

# Floyer Sydenham

## Truth

## Or

## The Nature of Things

## A Resumé

### Book the First

The muses are not going to be asked to praise Mars, Venus, or Bacchus, but Truth. The poem will consider the things that distract us from Truth and show the value of Philosophy.

But the muses the poet calls on are not the familiar muses of Parnassus.

*(Instead, these are the muses Plato talks about in the Myth of Er, in the Republic.)*

*(Lines 43ff)*

Come all ye Muses, lead the song; not ye  
Parnassian, vulgar, various, of your Aid  
To every Rhymer liberal; but ye  
Celestial, sitting on the radiant Spheres;  
Who rule in Rhythm their Motions, as they roll,  
Now leading, & now following, each by turns;  
Who tune them, as they sound, for Consonance;  
And with their varying Motions while they change  
Their Sounds, form All one perfect Melody,  
Grateful to the Ear of Intellect, compose;  
Ye Syren-Sisters Nine, whom at a Birth  
The Abyss of Things, pregnant by Truth, produc'd;  
Come joyn with Me, to celebrate your Sire;  
To celebrate of all-victorious Truth

The Triumphs; of fair Truth the Beauty bright  
To blaz'n; of blissful Truth to sing the Joys,  
That from his own Life-giving Well spring up,  
Ceaseless supply'd to Those who ceaseless draw.

And may thy genius Chesterfield...

*(Lord Chesterfield is lover of Truth)*

Reason can help us escape the distractions of life, such as of Opinion, Fancy, Hope, Rage, Superstition, Despair and Tyranny – which are all caused by the ignorance of Truth, as is...

*(Lines 190ff)*

The visionary Being of Honour vain;  
Knowledge mis-nam'd, with Toys for Children, Tricks  
For idle Boys, & wonderment for Fools,  
Filling the vacant Brain; & Pleasure's Charms,  
Our close Embraces mocking with a Cloud.

Truth every potent spell dissolves...

*(Lines 204ff)*

Clears up the Mind, the jarring Elements  
Composes; & the Soul is all-serene.

The fire of Truth removes all vanities...

*(Lines 206ff)*

Thy word divine in all-consuming Fire,  
Goes forth & Fancy's vast Creation, sprung  
Newly out of Nothing, into Nothing turns:  
Those happy Plains of Arcady, the Land,

Where Love is Life's whole Business, its sole Bliss  
Amorous Enjoyment; there, where Lovers find  
From their Belov'd equal Return of Love,  
Uninterrupted, unremitting Love,  
Untir'd, unchanging, elsewhere sought in vain:  
And all the Realms of Fairy, 3ravel'd o'er  
In Revery grave by many a musing Mind;  
When th'inward World in Conflagration wide,  
Kindled by Reason, burns and purifys,  
They in a Flash fly; & are seen no more.

The light of Truth makes nonsense of "the big-blown empty Bulk of Pedantry", sophistry, braggarty,  
"Fruitless babel structures" and the "Paper-Pedigree...of Ancestry".

But –

*(Line 281)*

Repine not at thy Fall, great Nothingness!

These "Cobweb Structures vanish", as does Hypocrisy, and Enthusiasm, which can inspire conflict  
and "mutual Slaughter."

When Truth reigns the world will be as new –

*(Lines 401ff)*

.....for with Thee on starry Throne  
Seated, thy daughter, without Mother born,  
Shall reign, Celestial Venus: while her Son,  
His Ivory Sceptre heading with pure Fire,  
Atherial-pure (less pow'rful strikes the Soul  
He with his flame-tip'd Arrows,) soft shall touch,

Shall charm his Psyche; & as now the Gods,  
Then Mortal Hearts no less shall captivate,  
To serve true Beauty. Under thee shall reign  
Liberty godlike, as in golden Days  
Of Saturn...  
In thy blest Reign Heav'n-sprung Philosophy  
Shall flourish, as of old in her first Spring;  
When taught by the learned Pipe of Samos' Sage,  
The Grecian Songsters warbled Airs divine.  
Then the Platonic Muse, in loftier strains,  
Thy Conquests & triumphant Joy shall sing....

The false world vanishes – the rubbish of books - The solemn Lecture, & the spritely Ball.

*(Lines 486ff)*

For lo! Things Earthly vanish'd, Heav'n on high  
Wide opens o'er me to my wondering View;  
The real archetypal ideal World;  
Never to end, for never it began;  
On Mind's immovable Foundation fix'd,  
Through Unity compact, encompass'd round  
By Eternity's strong Fences, and by Thee,  
O Truth, illum'd with ever-during Day.

But now the muse must rest ere...

*(Lines 499ff)*

...with high Voice to sing

The Wonders of the Day-discover'd World.

## Book the Second

Sleep - bordering worlds of sense and intellect -

Sleep lifts me to the upper air – Luna's circling wall..

Broad-extended Space...

Looking down into this world (*the Lunar world of change, it seems*) the poet sees it is "into two realms divided." The lower is the land of memory. The poet looks down, through memory, at the succession of historical characters and their apparent Triumphs, which are all false, and "trod in Dust."

The muse...

(Line 130)

...bade me turn my eyes to other sights...

These are sights of new Sadness, the great Cities, the works of men...

(Line 158)

...The Glories of old Rome...

(Line 179)

But chief among them there behold, & mourn,

(And without mourning who can there behold?)

The borrow'd Ornament and Pride of Rome

Imperial; but the Produce natural

Of Athens free...

Even the

*(Lines 189ff)*

Marbles, to which the Grecian Graces gave

To live & breathe...

It is melancholy contemplating the lamentable lot of sublunary glory,

In shades perpetual-tomb'd with the dark Dead,

And in this Atom-World for ever lost:

Above the world of memory is "that upper realm, adjoining, where Imagination Rules the Sceptre".  
How can this world of constant change be described? This world of things...

*(Lines 250ff)*

Unstable, ever-waving; to and fro

So flutter they, so flit they up & down?

Poets can bring these things to Earth, sometimes combining these things of Imagination with things from the world of Memory, as is the case with the works of Homer, or the epics of Charlemagne.

Poets can bring them to this earth

But not just these ideas, but whole worlds of Imagination can also be brought to Earth...

*(Lines 341ff)*

Nor only have great Bards the pow'rful Skill,

With Beings of Fancy-Land to people Earth;

...

The mighty Magick of the Muse can draw

Down from the Sky this Fancy Land itself;

Can seat it where she pleases; or in

Parts divide, & scatter like the Cyclades,  
O'er the vast Ocean: Like Latona's Isle,  
The floating Delos; where the Goddess' Womb,  
After long Wandrings & much Labour, oped  
And gave to smiling heav'n & joyous Earth  
A Phoebus & a Diana...

These mythic characters can be brought to places on Earth, such as the stories of Bacchus and Calypso.

And great poets can draw on the world of Imagination, most notably Shakespeare, Spenser (in a cancelled line the poet calls him "my own great master"), who "plundered fancy" and left the world of fancy empty, Milton, and "the Mantuan Bard" (Virgil).

But these fancies should not be used for (in cancelled lines) "scaring mind, with priestly chains to fetter its freedom..."

In the past the "Muse spoke truth through well-fram'd fictions, prophetic", but these words were corrupted by sophists.

We should not expect to find perfection in people on earth. One might despair...

*(Line 573)*

And the Pursuit of Virtue quite give o'er.

And we might think Virtue is "chimerical, of Fancy Land", but what we are seeing is the "subject matter" of "that piece divine". This is a world of change, but all this is superficial.

The Form is all from those real Essences  
Deriv'd, who dwell in Truth's Aerial World.

### **Book the Third**

The poet invokes Reason –

*(Lines 44ff)*

Parent of Wisdom! Thou best Friend to Man!  
Reason Divine! Thee, and thy powerful Aid  
Let me invoke...

Reason guided the poet from his youth. Reason was...

*(Line 55)*

My inward Oracle, my Guardian-God...

Youth brings with it all the distractions from Truth but...

*(unnumbered lines)*

For this the Cure has Thou prepar'd; for This  
Virtue. Thine Offspring, has sent down on Earth,  
Mistress of human Life, Artificer  
Of human Happiness, of human Woes  
Healer to All who would indeed be heal'd,  
To such as Health prefer to this Disease.

Virtue, who is the daughter of Reason (or, elsewhere, of Truth itself) is sent to guide us and to help us see...

*(Lines 164ff)*

...and seeing, to enjoy  
Beauty, whose light beautifys, of Truth  
The peerless beauty, Theme of my high Song.  
O for the blissfull Vision! Might I view,  
Once might I view, my Muse, on the light Wings

Of Rapture, like the day-delighted Lark,  
Lifted, should soaring sing, & reach her Theme.  
Come then, O Virtue, healing Pow'r! come, Child  
Of Reason, Sovereign artist; Thou, to whom  
All his best Arts he teaches: in whom dwells  
His all-restoring Spirit; and to whom  
Truth his own Good imparts: celestial Maid!  
Angel of Peace below, and Bliss above;  
Carefully sought, courted with warm Desire,  
And worship'd with the Pray'r sincere of Love;  
O come, thy suppliant with the Skill divine  
To heal, thy Lover with thy Self to bless.

And lo! She comes, O Reason, led by Thee,  
Her Sire: from her obscure retreat she comes,  
On Earth an Outcast, solitary, unknown,  
From the foul stain of human Commerce free...

Virtue helps us know Beauty and find Good, and...

*(Line 193)*

That elemental knowledge of my Self...

Virtue can guide the poet to higher realms where he can see the true Nature of Things.

*(Lines 202ff)*

...

Soaring shall I escape: with Thee ascend  
Thy Sire's bright Chariot: there my eyes shall mix  
Their kindred Beams with his, undazzled thence

Shall gaze th'Eternal world, fill'd with his Light:  
Nor fear the Fulness of Meridian Day...

Virtue speaks:

... A charm  
I bring thee, Words divine, whose gentle Sound  
Can turn to peaceful Calm the loudest Storms  
Within, & make soft Air breath thro the Soul:  
Whose Musick can the jarring Passions tune  
To Harmony, & move in Measure just  
Their wild Disorder: sacred Syllables  
Of Virtue to restore Strength to the Weak,  
The Lamp of Light relumine to the Blind,  
And thought extinguish'd in dead Minds revive.

The poet, while waiting for plumes to grow, the plumes of wings with which to ascend to the Fields of Truth, listens to Virtues's teaching. She explains her laws -

*(Lines 256ff)*

This is the (first?) – that Virtue is thy Law,  
Law of Man's Nature; & in consequence  
Of this, that Virtue is the highest Good,  
And hence thine End, whilst thou continues Man  
On Earth; that further, Virtue is thy Way  
To a superior Nature, & thy Guide  
To Bliss in th'higher World, the World of Truth.  
This perfectly to learn, & truly know;  
What Nature is, in general, her Self,  
Her Pow'rs, & General Laws, thou must be taught:

Indeed, Virtue is identical with the Law in Nature. Virtue is the Law in Nature and the way of knowing that Law.

*(Lord Shaftesbury would have agreed.)*

But before ascending false opinions must be removed from the poet's mind...

*(A lengthy section has been cancelled here, discussing the cosmos, e.g.*

*(Lines 348ff)*

*...For the mighty Mundane Spirit;  
To whom each Point of the vast Universe  
Is Centre, whence he darts his Rays, that reach  
Th'immense circumference, and feel to the Ends  
Of Being;..)*

#### **Book the Fourth**

This is the continuing teaching of Virtue – of

The first cause of Motion, Of the forms of Nature,  
Of Universal Mind, the Original of all Forms...

This includes the generation of Animals and Vegetables and the production of fossils, all deriving from...

The Sovereign Mind sole Cause of All things...

Everything comes from Mind, the Universal Mind. These are the higher teachings which belong to Virtue's sister, Wisdom.

*(The sisters are hard to distinguish – perhaps Virtue speaks of the Law in Nature, and Wisdom of the Law in itself, in the higher regions.)*

*(Lines 10ff)*

Sing, Heav'nly Muse: in higher Strains rehearse  
Doctrines sublime, which that celestial Maid,  
Virtue, went on to teach, her Sister's Lore,  
So modest Virtue term'd it; Wisdom's Lore:  
But justly might she claim it, as her own:  
Half her own Nature is Contemplative,  
Half Practice: human Happiness results  
From Both united; Virtue this completes;  
And complete Virtue forms the Perfect Man.

Life moves the world and comes ...

*(Lines 37ff)*

Of an invisible, an Inward World  
Of Forms forever living; of that World,  
Which thou aspir'st to view, prepare to hear.

Man can move things, his own thoughts, through Will. The same is true of the Universe itself, which has one Soul, the Mundane Soul. As Man lives

*(Lines 80ff)*

So is it with the Universe: for Man  
Is of the Universe an Abstract true,  
Of all its Parts partaking: of the Whole  
A just complete Epitome; the Same  
Their Elements, their Principles the same.  
Like Man's then, is the World's great Body mov'd  
By the One Great Soul: the Motions of that Soul,  
Like Man's, depend on Mind.

And the Natural World is also full of Virtue – even every drop of water has the same form, or Virtue, because...

*(Lines 175ff)*

...the Mundane Soul,  
Its self imparting, giveth Soul; to Each  
A distinct Soul, that each may call its own...

And the Soul in each work of Nature guides its formation.

*(Lines 237ff)*

For Universal Mind eternal, He,  
Who every where in All things ever is,  
He, who perceives & comprehends once  
Past, Present, Future, (present, equally  
To Him are always All things) this Great Mind  
Forms-animal ennobles, and uplifts  
Nearer himself...

All living creatures...

Imparting unto each a mind particular...

When the Mind of a creature is aware of its senses, it is called Sense, when she introverts her eye Mind is called Reason.

Animals (*it appears to the poet*) are concerned with Sense, with outward things, but man is able to reason, and is able to know the Ideal forms of things in his Mind. He can draw these down with his Science and Art and make things which improve even on the natural world. (*Some may question this.*) He may sometimes look to the outer world, but he is able...

*(Lines 260ff)*

From there retiring inward, oft to hold  
Converse with Forms Ideal, mental Beings,  
Which, with his Essence, he derives from Mind  
Eternal: for in Mind they always are;  
But in Man's Mind, lye dormant, till awak'd  
By her fair handmaids, Sciences & Arts;  
The prime, the fundamental Sciences  
Of Number & Figure, those sole Founts  
Of Harmony and Beauty; the fine Arts,  
Which, on the Basis of those Sciences,  
Raise rude Materials up to beauteous Forms  
Of the Mind's own Conception; or select  
From every Part of Nature what is found  
In each the fairest, in the Artist's Mind  
Assemble them, still following Nature's Rules,  
And copying thence, exhibit fairer Scenes  
Than Nature ever yielded, fairer Forms  
Than Nature e'er created; Spencer's Bow'r,  
Virgil's Elysium, Milton's Paradise,  
Alcina's gardens, or the Groves of Stow;  
Forms, for Pembroke's or for Orford's Hall,  
Forms, that would Badminton or Blenheim grace.  
That Radnor, Bruce, & Richmond would admire;...

All these works are "puerile and fatiguing" compared to Mind itself.

But Nature is an Image of the Mundane Soul.

...the Mundane Soul

Into all Nature forth he goes, he gives

Outward existence to his own fair Forms,  
And makes a World the Image of Himself.  
For Universal Nature, full of Life;  
Life Universal, still accompany'd  
By Soul...

In this way Nature is the

*(Line 348)*

All-comprehensive Plan, of the Great Mind.

*(But this is quite a different thing, one might say, from the modern idea of "Intelligent design." Yes, this is the work of "intelligence", but the design is the eternal Ideas, which are embodied in the changing would of Nature.)*

The Mundane Soul, copied in all things, inspires creatures to live, and act, as birds make nests, and  
"Man becomes of All within his Reach, The Earthly Lord."

And as a result of this...

*(Lines 450ff)*

...Views how vast  
Open'd on Russian Peter's Kingly Mind,  
To augment his Pow'r, & aggrandise his Race!  
What great Ideas fill'd the Mind of Pitt,  
To aggrandise his Country, yet preserve  
Her Freedom sacred from Tyrannic Pow'r!

*(This is William Pitt, the elder, who guided the Seven Years War.)*

Even fossils are formed in the working of Nature...

*(This is an 18<sup>th</sup> century idea that fossils are formed as fossils, a separate order of creatures. It is no longer held to be true by followers of Truth and Virtue.)*

All creatures belong to Species, which have a Form common to the Species, but every creature within that Species is an individual which also has the unifying Form of the Species:

*(Lines 608ff)*

...Every Individual Being  
(And Individual Beings are infinite  
In every Kind) of its Idea bears  
The Image; of its Archetype, the Type...

### **Book the Fifth**

The wisest of men (*so the Delphic oracle called Socrates*) sang these Truths. Now the poet hopes that Lyttelton (*praised as a writer of prose and poetry, and the creator, or improver, of a famous landscape at Hagley*) will be an audience to his "mean, but well meant" song:

*(Lines 1ff)*

O! for the Syren-Voice of that fair Swan  
Seen, in Prophetic Vision by the Sage,  
Whom Delphi's ancient Oracle pronounc'd  
Wisest of Men; seen rising from his Breast,  
Soaring aloft, & filling Earth & Heav'n  
With sweetest Melody. His heav'nly Theme  
Is one with mine; our Song the same, attun'd  
To Nature's Harmony. For He too sang  
The Cause of all Reality in Things;  
The Cause of all Stability in Being;  
The Fount of Beauty, & the Source of Good;  
He in loose Numbers, in those manlier Notes

Of Wisdom- grown mature: My Muse, confin'd  
 In Verse, as Infant-Wisdom lisp'd of old,  
 Revives the Subject, & repeats the Song.  
 To His enchanting Musick ancient Greece  
 Listen'd with charm'd Attention: next old Rome,  
 The slow to Science; then, in every Clime,  
 Where'er Greece spread her Wisdom, Rome her Arms,  
 Whoe'er had ears to hear, or Heart to feel,  
 Hear, hearken'd, felt, applauded. My low Voice  
 And ill-strung Lyre, amidst the deaf'ning Din  
 Of Discord's Rout, of roaring Demagogues,  
 In Fields of endless Controversy met,  
 Equal Opponents, little to be heard,  
 Less to be listen'd to, expects or dreams  
 Unless Thou, Lyttelton, wilt deign to' attend,  
 And for the Subject's sake, approve the Song.  
 Tho of harmonious Numbers be compos'd  
 Thy Soul, & tho in Harmony it breathes;  
 Thy Heart, inspir'd with the pure Love of Truth,  
 And Liberty, best friend of Truth below,  
 Spontaneous (?) and listens (*"oft has listened" deleted*) to Attempts  
 Mean, but well meant, their Praises forth to sound.  
 Thee Wisdom naked, or in simplest Dress,  
 Delights; thy Self canst give her Ornaments,  
 Master of Elegance in Prose or Rhythm.  
 Truth is the Soul of Harmony, the Spring  
 Of unadulterated simple Elegance.  
 So sings the Muse.

Virtue continues teaching the poet her lore. She declares that –

- Form is the reason, soul of nature
- This alone is real being, not the “still-shifting scenes of form”, and whatever “is born to die.”
- Mind is cause of motion in all nature.
- All things are the plan of a designing Mind.
- Its essence ever must be uniform.
- 

Man always follows an end, which is the good in what he does, or what he sees as good for himself.  
The Sovereign Mind has only Good in view.

*(Lines 149ff)*

Therefore the End of Mind is to perceive,  
To know, & contemplate...

All things come from Mind.

Even things without Reason follow Good in Nature.

*(Lines 205ff)*

Thus the green Herbage thick, that naked earth  
Apparels, the rough Hardness of the Soil  
Smoothing & soft'ning, Carpet yields by Day,  
And Couch by Night, to homeless Quadrupeds,  
Born to repose & sleep on the bare Ground:

Plants can have medicinal Virtues, or they can be...

Flowers to cheer the heart & sooth the Soul.

*(Lines 231ff)*

Good was intended to all Animals  
But specially to Man; who thro their Means  
More Good attains, than e'er was meant for Brutes.

Some creatures lack senses, or live in environments where some senses are useless. Fish may be insensible to sound. Subterranean creatures may have no use for sight. But even in these cases Nature gives creatures senses for their good, such as the senses required to find and have pleasure in food.

(The manuscript of Book the Fifth breaks with an unfinished line:

(Line 314)

Pleasure of Sense to feel,

*(The missing, and some, perhaps, unwritten books may have discussed more of the working of Virtue in the world of Nature and human life.)*

### **Book the Eighteenth**

*("Twentieth" is cancelled, and other numbers also.)*

*(Lines 1ff)*

Hail Mighty One! Who being of thy Self

Perfect Intelligence, has in thy Self

The Fulness of Intelligible Forms:

This is MIND.

*(Line 12ff)*

So sang his Praises the heav'nly Muse.

Soon as I waken'd from the Trance Divine

To Self-Reflection. But I now perceiv'd

This Muse to be the Voice of my own Mind,

Enlighten'd with a transitory Beam

Of Truth, twixt error's flying broken Clouds;

And like the Delphian Priestess, for a while

Inspir'd high Things to tell...

The worlds that the poet has considered, two worlds, (*are these still Memory and Imagination?*), are worlds of forms within matter (*which is indefinable*), subject to change, Protean. But...

(Lines 43ff)

Far otherwise is this fair Land of Truth,

The world Intelligible;...

The "intelligible world" is the world of Forms, free of matter, the true nature of things. We can, because we have Reason, study this true nature, through several sciences –

(Lines 65ff)

- Of the essential Forms - Numbers... (ARITHMETIC)
- The Science of Forms as shapes and dimensions (GEOMETRY)
- The Science of celestial Forms (ASTRONOMY)

And MUSIC –

(Lines 89ff)

...So in Sounds;

Their several Combinations, & what Sounds

Agree in Concord; of what Sounds the Train

Makes Harmony; & whar Harmonious Parts,

In Sequel, the harmonious Tunefull Whole

Lead up, bring on, or close, to comprehend;

Of Musick is the Science: & in Sounds,

Sameness & Difference together joyn'd:

For Difference unmix'd with Sameness makes

Discord; & Sameness sole is Unison,

Nought other in Effect than Simple Sound.  
And Form, Identity and Diversity,  
Were of all Science the sole Principles...

The highest Science is to know Mind, which is Unity and pure Intelligence –

*(Lines 107ff)*

...the Science Primary;  
It is to know, How Things are known, & What  
Is Science; 'tis to know by What they're known,  
For 'tis the Knowledge of the Mind its Self;  
Known therefore by some higher Principle...  
...That Ray  
Of Unity, the Fountain-Head of Light;  
The Principle of Form, the Source of Mind:  
Whose Knowledge Simple is pure Intelligence,  
To Science Fundamental; & whose Eye,  
Enlightening Reason, is pure Intellect.

In the world of matter forms change, become separate, and as separate things can no longer mix.

*(This is obscure – but though Nature is infinitely creative and produces new works, it is not producing new Forms, which are the higher realities.)*

The Soul draws these Forms in Nature into Memory, but Soul draws them into memory...

*(Lines 171ff)*

But Fancy all the Time, impertinent,  
...sets herself to work;

...creating misunderstandings, and wrong and rambling opinions.

The poet envisions the Forms, or Ideas, in himself as globes of light. (*This is made clear in the following book, and may have been explained in missing pages.*) He contemplates the Forms within his own Mind and the ways in which, through Reason, he can understand the nature of the Forms and their workings.

(Lines 230ff)

All Energys & Actions are best known  
By doing them: to reason then resolv'd,  
The Globes, within me latent, forth I call'd  
Distinctly, those Ideas General,  
Specific, and Particular, up-rais'd  
All in their Triple Order;...

There are three kinds of Forms – General (common to all), Specific (common to a species, or order of things) and Particular (belonging to that individual thing.) These are envisaged as coloured globes. The Forms in his Mind have varied colour –

(Lines 239ff)

...Part of this  
Was from its Grandsire-Globe deriv'd., & made  
Its General Colour: from its Parent-Globe  
Part was deriv'd immediately, & gave  
Its Colour Special, which distinguish'd it  
From all its Kindred-Forms Particular.

Therefore, reasoning by induction, the poet could juggle these spheres, move, combine, and separate, and understand the "Difference and sameness of species." Reason makes it possible to trace truths upward and "this ascending Method " he saw "contain'd the Principles of Human Art..."

In this way Reason can work upwards towards the higher truth. Science works downwards from truths in the Mind its Self to depths unknown to man.

There are these truths which can be said about every thing that has Being:

(Lines 405ff)

“That Same & Different in Being combine.”

“That every Being is with its Self the Same,”

“And Different is from every Being beside.”

These are the proof of all other Truths.

The absolute Truth, Truth itself, is the object of Reason –

*(Lines 465ff)*

Truth, the first Principle of Things alone;

Sameness, the Summit-Point of Intellect;

The Basis of all Being; the Root of Mind;

Of Form the Centre, All out-radiating:

Who being pure Unity, must everywhere

Ever be rising, ever raying forth;

...

Hail Fount of Glory, omnical Sun!

Whose pure Simplicity (though it contain

The Colours, that diversity of all Being;

And tho it pregnant be with every Truth

Particular, which like an Embryo lies

Latent & indistinct) meets not my Eye,

One only in Many fitted to discern:

Yet in thine outspread Wisdom omniform,

(In whom disparted yet united dwell

All Truths, to every Mind Particular,

Its Reason or Intellect, in Measure meet

Communicated;) That Reason Divine,

By whom illum'd with Ray reflected shines

The glimmering Lamp within me, since thou dwell'st;

Shining through Him, in Him made visible,  
Thy constant Presence with me let me hail;  
Thou First, Thou Last, and Thou every Midst of Things.

### **Book the Nineteenth**

The muse (*though this is Virtue*) pauses in her teaching. The poet's soul, fancying her feathers are full grown, attempts to "stretch her ineffectual pinions."

Virtue has taught the poet "what Man is, what his Duty" so now she offers an opportunity of a vision of the higher regions, guided by her sister, Wisdom...

*(Lines 22ff)*

.....a faint Glimpse, so rare,  
Of what approaches th'Height of Intellect;  
Where Truth, Supream of Things sits; & the Source  
Rises of all That Beaty thro' the Whole.  
Wisdom, my Elder Sister, is at hand;  
(See! She is come;) to Her will I commit  
They Weakness, yet from those high Flights unapt:

On the right Hand of Virtue then appear'd  
A wondrous Form, whose Stature tall out-top'd  
The Measure of My shorter Sight: a Veil  
Of cloudy Darkness, thick to vulgar Eyes,  
Cover's her Head, down-hanging to the Ground:  
But through it, was My happier Ken impowr'd  
To pierce; for yet not all from me was fled  
The Virtue of the Samian Waters: through  
I saw; her Body saw, of Human Shape,  
But above Human glorious to behold.

For white with snowy Purity her skin  
Shone silvery, soft-lucid like the Moon:  
But her strong Limbs with Hair of auburn Hue  
Were grac'd: the Sunny Brightness of whose Gloss  
Emitted golden Beams: so happily  
Was Female Softness mix'd with Manly Force:  
Mixture, that shew'd the Temper of her Mind;  
Stable, tho Placid; vigorous, yet mild  
And gentle: founded on so solid Base  
Stands the Tranquillity of Wisdom, fix'd  
And safely seated in a Calm of Air,  
Always the Same, where of true Greatness breaths  
The Spirit.

This figure of Wisdom reminds the poet of "Eliza", Queen Elizabeth, and of "Sophia" and her royal children. (*This could be a reference to Queen Sophia, wife of George 1<sup>st</sup>, but, perhaps, a reference to Queen Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg, wife of George III, is more likely if the date of this part of the poem is from the late 1760s.*)

Then the poet's "fair Patroness" turned to Wisdom to give "this daring mortal" into her care, so they could ascend to the regions of the intelligible world.

*(Lines 69ff)*

Wisdom at once upcaught me in her Arms,  
And mounted: fleet as the free Thought we flew...

*(Lines 79ff)*

Alighting on a Unite, there we paus'd,  
And rested a short Space...

Then the poet and Wisdom "speeded to the land of Figures" – and...

*(Lines 95ff)*

I saw in That one Figure uniform  
All Figures how included & compress'd...

*(Lines 100ff)*

But soon again up-rising, Both the Lands  
Of Vital Forms we travers'd without Stop:...

But is the light by which the poet sees these things "Light or fifth essence unknown?"

Wisdom declares:

*(Lines 115ff)*

"Hail Light original, archetypal!  
Eternal Reason, Intellectual Sun!  
I recognise & bless my Source: Hail Sire!  
The Parent-Voice of every Muse divine!"

The poet sees that the realm of Intelligible Forms is, like his own mind, composed of Ideas, which he sees, as he does in his own mind, as globes of light...

I could distinguish little spheres of Light  
Mixing and parting at will  
And these were full of lesser globes  
Tinged with various colour...

These colours, like jewels...

*(Lines 150ff)*

Seem'd Juno's darling Sapphire; th'Emerald  
The Nereids Favourite; fiery Carbuncles,  
And heav'nly-roseate Rubys; Phoebus' Love  
The Topaz, and Aurora's Amethyst.

The globes break into lesser globes, which reveals to the poet the relationship of his own Mind with the realm of Intellectual Forms –

*(Lines 185ff)*

While this the Glorys of the Scene I gaz'd  
Delighted, suddenly I found my Self  
One of those Spheres; whether to such transform'd  
Or whether, loosen'd from my Body, now  
First I discover'd my own proper Form:  
I found my Self to be all Mind. I found  
Those Forms, Orbicular of Shape, which swam  
Within me, which surrounding I contain'd,  
To be my own Ideas, ev'n my Self  
So form'd, & being thro young Amazement mov'd  
With in ward Agitation vehement,  
I saw my Self all multiform within;  
Broke into Myriads of minutest Orbs:  
To be Particular Ideas These  
Now saw I, not unlike the Forms of Things  
Sensible in the lower World, to Sense  
As they appear; but with This Difference,  
That in my Self compleat; compact, & round,  
I saw them; while below, Part after Part,  
And Each imperfect; in continual Change,  
Flowing, & loose, they only can be seen.

He wills and obedient to his will these Ideas combine  
He sorts them by colour, into three orders  
He contains all.

Every individual Mind was like his, containing all the same Ideas as the Intelligible World.

*(Line 263)*

Every Mental Sphere resembled me in all things.

And yet, though all Minds contain the same Ideas...

Again, One Mind was not the Other, Each  
Its self alone remaining

Differed as individuals of the same species  
Minds separate are all of Universal Mind particulars...

*(Lines 278ff)*

Particulars, of That great Ocean Drops,  
All in its vast Capacity contain'd,  
Surrounded by its wide Circumference;...

*(Lines 296ff)*

I saw my self all Diamond, of pure  
Uncolor'd Brightness: of my Being I saw  
The rude Simplicity. But when my Sire  
I 'gan contemplate, Universal Mind,  
Ocean of Beauty; ev'n my Brother-Orbs

I saw not...

...Alone with The Alone

I found my Self...& thought I was Him , Himself

Eternal All things...

But to the poet this vision of his union with the Source, "The Alone", is alarming, because it is natural for the individual, or particular mind, to be fearful when it feels alone. He "wants to seek multitude".

Neighbouring social minds displayed themselves and they...

*(Lines 329ff)*

...in Their Beauty lov'd

My own Ideas; and my Self enjoy'd

Over again in Each, another Me.

*(Lines 336ff)*

Now I perceiv'd that Minds particular

Delighted in Diversity, and shun'd

All simple Sameness, like a Solitude...

The poet, and all individuals, delight in diversity, the infinite variety of forms which flow from the Source, and yet also love the "sameness" in others' souls, which means not that all other souls or minds are the same as he, but that all individual minds share a sameness, the essential aspect which they all have in common – their resemblance to "the Alone", the Unity and Source. Therefore...

The love of sameness is from a higher source...

The love of this Unity in all things comes from that Source, and raises the Mind towards that source.

Wisdom has left the poet while he contemplates this truth. She has been to visit other Minds with whom she has a special relationship. *(Time has no meaning here.)*

Wisdom returns. She...

*(Lines 369ff)*

...took her private Solaces  
In the select Society of Minds,  
That in the blest Ages of the lower World  
Bodys inhabiting, had spread her fame  
And uncorrupted Worship in the Earth:  
... the Porch of Athens, or the Walks  
Surrounding, or the Grove far from the Croud;  
To Social Feasts, or Goals & poison'd Draughts (??)  
From Samos' isle to the Calabrian Shore.  
Near These now finding, as I after learn'd,  
Lately from Exile in the World of Sense  
Return'd, her Shaftsbury; with Him, who wrote  
Mysteriously of Mind, & gave dark Hints  
Of Highest Truths, so strange to modern Days  
And novel Doctrines;...

*(Lord Shaftsbury is the great hero and exemplar of the poet and his friends.)*

Wisdom and the poet fly higher, with her mantle covering him to protect him from the Light of Truth. They descend to the sea of reason. The poet must descend "into body soft". Only Wisdom can return to these high regions...

*(Lines 414ff)*

"But to remount; & this free Air regain  
Pure from gross Matter, only is to Me  
And Virtue given; with Those our Friends on Earth,  
Drawn hither after us, the favour's Few,  
To whom She shews, & I conduct the Way..."

Wisdom vanishes from the poet's view. But the poet sees the light that shines down and comes to a new understanding.

*(Lines 438ff)*

...I saw

First on my own Sphere falling from above

A single Ray, that spread its self around

All o'er me...

The light splits, flows, rises, falls. This is the Light of Unity which shines through all Forms, and is their Source...

*(Lines 470ff)*

...The Fountain-head of Light, the Source of Form,

Still in its pure Simplicity the Same

Remaining...

The sum total of all these Rays is Universal Being.

Does Will cause the diversity of things? But Will is constant, inseparable from Mind.

The poet understands that when the Will is turned inwards, into its own mind, it is restricted. Will should engage with other wills – the individual Mind is meant to be sociable -

As long as will is engaged with other wills it is enlarged. It is not dissolved into those other minds...

Not by the Dissolution of those Minds,

(For Mind, being One, can never be dissolv'd)

But their Enlargement into That Great All.

Not by the Loss of any Form, (for Form

Is Being, & Being ne'er can cease to be)

But Exaltation into Form Divine.

The more the will is outward-looking rather than turned in on itself the more it can flourish –

*(Line 431)*

Privation of self-will is self-expansion...

Knowing this the poet can contemplate the Source (the All alone) without fear.

*(Lines 433ff)*

No more I fear'd my self, no more my End;  
No longer shun'd to be with The Alone,  
Nor dreaded the Perfection of my Being.

...Self-Reflection was forgot:

And wrap'd in Wonder, for a while I lost  
The Thought of All things, save of the One-All.

*(One might think this is the climax of the poem. There is no trace of Book the Twentieth. The last surviving book moves onto discussions with other minds, other individual human beings.)*

### **Book the Twenty-First**

*(Lines 1ff)*

Thrice happy Those, who live in thy fair Light,  
O Truth! to dwell there Ages, e'er again  
Into the World of error they relapse.  
So might I with them tide, supremely blest;  
Blest with the Sight & Love of Thee, the Fount  
Of Form & Beauty; fully thus enjoy'd  
That Beauty, Theme of each divine Lay,  
Nor Thou these lower Notes of my faint Muse,  
Fir'd by this transient View, disdain to accept:  
In the Grand Concert Universal, She

Exerts her utmost, her appointed Post.  
Singing of Truth & Nature, thus to fill.  
To Truth & Nature Hymns from every Muse,  
Each Vocal Being this the Universe,  
All the mute World, re-echoing, ever rise.

Fortunate also is the Lot of Minds,  
Who, tho detain'd a while with Sense to dwell,  
Aided by Wisdom & with Virtue, take  
Their frequent Flight up hither; to refresh  
Their Life aetherial; their high-soaring Pow'rs  
By Use to strengthen; & the fated Term  
Accomplish'd of their Exile, to secure  
A Seat of lasting Bliss among the Gods.

Thee then, O Harcourt, happy let me hail;  
Thou, who so oft hast trod this arduous Way;...

The poet praises Simon, first Earl Harcourt, as the guardian of "Britannia's Princes". (*Lord Harcourt was guardian of George, Prince of Wales, from 1751, after the death of George's elder brother Frederick.*)

*(Lines 30ff)*

...Listen to the Muse,  
O Harcourt! that of Men prepares to sing  
The various Natures, & the various fates:...

*(The poet, by "fates", does not imply pre-ordained destinies, but the variety of ends to which lives tend, affected by the influences of the material world.)*

The poet can now rest, placid, knowing that the perfection of Being was the contemplation of Truth, and his will should be towards Good. The cause of this motion of Will was the Ray of Light from Truth.

But how is it that the will can be misguided? To answer this difficult question the poet hopes to meet a friend who can help him understand.

*(The poet is still in the form of an aetherial globe of Mind, rather than in soft flesh.)*

*(Lines 72ff)*

...I spy'd a globe:

And mov'd by secret Impulse, strait I run,

Spontaneous into its Embraces. Lo!

It was my Theages: for those he spake.

Criton!

Wisdom (great Patroness of every Mind) has told Theages of the poet's presence here.

*(Theages, the name used for this unknown friend of the poet, is the leading character in a Platonic dialogue, who is said, in The Republic, to have been diverted by everything in his life from philosophy. Criton, the name the poet uses for himself, was a wealthy friend of Socrates, who tried to persuade the philosopher to allow himself to be rescued from prison. A cancelled passage of the poem mentions another friend, Dorothea, whom, they hope, will soon be with them.)*

Theages knows that the poet wonders what separated the two friends, and distracted them from the pursuit of Truth. Theages has experience of the Light and can explain.

*(Lines 104ff)*

Good, as thou seeest, ever-living Good,

Himself for ever pouring forth in Beings,

Opening in every Truth, through all the Forms

Archetypal to All things, is the Mind

Eternal, Universal, the Divine:

Being, re-entring every where its Source;

And every where out-ray'd Diversity,

Centring in Sameness: Mind enjoying Truth;

All-Being in Possession of All-Good.

Will is the ever-active life of Mind. Mind can only love Himself, the Good in all things. Mind is present in all things, and the whole is conscious, or sentient, reflecting back to the Source all that is and happens.

*(Lines 136ff)*

...He creates

The World his Body, where he lives in Act  
Perpetual: This perpetual outward Act  
(Outward to Him, but inward to the World,)  
Through every Part exerted, thus becomes  
His Spirit, Spirit also of the World,  
Uniting Mind to the Corporal Mass.  
The Spirit, reverted back upon its Self,  
Is Sentient through the Universe, sees, hears,  
And feels: for every where is it produc'd;  
And still returning to its active Source,  
Communicates to Mind whate'er is done,  
Or suffer'd, every Motion, thro the Whole.

Being enters the world and becomes the Mundane Soul, still operating Universal Good, preserving the Great Body of the World. The perfect seeds of every form are sown in the World.

But nothing in the material world is a perfect copy of its Form. Forms, in the material world can be imperfect, in conflict with other Forms, and, especially, affected by Necessity, the foe of Good. As a musical instrument, whose notes are out of tune, can draw the musician to distraction, so Reason can be stifled by the material world.

*(Lines 238ff)*

...Reason thus inert

Drops into Sense: in Vegetable Life

Is Sense extinguished: till all Life, all Form,  
Subdue'd by Matter, dye, & be no more.

This is the downward Way: but up the Scale  
Of Being, in Re-ascent, the Mundane Soul,  
Running through All things, raises them to Life.

And there are those creatures which bring down Truth from above to guide the world.  
Matter may seem to affect all things with a foul & evil genius...

*(Lines 275ff)*

But this Necessity of Ill becomes,  
By Divine Art, the Matter of more Good;  
And Mind, distributing the Measures meet  
Of Imperfection, makes it to conduce  
To the World's Beauty, a concurrent Cause.

*(Imperfections caused by Matter are part of the plan. All is for best in the best of all possible worlds, perhaps.)*

Not everything is of equal excellence. There are adamant steps of Being & Form, of Good & Beauty, thronged with individuals – but all these, from highest to lowest, depend on each other.

The necessary sum of ill was distributed through everything to the benefit of all beings in successive ages. The world, in relation to the World of Forms, is not on a plane, but like a lever, in which things that depress the lower end raise the higher and the higher support the lower.

And every imperfect thing, when seen as part of the whole, has a place, as strong light contrasts with shade. Even Malice can result in fair Virtue. Ignorance can illustrate Truth.

This variety of fates is in ceaseless circulation. The motion of all bodies become causes in a depending chain of linked effects.

These are the mechanical rules, the laws impressed on body. These include the effects of pain and pleasure, which are mechanical effects, but the rational nature follows other laws.

*(Lines 441ff)*

...For these gracious Laws  
Are Motives Rational, deriv'd from Good  
Apparent; whither this in Form of Good  
Appear the Pleasant, Profitable, or fair.

The understanding of what is best is affected by outward things, diet, exercise, education, discipline.

Minds, all born equal, become corrupted variously, but the cure is in the pow'r of thought, or reflecting, & regret for the lost Good.

This process happens with lower beings.

*(Lines 520ff)*

Thus thro the Universe, in every Part  
Of Nature, triumphs o'er Necessity  
Fore-seeing ordering Mind, o'er Matter Form,  
Good over Evil, & o'er Falsehood Truth.  
Such is the general Plan of Providence...

This, says Theages, is the general way of fate, but we shall learn more when our friends join us and we can hear about particular lives.

*(Lines 552ff)*

Scarce had my Theages his Tale of Fate  
Completed, when as in His present Joy  
Joying, his Happiness to gratulate,  
And bless its Author, thus broke forth the Muse.  
Hail, Sovereign Truth! Thee Lord of All not Fate  
Ordain'd, nor lifted to thy Throne the Chance  
Of War Atomic, nor the Fancy or Will  
Of fickle Men, like Other Lords & Gods;  
But thine own Wisdom, whom on equal Throne

Beside thee thou hast seated, aye to rule;  
The Word that All things into Being spake,  
And All things to thy rightfull Reign subdues.  
O'er Falshood, Evil and Necessity,  
Triumph thou undisputed; ride thou on,  
Follow'd, acclaim'd, & bless'd by every Mind,  
From Darkness & from Bondage freed by Thee.  
To this thy Place of highest Worship lead:  
There feast thy Votarys on ambrosial Joys,  
Furnish'd from out thine own unfailing Stores  
Of Intellect & Reason, from thine own  
Exhaustless Essence; natural Food of Mind;  
Food uncorrupting; Secret true of Life;  
Food that transmutes our Nature; Passions foul  
Fumes from the Mud of Matter, it absorbs,  
Purges thro Virtue, or thy Wisdom fines:  
Dull Dregs of heavy Earth thro vigorous Life  
High lifts, by Motion quick of subtle Thought  
Actuates, & makes fit Vehicle of the Soul:  
To Spirit subliming Humours feculent;  
And to atherial pure attenuating  
Gross Body, till all Human to Divine  
Be re-exalted; & the Race of Men  
Mortal, immortalis'd, again partake,  
Companions meet, the Banquet of the Gods.

*(Here, dear reader, the manuscript concludes.)*

Transcrib'd and summaris'd by Andrew Baker.

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019

The British Library catalogue description of the manuscript:

- **Title:**  
'TRUTH: OR, OF THE NATURE OF THINGS' by Floyer Sydenham (d. 1787), the translator of Plato: books i-iv and v ( imperfect ) (45181) and books xviii, xix and xxi (45182) of a poem in blank verse expounding Platonic philosophy; circ . 1751-aft. 1778 (see below). Autograph, with autograph revisions. The numbering and arrangement of the books appear to be provisional. The title-pages preceding books i and ii (45181, ff. 17, 34) describe the poem as consisting of twenty-four books (on f. 34 this number has been amended from eighteen), but those preceding books xviii and xix (45182, ff. 1, 27) reduce this total to twenty. The numbering of books xviii, xix and xxi (45182, ff. 1, 28, 57) has been altered more than once. There are frequent marginal references to lines in the missing books vi-xvii and xx, but none to books xxii-xxiv. The latter part of book iii (45181, ff. 85-103) is cancelled with the text breaking off in mid-sentence on f. 103. (Notes on f. 130b, now facing the title-page of book iv, f. 104, apparently relate to a continuation of the same text.) A draft of the argument of books i and ii has been placed before book i (45181, ff. 1-16) and shorter summaries of books i and iv are also included (45181, ff. 18-18b, 105). Terminal dates for the composition or revision of parts of the poem are indicated by (1) a complimentary reference in book iii (45181, f. 71b) to Granville (John Carteret, 2nd Earl Granville 1744, d. Jan. 1763), whose name is deleted in favour of Chatham (William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham Aug. 1766, d. 1778) whose name is in turn deleted in favour of 'Campden' (Charles Pratt, 1st Baron Camden July 1765, and 1st Earl 1786); (2) an allusion in book xix (45182, f. 31) to the recent death (June 1757) of Sophia Dorothea, daughter of George I; (3) an allusion in book xxi (45182, f. 59) to the 1st Earl Harcourt as governor of the Prince of Wales (1751-1752). There are also in books i and iv (45181, ff. 20b, 124b) appeals for patronage to the 4th Earl of Chesterfield (d. 1773) and to the 1st Baron Lyttelton (d. 1773) to whom, respectively, Sydenham dedicated his translations of Plato's dialogues Hippias Major and Io , published in 1759. Paper; ff. i + 139, i + 90. Quarto. Circ . 1751-aft. 1778. Written on loose quires and subsequently (probably in the early 19th cent.) bound in half-russia, the spines (45181, f. i; 45182, f. i) being lettered 'Sydenham MSS.'  
Presented by Dr Mabel Day.
- **Collection Area:** Western Manuscripts
- **Reference:** Add MS 45181-45182
- **Creation Date:** c 1751-after 1778
- **Extent and Access:**  
**Extent:**  
2 items
- **Language:** English  
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**Contents:**