

CHAPTER V

SOME EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES OF THE CLASSICS

DIE Griechen sind, wie das Genie, *einfach*; deshalb sind sie die unsterblichen Lehrer. NIETZSCHE.

BUT is not our own literature an adequate substitute for the classics if not an improvement on them? And is there not something to be said for feeding children on their mother's milk, instead of surrendering them to foreign nurses? These are obvious and fair questions to ask, and I propose in this chapter to consider the respective educational merits of ancient and modern literature and to put successively the following questions:

(a) How does our own literature compare with Greek? (This has been to some extent dealt with in Chapter III.)

(b) Is it really better for a nation to be nourished mainly on its own past?

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(c) What are the general educational advantages claimed for the classics?

(d) In what sense can the classics be considered an introduction to modern problems?

It is only possible here to glance at these questions and to indicate certain lines of discussion, and it is always to be remembered that from their nature an absolutely definite solution is impossible. Educational problems are not like income-tax papers, where the replies can be precise; we can only give rough estimates and general forecasts.

How does our literature compare with Greek?

It is ungrateful and rather impious to match against each other the illustrious names of two illustrious literatures. As in religion, so in literature, differences of age or nation do not break the unity or disturb the peace of those who have joined the company of the departed great. But for educational purposes it is instructive to make these comparisons, and therefore, premising that anyone who does not know both Greek and English is the poorer for his ignorance, let us set the armies in array. (Latin for the most part I leave out of account, and no critic can object if I put myself at a disadvantage by meeting him

on one leg instead of on two.) First comes Homer, whom we might match if we could combine the simplicity and humanity of Chaucer with the grandeur and art of Milton ; as it is we may accept the Poet Laureate's judgment, that he holds an 'undisputed throne.'¹ Passing to the dramatists, we have in Shakespeare a genius beyond comparison, though for educational purposes it would be difficult in English to find anything to match the combination of the three Greeks ; we have nothing in tragedy so titanic as Aeschylus, so exquisite in art and plot construction as Sophocles, so curiously modern and human as Euripides (the three combined would be the highest literature man can conceive), nor have we anything so instructive as the development of art and thought which these three afford as they succeed each other in an age of intellectual progress and rapid change. In comedy Aristophanes is unique in the literature of the world, but a

¹ He writes of Shakespeare :

Whom, when she (England) bore, the Muses lov'd
Above the best of eldest honour
—Yea, save one, without peer—
And by great Homer set,
Not to impugn his undisputed throne,
The myriad-hearted by the mighty-hearted one.

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Menander can be had, and not in fragments, if we go to France for Molière.

In poetry, especially if the greater abundance and scope of our own literature be considered, English offers at least as much to the student as Greek. In some departments of prose this is not so. Oratory is its least important branch ; but here Lord Brougham speaks of Demosthenes' *Speech on the Crown* as "The Greatest Oration of the Greatest of Orators," and for sustained perfection our own speakers, with their rather ragged, shapeless speeches and brilliant purple passages, cannot compare with the great Greeks ; they did not take the same trouble in writing, and consequently we do not take the same pleasure in reading. An exception should be made of Burke ; no Greek politician has his rich language or profound political wisdom. In history our inferiority is greater. Our historians have lacked either impartiality, or else the style, or, still more important, the imagination, adequate to the momentous issues, tragic events, and commanding personalities of history. We have no one to compare, in their very different gifts, with Herodotus or Thucydides. And neither in our own, nor in any other literature will the historian find a model to match

with the latter. Macaulay, Froude, and Green are brilliant partisans. Clarendon or Gibbon comes nearest our ideal, but Gardiner speaks of "Clarendon's usual habit of blundering," and Gibbon, though both scientific, eloquent and an artist, is a model neither of style nor of impartiality. His subject is the fate of a bizarre and decadent absolutism, and his work is less like a picture than a great piece of ancient tapestry, where we admire the harmony of colour, the skill of design, the ample and stately pageant which passes under our eyes, but never quite feel as if the figures were human or alive. Byzantium is too remote from our life to excite our sympathy, pity or fear, and we miss the human interest, which Thucydides' story of the rise and fall of a great democracy awakes. I have already quoted the characteristically generous tribute of Macaulay to him.

But it is in philosophy that we compare least favourably with the Greeks. Hellenism has influenced the world deeply in every branch of intellectual life, but her greatest influence probably has been through her philosophers. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the 'budge doctors of the Stoic fur'—all educated

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men have heard these names ; if they had never lived, the world would have been different beyond conceiving from what it is to-day. They are the culmination of the Greek genius, and perhaps its greatest glory ; they are the natural offspring of its bent, children of the marriage between reason and life. They cover the whole field of philosophy ; in metaphysics, morals, and politics they started the game, in whose tracks, since their day onwards, the world of intellect has been afoot. Philosophy has often seemed dull and dry, but they united logic and feeling, imagination and analysis, and qualified with radiant vision the dry light of thought. This is true of all of them to some extent, and of Plato in the highest degree. He, and he alone in the world, was at once poet and philosopher, and in both his gifts supreme. Yet they were not mere writers of the study. It is the glory of Greek literature that in its greatest representatives art and life are not divorced ; the teaching of Socrates was a mission ; the *Republic* of Plato and the *Politics* of Aristotle were inspired by the political conditions of their day.

Against these names we can produce many illustrious writers from Hobbes to Mill : but they are weak just where the Greeks are strong. With

the exception of Bacon, Berkeley, and the Cambridge Platonists, our great philosophers belong to one school ; they are hard-headed, business-like-Englishmen, rather dry and unimaginative. Locke commences his essay *Concerning the Human Understanding* thus : " Since it is the understanding that sets man above the rest of sensible beings, and gives him all the advantage and dominion which he has over them, it is certainly a subject, even from its nobleness, worth our labour to inquire into." This opening, with the afterthought, " even from its nobleness," is characteristic of English philosophy. Its sanity and good sense are admirable and indispensable ; its famous child, utilitarianism, is a welcome addition to the European family. But neither man nor philosophy can live by sense and sanity alone ; a touch of vision must be added for the science which deals with such high things, and it is hard to say where in English philosophy it is to be found. Bacon, who has plenty, devoted himself to experimental philosophy, and never dealt completely or systematically with politics and morals. Berkeley and the Cambridge Platonists were less many-sided than Plato and Aristotle, and far smaller men. On the other hand, if we turn to pure science, we shall not need

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to leave our own circle: Newton and Darwin offer examples as admirable as any in the world. Our deficiencies are on the human side of philosophy. The plain reason why we read Plato and Aristotle is that in their subjects they are as supreme as Shakespeare in his. They are among the very few writers who, however highly we think of them, startle us, when we read them again, as being so much greater than we had thought. If anyone supposes he can replace them, let him try; let us have their substitutes named: but great thinkers are not like motor-cars—numbers of first-class makes, each pretty well as good as the other.

To conclude our comparison of Greek and English achievement in the various branches of literature, we may say that in literature proper Greek has probably more writers of the very first class; though English has a greater quantity of excellent work, and is superior in certain kinds of literature, such as novels, letters, biography and essays, while in the romantic interpretation of nature and human life we have broken ground which the Greeks left comparatively untouched; in eloquence Greek has the greatest masters, and the more finished and perfect models of art, while English again has the advantage in quantity and

width of range; in history, no English writer unites, like Thucydides, impartiality, imagination and literary art; in pure science we need not go beyond our own shores, but in philosophy those who seek for the combination of logic with imagination, of analytic with constructive power, and wish to see the intellect of man in its purest form, and freshest and most vigorous action, will find it in Greece. The gaps in our own ranks will be strongly reinforced if we go outside Britain, and include thinkers like Pascal, Spinoza, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and orators like Bossuet and the French school; but it will be difficult anywhere to find a match for Thucydides and Herodotus, Plato and Aristotle.

But is it not better in any case for a nation to be brought up on its own literature! Are not Thames and Avon, rivers of England, better, for us at least, than all the waters of Greece?

If to read the classics was to exclude English, there would of course be no doubt of our choice. But English enters, or ought to enter, into all school curricula; it is read at home and in leisure hours, and it is the more enjoyed and the better appreciated if it is not associated with class-rooms

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and text-books and examinations. There are no walls round its fields, and the wish to roam them gives admission. With the classics it is not so. The high palisade of languages unlike our own surrounds them, and must be surmounted young, or it will almost certainly never be surmounted at all. Not one in a thousand will learn Latin and Greek except as boys ; if not then, never, and, like Pushkin, they may say in late life, with unavailing regret, "How often do I tear my hair for not having had a classical education."¹

Of course for an Englishman to be ignorant of his own literature or history is as bad as for a child to know nothing of its own family ; but we cannot argue from this that he should be exclusively or even mainly brought up in it. Nowhere has this literary nationalism been more loudly preached than in modern Germany, whose education has been largely influenced by it since 1890, when the Emperor, then young, announced his policy. "Whoever," he said, "has been at a Public School (Gymnasium) . . . knows where the fault lies. The fault lies in the want of a national basis. We must take German as our foundation ; we have to educate young Germans, not young Greeks and

¹ Quoted by Zielinski, *Our Debt to Antiquity*, p. 112.

Romans.”¹ The immediate sequel was a reduced importance of the classics in secondary education, but recent years have revealed more questionable aspects of the movement. Not only has Germany been obliged to supplement the poverty of her literature by claiming Dante as a German, because, among other reasons, “he has a characteristically Germanic countenance,”² and Shakespeare, “because Germany is his spiritual home”; but also this concentration on *Deutschtum* has encouraged the monstrous egoism which, sitting in rapt contemplation of its virtues, finds everywhere its

Own vast shadow glory-crowned
And sees itself in all it sees.

This argument can be pressed too far. There is no absolute protection against self-absorption and blindness to our own weaknesses. Still a knowledge of other civilisations, with which we can compare ourselves, is some help. And when we look for such civilisations, where can we find them except in the classics? Surprising as it may seem, there are no really satisfactory alternatives.

¹ Quoted in Mr. J. W. Headlam’s report (p. 21) (*Board of Education Special Report, vol. 20, The Teaching of Classics in Secondary Schools in Germany*).

² Chamberlain, *o.c.* p. 538.

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Feudal societies are useless for the purpose, and to study them in this connection would be like studying modern warfare by the light of the Crusades, possible, but unprofitable. Nor does the rest of European history offer any instances either so complete or so modern in their ideals and difficulties as Greece and Rome. It may seem paradoxical to call the ideals and difficulties of Greece and Rome modern, and some will think that the parallel about the Crusades might be extended to the study of Greek and Latin as a whole. If they will have patience, I hope to have justified myself by the end of this chapter. Meanwhile I pass to my third point, the general educational advantages of the classics. The most obvious of these are their completeness, simplicity and the fact that they resemble us sufficiently to admit of comparison, yet are sufficiently different to admit of contrast.

Consider for a moment their completeness. In their literature we see the evolution of epic, lyric, tragic, poetry: the comedy of broad humour is succeeded by the comedy of manners; the literary epic, the elegy, the pastoral, the epigram follow. Then there is their prose, historical, oratorical, philosophical, and finally, artistic prose for its own

sake. Then there is their thought, commencing in bold scientific speculation, developing in the fields of morals, politics, psychology, logic, metaphysics, and branching out in hedonism of different types, materialism, idealism, scepticism, stoicism, asceticism, mysticism ; then there are the later developments of the Alexandrian epoch, when the various sciences are mapped out, and each tills laboriously its own field. Most of the adventures of the human mind are in Greek literature, one developing into another with a method and logic that is as wonderful as, and indeed explains, their completeness. Or turn from literature and thought to history, and see the examples of various forms of government, absolute, military and limited monarchies, oligarchies, democracies of different types, followed by absorption into the Roman empire with more or less autonomy : note the colonising activity of Greece (two of the three great colonising epochs of the world fall in its history) ; note the incessant political experiment and speculation, theories of communism, federal governments, arbitration treaties, commercial treaties, problems of naturalisation of aliens, of emigration, of the position of women and slaves. And so far I have not spoken of Rome. Let critics of the classics

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produce any other civilisation so complete, so fitted to introduce boys to the activities and adventures of the human mind, so able in every direction to open windows on to life.

Further, Greek literature has a curious inner completeness, which for educational uses gives it a singular advantage. By some chance its great writers wonderfully supplement each other's deficiencies, so that we have in Greek not only famous tragedians, historians, orators and philosophers, but different and representative types of the human mind in each of these branches of art and thought. Greek literature is like a picture gallery, which is small, but has perfect examples of all the great schools of art. In tragedy Aeschylus, austere, tremendous, elemental, his atmosphere charged with mysterious forces, his characters survivals from a heroic age, his plots crude, his imagery audacious, is followed by Sophocles, the perfect artist, a master of plot and language, yet a great poet besides; and he again by Euripides 'the human,' with his interest in the life of the common people, his sympathy with the oppressed and suffering, his hatred of wrong, his acute restless brain, sceptic and dreamer, intellectualist and poet. The circle is complete. Or take oratory, and note

how Lysias, the genius of plain, natural, spontaneous style, is supplemented by Isocrates, with his elaborate rolling periods, a little wanting in spontaneity or fire, and he again by passion incarnate in Demosthenes. Or take history, where Thucydides, intent on tracing step by step the progress of his country's tragedy, has almost banished personalities from his pages, and tells us nothing of the common life of Athens, while Herodotus is interested in every human being he meets, and records the gossip of the market, and the quaint customs of the foreign countries he visited. With philosophy it is the same, as we are reminded by the saying that every man is born a Platonist or an Aristotelian.

This richness, this completeness of the civilisations of Greece and Rome is one of their recommendations; another is their simplicity. They exhibit an epitome of man in himself and in his relations with other men; the web of human character and society is there, as it is in modern literature; but it has a far simpler form, so that we can trace the several strands out of which it is woven, and examine them more easily. The difficulty with modern history and modern thought

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is their complexity ; we grope through them, and find it difficult to know where we are, what are the forces and problems around us. It is like being in a modern factory ; the machinery spins, the pulleys, cogs, and driving wheels are in motion, but we cannot detect their connection and interdependence, the origin of all this activity or its purpose. To understand it we must study machinery on simpler models and a smaller scale. That is precisely what the classics are in education. "The ideas and laws which seem to play in inextricable confusion in modern life, are presented by Plato and Aristotle in a form which is as free from confusion as matters of such complexity can be. Nearly all the problems which bewilder us by their mutual entanglements in modern thought and writing, we find attacked straightforwardly by the ancient Greeks."¹ They are the small simplified models on which we master the ground principles, before we examine the big machine. They save us from the bewilderment of being thrown at once into the complex of modern history and thought.

This simplicity was partly a happy accident. Athens and Rome stand on the upper courses of

¹ A. W. Pickard Cambridge, *Education, Science and the Humanities*, p. 23.

the rivers of civilisation, while we are on the lower reaches, where confluents from many sources have swollen and disturbed its waters. Our civilisation is compounded of contributions from Greece, Rome, Palestine ; and added to these are by-products of its own, Feudalism, the Papacy, the Renaissance, the Reformation, our own and the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution. Could the compound of all these forces be otherwise than confused and confusing? But Greece was made by herself, and Rome by herself and Greece, and they and their creations are simple. Monarchy, oligarchy, democracy were evolved by the nation that gave them their names, and their forms in Greek history, and their conception in Greek thought are clearer and less complicated than they have ever been since. In the classics we study their development, and the development of the state, in domestic, imperial and foreign relations, on an easily comprehended model which has the essentials in simple form.

But partly this simplicity is due to a peculiar quality of the Greeks. They had a genius for the anatomy of thought ; they knew exactly where the joints of a subject lay, and could resolve a whole into its parts and place it ready for inspection ; they

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were born dissectors. That is why in all fields of thought they so often discovered the problems to be solved (to ask the right questions is the gift and infallible sign of genius, and the great advances both in the history of thought and in the special sciences, have been made by the men who could do this). We see this instinct in Herodotus' naïve, yet acute, discussion of the merits of monarchy, oligarchy and democracy,¹ but it reaches its perfection in Aristotle, the greatest of analysts. His treatises are incomparable introductions to their subject, not only for their wisdom, but still more because they exhibit so lucidly the questions in doubt, the points to be proved. Many modern books can be read from cover to cover without our ever being quite clear as to the exact problems at issue. The writer gives us an account rendered of judgments or conclusions, which shews neither the individual items nor how the sum total is reached, and leaves us doubtful if the result is correct. Compare Aristotle's introduction to his discussion of ethics with the opening of a modern book on the subject, and note how lucidly and carefully he puts before us the root problem of ethics, beginning with deliberation to climb the tree

¹ 3. 80.

at its foot instead of taking a flying leap into its branches. "Every art and every scientific inquiry, and similarly every action and purpose, may be said to aim at some good. . . . As every knowledge and moral purpose aspires to some good, what is in our view the good at which the political science aims, and what is the highest of all practical good? As to its name, there is, I may say, a general agreement. The masses and the cultured classes agree in calling it happiness, and conceive that to *live well* (εὖ ζῆν) or to *do well* (εὖ πράττειν) is the same thing as to *be happy* (εὐδαιμονεῖν). But as to the nature of happiness they do not agree, nor do the masses give the same account of it as the philosophers. . . . It would perhaps be a waste of time to examine all these opinions, it will be enough to examine such as are most popular or as seem to be more or less reasonable."¹ Now hear the beginnings of Mr. A. E. Taylor's *Problem of Conduct*: "With this prefatory word of explanation I turn at once to the subject which is to be considered in the following pages—the relation between ethics and metaphysics. It seems clear that in all cases in which we can say that two sciences stand in close connec-

¹ *Nic. Ethics*, 1094a, 1 f.—1095a, 14 ff. (tr. Weldon).

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tion with one another, the nature of the relation between them must be conceived in one of two ways. Either one of the two sciences is actually derivative from the other, and dependent upon it for its principles and methods, or else they are independent and coordinate branches of inquiry, and the relation between them is simply one of mutual contact and support at various points. The difference between the two cases is too obvious to need a lengthy explanation, but we may in passing illustrate it by comparing the relation of mechanics to geometry, or of acoustics to kinematics, with the very different relations which, in the view of the most competent authorities in either science, obtain between psychology and physiology.”¹ How much easier it is with Aristotle to tell where we are and what we are about! And Mr. Taylor’s book was not chosen for special obscurity. If anyone cares to glance at the opening of the ethical writings of Hume, Green, Martineau, Spencer or Rashdall, he will find that they contrast quite as unfavourably with Aristotle: only Henry Sidgwick has something of the Greek’s precision. I do not of course mean our study of politics and ethics is complete if we have read Aristotle;

¹ p. 2.

but I say that the simplicity and lucidity with which he poses their problems make him a better introduction to this subject than modern writers.

Nor is this simplicity and lucidity only shewn in the Greeks' power of expounding a problem. It is the essential mark of Greek literature. Writers speak of its light, clarity, sincerity, directness, concreteness, eternal outline—the phrases are all aimed at this power of going straight to the point, and displaying it with the accidental trappings removed. Modern writers are apt to be like modern statues, folds of heavy drapery muffle their form: Greek thought is naked, or if draped, the drapery only reveals the outlines beneath. No writers have less of the accidental, more of the essential in their descriptions; they bring us into the immediate presence of what they describe. It is difficult to express this quality, but anyone who knows Greek literature will know it. We see it in Simonides' epigram on the dead at Thermopylae

ὦ ξεῖν', ἀγγειλον Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῆδε
κείμεθα, τοῖς κείνων ρήμασι πειθόμενοι,¹

¹ "Stranger, tell the Lacedaemonians that we lie here, obeying their commands."

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in Sappho's description of stars paling before the moon

*"Ἀστῆρες μὲν ἄμφι κάλαν σελάνναν
αἰψ' ἀποκρύπτοισι φαίννον εἶδος,
ὄπποτα πλήθοισα μάλιστα λάμπη
γᾶν ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀργυρία,¹*

in Thucydides' account of the disastrous retreat of the Athenian army from Syracuse in the torrid September of 413 B.C.: "The Athenians hurried on to the river Assinarus. They hoped to gain a little relief if they forded the river, for the mass of horsemen and other troops overwhelmed and crushed them; and they were worn out by fatigue and thirst. But no sooner did they reach the water than they lost all order and rushed in; every man was trying to cross first, and, the enemy pressing upon them at the same time, the passage of the river became hopeless. Being compelled to keep close together, they fell one upon another, and trampled each other under foot: some at once perished, pierced by their own spears; others got entangled in the baggage and were carried down the stream. The Syracusans stood upon the further bank of the river, which was steep, and

¹ "The stars around the fair moon hide at once their bright face, when, about her full, she throws her silver light over all the earth."

hurled missiles from above on the Athenians, who were huddled together in the deep bed of the stream, and for the most part were drinking greedily. The Peloponnesians came down the bank and slaughtered them, falling chiefly upon those who were in the river. Whereupon the water at once became foul, but was drunk all the same, although muddy and dyed with blood, and the crowd fought for it. At last when the dead bodies were lying in heaps upon one another in the water and the army was utterly undone, some perishing in the river, and any who escaped being cut off by the cavalry, Nicias surrendered to Gylippus, in whom he had more confidence than in the Syracusans. He entreated him and the Lacedaemonians to do what they pleased with himself, but not to go on killing the men.”¹ Thucydides indeed is one long instance of this directness, especially in his seventh book, the greatest piece of historical writing in the world: Plato’s famous analysis of tyranny, oligarchy and democracy, is another illustration:² but all Greek literature is a continuous example of it.

The same quality is betrayed in their language. Philosophy (‘love of wisdom’), history (‘en-

¹ 7. 84 f. (tr. Jowett).

² *Republic*, 544 ff.

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quiry'), geography ('earth picture'), anatomy ('cutting up')—there is a vividness about these words which are not mere symbols, but living reflections of the ideas they represent. It is the language of pioneers, touched with the freshness of first discovery. So with their philosophical language: contrast in the following characteristic instances the abstractness of English, the concreteness of Greek: Reality—*τὸ ὄν* (what is); ideal beauty—*αὐτὸ τὸ κάλλος* (beauty itself); the cause—*τὸ δι᾽ οὗ* (the on account of which); essential nature—*τὸ τί ἔστι* (the what it is); factual character—*τὸ ὅτι* (the that); relativity—*τὸ πρὸς τι* (the in relation to something); the final cause—*τὸ οὐδ ἕνεκα* (the for the sake of which). Now open, I will not say Kant with his 'transcendental apperception,' 'synopsis of the manifold a priori,' 'teleological physico-theology,' 'intuitable synthesis,' etc., but a modern writer like Dr. Rashdall, who aims at lucidity and simplicity of expression, and note the stock vocabulary of modern philosophy; 'the hedonistic psychology involves a hysteron proteron,' 'dualism of the Practical Reason,' 'Subjective Idealism,' 'Objective Validity,' 'conation,' 'sensationalist,' 'the Absolute.' The Greeks walk on the real earth, or something like it; in modern

phraseology we seem to be among unsubstantial cloud-shapes. Let us admit by all means, that this queer jargon is necessary, and has grown up to meet a real need. Still it is an advantage to introduce the student in his early days to the stock ideas of philosophy in a simpler and more concrete form ; he will grasp them better if he meets them naked, divested of voluminous folds of language. We shall force him to think what 'reality' and 'relativity' mean when we present them to him as 'what is,' and 'a being in relation to something' ;¹ he will be less able to pick up and retail the phrases like a parrot, for the Greek words have a concrete quality which brings before the mind the idea they represent. Brought up in such a school he will be less likely to use language without thinking of its meaning, and in consequence may avoid the most fatal of blunders—the mistaking of words for things.

Whatever they are writing about, be it scenery, a historical event, an abstract problem, some one's character, it is just the same. The Greeks put

¹The English translations I have given sound clumsy and give no idea of the lucidity of the Greek. It is true that Locke and Hume are simpler than more modern writers ; but even they have nothing so simple as the Greek phrases quoted above.

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their subject before us naked, as the spirits in Plato's myth that came before Minos and Rhadamanthus in Hades, to be seen and judged. One can hardly exaggerate the value in education of this quality, which is the property and, in large manner, the charm of Greek literature. It is a perpetual challenge and lesson, *voir clair dans ce qui est*, to rise out of the mists of abstract language and vague words and journalistic jargon into a region where phrases are less able to masquerade as facts, because the air is clear. People talk of finding something to replace Greek in education. Perhaps they will discover substitutes for the Greek poets; perhaps, though no one has yet told us where they are to come from, they will find another Socrates and another Aristotle. But one thing certainly they will not be able to match—the lucid, transparent atmosphere in which the creations of Greece, in prose or poetry, all move.

But, it is objected, after all, the ancients are not ourselves, and in our devotion to them we lose touch with modern thought and modern problems. "Our governing class," urges a critic in the *Times*, "thanks to the facilities for a classical education existing in this country, know far more about the

ideas of the Gracchi than they do about the notions that such people as, for example, Mr. Cole and Mr. Mellor and the editor of the *New Age*, are spreading industriously in the country.”¹

I do not know how far the writer of the letter from which I quote is acquainted with Oxford, but in my experience intelligent undergraduates are not in that state of innocence which he supposes ; indeed many of them are in more danger of thinking too much of the *New Age* than too little. And even if they were not, it is doubtful whether an education in which the ‘notions’ of Mr. Cole and Mr. Mellor took a prominent place, would really be so satisfactory after all. Of course no one supposes that a study of thought and history is complete when we have mastered the classics. But the simplicity and lucidity with which they raise one after another the fundamental problems of life and thought, make them a better introduction to these than modern writers. They give, as a German writer has said, not mass of knowledge, but clearness of fundamental principles (*Klarheit der Grundanschauungen*). We require both : but the first is useless without the second. It does not need much knowledge of education to realise that

¹ Letter by D. P., *Times*, July 24, 1916.

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the whole power of the mind to judge rests on *Klarheit der Grundanschauungen*, the grasping quite clearly the simple elements, of which the infinitely complex forms of modern society and thought are composed. Want of such clearness is the greatest source of error, and produces the type of man common and dangerous in the age of journalism, who is at the mercy of the last bee that happens to have lodged in his bonnet.

Because the first task and greatest need of education is to secure this clearness, it is continually forced back into the past. It is compelled, for instance, in its first stages to take Mill or Rousseau or Hobbes or Aristotle as its text-book of political science rather than Mr. Wallas or Mr. Sidney Webb, or the 'notions' of Mr. Cole and Mr. Mellor. The moderns are more complicated; they presuppose, for their full understanding, knowledge of their predecessors, and they contain, mixed with much truth, errors on which time has not yet passed judgment, and which are therefore difficult to detect. This makes them unsuitable food for the young student, and education turns to the older writers, who have the principles of the subject in a simpler form, whose views have been scrutinised, and whose errors laid bare. By so doing she loses

touch for a moment with the most modern developments ; but she does so deliberately, knowing that the student will grasp them more quickly and judge them more accurately, if he has made his ground principles sure. The study of the classics follows from a logical application of this theory. We might, it is true, go back to Mill or Rousseau (in the Oxford Greats school this is to some extent done) ; but we should still be open to the objection that we were losing touch with contemporary problems, and we should be slaking our thirst at less pure and inferior streams. Instead, we go back to the great fountain heads. Greek has the ground principles presented in their first and simplest form by writers of genius whose mistakes are not likely to mislead us, because after the criticism of 2000 years they are well known.

And meanwhile, in studying the classics we are acquiring standards independent of our own age and its prejudices, by which to judge ourselves and it. Without some such standards we are like boys who have been brought up entirely at home, and have never been disciplined by coming to know dispositions and ideas and habits foreign to a narrow circle. Hazlitt has well described the dangers of such an education. Writing in circum-

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stances not unlike our own, and defending the classics against attacks made on them after the Napoleonic Wars by critics who wished to give science a predominant place in education and to substitute the education of *things* for the education of *words* (as they called it), he says: "It is hard to find in minds otherwise formed" (than by a classical education) "either a real love of excellence, or a belief that any excellence exists superior to their own. Everything is brought down to the vulgar level of their own ideas and pursuits. Persons without education certainly do not want either acuteness or strength of mind in what concerns themselves, or in things immediately within their observation. But they have no power of abstraction, no general standard of taste or scale of opinion. They see their objects always near, and never in the horizon. Hence arises that egotism which has been remarked as the characteristic of self-taught men, and which degenerates into obstinate prejudice or petulant fickleness of opinion, according to the natural sluggishness or activity of their minds. For they either become blindly bigoted to the first opinions they have struck out for themselves, and inaccessible to conviction; or else (the dupes of their own vanity and shrewdness)

are everlasting converts to every crude suggestion that presents itself, and the last opinion is always the true one. Each successive discovery flashes upon them with equal light and evidence, and every new fact overturns their whole system. It is among this class of persons, whose ideas never extend beyond the feeling of the moment, that we find partisans who are very honest men, with a total want of principle, and who unite the most hardened effrontery and intolerance of opinion to endless inconsistency and self-contradiction.”¹ We may not agree with every word of this criticism, but we all know instances of the type which Hazlitt is attacking; and there is no better medicine against its dangers, than to be able to withdraw from the modern world, and view and judge it in the light of other civilisations than our own.

If so, we are driven to Greece and Rome. Not only are they “two cities set on a hill, which could not be hid; all eyes have seen them, and their light shines like a mighty sea-mark into the abyss of time.” But nowhere else in European history shall we find two civilisations which satisfy the necessary conditions. They, unlike the states which grew up on their ruins, have run their full

¹*The Round Table*, No. 2.

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course from start to finish ; they have been judged and heard the final verdict of time ; because they are dead their history excites little prejudice and passion, and they resemble us sufficiently to admit of comparison, yet are sufficiently different to allow a contrast. There is no other Western civilisation of which this can be said.

The very difficulty of penetrating to their thought and life is an advantage ; it is a training in insight and sympathy, and develops the faculty of getting inside other people's minds, which all men need, whether they are politicians or teachers, civil servants or merchants. The very differences of the classical civilisations from our own are instructive. Is it not salutary in the days of big federations and world empires to test and check our beliefs by comparison with peoples who built up their life within the walls of small cities and thought that there should be "a limit to the state."¹ The comparison will not change our views, but it may save us from some of the excesses of megalomania. The achievement of Athens will remind us that bigness is not greatness, and her practice will teach us not in the state to forget the

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 7. 4. 9. Here, and generally, I have used Jowett's translation.

individual. "It is clear," says Aristotle, "that that form of government is best, in which every man, whoever he is, can act for the best, and live happily";¹ and he was uttering the principle which controlled Greek politics.

And yet the history of Greece and Rome is always reminding us of our own difficulties. This brings me to my fourth point—the sense in which the classics introduce us to modern problems. It is almost impossible to persuade those who do not know it, that classical literature is in any sense modern; they think of it as something primitive and barbarous, and they will not believe that Euripides or Seneca have at least as much in common with the twentieth century as Scott or Thackeray. So I will give a few instances to indicate how the classics teem with modern characters, situations, problems. Again, for brevity's sake I will take these instances from Greek only.

Greek history is at once more and less akin to the modern world than at first seems. We might suppose that Athens, the earliest and most complete democracy in Europe, would have many lessons to teach us; on the other hand, we might

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 7. 2. 5.

think that a slave-owning society, whose women were unemancipated, was too remote from conditions of to-day to be instructive. Both these suppositions are dangerous. The Athenian woman was not such a puppet as we suppose ; and if most Athenian men, like the modern French, thought that the complicated sex problem was logically solved by assigning the home and the family as the province of woman, there are plenty of signs in fifth and fourth century literature of views which we associate with the suffragette. Nor did the slave system make so much difference as we fancy. The member of our upper or middle classes, living partly or wholly on his dividends, which represent an inherited or acquired right to other men's labour, has affinities with a slave-owning Athenian ; while the difference between our industrial classes and the Greek slave is spiritual rather than material.¹ No doubt it is a very important difference, but it is not such as to make comparisons between ancient and modern society unprofitable. On the other hand, arguments drawn from Athens as to the fate of democracies are notoriously misleading : Athens was a small city, not a big modern

¹ See A. E. Zimmern, *Was Greek Civilisation based on Slave Labour?*

state, and her democracy was far more complete than ours is ever likely to be. So we need here to be even more cautious than usual in our historical inferences.

Yet it is true that Greek history is instructive, and at times surprisingly modern. There is the unique spectacle of Sparta—that country of austere and Puritan heroes, who thought a state could exist without a civilisation, and, banishing equally art and commerce, literature and gold and silver, have left the world doubtful whether to admire the virtues, or to despise the narrow efficiency, of these human ants; Sparta teaches the fate of a nation which dispenses with thought and art, and affords an excellent contrast with Rome. Then there is Athens, presenting the history of the only democracy before our own which has tried to govern an empire. Glance at her closing phase, of which Demosthenes is the hero. His whole career was a struggle against Philip of Macedon's attempt to subjugate Greece, and his task was to excite a good-natured, peaceable democracy to spend on war money which they preferred to use for social purposes at home, and to sacrifice their own lives on the field of battle instead of paying mercenaries to go in their place. His speeches

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are mostly in favour of this policy ; his greatest was in defence of it when it had failed. He was successful in so far that he persuaded Athens to spend money and men in fighting Philip ; he failed because the democracy awoke too late from its dreams of peace, and found that policies cannot be improvised at a moment's notice, and that tardy efforts at self-defence were useless against an enemy who knew exactly what he wanted to do, and had made every preparation to effect it. At present, we, who are at war with an adventurer nation, can read Demosthenes with greater understanding, as he denounces the designs of an adventurer king : and as he warns the Athenians of their unpreparedness, and implores them to awake to the situation, can recognise that his words might be applied to other times besides the fourth century, and other democracies besides Athens. Indeed the parallel with our situation in 1914, though not complete, is in many ways very close. Philip's policy was to deal with the nations on his borders in detail, and to amuse Athens with diplomatic negotiations till he had made himself invincible ; and there was a strong party in Athens which thought that Athens should leave him alone and conciliate him by a peaceful attitude, unless he actually attacked her territory.

Demosthenes urges that if she waits till then, it will be too late ; and his speeches are full of phrases that many people were using in 1914. "The weakness of your politicians, Athenians, is that they all say what will please you, not what is best for you." "What has given Philip his advantage in the past is that he is first in the field. He has his power mobilised to his hand, he knows beforehand what he intends to do, and pounces on whom he will : while we are not disturbed and make no preparations till there is something happening. The result is that he gets possession of what he attacks at his leisure, while we come too late, and the outlay we make is an outlay to no purpose."

The lessons in Greek history are nearly all how not to act. Rome teaches us more about politics than Greece, if by politics we mean the art of stable and efficient government. The Greeks were as unsuccessful in practice as they were fertile in theory ; successive states rapidly acquired and lost supremacy, none of their brief hegemonies outlasted two generations, and the brilliance of their life and the genius of their historians makes us forget the smallness of the stage on which they played their part. The history of Rome is the

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history of the making and fall of an empire ; but Greek political life is that of a glorified municipality. The real triumphs of Greece were won in the world of art and thought, and as she is the spirit of reason incarnate, so she teaches us to imitate herself and think about everything under the sun.

I do not quite know where we should go in English if we wished for such lessons, but we cannot escape them in Greek. First there are the Ionian Physicists who turned thought on to the Universe, and asked what it was and how it came there. Then there were the sophists who turned thought on to more human subjects, analysing language and its social use ; asking what are style and the art of writing, what the best way to plead a cause and make it plausible ; inventing memory systems ; discussing the anomalies of gender, and trying to put grammar on a sound basis ; offering to teach 'virtue' and 'politics' and 'wisdom' to anyone who would pay : the acutest and most hardy race of critics the world has ever known. They have come down to us in small fragments, but to read these is to feel ourselves afloat on the sea of free thought, with anchor up and only our own reason to steer us straight. "Man is the measure

of all things:” “about the gods I cannot know that they do or do not exist; for many things hinder from knowing, the obscurity of the subject, and the shortness of human life” (Protagoras). “Gorgias lays down in his book . . . about Nature three main points in order; first that Nothing is, second that, even if anything is, it is incomprehensible by man, third that, even if comprehensible, it cannot be communicated or interpreted to one’s neighbour.” Sentences like these bring us into the thick of philosophy, and though we might use different words, we understand what Thomas Arnold meant by saying: “Not the wildest extravagance of atheistic wickedness in modern times can go further than the sophists of Greece went before them. Whatever audacity can dare and subtlety contrive, to make the words ‘good’ and ‘evil’ change their meaning, has already been tried in the days of Plato, and by his eloquence, and wisdom, and faith unshaken, put to shame.”¹

Some people may feel that the passages just quoted are in themselves an argument against reading Greek, and that so far from introducing boys to such speculations, we should bury them in the obscurity of the past from which they come.

¹ See Ruskin, *Præterita*, c. xi. *fn.*

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To this I would reply in the words which Newman uses when he is arguing against an attempt to expurgate literature of all except its 'Catholic' elements. "If then a university is a direct preparation for this world, let it be what it professes. It is not a convent, it is not a seminary; it is a place to fit men of the world for the world. We cannot possibly keep them from plunging into the world, with all its ways and principles and maxims, when their time comes; but we can prepare them against what is inevitable; and it is not the way to learn to swim in troubled waters, never to have gone into them. Proscribe . . . secular literature as such . . . you will have refused to a boy the masters of human thought, who would in some sense have educated him, because of their incidental corruption."¹

Such 'masters' we meet when we pass from the sophists to Plato and Aristotle, who, instead of raising cries of horror, or appealing to outraged orthodoxy, or even losing their tempers, quietly took these critical, agnostic spirits as they found them, and cured the diseases of reason by a homoeopathic dose. The sophists had taken the current ideas of their day (just as Mr. Shaw takes ours),

¹ *The Scope and Nature of University Education*, c. 8.

and shewn the inconsistencies and inadequacies of them: current ideas, then as now, were of course inconsistent and inadequate. Having tossed them up and down, they threw them, damaged, aside. The public was indignant, but the harm was done, and Athens found herself in the middle of a big political crisis, with her moral currency discredited and her old ideas of right and wrong confounded. So, like a teased animal, she bit the first person who caught her attention, and that was Socrates. Yet Socrates was doing the only wise thing, meeting the sophists on their own ground, treating their theories as they had treated popular morality, and shewing that they were only a shade less superficial than what they condemned. The sophists by applying reason to the moral principles on which human society rests, had nearly brought the house about their ears. Socrates met them by more reason and carried the foundations of the house deeper. So well did he lay them that his work was never undone. Never again after the fifth century do we find in Greece that spiritual disease, which spread so widely then, and which Plato has shewn us in many of his dialogues—on the one side a cynical contempt of established ideas, believing that nothing can really be known, that the beliefs

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of a society are merely the conventional ideas in which it has been brought up, and that reason is a useful weapon to make a bad case seem good : on the other, an outraged morality, conscious of its intellectual weakness and unable to defend itself. Socrates and his successors had taught virtue to 'give an account' of itself, and the young Greek was no longer, unless he wished it, at the mercy of a sceptical critic with a clever tongue. How it was done, we can read in Plato and in Aristotle's *Ethics*.

Then, if we pass to politics, what description of the democratic ideal can rival the Funeral Speech of Pericles, of which we have quoted some phrases on p. 74. To-day criticisms are more common than eulogies of democracy, yet it would be difficult to lay the finger on its dangers, more accurately than did another Athenian. His words, cast in the form of a conversation, are worth comparing with those of Thucydides. "Again, consider that, in this state, . . . you need not submit to government if you dislike it, or go to war when your fellow-citizens are at war, or keep peace when they are doing so, if you do not want peace ;¹ and again, consider that, though a law forbids your

¹ I need not point out the modern analogy here.

holding office or sitting on a jury, you may nevertheless do both the one and the other, should it occur to you to do so: and now tell me, is not such a course of life divinely pleasant for the moment?

Yes, perhaps it is, he replied, for the moment.

Once more. Is not the meekness of some of those who have been tried in a court of law exquisite? or have you failed to notice in such a commonwealth how men, who have been condemned to death or exile, stay all the same, and walk about the streets, and parade like heroes, as if no one saw or cared? ¹

I have seen many instances of it, he replied.

And is there not something splendid in the forbearance of such a commonwealth and in its entire superiority to petty considerations? It positively scorns the doctrine which, when we were founding our state, we laid down with an air of importance, to the effect that no one, who is not endowed with an extraordinary nature, can ever become a good man, unless from his earliest childhood, he plays

¹Plato would have seen a parallel to this in the strike, in defiance of the Munitions Act arbitration clause, of the South Wales miners in June, 1915; and he might have considered that the story of the Ulster, and the Sinn Fein, volunteers presented certain similarities to it.

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among beautiful objects and studies all beautiful things. How magnificently it tramples all this under foot, without troubling itself in the least about the previous pursuits of those who enter politics; it raises them to honour, if they only assert that they wish well to the commons.

Yes, he said, it behaves very grandly.

These then will be some of the features of democracy, . . . and it will be in all likelihood an agreeable, lawless, parti-coloured commonwealth, dealing with all alike on a footing of equality, whether they be really equal or not.”¹ Our own democracy has come well out of this war, yet there have been incidents, which enable us to understand Plato’s picture of the dangers of that admirable ideal, the liberty of the subject, when it goes to extremes. Another darker and even acuter saying of Plato, that democracy is “weak and unable to do any great good or evil when compared with other forms of government,”² becomes intelligible in the light of the events of the last few years.

It would be difficult to find a better introduction to politics than Plato’s book *On the State—The Republic*, as we, not very happily, call it. In its first chapter we meet a criticism of the old heresy

¹ *Republic*, 557 f.

² *Politicus*, 303.

that right is might, whose close acquaintance we have made since 1914 in the form: "the state can do no wrong." There follows a discussion which covers almost the whole of life, and produces by the way some surprising paradoxes, such as that women are to fight in the army, that philosophers are to govern the state, that property, and even wives and children are to be common, and that education is only finally to cease with death.

It does not seem, perhaps, a very promising introduction to politics, this fantastic republic of a dream; nor is it, if we take the paradoxes as practical proposals. Plato never meant them to be that; it was merely his way of calling attention to what, on the benches of a legislative chamber, busied with details of policy and administration, men are apt to forget—the great diseases of human nature, of which the actual problems of politics are merely symptoms. Plato's gift is in diagnosis; no one knows better how to go behind the patient's obvious malaise and disclose the unseen weaknesses from which his ill-health proceeds.

He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said: *Thou ailest here and here.*

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Take the four paradoxes quoted above. They are Plato's way of calling attention to four fundamental difficulties. The first raises the problem which has fitfully worried humanity through the ages and at this moment demands of us an instant solution—the problem, what is woman's place in the world and the relation of her work to man. The second suggests the absurdity of making education stop at an early age; in Plato's ideal a man is not to think about the world from 18 to 23 (when his thought will be of little value, because it has no experience of life to correct and develop it), and then go into a business or profession, where mentally he will stick at the age of 23, and probably never have time to think systematically again; instead he will divide his life between action and thought, alternately a student and a man of affairs, correcting his reflections by practice, and his practice by reflection.

The third paradox conceals the greatest truth of all; it reminds us that all political weaknesses are due to a single poison in the state, as certainly as the emaciation, the dyspepsia, the rising temperature in consumption are due to one type of bacillus latent in the body; that they result from the selfishness of citizens who remember their private

interest and forget the interests of others or of the whole ; and that this selfishness is rooted not only in private property, but also in private families—a man who would not be selfish for himself will be selfish for his wife and children. The fourth paradox will be resented by those who believe that nations should be governed by ‘business men.’ Plato had no belief in either business men or professional politicians as such ; the best rulers, he thought, are men, “ready and willing to taste every kind of knowledge, who address themselves joyfully to their studies with an insatiable appetite . . . and who love to see truth.”¹ The world has not been very happy in its few philosopher kings, who have generally lacked force and will ; yet as life grows more complex, and the state takes more and more of it under its control, we shall find it easier to understand the greatness of the need which Plato divined.

“But you cannot manage a state on these lines.” That is quite true, and Plato knew it, and says so in his *Laws*. We do not go to him for practical statesmanship ; the ‘notions’ of Mr. Cole and

¹ *Republic*, 475. Plato’s philosopher-king is a very different person from the average philosopher, on whose weakness he is severe.

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Mr. Mellor, whatever we may think of them, would help us more there. But the world moves in a see-saw between the dreams of its idealists and the creeping notions of its 'practical' men ; and in youth at least it is better to dream the dreams and see the visions. As the day advances, the mists will of themselves blot out the mountain tops, and in the heat and dust of the plain our strength and refreshment will be in our memory of them. That is the sense in which Plato can introduce us to politics. He sees the world as it should be, as perhaps, thousands of years hence, it will be, and his vision takes us a few feet nearer the goal than we should go without it. We may be thankful, in fact, if our rulers are men of the stamp of Agricola, efficient, honest, practical ; yet it is salutary to have in our mind Plato's ideal politicians "who have safely passed through all temptations, and distinguished themselves in all spheres of action and knowledge, and who, concentrating the eye of their soul on that Ideal Good which is the light of the world and making it their pattern, so order their own life and the life of the community and of individual members."¹

Passages like this shew how Greek idealism com-

¹*Ib.* 340.

pletes, as it is completed by, the practical common-sense of Rome : and it shews, too, another quality of Plato, his sense that political are in the last resort moral and religious problems. Modern political writers discuss arbitration, wages boards, industrial insurance, methods of taxation. Fascinated by the power of machinery in the material world, they make politics a question of suitable mechanism ; impressed by the power of economic pressure, they forget the human soul ; and with the growing secularisation of politics there is no corrective to their views. Against this tendency Plato is the most powerful of allies. He is a socialist indeed, and believes in state control more strongly than any modern socialist. But whereas modern socialisms are based on economic forces, Plato's is built on human character alone. The hope of its success lies in finding politicians of exceptional virtue and intellect and on nothing else ; and it is characteristic that education has more space allotted to it in the *Republic* than any other subject. So always Plato takes us below the surface of political problems and past their machinery, to the tangle of human nature that makes them ; and his influence is the more salutary at a time when the world threatens to degenerate into a nest of

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human ants, infinitely busy, with their eyes fixed continuously on the ground.

The method of Plato might be compared to that of the Gospels ; he is stimulating, paradoxical ; he throws out seeds of thought, at the moment disregarded, whose power and fertility time brings to light. But just because of this he is more irritating and far more difficult to understand than Aristotle, who is the genius of careful analysis and far-seeing commonsense ; and those to whom Plato is uncongenial, will turn to his successor and critic. There commonsense dissects not only Plato's communism, but also the socialist theories of Phaleas, who wished, like Robert Owen, to try experiments in a 'new colony,' and of Hippodamas, the father of town-planning, an aesthete who wore his hair long and confined himself to a simple garment in winter and summer. To apply commonsense to the *Republic* is like applying it to the Sermon on the Mount ; still, the *Politics* states for the first time and in the simplest way the fundamental practical objections to these revolutionary schemes. Witness Aristotle's objection to communistic attempts at levelling. "Unity there should be, both of the family and of the state, but only in some respects. There is a point at which a state

may attain such a degree of unity that . . . it will become an inferior state, like harmony passing into unison.”¹ Such is his criticism of the idea that men will work for the state as for themselves. “That which is common to the largest number of people has least care bestowed on it. Everyone considers chiefly his own interest, and thinks not of the common weal, except so far as he is interested in it. For, besides other reasons, everyone is more inclined to neglect the duty which he expects another to fulfil; as in households many servants are often less helpful than few.”² Such is the very pertinent remark that “such attempts are chiefly designed to promote the internal welfare of the state, but the legislator should also consider its relation to neighbouring nations”;³ a point which has been sometimes forgotten by enthusiastic social reformers. Like all socialist reformers, Plato started by considering what was the ideal state, and having, as he thought, found it, wished to impose it on the world. Aristotle, like all critics of socialism, considered not the abstract desirability of reform, but its suftability to human nature. “Such legislation,” he says, “may have a specious appearance of benevolence; men readily listen to

¹ *Politics*, 2. 5. 14.

² *Ib.* 2. 3. 4.

³ *Ib.* 2. 7. 14.

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it, and are easily induced to believe that in some wonderful manner everybody will become everybody's friend, especially when some one is heard denouncing the evils now existing in states. . . . These evils, however, are due to a very different cause—the wickedness of human nature. Indeed we see that there is much more quarrelling among those who have all things in common, though there are not many of them when compared with the vast numbers who have private property.”¹ The true remedy for social evils, he says elsewhere,² is not revolution, but careful legislation, and above all education. “The beginning of reform is not so much to equalize property as to train the nobler sort of natures not to desire more, and to prevent the lower from getting more ; that is to say, they must be kept down, but not ill-treated.” “The state is a plurality which should be united and made into a community by education.”³

These extracts are taken from a single book of the *Politics*, and give no idea of the subtlety and closeness with which the author argues his points nor of the wealth which the whole work contains. It is full of profound and acute remarks. Who has so well defined the aim of the state ; “it

¹ *Ib.* 2. 5. 11.

² *Ib.* 2. 7. 20.

³ *Ib.* 2. 5. 15.

originates in the bare needs of life, and continues to exist for the sake of a good life?"¹ Or the objection to usury, "because it makes a gain out of money itself and not from the natural use of it"?² Who has more trenchantly criticised those who devote themselves to piling up money, "intent upon living only, and not upon living well" and even forgetting that the object of having money is to use it?³ If education could implant in us these principles and with them Plato's profound and picturesque reminder that the true object of trade is not to make money but to serve humanity, we should come nearer to solving the social problem than legislation will ever bring us. These are Plato's words. "Dear Cleinias, small, scanty by nature, and the product of an ideal education is the class of men, who set their faces steadily towards moderation, when they feel a want or desire, who are sober when they have a chance of making a big fortune, and who prefer moderate to large gains. The mass of mankind is the exact opposite, unmeasured in their wants and insatiable in their wish to make money, when moderate profits are in their reach. That is why commerce, shop-keeping and hotel-keeping are abused and

¹ *Politics*, I. 2. 8. ² *Ib.* I. 10. 4. ³ *Ib.* I. 9. 16.

regarded as discreditable occupations. But suppose—it is a preposterous and impossible idea of course— . . . suppose some one were to compel the best men everywhere to engage for a time in commerce or hotel-keeping or something of the sort ; or suppose . . . the best women were forced to follow similar callings, we should realise how welcome and agreeable these occupations were, and, if they were managed on honest principles we should honour them, as we honour a mother or a nurse.”¹ Business men in Greece were, it seems, unsatisfactory, but they are not without their weaknesses in England : and labour unrest will be considerably diminished when coal-owners and miners, and cotton-spinners, and landlords begin to think of themselves not as profit-makers but as the ‘nurses’ of the nation, to whose care is entrusted its clothing, warming and lodging.

It is not enough to glance through extracts like these, as if they were newspaper articles. Like the Gospel sayings, they should be “read, marked, and inwardly digested,” if we are to get the full nourishment they contain ; and they are meat in the strength of which we may go many days. Still, even without this, they shew not only how surely

¹ *Laws*, 916.

Greek thinkers lay their hand on the fundamental questions and how simply they pose them, but also how they are misunderstood by critics who suppose that they “may help towards the attainment of literary and oratorical style, or may even add to the amenities of conversational intercourse,”¹ but that otherwise they are out of date.

¹ Sir E. Schäfer at the Burlington House Conference.