

## XXIII. Distribution of Civil Knowledge

(1) Civil knowledge is conversant about a subject which of all others is most immersed in matter, and hardliest reduced to axiom. Nevertheless, as Cato the Censor said, “That the Romans were like sheep, for that a man were better drive a flock of them, than one of them; for in a flock, if you could get but some few go right, the rest would follow:” so in that respect moral philosophy is more difficile than policy. Again, moral philosophy propoundeth to itself the framing of internal goodness; but civil knowledge requireth only an external goodness; for that as to society sufficeth. And therefore it cometh oft to pass that there be evil times in good governments: for so we find in the Holy story, when the kings were good, yet it is added, *Sed adhuc poulus non direxerat cor suum ad Dominum Deum patrum suorum*. Again, states, as great engines, move slowly, and are not so soon put out of frame: for as in Egypt the seven good years sustained the seven bad, so governments for a time well grounded do bear out errors following; but the resolution of particular persons is more suddenly subverted. These respects do somewhat qualify the extreme difficulty of civil knowledge.

(2) This knowledge hath three parts, according to the three summary actions of society; which are conversation, negotiation, and government. For man seeketh in society comfort, use, and protection; and they be three wisdoms of divers natures which do often sever—wisdom of the behaviour, wisdom of business, and wisdom of state.

(3) The wisdom of conversation ought not to be over much affected, but much less despised; for it hath not only an honour in itself, but an influence also into business and government. The poet saith, *Nec vultu destrue verba tuo*: a man may destroy the force of his words with his countenance; so may he of his deeds, saith Cicero, recommending to his brother affability and easy access; *Nil interest habere ostium apertum, vultum clausum*: it is nothing won to admit men with an open door, and to receive them with a shut and reserved countenance. So we see Atticus, before the first interview between Cæsar and Cicero, the war depending, did seriously advise Cicero touching the composing and ordering of his countenance and gesture. And if the government of the countenance be of such effect, much more is that of the speech, and other carriage appertaining to conversation; the true model whereof seemeth to me well expressed by Livy, though not meant for this purpose: *Ne aut arrogans videar, aut obnoxius; quorum alterum est àlienæ libertatis oblii, alterum suæ*: the sum of behaviour is to retain a man’s own dignity, without intruding upon the liberty of others. On the other side, if behaviour and outward carriage be intended too much, first it may pass into affectation, and then *Quid deformius quam scenam in vitam transferre*—to act a man’s life? But although it proceed not to that extreme, yet it consumeth time, and employeth the mind too much. And therefore as we use to advise young students from company keeping, by saying, *Amici fures temporis*: so certainly the intending of the discretion of behaviour is a great thief of meditation. Again, such as are accomplished in that form of urbanity please themselves in it, and seldom aspire to higher virtue; whereas those that have defect in it do seek comeliness by reputation; for where reputation is, almost everything becometh; but where that is not, it must be supplied by *puntos* and compliments. Again, there is no greater impediment of action than an over-curious observance of decency, and the guide of decency, which is time and season. For as Solomon saith, *Qui respicit ad ventos, non seminat; et qui respicit ad nubes, non metet*: a man must make his opportunity, as oft as find it. To conclude, behaviour seemeth to me as a garment of the mind, and to have the conditions of a garment. For it ought to be made in fashion; it ought not to be too curious; it ought to be shaped so as to set forth any good making of the mind and hide any deformity; and above all, it ought not to be too strait or restrained for exercise or motion. But

this part of civil knowledge hath been elegantly handled, and therefore I cannot report it for deficient.

(4) The wisdom touching negotiation or business hath not been hitherto collected into writing, to the great derogation of learning and the professors of learning. For from this root springeth chiefly that note or opinion, which by us is expressed in adage to this effect, that there is no great concurrence between learning and wisdom. For of the three wisdoms which we have set down to pertain to civil life, for wisdom of behaviour, it is by learned men for the most part despised, as an inferior to virtue and an enemy to meditation; for wisdom of government, they acquit themselves well when they are called to it, but that happeneth to few; but for the wisdom of business, wherein man's life is most conversant, there be no books of it, except some few scattered advertisements, that have no proportion to the magnitude of this subject. For if books were written of this as the other, I doubt not but learned men with mean experience would far excel men of long experience without learning, and outshoot them in their own bow.

(5) Neither needeth it at all to be doubted, that this knowledge should be so variable as it falleth not under precept; for it is much less infinite than science of government, which we see is laboured and in some part reduced. Of this wisdom it seemeth some of the ancient Romans in the saddest and wisest times were professors; for Cicero reporteth, that it was then in use for senators that had name and opinion for general wise men, as Coruncanius, Curius, Lælius, and many others, to walk at certain hours in the Place, and to give audience to those that would use their advice; and that the particular citizens would resort unto them, and consult with them of the marriage of a daughter, or of the employing of a son, or of a purchase or bargain, or of an accusation, and every other occasion incident to man's life. So as there is a wisdom of counsel and advice even in private causes, arising out of a universal insight into the affairs of the world; which is used indeed upon particular causes propounded, but is gathered by general observation of causes of like nature. For so we see in the book which Q. Cicero writeth to his brother, *De petitione consulatus* (being the only book of business that I know written by the ancients), although it concerned a particular action then on foot, yet the substance thereof consisteth of many wise and politic axioms, which contain not a temporary, but a perpetual direction in the case of popular elections. But chiefly we may see in those aphorisms which have place amongst divine writings, composed by Solomon the king, of whom the Scriptures testify that his heart was as the sands of the sea, encompassing the world and all worldly matters, we see, I say, not a few profound and excellent cautions, precepts, positions, extending to much variety of occasions; whereupon we will stay a while, offering to consideration some number of examples.

(6) *Sed et cunctis sermonibus qui dicuntur ne accommodes aurem tuam, ne forte audias servum tuum maledicentem tibi.* Here is commended the provident stay of inquiry of that which we would be loth to find: as it was judged great wisdom in Pompeius Magnus that he burned Sertorius' papers unperused.

*Vir sapiens, si cum stulto contenderit, sive irascatur, sive rideat, non inveniet requiem.* Here is described the great disadvantage which a wise man hath in undertaking a lighter person than himself; which is such an engagement as, whether a man turn the matter to jest, or turn it to heat, or howsoever he change copy, he can no ways quit himself well of it.

*Qui delicate a pueritia nutrit servum suum, postea sentiet eum contumacem.* Here is signified, that if a man begin too high a pitch in his favours, it doth commonly end in unkindness and unthankfulness.

*Vidisti virum velocem in opere suo? coram regibus stabit, nec erit inter ignobiles.* Here is observed, that of all virtues for rising to honour, quickness of despatch is the best; for superiors many times love not to have those they employ too deep or too sufficient, but ready and diligent.

*Vidi cunctos viventes qui ambulant sub sole, cum adolescente secundo qui consurgit pro eo.* Here is expressed that which was noted by Sylla first, and after him by Tiberius. *Plures adorant solem orientem quam occidentem vel meridianum.*

*Si spiritus potestatem habentis ascenderit super te, locum tuum ne demiseris; quia curatio faciet cessare peccata maxima.* Here caution is given, that upon displeasure, retiring is of all courses the unfittest; for a man leaveth things at worst, and depriveth himself of means to make them better.

*Erat civitas parva, et pauci in ea viri: venit contra eam rex magnus, et vallavit eam, instruxitque munitones per gyrum, et perfecta est obsidio; inventusque est in ea vir pauper et sapiens, et liberavit eam per sapientiam suam; et nullus deinceps recordatus est huminis illius pauperis.* Here the corruption of states is set forth, that esteem not virtue or merit longer than they have use of it.

*Millis responsio frangit iram.* Here is noted that silence or rough answer exasperateth; but an answer present and temperate pacifieth.

*Iter pigrorum quasi sepes spinarum.* Here is lively represented how laborious sloth proveth in the end; for when things are deferred till the last instant, and nothing prepared beforehand, every step findeth a briar or impediment, which catcheth or stoppeth.

*Melior est finis orationis quam principium.* Here is taxed the vanity of formal speakers, that study more about prefaces and inducements, than upon the conclusions and issues of speech.

*Qui cognoscit in iudicio faciem, non bene facit; iste et pro buccella panis deseret veritatem.* Here is noted, that a judge were better be a briber than a respecter of persons; for a corrupt judge offendeth not so lightly as a facile.

*Vir pauper calumnians pauperes similis est imbri vehementi, in quo paratur fames.* Here is expressed the extremity of necessitous extortions, figured in the ancient fable of the full and the hungry horseleech.

*Fons turbatus pede, et vena corrupta, est justus cadens coram impio.* Here is noted, that one judicial and exemplar iniquity in the face of the world doth trouble the fountains of justice more than many particular injuries passed over by connivance.

*Qui subtrahit aliquid a patre et a matre, et dicit hoc non esse peccatum, particeps est homicidii.* Here is noted that, whereas men in wronging their best friends use to extenuate their fault, as if they might presume or be bold upon them, it doth contrariwise indeed aggravate their fault, and turneth it from injury to impiety.

*Noli esse amicus homini iracundo, nec ambulato cum homine furioso.* Here caution is given, that in the election of our friends we do principally avoid those which are impatient, as those that will espouse us to many factions and quarrels.

*Qui conturbat domum suam, possidebit ventum.* Here is noted, that in domestical separations and breaches men do promise to themselves quieting of their mind and contentment; but still they are deceived of their expectation, and it turneth to wind.

*Filius sapiens lætificat patrem: filius vero stultus mæstitia est matri suæ.* Here is distinguished, that fathers have most comfort of the good proof of their sons; but mothers have most discomfort of their ill proof, because women have little discerning of virtue, but of fortune.

*Qui celat delictum, quærit amicitiam; sed qui altero sermone repetit, separat fæderatos.* Here caution is given, that reconciliation is better managed by an amnesty, and passing over that which is past, than by apologies and excuses.

*In omni opere bono erit abundantia; ubi autem verba sunt plurima, ibi frequenter egestas.* Here is noted, that words and discourse aboundeth most where there is idleness and want.

*Primus in sua causa justus: sed venit altera pars, et inquiret in eum.* Here is observed, that in all causes the first tale possesseth much; in sort, that the prejudice thereby wrought will be hardly removed, except some abuse or falsity in the information be detected.

*Verba bilinguis quasi simplicia, et ipsa perveniunt ad interiora ventris.* Here is distinguished, that flattery and insinuation, which seemeth set and artificial, sinketh not far; but that entereth deep which hath show of nature, liberty, and simplicity.

*Qui erudit derisorem, ipse sibi injuriam facit; et qui arguit impium, sibi maculam generat.* Here caution is given how we tender reprehension to arrogant and scornful natures, whose manner is to esteem it for contumely, and accordingly to return it.

*Da sapienti occasionem, et addetur ei sapientia.* Here is distinguished the wisdom brought into habit, and that which is but verbal and swimming only in conceit; for the one upon the occasion presented is quickened and redoubled, the other is amazed and confused.

*Quomodo in aquis resplendent vultus prospicientium, sic corda hominum manifesta sunt prudentibus.* Here the mind of a wise man is compared to a glass, wherein the images of all diversity of natures and customs are represented; from which representation proceedeth that application,

“Qui sapit, innumeris moribus aptus erit.”

(7) Thus have I stayed somewhat longer upon these sentences politic of Solomon than is agreeable to the proportion of an example; led with a desire to give authority to this part of knowledge, which I noted as deficient, by so excellent a precedent; and have also attended them with brief observations, such as to my understanding offer no violence to the sense, though I know they may be applied to a more divine use: but it is allowed, even in divinity, that some interpretations, yea, and some writings, have more of the eagle than others; but taking them as instructions for life, they might have received large discourse, if I would have broken them and illustrated them by deducements and examples.

(8) Neither was this in use only with the Hebrews, but it is generally to be found in the wisdom of the more ancient times; that as men found out any observation that they thought was good for life, they would gather it and express it in parable or aphorism or fable. But for fables, they were vicegerents and supplies where examples failed: now that the times abound with history, the aim is better when the mark is alive. And therefore the form of writing which of all others is fittest for this variable argument of negotiation and occasions is that which Machiavel chose wisely and aptly for government; namely, discourse upon histories or examples. For knowledge drawn freshly and in our view out of particulars, knoweth the way best to particulars again. And it hath much greater life for practice when the discourse attendeth upon the example, than when the example attendeth upon the discourse. For this is no point of order, as it seemeth at first, but of substance. For when the example is the ground, being set down in a history at large, it is set down with all circumstances, which may sometimes control the discourse thereupon made, and sometimes supply it, as a very pattern for action; whereas the examples alleged for the discourse's sake are cited succinctly, and without particularity, and carry a servile aspect towards the discourse which they are brought in to make good.

(9) But this difference is not amiss to be remembered, that as history of times is the best ground for discourse of government, such as Machiavel handleth, so histories of lives is the most popular for discourse of business, because it is more conversant in private actions. Nay, there is a ground of discourse for this purpose fitter than them both, which is discourse upon letters, such as are wise and weighty, as many are of Cicero *ad Atticum*, and others. For letters have a great and more particular representation of business than either chronicles or lives. Thus have we spoken both of the matter and form of this part of civil knowledge, touching negotiation, which we note to be deficient.

(10) But yet there is another part of this part, which differeth as much from that whereof we have spoken as *sapere* and *sibi sapere*, the one moving as it were to the circumference, the other to the centre. For there is a wisdom of counsel, and again there is a wisdom of pressing a man's own fortune; and they do sometimes meet, and often sever. For many are wise in their own ways that are weak for government or counsel; like ants, which is a wise creature for itself, but very hurtful for the garden. This wisdom the Romans did take much knowledge of: *Nam pol sapiens* (saith the comical poet) *fingit fortunam sibi*; and it grew to an adage, *Faber quisque fortunæ propriæ*; and Livy attributed it to Cato the first, *In hoc viro tanta vis animi et ingenii inerat, ut quocunque loco natus esset sibi ipse fortunam facturum videretur*.

(11) This conceit or position, if it be too much declared and professed, hath been thought a thing impolitic and unlucky, as was observed in Timotheus the Athenian, who, having done many great services to the state in his government, and giving an account thereof to the people as the manner was, did conclude every particular with this clause, "And in this fortune had no part." And it came so to pass, that he never prospered in anything he took in hand afterwards. For this is too high and too arrogant, savouring of that which Ezekiel saith of Pharaoh, *Dicis, Fluvius est neus et ego feci memet ipsum*; or of that which another prophet speaketh, that men offer sacrifices to their nets and snares; and that which the poet expresseth,

"Dextra mihi Deus, et telum quod missile libro,  
Nunc adsint!"

For these confidences were ever unhallowed, and unblessed; and, therefore, those that were great politiques indeed ever ascribed their successes to their felicity and not to their skill or virtue. For so Sylla surnamed himself Felix, not Magnus. So Cæsar said to the master of the ship, *Cæsarem portas et fortunam ejus*.

(12) But yet, nevertheless, these positions, *Faber quisque fortunæ suæ: Sapiens dominabitur astris: Invia virtuti null est via*, and the like, being taken and used as spurs to industry, and not as stirrups to insolency, rather for resolution than for the presumption or outward declaration, have been ever thought sound and good; and are no question imprinted in the greatest minds, who are so sensible of this opinion as they can scarce contain it within. As we see in Augustus Cæsar (who was rather diverse from his uncle than inferior in virtue), how when he died he desired his friends about him to give him a *plaudite*, as if he were conscious to himself that he had played his part well upon the stage. This part of knowledge we do report also as deficient; not but that it is practised too much, but it hath not been reduced to writing. And, therefore, lest it should seem to any that it is not comprehensible by axiom, it is requisite, as we did in the former, that we set down some heads or passages of it.

(13) Wherein it may appear at the first a new and unwonted argument to teach men how to raise and make their fortune; a doctrine wherein every man perchance will be ready to yield himself a disciple, till he see the difficulty: for fortune layeth as heavy impositions as virtue; and it is as hard and severe a thing to be a true politique, as to be truly moral. But the handling hereof concerneth learning greatly, both in honour and in substance. In honour, because pragmatICAL men may not go away with an opinion that learning is like a lark, that can mount and sing, and please herself, and nothing else; but may know that she holdeth as well of the hawk, that can soar aloft, and can also descend and strike upon the prey. In substance, because it is the perfect law of inquiry of truth, that nothing be in the globe of matter, which should not be likewise in the globe of crystal or form; that is, that there be not anything in being and action which should not be drawn and collected into contemplation and doctrine. Neither doth learning admire or esteem of this architecture of fortune otherwise than as of an inferior work, for no man's fortune can be an end worthy of his being, and many times the worthiest men do abandon their fortune willingly for better respects: but nevertheless fortune as an organ of virtue and merit deserveth the consideration.

(14) First, therefore, the precept which I conceive to be most summary towards the prevailing in fortune, is to obtain that window which Momus did require; who seeing in the frame of man's heart such angles and recesses, found fault there was not a window to look into them; that is, to procure good informations of particulars touching persons, their natures, their desires and ends, their customs and fashions, their helps and advantages, and whereby they chiefly stand, so again their weaknesses and disadvantages, and where they lie most open and obnoxious, their friends, factions, dependences; and again their opposites, enviers, competitors, their moods and times, *Sola viri molles aditus et tempora noras*; their principles, rules, and observations, and the like: and this not only of persons but of actions; what are on foot from time to time, and how they are conducted, favoured, opposed, and how they import, and the like. For the knowledge of present actions is not only material in itself, but without it also the knowledge of persons is very erroneous: for men change with the actions; and whilst they are in pursuit they are one, and when they return to their nature they are another. These informations of particulars, touching persons and actions, are as the minor propositions in every active syllogism; for no excellency of observations (which are as the major propositions) can suffice to ground a conclusion, if there be error and mistaking in the minors.

(15) That this knowledge is possible, Solomon is our surety, who saith, *Consilium in corde viri tanquam aqua profunda; sed vir prudens exhauriet illud*. And although the knowledge itself falleth not under precept because it is of individuals, yet the instructions for the obtaining of it may.

(16) We will begin, therefore, with this precept, according to the ancient opinion, that the sinews of wisdom are slowness of belief and distrust; that more trust be given to countenances and deeds than to words; and in words rather to sudden passages and surprised words than to set and purposed words. Neither let that be feared which is said, *Fronti nulla fides*, which is meant of a general outward behaviour, and not of the private and subtle motions and labours of the countenance and gesture; which, as Q. Cicero elegantly saith, is *Animi janua*, “the gate of the mind.” None more close than Tiberius, and yet Tacitus saith of Gallus, *Etenim vultu offensionem conjectaverat*. So again, noting the differing character and manner of his commending Germanicus and Drusus in the Senate, he saith, touching his fashion wherein he carried his speech of Germanicus, thus: *Magis in speciem adornatis verbis, quam ut penitus sentire crederetur*; but of Drusus thus: *Paucioribus sed intentior, et fida oratione*; and in another place, speaking of his character of speech when he did anything that was gracious and popular, he saith, “That in other things he was *velut eluctantium verborum*,” but then again, *solutius loquebatur quando subveniret*. So that there is no such artificer of dissimulation, nor no such commanded countenance (*vultus jussus*), that can sever from a feigned tale some of these fashions, either a more slight and careless fashion, or more set and formal, or more tedious and wandering, or coming from a man more drily and hardly.

(17) Neither are deeds such assured pledges as that they may be trusted without a judicious consideration of their magnitude and nature: *Fraus sibi in parvis fidem præstruit ut majore emolumento fallat*; and the Italian thinketh himself upon the point to be bought and sold, when he is better used than he was wont to be without manifest cause. For small favours, they do but lull men to sleep, both as to caution and as to industry; and are, as Demosthenes calleth them, *Alimenta socordiae*. So again we see how false the nature of some deeds are, in that particular which Mutianus practised upon Antonius Primus, upon that hollow and unfaithful reconciliation which was made between them; whereupon Mutianus advanced many of the friends of Antonius, *Simul amicis ejus præfecturas et tribunatus largitur*: wherein, under pretence to strengthen him, he did desolate him, and won from him his dependents.

(18) As for words, though they be like waters to physicians, full of flattery and uncertainty, yet they are not to be despised specially with the advantage of passion and affection. For so we see Tiberius, upon a stinging and incensing speech of Agrippina, came a step forth of his dissimulation when he said, “You are hurt because you do not reign;” of which Tacitus saith, *Audita hæc raram occulti pectoris vocem elicuere: correptamque Græco versu admonuit, ideo lædi quia non regnaret*. And, therefore, the poet doth elegantly call passions tortures that urge men to confess their secrets:—

“Vino torus et ira.”

And experience showeth there are few men so true to themselves and so settled but that, sometimes upon heat, sometimes upon bravery, sometimes upon kindness, sometimes upon trouble of mind and weakness, they open themselves; specially if they be put to it with a counter-dissimulation, according to the proverb of Spain, *Di mentira, y sacar as verdad*: “Tell a lie and find a truth.”

(19) As for the knowing of men which is at second hand from reports: men's weaknesses and faults are best known from their enemies, their virtues and abilities from their friends, their customs and times from their servants, their conceits and opinions from their familiar friends, with whom they discourse most. General fame is light, and the opinions conceived by superiors or equals are deceitful; for to such men are more masked: *Verior fama e domesticis emanat*.

(20) But the soundest disclosing and expounding of men is by their natures and ends, wherein the weakest sort of men are best interpreted by their natures, and the wisest by their ends. For it was both pleasantly and wisely said (though I think very untruly) by a nuncio of the Pope, returning from a certain nation where he served as lidger; whose opinion being asked touching the appointment of one to go in his place, he wished that in any case they did not send one that was too wise; because no very wise man would ever imagine what they in that country were like to do. And certainly it is an error frequent for men to shoot over, and to suppose deeper ends and more compass reaches than are: the Italian proverb being elegant, and for the most part true:—

“Di danari, di senno, e di fede,  
C'è ne manco che non credi.”

“There is commonly less money, less wisdom, and less good faith than men do account upon.”

(21) But princes, upon a far other reason, are best interpreted by their natures, and private persons by their ends. For princes being at the top of human desires, they have for the most part no particular ends whereto they aspire, by distance from which a man might take measure and scale of the rest of their actions and desires; which is one of the causes that maketh their hearts more inscrutable. Neither is it sufficient to inform ourselves in men's ends and natures of the variety of them only, but also of the predominancy, what humour reigneth most, and what end is principally sought. For so we see, when Tigellinus saw himself outstripped by Petronius Turpilianus in Nero's humours of pleasures, *metus ejus rimatur*, he wrought upon Nero's fears, whereby he broke the other's neck.

(22) But to all this part of inquiry the most compendious way resteth in three things; the first, to have general acquaintance and inwardness with those which have general acquaintance and look most into the world; and specially according to the diversity of business, and the diversity of persons, to have privacy and conversation with some one friend at least which is perfect and well-intelligenced in every several kind. The second is to keep a good mediocrity in liberty of speech and secrecy; in most things liberty; secrecy where it importeth; for liberty of speech inviteth and provoketh liberty to be used again, and so bringeth much to a man's knowledge; and secrecy on the other side induceth trust and inwardness. The last is the reducing of a man's self to this watchful and serene habit, as to make account and purpose, in every conference and action, as well to observe as to act. For as Epictetus would have a philosopher in every particular action to say to himself, *Et hoc volo, et etiam institutum servare*; so a politic man in everything should say to himself, *Et hoc volo, ac etiam aliquid addiscere*. I have stayed the longer upon this precept of obtaining good information because it is a main part by itself, which answereth to all the rest. But, above all things, caution must be taken that men have a good stay and hold of themselves, and that this much knowing do not draw on much meddling; for nothing is more unfortunate than light and rash intermeddling in many matters. So that this variety of knowledge tendeth in conclusion but only to this, to make a better and freer choice of those actions



which may concern us, and to conduct them with the less error and the more dexterity.

(23) The second precept concerning this knowledge is, for men to take good information touching their own person, and well to understand themselves; knowing that, as St. James saith, though men look oft in a glass, yet they do suddenly forget themselves; wherein as the divine glass is the Word of God, so the politic glass is the state of the world, or times wherein we live, in the which we are to behold ourselves.

(24) For men ought to take an impartial view of their own abilities and virtues; and again of their wants and impediments; accounting these with the most, and those other with the least; and from this view and examination to frame the considerations following.

(25) First, to consider how the constitution of their nature sorteth with the general state of the times; which if they find agreeable and fit, then in all things to give themselves more scope and liberty; but if differing and dissonant, then in the whole course of their life to be more close retired, and reserved; as we see in Tiberius, who was never seen at a play, and came not into the senate in twelve of his last years; whereas Augustus Cæsar lived ever in men's eyes, which Tacitus observeth, *alia Tiberio morum via*.

(26) Secondly, to consider how their nature sorteth with professions and courses of life, and accordingly to make election, if they be free; and, if engaged, to make the departure at the first opportunity; as we see was done by Duke Valentine, that was designed by his father to a sacerdotal profession, but quitted it soon after in regard of his parts and inclination; being such, nevertheless, as a man cannot tell well whether they were worse for a prince or for a priest.

(27) Thirdly, to consider how they sort with those whom they are like to have competitors and concurrents; and to take that course wherein there is most solitude, and themselves like to be most eminent; as Cæsar Julius did, who at first was an orator or pleader; but when he saw the excellency of Cicero, Hortensius, Catulus, and others for eloquence, and saw there was no man of reputation for the wars but Pompeius, upon whom the state was forced to rely, he forsook his course begun towards a civil and popular greatness, and transferred his designs to a martial greatness.

(28) Fourthly, in the choice of their friends and dependents, to proceed according to the composition of their own nature; as we may see in Cæsar, all whose friends and followers were men active and effectual, but not solemn, or of reputation.

(29) Fifthly, to take special heed how they guide themselves by examples, in thinking they can do as they see others do; whereas perhaps their natures and carriages are far differing. In which error it seemeth Pompey was, of whom Cicero saith that he was wont often to say, *Sylla potuit, ego non potero*? Wherein he was much abused, the natures and proceedings of himself and his example being the unlikeliest in the world; the one being fierce, violent, and pressing the fact; the other solemn, and full of majesty and circumstance, and therefore the less effectual.

But this precept touching the politic knowledge of ourselves hath many other branches, whereupon we cannot insist.

(30) Next to the well understanding and discerning of a man's self, there followeth the well opening and revealing a man's self; wherein we see nothing more usual than for the more able man to make the less show. For there is a great advantage in the well setting forth of a man's virtues, fortunes, merits; and again, in the artificial covering of a man's weaknesses, defects, disgraces; staying upon the one, sliding from the other; cherishing the one by circumstances, gracing the other by exposition, and the like. Wherein we see what Tacitus saith of Mutianus, who was the greatest politique of his time, *Omnium quæ dixerat feceratque arte quadam ostentator*, which requireth indeed some art, lest it turn tedious and arrogant; but yet so, as ostentation (though it be to the first degree of vanity) seemeth to me rather a vice in manners than in policy; for as it is said, *Audacter calumniare, semper aliquid hæret*; so, except it be in a ridiculous degree of deformity, *Audacter te vendita, semper aliquid hæret*. For it will stick with the more ignorant and inferior sort of men, though men of wisdom and rank do smile at it and despise it; and yet the authority won with many doth countervail the disdain of a few. But if it be carried with decency and government, as with a natural, pleasant, and ingenious fashion; or at times when it is mixed with some peril and unsafety (as in military persons); or at times when others are most envied; or with easy and careless passage to it and from it, without dwelling too long, or being too serious; or with an equal freedom of taxing a man's self, as well as gracing himself; or by occasion of repelling or putting down others' injury or insolency; it doth greatly add to reputation: and surely not a few solid natures, that want this ventosity and cannot sail in the height of the winds, are not without some prejudice and disadvantage by their moderation.

(31) But for these flourishes and enhancements of virtue, as they are not perchance unnecessary, so it is at least necessary that virtue be not disvalued and embased under the just price, which is done in three manners—by offering and obtruding a man's self, wherein men think he is rewarded when he is accepted; by doing too much, which will not give that which is well done leave to settle, and in the end induceth satiety; and by finding too soon the fruit of a man's virtue, in commendation, applause, honour, favour; wherein if a man be pleased with a little, let him hear what is truly said: *Cave ne insuetus rebus majoribus videaris, si hæc te res parva sicuti magna delectat*.

(32) But the covering of defects is of no less importance than the valuing of good parts; which may be done likewise in three manners—by caution, by colour, and by confidence. Caution is when men do ingeniously and discreetly avoid to be put into those things for which they are not proper; whereas contrariwise bold and unquiet spirits will thrust themselves into matters without difference, and so publish and proclaim all their wants. Colour is when men make a way for themselves to have a construction made of their faults or wants, as proceeding from a better cause or intended for some other purpose. For of the one it is well said,

“Sæpe latet vitium proximitate boni,”

and therefore whatsoever want a man hath, he must see that he pretend the virtue that shadoweth it; as if he be dull, he must affect gravity; if a coward, mildness; and so the rest. For the second, a man must frame some probable cause why he should not do his best, and why he should dissemble his abilities; and for that purpose must use to dissemble those abilities which are notorious in him, to give colour that his true wants are but industries and dissimulations. For confidence, it is the last but the surest remedy—namely, to depress and seem to despise whatsoever a man cannot attain; observing the good principle of the merchants, who endeavour to raise the price of their own commodities, and to beat

down the price of others. But there is a confidence that passeth this other, which is to face out a man's own defects, in seeming to conceive that he is best in those things wherein he is failing; and, to help that again, to seem on the other side that he hath least opinion of himself in those things wherein he is best: like as we shall see it commonly in poets, that if they show their verses, and you except to any, they will say, "That that line cost them more labour than any of the rest;" and presently will seem to disable and suspect rather some other line, which they know well enough to be the best in the number. But above all, in this righting and helping of a man's self in his own carriage, he must take heed he show not himself dismantled and exposed to scorn and injury, by too much dulceness, goodness, and facility of nature; but show some sparkles of liberty, spirit, and edge. Which kind of fortified carriage, with a ready rescussing of a man's self from scorns, is sometimes of necessity imposed upon men by somewhat in their person or fortune; but it ever succeedeth with good felicity.

(33) Another precept of this knowledge is by all possible endeavour to frame the mind to be pliant and obedient to occasion; for nothing hindereth men's fortunes so much as this: *Idem manebat, neque idem decebat*—men are where they were, when occasions turn: and therefore to Cato, whom Livy maketh such an architect of fortune, he addeth that he had *versatile ingenium*. And thereof it cometh that these grave solemn wits, which must be like themselves and cannot make departures, have more dignity than felicity. But in some it is nature to be somewhat vicious and enwrapped, and not easy to turn. In some it is a conceit that is almost a nature, which is, that men can hardly make themselves believe that they ought to change their course, when they have found good by it in former experience. For Machiavel noted wisely how Fabius Maximus would have been temporising still, according to his old bias, when the nature of the war was altered and required hot pursuit. In some other it is want of point and penetration in their judgment, that they do not discern when things have a period, but come in too late after the occasion; as Demosthenes compareth the people of Athens to country fellows, when they play in a fence school, that if they have a blow, then they remove their weapon to that ward, and not before. In some other it is a lothness to lose labours passed, and a conceit that they can bring about occasions to their ply; and yet in the end, when they see no other remedy, then they come to it with disadvantage; as Tarquinius, that gave for the third part of Sibylla's books the treble price, when he might at first have had all three for the simple. But from whatsoever root or cause this restiveness of mind proceedeth, it is a thing most prejudicial; and nothing is more politic than to make the wheels of our mind concentric and voluble with the wheels of fortune.

(34) Another precept of this knowledge, which hath some affinity with that we last spoke of, but with difference, is that which is well expressed, *Fatis accede deisque*, that men do not only turn with the occasions, but also run with the occasions, and not strain their credit or strength to over-hard or extreme points; but choose in their actions that which is most passable: for this will preserve men from foil, not occupy them too much about one matter, win opinion of moderation, please the most, and make a show of a perpetual felicity in all they undertake: which cannot but mightily increase reputation.

(35) Another part of this knowledge seemeth to have some repugnancy with the former two, but not as I understand it; and it is that which Demosthenes uttereth in high terms: *Et quemadmodum receptum est, ut exercitum ducat imperator, sic et a cordatis viris res ipsæ ducendæ; ut quæipsis videntur, ea gerantur, et non ipsi eventus persequi cogantur*. For if we observe we shall find two differing kinds of sufficiency in managing of business: some can make use of occasions aptly and dexterously, but plot little; some can urge and pursue their own plots well, but cannot accommodate nor take in; either of which is very imperfect without the other.

(36) Another part of this knowledge is the observing a good mediocrity in the declaring or not declaring a man's self: for although depth of secrecy, and making way (*qualis est via navis in mari*, which the French calleth *sourdes menées*, when men set things in work without opening themselves at all), be sometimes both prosperous and admirable; yet many times *dissimulatio errores parit, qui dissimulatorem ipsum illaqueant*. And therefore we see the greatest politiques have in a natural and free manner professed their desires, rather than been reserved and disguised in them. For so we see that Lucius Sylla made a kind of profession, "that he wished all men happy or unhappy, as they stood his friends or enemies." So Cæsar, when he went first into Gaul, made no scruple to profess "that he had rather be first in a village than second at Rome." So again, as soon as he had begun the war, we see what Cicero saith of him, *Alter* (meaning of Cæsar) *non recusat, sed quodammodo postulat, ut (ut est) sic appelletur tyrannus*. So we may see in a letter of Cicero to Atticus, that Augustus Cæsar, in his very entrance into affairs, when he was a darling of the senate, yet in his harangues to the people would swear, *Ita parentis honores consequi liceat* (which was no less than the tyranny), save that, to help it, he would stretch forth his hand towards a statue of Cæsar's that was erected in the place: and men laughed and wondered, and said, "Is it possible?" or, "Did you ever hear the like?" and yet thought he meant no hurt; he did it so handsomely and ingenuously. And all these were prosperous: whereas Pompey, who tended to the same ends, but in a more dark and dissembling manner as Tacitus saith of him, *Occultior non melior*, wherein Sallust concurreth, *Ore probo, animo inverecundo*, made it his design, by infinite secret engines, to cast the state into an absolute anarchy and confusion, that the state might cast itself into his arms for necessity and protection, and so the sovereign power be put upon him, and he never seen in it: and when he had brought it (as he thought) to that point when he was chosen consul alone, as never any was, yet he could make no great matter of it, because men understood him not; but was fain in the end to go the beaten track of getting arms into his hands, by colour of the doubt of Cæsar's designs: so tedious, casual, and unfortunate are these deep dissimulations: whereof it seemeth Tacitus made this judgment, that they were a cunning of an inferior form in regard of true policy; attributing the one to Augustus, the other to Tiberius; where, speaking of Livia, he saith, *Et cum artibus mariti simulatione filii bene compostia*: for surely the continual habit of dissimulation is but a weak and sluggish cunning, and not greatly politic.

(37) Another precept of this architecture of fortune is to accustom our minds to judge of the proportion or value of things, as they conduce and are material to our particular ends; and that to do substantially and not superficially. For we shall find the logical part (as I may term it) of some men's minds good, but the mathematical part erroneous; that is, they can well judge of consequences, but not of proportions and comparison, preferring things of show and sense before things of substance and effect. So some fall in love with access to princes, others with popular fame and applause, supposing they are things of great purchase, when in many cases they are but matters of envy, peril, and impediment. So some measure things according to the labour and difficulty or assiduity which are spent about them; and think, if they be ever moving, that they must needs advance and proceed; as Cæsar saith in a despising manner of Cato the second, when he describeth how laborious and indefatigable he was to no great purpose, *Hæc omnia magno studio agebat*. So in most things men are ready to abuse themselves in thinking the greatest means to be best, when it should be the fittest.

(38) As for the true marshalling of men's pursuits towards their fortune, as they are more or less material, I hold them to stand thus. First the amendment of their own minds. For the removal of the impediments of the mind will sooner clear the passages of fortune than the obtaining fortune will remove the impediments of the mind. In the second place I set down wealth and means; which I know most men would have placed first, because of the general use which it beareth towards all variety of occasions. But that opinion I may condemn with like reason as Machiavel doth that other, that moneys

were the sinews of the wars; whereas (saith he) the true sinews of the wars are the sinews of men's arms, that is, a valiant, populous, and military nation: and he voucheth aptly the authority of Solon, who, when Cræsus showed him his treasury of gold, said to him, that if another came that had better iron, he would be master of his gold. In like manner it may be truly affirmed that it is not moneys that are the sinews of fortune, but it is the sinews and steel of men's minds, wit, courage, audacity, resolution, temper, industry, and the like. In the third place I set down reputation, because of the peremptory tides and currents it hath; which, if they be not taken in their due time, are seldom recovered, it being extreme hard to play an after-game of reputation. And lastly I place honour, which is more easily won by any of the other three, much more by all, than any of them can be purchased by honour. To conclude this precept, as there is order and priority in matter, so is there in time, the preposterous placing whereof is one of the commonest errors: while men fly to their ends when they should intend their beginnings, and do not take things in order of time as they come on, but marshal them according to greatness and not according to instance; not observing the good precept, *Quod nunc instat agamus*.

(39) Another precept of this knowledge is not to embrace any matters which do occupy too great a quantity of time, but to have that sounding in a man's ears, *Sed fugit interea fugit irreparabile tempus*: and that is the cause why those which take their course of rising by professions of burden, as lawyers, orators, painful divines, and the like, are not commonly so politic for their own fortune, otherwise than in their ordinary way, because they want time to learn particulars, to wait occasions, and to devise plots.

(40) Another precept of this knowledge is to imitate nature, which doth nothing in vain; which surely a man may do if he do well interlace his business, and bend not his mind too much upon that which he principally intendeth. For a man ought in every particular action so to carry the motions of his mind, and so to have one thing under another, as if he cannot have that he seeketh in the best degree, yet to have it in a second, or so in a third; and if he can have no part of that which he purposed, yet to turn the use of it to somewhat else; and if he cannot make anything of it for the present, yet to make it as a seed of somewhat in time to come; and if he can contrive no effect or substance from it, yet to win some good opinion by it, or the like. So that he should exact an account of himself of every action, to reap somewhat, and not to stand amazed and confused if he fail of that he chiefly meant: for nothing is more impolitic than to mind actions wholly one by one. For he that doth so loseth infinite occasions which intervene, and are many times more proper and propitious for somewhat that he shall need afterwards, than for that which he urgeth for the present; and therefore men must be perfect in that rule, *Hæc oportet facere, et illa non imittere*.

(41) Another precept of this knowledge is, not to engage a man's self peremptorily in anything, though it seem not liable to accident; but ever to have a window to fly out at, or a way to retire: following the wisdom in the ancient fable of the two frogs, which consulted when their plash was dry whither they should go; and the one moved to go down into a pit, because it was not likely the water would dry there; but the other answered, "True, but if it do, how shall we get out again?"

(42) Another precept of this knowledge is that ancient precept of Bias, construed not to any point of perfidiousness, but to caution and moderation, *Et ama tanquam inimicus futurus et odi tanquam amaturus*. For it utterly betrayeth all utility for men to embark themselves too far into unfortunate friendships, troublesome spleens, and childish and humorous envies or emulations.

(43) But I continue this beyond the measure of an example; led, because I would not have such knowledges, which I note as deficient, to be thought things imaginative or in the air, or an observation or two much made of, but things of bulk and mass, whereof an end is more hardly made than a beginning. It must be likewise conceived, that in these points which I mention and set down, they are far from complete tractates of them, but only as small pieces for patterns. And lastly, no man I suppose will think that I mean fortunes are not obtained without all this ado; for I know they come tumbling into some men's laps; and a number obtain good fortunes by diligence in a plain way, little intermeddling, and keeping themselves from gross errors.

(44) But as Cicero, when he setteth down an idea of a perfect orator, doth not mean that every pleader should be such; and so likewise, when a prince or a courtier hath been described by such as have handled those subjects, the mould hath used to be made according to the perfection of the art, and not according to common practice: so I understand it, that it ought to be done in the description of a politic man, I mean politic for his own fortune.

(45) But it must be remembered all this while, that the precepts which we have set down are of that kind which may be counted and called *Bonæ Artes*. As for evil arts, if a man would set down for himself that principle of Machiavel, "That a man seek not to attain virtue itself, but the appearance only thereof; because the credit of virtue is a help, but the use of it is cumber:" or that other of his principles, "That he presuppose that men are not fitly to be wrought otherwise but by fear; and therefore that he seek to have every man obnoxious, low, and in straits," which the Italians call *seminar spine*, to sow thorns: or that other principle, contained in the verse which Cicero citeth, *Cadant amici, dummodo inimici intercidant*, as the triumvirs, which sold every one to other the lives of their friends for the deaths of their enemies: or that other protestation of L. Catilina, to set on fire and trouble states, to the end to fish in droumy waters, and to unwrap their fortunes, *Ego si quid in fortunis meis excitatum sit incendium, id non aqua sed ruina restinguam*: or that other principle of Lysander, "That children are to be deceived with comfits, and men with oaths:" and the like evil and corrupt positions, whereof (as in all things) there are more in number than of the good: certainly with these dispensations from the laws of charity and integrity, the pressing of a man's fortune may be more hasty and compendious. But it is in life as it is in ways, the shortest way is commonly the foulest, and surely the fairer way is not much about.

(46) But men, if they be in their own power, and do bear and sustain themselves, and be not carried away with a whirlwind or tempest of ambition, ought in the pursuit of their own fortune to set before their eyes not only that general map of the world, "That all things are vanity and vexation of spirit," but many other more particular cards and directions: chiefly that, that being without well-being is a curse, and the greater being the greater curse; and that all virtue is most rewarded and all wickedness most punished in itself: according as the poet saith excellently:

"Quæ vobis, quæ digna, viri pro laudibus istis  
Præmia posse rear solvi? pulcherrima primum  
Dii *moresque* dabunt vestri."

And so of the contrary. And secondly they ought to look up to the Eternal Providence and Divine Judgment, which often subverteth the wisdom of evil plots and imaginations, according to that

scripture, “He hath conceived mischief, and shall bring forth a vain thing.” And although men should refrain themselves from injury and evil arts, yet this incessant and Sabbathless pursuit of a man’s fortune leaveth not tribute which we owe to God of our time; who (we see) demandeth a tenth of our substance, and a seventh, which is more strict, of our time: and it is to small purpose to have an erected face towards heaven, and a perpetual grovelling spirit upon earth, eating dust as doth the serpent, *Atque affigit humo divinæ particulam auræ*. And if any man flatter himself that he will employ his fortune well, though he should obtain it ill, as was said concerning Augustus Cæsar, and after of Septimius Severus, “That either they should never have been born, or else they should never have died,” they did so much mischief in the pursuit and ascent of their greatness, and so much good when they were established; yet these compensations and satisfactions are good to be used, but never good to be purposed. And lastly, it is not amiss for men, in their race towards their fortune, to cool themselves a little with that conceit which is elegantly expressed by the Emperor Charles V., in his instructions to the king his son, “That fortune hath somewhat of the nature of a woman, that if she be too much wooed she is the farther off.” But this last is but a remedy for those whose tastes are corrupted: let men rather build upon that foundation which is as a corner-stone of divinity and philosophy, wherein they join close, namely that same *Primum quærite*. For divinity saith, *Primum quærite regnum Dei, et ista omnia adjicientur vobis*: and philosophy saith, *Primum quærite bona animi; cætera aut aderunt, aut non oberunt*. And although the human foundation hath somewhat of the sands, as we see in M. Brutus, when he broke forth into that speech,

“Te colui (Virtus) ut rem; ast tu nomen inane es;”

yet the divine foundation is upon the rock. But this may serve for a taste of that knowledge which I noted as deficient.

(47) Concerning government, it is a part of knowledge secret and retired in both these respects in which things are deemed secret; for some things are secret because they are hard to know, and some because they are not fit to utter. We see all governments are obscure and invisible:

“Totamque infusa per artus  
Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.”

Such is the description of governments. We see the government of God over the world is hidden, insomuch as it seemeth to participate of much irregularity and confusion. The government of the soul in moving the body is inward and profound, and the passages thereof hardly to be reduced to demonstration. Again, the wisdom of antiquity (the shadows whereof are in the poets) in the description of torments and pains, next unto the crime of rebellion, which was the giants’ offence, doth detest the offence of futility, as in Sisyphus and Tantalus. But this was meant of particulars: nevertheless even unto the general rules and discourses of policy and government there is due a reverent and reserved handling.

(48) But contrariwise in the governors towards the governed, all things ought as far as the frailty of man permitteth to be manifest and revealed. For so it is expressed in the Scriptures touching the

government of God, that this globe, which seemeth to us a dark and shady body, is in the view of God as crystal: *Et in conspectu sedis tanquam mare vitreum simile crystallo*. So unto princes and states, and specially towards wise senates and councils, the natures and dispositions of the people, their conditions and necessities, their factions and combinations, their animosities and discontents, ought to be, in regard of the variety of their intelligences, the wisdom of their observations, and the height of their station where they keep sentinel, in great part clear and transparent. Wherefore, considering that I write to a king that is a master of this science, and is so well assisted, I think it decent to pass over this part in silence, as willing to obtain the certificate which one of the ancient philosophers aspired unto; who being silent, when others contended to make demonstration of their abilities by speech, desired it might be certified for his part, "That there was one that knew how to hold his peace."

(49) Notwithstanding, for the more public part of government, which is laws, I think good to note only one deficiency; which is, that all those which have written of laws have written either as philosophers or as lawyers, and none as statesmen. As for the philosophers, they make imaginary laws for imaginary commonwealths, and their discourses are as the stars, which give little light because they are so high. For the lawyers, they write according to the states where they live what is received law, and not what ought to be law; for the wisdom of a law-maker is one, and of a lawyer is another. For there are in nature certain fountains of justice whence all civil laws are derived but as streams; and like as waters do take tinctures and tastes from the soils through which they run, so do civil laws vary according to the regions and governments where they are planted, though they proceed from the same fountains. Again, the wisdom of a law-maker consisteth not only in a platform of justice, but in the application thereof; taking into consideration by what means laws may be made certain, and what are the causes and remedies of the doubtfulness and uncertainty of law; by what means laws may be made apt and easy to be executed, and what are the impediments and remedies in the execution of laws; what influence laws touching private right of *meum* and *tuum* have into the public state, and how they may be made apt and agreeable; how laws are to be penned and delivered, whether in texts or in Acts, brief or large, with preambles or without; how they are to be pruned and reformed from time to time, and what is the best means to keep them from being too vast in volume, or too full of multiplicity and crossness; how they are to be expounded, when upon causes emergent and judicially discussed, and when upon responses and conferences touching general points or questions; how they are to be pressed, rigorously or tenderly; how they are to be mitigated by equity and good conscience, and whether discretion and strict law are to be mingled in the same courts, or kept apart in several courts; again, how the practice, profession, and erudition of law is to be censured and governed; and many other points touching the administration and (as I may term it) animation of laws. Upon which I insist the less, because I purpose (if God give me leave), having begun a work of this nature in aphorisms, to propound it hereafter, noting it in the meantime for deficient.

(50) And for your Majesty's laws of England, I could say much of their dignity, and somewhat of their defect; but they cannot but excel the civil laws in fitness for the government, for the civil law was *nonhos quæsitum munus in usus*; it was not made for the countries which it governeth. Hereof I cease to speak because I will not intermingle matter of action with matter of general learning.