

**THE
DISSERTATIONS.
VOL. II**

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The Dissertations. Vol. II by Maximus Tyrius & T. Taylor

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MAXIMUS TYRIUS & T. TAYLOR

**THE
DISSERTATIONS.
VOL. II**

THE
DISSERTATIONS

OF

MAXIMUS TYRIUS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK

BY

THOMAS TAYLOR.

*Truth would you teach, or save a sinking land,
All hear, none aid you, and few understand.* FORTS.

VOL. II.

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DISSERTATION XXI.

WHETHER THE LIBERAL DISCIPLINES CONTRIBUTE ANY THING TO VIRTUE.

SOCRATES, in the Piræum, discoursing with political characters, fashions in words, as in a drama, an image of a good city and polity. He also establishes laws, educates children, and appoints guardians for the city, and delivers over both the bodies and souls of the citizens to music and gymnastic; for this purpose appointing good preceptors and select judges of both these disciplines, as being the leaders of the flock, and denominating these leaders guardians*; thus forming a city in a dream and not in reality, as it will appear to some one of a more rustic genius. This, however, was the manner of the ancient philosophy, which was similar to oracles. But, if you please, we will dismiss Socrates, and call on the Athenian guest to answer us: for I hear † him

* See the second book of the Republic of Plato.

† Maximus here alludes to Plato's Laws, to my translation of which I refer the reader.

discoursing in Crete, in the cavern of Dictæan Jupiter, to Megillus the Lacedæmonian, and Clinias the Cnossian, and establishing laws for a Doric city, in order that the Cretans might be persuaded to introduce music into the study of fortitude, and thus mitigate the ferocity of anger by melody, lest virtue among them should become mutilated or imperfect in consequence of preparing themselves to act valiantly, endure labours, and die without deserting their station in battle, but imparting no remedy against the sedition in the souls of their citizens.

What then do you say, O Attic guest? Is good so narrow, grovelling, difficult to be obtained, immanifest, and replete with molestation, that we cannot obtain it without singing, and drawing geometrical lines, and consuming our time in these, as if it were our intention to become something else, and not to be good men? Though divine virtue, indeed, according to its use, is sublime and great, and near to every one, but, according to its possession, is not difficult to him who but once wishes to be obedient to the beautiful in conduct, and to oppose whatever is base. The Athenian guest, however, will answer, that this, which is called the law of the city, without the obedience of those that use it, is promulgated in vain, and that it is necessary the people should submit to it voluntarily; but the people * in the soul are nu-

* The people in the soul consist, 1. Of multiform desires, which divide the soul about the body, and cause it to energize about externals. 2. Of the senses; for these are multiform,

merous and foolish, who, nevertheless, when they once yield their assent to the law, and follow where it commands, produce the most excellent polity in the soul, and which men denominate philosophy.

Come, then, let philosophy approach after the manner of a legislator, adorning the disorderly and wandering soul as if it were the people in a city. Let her also call as her coadjutors other arts; not such as are sordid by Jupiter, nor such as require manual operation, nor such as contribute to procure us things little and vile; but let one of these be that art which prepares the body to be subservient, as a prompt and robust vehicle, to the mandates of the soul, and which is denominated gymnastic. Let another art be that which is the angel of the conceptions of the soul, and which is called rhetoric; another, that which is the nurse and tutor of the juvenile mind, and which is denominated poetry; another that which is the leader of the nature of numbers, and which is called arithmetic; and another that which is the teacher of computation, and is called logistic. Let geometry, also, and music follow, who are the associates of philosophy and conscious of her arcana, and to each of which she distributes a portion of her labour.

and perceive nothing accurate or true. 3. Of imaginations, which draw down the soul to a passive intelligence. And 4. Of opinions, because these are various and infinite, tend to externals, and are mingled with phantasy and sense.

And of her labours, indeed, perhaps we may discourse hereafter ; but let us now assert what is reasonable about music, the most ancient of all the studies in the soul ; that it is a pursuit, beautiful indeed to a man, and again, that it is also beautiful to a city and to the whole human race, by which, through the destiny of the gods, it is studied. I do not speak of that music which proceeds into the soul through flutes and singing, through choirs and dancing, unaccompanied with words, and which is honoured for the delight it procures to the ears : for human error, it seems, embraced this in consequence of pursuing the apparently pleasant, and through this love adulterating the accuracy of music. Indeed this accuracy is now no longer to be found : but the music which we have at present, abandoning its sane and ancient beauty, deceives us like doves, by exhibiting a counterfeit and not a native flower ; and thus, associating with nothing but an image of music, we ignorantly think that it is the true Heliconian muse, which was the friend of Homer, the preceptor of Hesiod, and the mother of Orpheus, neither possessing this, nor having any knowledge of it. The illegitimate usurpation, however, gradually insinuating itself into the soul, drew it into this misfortune both privately and publicly. For when the Dorians, who inhabit Sicily, leaving at home that mountain and simple music which they used among their herds and flocks, became enamoured of Sybaritic pipes, and studied such danc-

ing as the Ionian flute excites, then, to speak the most favourably, they became less wise, but, to speak most truly, they became more intemperate. But the ancient Athenian muse consisted of choirs of boys and men; and the husbandmen being collected in tribes, who had not yet wiped away the dust which they had collected in the field from the harvest and sowing, poured forth the extemporaneous song. This muse, however, gradually declining into the art of insatiable grace in the scene and in theatres, became the source to the Athenians of political error. But the true harmony which the choir of the muses sings, and of which Apollo Musagetes is the leader, saves the soul, saves a house, saves a city, saves a ship, saves an army.

If, indeed, we are persuaded by Pythagoras, as it is fit we should, the heavens themselves sing *

* It is well observed by Simplicius, in his Commentary on the second book of Aristotle de Coelo, that all things are not mutually commensurate with each other, nor every thing sensible to every sensitive nature: for dogs scent animals at a distance, of which men have no smell. Much more, therefore, must it be true to say that the sound of divine bodies (and such are those in the heavens) is not audible by terrene ears, since celestial and earthly bodies differ in the same proportion from each other, as things incorruptible from such as are corruptible. He adds; but the sound of divine and immaterial bodies is neither percussive nor destructive, but excites the powers and energies of the sounds in the sublanary region, and perfects the kindred sense by which it is perceived. What Simplicius here observes accords with what Maximus says concerning the celestial harmony.

sweetly, not being struck like a lyre, nor inflated like a flute ; but the revolution of the elegant and harmonious bodies which they contain being commensurate and equally balanced, produces a certain divine sound. The beauty of this song is, indeed, known to the gods, but is not perceived by us, through its transcendency and our penury. This, also, Hesiod appears to me to have obscurely signified when he speaks of a certain Helicon, and the divine choirs of gods which it contains ; the coryphæus, of which is the sun, or Apollo, or by whatever other name it may be proper to denominate that most splendid and harmonic fire. But with respect to human music, which proceeds about the soul, what else will it be than a method of instructing the passions, soothing them as it were by enchantment when they are too elevated and impetuous ; and, on the contrary, exciting and exalting them when they are too remiss and dissipated ? This it is which is skilful in mitigating sorrow, repressing the emotions of anger and the ebullitions of rage, moderating desire, healing grief, consoling love, and alleviating calamity. This is a good assistant in sacrifices, a companion in banquets, a commander in war. This is skilled to give delight in festivals, to dance at the rites of Bacchus, and to impart inspiration in the mysteries. It is also skilled to mingle political manners with measure. Thus the study of the flute, accompanied with Pindar singing to its harmony, rendered the rustic Bœotians mild ; the