

XXIV. Conclusion of the Review of Philosophy in general

Thus have I concluded this portion of learning touching civil knowledge; and with civil knowledge have concluded human philosophy; and with human philosophy, philosophy in general. And being now at some pause, looking back into that I have passed through, this writing seemeth to me (*si nunquam fallit imago*), as far as a man can judge of his own work, not much better than that noise or sound which musicians make while they are in tuning their instruments, which is nothing pleasant to hear, but yet is a cause why the music is sweeter afterwards. So have I been content to tune the instruments of the Muses, that they may play that have better hands. And surely, when I set before me the condition of these times, in which learning hath made her third visitation or circuit in all the qualities thereof; as the excellency and vivacity of the wits of this age; the noble helps and lights which we have by the travails of ancient writers; the art of printing, which communicateth books to men of all fortunes; the openness of the world by navigation, which hath disclosed multitudes of experiments, and a mass of natural history; the leisure wherewith these times abound, not employing men so generally in civil business, as the states of Græcia did, in respect of their popularity, and the state of Rome, in respect of the greatness of their monarchy; the present disposition of these times at this instant to peace; the consumption of all that ever can be said in controversies of religion, which have so much diverted men from other sciences; the perfection of your Majesty's learning, which as a phœnix may call whole volleys of wits to follow you; and the inseparable propriety of time, which is ever more and more to disclose truth; I cannot but be raised to this persuasion, that this third period of time will far surpass that of the Grecian and Roman learning; only if men will know their own strength and their own weakness both; and take, one from the other, light of invention, and not fire of contradiction; and esteem of the inquisition of truth as of an enterprise, and not as of a quality or ornament; and employ wit and magnificence to things of worth and excellency, and not to things vulgar and of popular estimation. As for my labours, if any man shall please himself or others in the reprehension of them, they shall make that ancient and patient request, *Verbera, sed audi*: let men reprehend them, so they observe and weigh them. For the appeal is lawful (though it may be it shall not be needful) from the first cogitations of men to their second, and from the nearer times to the times further off. Now let us come to that learning, which both the former times were not so blessed as to know, sacred and inspired divinity, the Sabbath and port of all men's labours and peregrinations.

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