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## ON THE UTILITY OF THE MATHEMATICAL AND METAPHYSICAL SCIENCES

(INTRODUCTION TO THEORETIC ARITHMETIC)\*

BY THOMAS TAYLOR

### PART I

If philosophy, properly so-called, be, according to Plato, and as I am firmly persuaded it is, *the greatest good that was ever imparted by divinity to man*,† he who labours to rescue it from oblivion, and transmit it to posterity, must necessarily be endeavouring to benefit his country and all mankind, in the most eminent degree.

In consequence of the oblivion, indeed, into which genuine Philosophy has fallen, through the abolition of her schools, the mathematical disciplines have been rather studied with a view to the wants and conveniences of the merely animal life, than to the good of intellect in which our very being and felicity consist. Hence, the Pythagoric enigma, “a figure and a step, but not a figure and three oboli,” has been entirely perverted. For the whole attention of those who have applied themselves to the mathematics, has been directed to the oboli, and not to the steps of ascent; and thus, as their views have been grovelling, they have crept where they should have soared. Hence, too, the greatest eye of the soul has been blinded and buried, though, as Plato elegantly

\* Slightly abridged.

† The Pythagoreans were so deeply convinced of the truth of this assertion that one of them beautifully observes (*Iamblic. Protrept.*, p. 4): “The theorems of philosophy are to be enjoyed as much as possible, as if they were ambrosia and nectar. For the pleasure arising from them is genuine, incorruptible and divine. They are also capable of producing magnanimity, and though they cannot make us eternal beings, yet they enable us to obtain a scientific knowledge of eternal natures.” T.T.

observes, "it is purified and resuscitated by the proper study of these sciences, and is better worth saving than ten thousand corporeal eyes, since truth becomes visible through this alone."

This observation particularly applies to Theoretic Arithmetic, the study of which has been almost totally neglected: for it has been superseded by practical arithmetic, which though eminently subservient to vulgar utility, and indispensably necessary in the shop and the counting house, yet is by no means calculated to purify, invigorate, and enlighten the mind, to elevate it from a sensible to an intellectual life, and thus promote the most real and exalted good of man. Indeed, even with respect to geometry itself, though the theory of it is *partially* learnt from the Elements of Euclid, yet it is with no other view than that of acquiring a knowledge of the other parts of mathematics which are dependent on it, such as astronomy, optics, mechanics, and the like, without having even a dreaming perception of its first and most essential use: that of enabling its votary, like a bridge, to pass over the obscurity of a material nature, as over some dark sea to the luminous regions of perfect reality; or as Plato elegantly expresses it, "conducting them as from some benighted day, to the true ascent to incorporeal being, which is genuine philosophy itself."

If the mathematical sciences, and particularly arithmetic and geometry, had been studied in this partial and ignoble manner by the sagacious Greeks, they would never have produced a Euclid, an Apollonius, or an Archimedes,\* men who carried geometry to the acme of *scientific* perfection, and whose works, like the remains of Grecian art, are the models by which the unhallowed genius of modern times has been formed.

Having premised thus much, I shall in the next place present the reader with some observations on the essence of mathematical genera and species, on the utility of the mathematical science, and on the origin of its name, derived from the admirable com-

\* Plutarch, in his Life of Marcellus, informs us that the reason why Archimedes did not vouchsafe to leave any account of the admirable machines which he invented, in writing, was because "he considered the being busied about mechanics, and in short every art which is connected with the common purposes of life, as ignoble and illiberal; and that those things alone were objects of his ambition, with which the beautiful and the excellent were present, unmingled with the necessary." T.T.

mentaries of Proclus on Euclid, as they will considerably elucidate many parts of the following work, and may lead the well-disposed mind to a legitimate study of the mathematical disciplines, and from thence to all the sublimities of the philosophy of Plato.

With respect to the first thing proposed, therefore, if it should be said that mathematical forms derive their subsistence from sensibles, which is the doctrine of the present day, the soul fashioning in herself by a secondary generation the circular or trigonic form from material circles or triangles, whence is the accuracy and certainty of definitions derived? For it must necessarily either be from sensibles or from the soul. It is, however, impossible it should be from sensibles; for these being in a continual flux of generation and decay, do not for a moment retain an exact sameness of being, and consequently fall far short of the accuracy contained in the definitions themselves. It must therefore proceed from the soul which gives perfection to things imperfect, and accuracy to things inaccurate. For where among sensibles shall we find the impartible, or that which is without breadth or depth? Where the equality of lines from a centre, where the perpetually stable ratios of sides, and where the exact rectitude of angles? Since all divisible natures are mingled with each other, and nothing in these is genuine, nothing free from its contrary, whether they are separated from each other, or united together. How then can we attribute this stable essence to immutable natures, from things that are mutable, and which subsist differently at different times? For whatever derives its subsistence from mutable essences, must necessarily have a mutable nature. How also from things which are not accurate can we obtain the accuracy which pertains to irreprehensible forms? For whatever is the cause of a knowledge which is perpetually mutable, is itself much more mutable than its effect. It must be admitted, therefore, that the soul is the generator of mathematical forms, and the source of the productive principles with which the mathematical sciences are replete.

If, however, she contains these as paradigms, she gives them subsistence essentially, and the generations are nothing else than the projections of the forms which have a prior existence in herself. And thus we shall speak conformably to the doctrine of Plato, and discover the true essence of mathematical objects. But if the soul, though she neither possessed nor causally con-

tained these productive principles, could yet weave together so great an immaterial order of things, and generate such an admirable theory, how would she be able to judge whether her productions were stable, or things which the winds might dissipate, and images rather than realities? What standard could she apply as the measure of their truth? And how, if she did not possess the essence of them, could she generate such a variety of principles productive of truth? For from such an hypothesis we should make their subsistence fortuitous, and not referred to any scientific bound.

In the second place, therefore, if by a downward process and from sensibles we arrive at mathematical principles, must we not necessarily say that those demonstrations are more excellent which derive their composition from sensibles, and not those which are always framed from more universal and more simple forms? For we say, with reference to the investigation of the thing sought, that the causes should be appropriate and allied to the demonstrations. If, therefore, partial natures are the causes of universals, and sensibles of the objects of the reasoning power, why does the boundary of demonstration always refer to that which is more universal, instead of that which is partial? And how can we evince that the essence of the objects of the reasoning power is more allied to demonstrations than the essence of sensibles? For, as Aristotle\* says, his knowledge is not legitimate, who demonstrates that the isosceles, the equilateral, or the scalene triangle, have angles equal to two right, but he who demonstrates this of every triangle, and simply, has essentially a scientific knowledge of this proposition. And again, he says, that universals, for the purpose of demonstration, are superior to particulars; that demonstrations concern things more universal; and that the principles of which demonstrations consist, have a priority of existence, and a precedency in nature to particulars, and are the causes of the things which are demonstrated. It is very remote, therefore, from demonstrative sciences, that from converse with *things of posterior origin* and from the more obscure objects of sensible perception, they should collect their indubitable propositions.

In the third place, the authors of this hypothesis make the

\* In his *Posterior Analytics*.

soul to be more ignoble than the material forms themselves. For if matter, indeed, receives from nature things which are essential, and which have a greater degree of entity and evidence, but the soul by a posterior energy abstracts the resemblances and images of these from sensibles, and fashions in herself forms which have a more ignoble essence, by taking from matter things which are naturally inseparable from it, do they not evince the soul to be more inefficacious than and subordinate to matter itself? For matter is the place of material productive principles, and the soul of immaterial forms. On this hypothesis, however, matter would be the recipient of primary, but the soul of secondary forms. The one would be the seat of things which have a precedency among beings; but the other of such as are fashioned from these. And the former of things which have an essential subsistence; but the latter, of such as exist only in conception. How, therefore, can the soul which is a participant of Intellect, and the first Intellectual Essence, and which is from thence filled with knowledge and life, be the receptacle of the most obscure forms, the lowest in the order of things, and participating the most imperfect existence.\*

\* In addition to the above excellent arguments from Proclus, I shall present the liberal reader with what Syrianus, the preceptor of Proclus, says on the same subject, in his commentary on the 13th book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and which is as follows: "We neither behold all the figures nor all the numbers contained in sensibles, nor is it possible for things derived from sensibles to possess mathematical accuracy and certainty. But if it should be said that we add what is wanting, and make the things abstracted from sensibles more certain, and after this manner consider them; in the first place, indeed, it is requisite to say whence we derive the power of thus giving them perfection. For we shall not find any cause more true than that assigned by the ancients; I mean that the soul prior to the energies of sense essentially contains the reasons of all things. But in the next place, by adding something to the things abstracted from sensibles, we do not make them more certain and true, but, on the contrary, more fictitious. For if any one blames the person of Socrates, while he accurately preserves in his imagination the image which he has received from the sensible Socrates, he will have an accurate knowledge of his person; but if he wishes to transform it into a more elegant figure, he will rather consider the transformed figure than the form of Socrates. Nothing, however, of this kind takes place in equal and similar numbers and figures; but by how much the nearer we bring them to the more certain and perfect, they become

By no means, therefore, is the soul a smooth tablet, void of productive principles, but she is an ever-written tablet, herself inscribing characters in herself, of which she derives an eternal plenitude from intellect. For soul also is an intellect evolving itself conformably to a prior Intellect, of which it is the image, and external type. If therefore Intellect is all things intellectually, soul will be all things psychically (or in a manner adapted to soul); if the former is all things paradigmatically, the latter will be all things iconically or conformably to an image; and if the former, unitively, the latter, with expansion and divisibly. This, Plato also perceiving, constitutes the soul of the world (in the *Timaeus*), from all things, divides it according to numbers, binds it by analogies and harmonic ratios, inserts in it the primary principles of figures, the right and circular line, and intellectually moves

by so much the more manifest and known, in consequence of approaching so much the nearer to their own impartible form. We may say indeed that we are excited to the perception of mathematical truths by sensible objects; but it must by no means be admitted that they derive their subsistence by an abstraction from sensibles. For the forms, indeed, which are transmitted to us through the senses may proceed as far as to the imagination, in which they wish to retain an individual subsistence, and to continue such as they entered. When intellect, however, afterwards passes beyond these to universal, and to things which are apprehended by scientific reasoning, it plainly evinces that it considers objects allied to itself, and which indeed are its legitimate progeny. Hence, this energy imitates divine energy, and is not laborious, and has a power of exciting, purifying and enlightening the rational eye of the soul. But how could this be effected, if it were employed about things which only subsist by an abstraction from sensibles?"

In short, one of these two things must follow: either that mathematical demonstrations are less certain than physiological arguments; or that the mathematical sciences are conversant with things which possess more reality than the objects of physics. For it is not reasonable to suppose that things which have more reality should be more obscurely known, nor that things which are less real should be more manifestly known. But whenever this happens in the speculation of any intelligible essence, it is the consequence of our imbecility, and does not arise from the thing itself. For the assertion of Plato in this respect is most true, that every thing participates of splendour and knowledge, in proportion as it participates of truth and being. The same thing also is manifestly asserted by Aristotle in the second book of his *Metaphysics*, for he there expressly says: "*As is the being of everything, such also is its truth.*" T.T.

the circles which it contains. Hence all mathematical forms have a primary subsistence in the soul; so that prior to sensible she contains self-motive numbers, vital figures prior to such as are apparent, harmonic ratios prior to things harmonized, and invisible circles prior to the bodies that are moved in a circle. Soul also is a plenitude of all things, and another order, herself producing herself, and at the same time produced from her proper Principle, filling herself with life, and being filled by her Fabricator, incorporeally and without interval. When therefore she produces her latent principles, she unfolds into light all sciences and virtues.

Hence, the soul is essentialized in these forms, and neither must her inherent number be supposed to be a multitude of monads or units, nor must her idea of natures that are distended with intervals be conceived to subsist corporeally; but all the paradigms of apparent numbers and figures, ratios and motions, must be admitted to exist in her vitally and intellectually, conformably to the *Timaeus* of Plato, who gives completion to all the origin and constitution of the soul, in mathematical terms, and in her establishes the causes of all things. For the seven boundaries of all numbers pre-exist in soul according to cause. And again, the principles of figures are established in her in a fabricative manner. The first of motions also, and which comprehends and moves all the rest, are consubsistent with soul. For the circle, and a circular motion, are the principle of everything which is moved. The mathematical productive principles therefore, which give completion to the soul, are essential, and self-motive; and the reasoning power exerting and evolving these, gives subsistence to all the variety of the mathematical sciences. Nor will she ever cease perpetually generating and discovering one science after another, in consequence of expanding the impartible forms which she contains. For she antecedently received all things causally; and she will call forth into energy all-various theorems, according to her own infinite power, from the principles which she previously received.

## LIEH TSZE AND "THE CLASSIC OF FULLNESS AND EMPTINESS"

The simplicity and profundity of the writings of Lao Tsze, the founder of Taoism, are so outstanding, and the interest taken in his *Tao Teh King* or *Simple Way* has been so great, both in the land of its origin and wherever it has become known through translations, that there has been a tendency to overlook, in some measure, those who have followed him.

About two hundred years after the birth of Lao Tsze (generally accepted as 604 B.C.) tradition makes mention of Lieh Tsze, one of the most able of his followers and exponents.

Very little is known concerning the life of Lieh Tsze beyond that which is recorded of him by his more famous contemporary, Chuang Tsze; in fact, it has been possible to discover so little about him that certain modern scholars even suggest—as they have done in the case of many of the authors of ancient scriptures and philosophies—that he is a purely legendary character.

Those who hold this theory claim that the work was written by an able Taoist of the second century A.D., who used material of an earlier date; and that the Lieh Tsze mentioned by Chuang Tsze was an invention of that author.

Against this theory may be placed the verdict of the eighteenth-century compilers of the great catalogue of the Chien Lung Library (representing the cream of Chinese scholarship of that period), who affirm that *The Book of Lieh Tsze* is a genuine document.

In A.D. 742 (in the Tang Dynasty, A.D. 713-756) the Emperor Hsuan Tsung raised the work to the dignity of a classic, under the title of *Chung Hsu Ching* or *The Classic of Fullness and Emptiness*.

Professor Wylie, in his *Notes on Chinese Literature*, states that the work was probably handed down to posterity by the pupils of Lieh Tsze. He considers that the main portion of the work is undoubtedly genuine, but that there may have been some additions in later years.

The book remains as an evidence of the depth of insight of its author. It consists of eight chapters, which in the original Chinese are usually bound in three volumes, and accompanied by the fourth-century Commentary by Chang Chan.

Of the two Chinese characters which compose the name of

the author, the second, Tsze, means sage or philosopher. It is usually found in the names of the venerable teachers of ancient China, as, for instance, in those of Lao Tsze and Chuang Tsze. It is also in the name of Confucius, which is simply a Latinized form of the Chinese characters of the name Kung-fu-Tsze, that great Sage known and revered in China as "The Master Kung." The character Lieh is the family name, placed first, according to the Chinese custom. It means "to arrange in an ordered manner," and Lieh Tsze especially exemplifies order and method in his philosophical writings.

The references to Lieh Tsze contained in the works of Chuang Tsze are legendary rather than historical.

The Taoist writings abound in descriptions of the mysterious and the miraculous. The following narrative contains a deeper truth than is expressed in the literal account of the actual happenings, and it should be considered as symbolical and analogical rather than merely historical.

In his youth Lieh Tsze had a teacher named Hu Tsze, but not being contented with the slow and steady progress attained under this Sage's instructions, he went to visit a magician of great repute, named Chi Han, and became fascinated by his display of powers.

Lieh Tsze returned to his teacher full of enthusiasm about what he had seen. "Bring him to me," said Hu Tsze, "and I will show myself to him."

After the visit the magician said to Lieh Tsze: "Your teacher can hardly live ten days; I could see only the dampened ashes of his life."

Lieh Tsze returned to his master, weeping; but the latter explained to him: "While he was present I assumed the quiescence of dormant nature, the manifestation of Yin, veiling my vitality; but bring him again."

After the second visit the magician said: "It was a fortunate day for your teacher when you brought me to see him, for he is now likely to recover; the balance of recuperative power has turned in his favour."

Upon this being reported to Hu Tsze, he explained: "This time I showed myself to him as exemplifying the vitality of Heaven, the manifestation of Yang, with life welling from beneath my feet; but bring him to me again."

On the third day a similar interview took place, and as they departed together Chi Han said to Lieh Tsze: "Your teacher is never twice the same; from his features I can discover nothing. Tell him to be more consistent and I will view him once again and reveal to you his destiny."

On hearing this report, Hu Tsze said: "This time I showed myself to him as the perfect equilibrium of the Yang and Yin. This is the third aspect of the Abyss of Tao, of which there are nine aspects."

The following day they went again to see Hu Tsze, but almost immediately Chi Han turned and fled. "Pursue him," said Hu Tsze, but Lieh Tsze was unable to overtake him, so he returned to his master saying that the magician had quite disappeared from view.

"To-day," said Hu Tsze, "I showed myself to him as Tao subsisted before the beginning of time: I was to him as a Great Void. This it was that overwhelmed him so that he ran away."

These incidents caused Lieh Tsze to realize that he had really not begun to fathom the profundity of his master's teaching concerning the mysteries of Tao; whereupon he returned to his home for a period of three years in order to perform the ordinary duties of life and to meditate on that which had been revealed to him.

In the works of Chuang Tsze there is another interesting passage concerning Lieh Tsze, in which he is said to have asked a question of Kwan Yin, the Warder of the Western Gate.

This Kwan Yin (sometimes called Yin Hsi) was said to have been the contemporary and immediate disciple of Lao Tsze, who entrusted him with the manuscript of the *Tao-Teh-King* when the master was on his way to the Western Haven, the Abode of Peace.

Considerably over a hundred years divide this episode from the time usually ascribed to Lieh Tsze, and it is therefore evident that the incident should be considered as an allegory—Kwan Yin being the Keeper of the Gate of Wisdom, who belongs not to any particular time or place, but stands always ready to open his portal to those who call upon him with intelligence and humility.

The question which Lieh Tsze asks is as follows: "How is it that Perfect Man can pass through solid bodies without obstruc-

tion; walk through fire without being burned, and scale heights without fear?"

In reply, Kuan Yin answered: "Sit beside me and I will tell you.

"It is not because of his skill or daring that a man may accomplish such things, but because of his Intrinsic Purity.

"Whatsoever has form, sound, and colour may be termed a thing. Man, however, has special capacities which lift him above the externalities of manifested things; for the Perfected Man can transcend form and attain immortality. Having attained to this state, what can limit or restrict him?

"Man, resting at his own centre, may dwell in everlastingness, and yet journey throughout all creation. Resting in Unity, he may establish his strength, harmonize his virtue, and thus consciously work with the Divine."

There is a further reference by Chuang Tsze to Lieh Tsze which obviously is to be considered as symbolical.

"Lieh Tsze could ride on the wind wherever he desired, sublimely indifferent to cold and heat, returning again after fifteen days. He was blissfully free from restricting desires.

"He who has Heaven and Earth for his chariot, and the Six Influences of the Universe\* as his steeds, and may thus course through Everlastingness, what can restrict him? Therefore it is said:—

The Perfect Man has no thought of self.  
The Spiritual Man has no thought of merit.  
The Sage has no thought of fame."

The following new translation of the first four sections of *The Classic of Fullness and Emptiness* is a very free one.

These sections have been chosen as being the most important part of the work.

\* The Yang and Yin, Wind and Rain, Splendour and Obscurity (The Six Chi).

THE CLASSIC OF FULLNESS AND EMPTINESS

By LIEH TSZE

BOOK I

BENEFICENT INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF  
THE WORLD

1. *The Auspicious Order of the Heavens*

The Master Lieh Tsze lived for forty years in a garden in the State of Cheng, and few knew him to be a Sage. In the eyes of the princes and nobility he was one of the common people. It so happened, however, that the land was visited by a famine, and he was preparing to leave his home and journey to Wei. His disciples came to him and said: "As our Master is going away and we know not the hour of his return, may we not venture to ask for some final instructions, or some words of wisdom from Hu-Kiu-Tsze-Lin?"\*

The Master Lieh Tsze smiled and said: "Ah, what indeed did the Master Hu say! I well remember what he said to Po-Hun-Wu-Jen while I stood beside them: I will endeavour to recount his words:—

‘There is a Life which is uncreated:  
There is a Mover who is changeless.  
Only the Uncreated can create Life:  
Only the Changeless can create change.  
That which lives must continue to generate:  
That which changes must continue to change.  
Therefore life and change are perpetual,  
And life and change at all times continue to operate.  
They are observable in the Yang and Yin;  
They operate in the Four Seasons.  
The Uncreated is alone with Itself.  
The Unchanging flows this way and that,  
Through endless space,  
Yet It remains One, and Inexhaustible.’”

\* The Master of Lieh Tsze, sometimes shortened to Hu-Tsze.

In *The Book of the Yellow Emperor*\* it is written:—

“The Spirit of the Void never dies.

It is called the Mother Deep.

The Opening of the Mother Deep is called the Root of Heaven and Earth.

Ceaselessly, ceaselessly,

It nourishes and preserves:

Inexhaustible, without effort.”

“That which creates all things is Itself uncreated;

That which changes all things is Itself immutable.

It is: Self-Created

Self-Transformed

Self-Subsistent

Self-Manifested

Self-Intelligent

Self-Powerful

Self-Dispensing

Self-Reposeful.

Yet not by any one of these attributes may It be truly named.”

## 2. *The Beginning of Heaven and Earth*†

The Master Lieh Tsze said: “The Ancient Sages speak of Yang and Yin as the first cause of Heaven and Earth. Everything corporeal has its origin in that which is incorporeal; Heaven and Earth must also be thus engendered; therefore I say:—

“In the beginning was the Chaos of Simplicity. It contained the potentialities of Form, Subtle Matter and Gross Matter.

“A Great Change took place in Chaos and there was the Great Origin which is the Origin of Form.

“The Great Origin caused the Great Beginning which is the beginning of Subtle Matter.

“The Great Beginning was followed by the Great Void in which resides Gross Matter.

\* *The Book of the Yellow Emperor* is no longer extant, but the passage quoted is preserved in *The Simple Way of Lao Tsze*. See *Shrine of Wisdom* edition, p. 18.

† For a fuller explanation of the Chinese conception of Heaven and Earth see Chu Hsi on this subject in *The Shrine of Wisdom*, No. 40, p. 103.

“Gross Matter, Subtle Matter and Form, having thus emerged out of Chaos, all things were produced.

“Though we look we do not see it; though we listen we do not hear it; though we pursue, it eludes our grasp: therefore the Chaos of Simplicity is Calm and Still and Formless.

“From this Calmness it changed and became One. The One changed again and became Seven; the Seven changed and became Nine; but Nine is the furthest point of change, and from thence it became One again. This One is the Origin of the changing world of Form.

“That which was pure and light ascended and became Heaven. That which was turbid and heavy descended and became Earth. That from which the unifying force rayed forth became Man. Therefore Heaven and Earth contain the seeds out of which all things are generated through change.”

### 3. *The Perpetual in the Eternal*

The functions of Heaven and Earth, the wisdom of the Sage, and the usefulness of all-various things are severally distinctive.

Heaven forms and overshadows.  
 Earth provides material and support.  
 The Sage teaches and ordines.  
 Things fulfil their destined purpose.

Yet there are conditions in which Earth may excel Heaven, and things possess more freedom than the Sage. For it is clear that that which produces and overshadows cannot provide material and support; that which provides material and support cannot teach and ordinate; he who teaches and ordines cannot over-rule the natural purposes of things which are rooted in unchangeable and universal laws. Therefore the principles of Heaven and Earth will be either of Yin or Yang; the teaching of the Sage will be either benevolent or just; the properties of things will be either soft or hard. All these conform to their inherent properties, and abide in their allotted stations.

There is Life, and there is a succession of lives.  
 There is Form, and there are endless forms.  
 There is Sound, and there is a multiplicity of sounds.  
 There is Colour, and there are chromatic phenomena.

There is Taste, and there are innumerable flavours.

Successive lives begin and end, but Life is Eternal.

Endless forms succeed one another, but Form is an unchanging Reality.

A multiplicity of sounds may be produced, but Sound itself has never been heard.

Chromatic phenomena may abound, but Colour itself has never been seen.

Innumerable flavours may be enjoyed, but Taste itself has never been tasted.

All these phenomena are the functions of Wu-Wei\* (Mystical action-in-inaction).

It unites opposites in Itself: the bright and the obscure, the soft and the hard, the round and the square, life and death, heat and cold, floating and sinking, treble and bass, absent and present, light and dark, sweet and bitter, fragrant and fetid. It has neither knowledge nor ability, and yet is All-knowing and All-mighty.

#### 4. *The Course of Life*

The Master Lieh Tsze journeyed to Wei. On the way he rested to partake of refreshments. His disciples discovered an ancient skull and bent back the undergrowth by which it was hidden that he might see it. He turned to his disciple Po Feng and said: "He and I both know that there is Something which is Uncreated and which never dies; Something which is beyond all nourishment and all satisfaction."

The seed of life manifests variously, according to type. It becomes plants and animals and the bodies of men. It proceeds and returns in cycles.

In the Book of the Yellow Emperor it is written:—

"The movement of forms produces not forms but shadows; the resounding of sounds produces not sounds but echoes.

"Material forms, as such, must of necessity end. Heaven and Earth are finite in time, even as our bodies; but the end of time is unknown. How can the conception of the creation of the Cosmos have an end, when it had no beginning?"

\* Concerning Wu-Wei see *The Simple Way (Shrine of Wisdom edition)*, p. 41.

“That which has life returns again to the Lifeless.\*  
That which has form returns again to the Formless.  
That which is lifeless does not eternally remain lifeless.  
That which is formless does not eternally remain formless.

“Things exist because they cannot do otherwise;  
Things come to an end because they cannot do otherwise, just as  
those which are born, are born because they cannot be unborn.

“There are those who aspire to shut out death;  
There are those who wish to limit their bodily life;  
Both are deceived.  
The formal element in man pertains to Heaven:  
The bodily frame of man pertains to Earth.  
That which belongs to Heaven is pure and tenuous:  
That which belongs to Earth is turbid and dense.  
When the Soul departs from the body, each returns whence it came  
to its real abode:  
The body returns to that from which it sprang;  
The Soul returns through the Gate from which it emerged.”

## SEED THOUGHTS FROM CONFUCIUS

When we know a thing, to know that we know it; and when we do not know a thing, to admit that we do not know it; this is true knowledge.

Threefold is the way of the Sage.  
Being loving he is without anxiety.  
Being wise he is without doubts.  
Being powerful he is without fear.

The Master said: I do not murmur against Heaven, neither do I complain of the actions of men; learning from the lowest, yet do I cleave the heights. It is Heaven alone that knows me.

To subdue selfish desires and return to conformity is perfect virtue. If we could but do this for a day, all below Heaven would turn to virtue.

If in the morning we discover the Way (Tao) we may die in the evening without regret.

\* Life itself.

A DISCOURSE ON THE IMMORTALITY  
OF THE SOUL\*

By JOHN SMITH (Cambridge Platonist)

## I

Here we are to take notice of those two cardinal points which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes the necessary foundations of all religion, viz., "That God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him." To which we should add, *the immortality of the reasonable soul*, but that *that* may seem included in the former: and, indeed, we can neither believe any invisible reward of which he there speaks without an anterior belief of the soul's immortality; neither can we entertain a serious belief of that, but the notions of *poena* and *praemium* will naturally follow from it. We never met with any who were persuaded of the former, that ever doubted of the latter; and therefore the former two have usually been taken alone for the first principles of religion, and have been most insisted upon by the Platonists. And, indeed, we scarce ever find that any were deemed religious that did not own these two fundamentals.

But, if we will have the fundamental articles of Christian religion, we must add to the former *The communication of God to mankind through Christ*, which last the Scripture treats of at large, so far as concerns our practice, with that plainness and simplicity that I cannot but think that whosoever shall, ingeniously and with humility of spirit addressing himself to God, converse therewith, will see the bright beams of divinity shining forth in it, and, it may be, find the text itself much plainer than all those glosses that have been put upon it, though perhaps it is not so clear in matters of speculation as some magisterial men are apt to think it is.

In pursuing these three articles of faith and practice, we shall first begin with *the immortality of the soul*, which, if it be once cleared, we can neither leave any room for atheism (which those, I doubt, are not ordinarily very free from that have gross

\* Abridged from *Select Discourses*.

material notions of their own souls) nor be wholly ignorant what God is: for, indeed, the chief natural way whereby we can climb up to the understanding of the Deity is by a contemplation of our own souls. We cannot think of Him but according to the measure and model of our own intellect, or frame any other idea of Him than what the impressions of our own souls will permit us; and therefore the best philosophers have always taught us to inquire for God within ourselves, "Reason in us," as Cicero tells us, being *participata similitudo rationis aeternae*; and, accordingly, some good expositors have interpreted that place in St. John's gospel, "He is that true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world," which, if I were to gloss upon in the language of the Platonists, I should do it thus: "The Eternal Word is the light of souls," which the vulgar Latin referred to in Psalm iv. 7, *Signatum est supra nos lumen vultus tui, Domine*, as Aquinas observes. But we shall not search into the full nature of the soul, but rather make our inquiry into the immortality of it, and endeavour to demonstrate that.

## II

## SOME CONSIDERATIONS PREPARATORY TO THE PROOF OF THE SOUL'S IMMORTALITY

1. *The immortality of the soul doth not absolutely need any demonstration to clear it by, but might be assumed rather as a principle or postulatum, seeing the notion of it is apt naturally to insinuate itself into the belief of the most vulgar sort of men.* Men's understanding commonly lead them as readily to believe that their souls are immortal as that they have any existence at all. And, though they be not all so wise and logical as to distinguish aright between their souls and their bodies, or tell what kind of thing that is which they commonly call their soul, yet they are strongly inclined to believe that some part of them shall survive another, and that that soul, which, it may be, they conceive by a gross phantasm, shall live when the other more visible part of them shall moulder into dust. And therefore all nations have consented in this belief, which hath almost been as vulgarly received as the belief of a Deity, as a diligent converse with history will assure us, it having been never so much questioned by the idiotical sort of men as by some unskilful philosophers, who

have had wit and fancy enough to raise doubts, like evil spirits, but not judgment enough to send them down again.

This *consensus gentium* Cicero thinks enough whereby to conclude a law and maxim of nature, which, though I should not universally grant, seeing sometimes error and superstition may strongly plead this argument, yet I think for those things that are the matter of our first belief that notion may not be refused. For we cannot easily conceive how any prime notion, that hath no dependency on any other antecedent to it, should be generally entertained did not the common dictate of nature or reason, acting alike in all men, move them to conspire together in the embracing of it, though they knew not one another's minds.

The notion of the immortality of the Soul is such an one as is generally owned by all those that yet are not able to collect it by a long series and concatenation of sensible observations and, by a logical dependence of one thing upon another, deduce it from sensible experiments—a thing that, it may be, was scarce ever done by the wisest philosophers. It is rather believed with a kind of repugnancy to sense which shows all things to be mortal, and which would have been too apt to have deluded the ruder sort of men did not a more powerful impression upon their souls forcibly urge them to believe their own immortality. Indeed, if the common notions of men were well examined, perhaps some common notion akin to this of the immortality may be as generally received, which yet in itself is false (and that, by reason of a common prejudice by which the earthly and sensual part of man will equally influence all men, until they come to be well acquainted with their own souls), namely, a notion of the soul's materiality, and, it may be, its traduction too, which seems to be as generally received by the vulgar sort as by the former. But the reason of that is evident; for the souls of men exercising themselves first of all, as the Greek philosopher expresseth it, merely by a "progressive kind of motion"—spending themselves about bodily and material acts, and conversing only with sensible things, they are apt to acquire such deep stamps of material phantasms to themselves that they cannot imagine their own being to be any other than material and divisible, though of a fine ethereal nature: which kind of conceit, though it be inconsistent with an immortal and incorruptible nature, yet hath had too much prevalency in philo-

sophers themselves, their minds not being sufficiently abstracted while they have contemplated the highest Being of all. But such common notions as these are, arising from the deceptions and hallucinations of sense, ought not to prejudice those which not sense, but some higher power, begets in all men.

2. *To a right conceiving of the force of any such arguments as may prove the soul's immortality there must be an antecedent converse with our own souls.* It is no hard matter to convince anyone, by clear and evident principles, fetched from his own sense of himself, who hath ever well meditated on the powers and operations of his own soul, that it is immaterial and immortal.

But those very arguments that to such will be demonstrative, to others will lose something of the strength of probability: for, indeed, it is not possible for us well to know what our souls are but by their circular and reflex motions and by converse with themselves, which only can steal from them their own secrets. All those discourses which have been written of the soul's heraldry will not blazon it so well to us as itself will do. When we turn our own eyes in upon it, it will soon tell us its own royal pedigree and noble extraction, by those sacred hieroglyphics which it bears upon itself.

3. *No substantial and indivisible thing ever perisheth.* We shall here be content with that sober thesis of Plato in his *Timaeus*, who attributes the perpetuation of all substances to the benignity and liberality of the Creator. Plato held that the whole world howsoever it might meet with many periodical mutations, should remain eternally, which I think our Christian divinity doth nowhere deny; and so Plotinus frames this general axiom: "That no substance shall ever perish." And, indeed, if we collate all our own observations and experience, with such as the history of former times hath delivered to us, we shall not find that ever any substance was quite lost; but though this Proteus-like matter may perpetually change its shape, yet it will constantly appear under one form or another, what art soever we use to destroy it.

## III

The soul of man is something really distinct from his body, of an indivisible nature, and so cannot be divided into such parts as should flit from one another; consequently, it is apt of its own nature to remain to eternity, and so will do, except the decrees from heaven should abandon it from being.

If the reasonable soul be not of such an immaterial nature, then it must be a body. Let us therefore so suppose it to be made up as all bodies are: but because of the difference in the opinions of philosophers who hold this theory let us take only one, viz., that of Epicurus, which supposeth it to be made up of a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and in that demonstrate against all the rest; for, indeed, herein a *particular* demonstration is a *universal*, as it is in all mathematical demonstrations of this kind. For, if all that which is the basis of our reasons and understandings, which we here call the *substance of the soul*, be nothing else but a mere body, and therefore be infinitely divisible, as all bodies are, it will be all one in effect whatsoever notion we have of the generation or production thereof. We may give it finer words, and use more demure and smooth language about it than Epicurus did, as some that, lest they should speak too rudely and rustically of it by calling it *matter*, will name it *efflorescentia materiae*: and yet, lest that should not be enough, add Aristotle's quintessence to it also: and they will be so trim and courtly in defining it that they will not call it by the name of *æer*, *ignis*, or *flamma*, as some of the ancient vulgar philosophers did, but *flos flammae*. But, when we have taken away this disguise of wanton wit, we shall find nothing better than mere body, which will be recoiling back perpetually into its own inert and sluggish passiveness: and though we may think we have quickened it never so much by this subtile artifice of words and phrases, a man's newborn soul will, for all this, be but little better than his body; and, as that is, be but a *rasura corporis alieni*—made up of some small and thin shavings pared off from the bodies of the parents by a continual motion of the several parts of it; and must afterwards receive its augmentation from that food and nourishment which is taken in, as the body doth. So that the very grass we walk over in the fields, the dust and mire in the streets that we tread upon, may, according to the

meaning of this false philosophy, after many refinings, macerations, and maturations, which nature performs by the help of motion, spring up into so many rational souls, and prove as wise as any Epicurean, and discourse as subtilly of what it once was, when it lay drooping in a senseless passiveness.

But in truth that mental faculty and power whereby we judge and discern things is so far from being a body that it must retract and withdraw itself from all bodily operation whensoever it will nakedly discern truth. For, should our souls always mould their judgment of things according to those impressions which seem to be framed thereof in the body, they must then do nothing else but chain up errors and delusions one with another instead of truth: as, should the judgments of our understandings wholly depend upon the sight of our eyes, we should then conclude that our mere accesses and recesses from any visible object have such a magical power as to change the magnitudes of visible objects, and to transform them into all varieties of figures and fashions; and so we should attribute all that variety to them which we find in our corporeal perceptions. This is an unquestionable argument that that power whereby we discern things, and make judgments of them which are different, and sometimes contrary to those perceptions that are the necessary results of all organical functions, is something distinct from the body; and therefore, though the soul, as Plato hath well observed, be in its nature various and divisible accidentally in these sensations and motions wherein it extends and spreads itself, as it were, upon the body, and so, according to the nature and measure thereof perceives its impressions, yet it is indivisible, returning into itself. Whensoever it will speculate on truth itself, it will not then listen to the several clamours and votes of these rude senses which always speak with divided tongues; but it consults some clearer oracle within itself: and therefore Plotinus hath well concluded concerning the body: "Should a man make use of his body in his speculations, it would entangle his mind with so many contradictions that it would be impossible to attain to any true knowledge of things."

We also find such a faculty within our own souls as collects and unites all the perceptions of our several senses, and is able to compare them together; something in which they all meet as in one centre, which Plotinus hath well expressed: "That in

which all those several sensations meet, as so many lines drawn from several points in the circumference, and which comprehends them all, must needs be one." For, should that be various and consisting of several parts, which thus receives all these various impressions, then must the sentence and judgment passed upon them be various too. Aristotle says: "That must be one which judgeth things to be diverse"; and that must judge too, setting all before it at once. Besides, we could not conceive how such an immense variety of impressions could be made upon any piece of matter without the obliteration and defacement of one another. And therefore Plotinus hath well disputed against them who make all things to be sensation.

Let us next consider that knowledge which the soul retains in itself of things past, and, in some sort, prevision of things to come, whereby many grow so sagacious in foreseeing future events that they know how to deliberate and dispose of present affairs, so as to be ready furnished and prepared for such emergencies as they see in a train and series of causes which sometimes work but contingently. I cannot think that Epicurus himself could, in his cool thoughts, be so unreasonable as to persuade himself that all the shuffling and cutting of atoms could produce such a divine piece of wisdom as this is. What matter can thus bind up past, present, and future time together? While the soul of man doth this, it seems, as far as its own nature will permit, to strive after an imitation of God's Eternity; and, grasping and gathering together a long series of duration into itself, it makes an essay to free itself from the rigid laws of time, and to purchase to itself the freedom of a true eternity. And as by its "chronical and successive operations" (as the Platonists are wont to speak) it unravels and unfolds the contexture of its own indefinite intellectual powers by degrees, so, by this memory and prevision, it recollects and twists them all up together again into itself. And though it seems to be continually sliding from itself in those various vicissitudes and changes which it runs through in the constant variety of its own effluxes and emanations, yet it is always returning back again to its first original by a swift remembrance of all those motions and multiplicity of operations which have begot in it the first sense of this constant flux. As if we should see a sunbeam perpetually flowing forth from the bright body of the sun, and yet ever returning

back to it again; it never loseth any part of its being, because it never forgets what itself was: and though it may number out never so vast a length of its duration, yet it never comes nearer to its old age, but carrieth a lively sense of its youth and infancy along with it, which it can at pleasure lay a fast hold on.

But if our souls were nothing else but a complex of fluid atoms, how we should be continually roving and sliding from ourselves, and how soon forget what we once were! The new matter that would come in to fill up that vacuity which the old had made by its departure would never know what the old was, nor what that should be that would succeed. "That new pilgrim and stranger-like soul would always be ignorant of what the other before it knew, and we should be wholly some other bulk of being than we were before," as Plotinus hath so excellently observed.

Such a jewel as this is too precious to be found in a dunghill: mere matter could never thus stretch forth its feeble force, and spread itself over all its own former pre-existences. We may as well suppose this dull and heavy earth we tread upon to know how long it hath dwelt in this part of the universe it now dwells in, and what variety of creatures have in all past ages sprung forth from it, and all those occurrences and events which have during all this time happened upon it.

## PRAYERS OF THE MYSTICS

Vouchsafe to us, O Lord God, that having our hearts sprinkled we may be accounted worthy to enter into the holy of holies, to stand before Thine altar, high exalted, and to present unto Thee a reasonable and spiritual sacrifice.

—*Liturgy of the Syrian Jacobites.*

O Thou, the highest Beauty of Holiness, O Thou my sole Trust, my Lover and my Hope, impart unto me somewhat of Thy beauty. Renew me inwardly and outwardly according to Thine own likeness, till this life is accomplished. Let me die to this world that I may live to Thee. Let me arise with Thee that with Thee I may ascend unto Heaven.

—*J. Arndt.*

# THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF LETTERS

## THE NAME OF GOD

### THE BARDIC SECRET

Pray, my skilful and discreet teacher, if it be fair to ask, how was the knowledge of letters first obtained?

I will exhibit the information of men of wisdom and profound knowledge, thus: When God pronounced His name, with the word sprang the light and the life; for previously there was no life except God Himself. And the mode in which it was spoken was of God's direction. His name was pronounced, and with the utterance was the springing of light and vitality, and man and every other living thing; that is to say, each and all sprang together. And Menw the Aged, son of Menwyd, beheld the springing of the light, and its form and appearance, not otherwise than thus, /|\, in three columns; and in the rays of light the vocalization—for one were the hearing and seeing, one unitedly the form and sound; and one unitedly with the form and sound was life, and one unitedly with these three was power, which power was God the Father. And since each of these was one unitedly, he understood that every voice, and hearing, and living, and being, and sight, and seeing, were one unitedly with God; nor is the least thing other than God. And by seeing the form, and in it hearing the voice—not otherwise—he knew what form and appearance voice should have. And having obtained earth under him coinstantaneously with the light, he drew the form of the voice and light on the earth. And it was on hearing the sound of the voice, which had in it the kind and utterance of three notes, that he obtained the three letters, and knew the sign that was suitable to one and other of them. Thus he made in form and sign the Name of God, after the semblance of rays of light, and perceived that they were the figure and form and sign of life; one also with them was life, and in life was God, that is to say, God is one with life, and there is no life but God, and there is no God but life.

It was from the understanding thus obtained in respect of this voice that he was able to assimilate mutually every other

voice as to kind, quality, and reason, and could make a letter suitable to the utterance of every sound and voice. Thus were obtained the Cymraeg, and every other language. And it was from the three primary letters that were constructed every other letter, which is the principal secret of the Bards of the Isle of Britain; and from this secret comes every knowledge of letters that is possible.

Thus was the voice, that was heard, placed on record in the symbol, and meaning attached to each of the three notes: the sense of O was given to the first column, the sense of I to the second or middle column, and the sense of V to the third; whence the word OIV. That is to say, it was by means of this word that God declared His existence, life, knowledge, power, eternity, and universality. And in the declaration was His love, that is, coinstantaneously with it sprang like lightning all the universe into life and existence, co-vocally and co-jubilantly with the uttered Name of God, in one united song of exultation and joy—then all the worlds to the extremities of Annwn. It was thus, then, that God made the worlds, namely, He declared His Name and existence  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} / \backslash \\ \text{OIV} \end{array} \right\}$ .

Why is it not right that a man should commit the Name of God to vocalization, and the sound of language and tongue?

Because it cannot be done without misnaming God, for no man ever heard the vocalization of His Name, and no one knows how to pronounce it; but it is represented by letters, that it may be known what is meant, and for Whom it stands. Formerly signs were employed, namely, the three elements of vocal letters. However, to prevent disrespect and dishonour to God, a Bard is forbidden to name Him, except inwardly and in thought.

Pray, my beloved and discreet teacher, show me the signs that stand for the Name of God, and the manner in which they are made.

Thus are they made: the first of the signs is a small cutting or line inclining with the sun at eventide, thus, /; the second is another cutting in the form of perpendicular, upright post, thus, |; and the third is a cutting of the same amount of inclination as the first, but in an opposite direction, that is, against the sun, thus, \; and the three placed together, thus, /|\. But instead of, and as substitutes for, these are placed the three

letters O I W. And it was in this manner that the Bard inserted this name in his stanza, thus,  
 The Eternal, Origin, Self-existent, Distributer,—holy be the lips  
 That canonically pronounce them;  
 Another name, in full word,  
 Is O I and W—O I W the word.

This name God gave Himself, to show that He is in existence, and that there is no one but Himself, except by gift and permission; for truly all of us men, and other living beings, are and exist only by the gift and permission of God. It is considered presumptuous to utter this name in the hearing of any man in the world. Nevertheless, everything calls Him inwardly by this name—the sea and land, earth and air, and all the visibles and invisibles of the world, whether on the earth or in the sky—all the worlds of all the celestials and terrestrials—every intellectual being and existence—every thing animate and inanimate; wherefore none that honours God will call Him by this name except inwardly.

The three mystic letters signify the three attributes of God, namely, love, knowledge, and truth; and it is out of these three that justice springs, and without one of the three there can be no justice. Which one so ever of the three stands up, the other two will incline towards it; and every two of them whatsoever will yield precedency and pre-eminence to the third, whichever of the three it may be. It was according to this order and principle that three degrees were conferred upon the Bards of the Isle of Britain, and each of the three was invested with privilege, precedency, and pre-eminence, in respect of the particularity of necessity, over the other two, whichsoever they might be. Out of the three attributes of God spring every power and will and law.—From BARDDAS.

## LOVE, THE TRANSMUTER

Thou that desirest to love, hearken and hear of love. In the Song of Love it is written: "I sleep and my heart watches." He shows great love who is never loth to love but is always—standing, sitting, going, or working—thinking of his love and often dreaming thereof.

Love is a virtue that is the rightest affection of man's soul. Faith may be without love, but it may not avail without it.

Love is the perfection of letters, virtue of prophecy, fruit of faith, health of sacraments, stability of wisdom and knowledge, riches of poor men, life of dying men. See how good love is!

Love is a rightwise turning from all earthly things, and is joined to God without separation and kindled with the fire of the Holy Spirit; far from defilement, far from corruption, subject to no vice of this life, high above all fleshly lusts, ever ready and eager for the contemplation of God. In all things unsurpassable, the sum of all good affections, health of good manners, and of the commandments of God, death of sin, life of virtue, strength whilst fighting lasts, crown of victors, arms to holy thoughts, without which no man can please God, with which no man sins.

We shall exert ourselves to clothe ourselves in love, as the iron or the coal does in the fire, as the air does in the sun, as the wool does in the dye. The coal so clothes itself in the fire that it is all fire; the air so clothes itself in the sun that it is all light; and the wool so substantially takes the dye that it is like it. In this manner shall a true lover of Christ do: his heart shall so burn in love that it shall be turned into fire of love and be, as it were, all fire; and he shall so shine in virtues that no part of him may be dark in vices.

Where is love? Love is in the heart and in the will of man; . . . not in his heart, but in his soul. For many speak good and do good and love not God . . . because they seek praise and honour of men. . . .

Love is in will verily, not in work except as a sign of love.

How shall I verily love God? True love is to serve Him with all thy might *stalwartly*, with all thy heart *wisely*, with all thy soul *devoutly and sweetly*.

—Richard Rolle.