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THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE

As Discussed in the *Gorgias* of Plato

The subject of the *Gorgias*, according to Thomas Taylor, is "political felicity", and this, in its widest and highest sense, is the most true aim of human life. Real happiness springs from order and harmony in the soul, and as Socrates points out at the end of the dialogue, it is only when souls have become temperate, just, and holy, and have practised virtues in common that they can become the best leaders in a state and the fittest to advise, guide, and train those in their care.

Socrates, accompanied by his friend Chaerephon, is on the way to hear Gorgias, the great rhetorician, celebrated throughout Greece, when he meets Callicles, a wealthy Athenian, who tells them that the exhibition is over, and invites them to his own house where Gorgias is staying.

The persons of the dialogue are drawn with characteristic definition and humour. Gorgias, the accomplished rhetorician, confident of his own powers, courteous, and free from arrogance, is ready to listen to and learn from Socrates—indeed, such is his interest in the discussion that he insists that Socrates shall follow it out to the end, in spite of the impatient opposition of his friend Callicles. With Gorgias is contrasted Polus, a young, spirited, ambitious exponent of rhetoric who has already written a book on the subject. He ridicules Socrates at first, and when refuted, angrily attacks him, but in the end yields to his irrefutable demonstrations. Very different from the two rhetoricians, who are both convinced by the arguments, is Callicles, a man of the world, cynical, materialistic, a lover of power and

pleasure, and quite unscrupulous as to the means of attaining them. He represents the very evils against which Socrates is contending—the spirit of uncontrolled ambition and the desire for domination combined with a contempt for all that is spiritual. He is impatient of the methods of Socrates, unreasonable and insolent when refuted, and not sincere enough to accept the consequences of the admissions which he is obliged to make. In the end he recognizes, but rejects, the better kind of life, and moved by kindlier feelings towards Socrates, urges him to secure his own physical safety by doing likewise.

Thomas Taylor, in the introduction to his translation of this dialogue, gives an extract from the MS. Scholia of Olympiodorus which treats of the dramatic elements, the scope, and the divisions of the *Gorgias*, the persons in it, and their analogy.

With respect to the scope of the dialogue, Olympiodorus says that its purpose is to discourse concerning the principles which conduct us to political felicity, and continues:

“Since, then, we have mentioned principles and a polity, let us speak concerning principles universally, and concerning a political felicity, and also what the principles are of the political science. The principles, therefore, of everything are six. *Matter*, as with a carpenter, wood. *Form*, the writing-table, or something of this kind. *That which makes*, as the carpenter himself. *The paradigm* to which he directs his phantasy in making the table. *The instrument*, the saw, perhaps, or axe, and *the end*, that on account of which it was made.

“The multitude, therefore, and rhetoricians, not looking to truth, say that *the matter* of the political science is the body which is preserved; *the form*, luxury; *the producing cause*, rhetoric; *the paradigm*, a tyranny; *the instrument*, persuasion; and *the end*, pleasure. And such are their assertions.

“We, however, say that *the matter* is soul, and this not the rational only, but that which consists of three parts (reason, anger, and desire): for it imitates a polity. And as in cities there are governors, soldiers and merchants, so in us reason is analogous to the governor; anger to the soldier, subsisting as a medium and being obedient to reason, but commanding and ranking the merchants, that is, desire.

“*The matter*, therefore, is the soul, considered as divided into

three parts. For the political character wishes to be angry and to desire with respect to such things as are proper, and when it is proper. Just as the lowest string of a musical instrument accords with the highest and emits the same sound with it, though more acute. For thus desire is conjoined with reason. But *the form* is justice and temperance. *The producing cause* is a philosophic life. But *the paradigm* is the world. For the political philosopher arranges all things in imitation of the universe which is replete with excellent order. For this universe is order (cosmos), according to Plato, and not disorder (acosmia). Manners and discipline are *the instrument*, and *the end* is good. It must, however, be observed that good is twofold, one of which pertains to us in the present life, but the other we possess hereafter. Political good, therefore, belongs to us in the present, but theoretic good will be our portion in another life.

“To Gorgias, therefore, the discourse is about the *producing cause*; to Polus, about the *formal*; and to Calicles, about the *final*. Nor is it wonderful if all appear to be in all. For in the producing cause the rest are found, and in the others all; for there is a certain communion among them, and they pervade through each other. But they derive their order from that which abounds.

“Hence, therefore, the division of the dialogue becomes apparent. For it is divided into three parts: into the discourse with Gorgias; into that with Polus; and into that with Calicles. It is necessary also to observe that justice and temperance are peculiarly said to be the form of the political science. For it is necessary to know that all the virtues contribute to political felicity, but especially these two. Hence Plato always makes mention of these as being neglected by men. For they wish to know the other two (prudence and fortitude) though not perfectly, yet fictitiously, and under a false appellation. Hence they say, ‘such a one is a prudent man, he knows how to enrich himself.’ And in a similar manner with respect to fortitude; but they neglect the other two. There is, however, occasion for this, since they proceed through all the parts of the soul. For as he who in the city performs his proper work and gives to every man that which is his due, is said to be just; in like manner justice rules in the soul when reason, anger and desire respectively perform the office accommodated to each. If this be the

case, temperance then subsists in the soul when each part does not desire that which is foreign to its nature.

"In the next place it is worth while to inquire into the number and analogy of the persons. Five persons, therefore, are introduced, namely Socrates, Chaerephon, Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles. Of these, Socrates is analogous to that which is intellectual and scientific; Chaerephon to right opinion; Gorgias to distorted opinion; for he was not entirely vanquished by injustice, but was dubious whether he should be persuaded or not. But Polus is analogous to injustice and to one who is alone ambitious; and Callicles is analogous to a swinish nature and which is a lover of pleasure."

"I shall only observe," says Thomas Taylor, "in addition to what Olympiodorus has said, that Plato does not condemn all orators, but only those who study to persuade their hearers to embrace whatever they please, whether it be good or bad, false or true. . . . He also adds that a legitimate orator ought to understand the reasons of things, the laws of manners, the powers of words, and the different dispositions of men; that he should know how to compose words adapted, as much as possible, to the genius of his hearers; and that he should not be so anxious that what he says may be pleasing to man, as that it may be acceptable to Divinity."

The dialogue opens with a question put to Gorgias as to the nature of rhetoric. Polus offers to reply, and makes an elaborate statement which does not answer the question. This is gently pointed out by Socrates, and after a few more exchanges Socrates turns to Gorgias, asking him to answer more briefly. An amusing conversation follows in which the rhetorician answers for the most part in monosyllables, and it is elicited that the business of rhetoric is discourse. On being asked the nature of this discourse, since discourse can be upon many different subjects, Gorgias declares that it refers to the greatest good—that which gives to men personal freedom, and to rulers their power of rulership—namely, persuasion exercised through rhetoric. Rhetoric is therefore defined as "the artificer of persuasion, having this as its crown and end."

Socrates shows the inadequacy of this definition by pointing out that teachers also aim at persuading their pupils about the particular subjects taught, and the definition, amended by

Gorgias, becomes, "the art of persuasion in the courts and other gatherings about the just and the unjust."*

A series of questions and answers shows that one kind of persuasion leads to knowledge and the other kind merely to belief, and that the rhetorician can create belief about justice and injustice, but cannot give instruction about them. Socrates is not satisfied that the meaning of rhetoric has been found. The pupils of Gorgias might wish to learn how to advise the State on many subjects besides the just and the unjust, yet, as rhetoricians, would seem to be less qualified to do so than specialists in those subjects.

"I like your way of leading us on, Socrates," says Gorgias, "and I will endeavour to reveal to you the whole nature of rhetoric. You must have heard, I think, that the docks and the walls of the Athenians and the plan of the harbour were devised in accordance with the counsels partly of Themistocles and partly of Pericles, and not at the suggestion of the builders. . . . And you will observe that when a decision has to be given in such matters, the rhetoricians are the advisers; they are the men who win their point."

"I was wondering that this should be so, Gorgias, when I asked what is the nature of rhetoric, which always appears to me, when I look at the matter in this way, to be a marvel of greatness."

"A marvel, indeed, Socrates, if you only knew how rhetoric comprehends and holds under her sway all the inferior arts. I will give you a striking example of this. On several occasions I have been with my brother Herodicus or some other physician to see one of his patients who would not allow the physician to give him medicine or apply the knife or hot iron to him, and I have persuaded him to do for me what he would not do for the physician, just by the use of rhetoric."

Gorgias elaborates this point and goes on to say that rhetoric ought to be used fairly, and that the man who makes a bad use of the art is to be blamed, but that neither the teacher nor the art itself is blameworthy on this account.

"You, Gorgias, like myself," says Socrates, "have had great experience of arguments, and you must have observed, I think,

* Quotations are from Jowett's translation unless otherwise indicated.

that they do not always terminate to the satisfaction or mutual improvement of the disputants; but disagreements are apt to arise, and one party will often deny that the other has spoken truly or clearly; and then they leave off arguing and begin to quarrel, both parties fancying that their opponents are only speaking from personal feeling. And sometimes they will go on abusing one another until the company at last are quite annoyed at their own condescension in listening to such fellows. Why do I say this? Why, because I cannot help feeling that you are now saying what is not quite consistent or accordant with what you were saying at first about rhetoric. And I am afraid to point this out to you, lest you should think that I have some animosity against you, and that I speak, not for the sake of discovering the truth, but from personal feeling. Now if you are one of my sort, I should like to cross-examine you, but if not I will let you alone. And what is my sort? you will ask. I am one of those who are very willing to be refuted if I say anything which is not true, and very willing to refute anyone else who says what is not true, and just as ready to be refuted as to refute; for I hold that this is the greater gain of the two, just as the gain is greater of being cured of a very great evil than of curing the evil in another."

"I should say, Socrates, that I am quite the man whom you indicate, but . . . I think that we should consider whether we may not be detaining some part of the company when they are wanting to do something else."

At this, the cheering of the audience shows their desire for a further discussion, and Callicles assures Chaerephon that he would gladly listen all day to such discourse.

"Let me tell you then, Gorgias, what makes me wonder at your words, though I dare say that you may be right and I may have mistaken your meaning. You say that you can make any man, who will learn of you, a rhetorician?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean that you will teach him to gain the ears of the multitude on any subject, and this not by instruction, but by persuasion?"

"Certainly."

"You were saying, in fact, that the rhetorician will have greater powers of persuasion than the physician even in a matter of health?"

"Yes, with the multitude, that is."

"That is to say, greater with the ignorant; for with those who know, he cannot be supposed to have greater power of persuasion than the physician has."

"Very true."

"And if he is to have more power of persuasion than the physician, he will have greater power than he who knows?"

"Certainly."

"Though he is not a physician, is he?"

"No."

"And he who is not a physician is obviously ignorant of what the physician knows?"

"That is evident."

"Then, when the rhetorician is more persuasive than the physician, the ignorant is more persuasive with the ignorant than he who has knowledge?—is not this the inference?"

"In the case which is supposed, yes."

"And the same holds good of the relation of rhetoric to all the other arts; the rhetorician need not know the whole truth about them; he has only to discover some way of persuading the ignorant that he has more knowledge than those who know?"

"Yes, Socrates," says Gorgias, "and is not this a great blessing? not to have learned the other arts, but the art of rhetoric only, and yet to be in no way inferior to the professors of these?"

Socrates then asks whether the rhetorician is also ignorant of the just and the unjust, the base and the honourable, and whether he causes his pupils to appear to know these also when they are ignorant of them; and whether he seems to be a good man when he is not. Gorgias replies that if one of his students does not know the just and the unjust, he will have to teach him. It thus appears that the rhetorician is supposed to be a just man, unwilling to do injustice, although it was previously said that a man who made a bad use of rhetoric was blameworthy. Socrates says that it is because he perceived the inconsistency implied in the statement that rhetoric treated of the just and the unjust, that he has followed the argument to this stage. "There will be a good deal of discussion, Gorgias," he remarks, "before we get at the truth of all this."

Here Polus impatiently breaks in: "Do you, Socrates, seriously incline to believe what you are now saying about rhetoric? What! because Gorgias was ashamed to deny that the rhetorician knew the just and the honourable and the good, and that he could teach them to anyone who came to him ignorant of them? . . . Do you suppose that anyone will ever say that he does not know or cannot teach the nature of justice? The truth is, that there is a great want of manners in bringing the argument to such a pass!"

"Illustrious Polus," rejoins Socrates, with mild irony, "the great reason why we provide ourselves with friends and children is that when we get old and stumble, a younger generation may be at hand to set us on our legs again in our words and in our actions: and now if Gorgias and I are stumbling, there you are a present help to us, as you ought to be."

Polus now takes up the discussion and chooses to question Socrates. "I will ask, and do you answer me, the same question which Gorgias, as you suppose, is unable to answer: What is rhetoric?"

"Do you mean, what sort of an art?"

"Yes."

"Not an art at all, in my opinion, if I am to tell you the truth, Polus." Socrates explains that rhetoric is a kind of skilled experience or routine of making a sort of delight or gratification.

"And if able to gratify others, must not rhetoric be a fine thing?" says Polus.

"What are you saying, Polus? Why do you ask me whether rhetoric is a fine thing or not, when I have not yet told you what rhetoric is?"

"Why, did you not say that rhetoric was a sort of experience?"

"As you are so fond of gratifying others, will you gratify me in a small particular?"

"I will, Socrates."

"Will you ask me what sort of an art is cookery?"

"What sort of an art is cookery?"

"Not an art at all, Polus. I should say, a kind of experience of making a sort of delight and gratification."

"Then are cookery and rhetoric the same?"

"No, they are only different parts of the same profession."

Socrates hesitates to explain further, lest his remarks may seem discourteous to Gorgias, but when Gorgias urges him to speak his mind, he says that the whole of which rhetoric is a part appears to him to be, not an art, but rather the habit of a bold and ready wit which knows how to behave in the world, and which he sums up in the term "flattery". Polus, prompted by Socrates, next asks "What part of flattery is rhetoric?" and Socrates answers, "Rhetoric, according to my view, is the shadow of a part of politics."

"Noble or ignoble?"

"Ignoble, as I should say if I am compelled to answer, for what is bad is ignoble: though I doubt whether you understand what I was saying before."

"Indeed, Socrates," interposes Gorgias, "I cannot say that I myself understand."

"I do not wonder at that; for I have not as yet explained myself, and Polus, like a young colt,* as he is, is inclined to run away."

"Never mind him, but explain to me what you mean by saying that rhetoric is a part of politics."

Socrates, by questions put to Gorgias, brings out the point that both for bodies and souls there is such a thing as a good and a bad condition, and that there may also be the appearance of good without the reality, as when a body which appears healthy is not really so. There are two arts, aiming respectively at the health of the soul and the body; namely politics, with its two subdivisions legislation and justice, for the soul, and an art with the two subdivisions gymnastic and medicine, for the body, the whole constituting a fourfold art.

Flattery also has four divisions, each of which simulates one of the previous four. These are (1) cookery, which appears to know what food is best for the body, but which aims really at bodily pleasure, and hence simulates medicine; (2) the art of self-adornment or deceptive attire which by means of lines, colours, enamels and garments, gives a spurious appearance of beauty, to the neglect of the true beauty of body given by gymnastics; (3) sophistry, which simulates legislation; and

* There is an untranslatable play on the word Polus, which means a colt.

(4) rhetoric, which simulates justice. If represented in mathematical form it can be said that :

as self-adornment	:	gymnastics	::	cookery	:	medicine
as self-adornment	:	gymnastics	::	sophistry	:	legislation
as	:	cookery	:	medicine	::	rhetoric : justice.

Polus ironically asks whether rhetoricians, being considered as flatterers, have a low standing in the State. He protests that they have great power, but has to admit that real power is a good to the possessor; to which Socrates rejoins that in that case rhetoricians have the least power of all the citizens, because they do only what they think best, and not what they will.

Polus admits that power exercised without understanding is an evil, but he cannot see any difference between the statements "they do as they think best," and "they do as they will." He agrees to answer questions on this point, and is shown that when men act, they do so not for the sake of the action itself, but for the sake of some further end, which is the thing which they will. For instance, a man wills not the unpleasant medicine he drinks, but the health for the sake of which he drinks it.

All things can be classed as good, evil, or indifferent. Wisdom and health, for example, can be called good, and their opposites evil, while actions such as sitting or running, or objects such as wood or stones partake sometimes of good and sometimes of evil and sometimes neither of good nor evil, but are all for the sake of the good. In fact, all that is done, is done with a view to our good; for even if we deprive another of his goods, or exile him, we think we are serving our good.

Polus agrees to the conclusion that a man wills his own good, and if an act is neither good nor evil, or is simply evil, it is therefore not willed. If this is granted, then a tyrant or any man who kills or exiles another or deprives him of his goods in the belief that this is for his own interests when really it is not to his interests, may be said to do that which seems best to him, but not that which he wills.

"Then," says Socrates, "I was right in saying that a man may do what seems good to him in a State, and not have great power, and not do what he wills?"

"As though you, Socrates, would not like to have the power of doing what seems good to you in the State rather than not!

You would not be jealous when you saw someone killing or despoiling or imprisoning whom he please, O no!"

"Justly, or unjustly, do you mean?"

"In either case is he not equally to be envied?"

"Have done, Polus!"

"Why 'have done'?"

"Because you should not envy wretches who are not to be envied, but only pity them."

The discussion which follows brings out the truth that the one who suffers injustice is less wretched and to be pitied than the one who inflicts injustice, because the doing of injustice is the greatest of evils. Polus, however, still believes that to suffer injustice is the greater evil, but finally agrees that great power is a good to a man only if his actions result in his true advantage; otherwise such power is evil, and is not great power; and that such things as the suffering of death or exile or the deprivation of property are sometimes a good and sometimes not so.

"Tell me then," says Socrates, "when you say that they are good and when that they are evil: how do you determine that?"

"I would rather, Socrates, that you should answer as well as ask that."

"Well, Polus, I say that they are good when they are just, and evil when they are unjust."

"Though you are hard of refutation, Socrates, a child may refute that statement," says Polus, and to prove his point he cites the case of the tyrant Archelaus, once a slave, who had recently seized the throne of Macedonia by force and murdered the king, his former master. Then, far from thinking himself miserable, or repenting of his crime, had slain his own brother, a child of seven years. Polus ironically suggests that the lot of Archelaus, the greatest criminal in Macedonia, is the last Socrates would choose!

"But, my good friend, where is the refutation?" demands Socrates. "I certainly do not admit a word of what you have been saying."

"That is because you won't; for you must surely think as I do."

"Not so, my simple friend, but because you will refute me in the way which rhetoricians fancy to be refutation in courts of law." Socrates explains that the calling of a number of false

witnesses gives no proof, but here the proof will lie in making Polus the one willing and true witness of the words of Socrates.

Polus then repeats his own opinion—that the wicked are not miserable, that the wrong-doer is happier if unpunished than if punished, and that to suffer injustice is a greater evil than to do injustice.

Taking the last statement, Socrates asks which is the greater disgrace, to do or to suffer injustice?

“To do,” answers Polus.

“And the greater disgrace is the greater evil?”

“Certainly not.”

“I understand you to say, if I am not mistaken, that the honourable is not the same as the good, or the disgraceful as the evil?” “Certainly not.”

“And what do you say to this? When you speak of beautiful things, as, for example, bodies, colours, figures, sounds, institutions, do you not call them beautiful in reference to some standard:—bodies, for example, are beautiful in proportion as they are useful, or as the sight of them gives pleasure to the spectators; can you give any other account of personal beauty?”

“I cannot,” says Polus.

“And you would speak of everything else—of figures, or colours, for example, as beautiful, either by reason of the pleasure they give, or of their use, or both?”

“Yes, I should.”

“And you would call sounds and music beautiful for the same reason?”

“I should.”

“Laws and institutions also have no beauty in them except in so far as they are pleasant or useful or both?”

“I think not.”

“And may not the same be said of the beauty of knowledge?”

“To be sure, Socrates; and I very much approve of your measuring beauty by the standard of pleasure and utility.”

“And deformity and disgrace may be equally measured by the opposite standard of pain and evil?”

“Certainly.”

“Then when of two beautiful things, one exceeds in beauty, the excess is to be measured in one or both of these; that is to say, in pleasure, or good, or both?”

"Very true."

"And of two deformed things, that which exceeds in deformity or disgrace, exceeds either in pain or evil—does not that follow?"

"Yes."

"But then again, what was that observation which you just now made about doing and suffering wrong? Did you not say, that suffering wrong was more evil, and doing wrong more disgraceful?"

"I did say that."

"Then if doing wrong is more disgraceful than suffering wrong, the more disgraceful must be more painful and exceed in pain or in evil or both: is not that the necessary inference?"

"Of course."

It is evident to Polus that the injurers do not suffer more pain than the injured, hence they do not exceed in both, and the excess must be in evil. The doing of injustice, therefore, will be a greater evil than the suffering of injustice, as well as a greater disgrace.

"And would you prefer a greater evil or a greater dishonour to a lesser one? Answer, Polus, and fear not, for you will come to no harm if you nobly give yourself to the healing power of the argument, which is a sort of physician, and either say yes or no."

"I should say not," says Polus.

Socrates next asks whether the greatest of evils to a guilty man is to suffer punishment, as Polus supposes, or whether to escape punishment is not a greater evil. The questions and answers lead to the conclusion that he who punishes rightly acts justly, and hence the one punished suffers justly, and suffers that which is honourable and good, so that the soul of such a man is benefited. When Polus agrees to this, Socrates goes further and says that injustice and the other evils of the soul are the most disgraceful—far more so than those of the body—and are therefore the most painful or the most harmful. Polus says that it is not more painful to be unjust, intemperate, cowardly, and ignorant than to be poor and sick; hence it follows that injustice, intemperance, and the like must be more harmful and evil. In fact, "injustice, intemperance, and in general the depravity of the soul is the greatest evil that there is," says Socrates.

In another series of inquiries Polus is shown that justice is the greatest of the arts which free men from evil, and that the most happy man is he who has never known vice in his soul; the next in order, he who is delivered from vice by just punishment; and the least happy, and the worst, is he who is unjust and has no deliverance, being unpunished. The case of a tyrant who commits great crimes is parallel to that of a man suffering from a deadly disease who will not consult a physician for fear of the treatment to be endured. Polus agrees that a corrupt and unholy soul is a far more miserable companion than a diseased body, and that those who seek to evade justice are blind to their own advantage.

Socrates, now completing the circle of the discussion, asks him where, in the light of all this, is the great use of rhetoric? For the only consistent inference is that the wrong-doer should hasten to obtain punishment, and rhetoric, as helping a man to excuse his own injustice, will not be required. The value of rhetoric will now be for self-accusation and for exhortation to the manly acceptance of punishment in the hope of attaining the good and the honourable. Polus finds this a very strange conclusion, but agrees that it follows from the premises.

Socrates, following the argument to the extreme, adds that if anyone wishes to harm another, he should try to help him to escape punishment.

(To be continued)

SEED THOUGHT

The light of wisdom is often obscured by the smoke of ignorance; and man is deluded thereby, and mistaking the smoke for the flame, knowing not what lieth behind the smoke. But they who are able to pierce the pall of smoke, perceive the radiant flame of the Spirit, shining like unto an infinity of suns, free and undimmed by the smoke which hath shielded it from the eyes of the majority of men.

—*Bhagavad Gita*

THE ELEVATION

By JOHN NORRIS*

Take wing, my soul, and upwards bend thy flight
To thy originary fields of light.

There's nothing, nothing here below
That can deserve thy longer stay;

A secret whisper bids thee go
To purer air and beams of native day.
Th' ambition of the tow'ring lark outvy,
And like him sing as thou dost upward fly.

How all things lessen which my soul before
Did with the grovelling multitude adore!

Those pageant glories disappear,
Which charm and dazzle mortal eyes:

How do I in this higher sphere,
How do I mortals with their joys despise!
Pure, uncorrupted element I breathe,
And pity their gross atmosphere beneath.

How vile, how sordid here those trifles show
That please the tenants of that ball below!

But ha! I've lost the little sight!

The scene's removed, and all I see

Is one confused, dark mass of night
What nothing was, now nothing seems to be,
How calm this region, how serene, how clear!
Sure I some strains of heavenly music hear.

On, on, the task is easie now and light,
No streams of earth can here retard thy flight.

Thou needst not now thy strokes renew,

'Tis but to spread thy pinions wide,

And thou with ease thy seat will view,

*An article on John Norris, the Cambridge Platonist, was printed in *The Shrine of Wisdom*, No. 68. See also Nos. 60, 73, and 78.

Drawn by the bent of the ethereal tide.
'Tis so I find; how sweetly on I move
Not let by things below, and helped by those above!

But see, to what new region am I come?
I know it well, it is my native home.
Here led I once a life divine,
Which did all good, no evil know:
Ah! who would such sweet bliss resign
For those vain shows which fools admire below!
'Tis true, but don't of folly past complain,
But joy to see these blest abodes again.

A good retrieve: but lo! while thus I speak,
With piercing rays th' eternal day does break.
The beauties of the face divine
Strike strongly on my feeble sight:
With what bright glories does it shine!
'Tis one immense and overflowing light,
Stop here, my soul; thou canst not bear more bliss,
Nor can thy now rais'd palate ever relish less.

ANNOTATIONS

The general design of the precedent poem is to represent the gradual ascent of the soul by contemplation to the Supreme Good, together with its firm adherency to it, and its full acquiescence in it. All of which is done figuratively under the allegory of a local elevation from the feculent regions of this lower world.

"Pure uncorrupted element I breathe
And pity their gross atmosphere beneath."

By "pure uncorrupted element" is meant the refined intellectual entertainments of the *divine life* which are abstracted from all corporeal alloys—*Ἡδονὰς τὰς ἐαυτοῦ* as the divine Plato calls them, those pleasures which are peculiar to man as such. By "gross atmosphere" is meant the more drossy gratifications of the animal life which comes as short in purity of the divine, as the thick atmosphere does of the pure ether.

“No streams of earth can here retard thy flight, etc.”

The thing intended in this whole stanza is to insinuate the great facility and pleasure of the divine life to one who has arrived to an habit of it. For as the magnetic influence of the earth can have no force upon him who is placed in the upper regions beyond the sphere of its activity, so (which is the counterpart of the allegory) the inclinations of the animal nature have little or no power over him who has advanced to the heights of habitual contemplation. He looks down upon and observes the tumults of his sensitive appetite, but no way sympathizes with it; he views the troubled sea, but with the unconcernedness of a stander by, not as one that sails in it. His soul tho' in conjunction with his body is yet above the reach of its gusts and relishes, and from her serene station at once sees and smiles at its little complacencies. As Lucan says of the soul of Pompey when advanced to the ethereal regions :

*Illic postquam se lumine vero
Implevit, stellasque vagas miratur et astra
Fixa polis, vidit quanta sub nocte jaceret
Nostra dies, visitque sui ludibria trunci.*

“Drawn by the bent of the ethereal tide.”

This is an allusion to the Cartesian hypothesis of vortices or whirlpools of subtile matter. The mystic sense is this: That the higher a seraphic soul advances in the contemplation of the Supreme Good the stronger he will find Its attractions.

“I know it well, it is my native home.”

This verse with the whole stanza proceeds upon the Platonic hypothesis of pre-existence. I shall not here dispute the problem. Those who desire to be satisfied concerning it I refer to the works of that Oracle of profound wisdom and learning, the excellent Dr. More, to an ingenious treatise called *Lux Orientalis*, and to the account of Origen.

“Tis one immense and overflowing light.”

My business was here to give a compendious description of God. Now among all the representations we have of Him I thought none so agreeable to the genius of poetry as a sen-

suous one, and of all those I could not find a better in all the inventory of creation than this of light. I shall not here endeavor a parallel; it may suffice to say that the representation is warranted by authority both human and divine. The school of Plato describes the nature of God by an immense light or lucid fountain overflowing and diffusing its refreshing beams. And Holy Scripture goes further, and says in express terms that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. (John i. 5.)

EXTRACTS FROM THE NASNAVI

Jalalu'd-din Rumi

THE WAY TO PERFECTION

Whoso recognizes and confesses his own defects
Is hastening on the way that leads to Perfection!
But he advances not to the Almighty
Who fancies himself to be perfect.

THE LOVE OF THE SOUL AND THE LOVE OF THE BODY

The love of the soul is for Life and the Living One,
Because its origin is the Soul not bound to place.
The love of the soul is for wisdom and knowledge,
That of the body for houses, gardens, and vineyards;
The love of the soul is for things exalted on high,
That of the body for acquisition of goods and food.
The Love, too, of Him on high is directed to the soul:
Know this, for "He loves them that love Him."

TRIADS OF WISDOM*

Translated from the Welsh for *The Shrine of Wisdom* from the Myvyrian Archæology

113. Three signs of mercy: to turn aside from a resting beast of burden, to listen to the complaint of a child, and to respect old age.

114. Man's three signs of tranquillity: mercy towards his beast of burden, a desire to stay at home, and singing while at work.

115. Three signs of a bad disposition: giving advice before it is asked, doing that which is not necessary, and gossiping about neighbours.

116. Three marks of cruelty: to frighten an animal unnecessarily, to cut trees and herbs unnecessarily, and to beg importunately.

117. Three things which are good to possess: an inherited home, an art-craft, and the dignity of natural nobility.

118. Three things even better than these: a healthy body, commendable knowledge, and freedom from bondage.

119. Three things better than all of them: a vigorous reason, enduring courage, and a clean conscience.

120. Three things every man ought to have for himself: his own wife, his own home, and his own judgement.

121. Three things which unless watched may easily fall into the nature of deceit: the faculties of the mind, the fantasy of *Awen*, and the diversity of art.

122. Three things not easily perceived in others and therefore not easily prejudged: the tendency and inclination of *Awen*, the attempt to understand, and the judgement of conscience; and God alone knows them and judges them justly.

123. For three reasons these Triads from old Welsh manuscripts were collected by me, Thomas ab Ivan of Dre Bryn in Glamorgan in the year 1679: firstly to keep in memory the ancient wisdom of our nation, the Welsh, in the olden times; secondly for the enhancement of knowledge; and thirdly for the instruction of future ages.

* For previous Triads of this Series see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 75, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98 and 99.

THE DIVINE NAMES*

BY DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

Chapter IV continued

But some one might say, "If the Beautiful and the Good is the object of love and desire and affection to all (for even that which is not desires It, as has been said, and strives to abide in It, and It is Itself the moulder of the formless, and in Itself that which is not is said to abide superessentially), how is it that the hosts of daimons do not desire the Beautiful and the Good, but through their natural attraction to matter, and having fallen away from the angelic identity in respect of the desire for the Good, become the cause of all evils, both to themselves and to all others who are said to become corrupted? How is it that the race of the daimons, being produced wholly from the Good, are not like the Good, or how, if they were good when brought into being by the Good, did they become changed? And what corrupted them? And what, in short, is evil? From what principle did it arise, and in what kinds of beings does it exist? And how did the Good will to produce it, and how was He capable of willing this? And if evil comes from another cause, what other cause of anything can there be except the Good?"

"Again, how, when there is a Providence, can there be evil; how can it arise or remain undestroyed? And how can any being desire it before the Good?"

Thus, perhaps, will such a doubting voice speak. We, however, will bid the doubter look to the truth of things and will frankly say that evil is not from the Good, or if it is from the Good, it is not evil. For it is not the nature of fire to make things cold, or of good to bring forth that which is not good. And if all things that have being are from the Good (for it is the nature of the Good to produce and preserve, but of evil to corrupt and destroy), then nothing which is comes from evil. And evil itself could not exist if it were evil to itself, and if this is not so, then evil is not entirely evil, but has some portion of good through which it is a wholeness.

* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 96 to 99.

And if all things which have being desire the Beautiful and the Good and do all that they do for the sake of what seems good to them, and if the intention of all beings has the Good as its source and end (for nothing does what it does looking to evil as an end in itself), how can anything be essentially evil? Or how can it exist as a oneness lacking the desire for the Good? And if all things that have being have their being from the Good, and the Good is beyond all that is, then even non-being has its being in the Good.

But evil, indeed, has no being, otherwise it would not be wholly evil and that which is not, for that which is wholly non-existent will be nothing, unless this is spoken in a super-essential manner of the Good.

The Good, then, will be established far above and before both that which wholly is and that which is not, but evil is neither in that which is nor that which is not, and being further apart from the Good than even the non-existent, it is as it were foreign and unsubstantial.

Whence, then, it may be asked, comes evil? For if evil has no existence, virtue and vice are the same, both as wholes and in their parts. Besides, even that which opposes virtue will not be evil. Yet temperance and intemperance are opposites, as are justice and injustice; and I do not speak only of the just and unjust man or of the temperate and intemperate man, but I say that long before the difference between the just man and his opposite appears externally, the virtues are wholly distinct from the vices in the soul itself, and the passions rebel against the reason. We must therefore admit that there is some evil which is opposed to the good. For the good is not opposed to itself, but as coming forth from one Principle and one Cause, it rejoices in fellowship and union and friendship.

Nor yet is the lesser good opposed to the greater, just as the lesser heat or cold is not opposed to the greater. Therefore evil is in existing things and it exists and is opposed and contrary to the good; and if evil is the destruction of existing things, this does not destroy the existence of evil, but it will still have existence and generate existing things, for does not the destruction of one thing often result in the generation of another thing? And thus evil contributes to the completeness of the whole and by its presence saves the world from imperfection.

To this true reason will answer that evil, as such, produces no essence or existence, but only, in so far as it is able, corrupts and destroys the substance of things. But if anyone says that it contributes to the generation of things, since by the destruction of one thing it gives birth to another, the true answer is that not because of destruction does it give birth, for in so far as it destroys it is evil, since evil only corrupts and disintegrates; but it gives birth and generates substance through the Good. Thus evil, from itself, will indeed produce destruction, but it will contribute towards generation by reason of the Good. And evil, as such, neither possesses nor produces existence, but through the Good it both has existence and contributes to good.

Or rather, since the same thing is not in the same sense both good and evil, nor the same power in the same relation both generative and destructive either as power itself or destruction itself, evil in itself has neither being nor goodness nor generative power, nor can it produce being or goodness. The Good, however, renders those things in which It is perfectly present, perfect and pure and wholly good: but the things which have a lesser share in the Good are imperfect and impure because of their lack of goodness.

Thus evil is wholly without being, without goodness, and unproductive of good, but everything partakes of goodness in so far as it approaches more or less near to the Good, since the all-perfect Goodness, permeating all things, penetrates not only the wholly good beings around It, but extends Itself to the nethermost, being wholly present to some, in a lesser degree to others, and to others again in the least measure, in accordance with the capacity of each. And some beings participate fully in the Good, others are more or less deficient in it, others participate still less, while to others it is present only as the most distant echo of Goodness.

For if the Good were not present only in accordance with the capacity of each, the most divine and honourable things would have the same rank as the lowest, and how could it be possible for all things to receive uniformly from the Good, when they were not all equally adapted to partake of It?

(To be continued)

THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY

PROCLUS*

Proposition CLXXVII

Every intellect being a plenitude of forms, one indeed is comprehensive of more total, but another of more partial forms. And the superior intellects contain in a more total manner such things as those posterior to them contain more partially. But the inferior intellects contain more partially such things as those that are prior to them contain more totally

For the superior intellects employ greater powers, having more the form of the One than secondary intellects. But the inferior intellects, being more multiplied, diminish the powers which they contain. For things that are more allied to the One, being contracted in quantity, surpass the natures that are posterior to them. And on the contrary, things more remote from the One, as they are increased in quantity, are inferior to the natures that are nearer to the One. Hence the superior intellects, being established according to a greater power, but being less in multitude, produce a greater number of effects, according to power, through fewer things according to the quantity of forms. But the intellects posterior to them produce fewer effects through a greater number of things, according to a defect of power. If, therefore, the former produce a greater number of effects through fewer things, the forms in them are more total. And if the latter produce fewer effects through a greater number of things, the forms in them are more partial.

Corollary

Hence it follows that the natures which are generated from superior intellects according to one form, are produced, in a divided manner, from secondary intellects, according to many forms. And conversely, those natures which are produced by

* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 56 to 99.

inferior intellects through many and distinct forms, are produced by superior intellects through fewer but more total forms: for that indeed which is a whole and common, accedes supernally to all its participants; but that which is divided and peculiar accedes from secondary intellects. Hence secondary intellects, by the more partial separation of peculiarities, accurately and subtly distinguish the formations of primary intellects.

Proposition CLXXVIII

Every intellectual form gives subsistence to eternal natures

For if every intellectual form is eternal and immovable, it is essentially the cause of immutable and eternal hypostases, but not of such as are generated and corrupted. So that every thing which subsists according to an intellectual form is an eternal intellectual nature. For if all forms produce things posterior to themselves by their very being, but their essence possesses an invariable sameness of subsistence, the things produced by them will also be invariably the same, and will be eternal. Hence neither the genera which subsist from a formal cause, according to a certain time, nor corruptible natures so far as they are corruptible, have a pre-existent intellectual form. For they would be incorruptible and unbegotten if they derived their hypostasis from intellectual forms.

(To be continued)

JEWEL

When youth and age are paired in service, is there any lyre or flute that will produce so sweet a harmony or so nicely blended? For the qualities of old age will be associated with those of youth, with the result that old age will gain in strength and youth in discipline.

—*Apollonius of Tyana*