

THE

EPINOMIS;

OR,

THE PHILOSOPHER.

INTRODUCTION

TO

THE EPINOMIS.

THE *Epinomis*, or Nocturnal Convention, was not written by Plato, but, as we are informed by Diogenes Laertius, by Philip Opuntius, one of Plato's disciples. This dialogue, which, as its name implies, is a supplement to the *Laws*, is highly valuable, both for its great antiquity, its author being contemporary with Plato, and the recondite wisdom which it contains. However, notwithstanding its great intrinsic excellence, it appears to me that any one much conversant with the writings of Plato might easily discover that it was not written by that philosopher, though antiquity had been totally silent in this particular; for, where shall we find in it either his heretical strength and magnificence of diction, or his profundity, accuracy, and sublimity of conception?

This dialogue is also very properly inscribed *The Philosopher*, since the design of it, as the author informs us in the very beginning, is to show what wisdom is, and how it may be obtained. Before, however, he teaches us what wisdom is, he inquires what it is not; and having premised certain things necessary to its definition, he shows that the august name of wisdom can by no means accord with those arts which are subservient to the necessities and conveniences of life, such as politics, agriculture, architecture, rhetoric, and the like. After this, he enumerates the speculative disciplines, and, in the first place, not only praises but admires arithmetic, which, according to Plato, most of all things sharpens the wit, strengthens the memory, and renders the mind prompt and adapted to every speculation and action. The arithmetic, however, which is here so deservedly praised, is not that which is commonly taught, and which is subservient to merchandize and traffic;

but it is entirely speculative, and considers the properties of pure numbers unconnected with any thing sensible. Of this arithmetic Euclid and Nicomachus have transmitted to us the elements; but the study of it is at present neglected, because it is not calculated to promote gain, facilitate calculation, or expedite business. The author also adds, that number was delivered by divinity to men, as a necessary instrument of reason and discursive energy; and that, this being taken away, the soul would appear to be destitute of intellect, and arts and sciences entirely vanish. He also praises geometry, astronomy, music, and physics; and places dialectic, i. e. metaphysics, or *wisdom*, before all the other sciences, because it employs these as steps in the discovery and adoration of Divinity. He likewise shows that there are three employments of this queen of the sciences about other disciplines. The first consists in beholding the multitude of all these; the second, in surveying the communion and connection in all of them; and the third considers in what manner this multitude and its union contribute to *the one itself* and divine good. Lastly, the reader may learn from this dialogue, that as religion consists in the worship, so wisdom in the contemplation of Divinity; and that human felicity and the end of laws are only to be obtained in the union of both.

THE EPINOMIS;

O R,

THE PHILOSOPHER.

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE.

AN ATHENIAN GUEST,
CLINIAS the Cretan, and
MEGILLUS the Lacedæmonian.

ACCORDING to our agreement, O guest, we are all of us rightly assembled, being three, I, and you, and Megillus here, for the purpose of considering after what manner we should investigate prudence; which when understood, we say that it causes the human habit to subsist in the most beautiful manner possible to man, with respect to itself. For we have discussed every thing else respecting the establishment of laws. But we have not yet related and discovered, that which it is the greatest thing to discover and relate, I mean, what that is by the learning of which mortal man will become wise. We should now endeavour not to leave this uninvestigated: for, if we do, we shall nearly leave that imperfect, for the sake of rendering which apparent from the beginning to the end we have all of us proceeded thus far.

ATHENIAN GUEST. You speak well, friend Clinias. But I think you will now hear a wonderful discourse, though again in a certain respect it is not wonderful. For many that we meet with in life assert, that the human race can neither be blessed nor happy. Attend, therefore, and see, whether it appears

appears to you as well as to me, that by speaking as follows about this affair we shall speak well. For I say it is not possible for men in this life, except a few, to become blessed and happy. But the hope is beautiful that after death we shall obtain every thing, for the sake of which we cheerfully live and die in the best manner we are able. Nor is my assertion novel, but that which we all after a certain manner know, as well Barbarians as Greeks. For the production of every animal is in the beginning difficult. In the first place, the participation of the foetal habit is difficult; and, in the next place, to be nourished and educated. And, as we all say, these things are accomplished through ten thousand labours. The time, too, is short, not only with respect to the endurance of calamities, but every thing else which causes human life to take breath, as it were, about a medium. For old age swiftly arriving makes every one who is not full of puerile opinion unwilling to return to life again, when he considers the life he has lived. And is not the subject of our present investigation an argument of the truth of these assertions? For we investigate how we may become wise, taking it for granted that there is in each of us a power by which this may be accomplished. But wisdom then flies from us, when we apply ourselves to any of those things which are called by the name of art or prudence, or to any other such particulars as we rank among the sciences; because no one of these, as being conversant with human affairs, deserves to be called by the appellation of wisdom. The soul, however, vehemently confides and prophesies, that she naturally possesses this power: but what it is, and when, and how it subsists, she is not altogether able to discover. But do not our doubting and investigation respecting wisdom refer to this exceedingly, viz. that there is abundance of hope for such as are able to examine both themselves and others prudently, and in an according manner, through every kind of reasoning and disputation? Shall we say that these things are so, or not?

CLIN. We admit that they are, O guest, hoping that we shall in time, together with you, entertain the most true opinions respecting them.

GUEST. In the first place, then, let us discuss those other pursuits which are, indeed, called sciences, but do not render him wise who receives and possesses them; that, removing these out of the way, we may endeavour to assign the particulars of which we are in want, and, when assigned, to learn them.

them. Let us, therefore, first consider the things which the mortal genus first requires : for these are nearly most necessary, and truly such as are first¹. But he who is knowing in these, though at first he may appear to be wise, yet now he is not considered as such, but is rather disgraced by science of this kind. We shall mention, therefore, what they are, and shall show that every one who proposes to appear to others to be a most excellent man, will avoid these through the possession of prudence and accurate study. Let the first art then be that which orders us to abstain from the eating of human flesh ; this, according to the fable, being the practice of mankind formerly, after the manner of savage animals, and which recalls us to legal nutriment. The antients, indeed, were and are benevolent to us. Let us, however, bid farewell to those whom we call the first men. The preparation, indeed, and nutriment of Cerealian food is beautiful and good, but will never render a man completely wise : for it is attended with molestation. Nor yet will the whole of agriculture be able to accomplish this. For we all of us appear to undertake the cultivation of the earth, not from art but nature, through the favour of Divinity. But neither can the construction of houses, the whole of architecture, the making of every kind of furniture, the art of the copper-smith, and the apparatus of tectonic, plastic, plastic, and, in short, of all instruments which are accommodated to the vulgar, but are not subservient to virtue, accomplish this. Nor, again, can the whole of hunting, though it is various and artificial, confer magnificence on the wise man. Nor yet divination, or the interpreting art ; for these alone know that which is asserted, but they do not understand whether it is true or not. Since then we see that none of those arts by which necessaries are procured can make any one wise, after this that discipline remains which is for the most part imitative, but by no means serious. For imitation is here effected by means of many instruments, and through many gestures of bodies not altogether graceful. In discourse, too, there is imitation in every Muse ; and in things of which the graphic art is the mother, where things, many and all-various, are expressed in moist and dry bodies ; none of which, though fabricated with the greatest diligence, can in any respect render a man wise. After imitation, those arts remain which afford

¹ That is, they are first to man, who is naturally adapted to proceed from the imperfect to the perfect ; but the perfect is first to nature.

innumerable helps to men on innumerable occasions. The greatest of these and the most useful is the warlike art; but it is in want of abundance of felicity, and naturally rather requires fortitude than wisdom. But that which they call the medicinal art affords us assistance in unseasonable cold and heat, and in all those circumstances by which the nature of animals is injured; at the same time that no one of these contributes to the most true wisdom, for they proceed by uncertain conjectures and opinions. We likewise acknowledge that pilots and sailors afford us assistance; but at the same time we do not permit any one of these to be called a wise man. For none of them knows the rage, or the friendship, of the winds, which is the most acceptable thing in the whole of the pilot's art. Nor yet do we call those wise who by the power of eloquence afford assistance in courts of justice; for these pay attention to the manners of opinion, through memory and experience, but wander from the truth of things just in reality. There still remains a certain absurd power with respect to the opinion of wisdom, which many denominate nature rather than wisdom. This takes place when any one easily understands a thing which he is learning, and firmly remembers a multitude of things; and can rapidly attribute to any thing that which is accommodated to it, when it is proper so to do. For all these some denominate nature, others wisdom, and others sagacity of nature. But no prudent person will ever be willing to call any one of these a truly wise man. It is however necessary, that a certain science should be rendered apparent, which he who possesses will be truly wise, and not only so in opinion. But let us consider; for we are attempting a thing in every respect difficult, as we are endeavouring to find something different from the above-mentioned particulars, which may be truly and with propriety called wisdom, and which he who receives will neither be vile, nor stupid, but be rendered through it wise and good, and become an elegant man in a city, whether he governs or is governed.

Let us, therefore, consider this in the first place, investigating that one science belonging to human nature, which not existing, man would become most stupid and unwise. But this is not very difficult to perceive. For, as I may say, referring one to one, that which nature imparts to the mortal race will accomplish this. I think, however, that a God himself, rather than a certain fortune, gave us this for our preservation. It is proper, however,

however, to inform you what God I think it was, though my opinion will appear wonderful, and yet in a certain respect not wonderful. For, how is it possible that he who is the cause to us of every thing good should not also be the cause of by far the greatest good, prudence? But what God am I celebrating, O Megillus and Clinias? Nearly *Heaven*, whom it is most just we should, in the highest degree, honour, and fervently pray to, since this is done by all other Dæmons and Gods. That *Heaven*, indeed, is the cause to us of all other good, we all acknowledge. But we must also assert that, at the same time, he has given us number, and still imparts it to us, if any one is willing to follow us in what we say. For *he* will ascend to the right contemplation of this divinity (whether we may be allowed to call him the World, or Olympus, or Heaven,) who attends to the variety it contains, and how, by the courses of the stars which revolve in it, it imparts the seasons and nutriment to all things; and besides these, prudence, as we have said, together with all number, and every other good. But this is the greatest thing, when any one, receiving from him the gift of number, proceeds through every circulation. Again, recurring back a little, let us call to mind that we very rightly conceived that, by taking away number from human nature, we should be deprived of prudence. For the soul of this animal would scarcely any longer be able to receive every virtue, if deprived of reason. But the animal which does not know two and three, the even and the odd, and is entirely ignorant of number, will never be able to give a reason respecting those things of which it alone possesses sensation and memory; but nothing hinders it from possessing the other virtues, I mean fortitude and temperance, without this knowledge. However, he who is void of true reason can never become wise. And he to whom wisdom is not present, which is the greatest part of the whole of virtue, as in this case he will not be perfectly good, so he will never be happy. So that there is the greatest necessity that number should be established as a principle: but to show that this is necessary, a discourse longer than the preceding is requisite. It was, however, just now rightly asserted by us, that all the other arts which we a little before enumerated, must be entirely subverted if the arithmetical science is taken away. But some one who looks to the arts may be of opinion, that there are but few things in which mankind are indigent of number; yet, even here its utility is great. But if any one looks to that

which is divine and mortal in generation, in which the cultivation of divinity and true piety are known, he will find that no prophet can comprehend the mighty power which the whole of number possesses. For it is evident that every thing pertaining to music requires numbered motion and sound. And, which is the greatest thing, it may be easily known that number is the cause of every thing good, but of nothing evil, because every irrational, disordered, inelegant, and unharmonious lation, and all such things as participate of a certain evil, are deprived of all number. And this ought to be thus understood by him who is to be finally happy. To which we may add, that he who is ignorant of the just, the good, the beautiful, and all such things, and who has not received a true opinion respecting them, cannot employ the power of number in order to persuade himself and others.

But let us now proceed to consider how we learnt to number:—Whence, then, came we to perceive one and two; so that we might understand that in order to the knowledge of which we received this power from the universe? Nature, indeed, has not imparted to many animals the power of numbering, derived from their parents; but Divinity first implanted in us the ability of understanding number in that which is pointed out to us. Afterwards he rendered it more apparent to us; in which unfolding of things nothing can be seen more beautiful, if one thing is compared with another, than the genus of day. In the next place behold the night, which possesses the greatest diversity. For, by continually revolving these things, you will see many days, and many nights, in which the heavens, without ceasing, teach men one and two, so that even the most indocile may hence learn to number. For thus each of us, on perceiving these things, may understand three and four, and the many. And from these, Divinity fabricating, made one thing the moon, which at one time appearing greater, and at another less, continually varies as far as to fifteen days and nights. And this is a period, if any one is willing to establish the whole circle as one. So that, as I may say, the most indocile animal may learn to number, if he is one to whom Divinity has imparted the ability of learning. And, as far as to these, and in these particulars, every animal has the ability of becoming skilled in arithmetic, by considering one thing itself, by itself. But always to reason about all numbers, when compared with each other, appears to be a more arduous undertaking. And for the sake of this, Divinity having made, as
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we have said, the moon, increasing and decreasing, fabricated months for the purpose of constituting the year, and caused us to compare every number with number, with prosperous fortune. Hence, earth bears fruit for us, and becomes prolific, so that she is the nurse of all animals; and winds and showers are produced, neither immoderate nor immense. But if any thing evil happens in these, it is proper to accuse not a divine, but human, nature, as unjustly distributing its own life. To us, therefore, investigating laws, it has appeared, that other things which are best for men, are easy to be known, and that every one can sufficiently understand and perform what we asserted respecting them, if he understands what is advantageous and what is not so. It has been shown by us, indeed, and at present it appears, that all other pursuits are not difficult in the extreme; but to assign the manner in which men may be rendered good, is perfectly difficult. And again, to possess other goods in a proper manner is, as has been said, possible, and not difficult,—I mean riches, and the body. Likewise, every one acknowledges it is requisite that the soul should be good; and every one will say that it becomes good through temperance, fortitude, and the like. Every one, too, will say that the soul ought to be wise; but what the wisdom is which it ought to acquire, is not, as we just now observed, determined by any of the multitude. Now, therefore, besides the above-mentioned kinds of wisdom, we have discovered a wisdom by no means vile; so that he who learns what we have discussed will appear to be wise. But whether he who learns these things will be in reality wise and good, must become the subject of our discourse.

CLIN. How justly, O guest, you said that you should endeavour to speak greatly about great things!

GUEST. They are not trifling things, Clinias; and what is of still greater consequence, they are in every respect true.

CLIN. Exceedingly so, O guest; but, at the same time, do not yield to labour, but continue your discourse.

GUEST. I will. Neither do you, therefore, be weary of hearing.

CLIN. We shall not: for I will be answerable to you for both of us.

GUEST. It is well. But it is necessary, as it appears, to speak first of all from the beginning; and especially, if we are able, we should comprehend in one name that which we consider as wisdom. But if we are very incapable of accomplishing this, we should consider that which ranks in the

second place, the quality and number of those arts, which he who receives will, according to our doctrine, be a wise man.

CLIN. Proceed, then, in this manner.

GUEST. In the next place, then, the legislator will be without envy who speaks better respecting the Gods than the antients, and who employing, as it were, beautiful discipline, honours the Gods with hymns, extols their felicity, and thus passes through life.

CLIN. You speak well, O guest; since the proposed end of your laws consists in acquiring the best and most beautiful end of life, through reverencing the Gods, and purity of conduct.

GUEST. How, therefore, shall we speak, Clinias? Does it appear to you that we should vehemently honour by hymning the Gods, and that we should beseech them that we may proceed to speak things the most beautiful and the best respecting their divinities? Or how do you say?

CLIN. Thus, in a wonderful manner. But, O dæmoniacal man, confiding in the Gods, pray, and begin your discourse on the beautiful things respecting the Gods and Goddeesses.

GUEST. Be it so, if Divinity himself is pleased to be our leader. Do you only pray with me.

CLIN. Now, therefore, proceed with your discourse.

GUEST. As the antients, then, as it seems, have badly delivered in images the generation of Gods and animals, it is proper, in the first place, according to our former assertion, to accomplish this in a better manner, by resuming our discourse to the impious. For, if you remember, Clinias, we have shown that there are Gods, that their providence extends to all things both small and great, and that they are not to be appeased by any unjust supplications or gifts. These things, indeed, you should call to mind, because they are highly true. But the greatest among those assertions is this, that every soul is more antient than every body. Do you remember? or, rather, do you not perfectly remember this? For that which is better, more antient, and more divine, is prior to that which is worse, junior, and less honourable. And, universally, that which governs is more antient than that which is governed, and that which leads than that which is led. We must admit this, therefore, that soul is more antient than body. But, if this be the case, it is probable that what is first in the generation of the first must take the lead.

lead. We lay down this position, then, that the principle of a principle subsists in a more becoming manner, and that thus we shall most rightly ascend to the wisdom respecting the generation of the Gods.

CLIN. Let these things be so, which are asserted in the best manner we are able.

GUEST. Come, then, do we not say that an animal then subsists most truly according to nature, when one composition of soul and body produces by its junction one form?

CLIN. We do.

GUEST. A thing of this kind, then, is most justly called an animal.

CLIN. It is.

GUEST. But it is requisite, according to assimilative reasoning, to say, that there are five solid bodies, from which the most beautiful and best things may be fashioned. But the whole of the other genus possesses one form. For there is not any thing else which can be generated immortal, and in no respect at any time possess colour, except the truly most divine genus of soul. But this is nearly that alone to which it pertains to fashion and fabricate; but it belongs to body to be fashioned, generated, and become the object of sight. And we again assert (for it must not be said once only) that it is the property of soul to be invisible, endued with knowledge, intelligible, and to partake of memory and the reasoning power in even and odd mutations. As there are, therefore, five bodies, it is requisite to say that two of them are fire and water, that the third is air, the fourth earth, and the fifth æther. But in the several principalities of these many and all-various animals are produced. The truth of this we may thus learn in one of these bodies. For let us, in the first place, consider the terrene genus of animals, viz. all the human kind, all such animals as have many feet, and are without feet, such as have a progressive motion, and such as are stable and connected by roots. But this one thing ought to be attended to, that though all animals are constituted from all these genera, yet the terrene genus abounds with earth and solidity. It is, however, requisite to place another genus of animals, which is generated, and, at the same time, capable of being seen. For it consists for the most part of fire; but likewise contains small parts of earth and air, and of all other things. Hence, it is requisite to assert that all-various and visible animals are generated from this genus. It is likewise
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necessary to think that these genera of animals constitute all that the heavens contain; or, in other words, that they are the divine genus of the stars, consisting of a most beautiful body, and of a soul the most happy and the best. It is also requisite to consider this respecting these two genera of animals. For each of them is, from the greatest necessity, either indestructible, immortal and divine, or the life of each is so extended as not to require any longer period of duration. In the first place, therefore, as we have said, we must consider that there are these two genera of animals. And we again say that both of them are visible; the one, as it appears, consisting wholly of fire, and the other of earth. We must likewise assert, that the earthly genus is moved in a disorderly manner, but that which consists from fire, in perfect order. It is proper, therefore, to consider that which is moved without order, as stupid. But it is requisite to establish this as a great argument, that the natures which revolve in the heavens are endued with intellect,—I mean, that they always proceed according to the same and in a similar manner, and both do and suffer the same. But the necessity of a soul possessing intellect is by far the greatest of all necessities¹. For it promulgates laws governing and not governed. But when soul, which is a thing of the most excellent nature, deliberates according to the most excellent intellect, then that which is perfect according to intellect takes place in reality, nor can an adamant be more firm and inconvertible than such a soul. Indeed, the three fates preserve perfect that which is deliberated by each of the Gods with the best counsel. It is requisite, therefore, men should be convinced that the stars, and the whole of this progression, are endued with intellect, from this circumstance, that they always perform the same things. For in the past time they have deliberated for a wonderfully extended period respecting their actions. But they are not, in deliberating, agitated upwards and downwards, nor do they wander and revolve in a disorderly manner, acting differently at different times. The contrary of this, however, appears to many of us,—I mean, that because they perform the same things, and in a similar manner, they are without a soul. The vulgar, too, embracing this **INSANE OPINION**, conceive that the human genus is intellectual and vital, because it is moved, but that the divine genus is destitute of intellect, because

¹ For *persuasion* belongs to soul, but *necessity* to intellect.

it abides in the same motions. But it becomes the man who attributes to the Gods things more beautiful, more excellent, and more friendly to their natures, to conceive that it is necessary to consider them as possessing intellect, because they always accomplish the same things, according to the same, and in a similar manner. And that this is the nature of the stars, most beautiful to the sight, and which by a progression and musical dance, the most beautiful and magnificent of all choirs, produces in all animals every thing that is proper and becoming. But that we justly consider them as animated, may, in the first place, be evinced by their magnitude. For they are not in reality so small as they appear to be; but it deserves to be believed, that each of them is of an immense magnitude, as this may be shown by sufficient demonstrations. For we may rightly think that the whole sun is larger than the whole earth; and that all the stars possess a wonderful magnitude. We should consider, therefore, after what manner so great a bulk can be made to revolve by a certain nature perpetually in the same time. I say, therefore, that Divinity is the cause of this, and that it cannot in any other manner be accomplished. For it can no otherwise become animated than through a God, as we have evinced. As Divinity, therefore, is the cause of its animation, and all things are easy to a God, in the first place, he generated every body and every bulk in the heavens an animal; and, in the next place, he caused it to move in that manner which he conceived, by a dianoëtic energy, to be the best. And now, respecting all these particulars, we shall make one true assertion, viz. It is impossible that earth, heaven, all the stars, and all the bulks composed from these, could subsist, unless a soul is either present with each, or resident in each, enabling them to revolve with such accuracy according to years, and months, and days, and thus procuring for all of us every good. But it is requisite that, by how much more vile man is than celestial animals, by so much the less should he trifle, but assert something conspicuous concerning them. He, therefore, who assigns certain fluxions of bodies, or natures, or any thing of this kind, as the causes of the celestial convolutions, will not assert any thing conspicuous.

It is, however, requisite to reconsider what we have said with the utmost attention, that it may appear whether our assertions were reasonable, or altogether futile. In the first place, then, we said, that there were two things,
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the one soul, and the other body; and that there were many things pertaining to each. We likewise asserted, that all these mutually differed from each other; and that there was no other third thing common to any one of them: but that soul differed from body in this, that the former possessed, and the latter was destitute of, intellect; that the one governed, and the other was in a state of subjection; and that the one was the cause of all the passions of bodies, but that the other was not the cause of any one of these. So that he who asserts that celestial natures were generated by any thing else, and that they do not consist, in the manner we have said, from soul and body, must be very stupid and irrational. If, therefore, it is requisite that the arguments respecting all such particulars as these should be victorious, and that every nature of this kind should be believed to be divine, one of these two things must follow, viz. we must either celebrate the celestial orbs as Gods, and in so doing we shall act most rightly; or we must consider them as images of the Gods, fabricated as statues by the Gods themselves. For these two consequences are neither absurd nor of small importance, but, as we have said, one of these must ensue; and these statues are to be honoured beyond all other statues. For no statues will ever be found more beautiful and more common to all men than these, nor any that are established in more excellent places, or which so transcend in purity, venerableness, and all life, as these, which are throughout generated the same. Now, therefore, we should also endeavour to assert this respecting the Gods, viz. Since we perceive two species of visible animals, one of which we say is immortal, and the whole of the other which is terrene, mortal, we should endeavour to unfold, according to probable opinion, three species of animals which subsist between these five. After fire, then, we place æther; and we assert, that from it soul fashions animals which possess, like other genera, an abundant power from their own nature, but the smallest degree of power for the sake of a mutual bond, from other genera. But, after æther, soul fashions from air another genus of animals; and a third genus from water. Soul, therefore, having fabricated all these, filled the whole of heaven with animals, employing, to the utmost of its power, all the genera, as all these participate of life. But the second, third, fourth, and fifth, beginning from the generation of the visible Gods, at length end in us men. Respecting the
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Gods, Jupiter, Juno, and all the rest, let any one assign them such places as he pleases, if he only distributes them according to the same law, and considers this reasoning as stable.

We must call, therefore, the nature of the stars, and such things as we perceive together with the stars, the visible Gods, the greatest and the most honourable, perceiving every way most acutely, and ranking among such things as are first. But after, and under these, in a following order, dæmons subsist, an aerial genus, possessing a third and middle seat, who unfold the will of the Gods to men, and whom it is highly fit we should honour by prayers, for the sake of obtaining their propitious intercession. We cannot, however, wholly perceive either of these two kinds of animals, one of which subsists in ether, and the other in a following order in air. For, though these dæmons are by their situations near us, yet they never become manifest to us; but they participate of an admirable prudence, as being docile and of a good memory; and they know all our thoughts. They likewise love in a wonderful manner worthy and good men, and vehemently hate such as are vicious, as being themselves participants of pain. For the Gods, indeed, who possess the end of a divine allotment, are situated beyond the reach of all pleasure and pain, and participate, in the utmost perfection, of prudence and knowledge. And, as the heavens are full of animals, these dæmons, and the highest Gods, mutually¹ interpret all things to each other. For the middle animals are borne to earth and the whole heaven with a light and rapid impetus. But he who assimilates the fifth genus of animals, which is from water to a demigod, will assimilate rightly. And this genus is sometimes visible, and sometimes concealed from our sight; and, when it is visible, is seen in a wonderful and obscure manner. As, therefore, there are these five kinds of animals, whatever occurs to us in dreams, oracles, and divinations, and such things as we hear through the voice of the healthy or diseased, or which happen to us at the close of life, whence many sacred rites are instituted, both privately and publicly, and will be instituted hereafter,—*with respect to all these, the legislator who possesses the smallest degree of intellect, will never make innovations in any of them, lest he should turn his city to a religion which possesses nothing conspicuous.* Nor will he forbid any thing

¹ By dæmons interpreting all things to the Gods, nothing more is implied than an energy in dæmons, by which they become fitted to receive the influence of divinity more abundantly.

respecting sacrifices which the law of his country has established, as being convinced that it is not possible for a mortal nature to know any thing about such like particulars. And for the same reason MUST NOT THOSE BE THE WORST OF MEN WHO DO NOT CELEBRATE THE TRULY APPARENT GODS, AND WHO SUFFER THE OTHER GODS TO REMAIN DEPRIVED OF THEIR SACRED RITES, AND THE HONOURS WHICH ARE THEIR DUE? For this is just as if some one should perceive the sun and moon inspecting without receiving any honours from the whole of the human race, and at the same time should not be anxious for the celebration of their divinities by mankind, that festivals and sacrifices may be instituted, and that certain parts of greater and lesser years may be often distributed in honour of them. Would not such a one, if he should be said to be evil both to himself and to any other by whom he is known, be justly said to be so?

CLIN. Undoubtedly, O guest: for such a one must be the worst of men.

GUEST. Know assuredly then, friend Clinias, that this very thing has now happened respecting myself.

CLIN. How do you say?

GUEST. Know that there are eight powers revolving round the whole heaven, which are sisters to each other, and which I have beheld without paying them any great attention: for this is easy for another to accomplish. Of these, the following are three; one of the sun, another of the moon, and another of all the stars, which I mentioned a little before: and besides these there are five[†] others. With respect to all these, and such natures as are contained in these, whether they have a progressive motion themselves, or are borne along in vehicles, no one of us should at any time think that some of them are Gods, and others not; nor yet, that some of them are legitimate, but others such as it is not lawful for any of us to mention; but we should say that they are all of them brothers, and that they live in fraternal allotments. We should likewise honour them, not ordaining for some a year, for others a month, and for others no allotted portion of time, in which they accomplish their revolutions, and at the same time give perfection to a world, which reason determines to be the most divine of all visible things. This world a happy man will in the first place admire; and, in the next

[†] Viz. the five planets, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury.

place, he will ardently desire to learn as much respecting it as is possible to a mortal nature; thinking that he shall thus pass through life in the best and most fortunate manner, and after death arrive at places adapted to virtue; and thus being truly initiated, and participating in reality of prudence, and becoming one, will pass the rest of his time in the contemplation of things the most beautiful of all such as pertain to the sight.

It now remains that we should relate, in the next place, what and how many these are. For we may without falsehood strenuously assert as follows. I again say, then, that there are eight of these, three of which we have already discussed, and consequently five remain. But the fourth and fifth lation and transition are nearly equal in swiftness with the sun, and are neither slower nor swifter. And of these three, intellect is always a sufficient leader, I mean of the sun, Lucifer, and that third which cannot be denominated because it is not known. But the reason of this is, because a Barbarian was the first spectator of these. For an antient region is the nurse of those who first understood these particulars through the beauty of the summer season. And such was Egypt, and Syria, where, as I may say, all the stars are perpetually apparent, because clouds and rain are always far remote from that part of the world. Hence, both here, and in every other place, these things are found by the experience of an infinite length of time to be true; and on this account they ought boldly to be established by the laws. For to think that divine natures are not honourable, or that these things are not divine, is clearly the province of one not endued with intellect. But it is requisite to assign this as the reason why they have no names, though indeed they are denominated by certain persons. For Lucifer is called Vesper, or the star of Venus, by which it is probable that the author of this appellation was a Syrian. But the star which revolves with an equal velocity with the sun and Lucifer, is called Stilbon, or Mercury. And, besides these, there are three lations of those stars, whose course is to the right hand, in conjunction with the sun and moon. But it is requisite to call the eighth orb ¹ one, which may with the greatest propriety be denominated the upper world. This orb moves contrary to the rest, and draws

¹ That is, the sphere of the fixed stars.

the others along with it, according to the opinion of those who have some skill in these affairs. But it is necessary to speak of such things as we sufficiently know. For true wisdom will thus in a certain respect appear to him who participates, though in a small degree, of right and divine intelligence. Three stars then remain, one of which differs from the rest by the slowness of its motion. This star is called by some Phænon, or Saturn. That which is next to this in slowness is called Phaethon, or Jupiter: and, after this follows Puroeis, or Mars, who has the most red colour of them all. These things, when explained by any one, are not difficult to be understood; but, when understood, we should frame such conceptions respecting them as we have mentioned above. This, also, ought to be known by every Grecian, that we inhabit a region which is nearly the best of all others for the acquisition of virtue. But it is proper to assert that its praise consists in being situated between the nature of summer and winter. However, as we have said, because we are more distant from the nature of summer than the Barbarians we understood posterior to them the orderly arrangement of these Gods; yet we must assert, that whatever the Greeks receive from the Barbarians, is by them carried to greater perfection. This, too, we should conceive to be the case with respect to the subject of the present discourse. For, though it is difficult to discover without ambiguity all such particulars as the present, yet the hope is both beautiful and great, that the Greeks will reverence all these divinities with a more excellent mode of worship than that which they received from the Barbarians, and that they will employ both discipline and the Delphic oracles, and every legitimate observance, for this purpose. Nor should any Greek be at any time fearful, that mortals ought not busily to employ themselves about divine concerns; but, on the contrary, he should think that neither is a divine nature destitute of intellect, nor ignorant of human nature. For he knows that, in consequence of Divinity acting as a teacher, those that are taught follow and learn: and he likewise certainly knows that he teaches us number and to numerate. For he would be the most stupid of all beings if he were ignorant of this. For, as it is said, he would truly be ignorant of himself, if he were indignant, and not delighted with those that are able to learn, and who are rendered good through Divinity. But it is highly reasonable to suppose that the first conceptions

ceptions of men, respecting the nature and actions of the Gods, were neither such as wise men would frame, nor those that succeeded them. For they asserted, that fire and water, and the other bodies, were the most antient of all things; but that the particulars belonging to that wonderful thing soul were of posterior origin. Hence, they considered the location of body as better and more honourable, and as moving itself through heat and cold, and every thing else of this kind: but they asserted that soul neither moved body nor itself. But, now since we say, if soul subsists in body, that it is not at all wonderful it should move and carry about both the body and itself, there can be no reason to disbelieve its ability to carry about a certain weight. Hence, as we now think proper to assert, that soul is the cause of the universe; and as of things, some are good and others evil, it is not at all wonderful, that soul should be the cause of every location and motion, but that a location and motion which tends to good should proceed from the best soul, and a location and motion to the contrary, from a contrary soul. But it is necessary that things good should have vanquished, and should continue to vanquish, things which are not so. All these particulars have been asserted by us according to Justice, the avenger of the impious. With respect, however, to that which we have just now examined, we ought not to hesitate in asserting, that a good man is a wise man.

Let us however see, whether this wisdom, of which we were some time since in search, can be acquired by discipline or art. For, if we are destitute of the knowledge of this, we shall be ignorant of things just. Thus it appears to me, and therefore I assert this to be the case. For, having explored upwards and downwards, I will endeavour to evince to you that which has become apparent to me. For, when the greatest part of virtue is negligently attended to, it becomes the cause of ignorance, as what we have just now said appears to me most perspicuously to signify. But no one shall persuade us, that there is any part of virtue belonging to the mortal race, greater than piety. We must likewise assert that this is not produced in the most excellent natures through the greatest ignorance. But those are the most excellent natures which are most rarely found, and which when found benefit others in the highest degree. For the soul which moderately and mildly receives a flow, or the contrary nature, is simple and ingenuous:

ingenuous: it likewise admires fortitude, and is obedient to temperance: and, what is the greatest of all in these natures, it is able to learn, is of a good memory, is a lover of literature, and is very much delighted with things of this kind. For these things are not easily implanted by nature; and when they are innate, and obtain proper education and discipline, their possessors obtain such authority over most part of their inferiors as to cause them to think, speak, and act, in such a manner as is requisite, and when it is requisite, towards the Gods; prevent them from employing artifice in the sacrifices and purifications which are performed both to Gods and men; and dispose them to honour virtue in reality, which is the most important of all things to every city. This part, therefore, we say is naturally the most principal, and, when instructed, is capable of learning in the greatest degree, and in the best manner. But no one can teach, unless Divinity leads the way. It is better, therefore, not to learn from one who teaches, but at the same time does not act after this manner. However, from what we have now said, it is necessary to learn these things; and I have asserted that a nature of this kind is the most excellent. Let us then endeavour to explain what these particulars are, and how it is requisite to learn them; and this both according to my ability, who am the speaker, and the ability of those who are able to hear, that we may know after what manner certain things pertaining to the culture of divinity may be learnt. Perhaps, therefore, what you will hear is unusual: we shall, however, mention the name of the thing which, to him who is ignorant of it, would never appear to be the name. Are you then ignorant of astronomy, and that a true astronomer is necessarily the wisest of men? Not, indeed, that he is so who astronomizes according to Hesiod¹, and all such as consider the rising and setting of the stars; but this must be affirmed of him who contemplates the eight periods, and how seven of these are contained under the first, and in what order each revolves. But no one will easily contemplate these things, unless he participates of a wonderful nature, as we have just now said, and as we shall again say, unfolding what is to be learnt, and the manner of learning it. In the first place, therefore, let this be said

¹ Alluding to *The Works and Days* of Hesiod. He is not a true astronomer who studies the heavenly bodies with a view to the necessities, conveniences, or elegancies of a mortal life, but he who speculates them as images of true beings.

by us, that the moon accomplishes its period most swiftly, and thus, first of all, leads forth month and full moon. In the second place, it is requisite to consider the sun who produces the solstices through the whole of his period, and, together with the sun, those that revolve in conjunction with him. But that we may not often assert the same things about the same, the revolutions of all those natures which we mentioned before, and which it is not easy to understand, must be made the subject of contemplation; preparing human nature for this purpose by disciplines pertaining to these speculations, and this by long exercise and labour, while it is in a juvenile state. On this account, the mathematical disciplines will be necessary; of which the first and the greatest is that which respects numbers, but not those that possess a body, but which contain the whole of the generation and power of the even and the odd, as these two contribute to the knowledge and nature of things. That which is very ridiculously called geometry¹ follows these in an orderly succession. But the similitude of numbers naturally dissimilar to planes, becomes conspicuous by comparison. This circumstance, however, to him who is capable of understanding it, will evidently appear to be not a human, but a divine miracle. After this, those numbers which receive a triple increase, and are similar to the nature of a solid, are to be considered, and likewise those that are dissimilar to this nature, which is called by those that are conversant with it, geometry. But this, to those that are capable of understanding it, is a divine and wonderful thing, that as the power of things always revolves about that which is double, and in its own opposite, according to each proportion, every nature is fashioned according to genera and species. The first power, therefore, of the double proceeds according to number, in the ratio of one to two, being double² according to power.

¹ Alluding to its name, which signifies the measuring of the earth, which is a mechanical operation; but geometry is a speculative science.

² Of numbers, some are linear, others superficial, and others cubic and solid. The first are such as the number 2; the second such as the number 4, which is the square or second power of 2; and the third such as eight, which is the cube or third power of 2. Duple proportion also was considered by the ancients as perfect. In the first place, because it is the first proportion, being produced between one and two; and, in the second place, because it contains all proportions within

power. But in that which is solid and tangible, the double again proceeds from one to eight. Another power of the double proceeds to the middle; but perhaps into that which is more than the less, and less than the greater; while again, another power by the same part surpasses, and is surpassed by the extremities. But in the middle, of the proportion of six to twelve, the sesquialter and sesquitercian proportion subsists. And in the middle of these, a power revolving to both distributes to men an according and apt utility, which is imparted by the blessed choir of the Muses for the sake of sports, rhythm, and harmony. All these things, therefore, are produced and subsist after this manner. But their end is this, that we may betake ourselves to divine generation, and the most beautiful and divine nature of things visible, as far as divinity has conferred on men the ability of beholding them. These, however, we shall never behold without the above-mentioned discipline. Besides this, in our several conversations we must refer every individual thing to its species, by interrogating and confuting when any thing is improperly asserted. For this may be rightly said to be the most beautiful and the first touch-stone which men can employ. But where only a pretended examination takes place, it is of all labours the most vain.

Further still, the accuracy of time must be considered by us, and the exactness with which it causes all the revolutions of the heavenly bodies to be accomplished; that he who believes the assertion to be true, that soul is more antient and more divine than body, may also think it was beautifully and sufficiently said, *that all things are full of Gods*, and that no one of the natures more excellent than mankind, at any time forget, or pay but little

within itself; for the sesquialter, sesquitercian, and the like proportions are, as it were, parts below duple proportion. The numbers which the author of the Epinomis here adduces are 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 12. The ratio of 4 to 2 is duple, and that of 8 to 4 is also duple. These two excesses are equal in ratio, for that of each is duple, but they are not equal in number; for 8 exceeds 4 by 4, but 4 exceeds 2 by 2. Again, if we compare 6 to 4, and afterwards to 8, in the first case we shall have a sesquialter, and in the second a sesquitercian ratio; but these excesses are unequal in ratio, but equal in number. For the ratio of 6 to 4 = $1\frac{1}{2}$, and the ratio of 8 to 6 = $1\frac{1}{3}$; but 6 exceeds 4 by 2, and is exceeded by 8 by 2. Again, compare 12 to 6, which is a duple ratio, and between these compare 8 to each. Then, 12 to 8 will be a sesquialter ratio, and 8 to 6 will be a sesquitercian ratio; but a duple ratio arises from 12 to 6; and the excesses between 12 and 8, and 8 and 6, are unequal both in ratio and number.

attention

attention to our concerns. But in all such things as these we should thus consider, that he who rightly apprehends each of these particulars will be benefited by them; but that it will be better for him who does not, to invoke Divinity. The manner, however, in which these particulars may be rightly apprehended is as follows: (for it is necessary to relate this also)—Every diagram, system of number, and composition of harmony, together with the one concord of all the stars in their revolutions, ought to be beheld by him who learns in a proper manner. But that of which we are speaking will become apparent to him who rightly learns looking to one thing. *For, to those who reason scientifically, there will appear to be naturally one bond of all these.* But he who attempts to apprehend these in any other way ought, as we have said, to invoke Fortune. For, without these, it is not possible that any nature in cities can be happy. But this is the mode, this is the education, these are the disciplines; and through these we must proceed, whether they are difficult or easy. But it is not lawful to neglect the Gods; since the prosperous conception of all the above-mentioned particulars becomes apparent by an orderly progression. And I call him who rightly apprehends all these, most truly the wisest of men. I likewise strenuously affirm, both in jest and seriously, that such a one, when he has by death filled up his allotted time, will no longer participate of many senses, as at present, but will be a partaker of one destiny alone; and becoming one, instead of a multitude of things, will be happy, and, at the same time, most wise and blessed. And again, whether any one lives blessed on the continent, or in islands, I affirm that he will always participate a fortune of this kind; and that, whether any one living a public or a private life studies these things, he will, in like manner, obtain the same destiny from the Gods. But, as we have said in the beginning, and now the assertion appears to be most true, *it is only possible for a few of mankind to be perfectly blessed and happy.* And this is rightly asserted by us. For those that are divine and at the same time prudent men, who naturally participate of the other virtues, and who besides this have acquired all such portions of *blessed discipline* as we have mentioned, these alone can sufficiently receive and possess

¹ Meaning *Dialectic*; for an account of which see my Introduction to the Parmenides.

all that pertains to a divine destiny. We legally, therefore, ordain, that those who thus labour in these things, both privately and publicly, when they have arrived at old age, ought to possess the greatest authority in cities; and that others should follow these, and should celebrate all the Gods and Goddesses; and lastly, that all of us, in consequence of having examined these things, may, with the greatest propriety, exhort the nocturnal assembly to the pursuit of this wisdom.

THE END OF THE EPINOMIS.

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