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THE MANIPULATIVE POWER OF COMPRESSED PARADOX

A liar from Crete said all Cretans are liars and then asked if he lied. If he lied, then he did not. And if he did not lie, then he did. It cannot be true because it would make the speaker a liar and therefore what he says is false. Neither can it be true because that would imply that Cretans are truth-tellers and consequently what the speaker says would be true. It is both true and false. This paradox makes us feel ambivalent and uncertain because we're taught to keep things separated and to think in terms of cause and effect.

Thinking in terms of contradictions and paradoxes are hallmarks of creative thinking. In medicine, Louis Pasteur discovered the principle of immunology by discovering that some infected chickens survived a cholera bacillus. When they and uninfected chickens were inoculated with a new virulent culture, the uninfected chickens died and the infected chickens survived. The surviving chickens were both "diseased and not-diseased" at the same time. The paradoxical discovery that disease could function to prevent disease has saved millions of lives over the years.

Imagining two opposites or contradictory ideas, concepts, or images existing simultaneously is beyond logic. It is a type of conceptualizing in which the thinking processes transcend ordinary logical thinking. If you hold two opposites together, your mind moves to a new level. The suspension of thought allows intelligence beyond thought to act and create a new form. The swirling of opposites creates the conditions for a new point of view to bubble free from the mind.

The created conditions are ambivalence and incongruity which are tolerated by creative people. For instance, imagine being successful and a failure simultaneously. The ambivalence changes the way we feel and see and makes

possible a different thought process. “Successful and failure” inspires the thought of having to “learning how to fail your way to success”. An example is Thomas Edison. Edison’s assistant asked him why he persisted in trying to perfect the light bulb filament after having failed 5,000 times. Edison said he didn’t understand the word “failure”. “I’ve discovered 5,000 things that don’t work”. He said.

Paradoxical thinking is a raw thinking process that ignores the common rules of ordinary logical thinking.

Compressed paradox can be embodied in structures, such as proverbs, aphorisms, and maxims. Paradoxical statements are an effective device to capture truth since they dexterously reveal the conflicts and contradictions at the very heart of human experiences. A juxtaposition of opposites in statements compels our attention, expands our views, deepens our understanding, unleashes our imagination, and even revolutionizes our conventional thinking. More than just wordplay, figurative employment or verbal virtuosity, paradoxical statements are actually facts of life. In the East, Lao-Tzu, originator of the yin-yang philosophy, reiterated the inextricable link between paradox and truth. In the West, an anonymous adage indicates that “A paradox is truth standing on its head to attract our attention”. Besides, when people appropriately use paradoxical observations, they avoid otiose details, which are very likely to weaken their statements. Clear, succinct statements with paradoxical touch are one excellent medium to convey concepts [4, 35].

Paradoxical expressions are omnipresent but not many people pay attention to their beauty, truthfulness, and profundity. Popular proverbs integrated with paradox include “More haste, less speed,” “In a hurry, always behind,” “More is less,” “Failure is the foundation of success,” and “Everybody’s business is nobody’s business” and so on.

Philosophers, writers, musicians, artists, scientists, politicians, and celebrities all over the world have created a great number of insightful aphorisms. They are the treasury of human wisdom.

A number of researchers have pointed out that the paradox is a type of aphorism – along with the maxim, sentence and gnome. So the paradox in full least has a set of typological properties of an aphoristic text.

“Aphorism” is a general, all-encompassing term for a condensed sentence or statement. Short and concise, it is a written or spoken expression of an observation, principle, or precept of truth or advice. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the aphorism as a “short, pithy sentence expressing a truth of general import” [5]. “An aphorism ought to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world like a little work of art and complete in itself like a hedgehog” (Friedrich Von Schlegel) [2].

The etymology of the aphorism is revealing: from the Greek, “to delimit, define” *apo* plus *horizein* denote “away from a marked area or limited boundary”. Thus it proceeds by a dual process, of initial divergence from the terms of a given discourse followed by a return to it, but importing an unusual perspective, a process often characterized by a fusion of logic and imagination, or wit. By the 18th century the aphorism had developed into an autonomous literary short form. “The word *aphorism* was first employed by Hippocrates to describe a collection of concise principles, primarily medical, beginning with the famous, “Life is short, art is long, opportunity fleeting, experimentation dangerous, reasoning difficult”. Eventually the term was applied to statements of principles in law and agriculture and extended to other areas” [8].

Descending from the terse scientific-medical precepts of Hippocrates, it extended its range to include Francis Bacon’s *Novum organum* (1620) and the 17th-century philosophical aphorisms of the French moralists such as La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, and Chamfort.

Modern aphorisms are concerned with the same ideas and questions that have been puzzling humanity from the beginning of time. The desires and longings of the heart, our sense of identity, the nature of good and evil, time, religion, and the aftertime are common themes found in today's' aphorisms. They are used to express the need to find spiritual fulfillment and understanding of the cultural experience of the 21st century [3, v-vi].

The aphorism has included such small forms of brief discourse as the adage, the apothegm, the aperçu, the axiom, the cliché, the dictum, the maxim, the motto, the precept, the proverb, the reflection, the saw, the saying, and the sentence. These definitions are determined by a variety of criteria, such as whether the statements are oral or written, authorial or anonymous, practical or theoretical, prosaic or poetic, concrete or metaphorical, descriptive or prescriptive, etc.

The various studies of the aphorism agree in regarding it as a specific mode of inquiry or a particular intellectual response to the relationship between the individual (author, reader) and society. Further, that relationship is articulated through a distinct verbal structure, a literary representation which renders concrete the tension and conflict between individual observation and abstract reflection. Thus, the aphorism is often said to express the uncertainty of experience or a crisis of consciousness.

For many literary critics and theorists, the aphorism remains the sole form of discourse to refuse integration into any system or dominant order of thought. But in breaking up or subverting the status quo from the perspective of observation and presentation, the aphorism simultaneously implies an Other, a contrary order of the “not yet realized”. The aphorism uses rhetorical verbal structures like antithesis, parallelism, proportion, oxymoron, chiasmus, metaphor, and paradox, in a concise, emphatic manner to address this matrix of oppositions.

Like all literary constructions, the aphorism mediates an insight or perception through language. However, the aphorism is highly conscious of the manner in which this mediation occurs. Indeed, it has often been called the literary form that is most aware of itself. But the resulting relationship between writer and reader is neither direct nor conversational. The aphorism’s meaning is not immediately obvious; indeed often at first glance it is impenetrable. It typically works dialectically, through paradox, pun, mixed metaphor, or similarly unexpected verbal and semantic juxtaposition, forcing the reader to rethink, to complete the dialectical process of an active search for an unexpected meaning. Writer and reader require both logic and imagination: first to establish or recognize

the digression, the antithesis, the paradox, and the hiatus across the linear progression of discourse, and second to make the reconnection. The aphorism proceeds independently from individual experience. It begins in media res with the initial idea turned inside out. With its greater self-consciousness of language and its closed, inverted form – it is read in an instant, but encourages, even requires, multiple re-readings – the aphorism provides insight but does not provide a basis for dialogue or a dialogic stance by the author toward the reader. The aphorism is essentially dictatorial [7, 25].

The complex perception and comprehension of aphorism is complicated by the fact that the genre appears as an individual structure without any wider context. Since aphorism functions in two semantic planes, it is ambiguous. These semantic planes are literary and metaphoric. The former constitutes the body of aphorism, whereas the latter is a carrier of ‘deep thoughts’: the wisdom of aphorism, which contributes to the highly artistic literary form of this genre.

The following are only a small portion of them.

When you add to the truth, you subtract from it (Talmud).

Please all and you will please none (Aesop).

Nothing is permanent but change (Heraclitus).

Agreement is made more precious by disagreement (Publilius Syrus).

To study music, we must learn the rules. To create music, we must forget them (Nadia Boulanger).

An artist is forced by others to paint out of his own free will (Willem de Kooning).

To imagine the unimaginable is the highest use of the imagination (Cynthia Ozick).

Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction (Pablo Picasso).

To write a quality cliché you have to come up with something new (Jenny Holzer).

It takes a heap of sense to write good nonsense (Mark Twain).

Originality is nothing but judicious imitation (Voltaire).

Giving is true having (Charles Haddon Spurgeon).

To be an ideal guest, stay at home (Edgar Watson Howe).

What acting really is, is pretending – while you're pretending you're not pretending (Ted Danson).

Comedy is simply a funny way of being serious (Peter Ustinov).

A celebrity is a person who works hard all his life to become well known, then wears dark glasses to avoid being recognized (Fred Allen).

The greatest hate springs from the greatest love (Thomas Fuller).

Love involves a peculiar unfathomable combination of understanding and misunderstanding (Diane Arbus).

The love we give away is the only love we keep (Elbert Hubbard).

Parting is such sweet sorrow (William Shakespeare).

Paradoxically though it may seem, it is none the less true that life imitates art far more than art imitates life (Oscar Wilde).

My free will is a paradoxical partner of the power of intention (Wayne Dyer).

I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love (Mother Teresa).

We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing (George Bernard Shaw).

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change (Carl Rogers).

The list of such invented linguistic paradoxes can be indefinitely extended. It is specific to each language, and it is based on language expressions and types of sentence and phrase constructions and structures. One can also play with antonymic / synonymic adverbs, prepositions, etc. to construct other categories of linguistic paradoxes [1, 64].

The paradox is really the pathos of intellectual life and just as only great souls are exposed to passions it is only the great thinker who is exposed to what I

call paradoxes, which are nothing else than grandiose thoughts in embryo (Soren Kierkegaard) [6, 50].

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