101

Wisdom

INTRODUCTION

THE special character of wisdom among the attainments of the mind shows itself in the things which everyone will agree can be said about wisdom—things which cannot be said about art and science, or knowledge and learning generally. We believe that, with the centuries, knowledge can be steadily increased and learning advanced, but we do not suppose that the same progress can be achieved in wisdom. The individual may grow in wisdom. The race does not seem to.

In the tradition of the great books, the moderns usually assert their superiority over the ancients in all the arts and sciences. They seldom claim superiority in wisdom. The phrase "modern science" needs no elucidation, but if anyone were to speak of modern wisdom, he would have to explain his meaning. As "modern" seems to have an immediately acceptable significance when it qualifies "science," so "ancient" seems to go with "wisdom," and to suggest that, with the centuries, far from increasing, wisdom may be lost.

Wisdom is more frequently and extensively the subject of discussion in the ancient and medieval than in the modern books. The ancients seem to have not only a greater yearning for wisdom, but also a greater interest in understanding what wisdom is and how it can be gained. The traditional discussion of wisdom, furthermore, has its foundations in the literature of the Old and the New Testament, as well as in the books of pagan antiquity.

This is not true of other forms of knowledge. The teachings of revealed religion open a path to the "heart of wisdom." They do not propose methods of scientific research. Again and again the Scriptures proclaim that "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"—a wisdom which develops with piety and worship, as science develops with experiment and proof.

Still another distinctive mark of wisdom is that it cannot be misused. We recognize that bad men as well as good may possess other kinds of knowledge. We have seen artistic skill and scientific truth put to evil use. But we do not ordinarily think a man wise unless he acts wisely. To act wisely is to act well, even as to have wisdom is to use it. The satirist's praise of folly condemns a useless wisdom. The theologian's condemnation of "worldly wisdom" dismisses it as the worst of folly—a counterfeit of wisdom.

Other forms of learning may separate knowledge from action; wisdom tends to unite them. Other forms of inquiry may be content with knowing and understanding the facts; the pursuit of wisdom aspires to a knowledge of good and evil. Plato, for example, makes the vision of the good the goal of a dialectic which ascends to wisdom, yet which does not rest there, but returns enlightened to the realm of action. This conception of wisdom is hinted at whenever we refrain from calling a man wise simply because he is learned—a scholar, scientist, or philosopher.

Again it is Plato who respects wisdom so highly that he will not call the philosopher wise, but only a lover of wisdom. "No god is a philosopher or seeker after wisdom, for he is wise already," Socrates says in the *Symposium;* "nor does any man who is wise seek after wisdom. Neither do the ignorant seek after wisdom." The lovers of wisdom are neither the wise nor the ignorant and foolish. As Socrates points out, they are "in a mean between the wise and the ignorant."

Aristotle would seem to disagree, not from a lower regard for wisdom, but because he identifies wisdom with philosophical knowledge, and especially with that highest branch of speculative science which is called "theology," "first philosophy," or "metaphysics." His use of the phrase "philosophical wisdom" to distinguish speculative from practical or political wisdom suggests that the philosopher may attain the wisdom he pursues. Yet Aristotle, like Plato, speaks of "philosophers or lovers of wisdom"; and Plato, like Aristotle, treats wisdom as one of the basic human virtues.

We shall return to the distinction which both Aristotle and Aquinas make between practical and speculative wisdom; they often call the latter simply "wisdom," in contrast to "prudence," which is their name for practical wisdom. Other writers, who treat wisdom as one, sometimes emphasize its speculative, and sometimes its practical, aspect. But for all of them, this double aspect remains part of wisdom's special character.

Lucretius, for example, believes,

Nothing is more sweet than full possession
Of those calm heights, well built, well fortified
By wise men's teaching, to look down from here
At others wandering below, men lost,
Confused, in hectic search for the right road.

The way of life, free from pain, the distress of fear, and futile struggle, is known only to the wise. Calm and repose are here suggested as attributes of the wise man. That also seems to be the implication of Dr. Johnson's "approbation of one who had attained to the state of the philosophical wise man, that is, to have no want of anything." When Boswell observes that then "the savage is a wise man," Johnson retorts: "Sir, I do not mean simply being without—but not having a want."

For Plotinus, wisdom seems to be purely speculative, and its repose a condition of the reasoning mind at rest. "Wisdom," he writes, "is a condition in a being that possesses repose. Think what happens when one has accomplished the reasoning process; as soon as we have discovered the right course, we cease to reason. We rest because we have come to wisdom." Still wisdom has a moral or, for Plotinus, an aesthetic aspect. "One Soul," he says, is "wise and lovely, another foolish and ugly. Soul-beauty is constituted by wisdom."

The practical or moral aspect of wisdom predominates in Milton, Rabelais, and Tolstoy. In *Paradise Lost,* Adam communicates his reflections on human knowledge to Raphael.

But apte the Mind or Fancie is to roave
Uncheckt, and of her roaving is no end;
Till warn'd, or by experience taught, she learn
That not to know at large of things remote
From use, obscure and suttle, but to know
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime Wisdom; what is more, is fume,
Or emptiness, or fond impertinence,
And renders us in things that most concerne
Unpractis'd, unprepar'd, and still to seek.

Gargantua, writing a letter to his son Pantagruel while the latter is a student in Paris, admonishes him in the words of Solomon that "Wisdom entereth not into a malicious mind, and that knowledge without conscience is but the ruin of the soul." In *War and Peace,* Pierre, after reiterating that "All we can know is that we know nothing. And that's the height of human wisdom," learns from the Mason that "the highest wisdom is not founded on reason alone, nor on those worldly sciences of physics, chemistry, and the like, into which intellectual knowledge is divided." The highest wisdom, the Mason continues, is "but one science—the science of the whole—the science explaining the whole creation and man's place in it. To receive that science it is necessary to purify and renew one's inner self . . . And to attain this end, we have the light called conscience that God has implanted in our souls."

Though Plato defines wisdom as the virtue of reason—that part of the soul which is for him the faculty of knowledge—he gives it the function of directing conduct as well as contemplating truth. "Him we call wise," Socrates declares in *The Republic,* "who has in him that little part which rules" and which has "a knowledge of what is for the interest of each of the three parts and of the whole." In the state as in the soul, "how can there be the least shadow of wisdom," the Athenian Stranger asks in the *Laws,* "where there is no harmony?"

There is no harmony or wisdom "when fair reasonings have their habitation in the soul, and yet do no good, but rather the reverse of good" because reason fails to rule or be obeyed. "When the soul is opposed to knowledge, or opinion, or reason, which are her natural lords," the Athenian Stranger goes on, "that I call folly, just as it is in the state, when the multitude refuses to obey their rulers or the laws."

The four virtues which Plato enumerates in both *The Republic* and the *Laws* are wisdom, temperance, courage, justice. Justice is given a certain preeminence in *The Republic* as somehow embracing the other three, but in the *Laws*, the ruling virtue is wisdom. Calling the virtues "divine goods" to distinguish them from such things as health, beauty, strength, and wealth, the Athenian Stranger makes wisdom "chief and leader of the divine class of goods . . . Next," he says, "follows temperance; and from the union of these two with courage springs justice, and fourth in the scale of virtue is courage." As the principle of these other virtues, wisdom like them engages in the life of action. It does not move solely in the realm of thought.

WHEN HE REFERS TO WISDOM as one of the five intellectual virtues, Aristotle uses the word "wisdom" as if it named a single virtue. In the passage in the *Politics* in which he says that "the courage, justice, and wisdom of a state have the same form and nature as the qualities which give the individual who possesses them the name of just, wise or temperate," he does not divide wisdom into the speculative and the practical. But he seldom overlooks that separation. The passage just cited, for instance, begins with the statement that "each one has just so much happiness as he has of virtue and wisdom, and of virtuous and wise action."

Here the reference to virtue *and* wisdom places wisdom outside the virtues, when the latter are conceived exclusively as *moral* virtues. Wisdom for Aristotle is a virtue only in the order of intellectual excellence, not of moral excellence or character. As an intellectual virtue, wisdom is not even involved in the growth or exercise of the moral virtues. It is as possible, Aquinas says, following Aristotle, to have the cardinal moral virtues without wisdom, as it is to have them without art or science. But for both Aquinas and Aristotle this is neither true nor intelligible unless we bear in mind the distinction between philosophical and practical wisdom, or between wisdom and prudence.

Though prudence is, no less than wisdom, an intellectual virtue—a quality of mind rather than of character—it belongs with the moral virtues. As the chapter on VIRTUE AND VICE indicates, the cardinal virtues according to Aquinas include prudence, not wisdom. Similarly, as may be seen in the chapter on PRUDENCE, Aristotle's theory holds it impossible to be good "without practical wisdom," just as it is impossible to be "practically wise without moral virtue."

Practical wisdom, Aristotle writes, "is concerned with things human and things about which it is possible to deliberate." Philosophical wisdom, on the other hand, "will contemplate none of the things that make a man happy." To explain the difference, Aristotle uses the example of the early Greek sages. "We say Anaxagoras, Thales, and men like them have philosophic but not practical wisdom, when we see them ignorant of what is to their own advantage . . . They know things that are remarkable, admirable, difficult, and divine, but useless; *viz.*, because it is not human goods they seek."

If "wisdom" connotes the highest form of knowledge, then the name, according to Aristotle, is more properly applied to speculative than to practical wisdom. The highest form of knowledge, in his view, is concerned with the highest objects. Hence, he says, "it would be strange to think that . . . practical wisdom is the best knowledge, since man is not the best thing in the world . . . But if the argument be that man is the best of the animals, this makes no difference; for there are other things much more divine in their nature than man," and wisdom is knowledge "of the things that are highest by nature."

When Hobbes distinguishes between prudence and sapience, he does not assign a special object to wisdom. "As much experience is *prudence*," he writes, "so is much science *sapience*." It is the amount of science a man possesses, not his possession of a particular kind of knowledge, which makes him wise. Descartes seems to take a similar view when he says that "the sciences taken all together are identical with human wisdom." But for Aristotle and Aquinas, philosophical wisdom can be differentiated from the other speculative virtues, such as the understanding of first principles or the scientific knowledge of the conclusions which can be demonstrated from them. It involves them, but it is distinct from them insofar as it uses principles to demonstrate conclusions concerning the highest causes. Wisdom can be called a science if it is understood that by reason of its object it stands at the apex of the sciences, crowning and perfecting them.

In the opening pages of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle identifies wisdom with the supreme philosophical science—the science which investigates first principles and causes. He calls it a "divine science" or "theology," for, as he says, "God is thought to be among the causes of all things and to be a first principle." It is not the most useful science, but the most "desirable on its own account and for the sake of knowing ... It alone exists for its own sake ... All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary than this, but none is better."

While adopting Aristotle's conception of wisdom, Aquinas finds it most eminently represented among the sciences, not by metaphysics or the theology of the philosophers, but by sacred doctrine or the theology based on revelation. "Since it is the part of a wise man to order and to judge," he writes, "and since lesser matters can be judged in the light of some higher cause ... therefore, he who considers absolutely the highest cause of the whole universe, namely God, is most of all called wise ... But sacred doctrine essentially treats of God viewed as the highest cause, for it treats of Him not only so far as He can be known through creatures just as the philosophers know Him ... but also so far as He is known to Himself alone and revealed to others. Hence," Aquinas concludes, "sacred doctrine is especially called wisdom."

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE wisdom of the philosopher and the wisdom of the theologian is more fully discussed in the chapters on METAPHYSICS and THEOLOGY. But we are concerned here with the further implications of the difference between natural and supernatural wisdom, or the wisdom of man and of God.

The Greeks insistently raise the question whether man can have wisdom. In the *Apology*, Socrates tells his accusers that his "cross-examination of the pretenders to wisdom" was a duty imposed upon him by the oracle which declared that there was no man wiser than himself. To understand the oracle's meaning, he tried to seek out wisdom in other men but, he says at his trial, "I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish." This gave him an insight into the kind of wisdom which he himself possessed.

"My hearers always imagine," Socrates declares, "that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others; but the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and by his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing." Again in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates refuses to call any man wise, "for that is a great name which belongs to God alone." For men, "lovers of wisdom or philosophers is the modest and befitting title."

Aristotle also says of the science which most deserves the name of wisdom, because it is a science of divine things, that "such a science either God alone can have, or God above all others." He does not think that the divine power can be jealous, but if there were any truth in what the poets say about the jealousy of the gods, "it would probably occur in this case above all, and all who excelled in this knowledge would be unfortunate." To whatever extent the possession of wisdom "might be justly regarded as beyond human power," it would be unfitting, in Aristotle's opinion, "for man not to be content to seek the knowledge that is suited to him."

This is even more typically a Christian than a pagan sentiment. "Christians have a particular knowledge," writes Montaigne, "of the extent to which curiosity is a natural and original evil in man. The urge to increase in wisdom and knowledge was the first downfall of the human race; it was the way by which man hurled himself into eternal damnation." In *Paradise Lost,* as he is about to leave the Garden of Eden, Adam says to the angel Michael:

Greatly instructed I shall hence depart.
Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill
Of knowledge, what this vessel can containe;
Beyond which was my folly to aspire.

To which the angel replies:

This having learnt, thou hast attained the summe
Of wisdom . . .

But Sacred Scripture does more than enjoin man to humble himself before the chasm between human wisdom at its best and the infinite wisdom of God. It does more than say in the words of Jeremiah: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," for it also says that "fools despise wisdom." In the Epistle of James we find true wisdom set apart from false. If the knowledge of the wise man is not accompanied by the "meekness of wisdom," if instead there is "bitter envying and strife in your hearts," then "this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish . . . But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Saint Paul asks: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? When

. . . the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

But unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

"My speech and my preaching," Saint Paul continues to the Corinthians,

. . . was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden mystery, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

Wonder is the beginning of the kind of natural wisdom which a philosopher like Aristotle regards as the ultimate goal of human inquiry. But the supernatural wisdom of which Scripture speaks begins with the fear of God and comes to man not through his efforts at learning, but only as a divine gift. "If any of you lack wisdom," Saint James declares, "let him ask God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." It is wrong for a man to take pride in his own learning but, according to Pascal, "the proper place for pride is in wisdom, for it cannot be granted to a man that he has made himself wise . . . God alone gives wisdom, and that is why *Qui gloriatur, in Domino glorietur.*"

The theologians dwell at length on the text of the Psalmist that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Enumerating seven steps to wisdom, Augustine writes: "First of all, it is necessary that we should be led by the *fear of God* to seek the knowledge of His will, what He commands us to desire and what to avoid. Now this fear will of necessity excite in us the thought of our mortality and of the death that is before us, and crucify all the motions of pride as if our flesh were nailed to the tree." Then in succession come the steps of piety, knowledge, resolution, counsel, purification of heart; and, finally, the "holy man will be so single and so pure in heart that he will not step aside from the truth, either for the sake of pleasing men or with a view to avoid any of the annoyances which beset this life. Such a man ascends to *wisdom,* which is the seventh and the last step, and which he enjoys in peace and tranquility."

Only the wisdom which begins with faith, according to Aquinas, also begins with fear. "A thing may be called the beginning of wisdom in two ways," he explains; "in one way, because it is the beginning of wisdom itself as to its essence; in another way, as to its effect.

Thus the beginning of an art as to its essence consists in the principles from which that art proceeds, while the beginning of an art as to its effect is that wherefrom it begins to operate." Aquinas then points out that wisdom is considered by theologians "in one way, and in another way by philosophers." As the wisdom of the philosophers does not begin with articles of faith but with axioms of reason, so it does not begin with fear but with wonder.

The wisdom of the philosophers and the wisdom of the religious both consist in knowledge of divine things, but "wisdom, as we look at it," Aquinas writes, "is considered not only as being cognizant of God, as it is with the philosophers, but also as directing human conduct, since this is directed not only by the human law, but by the divine law . . . Accordingly the beginning of wisdom as to its essence consists in the first principles of wisdom, *i.e.*, the articles of faith, and in this sense faith is said to be the beginning of wisdom. But as regards the effect, the beginning of wisdom is the point where wisdom begins to work, and in this way fear is the beginning of wisdom, yet servile fear in one way and filial fear in another.

"For servile fear," Aquinas explains, "is like a principle disposing a man to wisdom from without, in so far as he refrains from sin through fear of punishment, and is thus fashioned for the effect of wisdom . . . On the other hand, chaste or filial fear is the beginning of wisdom, as being the first effect of wisdom. For since the regulation of human conduct by the divine law belongs to wisdom, in order to make a beginning, man must first of all fear God and submit himself to Him."

The special character of wisdom which we noted earlier—that it is at once speculative and practical knowledge, that it is concerned both with the ultimate nature of things and the ultimate good for man—seems to be strikingly exemplified in what the theologian calls "the gift of wisdom." Wisdom as Plato conceives it may have this double character, but for Aristotle, as we have seen, wisdom, as opposed to prudence, is purely speculative. It remains speculative even when it deals with the end which is the good of each thing "and in general with the supreme good in the whole of nature." It considers the end or the good, as Aristotle indicates, only under the aspect of investigating "the first principles and causes; for the good, *i.e.*, the end, is one of the causes." It does not thereby direct man to his own end, or lay down the rules of a good life.

The supernatural gift of wisdom, Aquinas tells us, "is not merely speculative but also practical . . . It belongs to wisdom as a gift, not only to contemplate divine things, but also to regulate human acts." Such infused wisdom not only extends "to the hidden mysteries of divine things," which are beyond the greatest wisdom man can acquire by his natural efforts, but this wisdom also directs man's actions to "the sovereign good which is the last end, by knowing which man is said to be truly wise."

Christian theologians like Augustine and Aquinas do not hold the wisdom of the philosophers in contempt because they fail to penetrate the divine mysteries, or to guide man to his salvation. Augustine finds in Plato's teaching a marvelous foreshadowing of Christian wisdom. "It is evident that none come nearer to us than the Platonists," he says, when he attributes to Plato the conception of "the wise man as one who imitates, knows, loves this God, and who is rendered blessed through fellowship with Him in His own blessedness." Though Aquinas holds that "wisdom as a gift is more excellent than wisdom as an intellectual virtue, since it attains to God more intimately by a kind of union of the soul with Him," he certainly regards Aristotle as the epitome of natural wisdom when he refers to him as "*the* philosopher."

The admonition of Saint Paul, "to beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world," does not seem to be interpreted by Augustine and Aquinas to mean, as Montaigne later suggests, that "the plague of man is the opinion of knowledge. That is why ignorance is so recommended by our religion." But the theologians do condemn the counterfeits of wisdom to which men are susceptible. These are false wisdoms; the wisdom of the philosophers is not false, but imperfect.

We find three types of false worldly wisdom listed by Aquinas. If a man "fixes his end in external earthly things," he writes, "his wisdom is called *earthly;* if in the goods of the body, it is called *sensual* wisdom; if in some excellence, it is called *devilish* wisdom, because it imitates the devil's pride." These worldly wisdoms constitute for him the sin of folly. "It is the wisdom of the world," Aquinas says, "which deceives and makes us foolish in God's sight . . . Though no man wishes to be a fool," he adds, "yet he wishes those things of which folly is a consequence, *viz.* to withdraw his sense from spiritual things and to plunge it into earthly things." The essence of such folly, according to the Psalmist, lies in denial: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

But there is another meaning of folly, in which it is neither a sin nor the opposite of wisdom. "If any man among you seem to be wise in this world," Saint Paul declares, "let him become a fool, that he may be wise." Commenting on this text, Aquinas explains that "just as there is an evil wisdom called *worldly wisdom* . . . so too there is a good folly opposed to this evil wisdom, whereby man despises worldly things." If there is wisdom in such folly, so also, according to Aquinas, there can be wisdom in those whom the world regards as natural fools or innocents. If they have grace, he writes, "baptized idiots, like little children, have the habit of wisdom, which is a gift of the Holy Ghost, but they have not the act, on account of the bodily impediment which hinders the use of reason in them."

Throughout the tradition of the great books those who praise folly do not take exception to the Psalmist's remark that only "fools despise wisdom." Rather they find wisdom in the appearances of folly, and use the wisdom of fools to expose the folly of those who pretend to be wise. "The wise have more to learn from the fools than the fools from the wise," writes Montaigne, quoting Cato the Elder; and in a similar vein, Touchstone, the clown in *As You Like It,* complains: "The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly." To which Celia replies: "By my troth, thou sayest true; for, since the little wit that fools have was silenced, the little foolery that wise men have makes a great show." And later, after a conversation with Touchstone about the passing of time, Jaques observes: "When I did hear the motley fool thus moral on the time, my lungs began to crow like chanticleer that fools should be so deep contemplative."

Erasmus, quoting scripture, Cicero, the Stoics, and others, declares that only God is wise and that all men are fools. He even goes so far as to say that Christ, "though he is the wisdom of the Father, was made something of a fool himself in order to help the folly of mankind, when he assumed the nature of man."

Nevertheless, the jesters and clowns in Shakespeare's comedies have a kind of wisdom. In *Twelfth Night,* the clown who banters with Viola denies that he is the Lady Olivia's fool, but says he is simply "her corrupter of words." The trouble, he explains, is not that he lacks reason, but that "words are grown so false that I am loath to prove reason with them"; and he ends by telling Viola: "Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere. I would be sorry, sir, but the fool should be as oft with your master as with my mistress. I think I saw your wisdom there."

Pantagruel persuades Panurge to take counsel of a fool. "The wise may be instructed by a fool," he says. "You know how by the advice and counsel and prediction of fools, many kings, princes, states, and commonwealths have been preserved, battles gained, and diverse doubts of a most perplexed intricacy resolved." As he who "is called a worldly wise man," Pantagruel goes on to remark, may "in the second judgment of the intelligences which are above . . . be esteemed a fool," so he may be thought a sage who lays "quite aside those cares which are conducible to his body or his fortunes . . . All which neglects of sublunary things are vulgarly imputed folly."

To the same general effect are Pierre's reflections in *War and Peace* on the period of his blissful insanity after the burning of Moscow. When he recalls the views he formed of men and circumstances at the time of his madness, he always finds them correct. "I may have appeared strange and queer then," he says to himself, "but I was not so mad as I seemed. On the contrary, I was wiser and had more insight than at any other time, and understood all that is worth understanding in life, because . . . because I was happy."

FOLLY IS NOT ALWAYS PRAISED in paradox, nor is it seriously condemned only by the Christian theologian who equates it with denying or turning away from God. "Delusion is the elder daughter of Zeus," says Agamemnon in *The Iliad*, "the accursed who deludes all; her feet are delicate and they step not on the firm earth, but she walks the air above men's heads and leads them astray . . . Yes, for once Zeus even was deluded." Agamemnon concludes the story of Zeus's befuddlement by relating how in his rage Zeus "caught by the shining hair of her head the goddess Delusion in the anger of his heart, and swore a strong oath, that never after this might Delusion, who deludes all, come back to Olympos and the starry sky. So speaking, he whirled her about in his hand and slung her out of the starry heaven, and presently she came to men's establishments."

On the earthly plane, folly takes many forms, of which, in Montaigne's judgment, the most exasperating are dullness of wit, the boldness of stupidity, and contentiousness in argument. "Obstinacy of opinion and heat in argument are the surest proofs of folly," he observes. "Is there anything so assured, resolute, disdainful, contemplative, serious, and grave as the ass?"

Whatever the forms or aspects of folly, and however the wisdom it implies or opposes be conceived, one thing is clear throughout the tradition of western thought. No one who can separate true wisdom from folly in disguise places anything but the highest value on it in the order of human goods.

The final utterance of the Chorus in *Antigone*, that "our happiness depends on wisdom"; the Aristotelian doctrine that "the activity of philosophic wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of virtuous activities" and "all the other attributes ascribed to the supremely happy man are evidently those connected with this activity"; the statement by Plato in his *The Seventh Letter*, in which he demands that his myth of the philosopher-king be taken seriously, for "the human race will not see better days until either the stock of those who rightly and genuinely follow philosophy acquire political authority, or else the class who have political control be led by some dispensation of providence to become real philosophers"—all these express the tribute which pagan antiquity pays to wisdom in human life and society.

To the Christian—theologian, mystic, or poet—it is in heaven with the saints who dwell in God's presence that wisdom, like love, reigns supreme. Nor are these two unconnected. As charity is the perfection of the will, so wisdom is the perfection of the intellect. In *The Divine Comedy*, Aquinas explains to Dante when they meet in Paradise how lack of wisdom's order in the mind goes hand in hand with love's disorder. "He is right low down among the fools," the spirit says, "who affirms or denies without distinguishing; because it happens that oftentimes hasty opinion inclines to the wrong side, and then fondness for it binds the intellect."

With the accent on earth rather than on heaven, with reliance upon reason rather than upon faith, Spinoza voices a comparable insight that to have wisdom is to love wisely, for to know wisely is to love God. "It is therefore most profitable to us in this life," he writes, "to make perfect the intellect or reason as far as possible, and in this one thing consists the highest happiness or blessedness of man; for blessedness is nothing but the peace of mind which springs from the intuitive knowledge of God." Not only does "the highest possible peace of mind" arise from this kind of knowledge but, he adds, from it also "necessarily springs the intellectual love of God."