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ARTICLE VI.

THE RELATION OF THE GRECIAN TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

Translated from the German of Neander, by George P. Fisher, Andover.

[Continued from page 504.]

THE ethical principle of Plato, at the first view, appears to coincide, in a preëminent degree, with the Christian principle, since Plato characterizes it as the assimilation (so far as possible) of man to God, and regards virtue as the means for the attainment of this end.¹ Christianity aims at nothing else. The kingdom of God is the community of men, realizing the image of God, under the conditions of their earthly being. Morality has its highest significance when it recognizes this principle. In it is founded the unity of morals and religion, the unity of the entire life, as a life that is animated by the Divine consciousness. But two conditions are requisite to the right understanding and application of this principle. It is a vital question how the idea of God is itself shaped. Is it such a notion that, in accordance with it, moral action can be truly understood as a becoming like God? Is God recognized as acting in such a manner, that an imitation of him can be spoken of in earnest? Or is prominence given to such a conception of God as renders this impossible and, as a consequence of which, this principle must be weakened and bereft of its true meaning? In the second place, the question arises, whether this principle is in harmony with the conformation of this world. Is this world looked on as one in which the likeness to God can really be exemplified; or is there in it something which resists our efforts to be like Him — an insuperable antagonism to Deity [dem Göttlichen], so that the highest of human aims cannot be realized under the circumstances of our earthly being? To carry out completely this principle, it is, moreover, requisite that we be able to regard not merely a single human life as the realization of it, but that this be also regarded as the one principle by means of which the whole life of mankind is to be regulated and directed to a single end. Only then will it be clear how the life of every individual has its peculiar place and peculiar mission in the comprehensive moral mission of mankind, which is the manifestation of likeness to God.

¹ Theaetetus. ed. Bipont. II. pag. 121: 'Ὁμολοῦναι τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τὸ ἴδιον.

Accordingly, the whole constitution of man must be considered in connection with Nature. The teleological idea of the world and of the course of its development must be ascertained. Now the inquiry is, how the Platonic conception stands with respect to these three points.

We are first to say how it is with the Platonic idea of God. We touch upon a topic here which is somewhat controverted in the investigation of the Platonic system. On the whole, we are led by Plato's expressions to think of the highest being as a personal spirit; especially when in the "Philebus" mention is made of the βασιλικὸς νοῦς, the νοῦς of Jupiter in the βασιλική ψυχή; when, in the "Timæus," the Father of all is designated, whom it is difficult to find, and whom, when he is found, it is difficult to make known to all. But in that remarkable passage of the "Republic," the highest principle is described as the ἀνούρατος, the Supernatural [das Ueberseinde], exalted in dignity and might above all existence; whence knowledge and being emanate, just as the sun is the source both of seeing and of the thing seen. We come to the inquiry, what is the relation of this expression of Plato to the above-mentioned explanations of the idea of God? Do all these expressions refer to the same object or to different things? If we take the first hypothesis and conclude that, in this passage of the "Republic," Plato is giving the scientific expression of what he has described in other passages in a more mythical way, from the standing-point of the popular belief, if we thus conclude, then in this passage of the "Republic," he has represented the true Absolute as the cause and ground of all being, and regards what, from the religious point of view, is the idea of God, only as a certain anthropopathical mode of viewing the Absolute. If this be the interpretation, this ethical principle of Plato could not have been meant in full earnest; for there could of course be no use of talking of a likeness to the Absolute, when the Absolute is thought of as something impersonal, abstract. Hence the later Platonists, who so understood Plato, were obliged to construe the idea in a different manner. But we can by no means hold this to be the correct interpretation of the Platonic doctrine, and it seems to us to be in opposition to the whole mode of thinking on religion, which pervades Plato's writings. We must, on the contrary, maintain that the passage in the "Republic" and the other expressions of Plato have reference to different things. The highest, absolute spirit from whom all real existence is to be derived, is one thing; the highest of ideas is something different. Under the ἀνούρατος, Plato understands

the good in itself, as what is exalted above all particular existences, the middle point of all knowing and of all life, by means of which alone all knowing and being gain their true end, the common bond between the Divine and the human. And just in this, we find a description of Plato's moral view of the world.¹ Thus the Platonic principle can be rightly understood in connection with the Platonic idea of God; the good is the ideal ground of all being, the defining principle and the final end or goal in the construction of the world by God. And so the likeness to God would consist in the reference of human action to the same idea as that to which the world-forming and world-ruling action of God has reference.

We come now to the second inquiry, the notion of the creation. Here again the important question is, whether those expressions in which Plato designates the father of the universe as him who gives form to the $\psi\lambda\eta$, are a representation meant in full earnest, or only as a popular, mythical mode of view. If, as above mentioned, we take the passage in the "Republic" as the interpreter of every other, there can be no mention of a creative act of God, but only of a process of necessary development of all existence, from the Absolute down to the last limit of being; and then (as the later Platonists conceived of it) the Platonic dualism is only apparent, the cover for a monism that lies at the bottom. The $\psi\lambda\eta$ would then be only a power, limiting the development of all being which emanates, in manifold gradations, from the Absolute. Then, as a creative activity of God is not supposed, there could be no such thing as a moral, world-forming activity of man. But as we were obliged to apprehend otherwise the Platonic idea of God, we must also form a different notion of the creative action of God; and we shall consider it to be the Platonic doctrine that the highest Spirit planned, in his reason, that ideal order of the world which by exhibiting itself, so far as possible, in actual existences, was to be realized in the world; a world formed by means of the animating power imparted to the $\psi\lambda\eta$. The world is the living existence, the *werdende* God, the revelation of the Most High Spirit who is exalted above all things; that, whose attribute it is to be, mirroring itself in that whose characteristic it is to become. And in harmony with this interpretation, the ethical principle under consideration can be carried out. We may speak of the introduction of ideas into objective reality, the forming of the given stuff of the world by means of ideas, in imitation of the creative and world-ruling

¹ This is further supported by the mode in which Aristotle opposes Plato on this point. Arist. 1. 1. p. 1182.

activity of God. But this conception will be, from one quarter, obscured, by the dualistic element in the cosmogony of Plato.

We recognize here the constraint from which the thinking of the ancient world could not free itself. The dependence of mind on nature was evinced in the fact that men could not elevate themselves above the whole order of nature to the idea of an absolute freedom, the unconditioned creative ground of all being, as Christianity teaches in the doctrine of the Divine omnipotence. The doctrine of an unqualifiedly free, creative action of the Most High Spirit, as the cause and ground of all existence, is something peculiar to the religion of revelation and could not gain a place in the common consciousness of men before this consciousness had been, by Christianity, set free from the bonds of nature in which it was imprisoned. Thus it is that the ante-Christian mode of viewing the world necessarily found in it an insoluble antagonism between good and evil. It appeared as if this world, with the evil and the defect that cling to it, could not be explained on the sole supposition of a creative action on the part of the most perfect Being. Of necessity, it appeared to be essential to the explanation of the phenomena of the world, in order to bring it into harmony with the idea of the highest Being, to assume the existence of something in it that withstands Deity; so that two principles were required for the explication of the Universe, viz. the formative, plastic, Divine principle, and the matter to be formed by it; and in the latter, there is always left an antagonistic element. Only Christianity was able to explain this hostile element, in the world, by a fall of freedom from God, and to set forth a moral discord as the solution of the riddle, and the removal of this discord by the redemption, as the final end to be reached. So long as this explanation was wanting, that was of necessity the purest conception which left the antagonism unexplained, instead of wishing to solve and explain it; i. e. a certain dualism. Desiring to get over the obstacle in their way, they could easily, by their monistic effort, fall into pantheism. We ascribe it, therefore, to Plato's predominantly ethical element which sprung from Socrates, that he did not go beyond dualism.

Here, indeed, we find an obstacle in the way of the ethical principle of Plato. For if the creation has not from the beginning been constituted with a view to the realization in it of the highest good, if there exists in the world a principle adverse to Deity and never to be wholly overcome, an invincible, natural necessity, then, under these conditions, the likeness to God cannot be truly realized. While

the Platonic doctrine of ideas, from the one side, leads to the regarding of moral action as an objective realization of ideas, in imitation of the Divine action, yet from the other side, the antagonism between idea and reality by means of the relation of the changing world to the *εἶδος*, forms the point of attachment for a tendency that lowers moral action and places the highest good in contemplation, as a state where the soul is exalted above this world of change and phenomenon, to the pure idea. In agreement with this is what Plato says, in the passage quoted from the "Theatet," that in this world evil exists by necessity, although it is far from the world of the gods, and therefore nothing is left for us but the flight of the soul from this world to that Divine order. To be sure, Plato designates in that passage, as the means to this flight, the moral assimilation to God; but the notion of such a flight of the soul from this world could always easily lead to the exaltation of the contemplative tendency, as may be seen, indeed, in the case of Plato himself. The antagonism between idea and reality continues unsolved. And, accordingly, since the practical removal of this antagonism is something impossible in life, the highest good must appear to reside in the goal of contemplation, of knowledge, that lifts itself above the imperfect, phenomenal world to the world of pure ideas. Here the intellectual tendency, of which we have already spoken, found its point of attachment. In general, so long as the opposition of the ideal to the real world was not practically solved, as it has been by means of Christianity, by the type of humanity realized through Christ, under these conditions of earthly existence, to which everything human is subjected, and by the idea of redemption, — so long as this was not done, the highest good was, of necessity, placed in the contemplative life, as the only mode by which one could elevate himself above the insuperable antagonism in the phenomenal world. And earnest moral action must be regarded as only an inferior stage in human progress.

In the third place, it is important for the actual realization of this principle, that it should be possible to give unity to the history of mankind by the reference of history to it, and that it should be possible to conceive of it as the middle point and goal of the whole historical development of man. Now, although (as is clear from what has been already said) the Platonic notion of the mode in which the world was formed, favors a teleological element, and many things in Plato's writings point toward it, yet, on the other hand, not only is this dualistic principle opposed to it, but there was also want-

ing a standard for such a consciously teleological conception of history, and a principle of unity for it. Even Plato was only acquainted with the antagonism of Greeks and Barbarians. He could not lift himself above the antagonism of nations, to the idea of humanity; and this, on account of the constraints which the narrower point of view, in antiquity, of necessity laid upon the mind; constraints, of which we have before spoken, and to which, as an important element in the development of ancient ethics, we shall often recur. And in this lay the ground why the idea of the State necessarily appeared to him to be the highest, all-comprehensive form for realizing the highest good, — the highest, universal, moral idea, of which we shall speak again in the proper place. These constraints were sufficient to exclude a single teleological notion of history, the recognition of the assimilation to God as the common moral end to be attained by mankind. Added to this, when men considered the history of nations, there was nowhere seen a single end or goal. Men saw a vicissitude of rise and fall, and the course of history was so interpreted that the culture and civilization of mankind was made subject to a circle of change, rising, being destroyed, and then springing up again.¹ Hence, we perceive how the ethical principle of Plato, although the highest principle beyond which ethics will not be able to advance, yet upon the standing-point where Plato, in the course of history, was placed, could not be carried out. But so certainly as this principle is a necessary element for the human consciousness in the development of truth and must at length find its way to a realization of itself, so certainly there lies in it a prognostic of that Christianity which first liberated the mind from the constraints that withstood the realization of this principle, and introduced into history all the conditions essential to its realization. These were the actual view of Christ, of redemption, as the means of bringing that image of God in man, which Christ presented, to bear upon the development of all mankind, and the idea of the kingdom of God, as the community founded therein, and destined to embrace all mankind.

From the general consideration of the Platonic doctrine of morals, we must distinguish isolated, prominent points, in which the Platonic view, animated by the Socratic spirit, rose above the whole standing-point of antiquity. We especially allude, in this connection, to the feature which so greatly distinguishes Platonism in comparison with

¹ Polit. ed. Bipont vol. 6. pag. 32. Timæus, vol. 9. pag. 291. — Arist. *meta-phys.* 1. 12 cap. 8. ed. Bekker II. pag. 1074. Polyb. *hist. lib.* 6. cap. 5. § 5, 6.

Stoicism. As we have before observed, the noble pride of self-assertion was the characteristic of the ancient standing-point. Hence, the word which designates the key-note of Christian virtue and Christian life, *humilis*, *ταπεινός*, was used only in a bad sense, to designate self-degradation, the casting away of self on the part of man. Only Plato forms here an exception, in using the word *ταπεινός* to denote the right position of the soul with reference to God. Plato says that God has the beginning, middle and end of all things, goes on His straight path, walking conformably to His nature. But after him follows Justice, Righteousness, as the avenger of transgressions of the Divine law; and he who would be happy attaches himself to her and follows humbly.¹ It is here obvious that there lies at the bottom something entirely akin to the Christian notion of humility; for there is here expressed the humble subordination of the soul to the Divine law in the moral order of the world (as consequently, the self-exaltation, the *ἐξαρθεῖς*² forms the antithesis), of the feeling of which, the consciousness of dependence on God is the key-note.³

In this one fundamental characteristic of his view of the world and of life, there lies much, which, if we think of it as developed, would necessarily have wrought a great revolution in the moral life. We bring to view still another prominent peculiarity, in which this fact is clear, and in which the original Socratic rather than the modified Platonic influence is discernible. Socrates, in the "Phaedo," appealing to a word in the Mysteries, considers the standing-point which man takes in this life, as a post by which the gods have placed him, and which, if not called from it, he may not desert. Using this as a complement in the application of the above-mentioned Platonic principle, we shall find in it the germ of the Christian view of life and shall be led to give to the Platonic principle a far more definite form, than it received from Plato himself. It would then be thus expressed: to every one by his situation in the world is the part indicated which

¹ De legibus lib. 4, 8 pag. 185. ed. Bipont.

² L. I.

³ We meet with a singular use of this word again, in a writer in whom the Platonic element is predominant, Plutarch, in the book *De sera nion. vind.* cap. 3, where he designates it as the aim of the Divine inflictions of punishment, that the soul may be thoughtful, humble, and filled with the fear of God, *σύννοους καὶ ταπεινῆ καὶ καρδιόφοβος πρὸς τὸν θεόν*. We would also here direct the attention to the fundamental notion of punishment as a reaction of the law of the moral order of the world, against the spirit of haughty wilfulness, which by suffering is brought to self-humiliation. Comp. also *Aeschl. Prometh. vind.* v. 321, where Oceanus exposes to Prometheus his want of humility: *Σὺ δ' οὐδέπω ταπεινός οὐδ' εἰκεις κακοῖς*.

he is to have in the realization of the universal mission of mankind, the exhibition of a likeness to God; the particular sphere of life in which he is to bring this to pass. Every one must look on this as something committed to him by God and must hence use his life only for the fulfilment of his appointed task and preserve it for the same end.

When we consider more closely the nature of the moral life, we find that Plato, as we should be led to expect from what has been before said, gives prominence to the unity of morality. This he does, proceeding from the principle (of the meaning of which we have spoken in connection with Socrates), that morality is founded in knowledge. From the consciousness of reason, everything must emanate. *Wisdom*, therefore, as the agent by means of which the sway of the reason is secured, has the highest place, giving to the other virtues their real significance. That reason, in the dominion over opposing nature, may accomplish her work, there is need of the *active* or combative, and the *moderating* virtues, the *ἀνδρεία* and the *σωφροσύνη*. *Righteousness* has respect to the whole structure of the moral life, to the end that every part of human nature may fulfil its own work, and may not encroach upon a foreign province — in contrast with the *πολυπραγματεῖν*. Plato apprehends this idea in a peculiar way, in connection with his trichotomy of the human soul, although the mode of conception holds true, independently of this connection. The soul, according to the Platonic tenet, is divided into the *νοῦς*, the *ψυχὴ λογικὴ*, the *ἐπιθυμητικόν* or *ἄλογον*, and between both, the *θυμός*. Now it is of decisive importance that reason should hold and exercise sway, and this result is effected by the knowing faculty and proceeds from wisdom. The *θυμός* must serve reason, contend for her aims, learn from her what is good and what is bad, in order to strive for good against evil. Hence results the true *ἀνδρεία*, as the virtue that is active in conflict in behalf of wisdom. It is, moreover, of decisive importance that the lower part of the soul should be kept within bounds, that it may not disturb the higher life, that the harmony between the lower and the higher nature may be preserved, — the harmony of the soul in the *σωφροσύνη*. And righteousness would consist in the fact that each of these three parts of the mind fulfils its appropriate work, the task devolving on it, — the *οἰκονομαγεῖν* in opposition to the *πολυπραγματεῖν*.¹

Now while the Christian notion, in this construction of the unity of the moral life, coincides with the Platonic, it will nevertheless be

¹ De Republ. lib. 4.

distinguished from it by the fact that a new principle is brought forward, as the animating principle, and thus the practical tendency takes the place of the intellectual element in Plato, and the aristocracy of knowledge, founded in this element, is subverted. Love, which distinguishes the Christian standing-point from that of all antiquity, here has the highest place and embodies itself in all the separate virtues. Love, as the transforming, transfiguring principle of the mind, first begets the true wisdom; love begets the true self-control, keeps apart the Divine and human, and guards the *σωφροσύνη* from the injurious encroachments of the latter. Love carries out the Divine ideas, in conflict with the world, in the *ἀνδρεία*. Love gives to each virtue its own place in the *δικαιοσύνη*.

Yet we must observe how Plato, where he is not confined by the effort to give a systematic form to ethics, goes beyond and above his peculiar standing-point, and, from this side too, approximates to a Christian mode of thinking, expressing ideas, which, in the consistent development of his ethics, could not be carried out. We are reminded of this, when Plato describes love, the *ἔρως*, as that by which the wings of the soul are set free that it may elevate itself to a higher world in which it feels at home; love, which effects the connection between phenomenon and idea, raises the soul from the phenomenon to the idea, fills the mind with enthusiasm for the idea.¹ When we apply what is here involved, we derive the creative principle of love, by which the connection between the Divine and human is effected, the Divine introduced into humanity, everything human appropriated as a form of revelation for the Divine life. And thus we find again the complement of that universal, ethical principle of Plato, respecting the becoming like God. Yet, at that time, this remained something isolated. Here also, constraints, already mentioned, stood in the way. They could be broken through, only by the might of the eternal love which, in a human life, entered into humanity and formed a new history, affording the only point of view whence that which the lofty mind of antiquity possessed in the form of presage, of fragmentary ideas, could be brought, clearly and comprehensively, to consciousness and be made a principle for shaping the whole moral life.

We cannot here leave unnoticed the profound myth upon the genesis of Eros. Eros is a being standing between gods and men, son of *πόρος*, riches, and *ἀπορία*, poverty. Thus love is described as the

¹ See what Plato says in the "Phaedrus" of *ἔρως περιφύττωρ*, of the *περοφύττωρ ἀνάγκη*.

bond between heaven and the earthly world, in connection with that aspiration, that longing for the true riches, which springs from the consciousness of poverty; that longing of love which imparts to the soul the right impulse and motion, in union with what Christ describes as the poverty of the spirit. In the "Symposium" also, in the myth of the two halves of one being, which originally belong together and are separated, in that love founded on this fact, which prompts them to seek and to recognize each other, we shall find a prognostic [ahnung] of the Christian idea of marriage, as a union between two persons who belong together, in one higher, complete life, for the exemplification of the type of man. Only it is to be observed, that this idea could not be realized upon the standing-point of that period, and could not be rightly applied, since that had not yet appeared by which the antithesis of the sexes (as well as all other antitheses), so far as it was an element of division for the spiritual life, could be removed. That had not appeared which alone could indicate the higher office of the female sex in the work of realizing the ideal of man as the image of God. This, moreover, could not happen until those means for the attainment of the higher life which should be alike accessible to all, had been given; until something else had taken the place of the *ἐπιστήμη*. We observe here again an essential complement for the application of the Platonic principle; for, according to the Platonic notion, this part of mankind, the female sex, would continue to be excluded from the higher life.

We have thus far spoken of the individual phases of the ethical life, and must now pass to its more general form. Even in the structure of the individual, in Plato, this general form is at the bottom. The man is the image of the State, the State is the man in a magnified sphere. In this idea the great truth is involved, that mankind, in individuals and in the mass, obey the same laws of development. Every man exhibits mankind in miniature, the individuals being the *dispersa membra* of mankind which, in the civil State, are to bind themselves together in a higher unity. But we shall here especially perceive how Plato, with respect to the apprehension of the highest good, was confined by the standing-point of antiquity. In this constraint of a narrow point of view, however, it will be seen how he is driven on; how a higher ideal hovers above him, which, in the circumstances of that era, could not be realized; and we shall see how, just on this account, he made the mistake of attempting to realize his idea, in a form which was too narrow for it. And we shall, moreover, just in this, recognize the striving towards Chris-

tianity, and the presage of what could be realized only by the agency of Christianity. The highest good, as Plato saw it in the sway of reason, was to be realized in the State. But inasmuch as he introduced into the State, — which cannot itself immediately exemplify and exhibit the highest good, but is only designed to secure the conditions for realizing all blessings, and, among them, the highest good of man, and to preserve these blessings against the disturbing power of arbitrary will, — as he introduced something into the State which oversteps its idea, his State was necessarily something monstrous, unnatural. What here inspired Plato was the idea of a community in the higher life, and of a union which could not come to the light, and be realized, except in the kingdom of God, — the community of the Divine consciousness as the true reason. Here we have a community and unity which has its source within, in which too, every peculiarity has its natural and appropriate place, and an opportunity for free development. Since the idea of such a higher community and unity had not yet been given to Plato in a form that could be practically realized, and since he made them reside in the State and would realize the sway of reason from an external power, the mistake in his notion of the State necessarily arose. The idea of unity and community was carried to such an extent, that the freedom of what is personal and characteristic in men wholly vanishes. We recognize the ancient element at its point of culmination. As the significance of personality was brought to the light only by Christianity, the free development of what is personal and peculiar was something foreign to the mind of antiquity. Everything must bend to the necessities of the State. So in Plato, the idea of political organism is apprehended in so exaggerated a form, that the being of the family, in its free development, is lost, and a community of goods and of wives, introduced. We here see whither one is led by the one-sided apprehension of the idea of the State as the absolute form for realizing the highest good, when this apprehension is disposed to maintain itself against the higher standing-point of Christianity, and against the idea of the kingdom of God.

Moreover, the partial spirit of aristocracy, connected with this one-sided intellectual element, is here apparent. As the State, in its trichotomy, is formed after the analogy of the mind, the *νοῦς*, the *θυμὸς* and the *ἐπιθυμίας*, the rulers who represent the governing reason, the army which corresponds to the *θυμὸς*, and the rest of the multitude who belong to the class of producers, the mechanics who answer to the *ἐπιθυμίας*, — so also a self-active coöperation in the

realization of the highest moral ends, is assigned only to the first class, and the last is wholly excluded from it. Here we can only speak of a certain discipline, to the end that the lower class may be kept in subjection to the higher. We here see, again, the defect in the Platonic notion, a defect growing out of the standing-point of the ancient world, by which an insuperable obstacle was put in the way even of this principle of assimilation to God; this principle being capable of application only to a certain privileged part of mankind, the larger part necessarily remaining excluded. It was Christianity alone that could break through this obstacle, and evince the possibility of realizing the principle in all spheres of earthly life, as Christ has here afforded an example. Only by Christianity, could this opposition of higher and lower life, as one growing of necessity out of certain relations, be removed. Not anything is now common, in the sense in which it appeared so to the ancient world. The depressed laboring class has an equal share with all other classes, in fulfilling the highest moral task, that of becoming like God. By the same Divine, vital element, are all circles of earthly life to be filled and penetrated, all forms of activity of whatever kind, to be animated. Love is the common bond in all these diversities. The wisdom of antiquity, at the acme of its advancement, could not lift the rank of laborers from its degradation. The higher this wisdom elevated itself, the lower it must depress this class. The higher the mission and aim of science, which is only one of the blessings of mankind, by the side of others, so much the lower must be the position of those who could have no share in this good, so long as this was looked upon as the single and universally necessary mode of realizing the moral task and mission of man.

With this, something else is connected. From the standing-point of antiquity, the antagonisms once given in the development of nations, of necessity appeared to be essential, unchangeable and invincible. Now as no means were known of developing the higher character of mankind alike in all the races and nations, certain nations in whom the characteristics of reason were supposed to be discerned, appeared to be destined to prescribe to the others laws for attaining this principle of the sway of the reason. It appeared to be in conformity with nature, that those in whom reason could not attain to a free development, should become the mere passive tools of others in whom the reason had been developed. The same principle which Plato applies in his State, has its application here. Among the Greeks, indeed, no one is to be a slave, but slaves are to

be taken from the barbarians, since this race, by its ignorance and degradation, is fitted for slavery.

In this connection we mention, also, something which, at the first glance, does not appear to belong here; but which, on deeper reflection is perceived to pertain to this branch of the discussion. It is something important with respect to the special influence of the Platonic ethics upon the subsequent Christian development, viz. the notion of *Truthfulness*. To be sure, more has been put into the words of Plato on this subject, than, when compared with all the qualifications which are subjoined, they are seen to mean. There are two passages in which Plato expresses himself on this topic. He first starts with the deeper significance of truthfulness, regarding the truth as an element of the entire spiritual life, putting it in connection with the idea of knowledge, whence everything is to emanate — the dominion of truth as the sway of reason. This inward truth of the spiritual life is to manifest itself in the outward life, in speech. Here, ignorance with reference to the highest good appears as the real lie, the inner untruth, as it represents itself outwardly.¹ The notion of truth, as the principle of the whole spiritual life, coincides with the apprehension of truth as it appears in the New Testament, especially in the Gospel of John. So, from this point of view, he requires that in speech, as well as everywhere, the truth should be exhibited, and describes the lie as something hateful to gods and men. Yet he makes an exception, allowing the lie to be employed in stratagems of war against enemies, and as a means of cure with the insane, to keep them from fatal injury. But, in the second passage, he makes more exceptions. He here avows the conviction that lying and deception may be employed, in many cases, as a means of good, — as by the physician with the sick, by the civil authority with the subjects. We cannot here enter upon the investigation of the entire doctrine of truthfulness, on which we shall, perhaps, on another occasion, speak at greater length. We would only here ask our readers to observe in what connection the limitations of this obligation stand with the Platonic intellectualism and intellectualistic spirit of aristocracy. If those who find themselves in possession of science, enjoy the privilege of having the ruling reason and are called to the guidance and governance of them who must content themselves with the mere *δόξα*, the consequence follows from this relation, that they may employ untruth as a means of educating the simple. Only by

¹ De republ. lib. 2, vol. 6, pag. 256, 257.

Christianity, which brought to consciousness the equal, higher, independent worth of man, and removed this alleged inferior state of mind with respect to the higher life, was it acknowledged to be the equal right of all, as members of a community in the practice of reasonable intercourse, to have the truth from each other, and the equal obligation of all to speak the truth, was felt. Hence, we observe in history, that, when by priestly rule or a reawakening aristocratic spirit of Gnosis, when from the Jewish or the heathen standing-point, the Christian consciousness has become obscured on this point, this obscuration has been extended to the doctrine of Truthfulness.

III. ARISTOTLE.

We pass now from the Platonic to the Aristotelian ethics. It will be seen that the Aristotelian ethics is not, in principle, so near the Christian as is the Platonic ethics. And yet, because Aristotle proceeds rather from the sound observation of individual phenomena than from the systematic unfolding of a principle, he will, in this respect, in many points, come nearer the Christian standing-point.

The Platonic principle which seemed to us to be so nearly akin to the Christian principle, finds no place with Aristotle. He opposes it. It appears to him to be an error of Plato to begin his ethics with the highest idea of the good. Ethics, according to Aristotle, can have to do only with what is good in a human view.¹ Here we can only speak of what is virtue in men. This notion does not admit of an application to the gods. In the case of these, we must assume something higher than this. According to Aristotle, ethics is not founded on the science of the highest good, as Plato thinks, but has reference only to what is purely human. Consciously at least, will Aristotle establish no such connection of ethics, the science of mere human action, with the science of the highest good, although, indeed, his notion of the highest good, unconsciously to himself, exerts a determinate influence upon his ethics. In a mind of so great unity, the conception of the highest good must involuntarily influence his notion of the chief end of man and of the highest good for man. In him, we see the ancient standing-point, which we have before described, coming forth in all its narrowness. The highest moral idea, in his view, is that of the State, and the sole province for purely human

¹ Magn. moral. 1, 1.

action is the State. While from one aspect of his system, we shall give him the preference to Plato, from the other aspect, we shall place him after Plato. As we have seen, Plato was driven by the power of his moral idea above the ancient standing-point of the State. It became, however, something abnormal, since he wished to place in the State something which the State could not embrace. But Aristotle adhered to the empirical notion of the State, without going beyond the standing-point of antiquity. Thus the development, keeping itself within its natural and legitimate bounds, was a sounder one. Yet, just for this reason must the lofty mind of Aristotle feel itself impelled to strive toward a higher goal than merely human action, limited to the narrow sphere of the State. Therefore the Divine must appear to him as the supernatural, exalted above the merely human activity. Since he looks on the highest Spirit, not as active and efficient, but as self-satisfied and blessed in contemplation, it follows that to him the highest end of human effort, what is properly Divine, in which man becomes truly like God, must appear to be the state of self-satisfied contemplation, an intellectual state. He says:¹ Such a life is something higher than the merely human; for one will not thus live, so far as he is a man, but so far as there is something Divine in him. The Divine in man is, according to Aristotle, the soul, as fitted for contemplation; and hence the life corresponding to the same, is something more than human, something Divine. From this standing-point, Aristotle utters these sublime words which fill us with admiration:² "Man must not, following the usual admonitions, think humanly because he is a man, nor like a mortal, because he is mortal, but should, so far as possible, make himself immortal and make all efforts to live conformably to what is highest in him; for although this is in quantity small, it is yet exalted far above everything in dignity and strength." These are words of the highest spiritual enthusiasm for the ideal; words, which even in a Christian time, must be held before such as would let the soul, akin to God, find its peace in the slime of merely earthly activity; before those, too, who know nothing higher than a secularized morality, who know nothing higher than the questions of politics, and would make the highest good consist in the satisfaction of the merely earthly, social wants; before all

¹ Eth. Nic. 10, cap. 7, ed. Becker, tom. 2, pag. 1177.

² Οὐ χρῆ δὲ κατὰ τοὺς παραινούντας ἀνθρώπινα φρονεῖν ἀνθρώπων ὄντα οὐδὲ θνητὰ τὸν θνητὸν, ἀλλ' ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν καὶ πάντα ποιεῖν πρὸς τὸ ἴην κατὰ τὸ κρείττοτον τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ· εἰ γὰρ καὶ τῷ ὄγκῳ μικρὸν ἴσθι, δυνάμει καὶ τιμότητι πολὺ μᾶλλον πάντων ὑπερέχει.

those who commend to us a humanity, estranged from God, which finds its home only in the world, without being filled with a longing for something higher. On account of the loftiness of his mind, Aristotle must thus judge, since he was not acquainted with the bond between Divine and human action, because the highest good, from a moral point of view, must appear to him to be shut up within the narrow limits of the State. But how sad were the lot of men, if the human and Divine were so separated, as it must appear to Aristotle, on the standing-point of antiquity! Then by far the larger part of mankind would be excluded from participation in the highest good, the truly Divine! The soul could attain to its true dignity only in the case of a very small number, composed of those who are qualified for science. In this aristocratical sentiment, Plato and Aristotle are found to agree, although the ethical principle of Plato, if developed under different historical circumstances, might have led to a higher point of view. This antithesis of the Divine and human, which Aristotle here makes, has been removed by Christianity. Through Christ, the highest good has been brought into the actual world. From the Christian point of view, we shall indeed say with Aristotle: We must not (as we are exhorted) as men, satisfy ourselves with the merely human, with the common, with what is transient; we must rise above the merely earthly and human, and strive toward a higher goal. But we shall then add: In Christ we recognize the Divine incarnated in humanity [*vermenschlicht*]. In all spheres of human life, we are to manifest the Divine. Nothing human is any longer separated from the Divine; everything is to be transformed, transfigured by the Divine. It is not merely the problem and task of contemplation, but of life. Contemplation and life alike, are to introduce the Divine into humanity. And this highest office belongs, not merely to a certain small, privileged number of men, but it is the common office of all Christians, in whatever sphere of life they may be. In becoming acquainted with the kingdom of God, we become acquainted with a higher sphere for the Divine activity, appearing as a human activity, and the human as a Divine. It is no longer the highest good of that egoistic standing-point of self-satisfied contemplation, feeling itself blessed in its loneliness, but the standing-point which reserves nothing for itself, strives to communicate all things; the standing-point of love, revealing the Divine life in a condescension to the wants of all. Hence, when we consider what is loftiest in antiquity, the more lofty does Christianity appear in the servant's form of love. Now in this part of the subject Plato, in

reference to the principle of ethics, stands nearer to Christianity than Aristotle, although, as we have evinced, the Platonic principle could not be realized except by the agency of Christianity.

On the other hand, Aristotle comes to a nearer agreement with Christianity, from the fact that his sound observation of moral life leads him to combat the Socratico-Platonic intellectualism in ethics. He remarks that mere knowledge does not make morality. What Paul says of the law, would harmonize with the way in which Aristotle expresses himself upon the significance of knowledge in ethics. We can here quote his words against the overvaluing of mere knowledge:¹ "The great mass of men take refuge only in the knowledge of reason and think to philosophize, and so to be able to attain to a moral life. It is with them as it is with the sick, who attentively listen to the physicians, but do nothing which they prescribe. Now as those, who pursue this course, do not get on well with the body, so also those will not get on well with the soul, who philosophize in such a way." Aristotle, on the other hand, thinks that all the virtues can be acquired only by persevering practice. Acting justly, we become just, and so with all the rest. He sees how morality can emanate only from the life. Aristotle, indeed, was himself obliged to suggest the objection, "that we may act morally, we must first be moral, — and how do we become moral?"² Here, to be sure, Aristotle could give no other answer than this: It depends on one's natural qualifications for the good, and upon the cultivation of the same by exercise. But Aristotle knew no mode of escaping from this circle. He knew not the principle of moral transformation which brings to pass a total revolution in the life, as Christianity teaches us. With this view, Luther opposes the Christian to the Aristotelian standing-point, in a letter written the 19th of October, 1516: "We do not," as Aristotle says, "become just that we may act justly, if we disregard a mere appearance of righteousness; but we act justly because, so to speak, we become, and are, just. The person must first be changed, then the works." Now, although Luther, having from his Christian standing-point a deeper view, justly opposes Aristotle, yet he does not give prominence enough to the other side of truth in what Aristotle says, which also continues to be truth upon the Christian standing-point, — that, the moral

¹ Eth. Nic. lib. 2, cap. 3, pag. 1105.

² L. c. *Ἀπορήσει δ' ἂν τις, πῶς λέγομεν ὅτι δεῖ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πρῶτον ἵνα δικαιοῦς γίνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ σώφρονα σώφρονος· εἰ γὰρ πρῶτον τὰ δίκαια καὶ τὰ σώφρονα, ἤδη εἰσι δίκαιοι καὶ σώφρονες.*

principle once present, the moral strength must more and more develop itself by exercise; a truth which has not been sufficiently regarded by the Lutheran ethics, when it refers everything simply to the preservation of the righteousness once received, the state of grace, as even George Calixt, out of fear of being accused of Catholic tendencies, has done, in his *Epitome*.

It is Aristotle's great service to ethics, a service of great practical importance, that he has seized upon the Platonic intellectualism by its roots, and urged the principle, that the free determination of the will is the lever of all moral development; that knowledge is not the original element, but the direction of the will; that the judgment does not, as the primal power of the mind, determine the will, but the continued decisions of the will determine the judgment of the mind; that the man by his continued volitions forms his character, and this character having become what it is freely, reacts upon the views and actions of the man; a principle which stands in absolute opposition to the principle of Plato. Against Plato's principle, he says:¹ When it is said that no one is voluntarily bad, and no one is happy against his will, this statement appears to be partly false and partly true; for no one is happy against his will; wickedness, however, is something voluntary, else we cannot regard the man as the efficient principle and author of his actions. But if it appears to be the fact that he is this, and we have not to refer actions back to other active principles than those which lie in the determinations of the will, then that in which our active principles themselves lie, is something dependent on us and voluntary. He then appeals with propriety to universal moral experience for testimony to this truth, and to the conduct of lawgivers who, in punishing evil, presuppose that it proceeds from the free activity of men. It is beautiful to see how, with Aristotle, the facts of our moral consciousness, in which, too, all civil order has its roots, have more force than all things else, and stand as an undeniable power to resist all sophisms. These are truths which it were well to observe even in our age, which ought to be called a Christian age, in opposition to the sluggishness of the moral judgment, the blunted feeling of justice in relation especially to crimes against the holy order of the State. It is, moreover, here to be remarked how Aristotle, recurring to the determination of the will as the lever of all moral development, regards even ignorance as culpable, distinguishes between blameless, and culpable ignorance, which latter he cannot excuse, but regards it as something guilty, it

¹ *Ethic. Nic.* 3, 7.

being based on immorality, and hence punishable. "Ignorance," he says, "lawgivers will punish, when one is himself blamable for his ignorance; as, for example, a double penalty is imposed upon the drunken man, for the cause lies in him, since he is able to avoid drunkenness which is the cause of his ignorance. And those are punished who know nothing of the contents of the law which, however, they ought to know and might easily learn. And so, also, in other things, which from negligence they appear not to know, since it is in their power to know; for it was in their power to give heed to them." Thus he points to the fact that the character of the man is founded in his free self-determination, and is thus guilty. He does not let the excuse pass, that the man is naturally so negligent; he makes it rather the ground of his fault. "Perhaps," he says, "one is now such a man that he is unconcerned about these things. Still, they are culpable in having lived carelessly; and, also, if they are unjust or dissolute men, they are culpable, — some in having done evil, others in having spent their lives in drinking parties and the like." And so he expresses the weighty, general thought: "Continuous activity toward any end confirms one in that course of conduct.¹ This is derived from the example of those who exercise themselves in any endeavor or mode of action; for they continue to act thus. One must be perfectly imbecile not to perceive that the fixed moral character² grows out of a definite, persevering course of action." He further remarks, that, although the individual has himself made his character guilty, yet this character, once formed, in turn exerts a power over the individual — the culpable moral slavery. "It is also unreasonable to say that the unjust man does not *will* to be unjust, or the dissolute man to be dissolute. When one with intelligence performs the act by which he becomes an unjust man, he is, because he *wills* to be so, an unjust man. Yet he cannot, when he will, cease to be unjust and be a just man; just as the sick person cannot, when he will, become well, though he may have become sick voluntarily, from living immoderately and not obeying the physicians. Once it was in his power not to become sick, but having neglected to use his power aright, it is no longer his;" and he quotes this clear example, in opposition to determinism: "Just as when one has thrown away a stone, it is not possible for him to take it back again; yet it was in his power not to throw it, for the beginning was under his control. So at the outset, it was in the power of the unjust or dissolute man not to become such, because he is voluntary in

¹ *Δι γὰρ παρ' ἕκαστα ἐνέργειαι τοσούτους ποιοῦσιν.*

² *Δι ἕξαις.*

it. Having once become such a character, it is no longer in his power not to be such." Then he calls attention to the fact that the views of men, which, being once present, determine their action, are themselves founded in the moral character of the persons, since this gives direction to the judgment of the mind: "When any one says, that all strive after what appears to them to be good, but cannot themselves determine how things shall appear to them,¹ but according to the character of each, so will his object appear to him, it is to be replied: "If one is, in some way, culpable for his moral character, he is also in some way guilty that the object appears to him thus."

Thus we perceive how Aristotle, by means of his sound ethical observation, in adhering here to what is simply practical, went on independently of speculation, attaining to that point of view which is peculiar to Christian theism, placing the act of the free will before everything, and thus making the whole development of the individual and of mankind to be conditioned on it; a principle which he could not fully carry out, inasmuch as the Christian teleological view of the world had not yet appeared; because, too, he wanted the knowledge of a power adequate to transform nature. We must ever admire the profound ethical insight of the great man who thus raised himself so high above the development of his age and nation; and it serves to put to shame an age in which, by the influence of Christianity, such a moral view of history ought to have become dominant, and which, by the conscious or unconscious influence of pantheism, is so misguided as to subordinate the moral to the natural, ever more and more to remove the sense for the strict moral view, since it knows how to explain everything by a historical necessity, which makes the development of mankind to resemble a process of nature. We mention here also the mode in which Aristotle defends the *ἡδονή* against Plato. He appeals to the fact that the tendency is implanted in every nature to strive for the *ἡδονή*; and this appears to him to be a sign of the truth, in so far as something Divine dwells in everything; the law laid by God into nature, the tendency implanted in nature, as we might express the thought from a Christian point of view. He thinks that the conscious exertion of creatures is to be distinguished from the unconscious, and that perhaps in all there lies at the foundation an attractive tendency toward the same *ἡδονή*; as we, indeed, can recognize in all creatures the tendency to one central point, which, if followed by the individual, leads him to find the

¹ *Τῆς φαντασίας οὐ κίνητος.*

highest good in God. And such a dim view it is which fills the mind of Aristotle, when he says: "Perhaps beings do not strive after the pleasure which they suppose, and which they would assert, that they strive for, but all for the same object; for everything has in it, by nature, something Divine."¹ Now in seeking for a general definition for the notion of *ἡδονή*, he finds it in the unchecked activity corresponding to that peculiar character of every being, which is founded in his nature. According as the peculiar nature of creatures is varied, must their sources of pleasure also be diverse. Hence to ascertain the *ἡδονή* that corresponds to human nature, one must not have regard to the *ἡδονή* of the bad, but the *σπουδαῖος* must be the standard for everything. It corresponds to the moral nature of man that the practice of goodness should be for him real pleasure, and just this is the characteristic of the truly moral man, that he finds his *ἡδονή* in doing good.

Thus Aristotle comes to an agreement with the Christian view, in describing this as the sign of truly moral action, that one should find in it his joy, should do good with love.² This is the difference between the Christian and the legal action, and in it is involved the refutation of the reproach of Eudaemonism, so often made against Christianity in the New Testament form. This would be a just reproach if the *ἡδονή* of the individual were placed in an end that is estranged from moral action; if this action were made the means of gaining something that lies without and beyond it. But it is only the perfection of the *ἐνέργεια* which begins in Christian morality, in the holiness of the Divine life; the development of the same *ἀνεμ-αόδιστος ἐνέργεια* corresponding to the *ἔξις*, being the development of the Divine life, freed from all hindrances, having attained its perfection, as this life passes from the present state of existence to the future.

Moreover, when Aristotle designates the *ἡδονή* of the *σπουδαῖος* as the norm for the truly human *ἡδονή*, describing the moral action as such an action as the *σπουδαῖος* performs, and makes him the standard for everything,³ we shall be reminded of what Paul says of the *πνευματικός*. Aristotle, too, speaks in a similar manner of the *σπουδαῖος*: "he judges everything in the right way, and in everything, the truth appears to him."⁴ This grand thought by which

¹ Πάντα γὰρ φέρεται εἶναι τι θεῖον.

² Ἐπεὶ τὸν σπουδαῖον ποίησον πράττειν τὰ κατ' ἀρετὴν, καὶ ἡδέως ταῦτα πράττειν. Magn. moral. 2, 7.

³ Ὁ σπουδαῖος ὡσπερ κανὼν καὶ μέτρον ὢν. Ethic. Nic. 3, 6.

⁴ Ὁ σπουδαῖος ἕκαστα κρίνει ὀρθῶς, καὶ ἐν ἐκαστοῖς ἀληθείας αὐτῷ φαίνεται.

Aristotle elevates himself above the abstract apprehension of morality, is connected with the great truth which is expressed by him, that the moral, free self-determination is the lever of all moral and spiritual development; for just by its means has he become the standard and rule for all things.

Passing on to the consideration of the separate virtues, it is to be observed of Aristotle that, in conformity to the ancient mode of view, he gives the first place to the notion of justice, and speaks of the relation of justice to the other virtues, just as one, from the Christian point of view, would speak of the relation of love to the other virtues. Justice denotes the whole side of virtue as virtue manifests itself in the intercourse of civil society; the kind of action which conforms to law. All virtue, when practised in the civil relations of life, becomes justice; and Aristotle here applies the Grecian proverb: "In justice is all virtue involved."¹ But we can recognize it as a prophetic word of this profound inquirer in ethics, when he himself alludes to a higher standing-point where justice passes into love, saying that there is no need of justice where love is present, and that hence it is the special effort of lawgivers to render all their friends. Here we have the highest point of the moral development that has been reached by Christianity; the highest community in which the principle of love inspires all, and in which love is to purify and transform social and political life.²

While we here find in Aristotle a point of attachment for the Christian element, on the contrary, the contrast of this element in another respect with the Aristotelian view, affords us occasion to become more definitely aware of what is peculiar to Christian ethics. We refer to the way in which Aristotle distinguishes the *φρόνησις* and the *σοφία* from each other. Under the virtues, properly so called, he mentions only the *φρόνησις*, inasmuch as this has respect to what is mutable, what is purely human. But wisdom belongs to a higher standing-point, going beyond the merely human; has respect to the eternal, immutable, Divine; belongs to the soul that exalts itself to the state of contemplation.³ This view is connected with the antithesis of the practical and theoretical, the Divine and human; with

¹ Nic. Eth. 5, 3: Πάντα τὰ νόμιμα ἐστὶ πῶς δίκαια . . . Ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ σὺλ-
ληβθῆν πάς ἀρετὴ ἐνι.

² Nic Eth. 9, 1: Ἔοικε δὲ καὶ τὰς πόλεις συνέχειν ἡ φιλία, καὶ οἱ νομοθέται
μᾶλλον περὶ αὐτὴν σπουδαίειν ἢ τὴν δικαιοσύνην. Καὶ φίλων μὲν ὄντων
οὐδ' ἐν δεῦ δικαιοσύνης, δίκαιοι δ' ὄντες προσδέονται φιλίας.

³ Magn. moral, 1, 35. pag. 1197.

the antithesis in the writings of Aristotle which we have before developed. Now, as we are obliged to regard this whole antithesis as set aside by Christianity, the whole relation of wisdom to prudence, from this standing-point, will be different. Among the cardinal virtues, we shall assign to wisdom the place which the *φρόνησις* occupied in antiquity, and shall here attach ourselves to Plato. We shall grant to Aristotle that wisdom has respect to the eternal and Divine; we shall regard it even as that virtue which gives to the entire life its direction toward the eternal and Divine, thus determining the whole life; the virtue which shadows forth those aims and ends which correspond to what is eternal and Divine, or the reference to the kingdom of God by means of which what is eternal and Divine, which Aristotle keeps apart from the earthly life — to which he assigns the narrow sphere of the State — passes over into actual life. Love being the bond that binds the soul to God and to Divine things, wisdom springs from the direction which is given to the mind by love. When Aristotle styles the *φρόνησις* the *ἀρετὴ ἀρχιτεκτονική*, we shall transfer this, in the sense assigned, to wisdom, and regard wisdom as the architectonic virtue for the building up of the life that has its origin in love. But the Aristotelian *φρόνησις* we shall regard as the agent of the *σοφία*, effecting the transition of the ideas which have been projected by the *σοφία*, to a real existence in the relations of life, adopting the circumstances as means for the realization of the ends of life which have been previously pointed out by the *σοφία*. Hence the notion of *φρόνησις* will be involved in the notion of the *σοφία*. When we conceive of the *σοφία* in its sway over the life, it will include in itself the *φρόνησις*. Hence, in the New Testament, the notion of the *σοφία* embraces both. But we shall again find Aristotle in agreement with the Christian view with respect to the *φρόνησις* when, by reason of the importance which, as we have seen, he attaches to the will as the lever of all moral and spiritual development, he calls attention to the truth that, although the *φρόνησις* is an *ἀρετὴ διασητική*, having its seat in the understanding, it is, nevertheless, connected with the moral element, the direction of the will, so far as this direction of the will toward the good renders the judgment of the mind clear, while wickedness corrupts this judgment in reference to the proper aims of action, the *πρακτικῶς ἀρχαίς*.¹

The boldest contrast between the Aristotelian notion of virtue and the Christian view, appears in the idea of *μεγαλοψυχία*, which has its

¹ Nic. Eth. 6, 13. pag. 1144.

origin in the ancient spirit of self-assertion, in direct opposition to Christian humility. We here perceive the egoistic element, though in connection with what is noble in the moral nature of man, awakening to self-consciousness. The *μεγαλόψυχος* is he who is deeply penetrated with the consciousness of his greatness and dignity, and rejoices when they are recognized; who holds himself worthy of great honor, since he deserves honor; who despises everything low and degrading, and aspires after what is high.¹ The consciousness of dependence on God as the key-note of the entire life, in which the substance of true freedom has its roots, the consciousness of one's own unworthiness in relation to the requirements of the moral law, the consciousness that man has no gift and no virtue which he has not received, this it is which is wanting in the *μεγαλόψυχος*, as it is wanting in what is called "noble pride;" for the highest elevation of the soul is founded on humility. When love humiliates itself for the good of others and in this gives up nothing but feels itself exalted in such a humiliation, it stands in direct opposition to the character of the *μεγαλόψυχος*. It belongs to the peculiar nature of the *μεγαλόψυχος* that he is fond of thinking on good deeds performed for others, since this thought is elevating, but that he does not love to receive favors from others and does not love to think of benefits received, because this is a self-humiliation.² This is also remarkable in reference to a description of the nature of thankfulness which, as we have seen, is incompatible with the qualities that characterize the *μεγαλόψυχία*. A feeling of dependence in which one places himself with reference to others, belongs to the essential nature of thankfulness. Thankfulness and humility are intimately allied to each other, just as pride and haughtiness often exclude thankfulness.

In entire agreement with the Christian view, or at least capable of being traced back to this view, is what Aristotle says of suicide. He calls it something contrary to nature, that a man should hate his own life, something at war with the natural instinct of self-preservation. He, however, observes how the bad man must come to the point of hating and fleeing from himself.³ It is a fine observation, that the more one's life ceases to be a moral good, the more it is given up to worthlessness and sin, so much the more does it lose its worth for the man, until he finally must become weary of it and hate it. He also justly observes, that the true *ἀνδρεία* does not consist in flying

¹ Ὁ μεγαλόψυχος ὁ μέγαλον αὐτὸν ἀξίων ἄξιος ὄν. Nic. Eth. 4, 7. pag. 1123.

² L. c. pag. 1124.

³ Nic. Eth. 9, 4. pag. 1166.

from evils by the destruction of one's life, which is properly cowardice, but it consists in bearing them.¹ Finally, when Aristotle styles suicide a crime against the State, starting from the principle, that a man owes his whole life to the State, we only need to put the kingdom of God in the place of the State, in order to give to this thought a Christian form. There is only wanting that union of the moral and religious standing-points, which comes out so finely in the words of Socrates, the notion of the moral task of life as a task imposed by God; and this idea is implied in what is said above, if we substitute the kingdom of God in place of the State.

How much slavery is in conflict with the universal consciousness of man, as unfolded by Christianity, is very obvious from the definition of slavery by Aristotle. He makes the slave sustain to his master the relation of a mere agent in nature,² describing him as an animate tool; describing him, in reference to the *ὄργανον ἀψυχον*, as an *ὄργανον ἀφαιρέτων*, in relation to the body, as an *ὄργανον σύμφυτον*.³ In Aristotle we find the authority for what we have mentioned, as the justification of slavery, which was advanced from the ancient point of view. He describes it as a relation conformable to nature, that those in whom reason is developed, are on this account called to rule the rest, since the reason ought to govern; and those in whom reason is not present, are, by this very circumstance, pointed out as fit for being servants, and must find their own best good in allowing themselves to be commanded by those who appear to be the representatives of reason; so that this arrangement is best for both parties.⁴ Thus, indeed, it necessarily seemed until the opposing principles in man, which have their origin in sin, were removed by the might of the Gospel, and in Christ, the type and Redeemer of all mankind, the equal worth of all men, and the requirement to develop this worth in all men, was brought to consciousness. Every advocate of such or of a kindred relation, goes back to the position of heathenism. Yet we must not here overlook the prophetic element in Aristotle, which led him to hint that this relation is something in opposition to pure humanity and to be removed by a higher standing-point. He says, that, although friendship can exist only among equals and hence there can be no friendship between the master and the slave, as a slave, yet, in so far as both are men, such a relation can subsist between them.⁵

¹ Nic. Eth. 9, 4. pag. 1166.

² Nic. Eth. 5, 15. pag. 1138.

³ Magn. moral. 1, 34. pag. 1194.

⁴ Eudem. Ethic. 7, 9. pag. 1241.

⁵ Polit. 1, 2. pag. 1252.

IV. THE DOCTRINES OF PLOTINUS.

We come now to him who forms the concluding point of this whole development, to Plotinus. He had the advantage of having the tendencies of ancient ethics, as already described, presented before his eyes. He could compare them with one another, remove and reconcile their conflicting features, and seek to supply deficiencies. It was, in fact, the endeavor of this philosophy, surveying the antagonistic elements of the ancient world, from the concluding point in its development, — just as when one has reached a goal, he looks back upon the various and intersecting ways that lead to it, — to compare them together and to seek out their points of union. This was especially his effort with respect to the relation of the Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy to each other; the effort to adjust their points of disagreement being a characteristic of the new Platonic philosophy. And this, Plotinus has especially attempted on the subject of ethics. At that time, Christianity had already become a powerful element in the spiritual world; and had this profound and lofty mind stood upon the Christian standing-point, he would have been able to discover here the right adjustment and reconciliation, just as Christianity has appeared to us to stand in this relation to ancient ethics. But he found himself in a conscious opposition to Christianity, although he does not expressly attack it. His whole philosophic mode of thought was rooted in the element that set itself against the power of Christianity which was more and more widely extending its sway, and thought to maintain against it the sinking ancient world. This antagonism to Christianity necessarily exerted an important influence upon the mode by which he endeavored to unite these fundamental ethical tendencies, and to supply their deficiencies. Whatever in those tendencies had prophetically pointed to Christianity, must in him retire to the background, and whatever is opposed to Christianity, must be more strongly expressed and consistently carried out. The great difference was, that these earlier tendencies belonged to the standing-point when it still had its right and went beyond it in many points, heralding the higher standing-point that was to come; while, on the contrary, Plotinus would cling to that ancient standing-point which had lost its right, in opposition to the new-world-principle that came from Christianity. Hence, the contrast with Christianity, must here appear far more bold; and this is especially founded in the intel-

lectualistic, contemplative tendency. Add to this, that those fundamental tendencies of ancient ethics had originated at a time when the Greek mind was more awake, and the political life had given them a certain practical element; whereas Plotinus lived at a time when the public and political life was in a decline and hence the one-sided, intellectual, contemplative tendency could be more easily cherished, unless the idea of the kingdom of God took the place of the idea of the State, and the higher practical element, which unites life and contemplation, went forth from Christianity.

We have seen how the Platonic ethical principle of assimilation to God, which is akin to the Christian principle, could be verified by the Platonic idea of God and the Platonic notion of creation, even though it found an obstacle in the Platonic dualism. In Plotinus, however, everything takes an entirely new aspect, since the Platonic notion of God and of creation undergo an essential modification. In his writings, that notion of the Platonic Trias predominates which we have rejected as a notion that is opposed to the original Platonism. With him, the difference between the ideal and the real absolute, vanishes. The highest simple principle, viz. that which is good or which is *in itself*, the *αὐτοῦγαθόν* or *ὄν*, is made, as the real absolute, to be the fundamental principle of all being, from which all things are developed. The impersonal principle is placed at the root of all development of existence, and thus the true significance of personality must vanish. We can no longer speak of an active Deity, no longer of creation as an act of God, but everything, from the highest to the lowest, and down to the limit of all being, the *ὑλη*, is a development that moves on with unqualified necessity. Not absolute freedom, but unconditioned necessity, it is, which rules all things. Dualism with respect to the *ὑλη*, as the limit of all development, is here only an appearance where the strongest monism is at the basis. It is to be shown how from the absolute, everything is developed into antitheses which became more and more bold, in gradually increasing manifoldness, down to this lower region of earthly existence where everything is marked with defect, where the might of negation rules. And hence, by an abstraction of the defect which is attached to all existence, there is formed the notion of the *ὑλη*, which denotes the dividing line between existence and non-existence. First, we have the impersonal, positively simple, absolute, the One which has no predicates; then we have the mind, living in contemplation, since the One unfolds itself in the All, the *ἐν πᾶσι*, the comprehensive notion of all ideal being; then we have

the *ψυχή*, in which the One and the All, the *ἐν καὶ πᾶν*, separate, which forms the transition to real existence. Although the exhibition of the course of speculation is foreign from our purpose, we must yet make this point prominent on account of its connection with the ethical ideas of Plotinus, and to show how with him everything assumes an entirely different form from that which appears in Plato and Aristotle.

Since the personal idea of God as a Creator, and the idea of a creative act, are excluded from this system, the ethical assimilation to God, in the Platonic meaning of the phrase, cannot be retained. By such action, one cannot become like God. Plotinus himself remarks, that this assimilation can be understood only in an improper and figurative sense, inasmuch as the same power is something different in the type from what it is in the copy; in the original from what it is in the derived existence, just as warmth is something different in fire, being essential to it, from what is in the object that is warmed by fire. So in the case of the political virtues, those afterwards styled the cardinal virtues, the notion of a resemblance to the absolute, can be understood only in a very improper sense. Plotinus, indeed, reproaches the Gnostics (and in this he is right only with respect to a part of them), with the neglect of ethics; and he says against them, that they were always talking of the contemplation of God without pointing out the way to attain to this state of mind; while he maintains that morality is the necessary preparation for the contemplation of God. He says finely that without virtue God is an empty name.¹ But yet, in his writings, only the negative side of virtue is brought out; positive, practical virtue has a very subordinate place. He here attaches himself to Plato and Aristotle, regarding contemplation as the truly Divine state, while practical virtue only is the human. Thus he connects together the Aristotelian and Platonic elements. Yet he removes the opposition of Aristotle to Plato (so far as the former had the province of ethics to the mere human and political sphere), in a way that surely does not correspond to the spirit of Aristotle, who was fully earnest with respect to what belonged to the purely human sphere; while, at the same time, he does not do full justice to the notions of virtue which were entertained by both philosophers. There arise, according to his view, various gradations of progress, in which the similitude to God becomes nearer and nearer, more and more true, on account of

¹ Enn. II. lib. 9. cap. 15: "Ανευ δὲ ἀρετῆς ἀληθινῆς θεὸς λεγόμενος ὄνομα ἐστίν."

the higher elevation to the absolute. But the merely negative side of ethics, also, becomes more and more dominant; the notions of virtue are more and more volatilized, so that they wholly lose their true significance, and all things are fused together.¹ The political virtues rise to the rank of purifying virtues. Here Plotinus attaches himself to the words of Plato in the "Phaedon," which speak of a purification, by means of virtue, for a higher, future state of being. But in this passage a purification different from moral action, is not meant; but in the exercise of virtue itself, the purifying element is placed, just as Christianity, even, lets us regard the moral life as a progressive purification for a future existence. Only it is false to make the purification to be anything different from the rest of moral action, and thus to render it something negative. The purifying and struggling element is only one side of all virtue, and can truly subsist only in connection with it. But according to the notion of Plotinus, these four fundamental virtues become something entirely different, by forming themselves into the purifying virtues. The highest state is made to consist in the running away from the practical activity which is directed to the outward world, in the freeing of one's self from contact with the sensational world, in the constant purification which is accomplished by escaping from the sensuous element and retiring into one's self, a purification for the contemplation of the highest good. And there finally arises the standing-point of the purified soul, the virtues of the purified state of being, where everything depends on the sinking of the soul, freed from every foreign element, wholly in contemplation. There an egoistic perfecting of one's self becomes the highest aim. The true perfecting of one's self is not placed, as it ought to be, in the fulfilling of the task in life which God has given to each individual, so that labor for himself coincides with the activity which aims at the best good of all, in realizing the moral mission of each. Love is wanting which unites all this, and brings the highest ideas to a realization, manifesting in moral action a true likeness to God. So there is

¹ Enn. I. lib. 2. cap. 3 et 7: 'Ἡ ψυχὴ εἴη ἂν ἀγαθὴ καὶ ἀρετὴν ἔχουσα, αἱ μῆτε συνδοξάζει, ἀλλὰ μόνῃ ἐνεργοῖ (ὅπερ ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ φρονεῖν) μῆτε ὁμοιοπαθῆς εἴη (ὅπερ ἐστὶ σωφρονεῖν) μῆτε φοβούτο ἀφισταμένη τοῦ σώματος (ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀνδρείου). Ἦγοῖτο δὲ λόγος καὶ νοῦς· τὰ δὲ μὴ ἀντιταίνοι, δικαιοσύνη δ' ἂν εἴη τοῦτο. Cap. 7: Ἀπολουθούσι τοῖσιν ἀλλήλους καὶ αὐτὰ αἱ ἀρεταὶ ἐν ψυχῇ, ὡσπερ καὶ τὰ πρὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς αἱ ἐν νῶ, ὡσπερ παραδείγματα· καὶ γὰρ ἡ νόησις ἀπὸ ἐπιστήμης καὶ σοφίας. Τὸ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὴν, ἡ σωφροσύνη· τὸ δὲ οἰκεῖον ἔργον, ἡ οἰκείοπράγία· τὸ δὲ οἶον ἀνδρεία, ἡ ἀνλήτης καὶ τὸ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ μένειν καθαρὸν.

wanting here the variety of moral activity in the various moral tasks in which the true likeness to God is aimed at and manifested. In this ethical sublimate of political virtues reduced to the purifying and those virtues which correspond to the purified state, all things become uniform; that barren monotony of the contemplative life. And how can a moral task in life be here spoken of where everything, evil even, belongs to a process of necessary development, and the highest good can be only that complacent repose of contemplation in which one elevates himself above evil even, as a defect adhering of necessity to this lower world and requisite for the harmony of the whole?

It is now clear how the dark side which we were obliged to observe generally in ancient ethics, that partial aristocratic element which confined the highest mission in life to a small number and entirely shut out a great part of mankind from the higher life, — how this dark side must be especially prominent in the system of Plotinus. This true likeness to God, to be attained by means of contemplation, only a few can reach. For the rest there remains only the subordinate position of the political virtues; to the highest good, they cannot elevate themselves. And finally, the great multitude of mechanics, of laborers, remain excluded even from the lower moral mission in life. Here one can speak only of a certain discipline, by which their wild desires and passions may to some extent be bridled.

Thus, in opposition to that principle of a Divine humanity to be realized in all, which had been introduced into the world by Christianity, we see the development of ancient ethics close with that cold, egoistic, aristocratic particularism, which had been developed in systematical consistency, to the exclusion of all the prophetic elements which accompanied it. May this historical discussion serve to give us a correct knowledge of the peculiar nature of Christian ethics, as this is closely connected with the nature of the Christian faith, and lead us to perceive how much is yet to be done in the future, in the work of applying to human life the principle here involved. This task Christianity sets before us. But how great is the danger, if we mistake the nature of this task, and of its connection with the innermost essence of Christianity, of losing the highest blessings which we enjoy in advance of antiquity, and of sinking far below that very antiquity which prophetically strove toward Christianity.