

# The Philosophy of ancient Greece

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## P A R T. II.

### S E C T I O N I.

*Of Pythagoras—his Travels into Egypt and other foreign Countries—his Institution of the Italic School of Philosophy,—and the peculiar Discipline taught in it.*

**I**N the more ancient times, the Egyptian temples are said \* to have contained no images or statues of the gods ; and, from Homer's silence upon the head, it may be inferred that those of Greece were not furnished with them in the time of the Trojan war. It is even to be presumed that many of the rites and ceremonies recited by him, as used in sacrifices and expiations, were introduced after that period †. It is likewise known that neither the antient Chaldeans of Assyria, nor the Magi of Persia, admitted of images, nor, for some time, of temples, for religious worship ; and that they adored, under the *expanse* of the heavens, the first or sovereign principle of all things, in the sun, or the element of fire ; while the Egyptians paid a similar veneration to that of water. The like simplicity of religion appears to have obtained among the antient nations of Italy ; and, according to Dionysius Halicarnassus ‡, Pliny, and Plutarch, it took place in the sacred institutions of the Romans by their first King, and more especially in those of his successor. The religion of the Sabines, says Livy §, of which nation Numa Pompilius was, had much of the character of that of the *Pythagoreans* ;  
and,

\* Lucian de Dea Syria.  
Cicero de Legibus, lib. 2. p. 345.  
§ Lib. 1. p. 27. fol. edit.

† Diogen. Laert. in Prooemio ; Strabo, lib. 15. ;  
‡ Antiquitat. Rom. lib. 2.

and, although it was afterwards accounted by the Romans too austere, it might well be accounted more pure and incorrupt than any other in its precepts. In its exterior forms, a principal regard was paid to composure of mind, and to a chaste adoration of the present, but *invisible* divinity. Numa \*, adds Plutarch, disapproved the use of sensible images of the *deity*; “for the first cause,” said that legislator, “is not to be considered as an object of the senses; neither is he susceptible of passion; but, having no mixture of parts, he is invisible, and to be comprehended only by the mind.” It is also observed by the same author, that this sentiment of *deity* corresponded with the one delivered in the philosophy of Pythagoras.

It would however be a gross error, to imagine that Numa could have borrowed any thing from Pythagoras, who was posterior to him by two or three generations, and is reckoned † to have come into Italy, not sooner than the reign of Tarquinius Superbus, the last of the Roman kings. Not much skilled in chronology, the ancient Romans, says Cicero ‡, easily admitted of this anachronism about Pythagoras; accounting it honourable for their king to have conversed with a philosopher so celebrated for his wisdom. The Roman orator §, when copying the religious institutions delivered in Plato’s book of laws, in which that philosopher connects the regulations of Minos with the Pythagorean discipline, finds an almost entire agreement of the two with the sacred appointments of Numa. It appears, then, that rational and worthy sentiments of deity, together with suitable notions of religious worship, such as distinguished the philosophy of Pythagoras, were not unknown, even in that region where he afterwards chose to institute his school. In tracing the sources of these sentiments, we are therefore still obliged to look back to an antiquity prior to that of any Grecian poet or sage; and shall find that Pythagoras, who became most intelligent in them, was hardly deemed a Grecian philosopher, on account of his having passed the greatest part of his life in foreign climes, and received there almost the whole of his erudition and discipline.

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\* In Vita Numae.

† Ibid. lib. 4. p. 163.

‡ Tusculan. Quaest. lib. 1. p. 129.

§ Ibid. de Legibus.

There are many fables, and unvouched anecdotes, with which Porphyrius, and, after him, his disciple Jamblicus, have loaded their lives of this philosopher, that are to be thrown aside, in any credible account of him that may be given \*. That Pythagoras had parents, or near relations, in a condition to afford him the most liberal education, and to gratify the uncommon thirst for knowledge he soon discovered, need not be called in question. His father's name † was Mnesarchus, a person of rank in the island of Samos; although his employment was that of an engraver of seals. As Samos furnished no masters in science of more ability than the ordinary priests in the temples, he was early placed under the tuition of Pherecydes Syrus, whose literary fame has been mentioned. That he made a circuit among other professors of science in Greece and Phoenicia, previously to his voyage to Egypt, and by his studies under them, before the age of eighteen, had attained to that proficiency in knowledge ascribed to him by Jamblicus ‡, is neither reconcileable with probability nor chronology. We may indeed ask, with respect to *theology*, which afterwards made a principal part in his philosophy, where, among all his Grecian masters, he could receive it? Unless we admit that there were genuine poems of Orpheus, which taught it, and might be perused by him, he must have collected it from some obscure hint, such as that of the syllable *u*, inscribed on the gate of the temple of Delphos, of which Plutarch gives several explications, or extracted it from some allusions or figurative expressions in Homer, in the manner his allegorising commentators pretended to do; or penetrated into it through the veil of the Eleusinian mysteries.

It is not alledged that Pythagoras received the instruction in science that Thales could have afforded him, but only a direction from that philosopher §, then in the decline of life, to prosecute his studies in the sacerdotal colleges of Egypt, which were the best sources of knowledge. He proceeded, accordingly, in his voyage to that country; but, although

\* Cicero, De Divinatione, lib. 2. p. 296. reckons him and Plato among the authors who were wealthy.

† Diog. Laert. lib. 8. p. 487.

‡ Jamblici Vita Pythag. edit. Bibliopola Commeliano, cap. 2. et 3.

§ Archaeologiae Philosophicae, quart. edit. lib. 3. cap. 11. p. 150. Ibid. cap. 8. p. 87.

though he carried with him letters of recommendation from Polycrates, who bore the chief sway in Samos \*, to Amasis the Egyptian King, they did not immediately procure him the admission to instruction which he expected. Amasis's mandate for that purpose, which he obtained, was not directly complied with by the priests. Those of Heliopolis, to whom he first applied, remitted him to their brethren of Memphis, as their seniors in office. The latter, under the same pretext, directed him to the college of Diospolis, or Thebes; the priests of which, although they did not use the same evasion, endeavoured to deter Pythagoras from insisting upon his demand, by representing to him what disagreeable austerities he would be obliged to undergo, in the course of his initiation into their mysteries. Finding, at last, that he was neither to be dissuaded nor terrified, the rigid fraternity relented, and willingly taught him what they wished not to communicate to any stranger. Perhaps the King's authoritative command was, in this case, disrelished by the priests, who might desire to preserve entirely in their own power, and without his interposition, the privilege of admitting or rejecting such applications to them for instruction †. Upon this supposition, may be explained what Plutarch, Strabo, and other Grecian authors, say of the frequent inexorability of the priests to communicate their sciences to foreigners; especially if we add to it, that these guardians of the temples and sacred monuments might be also influenced by the motive of interest, and that they expected to be recompensed for their pains by proper presents. Pythagoras had provided ‡ three silver cups, as his gift to the three colleges he meant chiefly to attend. But, coming first with the royal mandate in his hand, he would be thought to have trusted to it alone for compliance with what he required. Others, who had not a like ability to conciliate the favour of the priests, would be exposed to repulses from them.

For the course of two and twenty years, was Pythagoras's stay in Egypt prolonged; such study did the discipline of philosophy, when extended to all its branches, require in that country, where he had

\* Porphyrius de Vita.

† Plut. de Iside et Osiride. Strab. lib. 17.

‡ Diogen. Laert. lib. 8.

had to learn the Egyptian language \*, the common or epistolary orthography, and the symbolic character ; or that in which the sacred books, and those of some of the sciences, were written. The use of a vulgar and of a sacred alphabet prevailed among other nations as well as the Egyptians, and which, it is well known, many of the eastern parts of the world still retain. Pythagoras's assiduity in study was aided by singular abstinence in diet, and by a disregard of all pleasures excited either by the senses or the passions, except that of *music*, the powers of which he was, perhaps †, the first who investigated *theoretically*, by endeavouring to reduce sounds to certain measures and rules. His genius also gave him to the contemplation of numbers, and to cultivate the mathematical and abstract sciences of geometry and astronomy ; in which he showed himself an able proficient, by the lessons of his Egyptian preceptors, and also an inventor of several curious theorems ‡. To extend yet more the account of his acquired knowledge, he is said to have been carried away to Babylon, amongst the captives which Cambyzes made in his expedition to Egypt, and to have remained there for twelve years ; and, during that time, to have had the benefit of theological and scientific instruction from the Chaldeans of Assyria, and the Persian magi. Here, again, chronology is perplexed, and history labours under insurmountable difficulties : For, according to the exactest computation, Cambyzes's invasion of Egypt took not place sooner than the third year of the sixty-third Olympiad ; and Pythagoras's return from his travels to Samos and Greece, is commonly fixed to the sixty-second of that æra. To patch up ¶ this inconsistency, some throw back his birth to the forty-seventh, and others advance it to the fifty-seventh Olympiad. The former prolong, and the latter shorten his life, by more than twenty years ; so that, however the particular events of it may be transposed, they may, at least, agree with each other about the time of his death.

Although Pythagoras endured every trial of his patience, for the sake of attaining the Egyptian sciences, he could not bear the arbitrary sway

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\* Diog. Laert. lib. 8. Archaeolog. ibid. Porphyrius de Vita Pythag. octav. edit. p. 185.

† Jamblicus, cap. 26.

‡ Ibid. cap. 4. p. 36.

Cicero de finib. lib. 5. p. 113.

¶ Vide Stanley's lives of the philosophers.

with which Syloson, the brother of Polycrates, ruled the Samians. Finding also a great indifference among his countrymen for philosophic instruction, he quitted Samos, and visited such places of Greece as were accounted most remarkable either for religious or political institutions. In this course, his conference with Leo, the Prince of Phlius, became more memorable than any other held by him. It gave occasion to his explaining what was to be understood by the name and profession of a *philosopher*; a title which he first modestly applied to himself, instead of the more ostentatious one of *sage*, or an adept in wisdom. "You call yourself a philosopher," said Leo; "but can you tell what is the meaning of this singular appellation?" "You may, perhaps," replied Pythagoras, "conceive its import, by only considering the spectacle we lately beheld, which was that of the Olympic games, and the concourse of people of all classes and characters to the celebration of them. We there saw the eager and anxious competitors for the prizes of victory; and observed others intent upon their projects for profit, by the sale or the exchange of their commodities. A diversity of motives and passions appeared to have drawn together, and to agitate the vast multitude: Yet a small number may be reckoned to have come to the games without any view to glory or gain, to be spectators merely of the promiscuous scene, and to observe the various motions of the actors in it. The philosopher resembles this last class of men. *Contemplation* is his object; and in it he places all the profit or pleasure he expects in human life. To look around him, and to reflect on what he has observed, and to study his own nature, and that of the universe to which he belongs, is the noble employment, and the rational pleasure of a *philosopher*."

Instead of copying either the absurd tales, or fabulous prodigies related of this philosopher by authors, who, with a credulity similar to that of his two biographers, would have him considered not simply as a man, but one of those genii, who were believed to hold a middle rank betwixt divinity and a mortal, we shall proceed to relate the most distinguishing institutes of his school, the rules prescribed to the elevés in it,

\* Cicero, Tusculan. Quæst. lib. 5. p. 176. Diogen. Laert. *ibid.*

it, and his peculiar manner of imparting scientific instruction to them. After narrating the fate which befel him, and the first philosophic societies reared by him in Italy, a separate view shall be taken of the whole Pythagorean system, comprehending its physical, theological, and moral theories, whether as taught by Pythagoras himself, or subsequently adopted by his most eminent disciples.

The first and most conspicuous feature of Pythagoras's school was, that in it he imitated what he saw in the foreign colleges of the learned, where the studies of religion and philosophy were enjoined; and the veil of sanctity, common to the one, was extended to the other. Although he could not in Greece appropriate them to one class of men, yet he did his utmost to make a selection of proper participants in these sublime studies. The opinion that the minds of men being various, like their bodily constitutions, the same discipline ought not to be dispensed to them all, had early obtained credit in the world. It was so much adopted by Pythagoras, that he admitted none into his school without a previous observation and trial of the temper and disposition of their minds\*. "We do not," said he, "make an Apollo of every block of marble, nor a Mercury of every piece of wood." The *purgation*, as it was called of a disciple, equalled the austerity of the strictest religious initiation. The silence enjoined to the disciple, for five years, was of itself a severe probation.

The communication of knowledge to his eleves, in three several ways, by *plain speaking*, by *concealing*, and by *signifying*, was a further proof how much he adhered to the manner of instruction he had learned abroad. The first of these needs no explication. The other two were the hieroglyphic and symbolic styles, both highly esteemed in Egypt†. In conformity to one of them, he taught, for instance, that the *unite* in number denoted *deity*, or the one original generator of all things; and that *two* expressed the indefinite nature of matter, or the whole complexity of visible objects. The *quaternion*, or number *four*, was also considered as

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competing

\* Aulus Gellius, lib. 1.

† Sextus Empiricus, Advers. Mathem. lib.

4. p. 104, 5, 6. Diogen. Laert. lib. ner. 8. p. 507.

competing with the *unite*, in indicating the stability and power of the first cause. In this manner, the ideas of theology were concealed under numerical denominations. The *symbol* was likewise used to signify them; but, more generally\*, to convey moral or political maxims. It consisted of a short sentence, and sometimes of only a word or two, which, according to its literal sense, was either vulgar or frivolous; but in another acceptation, which was latent, it required and merited attention and study, on account of its important meaning. Thus†, it was *symbolically* said, "*Stir not up the fire with a sword*," which has the obvious meaning, not to use an instrument unfit for the work to be done; but when reflected upon or explained, it communicated a precept, more proper and instructive, not *to inflame anger*, or instigate passion, where it was already excited, "*Sit not down upon the bushel*." The measure of corn of that denomination was not made for a seat; nor had it the conveniency of one, and yet it might be so used by the indolent and careless. Vulgarly taken, it might be supposed only to prohibit that practice; but its interpretation conveyed a more refined sense, that men ought not to suspend their thoughts of action and industry, on account of their having gained the present day's provision, but be always ready for the labour, which the next would require of them. *If a temple of the gods should lie in the way of your journey*, and you were even to pass near its gates, *yet enter it not*, was rather a religious precept that needed a comment, than a symbol in its proper form. It guarded against rash intrusion into sacred places, and against offering an unpremeditated worship to the gods, and pretending to do that occasionally, which ought ever to be performed as a principal act. The symbol, beside being sometimes reduced to a single word, was also expressed by letters or figures, which the instructed Pythagorean could easily explain. It appears to have been a device, which even civilized nations had fallen upon, for signifying to others their desires and intentions, on important occasions, by some sensible representations of them, when letters and writing were little known. The symbolic signs were considered as forming

\* Jamblicus *ibid.* cap. 29.

† Porphyrius de Vita, p. 199.

forming a language more emphatic than that of words \*, and calculated to make a more forcible and lasting impression upon those to whom they were addressed.

It has been observed, to the honour of Orpheus, that he restrained savage men from their horrible food ; which some understand to have been their devouring their vanquished enemies, and others their feeding upon the animal kind, while life yet quivered with the warm blood in their limbs. Plato † speaks of the *Orphic* diet as a prescribed abstinence from all animal food, and the use of only the vegetable productions of the earth. That Pythagoras was acquainted with, and imitated several of the religious and moral precepts of the Thracian bard, is generally admitted. The distinction betwixt clean and unclean beasts, whether for sacrifice or for common nourishment, he might have learned in Egypt, and other eastern countries. To his disciples he enjoined a total disuse of animal food, although it was not altogether observed among them. His ‡ favourite altar for religious worship was that of Apollo at Delos, who presided over births ; and where life, and not death, being the object, the spilling of blood, even accidentally, was accounted a profanation. The story of his sacrificing an ox upon his discovery of the mathematical theorem known by his name, Cicero § observes to be utterly improbable. Inconsistent it was with the ideas he had formed of religion and morality ; in which a rational and temperate devotion, and a humanity extended to every creature possessed of life and sensation, were conspicuous. His doctrine was, that all animated beings ¶ here below might be reckoned in a manner of a kindred tribe. In what point of view he understood and taught the particular one of the transmigration of human souls, known in Egypt, and diffused over all the East,

\* One of the Scythian Princes sent to Darius Hystaspes, when he passed the Ister with his army, a symbolic defiance, instead of a verbal one, which was that of a mouse, a frog, and a bird, tied up together with a javelin, in a bag. It intimated, that, unless the Persian soldiers could creep into holes, swim rivers, or fly through the air, they could have no success. Clemen. Alexand. Strom. mat. 5.

† De Legibus, lib. 6.

‡ Philostratus in Vita Apolonis, lib. 1. cap. 2. ;

Diogen. Laert. ibid. p. 499.

§ De Natur. Deor. lib. 3. p. 253.

¶ Diogen. Laert. ibid.

East, will be stated in the account to be given of the philosophy of the Italic school. Here we shall only take notice, that, in the judgment of his ablest disciples, the vulgar notion of it was not admitted by him ; and also, that he by no means held the human or rational soul to be of the same nature or origin with the mere animal or sensitive one; or that the corporeal and mortal nature could be ranked in the same class with that which was pre-existent to body, and immortal.

A fiction, such as that which Homer throws out \* in his story of the transmutation of Ulysses's companions into swine, by the enchantments of Circe, might be allowed to pass in Pythagoras's school, for the sake of its moral import, although not conformable to any special tenet in his philosophy ; unless as it might be understood by common hearers of his discourses, who were not admitted to the knowledge of its principles. It was †, however, agreeable, both to his physical and moral doctrine, to hold forth the animals below us as constituent parts of the general system, and, on that account, respectable to us, who ought to lay aside that thirst for their blood contracted in the barbarous ages, when the wild kinds of them were many and formidable. Considering the food of man as indicating either his brutality or his humane feelings, he recommended that sort of it which was attended with no cruelty, and, by being less inflammatory, would render him temperate and mild. The sentiment itself was truly compassionate, and worthy of being touched in Orpheus's tenderest strains. No son of the muses has alluded to it without some sympathetic approbation. When recollected by the contemplative mind, it has been revered as the image and concomitant of the golden age ; and, even in the indulged state and latitude of the human appetites and passions, it has still been admired. The Roman poet, a libertine as he was in principle and practice, could not take up the theme without falling ‡ into notes of relenting sensibility ; so that, from

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\* *Odyssey*, lib. 10. p. 136.

† *Porphyrius de Abstinentia ab Ufu Animalium*, octav. edit. lib. 3. p. 135. et sequent.

‡ The line of "*Quid meruistis, oves, placidum pecus, inque tuendos,*" and the sequel, is hardly ever forgot by any boy who ever read it at school ; and the "*O genus attonitum gelidæ formidine mortis,*" &c. also dwells upon the memory. *Ovid. Metamorphos. lib. 15.*

a licentious Epicurean, we are apt to think him suddenly transformed into one of the primitive disciples of Pythagoras. He also considers another doctrine of this philosopher, as emancipating human minds from the fears of Hades, and the Stygian lake, but upon a very different principle from the unnatural, comfortless, and heart-freezing conception of Epicurus, that death would totally extinguish their being. This will be afterwards explained. But we proceed now to narrate the institution of the Italic school, in consequence of Pythagoras's voyage to Crotona, a Grecian city upon the Italian coast.

Colonies from Greece, beside migrating eastward to Asia minor, also took their course to the west, and planted themselves in several sea-ports of Italy and Sicily, which, in time becoming populous cities, were, with their districts, called by the general name of *Magna Graecia*. It is remarkable, that a school of philosophy was instituted in both these colonial regions, before any such literary seminary took place in the parent country. It would appear that one great motive which Pythagoras had to betake himself to the Grecian cities in Italy, was the hope, that the principles, both of their religion and policy, being of a later establishment, and less rivetted by custom than those of the original states, would admit more easily the improvements he might prescribe. Upon his arrival in the city of Crotona, the extended fame he had already acquired, sufficed to procure him the most honourable reception. People of all ranks flocked around him, and, according to Jamblicus \*, were disposed to pay him a veneration beyond what was due to one in mere mortal condition. The admiration of his eloquence and wisdom, joined with that of his apparent probity and virtue, engaged the magistrates to submit to his decision their most important public resolutions. But the change of manners he introduced among the citizens was still more surprising, especially as the Crotoniates are said to have contracted various depravations of luxury. The numerous audiences he had, of both sexes, to his public lectures, gave him opportunity to display and enforce the science and practice of moral virtue †. The women laid aside their superfluous ornaments; and the men became ashamed of their effeminate

\* In vita Pythag. cap. 6.

† Justin. Histor. lib. 20. Philostrat. ibid.

nate habits ; and so much was even the strict discipline appointed to his elites in science complied with, that schools and societies for learning, in imitation of those of Crotona, were, in a short time, erected at Rhegium, Locris, Tarentum, and Metapontum, in Italy, and at Catana, and other Grecian towns on the Sicilian coast. Thus far did the *Pythagorean dreams* \* hopefully proceed ; for constituting, or reforming republics upon a peculiar mixture of the principles of religion, and philosophic science.

The course of a few years was sufficient to show the fallacy of Pythagoras's project ; and how vain the imagination was that the precepts of a philosopher, or the principles of a contemplative society, could avail to repress the operation of the common passions of men, especially when exerted in free governments, where they are apt to run into the greatest excesses. If Pythagoras, as some alledge, reckoned that his seminaries of disciples could become, like the priests of Egypt, established and permanent councils of the states in which they were erected, he was surely no wise calculator of the difference of *political meridians*, and of the varying characters of nations. But in this, it is presumable there was much more of philosophic enthusiasm than of political design. One man's disgust was only required to subvert all the labours of the philosopher, and that of his followers, and to involve him and them in a general ruin. As the number of the Pythagoreans increased, they became the majority in the senate of Crotona, and attained the chief administration of public affairs. For some time this created no jealousy, but rather gave the utmost satisfaction †. Cylon, however, a person of rank and opulence in the city, resenting Pythagoras's refusal to admit him into his school, upon the footing of an initiated disciple, exerted all his endeavours to awake the sleeping spirit of faction. He was soon successful in attaching to his party all those who were, like himself, dissipated in their manners. He represented the Pythagorean societies as disguised instruments of political domination, and that their assumed authority in the government of Crotona, fully verified this accusation.

Ignorance

\* The scheme may be reckoned among the *Somnia Pythagorea*, mentioned by Horace.

† Jamblicus, cap. 25. p. 207.

Ignorance in the multitude, and jealousy in others, rendered it credible. The silent demeanour of the Pythagoreans, their secrecy, the *symbol*, or *cypher*, intelligible only among themselves, were deemed indubitable proofs of its truth. Various are the accounts of the measures pursued by Cylon, and his associates, for overthrowing the sect. But the issue was, that, taking advantage of the popular odium now excited, a scheme was laid for their destruction, by assailing the persons of the principal men among them. While convened in the public hall, or, as some say, in the house of Milo, the famous wrestler, they were surrounded; and the edifice being set on fire, all who were present, except Archippus and Lyſis, fell victims to the flames, or to the swords of their enemies. The number of the sufferers is not agreed upon; while some reckon them forty, and others a great many more. Pythagoras himself, before the fatal event, had gone to Metapontum, where concern, added to the infirmity of his age, soon put an end to his life. The same outrageous jealousy, which arose in Crotona, spread through the other Italian cities and towns, into which the Pythagorean fraternities had been introduced. Rhegium only afforded a protection for the refugees from Crotona. In other places, they were generally subjected to forfeitures of their estates, or to exilements.

To consider this catastrophe of the Pythagoreans as the consequence of their aspiring to civil power; and to conceive their founder to have been one who entertained the deep design of subjecting, by means of his religious and philosophic discipline, the cities and states of the *Magna Graecia*, to the controul and jurisdiction of his sect, is an opinion unauthorized by the judgment of antiquity, which vouches no less for the simplicity, candour, and disinterested virtue, of the Pythagorean disciples, than for the extent of their theological wisdom, or political knowledge. Pythagoras himself was, perhaps, in no principle maintained by him so much an enthusiast, as in that of his hatred of political tyranny, and zeal for equality among the citizens in every community. He connected his detestation of the opposite principle with the idea of injustice, when understood in a religious as well as in a moral sense, to imply an usurpation of power contrary to the will of the gods, and which they had assigned to no individuals. It was the chief labour

of his life to oppose arbitrary rule \* ; as the tyrant of Centoripa is said, in consequence of his remonstrances, to have resigned his oppressive power, so the cruel Phalaris is reckoned to have owed his death to his instigations. His political doctrines were not, like his philosophical ones, involved in mystery, but openly declared, and well known. Various cities and communities, by the just and equal laws he promoted amongst them, bore testimony, that not the narrow view or ambition of throwing civil authority into the hands of his sect, but the noble one of reducing the science of government to its truest principles, and exemplifying wise and equitable legislation, animated all his endeavours † : Hence he is called by Cicero the *greatest ornament* of ancient Italy, on account of the civil institutions, and ingenious arts, communicated by him ; and the disciples trained up in the knowledge of his political maxims ‡, such as Zaleucus of Locris, and Charondas of Thurium, are not known to have assumed power, or dealt in intrigues, even where every opportunity was given them, but to have derived the signal fame that followed them, from the honest and worthy exertions they made for establishing civil concord and harmony in the states they were called to reform. To have the capacity of performing this service to mankind, was reckoned, in the Pythagorean school, the highest of all worldly honours.

The decisive sentence of the *ipse dixit* has been often quoted, to the reproach of Pythagoras §, as a teacher of philosophy, and to the ridicule of his school ; and, if understood according to the common acceptation, nothing can be imagined more absurd. Perhaps there may be a mistake in supposing that it implied an implicit submission to every dictate of Pythagoras. We may venture to say, farther, that it is morally improbable, in the highest degree, that such disciples as Archytas of Tarentum, Philolaus, Timaeus of Locris, Ocellus Lucanus, Alcmaeon, Lysis, the preceptor of Epaminondas, men of the most distinguished abilities in science, and whose literary works testified their genius, could ever admit Pythagoras's assertion, or that of any philosopher, in the room of  
reason .

\* Jamblic. cap. 32.

† Diogen. Laert. ibid. p. 501.

‡ Tusculan. Quaest. lib. 5.

§ Cicero. de Natur. Deor. lib. 1. p. 192.

reason itself, and acquiesce in it as the *ultimatum* of human knowledge \*. It appears, indeed, that the *ipse dixit*, or the precept, without the reason being annexed to it, was directed to those called *Acoustics*, or the croud of auditors, and the undisciplined, who attended his school. During the five years of the *noviciate* of the disciples, it also had its currency amongst them. But, if we suppose that it was extended to the fully instructed, it is likely to have been only with a particular view of terminating disputes, and preserving in the sect an apparent unanimity of sentiments. In that age, the *dialectic*, as it was afterwards called, or a method of conducting any argument with accuracy, and in such a manner as to avoid a false conclusion, unless what natural good sense might suggest to that purpose, was unstudied, and made no part of erudition or science. The Pythagorean disciples, sensible how readily they might be misled, or mislead others, in various disputable questions, would find it the properest remedy against vague and fallacious argumentation, and generally the best termination of their reasoning, to appeal to some noted axiom, or acknowledged principle, in the doctrine of their master. Considered in this light, the *ipse dixit* was no such gross absurdity as it is commonly represented.

The distinction which Pythagoras chose to make amongst his disciples, according to the judgment he could form of their genius and capacities, instead of being a political measure, calculated to strengthen his sect, had a direct tendency to weaken and infringe its union. It rendered his school a breed of philosophers, who cultivated separate branches of science †. Some were *theologists*, dedicated chiefly to religious studies; some were *politicians*, conversant in the theory of legislation and civil government; and others *mathematicians*, who applied themselves to geometry and astronomy. Upon none was imposed, and from none was exacted, any other task or performance, but that for which their natural faculties and inclinations appeared to qualify them ‡. One party of them was closely united to the college; and, having their estates thrown

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 \* Diogen. Laert. *ibid.*

† De vita Pythag. autor. incertus. Ex.

Photii. Bibliotheca, codice 249. Holsteno Interprete.

‡ Porphy. de vita, p. 189. et observat. ad vitam.

into the common flock, used the diet, and lived according to the forms prescribed in the society. Another class was allowed to retain their fortunes, and to dwell at home, under the profession of being of the sect, but tied to less strict rules of fellowship. These two orders were distinguished from each other by the names of *Pythagoreans* and *Pythagorites*, or the genuine disciples, and their imitators. The distinction was triple, when it included foreigners.

According to Pythagoras's doctrine, morals and politics formed one system, and were reducible to the same principles. As his treatises on the latter, which are said to have been large, are not transmitted, we can form no distinct judgment how he reconciled the duties required of his disciples in their private capacity, which, in several respects, were singular, and out of the tract of common life, with such as might be exacted of them, as members of civil government. Here we allude not to the precepts about diet and abstinence, but take into view their sense and practice of certain moral duties, when they came in competition with others that might be accounted of superior obligation. A Pythagorean, it appears, under promise to render any personal service to one of his fraternity, although not very important, reckoned himself indispensibly bound to perform it, in the precise manner and time he had engaged. Arrested by his word given, he could not turn aside to do any other office, which his country or his neighbours might request of him, if that demand put him out of the way of acquitting himself of his promise \*. Lysis meets his friend Euryphamus going to worship in the temple of Juno, and is asked by him to wait at the gate, until he had performed his adoration, and should return to him. He promises to do so. Wrapt up in some deep meditation, Euryphamus forgets the appointment he had made, and departs by another entry. In expectation of his appearance, Lysis had taken his seat upon a stone bench, and remained there all the hours of the day, and through those of the night. His name being accidentally mentioned next morning, in the presence of Euryphamus, the interview with him was recollected by the latter. He repairs to the temple, and finds him there, keeping his station; and still waiting

\* Diogen. Laert. *ibid.*

waiting his return with all composure. In this instance, there was testified, perhaps, more respect to a friend, and a confidence in his punctuality, than a sense of strict obligation. But if it was a Pythagorean maxim to put an ordinary and accidental promise upon an equality with the engagement of an oath, which is alledged to have been the case, it must be looked upon as a *hyperbole* in morals, and to have inferred various improprieties in conduct. An oath or vow was either a deliberate, voluntary, and public act of religion, or was pronounced upon some extraordinary occasion, and such as was sufficient to introduce it. All that was accounted sacred among men was called to witness the sincerity of it; and therefore, although a person swore to his own hurt, he was not to think himself at liberty to retract. It would seldom interfere with any call to public or private duty; or, if it did, its solemnity would make it publicly known. But promises among friends are often requested and granted upon slight occasions, and with no reserve or ceremony. Unless, then, the Pythagoreans be supposed to have been as scrupulous in giving promises as they were religiously strict in the observance of them, they must have been frequently thrown into disagreeable situations, and committed errors in moral behaviour, more culpable than those incurred in other societies, where a proper distinction was made with respect to the obligation of the greater and lesser moralities.

There are other precepts of a frivolous kind imputed to Pythagoras, or delivered as articles of his moral discipline, which may be reckoned more worthy of the *Pythagorites*, or *mimics*, of his school, than of the true Pythagoreans. We can, indeed, discover no foundation for them in those fragments which bear the names of some of his earliest disciples, and appear to be genuine relicts of their writings: Nor does Hierocles, in his commentary on the *Golden Verses*, give ground to suppose that such *embrius* of religious or moral doctrine had credit amongst the more intelligent of the sect. Some of them, as we may understand from Porphyry, were no more than prescriptions for health, or for the rendering the body more freely subservient to the energies of the mind. The enjoined abstinence from *beans* most probably proceeded from no other reason, notwithstanding the various fictions reported with respect to it. Venerated as the name of Pythagoras was among his disciples, and its authority

authority required for every species of doctrine, yet this did not prevent various mistakes and corruptions of it from taking place \*. It is not agreed among antient authors, whether any philosophic treatises he had written were preserved after his death ; and, by several of them, it is observed that he committed nothing to writing. But, if it should be allowed that there were extant such commentaries of his as Diogenes Laertius † mentions, upon the authority of Heraclitus, the philosopher, who, in his books, gave the titles of them, it seems that they had been lost at an early period. Beside uncommon accidents to which they were liable from the catastrophe of his followers, Porphyry takes notice of its ‡ being an unfavourable circumstance that they were written in the Doric dialect, which had a peculiar obscurity ; and that transcripts of them into other dialects were made by those who were not true Pythagoricks. Hence ensued a misapprehension of many of his precepts, and a ridicule of their perverted meaning §. The poet Epicharmus, who was only a common hearer of his public discourses, and not of his college, took the liberty to descant, in sportful verse, upon some of the most abstruse points of his philosophy.

It is alledged, and with probability, that, at first, every literary composition, by any of the disciples of Pythagoras's school, had his name prefixed to it : But this usage had been soon laid aside, most likely on account of the abuse to which it was turned. Although antiquity has transmitted his golden verses as the most genuine summary of his moral doctrines, they are evidently not of his composition. Some of the verses were probably taken from his mouth ||, but the greater part appear to be recollected sentences, turned into numbers by Lysis or Philolaus, or them both ; who, in contradiction to fictitious or faulty complements of their master's precepts, might find it necessary to publish a just abstract of them \*\*. From the latter of them came that *Collect* of Pythagoras's philosophy which was most esteemed, and that Plato thought well purchased for forty *minae*. The theory of the sciences, divine and human, taught

\* Vide Lucian, Plutarch, Cicero.

† De Vita Pythag. p. 205. et seq.

‡ Diogen. Laert. in Vita Philolai, lib. 5.

† Ibid. in Vita.

§ Jamblicus in capit. ult.

\*\* Porph. de Vita Pythag. p. 208.

taught by this celebrated philosopher, was further illustrated by the publications of Timæus of Locris, Ocellus Lucanus, Archytas, and other eminent disciples of his Italic school.

Notwithstanding the great subversion of the Pythagorean schools that has been mentioned, still some scattered vestiges of them were preserved. In these, both teachers and disciples were found, who supported the reputation, although they could not revive the splendour, of their sect. The unenvied privacy to which they were reduced, joined to the virtuous simplicity of their manners, contributed to their duration; and \*, according to Diogenes Laertius, we must reckon nineteen generations from Pythagoras, until his retainers totally disappeared, or were absorbed in other sects, whose principles bore some analogy to their own. While a remnant of them subsisted, they were beheld with veneration, like the sequestered priests of some once famous, but forsaken shrine. "At this day," says Isocrates, "we more admire a Pythagorean in his silence, than a person who discourses in the most eloquent manner." Although contemplative and studious, a true Pythagorean was attentive, and feelingly alive to every act of duty, and generous service, to all of his tribe. The tie of friendship amongst individuals of the sect, was equal to every proof of its constancy. Damon † and Pythias contended which of them should die in place of the other. In youth, the studies, the exercises, and amusements of the *friends* were the same, and tallied through every period of age. An indissoluble sympathy was the consequence, which ceased not altogether in death. The image of the departed friend was sought for, and contemplated, as far as might be, in some living character. The provisions made for the general benefit of the sect, testified not only the prevalence of friendly affections, but of the warmest benevolence amongst its members. The aged and infirm had comfortable recesses assigned them. The credit of the fraternity served the accidental necessities of every individual; and his wilful secession from it, or the breach of his sacred engagements, could only deprive him of these privileges. In this case, if he had contributed any thing

\* In Vita Pythag. ad finem.  
p. 234.

† Valerius Maxim. lib. 4. quart. edit.

thing to the public stock, it was returned to him ; but his alienation was considered as a sad walk into the grave. His *moral* death was deplored ; and his obsequies were solemnly performed, as of one more *wofully* dead, than he who only falls a corporeal victim to mortality.

So far we have attempted to trace, not what may be called *a life* of Pythagoras, which, perhaps, never was, and now cannot be compiled without an intermixture of fables or vague conjectures. An essay only has been made, to give the outlines of his genius and character, and to join with them some explications of the discipline of his school, and of particular tenets of his philosophy, which otherwise might have been omitted, and could not, without frequent and improper digressions, be introduced into the following general dissertations on the principles, theological and moral, which not only distinguished the Pythagorean sect, but were partly ingrafted into the systems of the most admired philosophers in the academies of Athens.

SECT.

## S E C T. II.

*Preliminary reasoning of the Pythagoreans.—Their argument for the Incorporeal Nature being the Original Principle in the Universe ;—and why they Philosophised by Numbers.—Views of Theories in Theology and Morals.*

**T**WO natures of things, the incorporeal and corporeal, were held by the Pythagoreans as together constituting the universe. They, therefore, defined philosophy to be the science of things divine and human, or of objects intelligible by the mind, and of those perceived by the senses. In discussing the question, into which of these two component parts of the universe, its principle might, most rationally, be resolved, they held it to be an evident truth, *that bodies could never be the principle of bodies.* All of them, said they, apparent to us, are compounded ; and, therefore, in none of them is to be discerned a first principle. To alledge, that the minute particles of bodies, although they escape the senses, may have the form of principles, is a vague assertion, and, when considered, leads to no conclusion. For, if we suppose any species of body to be analysed, and its smallest particles to be reduced into those which are smaller ; yet, whether these be called atoms, or invisible quantities, we can still conceive a further diminution of them, and that to proceed in an endless series. There is, therefore, no principle of originality either apparent or conceivable in bodies ; and those who insist upon it, are only right in saying, that it is unapparent and obscure. But they ought to go further, in order to discover the truth, and acknowledge, that, if such a principle obtains in the universe, it is to be found in the incorporeal nature, or that genus of being which is comprehended only by the mind ; otherwise it must be concluded, the

the world is without a principle \*. It is added by Sextus Empiricus, who states the Pythagorean argument at greater length, that Epicurus, who is known to have held the eternity of atoms, and denied all incorporeal substance, was obliged to confess, that we acquire the idea of body, by combining in our minds its sensible qualities of extension, figure, and solidity; without which conception it could be no intelligible thing. But, if a mental idea of body necessarily precedes the knowledge of body, the incorporeal and intelligent nature must be inferred to have essence prior to the corporeal and unintelligent †; and as bodies, apparent and sensible, are constituted of those which are unapparent, so the intelligible ideas of them must have their original in beings incorporeal, and possessed of intelligence; which are, therefore, to be concluded the only principles of things in the world.

In attempting to give any rational account of the constitution of the world, whether it be supposed to have been eternal, or to have been generated, all philosophers have found it necessary to form certain conceptions of the substances that do exist, and to express, in the most perspicuous manner they can, their ideas of them. Some held all substances to be no more than an assemblage of what others called the qualities of bodies, and therefore contented themselves with taking only a collective view of these qualities ‡; while the Pythagoreans thought it more philosophical to consider them separately by themselves, as objects intelligible to the mind. Thus, said they, the extension of body may be conceived

\* Sext. Empir. *Advers. Mathem.* in cap. de Numero, lib. 9. p. 425. fol. edit.

† Notwithstanding the above argument used by the disciples of the Pythagorean school, it must be admitted, that they generally supposed matter unformed, which was not body, to have been eternal, or, at least, pre-existent in time to the constitution of the world. That this was their hypothesis, appears from the account to be given of the formation of the world, according to Timæus Locrus; and it must be owned to have been the common delusion of the ancient philosophers. We call it a *delusion*; because no idea can be conceived of matter without any form; nor is it explained by them in any other way, but by saying what it was not, and making it a *chimera*, void of all properties, and yet so far qualified as to be the subject of them.

‡ Porphyrius in *Vita Pythag.* p. 202.

ceived without its figure, and both these properties separate from its weight. A line, a superficies, a solid, are surely different conceptions, although all of them be found together in the dimension of body. Yet each of them comes under the predicament of numbers. A line, as considered by mathematicians, consists of several points; and its length is determined by the number of them. A superficies is composed of several lines, and a solid of several surfaces\*. *Number*, therefore, is a primary *idea*, antecedent even to that of a conceivable substance, or the constituent properties of body. It is ever occurring to the mind; for each idea is one, and, when joined to another, it is more. As the Pythagoreans held incorporeals, or intelligibles, to be the principles of all things, they reckoned that their essential differences could not be so distinctly and philosophically expressed in any language, as in that of numbers: For how, said they, is the first principle of the universe understood, in its identity and individuality, to be represented to the mind with a propriety equal to what the *monad* holds forth; and, if alterity be found in nature, the duad, as it may be called, is a no less expressive epithet, when taken not according to the common conception of the arithmetical number two, consisting of one, and one, but of one, and another, or what is indefinite; and therefore not properly number, but its source or beginning. In this manner, they reckoned the clearest distinction was made between the incorporeal and indivisible first cause, and passive matter, the subject of its operation; which being divisible and alterable, had the capacity of producing the triad, the first distinct numerical idea, or quantity ascertained, and particularly terminated, having a beginning, a middle, and an end. It may be asserted, therefore, that Pythagoras, and his immediate successors, by no means entertained the visionary notions of a physical and generative power in numbers, which their followers, in a subsequent age, absurdly adopted, to the shame of philosophy; and that the former insisted upon the science of numbers only as subservient to the abstract and intellectual contemplation of the principles of things, which they maintained to be incorporeal, and in conjunction with body, to be susceptible of multitude and

\* Porphyrius in Vita Pythag. lib. 4. p. 104. 105.

ind. of Py.

magnitude, identity, and diversity, equality and inequality. It has been reported, says *Theano*, as cited by *Stobaeus*, by many of the Greeks, that Pythagoras taught that numbers were \* principles; but his doctrine was, not that things originated from them, but according to them. The treating philosophical subjects according to mathematical ideas, and particularly those of arithmetic, was not so much exploded even in Aristotle's † time; but that he, who overspread the whole ground of philosophy with metaphysical and logical terms, chose to explain the four faculties of the soul in the Pythagoric manner. The understanding, says he, corresponds to the unite, knowledge to the number two, opinion to three, or the triangular superficies, and sense to the quaternion, or solid figure. The idea annexed by the Pythagoreans to the quaternion, was, however, a very different one. The author of the *Golden verses* swears by his master Pythagoras, who had transmitted to his disciples ‡ the knowledge of the *Tetractys*, which is the source of nature, ever flowing on in generation. Hierocles, in his commentary upon the verses, understands by the mystic number four, the Deity himself, the fountain of everlasting order in the world. But in what sense is he the quaternion? This, adds he, must be learned from the sacred book, ascribed to Pythagoras, in which the Deity is held forth as the *number of numbers*. He then descants upon the perfection of the unite, as the principle of all the numbers, and having the powers of them all; and observes further, that the whole power of the Decad, which is the finite interval of number, was first discoverable in the four, which, taken together with the three numbers antecedent to it, made up ten. After such speculations on the virtue and efficacy of the quaternion, he concludes it to bind together all beings, the natural elements and seasons, the ages of human life, and of human societies. It is subjoined, that the intelligent God is, after this manner, the cause of the sensible one, or the animated world. By all this, if any thing be intelligible, we may understand it to be an essay

\* *Stobaei Eclog. Phys. lib. 1. p. 27.* Theano was Pythagoras's spouse, who took the government of the school upon his death, and wrote some philosophic treatises, which remained.

† *Arist. de Anima, lib. 1. cap. 2.*  
cum Hieroclis Comment.

‡ *Aurea Car. vers. lin. 47. 48.*

say on the mysterious Theurgy, as it was called, or the operation of the Deity in the fabric of the heavens and the earth, and on the subject of which, we have, in the fragment of Timaeus Locrus \*, the following dissertation, together with other principles of the Pythagorean philosophy.

There were two causes of all things, mind and necessity; the one, of such as are done with reason, and the other, of those which are produced by power, and according to the capacity of bodies. The principle of the fair, and the best things in the world, is called God; whilst other adventitious causes are to be referred to necessity. Before the generation of the world, form, or the idea of it, and matter void of shape, but susceptible of it, coexisted with God, who wise, as well as good, saw what was to be done in order to produce a regular system of things. He imparted that form to the mass of matter, which gave it a definite constitution, and rendered it one whole, and perfect; being uniform, and also most comprehensive, from its rotundity, and from its circular motions, adapted to that perpetual duration for which it was designed by him. For he who made it fair, not after the model of any thing done before, but according to his own intelligible idea, willed that it should be so permanent, as to be dissolvable by no other cause but that of his own volition. As, therefore, a good parent, can have no motive or inducement to destroy what has been procreated by him, especially when it bears the stamp of pulchritude upon it, the world remains, as it was formed by its maker, unaltered, and exempted from change. The more it may be reckoned to have this perfection, as it was endowed with life, and the infusion of an all-informing and intelligent soul; a soul so tempered, as to consist of idea individual, or unity, and dividual essence, or number. Hence the world is found to contain two different powers, or principles of motion, which may be distinguished by the names of *the same*, and *of another*; the first being constant, and the second variable. The conjoining these two powers, whether in the soul of the world, or in the visible creation, was an intricate operation; but effectuated according to the powers of harmonic numbers. Here, then, the wide step was made into

\* Timaeus Locrus de Anima Mundi. In Opusculis Mythol. Physic. Ethic. Octav. edit. Amstelodami, p. 544.

into philosophy, in the mystic style that has been exemplified, and which threw such obscurity upon the doctrine of the Pythagorean schools, that the inscription upon the statue of the Egyptian Isis, or Minerva, wrapt around with a thick shroud, was said to become them, "who can penetrate through my veil."

Resigning, therefore, the investigation of the numerical faculties to those who can be amused with them, we shall only here subjoin, from the same author, so much of his account of the system of the world as may serve to introduce that of Plato, afterwards to be given, which is no more than an enlarged view of the same principles.

The soul of the material world, which is its greatest ornament, must be conceived to have had all its endowments prior to its infusion into a subject void of all qualities. For, whatever in the universe is more adorned, and more eminently qualified than another, must be concluded to be the more ancient, and to have the precedence in originality. Time, indeed, is but coeval with the generated world; yet in such a manner, that it may be conceived to be the image of that time ungenerated, which is called *eternity*. As the constitution of the world, furnished with an enlivening soul, demonstrated the operation of its parent and founder, so the generation of animals, subject to mortality, but capable of continuing their species, testified a similarity of design, and a completion of like admirable workmanship. The procreation and custody of all living substances, under the law of mortality, was, indeed, committed to Nature; who, as the appointed distributor and nourisher of animal life, performs her work in every region of *alterity*; making souls flow into bodies, some from the sun and moon, and others from the wandering stars; but her power stops at that which, in the human composition, possesses identity, and which being the essence of the rational part, remains the same as it was given by the supreme ruler of the world, to be the type and signature of wisdom to those of the human race, who, along with this good destiny, make it the study of their life how to use it aright.

In the mystical detail of the origin of all rational souls, such as the human, their existence before their connection with bodies, is evidently delivered as a Pythagorean doctrine. They are represented, not as generated

rated by Nature, but as individual portions of the intelligent soul of the world, which being tempered with the elementary essences, were assigned to Nature's charge for distribution into mortal bodies, and coalition with them. Therefore they were, in a manner, coeval with their original, and the production of the world; which, according to this philosophy, beside human souls, contained a multiplicity of other intelligencies conversant with bodies, and acting in the celestial and terrestrial spheres, in various capacities, and with the several denominations of heroes and demons; the earth being accounted the residence of certain inferior divinities, as well as of men. Evident it is, that the immortality of human souls could be inferred, by necessary consequence, from the doctrine of their pre-existence; and that the argument with respect to this important point, instead of a prolix discussion, might be reduced to this short state: Whatever substances had co-existed with the world, and were not generated from any adventitious forms, or accidents of body, could not be affected by corporeal vicissitudes, and corruptibility; but the rational souls of men are such substances; therefore they are not subject to corruption with the body, but immortal.

The doctrine of the transmigration of human souls into the bodies of other animals, by way of penal suffering, and correction for their vices, is mentioned by Timæus Locrus, not as a tenet of the Pythagorean philosophy, adapted to rational minds, but a fictitious one, calculated to strike the gross, and otherwise indocile minds of the multitude. He ranks it with the fables of Homer; which having a religious or moral tendency, might be reckoned allowable deceptions, and properly enough employed to deter the impious and profligate from their lawless and pernicious practices. This, says he, is no more than what is often done by the physician in his healing art. Diseases which yield not to gentle, and what may be called more salubrious remedies, are expelled by those which are more effectual, but severe and violent. Therefore, to impress truth, which is the sanity of the soul, upon certain impenetrable minds, they must be told of strange punishments abiding them, such as the transmigration of their souls from one animal body into another, in which every one shall meet the chastisement due to his depravation. But, with respect to the suffering of souls, there can, in reality, be no  
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other than what Nemestis, in adequate judgment of their demerit, has determined for them; and which, in the second circuit, or the return of the soul into the regions of air \*, the furies, and other terrestrial demons, the inspectors of human affairs, are impowered to inflict; having this charge from the supreme God, the disposer of all things. We also find in Hierocles's commentary †, a similar disapprobation of the Metempsychosis, which is declared to be a mistaken and irrational opinion, implying a degradation of the superior nature into the inferior, which the order of the universe forbids; and that can be understood only in a metaphorical sense, when vice is said to debase man to the brutal condition.

The author last mentioned has also given, in the explanation of his text, the Pythagorean doctrine with regard to the future felicity of those souls which have adorned themselves with virtue and truth, and thus completed their purification from corporeal passions. It amounts to a kind of deification. Liberated from the body, says he, the enlightened and purified soul shall become an immortal god, no more obnoxious to death or corruption. But its elevation to divinity was to be understood in a limited sense, and in connection with other points of the Pythagorean theology. It was a principle in it, *that species does not coincide with species*; but every distinct nature remains under its peculiar law. Thus, in the three fixed orders of beings, the immortal gods, the heroes by nature, and the terrestrial demons, together with human souls, the perfection of each of them is not placed in the change of its essence, or in its transmutation into a state of being superior to that which it occupies, but in the proportional and comparative likeness which all of them, in their several ranks, bear to the supreme God. In the first of them, this resemblance was said to be of constant duration, always the same in degree; in the second, to be no less perpetual, but not ever in equal measure; and, in the third, to have neither constancy in the one way, nor invariability in the other. Yet the human soul was to be considered as having attained a deified condition, when, in conjunction with its subtile vehicle, it mounted to its pure aetherial place, superior to that of terrestrial

\* Diogen. Laert. lib. 5.

† Hierocles Comment. in Verf. 52. 53.

terrestrial and perishable bodies; and from thence never to descend again to the sphere of mortality and corruption. It is in allusion to this retreat of purified souls, according to the Pythagorean principle, into the regions of aether, supposed to be below the celestial spheres, but above the sublunary one, that the poets \* sing of their taking flight from hence, and being reunited, each of them to its proper star; which, in more philosophical language, was expressed, by their recovering their primæval state, being resolved into their original principle, and harmonising with the soul of the world.

We enter not into a more particular account of the sphere of the *triple world*, as it was called, and which the Pythagoreans distinguished by the names of the inferior, superior, and supreme. The explication which ancient authors give of this arrangement of the universe, is marked with obscurity, and a considerable diversity of opinion. Even the terms they employ in describing it are varied, according to the indistinct conceptions they had of a theory so dark and abstruse. Yet, before concluding the subject, it is proper that one remark should be added to what has been said of the three orders of intelligent and rational being found in the universe. Among them, it seems, of the same order, and who possessed the same essence, it was imagined that some natural distinction took place, so as to infer subordinate degrees of virtue and excellence, according to the higher or lower places in the celestial sphere, assigned them for habitation, by the will of the Deity. Hence, we find Hierocles asserting, that, in the first of these classes, as well as in the other two, some of those he styles immortal Gods were more, and some less, divine than others †. From this doctrine we may trace the introduction of those fantastic speculations about the moral attributes and qualities of these divinities, their agency in the globes and stars of heaven, and the influence they were supposed to derive, to the sublunary and terrestrial world, which, by the later Pythagoreans, were carried into all the absur-

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dities

\* Virgil, who in several passages alludes to the Pythagorean philosophy, has, in his *Georgics*, the verse well known to every reader of the classics:

Nec morti esse locum, sed viva volare,  
Sideris in numerum.

† Hierocles Comment. V. 1. cap. 1.

dities of judicial astrology and divination. The vestiges of these and other corruptions of this philosophy, which was early propagated through the eastern nations, are observable among them to this day. But, in whatever manner they explained what they called the *condition*, *chorus*, and *order*, that obtained in the fixed stars, and in the seven planets, they distinguished from them the super-etherial or supreme world, as that which comprehended them and all other things within itself; having the essence of sempiternity, and being replete with all principles, the sum of which was found in one divine mind. Without reference to time or place, without distinction of its genus, it could not be properly called by any name, unless that of the all-governing throne of the Deity was applicable to it. But this much may suffice as a sketch of the theory of the world as it was conceived by the Pythagoreans, and which we will find resumed and insisted upon, at greater length, in the account of the Platonic philosophy. The general principles of the ethical, or what was called the practical part of the Pythagorean system, come now to be delineated.

All philosophy, at first, and for a course of time, was comprehended under the general name of Physics, which has been since more fully expressed by the compound word Physico-theology. Until about Socrates's age, there was no division of it into physics, properly so called, and dialectic, and ethics. Theology and morals were generally treated under one head; and, in the Pythagorean school, they were not distinguished further, than as the one was considered to be the foundation of the other. Piety and the worship of the gods was taught as the fundamental principle of moral discipline. But it may be reckoned the peculiarity of this philosophy, not only that the precept was at first given without the reason of it, but that a certain degree of moral and virtuous practice was required of the disciple, before he was deemed qualified to understand or to relish theoretical principles, relative to the general nature and constitution of things, and productive of wisdom and mental improvement, not human only, but divine\*. For as the blemished eye, says Hierocles, or one accidentally stained, endures not, until it be cleansed,

\* Hierocles in Proemio ad Aur. Carm.

cleansed, the view of bright objects, so neither does the soul, which has not the purification of virtue, behold with steadiness the beauty and splendour of truth.

Upon this axiom, the philosophy of human life, or the moral discipline of ~~Man~~, was reduced by the Pythagoreans into two parts, the *purifying* and the *perfective* one. By the first was understood the delivery of the soul from corporeal impurities ; by the second, its advancement to conformity to the great original, which is the divine image. In the scale of beings, when an ascent is to be made by individuals of one class of them, smaller things must precede the greater. We must first be men, and then divinities. The civil virtues known and practised, stamp upon us the former character ; but science and contemplation assimilate us to the latter \*. Nature has made the human body such an instrument, that it may be accommodated to different kinds of life ; yet the habits it most contracts serve to discover that temper of the soul which is most predominant, and may be reckoned the openings of its propensities to the practice either of virtue or vice.

The analogy that may be traced between the powers of the body in the best condition, and the moral faculties of the soul, is most remarkable ; and the correspondence of the one to the other is so manifest, that the great lines of the virtues may be said to have their similitudes in the bodily accomplishments. In this comparative view, the virtue of temperance is similar to health, prudence to acuteness of sense, fortitude to vigour, and justice to the beauty and symmetry of the whole body. It is therefore a primary dictate in ethical philosophy, that the order instituted by nature in the corporeal part of the human constitution has a reference and a connection with that suitable to the mind, and that the perfection of both, and the means of promoting it, are alike and harmonious †. The seeds of virtue, as incitements to acquire this perfection, are indeed imparted by nature ; but neither the middle nor the end of the necessary progression is attainable without labour and diligent study. Hence the helps to advancement are to be sought after ; and the same prudence which discovers the usefulness of exercise and medicine to the

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body,

\* Timæus Loc. Opuscul. ibid. p. 564.

† Ibid.

body, points out the necessity and benefit of philosophical instruction and discipline to the soul. To allay anger, and abate vehement desire, to liberate the soul from the turbulence of passion, is no less proper and advantageous, than to keep the body cool, to preserve the equal temperance of the blood, and to expel the humours which are pernicious to the animal frame. By what method the latter purpose may be accomplished, belongs to that branch of practical science to show, which relates to diet and medicine, and may be called the Therapeutic.

Dispositions to good or ill, to virtue or vice, arise not only from indulged habits, but also are derived to us from our parents, and the elements of which we are composed; at least, the depravities or defects found in either of these have their effect upon us. But the ills that are in nature, of whatever kind they be, have their mitigations or their remedies; and the means to be used for the sanity of the body are not more ascertained, nor more efficacious, than what true philosophy prescribes for the human soul. To understand what aliment or medicine may best support or relieve the one, or what rule of reason or prudence may prove beneficial to the other, the constitution of both must be studied with attention. If we inquire into that of the latter\*, we shall find it to consist of three parts; reason; irascible passion, and cupidity. Reason has subjected to it knowledge; passion, the bravery of strength; cupidity, appetite. When these three are brought to coalesce, and be at one with each other, virtue and concord are produced in the soul. But, if their motions be incoherent and tumultuary, vice and discord are necessarily generated. Since by virtue is generally understood that which perfects any thing in its kind, or raises it to the highest pitch of excellence, human virtue† must be reckoned, and defined to be the perfection of man's nature. But this perfection is unattainable, unless the mind, or rational faculty of the soul, govern that which is void of reason; for, by the one we are enabled to judge of the nature of objects, and consider their effects; while the other subjects us to the power of every impelling and blind appetite or passion. The dominion of the first

\* Fragmenta Pythag. ex Theage in Opusculis Mythol. ibid. p. 681.; Maximus Tyrius Dissert. 8. edit. p. 66.

† Frag. ex Thaurio Opusc. ibid. p. 689.

first tends to produce tolerance and continence \*, without which, neither the labour necessary in human life can be sustained, nor the good of which it is susceptible procured. By its influence, the gratification of appetite is moderated, cupidity is turned into temperance, and the impulse of passion into fortitude; and that composure of the jarring parts of the human constitution † takes place, which is the result of justice, or the disposing of all of them in their due proportions.

When the term Justice is used in this peculiar sense, it is to be understood as signifying a branch of that supreme law of reason, which, extending through all the constituent parts of the universe, combines them together as a whole; while to each particular part its proper place and function are assigned. By it, whatsoever is nobler and better in its properties ‡ and attributes has the ascendancy above that which is of inferior and meaner qualities. That which moves of itself is preferred to that which is moved; that which constantly acts, to what is ever acted upon; and that which is divine and eternal, to what is human and created. Therefore, as God bears rule in the world, so ought reason and mind to preside in the soul of man. The conformity of the human constitution to this law does not imply the rejection of any of its parts, but only their suitable distribution and action. The irrational passions, as useful, and the appetites as necessary, have their subordinate place and office. Submissive to reason, or in concert with it, they give that animation and vigour to the intelligent faculties, which contributes to their laudable operation, and their success §. As ingredients of the human constitution, they are parts of a whole, which are to be arranged, but not set aside. Unlike as they appear to be, to the intelligent principle, they may yet be so regulated, as to harmonise with it. In the visible world, harmony is produced, not by the separation of the elements from each other, but by their due mixture. To remove from the human body all cold or heat, or all moisture or dryness, in the participation of which its proper temperament consists, would not be to promote but to destroy.

\* Ex Theage, p. 689.

† Hieroc. Comment. in Carm. Ver. 13. 14.

‡ Fragm. ex Critone, p. 619.; *ibid.* ex Archyt. p. 677.

§ *Ibid.* ex Theag. p. 691. & 695.

destroy its health. The same rule is applicable to the soul. The extinction of the passions, as it would unhinge its constitution, would be destructive of its active powers.

The affections and passions may indeed be considered as the matter out of which the human virtues themselves are formed \*, since, in the due government of them, the moral qualities are beheld. It is the sufferance of pain, and the moderation of pleasures, which chiefly hold forth these dispositions to view, as having excellence and propriety in them. But, for such virtuous exertions, reason, or the counsel of the mind, would prove unequal, were it not for the support which the natural passions afford. Fortitude arises from them †, and excites us to defy and surmount difficulties. In like manner, the powerful instinct for self-preservation enables us to counteract the immoderate desire of pleasure. Nor yet, upon this account, is the lustre of virtue tarnished, but rather is set off to greater advantage, like a picture, the more illuminated by the mingling of light and shade. It proves that there is no obstruction to the harmony of the world ‡, but that all things, according to their nature, bear a part in it; and especially that whatever is connected with the rational faculties of the soul is made responsive to reason's voice; and to conform, in some degree, to its excellence and dignified office.

There is, it must be owned, a sense of decency, which approves it as a general rule in every moral action, that virtue is placed § in a mean between extremes, and chiefly between excess in that which is easy and agreeable to us, and defect in what is troublesome and laborious. To estimate the too much and the too little, must, in various cases, prove difficult. Hence the mixed character, participating of one or other of the extremes that is so commonly found in human life, and which, in the ethics of a more rigid philosophy, would be pronounced a proof of the failure of all human virtue. It obtains, however, more frequently from a mistake of the mean to be observed, and the decorum to be attended to, in moral conduct, than from a wilful trespass upon what is proper

\* Ex Theage, p. 683.  
in Carm. ver. 12. 13,

† Ex Metopo. p. 686.  
§ Ibid. ex Theage, p. 69. 93.

‡ Hierocles

proper and virtuous. Besides, it is to be considered, that the moral qualities of fortitude and temperance are not exerted, as has been said, but in some concurrence with the natural passions, and therefore they are the more liable to run into the extremes. In comparison with prudence and justice, they are virtues of a less perfect kind, which admit of some variations, from what may be reckoned, in certain cases, the measure of their energy, and yet they cease not to be virtues, in a higher or lower degree. All then that philosophy can prescribe with respect to their due exercise, is, to be in the habit of attention to decorum in every particular and important action. Evident it is, that insensibility and languor are no less \* inconsistent with true virtue, than the immoderate incitement of passion, or perturbation of the mind. But when, as far as may be done, the mean between these is studied, the way to virtue will be found, as well in the smooth course of Nestor's life †, as in the toilsome one of Ulysses. Those philosophers, who would refine upon this point, weigh passive fortitude against temperance or sufferance of what is painful, against moderation in what is agreeable and pleasant, and insist that the former is a nobler source of virtue than the latter, ought to reflect, that in both characters there is an admission of what is less excellent in its nature, of the taint of passion in the one, and of want of desire or insensibility in the other. Let us, then ‡, be contented to speak of human virtue, according as it is found in human nature, and acknowledge that it is, in general, a certain concord of the irrational with the rational part of our frame, and that the exercise of it is best discovered, when our aversion to pain, and our desire of pleasure, are alike regulated by a sense of decorum.

Beside prudence, which may be called the source or leader of the virtues, beside the faculty that resists difficulties §, and that which restrains desire, it is requisite that the moral temper and disposition be approved and chosen by the will of the mind, otherwise the character of virtue can never be truly embraced, and much less properly sustained. It must be known and regarded as the real good of the mind, in order to its becoming

\* Ibid.

† Ex Archyta, p. 693.

‡ Ex Theage, p. 692.

§ Ex Metopo. p. 695. et ex Archyta, p. 696.

coming desirable; and then, as the body's good is sought after, for its own sake, so also will that of the rational soul be pursued. In the happiness of human life, the good of each is a necessary ingredient, although the last, by nature and estimation, be more excellent than the first. But to attain its greatest felicity, there must likewise be a concurrence of good destiny. The utmost degree of beatitude competent to man must indeed ever fall short of that of the divinity, as that which is acquired must be inferior to that which is essentially possessed \*, and that which depends on certain acts, accompanied with circumstances, must yield to that which has always in itself perfect energy; and an all-disposing power. The human faculties, which have been mentioned, when harmoniously exerted, produce virtue, which is the perfection of human nature; but it is not, therefore, by necessary consequence, the perfection of the happiness of human life in all its conditions. Virtue itself, in order to its complete exercise, requires a certain favourable station, and a sphere of action adapted to it; but this a propitious destiny only can provide. Laudable ever, and so far as his active powers go, the virtuous man must be deemed happy; yet still he would partake more of felicity in a more fortunate arrangement of external things. From this consideration †, it is not to be inferred, that virtue, which consists in the free and independent acts of the mind, should reckon upon the outward advantages of fortune as her life-guards, without which she cannot be conspicuous. Such reliance upon them she does not acknowledge. What is eligible to her is no more than, by the opportunity they may afford, to enlarge her activity, and, with the increase of her beneficent abilities, to augment the felicity she brings to her votaries.

By two things, therefore, the happiness of human life is perfected; by moral discipline ‡, and good destiny. The one, like health and vigour of body, qualifies the man to act well his part, whatever his external condition be: the other so accommodates circumstances to his laudable performances, that success, and its sure attendant complacency, are

\* Ex Euryphamo, p. 665.  
Ex Archyta, p. 678.

† Ibid. p. 667.

‡ Ex Thurio, p. 661.

are the result \*. In few words, human felicity is the usage of virtue in good fortune. The estimate of the actual attainment of it is not to be made from single acts, or a few particular events, but from the general tenor of the one, and the collective sum of the other. Accidental variations there may be found in both, which yet, like the stops in music, hinder not the progress of the concords, and their issue in the best harmony. In the conduct of human life, there cannot be too much reason used, or too much virtue performed; yet, in the circumstances attending it, there may be imparted a superfluity of external goods, or what may be called an excess of good fortune; which is always dangerous, and often hurtful to the possessor. But here the oeconomy of Providence is worthy to be observed †. The deity, ever wise and watchful of man's greatest good, has only put in his power that accomplishment of his nature, in the use of which he cannot err or exceed. Virtue is assigned as his sure guide to happiness; while, with respect to the situations of life, in which it is to be exercised, whether in more or less outward prosperity, a reserve is found to take place, and a disposing power is kept in the hands of destiny. In those of man, who never can be a sufficient, and would generally be a partial judge, it could not in reason be placed: he, therefore, remains unassured whether his virtuous acts may be allowed all the extent he may wish, or be followed with that measure of success and felicity they may deserve. Yet of this he cannot complain, if he admits it as a principle, that virtue is eligible for its own sake, as well as on account of the good it produces.

There is, however, one external condition of human life, to which beatitude, as the consequence of virtue exercised in it ‡, appears to be chiefly or only annexed. It is that of social and civil life enjoyed in a free and well regulated commonwealth. Such seems to be the order of divine destiny, with respect to man, that, disjoined from society, he should vanish, as it were, out of being; and that, notwithstanding all the propensities and powers he has to relish it, and to form a part of its har-

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mony,

\* Ibid. p. 68a.

† Ex Euryphamo, p. 668.

‡ Ibid. p. 666.

mony, he should exist no more \* than a creature is supposed to do, when, though alive, it is bereft of all its natural faculties. Without society, constituted in its best political form, without connection with a commonwealth, the model of order and equity, no good of nature's gift can be truly enjoyed, nor any acquired one be possessed with security. But under the auspices of a republican government, every private benefit has a double relish, and is enhanced in its value. As an equal right, common to every one of the community, it is participated of without envy or fear, being undetached from, and accounted subservient to, the public good. In a similar manner, every advantage derived to the state redounds to the profit, or to the credit of its individual members. In respect of all exterior advantages, life, in such a community, may be reckoned the possession of Amalthea's horn of plenty, so celebrated by the poets. But it is still more to be esteemed in another point of view : It is Virtue's school, and her sanctuary †. There, morals and manners, such as become men and citizens, are studied, and exhibited with honour and applause. There, right reason and piety being cultivated, the sanctity of the virtues is maintained, while sacred and just laws operate with all their authority and benign influence.

Among the proofs of man's superiority above other animals in capacity and intelligence, there is none in which he discovers such knowledge of the world he inhabits ‡, or so signally imitates the wisdom of its founder, than in the instance he gives of his penetration and ability in making civil government exist in its noblest and best form, which is only to be found in a republic. His applying names to things distinctive of their species, or his invention of letters, for the silent speech of the mind, cannot be accounted more worthy of admiration. To be the founder of a political state, in which laws and not men rule, is the highest attainment of human wisdom. To live with virtue, and to die, in such a constitution, may be reckoned that circumstance which consummates human felicity §. Deprived of this happy addition to his lot in life, even the virtuous man has reason to regret his destiny, if not as quite unfortunate, at least as unfavourable.

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\* Ex Hippodomo Thurio, p. 662.  
p. 666.

† Ibid. p. 663.

‡ Ex Euryphamo,

§ Ex Hippod. Thur. p. 653.

But if, in human life, a compensation for the want of this disagreeable destiny can be found, it is that of contemplation, or the exercise of that intellectual power of the soul, which may be compared to the eye of the body \*, as it comprehends things in *wholes*, or entire compositions; whilst its perceptive faculty apprehends them singly, or by transition from one part of them to another. It may also be distinguished from the reasoning faculty, when following, step by step, the information of the senses, and their slow and lame experience of things, it arrives only at a probable, but no certain judgment with respect to them. This † superior light of the mind, which well may be reckoned of divine origin, opens the source of knowledge in a way more immediate and distinct, by bringing forward objects that are wholes in themselves; and, being so considered by the mind, claim its first attention. As, in common reason, the idea of a whole is prior to that of a part, so that of the constitution of the world, or of the universe, is antecedent to any conception of its component parts. The latter can be supposed to have no existence but in reference to the former. If there were no formed world, there could neither be sun, nor moon, nor star, of any denomination; but because there is a world, constituted as it is, these things are not only seen, but known for what they are. In like manner, what could be understood of an eye, an ear, or a limb, without the previous knowledge of an animal, of which these might be the proper members. The conception of a general constitution of things, or of whole natures, is therefore the foundation of all true knowledge, or wisdom, properly so called: And, if we would extend this contemplation farther, we must say, that, as the whole is to the part, in respect of precedency, so is the virtue of the whole to the virtue of the part, in respect of power and efficacy. As the world could not have existed without constitutional harmony, so neither could it continue in its state without the constant energy of that principle: But the recognition of it as a truth, that the world is ruled by one principle, leads on the intelligent mind to the discovery ‡ of Deity, or the existence of that being, in whom the fitness

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of

\* Ex Euryph. *ibid.*

† Ex Archyta de sapientia, p. 732.

‡ *Ibid.* pag. 734.

of order and harmony, or reason, in its perfection, ever resides. Without this knowledge, wisdom halts; but he is the wise man \*, and above all others most conversant in truth, who having thus comprehended the universe, or the whole of being, under one principle, and referred its efficiency to one cause, is farther able to trace its arrangement into specific natures, and discover what distinguishes them from, and how they are subordinate to, one another; and, while so diversified, what singular tie connects them with the whole.

To such contemplation the human soul is prompted by its innate desire of knowledge; which, unsatisfied with the survey of earthly objects †, seeks to investigate those of celestial dignity, and to recreate itself with the conception of forms that are of a permanent and divine nature. How much may the thought of the brevity of human life dispose man to indulge this speculation; and how forcibly does the consideration of its many natural and moral evils enjoin it as a proper resource? These can, indeed, be no more dissembled than they can be altogether avoided. Such as bestow little thought upon them, or affect to overlook them, are more apt than others to be overwhelmed with their unexpected assault. But, surely, it is fit that we should know ourselves, and what is allotted to man in his present condition ‡; out of which, as it is not permitted to any to withdraw himself without the leave of his commander, so it is indecent and unmanly to be always deploring its distresses and calamities. By the adept in wisdom, none of them are unreckoned upon: They are known to be concomitants of his corporeal habitation, and of the soul's remission into a temporary exile. Comfortable it is to reflect, that it is to be endured only for a space of time, which is as a point, or as nothing, compared with eternity. He, therefore, takes courage, not from ignorance, or insensibility of human evils, but from observing a divine destination with respect to them; and, especially, that they can have a pernicious efficacy solely upon the wilful slaves

\* Ex Stobaei Sententiis, in Serm. I. de Virtute, pag. 23. fol. edit. Hieroclis Comment. in v. 49. 50. 51.

† Ex Hipparch. pag. 660.

‡ Cicero de Senectute, fol. edit. p. 416. Hieroc. in Aur. Car. v. 46. 47. 48.

slaves of sense and corporeal passion \*. The remedy is put in his own power; and the soul, which yet bears the traits of her high original, longs to apply it. Instructive, and, therefore, so far agreeable, she knows her short peregrination here may be rendered. From it she learns what it is to be enveloped in a mass of gross and corruptible matter; where the perception of sensible things is only delusive, and that of those which have the character of truth, is obscured or lost. She feels what misery arises from the failure of reason's light †, and the dominion of the unruly and irrational appetites. From their tumult she makes an effort to escape, by the faculty she retains of self-recollection. Its repeated acts suspend the career of the passions, and produce that happy attainment of the proficients in true philosophy, *internal tranquillity*, to which all vulgar souls are ever strangers.

This mental tranquillity may be considered as the ascent of the soul, from the dense air of the earth, to that of the unclouded and serene aether. Congenial she feels it to herself; and introductive of the recognisance of her native faculty of contemplation. Such feeble discoveries of truth as she had been before enabled to make, from the precarious information of the senses, and which she could understand to be only simple judgments of their experiences, she finds now to be the openings of her own intellectual powers, and that all human science is to be considered as the flower of those seeds of knowledge originally planted in her. Let us here attend to what Nature has done for the animals placed far below the rank of man. Do they borrow their sagacity from abroad; or is it required of them to seek it from external objects? No. Nature has instructed the individuals of every species in all points relative either to their particular preservation, or to the general good of their kind. How utterly improbable is it, that this providence of nature should not take place with respect to mankind, but that they should be left to find out, by help of their sensible perceptions alone, not only the openings to knowledge, but all the conclusions of reason, and the principles of abstract science? If the latter were not the product

\* Hieroc. in Aur. Car. v. 17. 18. 19.  
28. 8vo edit. pag. 289.

† Maxim. Tyrius, Diss.  
‡ Ibid. pag. 293.

product of the human intellect, acting of itself, the former could be turned to no rational account, or reflect upon the soul the light of truth, and the evidence of general and scientific knowledge.

Whence is it, that what is called *natural genius* is found so different in its degrees among men, that some understand at once \*, and as it were by a glance of thought, what others do not comprehend but with the greatest study and application? How is it, that the true poet is said to be born such; the musical genius to require no master; and the wise lawgiver, and the able commander in the field, to have each of them his peculiar talent, bestowed by Nature, with little aid from study or instruction? Were such reputable endowments to be acquired by labour and industry, they would not be so rarely exemplified. But no exertion of pains is sufficient to supply what all men agree in saying, *the gods only can give*. Intellect is, indeed, originally the same in all men; and, were it not so, the most intelligent would hardly correspond in their idea of any one truth. But the corporeal prison of the soul admits of great variations; and, as the matter composing it is mutable, so the bodily organs are diversified. In some they are easily moved; in others more slowly. In many they are so gross, that the soul is seldom roused to any reflection. But, from the awakening † which philosophy gives, her intellectual powers revive; and her conceptions following close to one another, appear more like the retracing of ideas formerly known, and exertions of the memory, than as discoveries of science newly made, in consequence of a train of progressive reasoning. Such a reminiscent faculty may well be supposed to appertain to the soul, pre-existent as she has been in another state, where the natures of things were contemplated, not by intermissive and partial views, but intuitively, and by *wholes*. A reason, therefore, may be assigned, why the poets reckon memory (Mnemosyne) to be the nurse, or mother of the muses ‡. They are the daughters of Jove, and the same with the sciences; but it is memory that produces them to men, and ascertains their due order and harmony.

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\* Maxim. Tyrius, Dissert. 28. pag. 293.

† Ibid. 298.

‡ Hesiod in Theog. v. 52.

The human or civil virtues, perfected by justice, have been said to bear analogy to that eternal law of reason, and order, which combines the system of the universe. The contemplative mind assumes them in this illustrious point of view. Regarded not merely as the dictates of prudence, which have decorum and utility in human life \*, but as principles co-ordinate with the wisdom of the universe, and portions of it; their tendency to elevate the soul possessed of them to the life of the gods, becomes manifest †. The heights of perfection and felicity attainable by virtuous souls have no other limitation except what the law of their being prescribes. Sufficient to beatitude these attainments must be, which extend to the happiest qualification their state can admit. But, while virtue and knowledge thus exalt the human soul, vice and ignorance degrade it. In the latter, neither principle nor consistency can be found. Disjoined from what is true, uniform, and just, in the constitution of the universe, they are necessarily involved in a proscription from good, which only can arise from conformity to virtue and truth, the fixed principles of union and harmony in the moral world. Hence the vicious are seen precipitated into various evils, that bring on their ruin; rolling like heavy stones upon a declivity, which, along with the discomposure they may give to other bodies, fail not to be dashed in pieces by their own weight.

Here, then, we may conclude the account of the Pythagorean philosophy, which exhibited a theory of the universe reduced to a system complete in its physical and moral parts, but little resembling any one that issued from the masters or disciples of the Ionic school. It had, indeed, evident marks of a foreign original, from the manner in which it was taught, and the peculiar discipline it prescribed. With a sublimity of ideas in theology that surpassed the best of the Grecian theories, it appeared to recede too far from simplicity, and to err by a superfluity of principles and doctrines. Along with exalted conceptions of an eternal mind or deity, it held forth a system of gods of undetermined power; and an infusion of a rational soul into the world, which rendered it an intelli-

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\* Aurea Carm. Vers. 45. 46. 47. cum Hieroc. Comment.

† Ibid. Vers. 70. 71.

gent being, while nature was still required to act her part. These, and other tenets, arranged with method, and a shew of consistency, proved the complicated system to be the result of long and deep study, and the production of those foreign colleges of philosophy and literature, which had subsisted for generations, and with which Pythagoras was for so many years conversant. Whether the exceptionable parts of it may be regarded as additions, which it is natural to suppose these learned men would make to a more primitive, simpler, and purer theology, to the knowledge of which, in Egypt especially, they might have access, belongs not to our subject particularly to investigate. Without entering into these elaborate discussions, to which this question has given room, the probability is, that the Mosaic Scriptures, and other prophetic writings under the Jewish dispensation, could not be unknown to the priests of Egypt, Chaldaea, and other adjacent countries. What use they made of them is another point, which cannot, perhaps, be more truly determined, than by saying, that they would assume from them such theological ideas and moral doctrines as they could best accommodate to their own favourite systems. That they would hold them in contempt, or neglect them, as the Grecians and Romans afterwards did, is extremely improbable. In these early ages, knowledge, wherever it could be found, was eagerly sought after, and not despised; neither was the Jewish nation then in that low estimation among the neighbouring kingdoms, to render their antiquities or their religious and civil knowledge unworthy of regard. This degraded character, they, in subsequent times of their depression, and from the pride of conquering nations, incurred. What we here alledge the Egyptian priests might do, with respect to the Mosaic writings, was certainly much practised in regard to their own store of erudition and science. The proofs already given will be followed with other evidence, how common among nations this sort of plagiarism was, when the rarity of knowledge increased the vanity of being accounted originals in it.

We cannot, therefore, ascribe more to the philosophical genius of Pythagoras, than that it enabled him to disclose a theory of the universe, wrapt in mysteries, taught in the most abstract manner, and still perhaps wanting, in the hands of its masters, that finishing which he was qualified

qualified to give it. That he might methodise, and, in some respects, extend and improve its general principles, is probable; that he modified them in the moral and political part, so as to bring them nearer to the genius and taste of his countrymen, appears a certainty. But, with all the illustrations and improvements this philosophy received from Pythagoras, or his ablest disciples, it was still accounted in the other Grecian schools a borrowed system, and was not thoroughly known or studied among them, until Plato gave it a place in his Dialogues; with such embellishments, however, as his invention suggested. Blended with his philosophy, it became less distinguishable from it; and, as the sect declined, its original doctrines were corrupted, or, by a motley superstructure induced upon them, rendered extravagant and absurd. Yet the ancient fame of its disciples revived their investigation; and, from the sketch given of them upon the authorities cited, we may judge that they well merited this attention and labour. Not only are several of the principles and doctrines held forth, important, instructive, and entertaining to the human mind, but they are supported upon arguments that discover a profundity of thought and reflection upon the universe, the different natures of the beings that compose it, and the special, yet uniform and harmonious laws by which they are governed. Above all, the placing the consummation of wisdom in the knowledge of one eternal and incorporeal principle, the primary and efficient cause of all that is orderly and beautiful in the universe, and the resolving the moral discipline of the human soul into the perfection of its faculties for contemplation, and the appointed course of its advancement to a happy and divine condition, must be owned such rational and noble sentiments as prove those tracts of the Pythagorean philosophy a venerable remainder of ancient wisdom and science.

Having mentioned the difficulties that occur in chronology, in ascertaining the period of Pythagoras's birth, and also that of several events in his life, we shall subjoin to this section, not any essay upon this perplexed point, but such an account of the computation by Olympiads, and of the æra to which it refers, and the term of years included in each of its periods, called an Olympiad, as may render intelligible those dates of

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chronology which will, in the subsequent pages, be frequently announced\*.

\* The aera to which, as a fixed date in time, the chronological reckoning by Olympiads referred, was that of the institution of the Olympic games, celebrated in honour of Jupiter Olympius, at Elis, a city in the Peloponnesus of Greece. This aera was convenient on account of the regular return of the solemnity of these games within a limited time. But it happened unfortunately for this scheme of chronology, that scarcely any event recorded in history was of a more uncertain and undeterminable date, than the commencement of the Olympic games. Venerated as they were in Greece, and their origin reckoned an important piece of knowledge in its antiquities, no investigation availed to fix either the time or occasion of their institution. The account given of the latter circumstance in Herodotus, lib. 8. alluded to by Pindar, Olympion ode 2. and followed by Diodorus Siculus, lib. 4. who ascribe their first celebration to Hercules the son of Alcmena, is rejected and confuted by Strabo, lib. 8.; and Pausanias, *Eliacorum prior*, vel lib. 5. shows what various opinions, and all of them fabulous, were entertained upon that point. One supposition, with respect to it, appeared to be allowable, that these games were either unknown, or in no reputation before the war of Troy; since it could not well be imagined, that Homer, who abounds with such narratives, would have omitted to mention them. Some evidence there was of their being celebrated, if not, after long intermission, re-instituted by Iphitus, King of Elis, contemporary with Lycurgus, as mentioned by Plutarch in the life of that lawgiver. But the great uncertainty of this period in chronology, as well as the discontinuance of the games for various years, still left an exact date of time, and the regular measurement of certain intervals of it, in doubt or obscurity. It was therefore suggested by Phlegon, the author of the computation by Olympiads, to fix upon a period, in which there appeared the least chronological dubiety, and the other requisite circumstance of the stated celebration of the games might also be found. Such what was called the 25th Olympiad, in the common reckoning of them from Iphitus's time, was judged to be, when Choraebus proved victor in the race on foot, and of which the memory was preserved in his sepulchre at Elis. From that period, the Olympic games were regularly solemnized at the end and completion of every fourth year; so that they were generally held in the second month of the fifth, and continued for five days. Reckoning, then, an Olympiad a scale of four years, and that twenty-eight of them were elapsed in that marked by Choraebus's victory, the only question was, to what aeras fixed in chronology the first year of the first Olympiad was to be referred. It has been generally agreed, with only the variation of a year or two, to correspond to the 408th year from the taking of Troy; to the 19th before the building of Rome; and to the 757th or or 759th before the Christian aera. Computing, therefore, according to the Olympiads,

piads, it is plain, that Rome was built in the 3d year of the fifth of them, and Pythagoras reckoned to have been born about the 47th; his birth answers to the 169th year of Rome; by this rule, that the announced number of Olympiads multiplied by four, and a deduction made of nineteen years, will always give the year of the ancient Roman calendar. If, again, a given year of this epoch be subtracted from the number assigned for the commencement of the Olympiads, or 19 years before the building of Rome, the year preceding the nativity of Christ will be found. Thus, if the 169th of Rome be given for the birth of Pythagoras, and the subtraction of it be made from 757 or 759, there will remain either 588 or 590, to mark the years before the Christian aera.

