

THE SHRINE *of* WISDOM

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THE GOOD CITIZEN

From the *Crito* of Plato*

Thomas Taylor in a note on his translation of this dialogue says: 'The *Crito* is disposed after a manner so regular and plain that it requires no introduction. I shall therefore only observe that it admirably teaches us to despise the opinions of the vulgar, to endure calamities patiently, and to consider the good of the whole as incomparably more important than that of a part.'

The scene of the dialogue is the prison where Socrates is visited at dawn by his aged friend Crito.

While waiting for Socrates to awaken, Crito marvels at the peacefulness of his sleep and at the cheerfulness of spirit with which he awaits his death. At last Socrates awakens and, asking why his friend has come so early, is told that this is the day on which the ship from Delos is due at Athens, and that therefore only two more days of life remain for him.

Socrates, however, thinks that the ship will be delayed for a day because just before awakening he saw in a dream a beautiful woman clothed in white who called him saying:

'O Socrates, the third day hence to Phthia shalt thou go.'

'There can be no doubt about the meaning,† Crito, I think.'

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

† Socrates here applies what is said in the dream to a returning to his true country, the intelligible world, thus confirming the interpretation of the symbolism of the Trojan War given by Proclus.

The quotation is from the ninth book of the *Iliad* and occurs in the speech of Achilles on the embassy to him from Agamemnon.—Thomas Taylor.

'Yes, the meaning is only too clear. But O! my beloved Socrates, let me entreat you once more to take my advice and escape. For if you die, I shall not only lose a friend who can never be replaced, but there is another evil: people who do not know you and me will believe that I might have saved you if I had been willing to give money, but that I did not care. Now can there be a worse disgrace than this—that I should be thought to value money more than the life of a friend? For the many will not be persuaded that I wanted you to escape and that you refused.'

'But why, my dear Crito,' answered Socrates, 'should we care about the opinion of the many? Good men, and they are the only people who are worth considering, will think of these things truly as they happened.'

Crito urges the great importance of the view of the many, as shown by the fate of Socrates himself, but is told that the many can do neither great good nor great evil, since they cannot make a man wise or foolish.

Is Socrates then anxious about what may happen afterwards to those who help him to escape? asks Crito. Socrates admits that this is not the only consideration that makes him unwilling to flee, whereupon Crito protests that he and his friends are ready to run any risk, and that they have the means to carry out their purpose. They are prepared to give Socrates all the money he may need, and there are many places to which he can go—Crito's friends in Thessaly would gladly shelter and honour him.

Socrates appears unmoved, and Crito in desperation musters all the arguments he can think of. To stay in prison would be to play into the hands of his enemies; and has Socrates forgotten his children? Children should not be brought into the world unless parents are willing to provide for and educate them. Socrates appears to be choosing the easier part—an unmanly and unbecoming act in one who says he has aimed at virtue throughout his life. 'Indeed,' Crito breaks out at last, 'I am ashamed not only of you, but of us who are your friends, when I reflect that this entire business of yours will be attributed to our want of courage. The trial need never have come on, or might have been brought to another issue; and the end of all, which is the crowning absurdity, will seem to have been permitted by us, through cowardice and baseness, who might have

saved you, as you might have saved yourself, if we had been good for anything (for there was no difficulty in escaping); and we did not see how disgraceful, Socrates, and also miserable all this will be to us as well as you. Make your mind up, then, or rather have your mind already made up, for the time of deliberation is over and there is only one thing to be done, which must be done, if at all, this very night, and which any delay will render all but impossible. I beseech you therefore, Socrates, to be persuaded by me, and to do as I say.'

'Dear Crito,' answers Socrates, 'your zeal is invaluable, if a right one; but if wrong, the greater the zeal, the greater the evil; and therefore we ought to consider whether these things shall be done or not.' He goes on to say that he has always been guided by reason, and cannot now discard the reasons he has given before, since he still honours and reveres the principles he formerly honoured; and unless better principles can be found, he is certain not to agree with Crito, however frightening the power of the multitude may appear to be. The fairest way of considering the question will be to continue the discussion about the opinions of men, some of which are to be regarded and others disregarded.

Crito agrees that the opinions of the wise are to be valued, but not those of the unwise, just as in matters of disease and health the advice of the wise physician is followed rather than that of the unwise multitude. Socrates then asks whether in questions as to what is just and unjust, fair and foul, good and evil, the opinion of the many ought to be feared and followed or that of the one wise man who is worthy of all reverence and honour, in deserting whom we should harm that principle within us which is superior to the body and which is improved by justice and injured by injustice. For if an incurably corrupted body makes life unbearable, by so much the more will life become valueless if that higher principle, far more to be honoured than body, becomes depraved. Even though someone say 'The many can kill us' the argument holds.

Crito agrees and admits that their own long-held conviction still remains true—that it is not simply life, but a good life, which is of the greatest value, the good life being a just and honourable life. On these two statements the argument is to be based.

'Let us consider the matter together,' says Socrates, 'and do

you either refute me if you can, and I will be convinced; or else cease, my dear friend, from repeating to me that I ought to escape against the wishes of the Athenians:* for I shall think it a great thing if you can persuade me thus to act, but not if you attempt this contrary to my will.'

The first question asked is whether wrong-doing is always evil and dishonourable—is injustice always an evil and dishonour to him who acts unjustly? The answer is 'Yes'; for even when injured we must not injure in return, though this is not the opinion of the many.

The next question is, ought a man to do what he admits to be right, or ought he to betray the right? Crito says that a man ought to do what he thinks right.

'But if this is true, what is the application?' says Socrates. 'In leaving the prison do I injure any? or rather, do I not wrong those whom I ought least to wrong: do I not desert principles which were acknowledged by us to be just? What do you say?'

'I cannot answer your question, Socrates, for I do not understand it,' answers Crito.

Socrates then relates an imaginary conversation between himself and the Athenian laws. 'What are you about, Socrates?' they would say. 'Are you going by an act of yours to overturn us—the laws—and the whole state, as far as you are able?' No state, they say, can subsist in which the decisions of the law are set aside and overthrown by individuals.

'And suppose', says Socrates, 'that I say "Yes, but the state has injured me and given me an unjust sentence."'

The laws reply, 'And was that ever our agreement with you, or were you to abide by the sentence of the state? Tell us what complaint you have to make against us which justifies you in attempting to destroy us and the state.' They now enumerate some of the benefits they bring to citizens. Does Socrates object to the marriage laws? He does not. Are the laws regarding the nurture and education of children right in what they ordain? They are right. Since this is so, Socrates, as assenting to the laws like his forefathers, must be like them the child and servant of the laws and not on an equal footing with them†, and therefore

* Thomas Taylor's translation.

† Thomas Taylor in a note on this passage says: Wholes in the

has not the right to destroy the laws because they are going to destroy him, any more than a child has the right to strike or revile his father. 'Has a philosopher like you,' they say, 'failed to discover that our country is more to be valued and higher and holier than any ancestor?' 'Her punishments,' they continue, 'are to be endured in silence. If she leads us to battle, it is right that we should follow, and none should leave the post, whether military or civil, to which the laws have appointed him. If he may do no violence to his father or mother, much less may he do violence to his country.'

Crito assents to what the laws have said, and they next remind Socrates that if, after receiving all the good they could give, he had, on coming of age, disliked them, he could have left Athens without interference from the laws; but the very fact of his staying in the city, once he had understood the way in which justice and order are maintained and administered, implies a contract that he will obey the law. Socrates, if disobedient, does a threefold wrong—firstly in disobeying his parent, secondly because he has been educated under the laws, and thirdly because he has implicitly agreed to obey the laws, yet being given the choice of obeying the laws or confuting them, he does neither.

Moreover, Socrates, above all other citizens, has been the most constant to Athens, never leaving it except for military service; never desiring to see other states, loving it and its laws above all others. At the trial he said that he preferred death to exile, yet he is running away and breaking the agreements made as a citizen.

'And now answer this very question,' say the laws, 'Are we right in saying you agreed to be governed according to us in deed and not only in word?'

'How shall we answer that, Crito?' says Socrates. 'Must we not agree?'

'We must agree, Socrates,' answers Crito.

The laws, having reminded Socrates that he has had seventy years in which to decide whether he liked them enough to remain in Athens, bring forward another argument, asking what order of nature are more excellent than parts, and in consequence of this, as being more honourable, there is no reciprocity of obligation between the two.

good an escape will do to himself or his friends. His friends will most probably be exiled or deprived of their rights as citizens or of their property, and Socrates, a law-breaker, fleeing to a well-governed city, will hardly be welcomed by its patriotic citizens as a friend, but rather as a corrupter of their youth. If he avoids well-governed cities and virtuous men, what kind of existence will that be? Even if he goes shamelessly to such cities and talks with the people, what will he say? Will he tell them, as he has told the Athenians, that virtue, justice, institutions, and laws should have the first attention among men? If he goes to Crito's friends in Thessaly, where there is great disorder and license, can he be sure that no one will remind him that in his old age he has broken the most sacred laws from an unworthy desire for a few more years of life? If Socrates flatters and entertains the people of Thessaly in order to hear only good of himself—though they still may speak evil behind his back—how will he spend his life? Simply in eating and drinking and flattery. And what will become of his fine discourses about virtue?

If Socrates wishes to escape for the sake of bringing up and educating his children, where will he do this? In Thessaly, depriving them of Athenian citizenship? Or if he thinks that his friends in Athens will see to his children if he is in Thessaly, will they not also do this if he is in another world?

'Listen, then, Socrates, to us who have brought you up,' say the laws, in a last appeal. 'Think not of your life and children first, and of justice afterwards, but of justice first, that you may be justified before the princes of Hades. For neither will you nor anything that belongs to you be happier or holier in this life or happier in another, if you do as Crito bids. Now you depart in innocence, a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim not of the laws, but of men. But if you go forth, returning evil for evil and injury for injury, breaking the covenants and agreements which you have made with us, and wronging those whom you ought least to wrong, that is to say, yourself, your friends, your country, and us, we shall be angry with you while you live, and our brethren, the laws in Hades, will not receive you with good will; for they will know that you have done your best to destroy us. Listen, then, to us and not to Crito.'

‘This is the voice, Crito, which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic; that voice, I say, is humming in my ears, and prevents me from hearing any other. And I know that anything more which you will say will be in vain. Yet speak, if you have anything to say.’

‘I have nothing to say, Socrates.’

‘Then let me follow the intimations of the will of God.’

A PRAYER

O Lord, Thou art single and the oversoul, the indwelling spirit and the Ancient One; Thou art identical with truth and self-effulgent, infinite and the first; Thou art eternal, imperishable and of the nature of bliss everlasting and untainted; Thou art perfect, without a second, free from appellations and immortal.

O Lord, Thou art of truthful vows, and the means of attaining unto Thee is the way of truth; Thou art the true existing entity in the three stages of the world; Thou art the origin of the entire creation; Thou dost pervade it and art its true essence; Thou art the Progenitor of truthful speech and of true behaviour, and Thou art all truth; Therefore I take refuge in Thee.

—*Srimad Bhagavatam. (From the Sanskrit.)*

MYSTIC VERSE

Yet there is some light even in darkened eyes:
To those who have fallen hither
There is a certain power remaining
To the celestial sphere recalling them,
When, from mortal waves emerging,
Rejoicing, they enter on the sacred path
Leading to the regal, parental abode.
Happy he who, the voracious bark of hyle escaping
And from earthly bonds released,
With joyful and enlightened mind
To Deity directs his hasty flight.

— *Synesius.*

SEED THOUGHTS

FROM EMERSON'S OVER-SOUL

We live in successions, in divisions, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One.

Some thoughts always find us young, and keep us so. Such a thought is the love of universal and eternal beauty. Every man parts from that contemplation with the feeling that it rather belongs to the ages than to mortal life. The least activity of the intellectual powers redeems us in a degree from the conditions of time.

With each divine impulse the mind rends the thin rind of the visible and finite, and comes out into eternity, and inspires and expires its air. It converses with truths that have always been spoken in the world.

There is a certain wisdom of humanity which is common to the greatest men with the lowest, and which our ordinary education often labours to silence and obstruct. The mind is one, and the best minds who love truth for its own sake, think much less of property in truth. They accept it thankfully everywhere, and do not label or stamp it with any man's name, for it is theirs long beforehand, and from eternity.

The soul is superior to its knowledge; wiser than any of its works.

The soul gives itself, alone, original, and pure, to the Lonely, Original, and Pure, who on that condition, gladly inhabits, leads, and speaks through it. . . . Behold, it saith, I am born into the great, the universal mind. I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect Pattern. I am somehow receptive of the great soul, and thereby I overlook the sun and the stars, and feel them to be the fair accidents and effects which change and pass. More and more the surges of everlasting nature enters into me, and I become public and human in my regards and actions. So come I to live in thoughts, and act with energies, which are immortal.

THE FABLE OF CUPID AND PSYCHE

WITH AN EXPLANATION BY THOMAS TAYLOR

Introduction

The beautiful myth of Cupid and Psyche is related by Apuleius in the *Metamorphoses* (*The Golden Ass*) which tells how a young man, through curiosity about a magic spell, was changed into an ass of yellowish colour. In this form he had various masters, among them thieves and bandits; he suffered many cruelties and hardships, and found himself in many degrading situations.

The myth occurs in the middle of the story. It is told to a young girl, snatched by bandits from her wedding, by an old woman trying to calm the maiden's fears.

The central position of the myth in the narrative seems to symbolize the Divine beauty and mystery forever at the heart of things, even in the midst of the strife and iniquity which so often obscure the soul's true purpose.

Thomas Taylor, in his Introduction to his translation of the *Metamorphoses*, says: "Apuleius is undoubtedly the greatest of the Latin Platonists, a portion of whose writings have been preserved to the present time; and though, in consequence of living at a period in which the depths of the Platonic philosophy had not been fathomed, and its mysteries luminously unfolded, as they afterwards were by certain Coryphæan Greeks (Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Syrianus, Damascius, and Olympiodorus), he is not to be classed among the chief of the disciples of Plato, yet he will always maintain a very distinguished rank among those who have delivered to us the more accessible parts of that philosophy with consummate elegance and an inimitable splendour of diction.

"What, then, was the real design of Apuleius in composing this work? Shall we say, with Macrobius, that Apuleius sometimes diverted himself with the tales of love, and that this is a kind of fable which proposes only to please the ear, and which wisdom banishes from her temple to the cradles of nurses? This, however, is by no means consistent with that dignity and elevation of mind which are essential to the character of a Platonic

philosopher. Is it not therefore probable that the intention of the author in this work was to show that the man who gives himself to a voluptuous life becomes a beast, and that it is only by becoming virtuous and religious that he can divest himself of the brutal character and be again a man?

‘For this is *the rose* by eating which Apuleius was restored to the human and cast off the brutal form; and like the moly of Hermes, preserved him in future from the dire enchantments of Circe, the goddess of sense.’

The Myth

There lived in a certain country a king and queen who had three beautiful daughters. Of these the two elder were of a rare and great beauty, but the youngest, named Psyche, was beautiful beyond expression. The fame of her loveliness brought to the city a multitude of people who in wondering astonishment worshipped her with the honours due to the Goddess Venus. The rumour even spread that Venus herself had come to earth, and Psyche was hailed in that name. So greatly did the worship of Psyche increase that the shrines of Venus at Paphos, Cnidos, and Cythara were neglected and her temples fell into ruin.

Greatly indignant at this neglect, the Goddess summoned her son Cupid and, showing him Psyche, surrounded by worshippers, entreated him to avenge this slight to herself by causing Psyche, by his art, to fall in love with the most vile and miserable man he could discover.

Meanwhile Psyche, far from wishing to rival Venus, wearied of this adoration and hated the beauty which had brought her to such a pass. Her sisters soon found husbands, but she was left in dreary solitude and soon fell sick in mind and body. Her anxious father, desiring a husband for his daughter, consulted the Oracle of Apollo with prayer and sacrifice, and received the prophecy that Psyche would be wedded to a fiery flying serpent. The Oracle decreed that on a certain day she must be arrayed in mourning robes and taken to the top of a high mountain, there to be left to her fate. On the appointed day, after a marriage rite, and amid great lamentations, Psyche was led to the mountain top. As her weeping parents turned to leave her she said to them, ‘Why do you weep now for me? When I was honoured as Venus you should have wept and sorrowed, but now it is too

late. I see that it is Venus herself who has sent this misery upon me. Now set me upon the rock, for I long to die.'

Weeping and trembling she awaited her fate when suddenly she was borne away on a gentle breeze and set down in a deep valley carpeted with flowers where, worn out with sorrow, she fell asleep. On awakening she found herself in a pleasant wood through which ran a stream. In the midst of the wood she saw a splendid palace shining like the sun. It seemed to her like the dwelling place of a God. As she drew near to it she saw that the roof was of ivory supported by pillars of gold, the walls were of silver, and the floors were set with patterns of precious stones. Inside the house were all manner of treasures, but no locks or bars to protect them. As she gazed a voice said, 'Why do you marvel? All that you behold is yours and we whose voices you hear are your servants. Rest now upon your bed, then bathe at your desire while royal meats are made ready.'

Psyche did as the voices directed and soon a feast was spread for her by the invisible servants. For a time she lived happily, exploring the palace and its beautiful grounds by day, while during the hours of darkness she was joined by a kind and loving husband whom she never saw, for he left her at daybreak. One night her husband told her that her sisters, believing her to be dead, were on their way to the mountain to bewail her. 'If you should chance to hear them,' he said, 'heed them not, by look or word, for if you do, great sorrow will befall.' Psyche willingly promised, but next day, overwhelmed by the thought of her sisters' sorrow and her own loneliness, she spent her time in fasting and weeping. At night she besought her husband to let her speak to her sisters, saying that she would die unless he consented. At last, after warning her again that it might cause her destruction, he agreed that the sisters might be brought to the palace and given gifts of gold and jewels, but on no account must Psyche let herself be persuaded to try to see him.

On the following day the two sisters were brought by Zephyr to the palace where Psyche showed them her treasures and feasted them royally. The sight of these wonders roused their envy, and they questioned Psyche about her husband's appearance and occupations. Psyche, remembering the warning, described him as young, fair-haired, and fond of hunting in the

vales. Then she gave gifts to her sisters and commanded Zephyr to take them home.

The sisters, consumed with anger and envy, decided to say nothing about Psyche, and to devise a plan to destroy her. Her husband, meanwhile, renewed his warning, saying that should she look upon his face, not only would she come to misery, but the child she was soon to bear would be not an immortal, but a mortal infant.

Again the sisters came, at Psyche's earnest plea, and again she was questioned about her husband. This time, forgetting her former tale, she said that he was a middle-aged merchant. Her sisters at once taxed her with the lie, and Psyche, weeping, confessed that she had never seen her husband's face. Then they assured her that she was the wife of a monster who was only waiting for her child to be born, when he would devour her. Finally they persuaded her to provide herself with a lamp and a sharp knife, and when her husband slept, to light the lamp and behead the monster.

That night, when her husband slept, Psyche took the knife and by the light of the lamp she saw a most beautiful youth with hair of bright gold, cheeks of red and white, and on his shoulders softly fluttering feathers. Filled with love and forgetting all caution, Psyche kissed and caressed him. Then a drop of hot oil fell from the lamp upon his shoulder and awakened him. Without a word he rose and took flight, but Psyche seized him by the leg and was carried with him until she could hold on no longer and fell to the ground. Then Cupid, alighting in a cypress above her, said: 'O most foolish Psyche! Think how I disobeyed my Mother's will that you should be married to a monster, and came myself from heaven to love you. Did I seem a beast that you should design to cut off my head? Did I not warn you? Your sisters shall be fittingly rewarded. As for you, you will be punished enough by my absence.' Then he flew upwards and vanished in the heavens.

Psyche, weeping and lamenting, ran to the stream nearby and threw herself into it, but the stream lifted her up and tossed her upon the bank. There she was seen by Pan who, measuring by her sorrow, her staggering footsteps, and her paleness, the depth of her love, counselled her to dry her tears and seek to serve the God Cupid, and sent her upon her way. By chance

Psyche came to the city where one of her sisters dwelt. On hearing the story this sister, hoping herself to become the bride of Cupid, hastened to the mountain, threw herself down, and was destroyed. The other sister in turn met the same fate. Then Psyche journeyed far and wide, seeking for Cupid, but he had gone to his mother's house to be healed of his wound. Meanwhile, to Venus, sporting in the sea, a gull recounted all that had happened. Angrily she returned to her palace and, rebuking her son, clipped his wings and imprisoned him.

Psyche's wanderings led her to a mountain where stood the temple of Ceres. Entering it, she found everything in disorder and was carefully arranging the sheaves, garlands, and reaping hooks, when Ceres, coming suddenly, surprised her at the task. Psyche knelt before her, weeping and begging for shelter until the anger of Venus should lessen; but Ceres, because of the bond of peace and friendship between herself and Venus, could not grant the request, and Psyche went sorrowfully away. Presently she came to a valley in which she could see a beautiful temple in a forest, and finding it to be the temple of Juno, she prayed at the altar for deliverance from danger. Then Juno appeared to her and told her that by law she was forbidden to shelter any fugitive against his master's will, so Psyche was again sent forth. Then, finding no hiding place, she determined to submit herself to Venus for punishment.

Venus, meanwhile, had obtained the services of Mercury to proclaim far and wide that a reward would be given for the return of her fugitive servant, Psyche, and when the unhappy girl came within sight of the palace the servant Custom ran out and dragged her before her mistress who delivered her to be scourged by Sorrow and Sadness, after which Venus showed her a scattered mass of mixed grains of wheat, barley, millet, poppy seed, peas, beans, and lentils, and telling Psyche that only by difficult and painful service could she regain the favour of Cupid, commanded her to separate the grains into orderly heaps before nightfall.

Psyche, dismayed at the impossibility of the task, was in despair when an ant, pitying her, called together all the ants in the neighbourhood, asking their help in the name of their great mother Earth. Soon the seeds were neatly sorted into separate heaps and all the ants had disappeared. At night, seeing that the

work was done, Venus gave her a morsel of coarse bread, and Psyche slept until morning.

Next day Venus showed her a great forest separated from them by a river, and told her to gather some wool from the golden fleeces of the flock of wild sheep that were in the forest. In despair Psyche was about to throw herself into the river, but a reed, divinely inspired, spoke to her, counselling her to hide in the reeds until the heat of the day was past and the savage sheep had drunk from the river and fallen asleep. Then she could gather the wool which was caught among the bushes. This Psyche did, and brought the golden wool to Venus.

On the next day Venus pointed out to Psyche a great mountain down whose side poured a dark torrent from which the streams of Styx and Cocytus were fed. Then, giving her a vessel of crystal, she charged Psyche to fill it with the water. When at last Psyche reached the mountain top she saw that the torrent gushing out from a great rock was guarded by two huge dragons, one on either side, who never slept. So terrified was she that she stood transfixed with horror. Then from the heights flew down Jove's Eagle, and offered, through her, to serve Cupid. Taking the crystal flask, he flew between the dragons, filled it with water, and gave it to Psyche. Full of joy, she returned, but Venus, still unsatisfied, set her the most difficult task of all. Giving her a small and beautifully designed box, she told Psyche to go to the Underworld and ask from Proserpine enough of her beauty to serve for one day, that Venus might adorn herself with it at the festival of the Gods.

Certain that she would not survive such a journey, Psyche determined to make an end, and seeing a high tower, mounted it and was about to cast herself down, when the tower spoke and told her how to accomplish her task. First she must go to Lacedemon and find the hill Tenarus, in which was a deep cavern leading down to Hades. She was to take two sops of barley bread and honey, one in either hand, and two pennies in her mouth. On the way she would see a lame ass carrying wood and driven by a lame man who would beg her to pick up the sticks that fell to the ground, but she was to take no notice of him. On coming to Styx, she was to let Charon take one of the pennies from her mouth. As they crossed the river, she would see an old man struggling in the water and begging

to be taken into the boat, but she was to give him no help. On the far bank an old woman spinning would ask her for help, but again Psyche must take no heed, for these were traps set by Venus to make her drop the sops, without which she could neither enter nor leave the Underworld. Before the palace gate of Pluto she would meet three-headed Cerberus, to whom one of the sops must be given, and who would then let her pass in safety. In Proserpine's palace she would be offered a banquet, but she must refuse, and sitting humbly on the ground, accept only bread. When the box had been filled, she must return as she had come, giving the second sop to Cerberus and the second penny to Charon. But on no account must she open the box.

Psyche obeyed the directions of the tower, and everything came to pass as she had been told. When she had received back the box, which now contained its secret, she made her way safely to the upper world. Suddenly she was seized with an intense desire to open the box and use a little of Proserpine's beauty to make herself more pleasing in Cupid's eyes. But even as she opened it, sleep streamed from it in a cloud and enveloped her so that she fell unconscious upon the earth.

Cupid, meanwhile, his wound healed and his wings grown, had escaped from a window and was searching for Psyche. He found her asleep, and understanding what had happened, gathered up the sleep and, restoring it to the box, awakened her, chiding her for the curiosity which had almost been her undoing. Then he sent her to Venus, and himself sped upwards to the summit of the heavens to implore the aid of Jupiter for his own reconciliation with Venus. Jupiter, taking pity on him, proclaimed a concourse of the Gods in whose presence Cupid and Venus were reconciled. Then Mercury, who had been sent to bring Psyche to the assembly, returned and presented her to the Gods. At Jupiter's command she drank of the divine water of immortality and thus became immortal. Then she and Cupid were wedded in the presence of the Gods and united for ever. In due time their child was born, and was named Joy.

Thomas Taylor's explanation of the Fable of Cupid and Psyche
From his translation published in 1822

In the Introduction to his translation, he says : The following beautiful fable, which was designed to represent the lapse of the human soul from the intelligible world to the earth, was certainly not invented by Apuleius ; for, as will appear in the course of the Introduction, it is evidently alluded to by Synesius, in his book *On Dreams*, and obscurely by Plato and Plotinus. It is clear, therefore, that Plato could not derive his allusion from Apuleius ; and as to Plotinus and Synesius, those who are at all acquainted with the writings of the Greek philosophers well know that they never borrowed from Latin authors, from a just conviction that they had the sources of perfection among themselves.

I have said that this fable represented the lapse of the human soul ; of the truth of this the philosophical reader will be convinced by the following observations : In the first place, the Gods, as I have elsewhere shown, are super-essential natures, from their profound union with the First Cause, who is super-essential without any addition. But though the Gods, through their summits or unities, transcend essence, yet their unities are participated either by intellect alone, or by intellect and soul, or by intellect, soul, and body ; from which participations the various orders of the Gods are deduced. When, therefore, intellect, soul, and body are in conjunction suspended from this super-essential unity, which is the centre flower or blossom of a Divine nature, then the God from whom they are suspended is called a mundane God. In the next place, the common parents of the human soul are the intellect and soul of the world ;* but its proximate parents are the intellect and soul of the particular star about which it was originally distributed, and from which it first descends. In the third place, those powers of every mundane God which are participated by the body suspended from His nature are called mundane, but those which are participated by His intellect, are called supermundane ; and the soul, while subsisting in union with these supermundane powers, is said to be in the intelligible world ; but when she wholly directs her attention to the mundane powers of the God, she is said

* By the world is meant the objective universe as a whole.

to descend from the intelligible world, even while subsisting in the Heavens.

Thus much being presumed, let us proceed to the explanation of the fable: Psyche, then, or soul, is described as transcendently beautiful; and this is indeed true of every human soul before it profoundly merges itself in the defiling folds of dark matter.

In the next place, when Psyche is represented as descending from the summit of a lofty mountain into a beautiful valley, this signifies the descent of the soul from the intelligible world into a mundane condition of being, but yet without abandoning its establishment in the Heavens. Hence the palace which Psyche beholds in the valley is, with great propriety, said to be "a royal house, which was not raised by human, but by Divine hands and art." The gems, too, on which Psyche is said to have trod in every part of this palace are evidently symbolical of the stars. Of this mundane, yet celestial, condition of being, the incorporeal voices which attend upon Psyche are likewise symbolical: for outward discourse is the last image of intellectual energy, according to which the soul operates only in the intelligible world. As voices, therefore, they signify an establishment subordinate to that which is intelligible, but so far as denuded of body, they also signify a condition of being superior to a terrene allotment.

Psyche, in this delightful situation, is married to an invisible being, whom she alone recognizes by her ears and hands. This invisible husband proves afterwards to be Love; that is to say, the soul, while established in the Heavens, is united to love of the purest kind, namely to intellectual love, or, in other words, is not fascinated with outward form. But in this beautiful palace she is attacked by the machinations of her two sisters who endeavour to persuade her to explore the form of the unknown husband. The sisters, therefore, signify those two powers of the irrational part of the soul, anger and desire, the latter of which powers is well defined by the Pythagoreans to be a certain tendency, impulse, and appetite of the soul, in order to be filled with something, or to enjoy something present, or to be disposed according to some sensitive energy; just as reason, or the rational soul, is signified by Psyche. Their stratagems at length take effect, and Psyche beholds and falls in love with Love; that is to say, the rational part, through the incentives of anger

and desire, becomes enamoured of and captivated with outward form; in consequence of which Cupid, or intellectual love, flies away, and Psyche, or the rational soul, is precipitated to earth. It is remarkable that Psyche, after falling to the ground, is represented as having "a stumbling and often reeling gait"; for Plato, in the *Phaedo*, says that the soul is drawn into body with a *staggering* motion.

After this commence the wanderings of Psyche or soul, in search of Cupid or intellectual love, from whose embraces she is unhappily torn away. In the course of her journey she arrives at the temples of Ceres and Juno,* whose aid she suppliantly implores. Her conduct, indeed, in this respect, is highly becoming; for Ceres comprehends in her essence Juno, who is the fountain of souls; and the safety of the soul arises from converting herself to the divine sources of her being.

In the next place, Venus is represented as desiring Mercury to proclaim Psyche through all lands, as one of her female slaves that has fled from her service. It is likewise said that she gave him a small volume, in which the name of Psyche was written, and every other particular respecting her. Now I think it cannot be doubted but that Synesius alludes to this part of the fable in the following passage from his admirable book *On Dreams*: "When the soul descends spontaneously to its former life, with mercenary views, it receives servitude as the reward of its mercenary labours. But this is the design of descent, that the soul may accomplish a certain servitude to the nature of the universe prescribed by the laws of Adrastia, or inevitable fate. Hence, when the soul is fascinated with material endowments, she is similarly affected to those who, though freeborn, are for a certain time hired by wages to employments, and in this condition, captivated with the beauty of some female servant, determine to act in a menial capacity under the master of their beloved object. Thus, in a similar manner, when we are profoundly delighted with external and corporeal goods, we confess that the nature of matter is beautiful, who marks our assent in her

* Ceres, Juno, and Venus represent different Powers of the Providence of the Supreme God which never forsakes the soul.

The anger of Venus and the refusal of Ceres and Juno to shelter Psyche symbolize the condition of the soul when it is pre-occupied with mundane interests and turned away from its Divine Source.

secret book; and if, considering ourselves as free, we at any time determine to depart, she proclaims us deserters, endeavours to bring us back, and openly presenting her mystic volume to our view, apprehends us as fugitives from our mistress. Then, indeed, the soul particularly requires fortitude and divine assistance, as it is no trifling contest to abrogate the confession and compact which she made. Besides, in this case force will be employed; for the material inflictors of punishments will then be roused to revenge, by the decrees of fate, against the rebels to her laws."

Venus, however, must not be considered here as the nature of matter; for though she is not the celestial Venus, but the offspring of Dione, yet she is that Divine power which governs all the co-ordinations in the celestial world and the earth, binds them to each other, and perfects their generative progressions through a kindred conjunction. As the celestial Venus, therefore, separates the pure soul from generation, or the regions of sense, so she that proceeds from Dione binds the impure soul, as her legitimate slave, to a corporeal life.

After this follows an account of the difficult tasks which Psyche is obliged to execute by the command of Venus; all which are images of the mighty toils and anxious cares which the soul must necessarily endure after her lapse, in order to atone for her guilt, and recover her ancient residence in the intelligible world. In accomplishing the last of these labours she is represented as forced to descend even to the dark regions of Hades; which indicates that the soul, through being enslaved to a corporeal life, becomes situated in obscurity, and is deprived of the light of day, that is, of the splendour of truth and reality agreeably to which Empedocles sings,

"I fled from Deity and heavenly light

To serve mad discord in the realms of night."

But Psyche, in returning from Hades, is oppressed with a profound sleep, through indiscreetly opening the box given her by Proserpine, in which she expected to find a portion of Divine beauty, but met with nothing but an infernal Stygian sleep. This obscurely signifies that the soul, by expecting to find that which is truly beautiful in a corporeal and terrene life, passes into a profoundly dormant state, and it appears to me that both Plato and Plotinus allude to this part of our fable in

the following passages, the originals of which may be seen on page 10 of my *Dissertations on the Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*. In the first place, then, Plato, in the seventh book of his *Republic*, observes that "he who is not able, by the exercise of his reason to define the idea of *the good*, separating it from all other objects, and piercing, as in a battle, through every kind of argument: endeavouring to confute, not according to opinion, but according to essence: and, in all these, marching forward with un-deviating reason—such a one knows nothing of *the good itself*, nor of any good whatever; but if he has attained to any image of *the good*, we must say that he has attained to it by opinion, not by science; that in the present life he is sleeping, and conversant with dreams, and that, before he is roused, *he will descend into Hades and there be profoundly and perfectly laid asleep*." And Plotinus in *Ennead I*, lib. viii, p. 80, says, "The death of the soul is for it, while merged, as it were, in the present body, to descend into matter and be filled with its impurity, and after departing from this body, to lie absorbed in its filth until it returns to a superior condition, and elevates its eye from the overwhelming mire. *For to be plunged into matter is to descend to Hades and fall asleep*."

Cupid, however, or *intellectual love*, at length recovering his pristine vigour, rouses Psyche, or the rational part of the soul, from her deadly lethargy. In consequence of this, having accomplished her destined toils, she ascends to her native heaven, becomes lawfully wedded with Cupid (for while descending her union might be called illegitimate), lives the life of the immortals, and the natural result of this union with intellectual love is pleasure or delight. And thus much for the explanation of the fable of Cupid and Psyche.

In false opinions the perception of the understanding power itself is not false, but only obscure. It is not the understanding power or nature in us that erreth, but it is we ourselves who err when we rashly and unwarily assent to things not clearly perceived by it.

—Ralph Cudworth.

THE DIVINE NAMES*

BY DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

Chapter VIII continued

Again God is named Justice because He satisfies the needs of all things, dispensing due proportion, beauty, and order, and defines the bounds of all orders and places each thing under its appropriate laws and orders according to that rule which is most truly just, and because He is the Cause of the independent activity of each. For the Divine Justice orders and assigns limits to all things and keeps all things distinct from and unmixed with one another and gives to all beings that which belongs to each according to the dignity of each. And, to speak truly, all who censure the Divine Justice unknowingly confess themselves to be manifestly unjust. For they say that immortality should be in mortal creatures and perfection in the imperfect and self-motivity in the alter-motive and sameness in the changeable and perfect power in the weak, and that the temporal should be eternal, things which naturally move, immutable, temporal pleasures eternal, and to sum up, they assign the properties of one thing to another. They should know, however, that the Divine Justice is essentially true Justice in that it gives to all things that which befits the particular dignity of each and preserves the nature of each in its own proper order and power.

But someone may say: 'It is not just to leave holy men unaided when they are persecuted by evil men.' We must answer that if those whom you call pious do indeed love those lower things which the materially minded strive to possess, then they must have entirely turned away from the Love of God, and I do not know how they could be called holy when they do this injustice to things truly lovely and Divine—to regard them as less desirable than ignoble and unlovely things. But if they love the things which are real, they who desire a certain thing should rejoice when the object of desire is attained. Are they not, therefore, nearer to the Angelic virtues when they withdraw as far

* For previous sections see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 96 to 104.

as possible from the love of material things in their vehement longing for that which is Divine, and exercise themselves in the most manly fashion in this virtue in their efforts to attain the Beautiful? Hence it is true to say that this, rather, is consistent with the Divine Justice—not to weaken and destroy the noblest qualities of manhood by gifts of material value, nor, if anyone should attempt to do so, to leave men unaided, but to strengthen them in adversity and impart to them those spiritual goods which they merit.

The Divine Justice is also celebrated as the Preservation of the whole because It preserves and guards that which is proper to the being and order of each thing as distinct from others, and is the exempt Cause of the independent operation of each in the whole.

But if anyone should speak of this Preservation as Salvation which delivers the world from degeneration, we will wholeheartedly accept this as one of the many modes of preservation, and it is worthy to be regarded as the first Preservation of the world, which sustains all things in their own natures unchanged and undisturbed and without deterioration, and guards all things free from war or defeat, each being regulated by its own reasons, and banishes all inequality and interference from the whole, and regulates the relations of each so that they are not reversed or transferred to others. And indeed it would not contradict the sacred theology to extol this Preservation as redeeming all things by Its all-saving Goodness, so far as the nature of each is capable of salvation, so that they do not fall away from their own proper good. Therefore the theologians call It Redemption, both because It does not allow things which have real being to fall away into non-being, and also because in so far as anything should have strayed into error and disorder and should suffer a privation of the perfection of its proper goodness, It redeems this thing from its weakness and imperfection, supplying what is lacking, supporting in a fatherly manner that which is weak, uplifting it from evil, or rather, establishing it in the Good, filling up the good it had lost and setting in order and beautifying its disorder and imperfection of form, making it perfect and freeing it from all its defects.

So much for these matters and for Justice, according to which the equality of all things is measured and bounded, and all

inequality arising from lack of equality in individual things is banished. And if, in considering inequality, this should be interpreted as the differences in all things in the universe among themselves, even this is guarded by Justice which does not allow all things to be mingled and confused in the whole, but keeps them all within the particular groups to which they naturally belong.

(To be continued)

JEWELS FROM ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

When the will, the moment it feels any joy in sensible things, rises upward in that joy to God, and when sensible things move it to pray, it should not reject them, it may and should make use of them for so holy an exercise; because sensible things, under these conditions, subserve the end for which God created them: namely, to be occasions of making Him better known and loved.

Strive to be continually in the presence of God, and to preserve the purity which He teaches.

By prayer aridity is expelled, devotion increased, and the interior practice of virtue is established in the soul.

He who interrupts the course of his spiritual exercise and prayer, is like a man who allows a bird to escape from his hand; he can hardly catch it again.

Let your soul be always ordered by a desire not for that which is easy, but for that which is most difficult; not for that which is most pleasant, but for that which is most unpleasant; not for that which is elevated and precious, but for that which is vile and despised; not for great things, but for little things.

THE ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY*

PROCLUS

Proposition CXCI

Every soul subsists proximately from intellect

For if it has an immutable and eternal essence, it proceeds from an immovable essence. For that which proceeds from a movable essence is essentially changed in every respect. The cause, therefore, of every soul is immovable. But if it proximately subsists from intellect, it is perfected by and converted to intellect. And if it participates of the knowledge which intellect imparts to the natures that are able to partake of it—for all knowledge is derived from intellect, and all things have their progression essentially from that to which they are naturally converted—if this be the case, every soul proceeds from intellect.

Proposition CXCI

Every soul contains all the forms which intellect primarily possesses

For it proceeds from intellect, and intellect gives subsistence to soul; and if intellect subsisting immovably produces all things by its very being, it will also impart to soul, which it fabricates, the essential reasons or producing principles of all things which it contains. For every thing which produces by its very being imparts secondarily, to the thing generated by it, that which it is itself primarily. The soul, therefore, contains secondarily the representations of intellectual forms.

* For previous sections, see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Nos. 65 to 104.

(To be continued)