

VERACITY

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Essex Hall Lecture 1937

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NOTE

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*Essex Hall, London,
April, 1937*

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TO be educated is to enter the service of that power which the Jews called Wisdom and the Greeks Reason. My subject is one of the qualities which she expects from her servants, Veracity—the habit of seeing and describing things as they are. To have no favourites, to hear all sides, to weigh honestly the arguments of an opponent, to admit the strong points in his case and the weak in our own, to be just in thought no less than in action, to show fair-mindedness as well as fair play; and then when the mind is made up and the views are to be stated, not to allow the partiality, the prejudice, the animus, the one-sidedness, which have been banished in forming them, to vitiate their expression. We are expected to be candid, honest and moderate in language. Intemperance and a pugilistic attitude in controversy generally indicate latent egotism, an anxiety, as Whately said, that

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truth should be on our side rather than that we should be on the side of truth. Her style is sparing in emphasis and marks of exclamation, her statements need no underlining, she prefers to give her opinion without raising her voice, nor is there any greater hindrance to her recognition than the form in which she is often presented to the world, attended by a violence and heat which distract attention from her and in whose presence she is not her true self. A man who observed these maxims might claim to be veracious. Where shall we find him? Where in life or literature are the best models of this high and difficult virtue?

It is not to be found in most centuries of human history nor in most of the men who are called great. Its possession brings neither fame nor popularity, and is unnecessary to success in any field except that of the intellect. There among the intellectuals and the men of science we expect to find it, for their instrument is the intellect, and veracity is a virtue of the intellect. Yet even among these we shall have disappointments.

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In our own generation Shaw, Lytton Strachey, and, perhaps, Galsworthy, may be taken as representatives of the "intellectuals," yet complete candour, balanced judgment and impartiality are not characteristic of them. The writings of "intellectuals" are not always notable for justice to or comprehension of views with which the writers disagree. Their marks are acuteness, subtlety of thought and intellectual power, but not necessarily the impartiality of the honest judge. Their prejudices may be less gross than those of the mass, but they are no less *praejudicia*, and the mirrors with which they reflect fact and opinion, though the distortion may be less crude and obvious, are not the mirrors of truth. That perhaps is not surprising. An "intellectual" is only, according to the Oxford Dictionary's definition, "a person possessing or supposed to possess superior powers of intellect," he justifies his name in some sort if he uses his intellect, and there is no guarantee that he uses it to see things as they are. We are too exacting—experience seems to

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show—if we necessarily expect more of him than a virtuoso's performance on his peculiar instrument. It is a common and dangerous delusion that people who have brains necessarily employ them to tell the truth. Here, too, there may be a *trahison des clerics*.

What then of science? It is natural to expect that veracity would be the invariable product of a scientific training, and it is often assumed that this is so. Dealing with his own subject a man of science learns to observe accurately, to seek for and weigh contrary evidence, to suspend judgment, to discard without hesitation a painfully constructed theory, and to allow the deductions of years to be killed by a single adverse fact. Without such habits he cannot do his work, and one of the supreme examples of human greatness is his obedient subjection of the beliefs, ambitions and labours of a life-time to the claims of truth. It would be natural to suppose that science and veracity are convertible terms, and that when scientists open their lips only truth proceeds. It would

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be a natural supposition, but, if following the approved method of science we examine the phenomena before drawing our conclusion, we shall see it to be false. There is no guarantee that a scientist will show this veracity in subjects outside his own. In pronouncing on these he will be no worse than any other educated man, but there is no certainty that he will be better, and the views of psychologists on transfer of training are sometimes illustrated by the inability of men of science to transfer their unpartisan spirit from a chemical analysis or a mathematical calculation to subjects which arouse their prejudices. It is a curious paradox that science, of which the very health and life blood is veracity, is no specific for training men to be veracious in other fields than its own.

After this preliminary caution I proceed to unveil my models. I am taking them from a distant past: not that more recent times cannot furnish exemplars in men like Pasteur, Darwin, Mill (to mention only the dead), but that the past can be judged *sine amore et sine*

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*cupiditate et rursus sine odio et sine invidia*¹ and that there we find the greatest intellectual achievement of the human race and a people to whose thinkers veracity seems to have been almost second nature.

It may seem strange to exhibit the Greeks as models of veracity, for in the ordinary affairs of life their attitude to truth was Levantine rather than English, and even Plato proposes to maintain the authority of social institutions by telling his citizens a myth to the effect that these were ordained by God.² This "noble lie," the first great instance of deliberate political propaganda, has had a long and generally disreputable progeny, and might make us doubt

¹ Cicero, *Pro Marcello*, 29.

² *Republic* 414 f. The "noble lie" is not to be told to those who are intelligent enough to see the truth and strong enough to live by it, but to those who are not. Those who are shocked at it should ask themselves how many foreign secretaries, political leaders or journalists invariably tell the people the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We differ from Plato in theory rather than practice.

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whether Greek thinkers had much regard for truth. Yet, in the realm of art and thought their ideals were high and their standard rigorous. This fact and the reason for it appears in a passage where Plato, contrasting "spoken" lies with ignorance, calls ignorance the "real lie" and speaks as if it was far the more serious of the two.¹ Such an idea surprises us. The ordinary Englishman's point of view is exactly the opposite; lying, if it does not excite his disgust and contempt, at any rate makes him uncomfortable; ignorance he endures with comparative complacency. But Plato regards it as the more disastrous, because ignorance is a lie not on the lips but in the soul, and "to lie or to be the victim of a lie and to be ignorant in the soul and on the subject of absolute realities, is the last thing which any one would accept"; that is "the genuine lie

¹ *Republic* 382. It is fair to remember that the "spoken" lies of which Plato is thinking are such as may be told to a sick friend or a madman for their good: but they also include those told to enemies.

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which all gods and all men hate." So put, the matter wears a different complexion. We are in the presence of a profounder view of truth than the conventional one, and, while we may leave to casuists the question whether the "lie in the soul" or the "spoken lie" involves more moral guilt—Plato does not discuss the question—we can see that this horror of ignorance leads to veracity in the sense in which I have used the word, to a sensitive conscience and scrupulous practice in the intellectual life.

At any rate there is no doubt about the greatness of that Greek achievement between 600 and 300 B.C. During those years there was created something which had never existed before, a rational theory of life in all its departments, from cosmology to politics, from religion to style, from morals to poetry. It was creation, not, like our science, development. We, who live in times where the rule of reason, if often ignored, is accepted as legitimate, are apt to forget that there was an age when even the

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conception of reason did not exist, when thunder and lightning were javelins hurled by a god, and the sun drove his flaming chariot daily across the sky, and woods, mountains and rivers were living spirits, when government was exercised by "Zeus-born" kings—priests, judges and commanders-in-chief of the tribe—when morality was traditional custom. Such was the world of Homer, fast bound in superstition and tradition, lacking the very ideas of reason and science. A few centuries pass, and in that one small corner of the earth (but nowhere else) thinkers have divined that the universe is composed of atoms in infinite space, there are states based on political theory, and lofty ethical systems rationally deduced from the nature of man. It is the greatest intellectual revolution in human history, and the men who made it must have possessed rare intellectual virtues, for it was by the intellect that the work was done. How did they do it?

I am tempted to sum up their secret

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in three sentences. They desired knowledge, or rather wisdom, with an intensity and disinterestedness which have never been surpassed. They wished to see things as they are. They knew the temper in which controversy should be conducted. Here, taken from a variety of Greek authors, are some of the great texts of the intellectual life, whose brief, piercing phrases reveal these traits: "Contemplation and the freedom that comes from it are the ends of life" (Anaxagoras). "The excellence of man lies in Thought, and Wisdom consists in saying what is true and acting according to Nature, listening to her" (Heraclitus). "Wisdom is the surest castle. It is neither betrayed nor destroyed. We must fortify ourselves in the impregnable reasonings of the individual mind" (Antisthenes). "The uncriticised life is not worth living" (Plato). "I belong to the class of people who would like to be proved wrong if I say anything which is not true, and would like to prove others wrong if they are in error, and I should not find it more disagreeable to

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be myself convicted of error than to convict others; indeed I prefer the former, for it is a greater gain to be set free from the greatest of evils (i.e. error) than to set another free" (Plato). "We invite you to criticize our institutions without reserve. It is no insult to be told of something amiss. It gives one an opportunity to change it, if the criticism is accepted in good part and without resentment" (Plato: the speaker is a Cretan inviting an Athenian to criticise his country—as an Englishman might invite a German or an American to criticise England). Finally, two passages on the way in which a dispute should be conducted; the first is from an argument with a militarist. "It is not a case for obstinate contention with them but for calm inquiry, for this is a serious matter to both of us" (Plato). Again (after saying how difficult it is to use "gentle language" in religious controversy): "Still we must face the task. It would never do for our opponents to go mad from a passion for pleasure and for us to go mad from indignation at their

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views . . . so let us quench our passion and speak gently." (The history of religion would be different if the disputants had more often "quenched their passion and spoken gently"!) Finally, the words with which Plato prefaces an argument against those who maintain that wrong doing can benefit a man—words which might preface every argument—"Let us persuade him gently, for his error is unintentional."¹

The belief in knowledge and a passion for it, candour, moderation are the temper of these maxims. I now pass to instances of their application. The Greeks' desire for wisdom is sufficiently illustrated by their achievement in philosophy and science, and my examples illustrate their freedom from passion in argument, their anxiety to hear what can be said against their views and their fairness to opponents. In the first we see how Socrates deals with an insulting opponent and opinions which he regards as pernicious. He is arguing with

¹ *Apology* 38. *Gorgias* 458. *Laws* 635, 629, 888. *Republic* 589.

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a contemporary politician, Callicles, who has effectively and trenchantly maintained the view that might is right and that justice is an invention of the weak to protect themselves against the strong, and who concludes by some cutting words on the ineffectiveness of philosophy and on the way in which philosophy, an elegant accomplishment in youth, becomes the ruin of a man who makes it his life's work. "He slinks away and spends his life lipping in a corner with three or four youths and never speaks out freely, greatly, and like a man." With such an opponent it is difficult not to meet discourtesy with discourtesy, and few of us would make the rejoinder of Socrates to this contemptuous insolence of the man of affairs to the man of thought. These are the words with which he takes up the final challenge of Callicles to "abandon these subtleties—shall I call them chatter or nonsense?—and match yourself not with the disputants of trifles but with the masters of wealth and fame and many other good things."

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"If I had," Socrates says, "a soul of gold, Callicles, don't you think that I should have been delighted to find one of these stones, by which gold is tested—the best there was—which I could apply and see whether it agreed that my soul had been well trained. Now I think that in you I have found a godsend of that type. For if a man is adequately to test the goodness or badness of the soul, he ought to have three qualities, all of which you possess, knowledge, good-will, and out-spokenness."¹

The reply is so unexpected that its relevance is at first obscure. We see in Callicles cynical immorality and condescending insolence; Socrates sees in him the ideal critic with knowledge, frankness and good temper, sent by heaven to test his opinions, detect any weak or unsound belief and help him towards truth. This is not the way in which philosophic thinkers and religious disputants normally receive

¹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 485, 486 (shortened).

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the criticisms of an unsparing opponent.

In this dispute Socrates survives successfully the severest of intellectual temptations, for a man's devotion to truth is most sharply tested in his relations with opponents and opposing views. Veracity in a scientific inquiry may be difficult, but it is far easier to be just to a microbe or an atom, than to opinions about politics, morals and religion with which we disagree. These are the subjects which it is hard to discuss with candour and without heat, where the currents of moral indignation combine with those of personal irritation to sweep us off our feet.

My next example shows a more subtle temptation to inveracity. Socrates, with an hour or two to live, has been discussing the question of immortality, and the argument has led to conclusions which seem to prove it. The natural instinct of a man at such a moment, when death was at hand and nothing could be gained by needless distress, might have been to leave the discussion at the point which

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it had reached, and, as his words show, Socrates was fully alive to such considerations. But instead of yielding to them, and resting content with an apparent certainty, he throws all the comforting conclusions back into the melting-pot; nothing perhaps has ever been written more instinct with the virtue which is the subject of this address—the spirit which puts truth first. These are the words with which he resumes the discussion.

“At this moment I am sensible that I have not the temper of a philosopher; like the vulgar, I am only a partisan. Now the partisan, when he is engaged in a dispute, cares nothing about the rights of the question, but is anxious only to convince his hearers of his own assertions. And the difference between him and me at the present moment is merely this—that whereas he seeks to convince his hearers that what he says is true, I am rather seeking to convince myself; to convince my hearers is a secondary matter

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with me. And do but see how much I gain by the argument. For if what I say is true, then I do well to be persuaded of the truth; but if there be nothing after death, still, during the short time that remains, I shall not distress my friends with lamentations, and my ignorance will not last, but will die with me, and therefore no harm will be done. This is the state of mind, Simmias and Cebes, in which I approach the argument. And I would ask you to be thinking of the truth, and not of Socrates: agree with me if I seem to you to be speaking the truth; or, if not, withstand me might and main, that I may not deceive you as well as myself in my enthusiasm, and, like the bee, leave my sting in you before I die. And now let us proceed.¹

There are two great obstacles to clear vision; first, the atmosphere of a man's education and environment which unconsciously distorts or limits his view

¹ *Phaedo*, 91, tr. Jowett.

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and from which no one entirely escapes; second, the ever-watchful Self, attached to its own opinions, instinctively resentful of opposition to them, jealous of any *deminutio sui*, of all that impugns or impairs its authority and prestige; or, in nobler mood, led by indignation to overstate the case against some evil or error and be unjust to persons and causes of which it rightly disapproves. These are the two great enemies of veracity. More than any men who have ever lived, the Greeks were resistant to them. Objectivity seems in their blood and is found not only in their philosophers but equally in their poets and men of letters. Could any one tell by reading the *Iliad* whether Homer was a Greek or a Trojan? Herodotus in writing about the Persians shows no sign of prejudice against the great power that enslaved his countrymen in Asia and almost conquered them in Greece. Thucydides wrote the story of the war in which his country lost her empire and he himself became an exile, but there is nothing in his picture of the Spartans which

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suggests that they were national enemies. Plato expounds opinions which he attacks with a force and persuasiveness that their warmest advocates might envy. There are few more telling statements of the case against morality than the opening of the Second Book of the *Republic*, or of the view that might is right than its presentation in the person and by the mouth of Callicles in the *Gorgias*.¹ Unlike many defenders of morals and religion, Plato makes clear to himself and his readers the difficulties which have to be faced.

But besides such obstacles to veracity as indifference to truth, and resentment of criticism or failure to understand or face it, truth itself has its *Kehrseite*, a reverse to the coin, a defect to the quality. There are what the Greeks would have called its *Παρεκβάσεις*, its deviations or perverted forms. There is, for instance, that type of Realism,

¹ So also in the *Laws* (88g f.) the statement of the extreme materialist position, in the *Crito* (44 f.) the argument in favour of Socrates' escape from prison.

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product of some morbid twist in human nature or of a revulsion from cheap optimism, which lays bare the pettiness, meanness and ugliness of life, renders them with conscientious and exact fidelity, and is neither more nor less veracious than a painter of clouded days and starless nights, who asked us to accept his pictures as a complete record of the British year. Then again there is what may be called Negativism, a common phenomenon of recent years. It acts as if truth were negative, not positive, as if nothing were necessary but to destroy the errors and expose the stupidity which obstruct it. We know what the Negativist dislikes but never learn what he admires. The search for truth degenerates into iconoclasm, and in the end little trouble is taken to distinguish between idols and gods, the exercise of the critical faculty becomes an end in itself, escapes from the control of truth and degenerates into an irresponsible activity, as of a child breaking its toys and tearing up its books. Our age is familiar with both of these

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perversions. We had our realists, who with the change of the century set out to correct the facile optimism of the weaker Victorians and supply what these had omitted or ignored, and who told us perhaps the truth—but not the whole truth; and we have our intellectuals who break many idols but leave the temple empty. These perversions, when the novelty of realism wears off and the amusement of breaking idols grows stale, end, for their devotees in tedium and disappointment, for their epochs in violent reaction.

Even the genuine pursuit of knowledge and truth has always been exposed to a *malaise*, a sense of barrenness and bitterness, an *accidia* which makes its achievements seem profitless. There was the Ecclesiast, who gave his heart to know wisdom and found that “in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow”; and Faust, who masters all the sciences and arts, only to feel

Dafür ist mir auch alle Freud' entrissen;
Bilde mir nicht ein, was Rechts zu wissen,

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Bilde mir nicht ein, ich könnte was lehren,
Die Menschen zu bessern und zu bekehren.¹

This mood finds expression in Selma Lagerlöf's description of the Spirit of Criticism:

“We thought of that inquisitive spirit of self-criticism. We thought of him, with his eyes of ice and long bent fingers, he who sits within in the darkest corner of the soul and tears our being to pieces, as old women shred up bits of silk and wool. Bit by bit, the long, hard bent fingers had torn away, until our whole self lay there like a heap of rags, and our best feelings, our deepest thoughts, all that we had done and said, had been searched, explored, taken to pieces, gazed at by the icy eyes; and

¹ But I've paid for that a ruinous fee,
No less than the loss of all joy in living,
Of the dream that knowledge was mine to
reach,
The dream that by something I could teach
Men might be profited or bettered.

(Tr. COOKSON).

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the toothless mouth had sneered and whispered—'Behold it is rags, only rags.'¹

These three diseases haunt the pursuit of truth, a barren negativism, an unbalanced realism, a listless *accidia* that strikes from the hand the painfully-forged weapon of knowledge, or at least blunts its edge. To these diseases Greek thinkers seem to have been almost immune. Euripides has traces of the intellectual's want of balance and captious irritability, nor is this surprising in one who lived through a Thirty Year's War and knew the bitterness, distortion, intolerance and cruelty which war breeds. Towards the close of ancient civilization the Roman Emperor who wrote his diary in Greek shows something of the pessimism of that earlier "King in Jerusalem." But with these partial exceptions it would be difficult to find the defects I have mentioned.² In Greece we have intellectualism without its diseases, and it is

¹ *Gösta Berling's Saga*.

² I am only speaking of *thinkers*.

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worth while studying the cause of this immunity. Perhaps the explanation lies in the Greek attitude to intellectual pursuits.

The Greeks sought knowledge, but also they had clear views why they sought it. This is Aristotle's explanation of the origin of science and philosophy.

“It is owing,” he says, “to their wonder that men originally began, and to-day begin, to philosophize; at first they wondered at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated greater difficulties, for instance about the phenomena of the sun and moon, and about the stars and about the genesis of the universe. So, since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, they were evidently pursuing science in order to know and not for any utilitarian reason.”¹

This is much the same answer as we should give. Asked why science or

¹ *Metaphysics*, 982b.

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philosophy attracted us, though we might also stress the practical uses of science, to which the Greeks were indifferent, we should probably say that they were interesting or that we were curious to know certain things; and that is Aristotle's view; it is, however, worth noticing that instead of speaking of curiosity or interest, he used a profounder and more imaginative word, *θαυμά* — "wonder" — to describe the scientific impulse. But he does not leave the matter there. Why do men wonder? Not, Aristotle says, for any utilitarian reason, for any advantage that knowledge may bring, but "because all men by nature desire to know." Intellectual interest is as natural to man as the sexual or the parental or the acquisitive interests, and it takes the form of philosophy or science. Elsewhere he goes further and draws out the full meaning of the saying that "men by nature desire to know."¹ The reason for their desire is that in the intellectual life men find their real selves, their

¹ *ib.* 980a.

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greatness and their happiness; and they do so because the intellect is the highest thing in man and the pursuit of knowledge is the activity of the intellect.

“What is peculiar to the nature of each creature is the best and pleasantest for it. Accordingly the life of the intellect is the best and the pleasantest life for man, inasmuch as the intellect more than anything else is man: therefore the intellectual life will be the happiest.”¹

For Aristotle science and philosophy are more than the satisfying of curiosity, the pursuit of a natural instinct. To follow them is to live the life most natural and satisfying to human nature, the life of the spirit in its highest form.

These, it may be objected, are the views of a philosopher meditating on his occupation and “giving an account” of it: but did others share them? That question is answered by the word which

¹ *N. Ethics*, 1178a.

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the Greek coined to describe intellectual pursuits—φιλοσοφία. Indeed, the Greek vocabulary for these matters reveals their genius for them, and has an imaginative quality which is absent from our English equivalents. Compared with θαῦμα, and φιλοσοφία, how flat and insensitive, yet wanting in precision, are “curiosity,” “interest,” “science!” Even “philosophy,” which once meant so much, has now forgotten the meaning of both parts of its name, and withered like a plant taken from Greek soil to a northern garden.

It is instructive to compare the ancient and the modern use of this word, to note that in antiquity “the love of wisdom” covered the whole field of knowledge, and included physical science, metaphysics, political, ethical and literary theory, but that with us its meaning has shrunk, part of its ancient field is segregated and assigned to studies which we call, neither happily nor logically, “science” (i.e. “knowledge”), and philosophy is but a fraction of its old self. That change reveals one

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of the most disastrous weaknesses of our intellectual life, a source of incompleteness and one-sidedness, of impoverishment and frustration. But it is not of this that I wish to speak but of the definition of the pursuit of knowledge as a form of love.

Love of what? Plato at any rate would have replied "love of beauty." To us there seems no connection between science and philosophy on the one hand and beauty on the other. Chemicals, cultures, apparatus, the gaunt aspect of a laboratory, Time and Space, the One and the Many, Truth and Falsehood, Good and Evil—what conceivable relation have these to a beautiful scene or a beautiful face? That is not how Plato felt. To him the relation was intimate, and the world of the intellect beautiful, not necessarily in its details but in its general purpose and nature, so that he uses the word *καλός* indifferently for beauty of the body or the mind, and regards the studies of the philosopher as the highest rung in a ladder whose first step is the perception of human

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beauty. This is the account of the ascent, which he gives in the *Symposium*. Starting with Physical Beauty, a man goes on to see that the Beauty of the Soul is something more precious, and reflection on it leads him to the Beauty of Laws and Morals

“which he perceives to be all akin. After Morals behold him next led up to the Sciences that he may see their Beauty, and looking at Beauty now widely extended may no longer be as a bondman, mean and petty, enslaved to the Beauty of one, but, turned to the Great Sea of Beauty and looking on it, may bring forth many Arguments beautiful and lofty, many Thoughts out of the fullness of Philosophy, until, strengthened there and increased, he can discern that One Science which comprehends that One Beauty.”¹

Here, though the practical conclusion

¹ *Symposium* 210., tr. Stewart (with some changes and omissions).

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may be the same, is a different outlook from Aristotle. Plato is (though also much more) an artist drawn into problems of conduct and politics; his thought and style reveal the ardour and tension of a spirit which desires to transform the world. Aristotle has the "great serenity"¹ of one who surveys its spectacle, living "the life according to reason, which aims at no end beyond itself," and which is a life "that man achieves not in virtue of his humanity but in virtue of something divine in him."² The two attitudes differ, as the creative activity of the artist differs from the contemplative activity of the man of science. But both demand veracity and both create it.

Perhaps Plato's ideas in their heightened language may sound fantastic. But if Plato is wrong he is wrong in the company of Keats and Wordsworth who expressed a kindred view in vaguer words, when the one said that "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty," and

¹ Jaeger, *Aristotle*, p. 406.

² Aristotle, *N. Ethics*, 1177b.

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the other that "Poetry is the health and finer spirit of all knowledge, it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science": and possibly not only the great masters of human thought but many humbler searchers after truth would not disown Plato's belief that the inner impulse which inspired and sustained them belonged to what was highest and most divine in man and in the universe, and brought them near it, whether they called this Beauty or not.

At any rate such beliefs put an altered complexion on the pursuit of knowledge. There is all the difference between a life ruled by an exalted creed firmly held, and one moved to more immediate ends by weaker purposes, between intellectual studies which a man undertakes because he has the taste and power for them, or is inclined to them by his education, or involved in them by the career which he has chosen, and those studies which he follows because he feels that they "reveal something of that real and permanent existence which

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is exempt from the vicissitudes of generation and decay,"¹ and enable him ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν καὶ ζῆν κατὰ τὸ κρᾶτιστον τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ "to achieve such immortality as a man may and live by what is greatest in him."² In the one event we have intellectual interest, in the other the impelling and sustaining force of a religion. If a man thought like Aristotle that scientific and philosophic studies are the activity of the highest part of human nature, or like Plato, that they are the road to "the life which above all others a man should live, in the contemplation of Absolute Beauty," there would be no risk of his feeling that in much wisdom is much grief and that to increase knowledge is to increase sorrow; he would not resent criticism but welcome it, he would have no temptation to rest in half-truths. He would not repose in facile optimism nor drift into the opposite extreme of our own time. Veracity to him would not be negative—an acute consciousness of the errors and stupidity of others—but a passionate sense of Truth as

¹ Plato, *Republic*, 485.

² Aristotle, l.c.

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something positive, admirable, desirable, beautiful. He would really feel with Anaxagoras that men were "born to contemplate the works of Nature," and with Heraclitus that "the excellence of man lies in Thought, and that Wisdom consists in saying what is true": he would live as Socrates and Plato and Aristotle, and other makers of Greek thought and science lived.

No men have pursued truth more faithfully than they, and that gives grounds for believing that no men have had a juster sense of the reasons why it is worth pursuing. There are doubtless other reasons for its pursuit, such as that given in the famous phrase of Bishop Butler, "Things are what they are and their consequences will be what they will be: why then should we wish to be deceived?" One seems to need no more than this lucid and stately eighteenth-century common sense, till we put beside it Milton's phrase about "beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies," or Plato's simple words,

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“Truth is beautiful and permanent.”¹ Those who can feel in this way will follow truth, not more faithfully perhaps, but with more ardour and joy, and will know better the deep reasons why the world is always haunted by this disturbing and elusive vision, and from all its passions and errors returns continually to follow it.

¹ Καλὸν ἡ ἀληθία καὶ μόνιμον.—*Latos*, 664.

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