

# THE SHRINE *of* WISDOM

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## A DISCUSSION CONCERNING A KINGDOM\*

From the *Politicus* of Plato

Thomas Taylor, in his introduction to the *Politicus* or *Statesman*, says: "As there is one end for which nature, or rather the Author of nature, produced the parts of the human body, and another for which He formed the whole man, so likewise He directed an individual of the human species to one end, a family to another, and again a city and kingdom to another. And lastly, that is to be considered the best end for the sake of which He produced the whole human race.

Let no one, however, think that though there is a certain end of every partial association among mankind, yet there is none of the whole; and that though there is order in the parts of human life, yet there is confusion in the whole; or, in short, that though the parts possess union from being directed to one end, yet the whole is dispersed and unconnected: for if this were admitted, parts would be more honourable than the whole; though the former subsist for the sake of the latter, and not the latter for the sake of the former.

Hence it is necessary that there should be a certain end of the human race, and that it should consist in those energies through which it may imitate as much as possible things supernal; by science speculating things natural, human, and divine; by prudence properly managing human affairs; and by piety cultivating and venerating Divinity.

\* The quotations are from Jowett's translation except where otherwise indicated.

An end, therefore, of this kind, requires a twofold life, consisting both in action and contemplation, yet so constituted that action may subsist for the sake of contemplation, as that which is more excellent and divine.

Plato in this dialogue demonstrates that this end can be alone obtained by the human race under the government of a king who possesses consummate probity and science. Hence employing a most accurate division which is essentially necessary to definition and science, and in which Plato and his genuine disciples excelled in a transcendent degree, he Homerically denominates a king the shepherd and curator of the whole human race. This king, too, he compares to a physician, since such a one, by imposing laws both on the willing and the unwilling, procures salutary remedies for his subjects. But he more frequently calls a governor and curator of this kind a politician than a king, signifying by this that he will be so humane and mild that among the citizens he will appear to be a fellow-citizen, and will evince that he is rather superior to them in justice, prudence, and science, than in any other endowments. He likewise asserts that the man who far surpasses all others in justice and prudence is born a king, though he should live the life of a private individual: and it may be collected from his other dialogues that royal authority should be given to the older and more worthy, a senate of whom should be the colleagues of the king, forming as it were a certain aristocracy, or government of the most excellent men.

As he proves too in this dialogue that a royal surpasses every other form of government, he likewise shows that a tyranny is the worst kind of dominion, since it governs neither by law nor intellect, but by unrestrained impulse and arbitrary will. As the next in excellence to a royal government, he praises an aristocracy, but reprobates an oligarchy, or the government of the few: and he considers a popular government as deserving praise in the third degree if it governs according to law.

After this he discusses the duty of a king, and shows that it consists in providing such things as are necessary for the human race, and especially such as contribute to its felicity, in prudently judging what arts are subservient to this end in peace and war, in public and private conduct, and in exercising sovereign authority in conjunction with the senate."

The persons of this dialogue are Theodorus, the great geometrician, an old friend of Socrates; his guest, a stranger from Elia, a great philosopher, a follower of Parmenides and Zeno; and a pupil of Theodorus named Socrates. Theætetus, a fellow-pupil of young Socrates, is present, and also Socrates himself, who takes no part in the discussion.

The Eleatic Guest had on a previous occasion, in the presence of Socrates, Theodorus, and Theætetus, discovered, after a long process of dialectic division, the nature of the sophist, and now he is asked by Theodorus to describe in a similar manner either the statesman or the philosopher. He is willing to do this, and young Socrates agrees to answer his questions.

The youth is first asked whether the statesman or politician is to be classed among those who have knowledge. His answer is 'yes', and the next process is the division of all sciences into two classes, one of which will contain the knowledge by which the art of the statesman is governed. By question and answer it is elicited that one class of knowledge is directly connected with human works; such sciences include architecture and those underlying the manual arts. Another class is that of abstract knowledge. The two classes can respectively be named practical and intellectual knowledge.

It is next agreed that in its essence the knowledge of rulership, the political or royal science, is the same whether it is possessed by the ruler of a state or city, the master of a number of workers, the householder, or the individual, each of whom may be called 'royal' in respect of this knowledge. It is also agreed that the statesman or king conducts his rulership by means of intelligence and strength of soul rather than by manual activity.

The class of intellectual knowledge which includes the science of rulership is now divided in order to isolate this science.

In order to find the point of division the example is taken of the two arts of calculation and architecture. The function of the former is to form judgments. It can be called a critical art. That of the latter is both to form judgments and to direct those who are to carry out the plans. It is decided that the knowledge of the statesman is of the directive class.

Rulership or command is next divided into two branches—those of sole and subordinate authority. Various names can be

given to those exercising sole authority, and the name king is chosen as representative of this class.

Rulership, says the Guest, is for the sake of producing or generating something. All generated things are therefore divided into two main classes, inanimate things and living things. Of those who have sole control of animals there are grooms—who tend individual animals—and herdsmen.

The herdsman's art is now to be divided and young Socrates boldly separates the two classes of the human race and the beasts. The Guest, while praising him for separating off at once the subject of enquiry, cautions him against any division which cuts off a small part of a species from the rest. The separation should be 'through the middle'. A similar fault would be to divide the human race into Greeks and Barbarians, whereas a better division would be into male and female.

A new attempt is made and the youth is shown a point of division into land and water herds. The land herds are then divided into flying and walking herds. A choice of two ways now appears, of which one, while longer than the other, better illustrates the method of dialectical division. Young Socrates is anxious to hear them both, so the longer method is taken first.

According to this method the knowledge of the nurture of walking herds is divided into that of horned and hornless herds. The hornless animals are divided into those which do and do not interbreed. From the division of the walking, hornless, uncrossed animals into quadrupeds and bipeds there follows the amusing result that man and birds are found in the same class, while the statesman and bird-keeper are together. The Guest seizes upon this to show that 'the dialectical method is no respecter of persons, and cares not for great or small, but always arrives in its own way at the truest results'. The final division is into winged and wingless bipeds.

The shorter method is to divide the walking herds at once into bipeds and quadrupeds.

Although the statesman has now been seen to be the ruler and guardian of human beings, he does not, like the shepherd with his flock, provide entirely for them. This work is shared with physicians, teachers, merchants, and others who may all claim to be concerned with the rearing of men, and not only of man in general but of the rulers themselves. A kind of royal

type has thus been described, but the true image of the nature of the statesman has not yet appeared.

The search must therefore be continued, and the Guest relates, for the entertainment and instruction of his young listener, an ancient myth which is the origin of many other myths, such as that of the kingdom of Kronos, that of the earth-born men of earlier times, and the myth of the reversal of the sun's rising and setting in the story of Atreus and Thyestes.

'There is a time' says he, 'when God Himself guides and harmonizes the world, and upon the completion of a certain cycle there is another time when God lets go, and the world, being a living creature, and having received intelligence from its Creator, turns about and revolves in the opposite direction.'\*

'Why is this?' asks young Socrates. He is told that only that which is most divine is unchangeable. The universe, having a bodily nature, is subject to change, for it is not perpetually self-moved. The guidance of the Lord of the universe is always the same. He does not guide it now in one direction, now in another, nor are there two Gods who oppose one another in the

\* Proclus interprets this myth in his *Theology of Plato*.

The two opposite cycles represent the two kinds of life of individual souls. The cycle of Kronos or Saturn symbolizes the life of the soul which, purified from all attachments to earthly things, and energizing intellectually and simply, is consecrated and united to the Divine. The cycle in which deterioration occurs is said to be under Zeus. It symbolizes the natural and exterior life of the soul which is immersed in corporeal interests and activities and bound by inclination and habit to material things.

Upon the reversal of the latter cycle there is the return to the dominion of Saturn. The earth-born men and those who become progressively younger symbolize the progressive forsaking of earthly ties and the entering upon an intellectual life, superior to time and space, in which the soul is filled with vigour and joy, symbolized by the return to youth. The shrinking of the body as youth returns to infancy symbolizes still greater freedom from attachment to body, until body, as it were, disappears.

In that blessed cycle the soul depends no longer on possessions. It feeds upon truth and is abundantly illuminated and filled by Divine Providence with all-sufficient life. 'And lastly,' says Proclus, 'establishing a sleepless and undefiled life in the generative powers of intelligibles, and being filled with intellectual fruits and nourished with immaterial and divine forms, they are said to live the life which belongs to the government of Saturn.'

intelligent guidance of the world. The reversal of the circular movement is the least possible change of motion, and the world continues to revolve in this manner for an immeasurable duration of time. Then God again takes charge, the motion is reversed, and all things revert to the former state. The first effect of the change, says the myth, is a great upheaval and destruction; most of the animals and many men die, but the few men who survive undergo a remarkable change. The old grow young again, the young returning to the state of the newly-born, and finally disappearing. Those buried in the earth come forth into life and retrace the path from age to youth. This is the origin of the myth of the earth-born men.

Young Socrates, remembering the earlier reference to the age of Kronos, asks which of the two cycles is that of Kronos.

'That blessed life', answers the Guest, 'belongs to the cycle in which God superintended the whole revolution of the universe, assigning its parts to the rulership of lesser deities.' In this cycle there was no violence among animals. Man could converse with them all and none did him harm. His needs were all supplied by the fruits of nature which grew spontaneously so that he neither sowed nor planted. So mild was the climate that shelter and clothes were unnecessary. He had no wish for property or possessions, for all that could be required was at hand.

But when, at the appointed time, God let go the helm, fate and innate desire reversed the circulation of the universe. There was great tumult and destruction of creatures, but in time the world settled down into tranquillity. At first it remembered and exactly followed the commands of the Creator, but gradually it forgot, and the material element, latent in it from the beginning, became more and more dominant, bringing a certain quality of disorder. The animals which by nature were intractible grew wild, and man found himself helpless against them. The fruits of nature ceased to be given spontaneously, and man did not know how to cultivate the earth. Then, as another myth tells, the gifts of fire and of the arts were given by Prometheus,\* Hephaistos and Athene.

\* Prometheus is the inspective guardian of the descent of rational souls; and the fire which he imparted to mortals is the rational soul itself, because this, like fire, naturally tends upwards, or in other words, aspires after incorporeal natures.—Thomas Taylor.

At last, in the fulness of time, lest destruction should overwhelm the universe, the Creator again reversed its circulation, and Himself directing it, rendered it imperishable and immortal.

The Guest now links the myth with the idea of the statesman, and shows young Socrates that they had been describing a guardian of humanity, belonging rather to the age of Kronos than to the present cycle. The statesman had been regarded as ruler of some whole, but the kind of rule exercised had not been considered.

'The myth was told', says the Guest, 'in order not only to show the difference between all other shepherds and the true shepherd who is the object of our search, but also to give a clearer view of him who is alone worthy to receive this name because he, alone of shepherds and herdsmen, according to the image which we have employed, has the care of human beings. . . . The form of the Divine Shepherd is above even that of a king, whereas the statesmen who are now on earth seem to be much more like their subjects in character and much more nearly to partake of their breeding and education.'

It must therefore be decided whether the statesman is above his subjects, like the Divine Shepherd, or on a level with them. Young Socrates is also reminded that the herdsman's art includes many particulars, such as feeding, breeding, and tending animals in sickness, which do not belong to the statesman, and a more general name should be found to include the art of statesmanship, such as the management or guardianship of herds.

In dividing this art of management the first distinction must be between the Divine Shepherd and human guardians. The next is between enforced or freely accepted rule, the former being tyranny, and the latter, politics.

Young Socrates now feels sure that the delineation of the statesman is complete, but is told that the outline has still to be filled in. He asks why this is necessary, and the Guest replies,\* 'It is difficult, O divine youth, to exhibit great things per-  
spicuously without examples. For each of us appears to know

\* Thomas Taylor's translation. The following note is his also.

'The soul possesses a twofold knowledge, one indistinct, but the other distinct, scientific, and without ambiguity. For we essentially contain the reasons of all things, and breathe, as it were, the knowledge of them; but we do not always possess them in energy.'

all things as in a dream, and again to be ignorant of them according to wakeful perception.' After explaining the need for such a method, he concludes, 'You and I will not in any respect err if we first of all endeavour to perceive the nature of the whole paradigm in another smaller and partial paradigm; and after this, betaking ourselves to the paradigm of a king, which is the greatest of all paradigms, and deriving it from lesser things, endeavour again by a paradigm to know by art the remedy of political affairs, that we may be partakers of wakeful perceptions instead of dreams.

The smaller example chosen is the art of wool-weaving. In order to isolate and classify this art, all man's productions and possessions are divided into two groups which can respectively be called creative and preventive. The preventive can be divided into antidotes of various kinds and defences. Of defences there are military defences and shelters or protections. From protections against cold, woollen clothes are separated, and the art of wool weaving is thus isolated from the other arts of the protective family, such as the builder's and shoemaker's arts. In the art of wool-weaving, again, are included, on the one hand the arts concerned with the preparation and fabrication of the wool, and on the other, the arts which produce the tools used in weaving. The former may be named causal arts, and the latter co-operative arts. The causal arts are twofold, namely the arts of separation, such as carding, and the arts of composition, such as spinning and the formation of an orderly texture by the combination of the threads of warp and woof; the warp being a firm thread, and the woof having a softer and looser texture proportionate to the interwoven warp and the degree of force to be used in dressing the cloth.

'But why', says the Guest, 'did we not say at once that weaving is the art of entwining warp and woof, instead of making a long and tedious circuit?'

'I thought', says young Socrates, 'that there was nothing useless in what was said.'

The Guest now sets forth a principle to be applied to arguments in general. The greater and the less—excess and defect—are always relative to one another, but there is another principle, that of the standard, or right mean between extremes, with which they may be compared. The excellence and beauty of

a work of art depends on the observance of measure, for excess and defect are evils which hinder action. This idea of a standard has an important connection with statesmanship, for no one can truly be a master of any science without the recognition of standards. The idea of a standard is also necessary with a view to the demonstration of absolute truth.

The art of measurement is next divided into arts which measure number, length, speed, whether small or great, and the arts which deal with the due, the appropriate, the mean, the standard, as distinct from the extremes.

Returning to the bearing of this subject on arguments, the Guest elicits from young Socrates that the present discussion is intended to improve not only their knowledge of politics, but also of philosophy generally. It is pointed out that the example of wool-weaving was not analysed for its own sake, but because the sensible image of a thing can easily be shown, and it is less difficult to fix the mind on small matters than on great, whereas the greatest and noblest truths have no outward visible image, and are less easily grasped by the mind. The mind should therefore be exercised in meditation, so that a reason may be given and received for all things; for incorporeal natures, as they are the greatest and most beautiful of all things, can only be pointed out by reason and by nothing else, and all that has been said has had this end in view. The criterion, therefore, of arguments is not their length or shortness; a length such as gives pleasure is a secondary consideration, as is the speed with which a conclusion is reached. The chief aim is to apply the great method of division according to species, and the course of the argument should follow the standard of that which is fitting for the purpose in view, namely the discovery of truth and the exercise of the reasoning powers of those taking part, so as to make them better dialecticians and more capable of expressing the truth of things.

Now the subject of statesmanship is resumed, and applying the example of weaving, the causal and co-operative parts of statesmanship are distinguished. There are arts corresponding to the various properties belonging to man, such as minerals, trees and wood, tools, vessels, vehicles, shelters, amusements, nourishment, which can be called co-operative, and other arts, connected with various kinds of service, which may be called

causal. It is among these causal arts that the art of statesmanship will be found.

Those who clearly have not and do not profess to have the royal science of statesmanship must first be separated—household servants, shopkeepers, money-changers, merchants, ship-owners, and the like. There are others such as physicians and state officials who are likely to make claim to the statesman's knowledge; and yet another class who interpret to men things proceeding from God, and priests who know how to offer sacrifices and prayers and who have great authority on account of the greatness of their work. 'Here,' says the Guest, 'we seem to touch on a vestige of the object of our search; for in Egypt only a king with priestly powers may reign, and many of the highest magistrates in Greece have the duty of offering the most solemn sacrifices.'

The class of sophists and self-styled statesmen who are really party politicians next comes into view, and in order to distinguish from these the true statesman the various forms of government are reviewed. First, monarchy, second, government by the few, and third, government by the many, called popular government or democracy. Monarchy is divisible into royalty and tyranny; government by the few into aristocracy and oligarchy. Democracy has the same name whether the government is good or bad.

Can any of these, it is asked, by its nature alone be said to possess the true science of statesmanship? If this, which is among the greatest and most difficult of all sciences can be found to lie in one of these forms of government, then the false politicians can be distinguished from the wise ruler.

'Do you think,' asks the Guest, 'that the masses in a state can attain the political science?'

'How can they?' asks young Socrates.

'But perhaps,' replies the Guest, 'in a city of a thousand men there would be a hundred, or say fifty, who could?'

'In that case,' was the rejoinder, 'political science would certainly be the easiest of all sciences; there could not be found in a city of that number as many really good draughts-players, and there certainly would not be as many kings, for kings we may truly call those who possess royal science, whether they rule or not, as was shown in the previous argument.'

The consequence follows that ideal forms of government can only be supposed to be in the hands of one, two, or a few, who must be supposed to rule according to certain scientific principles: just as a physician, whatever his modes of treatment, is a physician, so long as he acts with a view to the health of the body according to the rules of his art, so the only true form of government is that in which the governors are found to possess true science and are not pretenders, whether they rule with or without a code of laws, whether over willing or unwilling subjects, or whether the rulers themselves are rich or poor, for all these factors are extraneous to the notion of the ruler.

The particular actions also of a wise ruler will always be guided by true science, whether he purges the state by executions or exiling; whether he encourages emigration or immigration, so long as he acts wisely and justly to the utmost of his power, causing the city to pass from a worse to a better condition, and preserving it in this state.

Young Socrates agrees with all that has been said, except the possibility of good government without a code of laws. The Guest therefore examines this point.

‘There can be no doubt,’ he says, ‘that legislation is in a manner the business of a king, and yet the best thing of all is not that the law should rule, but that a man should rule, supposing him to have wisdom and royal power. Do you see why this is?’

‘Why?’

‘Because the law cannot comprehend exactly what is noblest or most just, or at once ordain what is best for all. The differences of men and actions, and the endless irregular movements of human things do not admit of any universal and simple rule. No one can lay down any rule that will last for ever—that we must admit.’

‘Certainly.’

‘But this the law seeks to accomplish; like an obstinate and ignorant tyrant who will not allow anything to be done contrary to his appointment, or any questions to be asked—not even in sudden changes of circumstances, when something happens to be better for some one than what he commanded.’

‘True; that is just the way in which the law treats us.’

'A perfectly simple principle can never be applied to a state of things which is the reverse of simple.'

'True.'

'Then if the law is not the perfection of right, why are we compelled to make laws at all? The reason of this has to be investigated.'

It is seen that the law-maker, being unable to provide for each particular case, will frame laws in a general form suitable for the majority and roughly meeting the cases of individuals. Some laws will be written; others will be unwritten, traditional customs.

In contrast to this the example is taken of a physician who, about to go on a long journey, leaves written instructions for each patient. Supposing he should return sooner than he expected, and find that owing to a change of circumstances, other remedies are indicated in some cases, would he not change them? Would not the opposite course be utterly ridiculous?

Young Socrates agrees, and the inevitable conclusion is drawn that it would be equally ridiculous to forbid any change in the laws of a state, should a wise legislator perceive this to be necessary, even if this does violence to the wishes of the citizens, so long as they are compelled to do something nobler and better than before. And carrying this principle further, 'may not any man,' says the Guest, 'rich or poor, with or without written laws, with or against the will of the citizens, do what is for their real interest? Is not this the true principle of government? . . . In this way he will make his art a law, and wise rulers will never err while they observe the one great rule of distributing justice to the citizens with intelligence and art, and are able to preserve, and as far as possible to improve them.'

A former statement is recalled, that there will never be found in the state a great number of persons having true political knowledge and wisdom, but that the most true government is to be found in a small body of men or an individual. Other forms of governments are but imitations of these, and their salvation will be found in following the written laws of a wise government. This may be called the second-best course. Another example is given of the physician or the captain of a ship which encounters storms or other dangers. A man may reflect that a physician heals some painlessly, burns or cuts others, and

requires payment from them all, like tribute of which a very small part is spent on the sick man, the greater part being spent on the wants of the physician and his family. From time to time extreme cases have been known of physicians accepting payment from enemies of the sick man, and doing him an injury. The captain of a ship has been known to wreck it for gain. In view of such instances it might be decided that those in authority in such spheres should no longer have their old freedom of action, but that either all the rich or the whole of the people should be assembled and consulted, whatever their knowledge of the subject, about the particulars of the rules to be followed in each art, and that whatever the multitude decreed should be written down, or observed as unwritten laws.

'Suppose, further,' says the Guest, 'that admirals and physicians are appointed annually, elected by lot, either out of the rich, or out of the whole people, and that after their election they practise the corresponding art by the written rule, and still further, that at the end of the year the admiral or physician has to appear before a court of review in which the judges are either chosen from the wealthy classes, or from the whole of the people, and anybody who pleases may accuse them of departures from the written law of their respective arts, and if either is condemned, there must be persons to fix what he is to suffer or pay.'

'He who is willing to take command under such conditions deserves to suffer any penalty,' remarks young Socrates.

It also appears that a decree would be necessary forbidding any enquiry into sailing or navigation, or similar matters, or health, or the nature of medicines, contrary to the written rules, for no one must presume to be wiser than the laws which anybody may know, since they are written down. If this were so, and all things were done according to the written code, what, asks the Guest, would be the result?

'All the arts would utterly perish,' answers young Socrates, 'and could never be recovered because enquiry would be unlawful, and human life would become utterly unbearable.'

It is seen, however, that a worse evil could be brought about if someone elected by lot as the guardian of the laws were to act contrary to the laws for interest or favour and without knowledge; for to go against laws based on long experience and custom would be a greater mistake than to abide by written

laws. The next best thing in legislating, therefore, is that all should alike obey the laws, which should be images of true modes of action, so far as these can be written down from the sayings of those who have knowledge.

The wise statesman would act in particular circumstances according to his art without regard to the laws, when he considered that something different from that which they decreed would be better.

This was agreed, and it followed that any individual or state which had fixed laws would be imitating the true statesman if, on occasion, they acted contrary to the laws with a view to something better. If, however, they acted without knowledge, they would give a bad imitation of the truth, but if they acted with true wisdom their government would be the most true of all.

In the case of government by the class of those who had aimed at wealth, or by the multitude, neither of which would have knowledge of the royal art, the nearest approach to the government of the wise ruler would be to obey their own written law and national customs.

It is now seen that when the rich govern and rightly imitate the true political science, the government is called an aristocracy; but when they ignore the laws, it is called an oligarchy. Similarly, when an individual rules according to law, imitating the ideal ruler, he is called a king, whether he rules with opinion only, or with knowledge, or with true wisdom. But an individual who rules without law, and ignores custom, acting in ignorance and impulsively, but pretending that he has knowledge and is justified in setting aside the laws, is called a tyrant.

'And this,' says the Guest, 'we believe to be the origin of the tyrant and the king, of oligarchies and aristocracies and democracies; because men are suspicious of the one monarch and can never be made to believe that anyone can be worthy of such authority, or can unite the will and the power in the spirit of virtue and knowledge to do justly and holily to all; they fancy that this despot would wrong and harm and slay whom he pleased of us; for if there could be such a despot as we describe, they would acknowledge that we ought to be too glad to have him, and that he alone would be the happy ruler of a true and perfect state.'

But since the state, unlike a beehive, has no natural head, men are obliged to meet and make laws, trying to approach as nearly as they can to the true form of government. It is not surprising that governments should fail when they are built only on the letter and on custom, without true knowledge. The wonder is that the political bond is so strong that some states can survive this, 'though many have perished like ships foundering at sea, are perishing, and will hereafter perish, through the incapacity of their pilots and crews who have the worst sort of ignorance of the highest truths—I mean to say that they are wholly unacquainted with politics, of which, above all the sciences, they believe themselves to have acquired the most perfect knowledge.'

This is agreed, and when it is asked which is the least oppressive of these untrue forms of government it is seen that royalty, bound by good laws and customs, is the best, tyranny is the worst, the government of the few is intermediate in good and evil, and the government of the many is weakest, hence is the best of all lawless governments and the worst of all lawful ones. The ideal government is among states what God is among men. Ignorant rulers of states are more rightly named sophists than statesmen.

The nature and work of the true statesman has not yet been fully described, for those natures more nearly akin to the king and not easily distinguished from him remain to be analysed. This is a process much more difficult than the others, and may be compared to that of refining gold. For just as the earth, stones, and the like are first sifted away from the residue, which is then melted in the fire to separate the fusible metals from the gold, so in the present discussion, all alien matter has been separated from the political sciences, and what is precious and of a kindred nature remains, namely the nobler arts such as the military and judicial arts. The science relating to each of these arts is considered and it is shown that above each is another science which decides whether or not the corresponding art should be practised. For example, above the military science is a science which decides whether or not to make war. Examination shows that this higher science is the same for all. It guards the laws and all the activities of the state, weaving them together, and it is truly named politics.

Now it remains to analyse politics, following the example of the art of weaving. 'I must', says the Guest, 'describe the nature of the royal web and show how the various threads are drawn into one.' His next statement—startling at first sight—is that certain parts of virtue may oppose one another, for example courage and temperance, which he declares, are in many ways opposed and contrary to one another and pervade a great part of nature.

The matter is examined by contrasting the quality of acuteness which with energy and keenness combine to form valour, and the quality of gentleness and quiet with calm deliberation, which is combined with order, and is called temperance. Both qualities have beauty in common, but in other respects are opposed. Each in excess becomes a vice; excessive sharpness, speed or hardness becomes violence or even madness; excessive gentleness and slowness becomes softness and sloth.

Again, these two parts of virtue do not mingle easily. Men of the quick and courageous type admire courage and dislike slowness. This matters little among individuals, but in a state is the cause of serious disorder.

'What part of the state is thus affected?' asks young Socrates.

'The whole course of life suffers from this disorder, for the orderly class are always ready to lead a peaceful life and do their own business; this is their way of living with all men at home, and they are equally ready to keep the peace with foreign states. And on account of this fondness of theirs for peace, which is often out of season where their influence prevails, they become by degrees unwarlike, and bring up their young men to be like themselves; they are at the command of others; hence in a few years they and their children, and the whole state, often pass imperceptibly from the condition of free men into that of slaves.'

'That is a hard, cruel fate,' says young Socrates.

'What now is the case with the more courageous natures? Are they not always inciting their country to go to war, owing to their excessive love of the military life?—their enemies are many and mighty, and if they do not ruin their cities they enslave and subject them to their enemies.'

It is now pointed out that any constructive art will use the best materials available, combining the finest of like and unlike materials into one to fabricate a certain form or idea.

'Similarly the true art of statesmanship will never allow any state to be formed by a combination of good and bad men, if this can be avoided; but will begin by testing human beings in play, and after testing them will entrust them to careful educators and instructors, and will not allow any of them to train characters unsuited to the political constitution which she desires to create, but such as are suitable only. Other natures which have no part in fortitude and temperance or any other virtuous inclination, and through a depraved nature are violently carried away to godlessness, injustice and violence, she removes by death, and punishes by exile and the greatest of disgraces.'

'The rest of the citizens of whom, if they have education, something noble may be made, and who are capable of social science, the kingly art blends and weaves together; taking on the one hand those whose natures tend rather to courage, which is the stronger element and may be regarded as the warp, and on the other hand those which incline to order and gentleness and which are represented in the figure as spun thick and soft, after the manner of the woof. These which are naturally opposed she seeks to bind and weave together in the following manner.'

'First of all she harmonizes the eternal element of their souls and binds that with a like, that is, with a divine cord, and then the element of life, and binds that with human cords.'

Young Socrates does not understand this, so the Guest explains.

'The meaning is that the opinion about the beautiful and the just and good and their opposites, which is true and assured, is a divine principle, and when implanted in our souls is implanted, as I affirm, in a heaven-born race.'

'Only the statesman and good legislator having the inspiration of the royal muse can implant this in those who have rightly received education and whom we were just now describing. . . . But he who is unable to do this shall not be given by us the names which we are now examining.'

'Very right,' agrees young Socrates.

'And the courageous soul, when possessing this truth, becomes civilized and rendered more capable of partaking of justice; but when not partaking, is inclined to brutality. Is not that true?'

'Quite true.'

It is agreed that no science would sanction the union of the

evil with the evil, or the evil with the good, nor would such a bond endure. But in the natures originally noble which had been rightly trained—only in these would the divine bond be implanted through the laws, the bond that heals and unites dissimilar and contrary parts of virtue, correcting the bias of each type and producing unity of life and character. Where this divine bond exists, there is no difficulty in creating the human bond of intermarriage based on right principles, for the sake of unity in the Society—not for the acquisition of power or wealth, nor for the sake of uniting those of similar nature or class; for many dislike those who differ from themselves, and allow this feeling to guide them, the quiet seeking orderly natures and the courageous seeking spirited natures similar to themselves, whereas according to right principles each should seek the other kind because courage, when untempered by the gentler nature during many generations, may for a time be strengthened, but at last will break out in every kind of madness. ‘On the other hand,’ says the Guest, ‘the soul which is over-full of gentleness and modesty and has no element of courage in many successive generations, is apt to grow very indolent and at the last to become utterly sluggish and useless.’ He adds that when both the spirited and the temperate natures hold the same opinion about what is good and beautiful, these bonds of marriage are easily made.

‘The process then of royal weaving is to weave together the brave and the temperate natures, like the warp and woof, by common sentiments and honours and opinions and by the giving of mutual pledges, and having formed from them all one smooth and even web, to entrust to them the offices of the state.’

In further explanation he says that when only one officer is needed he should combine both qualities, and when many are needed some of each quality should be included, since the temperate ruler, though just and safe, lacks thoroughness and zeal, while the spirited type, though possessing a remarkable power of action, is less cautious and just than the other. For the government of a state both qualities are required.

‘This, then, according to our view,’ concludes the Guest, ‘is the perfection of the web of political action. There is a direct intertexture of the brave and temperate natures when the kingly science has drawn the two sorts of lives into communion by

unanimity and kindness; and having completed the noblest and best of all webs of which a common life admits, and enveloping therein all other inhabitants of cities, whether slaves or freemen, it binds them in one fabric and governs and presides over them, omitting no element of a city's happiness.'

## JEWELS FROM KABIR

O friend, hope for Him while you live, understand while you live; for in life deliverance abides. If your bonds be not broken whilst living, what hope for deliverance in death? If you have union with Him now, you shall have it hereafter.

Where is the night when the sun is shining? If it is night, then the light of the sun is withdrawn. Where knowledge is, can ignorance endure?

Lay hold on your sword and join in the fight. Fight, O my brother, as long as life lasts. . . He who is brave never forsakes the battle: he who flies from it is no true fighter. In the battle of this body a great war goes forward, against anger, passion, pride and greed. It is in the kingdom of truth, contentment and purity, that this war is raging; and the sword that rings forth most loudly is the sword of His name.

Brahma suits His language to the understanding of His hearer.

He who has found both love and renunciation never descends to death.

THE DIVINE NAMES\*

BY DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

*Chapter VIII*

*Concerning Power, Justice, Preservation, Redemption, and also concerning Inequality*

Since the theologians praise the Divine Truth and suprasapient Wisdom as Power and Justice and also call It Preservation and Redemption, let us attempt to unfold these Divine Names also.

Now I do not think that anyone who has been nurtured in the Divine Scriptures would be ignorant that the Godhead transcends and goes beyond every power, in whatever manner it subsists or is conceived. For the Scriptures often attribute Lordship to It and set It above even the super-celestial Powers. How, then, do the theologians celebrate It also as Power when It transcends all power? Or how should we understand the name of Power which is given to It?

We answer that God is Power in the sense of fore-possessing and surpassing all power and as being the Cause of all power and as Cause of the very being of power, whether universal or particular, and as infinite in power, not because He produces all power, but because He is above all power, even the self-subsistent power, and because of that Omnipotence. Which brings forth in infinite ways an infinite number of powers, and because the infinitude of powers produced to infinity is not able to exhaust the supremely infinite productivity of His power-creating Power, and because His all-transcending Power is unutterable and unknown and inconceivable, and through Its Omnipotence gives strength even to the weak and enfolds and preserves Its furthest images; just as in sensible powers it is evident that exceedingly bright lights can enlighten dim eyes and loud sounds can be heard by dull ears. For indeed, that which is entirely without the power of hearing is not an ear,

\* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom* Nos. 96 to 103.

and that which is entirely without the power of sight is not an eye.

Thus the plenitude of the infinite Power of God in harmonious rhythmic measure fills all things and there is nothing in the universe which is entirely without some kind of power: it has intellectual or rational or sensitive or vital or essential power; and, indeed, if it is lawful to say so, Being Itself has Its power from the Super-essential Power.

From It are the God-like powers of the Angelic Orders; from It they have their unchangeable being and all their intellectual and immortal perpetual activities; and their own stability and unfailing aspiration to the Good they have received from that infinitely good Power which Itself imparts to them their power and their being and their perpetual aspiration to Being, and the power to aspire to that ceaseless Power.

From this ever-flowing Power men and animals and plants and the entire nature of the universe are filled; It disposes unified natures to mutual harmony and communion and gives to each individual thing the power to be according to its own particular reason and form, distinct from and unmingled with others. And It guides according to their appropriate good the laws of the universe and the activities related to them, and guards the immortal lives of the individual angels inviolate, and keeps the heavenly and luminous and starry substances unchanged in their own orders, and gives Eternity the power to be and differentiates the cycles of time in their beginnings and joins them together in their returning, and It makes the powers of fire unquenchable and the flow of water unfailing. It sets a bound to the fluid air and establishes the earth upon the void and maintains its imperishable and life-bearing travail. It preserves the mutual harmony of the mingling elements unconfused and yet inseparable, and makes fast the bond uniting soul and body. It quickens the powers of growth and nourishment in plants and supports the essential powers of the whole and protects the stability of the universe from dissolution, and bestows even deification itself by giving the capacity for this to those who are being deified. And, in a word, there is no single thing in the entire universe which is outside the almighty embrace and safe-keeping of the Divine Power. For that which is absolutely without power

has no existence or qualities and no place whatever in the universe.

But Elymas the magician says, 'If God is omnipotent, how does your theologian say that there is something He cannot do?' For thus he reproaches Paul the divine, who said that God is not able to deny Himself. Now in bringing this forward, I very much fear that I may be laughed at for my folly in attempting to overturn frail houses built on sand by children at play, and in aiming at a mark which cannot be reached, when attempting to solve this theological matter. For the denial of Himself is a lapse from truth. But truth has being, therefore a lapse from truth is a lapse from being. If, therefore, truth is, a denial of truth is a fall from that which is. Now God cannot fall from being; for it might be said that He *is* not non-being, He is *unable* to be powerless, He does not *know* privation of knowledge in ignorance.

The wise magician, not knowing this, is like an untrained athlete who often supposing his adversary to be weak, according to his own judgment, and making a pretence of fighting him in his absence, bravely beating the air with empty blows, thinks that he has vanquished his antagonist and declares himself the conqueror without having yet experienced the strength of his rival. But we, endeavouring to understand the theologian to the best of our power, extol the super-powerful God as Omnipotent, as Blessed, as the One Ruler, as Lord of the Power of Eternity Itself; as in no manner arising from any existing thing, but rather as transcendently possessing and fore-possessing all existing things by His super-essential Power; as having bestowed upon all things their power to be and their being by the plentiful flood of His transcendently excelling Power.

### THE GOODNESS OF GOD

The Deity acteth according to Its own Nature and Essence; and Its Nature and Essence displayeth Goodness and Justice: For if these things be not there, where should they else be found?

—Plotinus.

## THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY\*

PROCLUS

Proposition CXC

*Every soul is a medium between impartible natures and the natures which are divisible about bodies*

For if soul is self-vital and self-subsistent, and has an hyperaxis separate from bodies, it is more excellent than, and exempt from every thing divisible about body. For the natures which are divided about bodies are entirely inseparable from their subjects, being co-distributed with divisible bulks. They also depart from themselves, and their own impartibility, and are co-extended with bodies. And though they subsist in lives, yet these are not the lives of themselves, but of participants. Though likewise they exist in essence and in forms, yet these are not the forms of themselves, but of those things which are fashioned by forms.

If, therefore, soul is not these, it is a self-subsistent essence, a self-vital life, and a knowledge gnostic of itself. Hence, it is entirely separate from bodies, but is a participant of life. If, however, this be the case, it also participates of essence. But it likewise participates of knowledge from other causes. It is evident, therefore, that it is inferior to impartible natures, because it is filled with life externally. But if with life, it is evident that it is also externally filled with essence. For impartible life and impartible essence are prior to soul. That soul, however, is not primarily gnostic is evident. For every soul indeed, so far as it is soul is life, but not every soul, so far as it is soul, possesses knowledge. For soul ignorant of real beings yet remains soul. Soul, therefore, is not primarily gnostic, nor does it possess knowledge from its very being. Hence, it has an essence secondary to those natures that are primarily and by their very being, gnostic. Since, however, the essence of soul is divided from its knowledge, soul does not belong to natures entirely impartible. But it has been demonstrated that neither

\* For previous sections, see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 65 to 103.

does it rank among the natures that are divisible about bodies. Hence, it is a medium between the two.

Proposition CXCI

*Every participable soul has indeed an eternal essence, but its energy is according to time*

For either it possesses both eternally, or both temporally; or the one eternally, but the other temporally. It cannot however, possess both eternally: for thus it would be an impartible essence, and the nature of soul would in no respect differ from an intellectual hypostasis, that is, a self-motive from an immovable nature. Nor can it possess both temporally: for thus it would be generated alone, and neither be self-vital, nor self-subsistent; for nothing which is essentially measured by time is self-subsistent. But soul is self-subsistent; for that which is converted to itself according to energy is also essentially converted to itself, and proceeds from itself. It follows, therefore, that every soul is in one respect eternal, and in another respect participates of time. Either, therefore, it is essentially eternal but participates of time according to energy, or the reverse. The latter, however, is impossible. Hence, every participable soul is allotted an eternal essence, but a temporal energy.

Proposition CXCII

*Every participable soul ranks among the number of truly existing beings, and is the first of generated natures*

For if it is essentially eternal, it is truly being according to hyperaxis, and always is; for that which participates of eternity, participates likewise of perpetual existence. But if it is in time according to energy, it is generated; for every thing that participates of time, since it is always becoming to be, or rising into existence, according to the prior and posterior of time, and is not at once that which it is, is wholly generated. But if every soul is in a certain respect generated according to energy, it will be the first of generated natures; for that which is in every respect generated is more remote from eternal natures.

*(To be continued)*