BEGINNINGS OF PHILOSOPHY IN WILL (AND EMOTIONS)

WONDER

The first disposition of will to be considered a beginning of philosophy is wonder. Plato and Aristotle seem to say by antonomasia that wonder is the beginning of philosophy. For it is out of wonder that men first began to philosophize.

But not every wonder is the beginning of philosophy. If I wonder who will win the game or how the story will turn out, this wonder does not give rise to philosophy although it may keep me watching the game or make me finish reading the story. If I wonder about a famous man like George Washington, what sort of man he was or what was the course of his life, this wonder might lead me to read a biography of Washington or even write one. But such wonder does not lead me to philosophize. If I wonder what it was like to live in Elizabethan England or imperial Rome, I might read some history or even do some historical research. But this is not to philosophize. If I wonder about some new gadget or invention of man, I am not becoming a philosopher. What then is the wonder which gives rise to philosophy?

The wonder that gives rise to philosophy is a wonder (1) about the universal, not the singular, (2) a wonder chiefly about what something is or why something is so and hence (3) a wonder about the cause or causes responsible for what something is or why something is so.

But perhaps we should add that it is chiefly a wonder about natural things. The wonder we have in reading Euclid's *Elements* is more the wonder or admiration of the simplicity and beauty of the theorems and proofs.

Now if it were easy to know the truth and avoid mistakes, the desire to know and the aversion for mistakes would be enough. But since truth is often difficult to know and error hard to avoid, the wonder of the philosopher must include or have with it the hope of overcoming the difficulties in coming to know the truth (for if one despairs of this, he will give up the pursuit of truth) and the fear of making a mistake (lest he become bold and careless in his

search for the truth). The philosophical life requires a balance of hope and fear, the hope of coming to know what you do not know and the fear of making a mistake on the way. If you have hope, but not enough fear, you will become presumptuous and easily fall into error. If you have fear, but not enough hope, you may easily despair and give up. We see Socrates in the *Phaedo* trying to balance hope and fear in his friends as they investigate whether the soul is immortal.

Logic is the tool of the man who wonders in this way. Since wonder is the desire to know what and why, the man who wonders finds the second book of the *Posterior Analytics* the heart of logic for him. For there we learn the connection of what and why with cause and each other, and with definition and demonstration. We can hope to know the unknown through the known for in logic, as Albert the Great most of all emphasizes, we are taught how to investigate and know the unknown through the known. But logic also teaches us how we err or make mistakes in our thinking. So the fear of making mistakes leads us to learn logic whereby we can avoid them. But in seeing how we err and how easily we do so, the logician also gives us that reasonable fear of mistake that is found in Socrates and other great philosophers.

THE LOVE OF WISDOM

The love of wisdom is a chosen love, a love in the will. And it cannot be chosen before one knows what wisdom is. The senses cannot sense what wisdom is or know its excellence. So the love of wisdom cannot be an emotion or feeling. It must be an act of the will. Aristotle says in the fourth book of *Wisdom* that the philosopher and the sophist differ by their choice.

But how must a man love wisdom to be considered a true philosopher? He must love it *for its own sake*. If he loves it for the sake of glory or honor or wealth or anything else, he is more to be called a lover of those things than of wisdom. If a man loves a woman for her money, we would call him more a lover of money than of that woman.

And if he loves something else for its own sake and more than wisdom, he should be named a lover of that. If I love the music of Mozart more than

wisdom, it would make sense to call me a lover of the music of Mozart more than a lover of wisdom. Thus a philosopher or lover of wisdom in the fullest sense is one who not only loves wisdom for its own sake, but loves it *more than anything else which he may love for its own sake.*

And if he loves wisdom for its own sake and more than anything else he may love for its own sake, he must love wisdom as the end of his life, the very purpose of it.

But since the knowledge of truth belongs most of all to the wise man (as Aristotle shows in the second book of *Wisdom,* the *Metaphysics*) and truth is the common good of man, the philosopher must also love wisdom as the common good of man and of reason.

Such love of wisdom is very rare and so the true philosopher must be very rare.

LIKENESS, DIFFERENCE AND NEED FOR BOTH WONDER AND THE LOVE OF WISDOM

Wonder is like the love of wisdom and some have even gone so far as to say that it is, at least, an imperfect love of wisdom. But the wonder that is the beginning of philosophy is about something unknown to the one who wonders. The one who wonders, as Aristotle said, wants to escape from his ignorance. But the love of wisdom is possible both in the absence and in the presence of wisdom. And the love of wisdom is greater and more stable or confirmed in the presence of wisdom. Hence, the love of the beautiful (which Socrates speaks about in the *Symposium*) is more akin to the love of wisdom. For the beautiful is that which pleases when seen. And thus it is found more in the one who knows than the one who does not know. And also wisdom is itself a most beautiful thing.

Wonder is also more particular in its object than the love of wisdom. For one wonders about something in particular, such as what is time or what is the soul. But the love of wisdom is a love of the common good of reason for

wisdom is the end of the whole activity of reason. Hence, the love of wisdom is necessary to insure the common good of reason which wonder does not insure.

Moreover, the love of wisdom is very much the love of order, not only because it belongs to the wise man to order or direct all others, but also because wisdom is the highest perfection of reason which, as Shakespeare teaches us, looks before and after. The lover of wisdom, therefore, loves not only the order he sees in things, but also the order in our knowledge. And since every reasoned out knowledge is perfected by order in itself and by the knowledge of some order or orders in the things it considers, every reasoned out knowledge (and not only the reasoned out knowledge that is wisdom) is stimulated to perfection by this love of wisdom. And since order is the first of the three chief forms of the beautiful, we again see the likeness of the love of wisdom and the love of the beautiful.

But the universality and perfection of the love of wisdom is not possible in the beginning for man who does not even know then what is wisdom. We wonder about something more particular which leads bit by bit to particular kinds of knowledge that are a kind of experience necessary to begin the universal considerations of the wise man.

TEACHABLENESS (IN THE WILL), MILDNESS, AND FRIENDSHIP

Man is by nature a social animal and he comes to know with the help of others. He can learn from others who already know something and he can investigate the unknown with those who are also ignorant of something.

In order to learn from others, he need that teachableness which is a disposition of the will to listen to or read carefully, frequently and with reverence the words of those wiser than ourselves.

And when he investigates the unknown with others, he needs that mildness which moderates anger and resentment toward those who think otherwise and are slow to see his thinking.

And both in learning from others and in investigating with others, he is also helped by the friendship that is appropriate. Homer, in the *Iliad* and the

Odyssey, and Aristotle, in the eighth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* have taught us the difference between friendship among equals and friendship among unequals. The friendship of the teacher and the student is between unequals, like that of father and son. But the friendship among those ignorant of the same can be a friendship among equals.

Envy is sadness over the good fortune or success of another. And flattery is undeserved praise of another. Both envy and flattery are opposed to true friendship although envy is much more opposed. If we envy those wiser than us or those who have discovered something before us, this will impede us from learning from them and may even lead us to slander them and their accomplishments. If envy harms the life of the mind in the one who envies, flattery can harm the life of the mind in the one who is flattered. For he may not correct his mistakes or perfect his thinking when he is flattered for what he has done. We need then true friendship in the life of the mind.

HUMILITY

Humility moderates the desire for excellence in accord with right reason and, therefore, it supports all the dispositions above.

If out of pride or arrogance one thinks he knows more than he does or knows what he does not, how will he wonder about what he does not know? But such wonder is the beginning of philosophy.

There is a proverb *Ubi humilitas, ibi sapientia.* Where there is humility, there is wisdom. Humility places us under God and godlike men in reference to God. And since wisdom is the knowledge of God in both senses, we can begin to see the wisdom of the proverb.

Teachableness also requires the humility to submit our reason to learn from those wiser than us (and to recognize them as wiser).

And since envy and anger especially arise from pride or haughtiness, humility helps to remove these impediments to learning from others and

investigating with them and greatly contributes to true friendship among philosophers.

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