionally charged words gave us plenty to be getting on with.*

*True to the spirit of the man himself, en route to an explanation, the group began by taking apart his saying and examining the parts which go to make it up.*

*Evil notably took prominence in the discussion. Secondly perhaps came False. Interestingly, the subject of Soul managed to pass quietly under the collective radar - perhaps biding its time until another evening...*

*The polarity in reaction to Evil seemed to be divided along a thinking versus feeling response.*

*According to the Dictionary:*

*EVIL: A force or power that brings about wickedness or harm. Harmful or morally bad.*

*The group began by questioning and put forward Evil in many forms:*

*Is the Devil Evil?*

*Is Hitler evil?*

*Is it not Intention that is truly Evil? ie a false intent (which may in fact harm the perpetrator more than the victim)*

*Is Evil subjective?*

*Is Evil inherent?*

*Perhaps even, there is no such thing as Evil.*

*Unsurprisingly, Hitler received many mentions. Runner up in the personality stakes was Margaret Thatcher!*

*Today's Church was noted and cited as an example of how large organisations can by their very nature tend towards corruption. In a similar vein our current financial crisis came up.*

*It seemed to be accepted that there is a scale of evil and that words are only one of many sources. Though the Nazis revealed new shocking depths to evil, they didn't exhaust it- it is with us now.*

*Dictionary Definition:*

*FALSE: Not in accordance with the truth or facts.*

*This word was much less of a hot potato, somehow less subjective. It was perhaps viewed mainly through a behavioural perspective: Disingenuous, Flaky, Liar, Untrustworthy, Slippery.*

*The Banking crisis may a good example of falsehood - where lies breed more lies. Self preservation led to intentional misleading. The many are now paying the price for the few who abandoned any notion of responsibility and sacrificed honesty to protect themselves.*

*In broad terms, the group was in sympathy with Socrates' words.*

*The very vocal objection was expressed by asking what exactly did Socrates mean? Should we take him literally? Isn't Intention the real key here? Perspective and cultural conditioning can give rise to "white lies" as may be put to use by "the honest cheat".*

*In agreement with Socrates, the group brought up Trust. If Trust is infected then relationship and Love are disrupted. Trust though, could have many forms -space again here for the honest cheat. Infidelity came up quite a lot and was seen in a negative light since its tendency would be towards the creation of a tissue of lies. However, integrity was not seen as requiring perfection. A culture of responsibility was seen as necessary for the preservation of daily life. The yoga Sutras direct us not to speak untruths and encouragingly, they say that a pure being is beyond infection.*

*Knowledge of things is a challenge. There is so much food for thought here that it would be possible to write for a very long time on this subject.*

*Implicit in Socrates' words is surely the aim to live a Good Life rather than an Evil Life. This pursuit is something he has explored and articulated at great length. I feel we can thank him greatly for that and continue to breathe life into his work by continuing to gather and share in this way.*

*Since Evil grabbed such headlines I would like to add the following:*

*C.G. Jung remarked that it is very rare for anyone to truly glimpse the face of evil. According to him: "Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darkness of other people."*

*Buddha: "An insincere and evil friend is more to be feared than a wild beast; a wild beast may wound your body but an evil friend will wound your mind."*

*Many thanks one and all for our last meeting and looking forward to many more,*

*Peter*