

V. Knowledge divided first into Divinity and Philosophy

(1) The knowledge of man is as the waters, some descending from above, and some springing from beneath: the one informed by the light of nature, the other inspired by divine revelation. The light of nature consisteth in the notions of the mind and the reports of the senses; for as for knowledge which man receiveth by teaching, it is cumulative and not original, as in a water that besides his own spring-head is fed with other springs and streams. So then, according to these two differing illuminations or originals, knowledge is first of all divided into divinity and philosophy.

(2) In philosophy the contemplations of man do either penetrate unto God, or are circumferred to nature, or are reflected or reverted upon himself. Out of which several inquiries there do arise three knowledges—divine philosophy, natural philosophy, and human philosophy or humanity. For all things are marked and stamped with this triple character—the power of God, the difference of nature and the use of man. But because the distributions and partitions of knowledge are not like several lines that meet in one angle, and so touch but in a point, but are like branches of a tree that meet in a stem, which hath a dimension and quantity of entireness and continuance before it come to discontinue and break itself into arms and boughs; therefore it is good, before we enter into the former distribution, to erect and constitute one universal science, by the name of *philosophia prima*, primitive or summary philosophy, as the main and common way, before we come where the ways part and divide themselves; which science whether I should report as deficient or no, I stand doubtful. For I find a certain rhapsody of natural theology, and of divers parts of logic; and of that part of natural philosophy which concerneth the principles, and of that other part of natural philosophy which concerneth the soul or spirit—all these strangely commixed and confused; but being examined, it seemeth to me rather a depredation of other sciences, advanced and exalted unto some height of terms, than anything solid or substantive of itself. Nevertheless I cannot be ignorant of the distinction which is current, that the same things are handled but in several respects. As for example, that logic considereth of many things as they are in notion, and this philosophy as they are in nature—the one in appearance, the other in existence; but I find this difference better made than pursued. For if they had considered quantity, similitude, diversity, and the rest of those extern characters of things, as philosophers, and in nature, their inquiries must of force have been of a far other kind than they are. For doth any of them, in handling quantity, speak of the force of union, how and how far it multiplieth virtue? Doth any give the reason why some things in nature are so common, and in so great mass, and others so rare, and in so small quantity? Doth any, in handling similitude and diversity, assign the cause why iron should not move to iron, which is more like, but move to the loadstone, which is less like? Why in all diversities of things there should be certain participles in nature which are almost ambiguous to which kind they should be referred? But there is a mere and deep silence touching the nature and operation of those common adjuncts of things, as in nature; and only a resuming and repeating of the force and use of them in speech or argument. Therefore, because in a writing of this nature I avoid all subtlety, my meaning touching this original or universal philosophy is thus, in a plain and gross description by negative: “That it be a receptacle for all such profitable observations and axioms as fall not within the compass of any of the special parts of philosophy or sciences, but are more common and of a higher stage.”

(3) Now that there are many of that kind need not be doubted. For example: Is not the rule, *Si inæqualibus æqualia addas, omnia erunt inæqualia*, an axiom as well of justice as of the mathematics? and is there not a true coincidence between commutative and distributive justice, and arithmetical and geometrical proportion? Is not that other rule, *Quæ in eodem tertio conveniunt, et inter se conveniunt*, a rule taken from the mathematics, but so potent in logic as all syllogisms are built upon it? Is not the observation, *Omnia mutantur, nil interit*, a contemplation in philosophy thus, that the *quantum* of nature is eternal? in natural theology thus, that it requireth the same omnipotency to make somewhat nothing, which at the first made nothing somewhat? according to the Scripture, *Didici quod omnia opera, quæ fecit Deus, perseverent in perpetuum; non possumus eis quicquam addere nec auferre*. Is not the ground, which Machiavel wisely and largely discourseth concerning governments, that the way to establish and preserve them is to reduce them *ad principia*—a rule in religion and nature, as well as in civil administration? Was not the Persian magic a reduction or correspondence of the principles and architectures of nature to the rules and policy of governments? Is not the precept of a musician, to fall from a discord or harsh accord upon a concord or sweet accord, alike true in affection? Is not the trope of music, to avoid or slide from the close or cadence, common with the trope of rhetoric of deceiving expectation? Is not the delight of the quavering upon a stop in music the same with the playing of light upon the water?

“Splendet tremulo sub lumine pontus.”

Are not the organs of the senses of one kind with the organs of reflection, the eye with a glass, the ear with a cave or strait, determined and bounded? Neither are these only similitudes, as men of narrow observation may conceive them to be, but the same footsteps of nature, treading or printing upon several subjects or matters. This science therefore (as I understand it) I may justly report as deficient; for I see sometimes the profounder sort of wits, in handling some particular argument, will now and then draw a bucket of water out of this well for their present use; but the spring-head thereof seemeth to me not to have been visited, being of so excellent use both for the disclosing of nature and the abridgment of art.

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