Twistedness in Psycho-social Systems

callenge to logic, morality, leadership and personal development

This paper is an annex to Engaging with Questions of Higher Order: cognitive vigilance required for higher degrees of twistedness (2004). The web resources presented here were a basis for research on an associated paper on Strategic Opportunities of the Twice Born: reflections on systemic camouflage of mass deception (2004).

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Socio-political twistedness

In the final week prior to the American presidential election, the International Herald Tribune (25 October 2004) produced its lead editorial under the heading: How the Bush crowd twisted intelligence. This focused on the report by Carl Levin (Democrat, Senate Armed Services Committee) demonstrating "how intelligence can be cooked to fit a political agenda", and showing the distortions of intelligence that were essentially fabricated through the office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Subsequent to the election, Maureen Dowd (A Plague of Toadies. New York Times, 18 November 2004) notes that:

The president and vice president are dispatching their toadies to the agencies to quell dissent. The crackdown seems bizarre, since hardly anyone dared to disagree with them anyway and there were plenty willing to twist the truth for them.

In a summary at a workshop on "National Security and Constitutional Rights in the Asia Pacific Region", Muto Ichiyo (1947 Constitution situated in the problematic of the postwar Japanese state) in summarizing, 2002) notes that:

The problematic of the 1947 Japanese constitution should be situated in the context of the inherent twistedness of the statehood of the postwar Japanese state (PWJS), a historical product with enduring characteristics. Constituted under the post-WWII American hegemony, and specifically under the US occupation, PWJS incorporated in it three mutually contradictory principles, hence systems, giving rise to dynamics that characterized its behavior over decades of its existence. The three principles are (A) identification with the US global-Asian hegemonic design (free worldism, anti-Communism, and the security treaty), (B) constitutional pacifism, and (C) continuity from the Imperial past.…

Twistedness in statehood was permeating; convenient use of one of the three principles, depending who Japan was talking to; hence the loss of the principle status of all the three; the maturity of PWJS as an opportunistic state (opportunism raised to the status of principle!)

Those inspired by Marxist analysis make extensive reference to "capitalist contradictions" -- a particular understanding of twistedness. (Jose Maria Sison. Contradictions in the World Capitalist System and the Necessity of Socialist Revolution, 2001; Jim Peron, The Contradictions of Capitalism, 2002; Yves Engler. Capitalist Contradictions, 2003). Some form of twistedness is a frequent descriptor in
Marxist perceptions of capitalist policies. For example, comments in the *The Marxist-Leninist Daily* include:

- Within the twisted system that Washington is mounting comes the recent designation of right-wing ideologue Otto Reich as Under Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs. Reich was a member of the Reagan administration and participated in the Iran-Contra scandal. He also helped to design the notorious Helms-Burton law which, among other draconian measures, toughens Washington's economic blockade against Cuba. (13 April 2001)
- U.S. President George Bush has reached a point of no return in his twisted and obsessive relationship with Cuba. (30 June 2004)

On the other hand, Marxism itself is frequently held to be "twisted" in a variety of ways:

- Stalinism has been presented as a particular perversion of Marxism-Leninism at the hands of Joseph Stalin. "As a result of the institutionalizing and solidifying of Communist power in the Soviet Union, Stalin twisted Marxist theory", notably with regard to the concept of "socialism in one country". [more | more]
- In Chile, action against General Pinochet by so-called "human rights groups" were claimed to a front for a terrorist group (FPMR). Therefore "they can't be campaigning for human rights, but a twisted marxist version, a farce, or mock of human rights" (*The Face of World Communism*).

Economic policy may be seen as inherently twisted (Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr. *Twisted Economic Logic*, 2000). In commenting on a study by Richard Peet (*Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank and the WTO*), John Cavanagh, co-author of *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: A Better World Is Possible*, states that the work demonstrates "how the IMF, World Bank, and WTO were twisted from their original mandates to serve the interests of corporate globalization". Reviewing the World Bank's *World Development Report* (1991), the *New Internationalist* (November 1991), states: "Structural adjustment is the World Bank's current religion and any evidence that it is not the true faith must be either omitted or twisted" [more].

Corporate initiatives can be perceived as highly twisted, and deliberately so, as in the case of Enron (*Building the Labyrinth: The Enron Collapse*, 2004):

> Like everything else complex, Enron excelled in architecting financial complexity. They took minor accounting tricks and grew them into a maze of accounting slights of hands in which trillions of dollars of debt were ferreted away in off-balance sheet subsidiaries, partnerships, and other obligations such as pension funds and take-or-pay contracts with suppliers. Their accounting still confounds the experts. How many accounting rules can be bent and twisted and manipulated while still believing that the rules themselves aren't broken? When does complexity give way to immorality?

"Twisted logic"

The declarations of arguments of dictators are typically seen as based on twisted logic, as are those inciting to *jihad* and terrorism. With respect to the events of 9/11, Robert E. Heiler (*America and the Peace Process: A Closer Look*) of the Institute of Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, argues that:

> American culture, however, has long been preparing for the twisted logic of the Peace Process. The essence of this twisted logic is cowardice, which is to say the renunciation of courage as expressed in the phrase, "having the courage of one's convictions.

To have the courage of conviction requires the belief that one is unequivocally right, which presupposes that objective right and wrong exist. This notion is not in favor in American culture, particularly among intellectuals and on our university campuses. For example, the "root cause" of criminal behavior, according to the social scientists, is poverty, the existence of which is somehow more the fault of the victims than the perpetrators. Every situation is much more complicated than it seems, and any statement that represents a clear moral choice is an oversimplification. And Americans are expected to cower before this dialectic, examining every word and deed to eradicate any possibility of offending the Politically Correct thought-police.

There is much mutual accusation of "twisted logic" in "dialogue" between different socio-political factions -- and in advocating one position in contrast with the absurdity of another. For example: "In the meantime, civilian casualties are mounting. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has engaged in twisted logic worthy of Orwell's 1984, claiming that the U.S. is not responsible for the civilian casualties caused by its bombing raids" (*Institute for Public Accuracy*, 2001). Again: "The secular character of the resistance movement is denied. In an utterly twisted logic, A Queda is said to constitute a significant force behind the Iraqi insurgents" (Michel Chossudovsky, *Iraq and the "War on Terrorism*, 2004). Again: "In effect, in the twisted logic of the committed terrorist, almost any attack anywhere that kills large numbers of people is a legitimate blow" (Joseph M. DeThomas. *The War on Terror Will Be a Long One*, 2003). Or again, "terrorism follows its own, albeit twisted, logic." [more]

Those recognizing some validity in the position of "terrorists" (see Mohammed Daud Mirakialso. *Terrorism Or Justice: In The Dichotomy Of 'Haves and Have-Nots'), argue that those they oppose also use a twisted logic:

> Unfortunately, that is where, the thought processes of those in the West become paralyzed with their own self-partiality and arrogance and refer only to their own losses and that of their allies as significant irrespective of how high the losses on the opposing end are. It is not atypical but rather the modus operandi of the twisted logic in creating self-melancholic make-believes.

Again, according to Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal (*On the terrorism of US imperialism and the Macapagal-Arroyo regime*, 2002):

> It is utterly irresponsible, baseless and malicious for the US and the regime to tag the CPP and the NPA as terrorist. It is twisted...
logic that is behind Macapagal-Arroyo's contention that the CPP and the NPA are "generic terrorists" because they are waging armed struggle to overthrow the reactionary government.

Twisted logic is the focus of Boris Shusteff's (*The Logic of the Heart*, 1999) claim regarding the deafening silence in Israel in response to proposals to withdraw from the lands of Judea, Samaria and Gaza (Yesha) according to the Wye Agreement:

> It appears that the Jewish state has become so demoralized and submissive that it is simply incapable of adequately comprehending the situation. Using all kinds of twisted logic, the Israeli leaders try to explain why it is necessary for the Jewish state to get rid of its heartland - the lands of Yesha. It seems that everybody is in a hurry to deliver the soul of the Jewish state to its enemies. It is assumed by default that as soon as the land of Yesha is given to the Palestinian Arabs and the Golan is given to the Syrian Arabs the Arab world will embrace the Jewish state and peace will descend on the Middle East.

**Twisted morality**

The challenge of sincerity has been explored in contrast to twistedness in the earliest Confucian classics by A. Charles Muller (*Essence-Function and Interpenetration: Early Chinese Origins and Manifestations*, 1999) who cites the Doctrine of the Mean doctrine:

> Those of the next level straighten out their own twistedness. Being straightened they can possess sincerity. Having sincerity, they can give form to their character. Their character having form, their sincerity becomes manifest. Being manifest it is luminous, being luminous it can function. Functioning, it changes; changing, it transforms. Only the most fully actualized sincerity is able to transform [people].

The Judeo/Christian tradition also acknowledges a concept of twistedness. One comment by J. I. Packer (*What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution*, 1973) notes that Christ's death is seen as having its effect primarily on hostile spiritual forces, external to people, which are held to be imprisoning people in a captivity of which the inveterate moral twistedness of humans is one sign and symptom.

The phenomenon of twistedness is specifically associated with the fundamental challenge of the defective moral quality of humanity, notably by religious commentators.

In a presentation of a *Course 101: Christian Foundations* (2004) the Asian Baptist Student Koinonia (ABSK) indicates:

> Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we can see a portrait of God's intense love for us. When we look at our world, we see sin and twistedness all around us and inside us. We see ourselves groping for meaning in life and yet gripped by the emptiness of death. And just when we despondently look up to the heavens in pitiful protest, we find that the God of the universe personally came down to this hellish, sin-ridden world and died in anguish. In the greatest paradox, we can rejoice at this tragedy -- because it is in His death that we find forgiveness and in His resurrection that we find our destiny. [more]

For example, Richard H. Akeroyd (*He is Nigh*), in his study of Christ's second coming, the rapture, the overcomers, and the rule of Antichrist, notes in discussing the *Origin of Evil--Satan--The Antichrist*:

> Evil was conceived at that moment when Lucifer's eyes turned away from the Creator and looked upon himself: "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness" (Ez. 28:17) -- self-consciousness awoke in him where none had existed before. The happy days of total freedom from self in service to the Creator were over -- a futile look in the eyes betrayed a profound inner change: "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created," says the Lord, "till unrighteousness (distortion, or twistedness) was found in thee" (Ez 28:15). That distortion, introverted preoccupation with self, produced an independence, another alternative, later to be called "the lie." "He stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him," said the Lord Jesus. "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father thereof" (Jn 8:44).

The truth of anything is the reality lying at the basis of its appearance--how it looks and sounds in the presence of God. The lie betrays the presence of a deformed and twisted nature which must draw to itself and, providing an alternative focus, compete for attention and seek to distract from God....

When twistedness was found in Lucifer, he was cast out of the heaven of heavens but was allowed considerable latitude of movement and influence throughout the remainder of the creation. Why did God permit this? Why did He not dissolve and annihilate this evil one immediately the evil found lodging in his heart? Force is a confession of weakness, and thus not God's way. For, had He obliterated sin at its inception, there would always have remained a question as to what might have happened had He allowed it to run its course. God's ultimate objective is a new heaven and a new earth in which will dwell righteousness (clarity and transparency, allowing His character to shine through the absence of distortion and twistedness), and His way to that goal is by a moral victory, removing the moral ground of any contrary element--even if it must cost the death of His dearly beloved Son to pay the price for it. Thus God does not remove Satan from his function as prince of the world; He bides His time until the season is ripe and then acts, on the cross, to disqualify him for ever from any further right over it.

For P. G. Mathew (*Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, 1999) of the Grace Valley Christian Center:
Psychological twistedness

Antonio Barbato (Instincts, Centers and Subtypes, 2001) clarifies the relationship between "straight" and "twisted" development as follows:

The final step in this process comes about when the intervention of the adaptation instinct locks in our responses, affecting our natural homeostasis in a definite way, giving birth to our Passion and finally the Fixation. I think that to better understand this process intuitively (intuition being the "reasoning" of the instinctive part), we can compare the development of a child to the growth of a tree. A tree grows from the seed, following its fundamental instinct of expansion, developing roots and then the trunk. If there are no disturbing factors, the trunk will grow naturally straight, even if the roots by contrast are gnarled and intermingled. If however, our tree is exposed to a strong wind blowing constantly (the Original Wound), the trunk will begin to lean in that direction (adaptation instinct). The tree will continue to grow (expansion instinct), but its trunk will definitely be crooked (i.e., the Passion). In my opinion, it is essential to our personal growth (and to the well-being of our children and dear ones lest we contaminate them with our "twistedness") that we work in a resolute and conscious way on this Original Wound.

Michael Hoffman (Cybernetics and Ego Death) relates the cybernetic challenge of self-governance to twistedness:

There awaits a "potential" inside the mind. Not the potential to talk to spirits or bend spoons, but something more astonishing: the potential to apprehend a self-control vortex in the mind. This vortex is a potential structure made possible by the twistedness of our normal conception of ourselves as autonomous, self-steering agents who create and choose our own thoughts for ourselves. This is the Cybernetic Revelation, the revealing of the hidden dynamics and logical loops of self-steering.

In discussing the constraints on effective (Bohmian) dialogue, Nick Consoletti notes:

In Science, Order, And Creativity (1987), Bohm and F. David Peat discuss the "false play of mind" as an attribute of thought. Thought presents illusions to us as if they were reality. In other words, thought, without knowing it, separates the "me" from what is happening, which leads to illusory perceptions. This twistedness reveals itself in the exploration of the dialogue group, suggesting that a deeper understanding of one's makeup could lead to cooperation between people in practical matters of survival. [more]

Psychoanalysis of twistedness

There is considerable controversy over the definition of perversion, defined by some say as a matter of variant forms of human sexuality, by others as an 'aberrant' form. As discussed by Claire Pajaczkowska (In Perversion), in relation to "Queer Theory", it is only in psychoanalysis that the concept has a diagnostic and descriptive meaning: it is neither a variant nor an aberration but has specific underlying causes and recurring characteristics.

According to Queer Theory the word perversion is nothing but an unpleasant and moralising anachronism that should be analysed in terms of its history, or else should be taken up and used ironically as an emblem of the stigma of social disapproval... Queer Theory also acknowledges the scapegoating of 'aberrant sexualities' which enables those 'nice normal people' to feel themselves different from (superior to) the nasty 'perverts'.... Social determinism suggests that repression is a product of the censorship exercised by juridico-discursive institutions without psychological involvement. Where Queer Theory celebrates the connotations of unpleasantness, twistedness and severe moral criticism, it does so by implying that these are to be levelled at the accusers.

The concern about twistedness is notably articulated in relation to cults as presented by Rafael Martinez (What Cultic Mind Control Is):

Why do we assert that mind control is such a twisted factor in society? We reply by reminding you... that the exercise of mind control proceeds from the manipulative motivations of human nature. We have contended that this side of human existence is essentially sullied by what Christian theology would call our depravity, a sinful bent that all of us descend to in one way or another. Fallen man, operating from his essentially self-centered nature, seeking his own self-gratification at the expense of all else, will continually seek his own good according to his own convictions... Add the twistedness of our human tendency to dominate and control by the use of fear, threats and withheld social contact, and we can see more clearly why such a system of authoritarian abuse that mind control imposes can come about in settings other than the "cults" that are decreed by the larger society.

Twistedness in psychotherapy

David D. Burns (The Feeling Good Handbook, 1989) identifies Ten Forms of Twisted Thinking, namely "cognitive distortions" that are
the focus of cognitive therapy.

Twistedness may also be used to characterize illness as noted in the following points by the School of Spiritual Psychology (Archetypal Medicine, 2002) from a Jungian perspective:

If one tries to begin to work with one's own illnesses in an archetypal way, which may be necessary, given that the practitioners of this art are almost unheard of, it may at first be like entering a dark forest, where shadows constantly pop up as seeming realities. The main shadow to be alert to consists of the tricky inversion of this way of working back into the model of health. Recently, I was speaking with someone who for months had been nauseous, felt pain in the stomach, was weak, and continually losing weight.... A Jungian told her that hearing the symptoms brought to mind a twisted telephone cord and that what was needed was silence, relaxation, and unwinding... The twisted telephone cord can also be seen as the body's necessity for knotting, for complexity, twistedness, entanglement, confusion in communication.

According to Marion H. Hendricks (An Experiential Version of Unconditional Positive Regard):

What is twisted, stuck, painful has implicit movement. There is even a sense in which the twisted gives rise to untwisting. Untwisting inheres in twistedness. From inside the vast texture, emotions like sadness, anger, fear are simply part of the person being perfect exactly as she is right now. If it were possible to displace these painful emotions, other than by untwisting, the untwisting that inheres in them would be lost and there would be a loss or a hole in creation.

**Spiritual twistedness**

The sense of twistedness of spirit is a focus of various religious teachings, as illustrated by the Antioch Weekend Learders' Manual (1968):

The meditation begins with a consideration of Christ on the cross.... The cross, however, is not an end in itself. It is a way, a passage from death to life, a passage which is made painful by the twistedness and resistance of the world. The goal is not suffering, but resurrection.

Or again, according to P. G. Mathew (Worship Is All of Life Romans, 1997):

In Romans 8:5 we read, "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires. . ." And in verse 6 we read, "The mind of sinful man is death. . ." and verse 7, "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." Do you see the perversion, the twistedness of the sinful mind? Romans 1:28 tells us it is a depraved mind, a God-rejected mind. In 1 Corinthians 1:18 we read, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. . ." again, because of the twistedness and perversion of the mind. Sin twists and perverts, "but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God."

And from a Christian perspective again (What Does God Expect of A Women?):

In the beginning, woman was created for companionship, conversation, and co-rulership of the earth. Today she is not the person she used to be. Neither is her male counterpart. Both suffer from distortions of gender that limit their ability to give one another the love and help they were made to give. Both are plagued by a twistedness rooted deep in their souls. Both reflect caricatures that betray their inner trouble.

For Pastor Kyle (The Exchange Rate, 2004):

We know we've sinned, but do something for your name's sake. Jeremiah uses quite the concert of words here to describe Judah's breach of covenant. He uses the term awan it means a twistedness or an iniquity, something that is distorted. He uses the term meshuva from that term we talked about earlier that means a backsliding. It can also be translated as a rebellion or a defection or a turning or as an exchange. An exchange - turned around.

For Jared L. Olar ("We Believe": A Study of the Doctrines of the Church of God):

That Jesus had no original sin is shown from the fact that, unlike what the rest of us face everyday, the Devil had to tempt Him in person. In exactly the same way, Satan had to tempt Adam and Eve in person. Prior to their sin, their bodies and souls did not possess that natural, innate, inescapable twistedness that is known as original sin. That only became a fact of human life after they had disobeyed God's commandment.

From another biblical perspective (Besetting Sins, 1998):

Therefore "subdue" in Gen 1:28 implies that creation will not do man's bidding gladly or easily and that man must now bring
creation into submission by main strength. It is not to rule man. However, there is a twistedness in humanity which causes us to perform such a task with fierce and destructive delight. Try as we might, we cannot subdue this. But it can be subdued and this is the promise of Mic 7:10, "He will subdue our iniquities".

A traditional concern with twistedness of spirit is associated with various understandings of demonic possession, as indicated in How To Cast Out Demons Understanding Demonisation (2002), specifically with regard to how demons "gain entrance":

Blood line curses or generational curses are passed down. Spiritual genetic weakness. Iniquity = bentness or crookedness. Ancestral spirits may inhabit this twistedness. E.g. alcoholism, fits of rage, lust, fear, depression....

Iniquity = bent, crooked, twisted, warped, and perverse. Not merely an act of transgression, but an inward disposition and bentness towards sin. Iniquities are deliberate, wilful, habitual, repeated sins. These are not superficial, but deep seated sins which are patterns and strongholds of sin in our lives. They become our natural tendencies, second nature and driving forces to us. Demonic spirits may inhabit this twistedness and strongholds of sin.

Kundalini

In the classical literature of Hatha Yoga, kundalini is described as a coiled serpent at the base of the spine. Kundalini literally means 'coiling,' like a snake. Energy and consciousness - moves in spiraling motion - coils - loops - the snake. This is a metaphor for the spiraling energies of consciousness -- the reality of thought in the light of sacred geometry. The loops of time -- the slinky effect -- time as an illusion played out in a physical game of polarities -- duality emotions.

The coiled and dormant 'feminine' energy, refers to the vast potential of psychic energy contained within us all. It is normally symbolized as a serpent coiled into three and a half circles, with its tail in its mouth, and spiraling around the central axis (sacrum or sacred bone) at the base of the spine. The awakening of this serpent and the manifestation of its powers is a primary aim of the practice of Kundalini Yoga. [more]

Symbols of twistedness

Poetry offers particular insight into twistedness for contmporary society as illustrated by Andrew Nicol (Form and Content in Eliot's Poetry: techniques and content in Eliot's 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' and 'The Hollow Men').

The recurring image of twistedness is gradually developed in the first stanzas. The persona's memory is triggered by the "a crooked pin", which leads to "The memory throws up high and dry| A crowd of twisted things". A coiled spring, a curled tongue and the image of an old crab all feature as twisted and contorted images in the subsequent stanzas. The images thrown up by the past, despite being random and disordered, seem to have one thing in common - they are all perverted. This motif suggests powerfully the angst that humans feel about being random and disordered, seem to have one thing in common - they are all perverted. This motif suggests powerfully the angst that humans feel about the disordered and nature of both the past and the present.

David Yarrow (Return of the Dragon, 1990) reviews research into electromagnetism, biology and consciousness, referring to the symbolism of the snake, the eagle -- and the dragon as an integration of them.

Dragons are also associated with consciousness, but they're often confused with the serpent, a creature who crawls on the earth. For example, in the Garden of Eden, the serpent enticed Man and Woman to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. From India comes kundalini—the serpent power coiled at base of the spine. Through meditation kundalini rises along twin spiral channels to spin along the spine and energize the higher brain centers. This union brings Enlightenment....

In Hermetic lore, Hermes Trismegistus slew the dragon Typhon—symbolizing Ignorance—using a special staff. This is the caduceus -- an erect rod with eagle wings on top and two serpents coiling up its base [more] [more]. Later Hermes founded Egyptian medical science, and today his staff is still the symbol of doctors.

The Dragon, then, is winged serpent -- union of eagle and snake. As such, Dragon symbolizes universal, collective consciousness-the mind of our cells wedded to rational intellect.

This is a challenging paradigm for scientists in search of Gaia. Or neurologists faced with the crucial question how neurons integrate to produce coherent brain function. Or ecologists, who wonder how independent organisms cooperate to maintain a stable biosphere that nurtures life.

The serpent is a symbol in many cultures. Ancient Egyptian priests held a tradition maintaining that a serpent lies coiled in the Great Pyramid. The Sumarians of 4000 years ago called the Great Pyramid "The House of the Serpent". The Torah was referred to as the "Serpent Book of the Ages" and as a "Serpent that cannot be slain, safeguarded the Book of Thoth." Serpents have always been used as emblems of the intelligence of God and of underlying wisdom (see Jeremy Narby. The Cosmic Serpent : DNA and the Origins of Knowledge, 1999). In ancient times and in cultures as widespread as Australia, China, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Babylonia, Sumaria, Egypt, India, and Central America, serpents were feared and worshipped as gods for thousands of years.

Labyrinths, as important symbols, are typically and deliberately characterized by twistedness and deception -- that has to be negotiated on the path to reedom.
Various cultures use sacred knots as key symbols. This is notably the case with Celtic knots. It is worth recalling that, in the absence of writing, the Incas used knotted cords (khipu) to hold and carry information notably in the highly specialized art of recording political and military history [more]. Whereas relationships may be described as "bonds", without any implication of a knot, curiously the process of "tying a knot" is associated with marriage ("getting spliced"). A "binding " contract may also be understood in these terms -- recalling the "pulling together" sense of "con-tract". This suggests the possibility of asking the question: what kind of knot is that relationship? Contracts might be usefully analyzed in terms of knot theory.

Daniel Ogden explores The Importance of Twistedness in binding spells, curses and voodoo dolls (in Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Eds). Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome, 1999)

Myth and twistedness

Inspired by depth psychologist James Hillman, Greg Nixon (Curriculum as Mythic Image Spring 69: Education A Journal of Archetype and Culture, 2002) argues that:

> It is the dreamlike -- horrifying or exalting -- quality of myths which seems to exist as a "glistening interface" between the underworld of soul and our daylight reality. In this light, myths are not the creations of words but, in a twisted sense, the words are a condensation of myth. Archetypal psychology, then, though never defining myth per se, would likely consider myth to be an expression of the experience of the suprapersonal image. Myth is the name of that experience, taken within, as it were -- subjected (not projected). Hillman (On the Necessity for Abnormal Psychology, 1980) denies that "the world of the gods" is an anthropomorphic projection of our own. Instead, our "secular" world is "an imitative projection of theirs, including their pathologies".

In Central America, for example, Itzcoliahuqui, the Twisted Obsidian One is the God of the Curved Obsidian Blade, and god of darkness and destruction. Having been blinded and cast down from the heavens, Itzcoliahuqui strikes out randomly at his victims.

Of special interest in exploring the role of twistedness in the study of mythology and religion of many cultures, is the trickster. This may be a god, goddess, spirit or human who breaks the rules of the gods or nature, sometimes maliciously, but usually with ultimately positive effects. Often, the rule-breaking takes the form of tricks or thievery. Tricksters can be cunning or foolish or both; they are often very funny even when they are considered sacred and are performing important cultural tasks. [more]

"Twisted philosophy"

There is a case for recognizing forms of twistedness in philosophical argument due to the inadequacies of language and the constraints on comprehension. Thus the early Greek philosopher, Heraclitus of Ephesus, was nicknamed the Riddler because the manner of his oracular style that favoured obscurity, ambiguity, word play, riddles and paradoxes to produce linguistic density and resonance. Dissatisfied with earlier efforts to comprehend the world, Heraclitus notably delivered his pronouncements in deliberately contradictory (or at least paradoxical) form. The structure of puzzling statements, he believed, mirrors the chaotic structure of thought, which in turn is parallel to the complex, dynamic character of the world itself [more].

The Taoist "crazy wisdom" philosophers might be perceived in a similar way.

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