

CHAPTER 2

2.0 Introduction

With wisdom a house is built. It is strengthened by prudence. Its granaries are filled by knowledge with all that is good, precious and desirable.⁴⁹

Knowledge and wisdom seemed to be used interchangeably. However, there can be a distinct difference in the two. Thus, this study will begin by looking at what is knowledge and wisdom.

Knowledge is a body of facts that has been acquired proficiently through learning. Such information may establish awareness or a perception in an individual's intellect or in the psyche of all human being⁵⁰. If the washing machine seizes up electrical knowledge is valuable otherwise, it is unnecessary. Correct knowledge allows problems to be solved and avoided. Both the Bible and the Qur'an stipulated that the source of true knowledge is with The All-Knowing⁵¹. Through

such true knowledge, understanding is conceived. If knowledge is the accumulation of facts then understanding is the capability of deciphering the meaning out of the facts, and wisdom is recognising what to do next and which way to go. Those who are with wisdom constantly do the right thing. In contrast, many have vast knowledge and understanding, but are consistently in the wrong. Wisdom, then, is the definitive goal, whereas knowledge and understanding only have perpetual usefulness as they complete in wisdom.

This chapter will initially look at aspects of wisdom - its origins, definitions and concepts. It will also focus on how man observed and distinguished wisdom. Hence, it is only apt that the latter part of this chapter will look at the nature of man and the integration between wisdom and man throughout the different eras. These contents make up the basis of outlining the dissertation.

2.1 Aspects of Wisdom: Then and Now

Very few of us give wisdom a second thought. It is unfortunate that some even think that they are never capable of being wise. The wise person is too often assumed as a guru contemplating high on an inaccessible mountain in a faraway exotic culture or those in the academic institutions possessing various doctorates. Yet, the Bible and the Qur'an promotes wisdom as a form of salvation. Both scriptures uphold that wisdom is the foremost key to maintaining everything you

need and desire in life. Without wisdom, everything that you have garnered will only provide transitory pleasure.

However, what is this wisdom that we cannot live without? How are we to discern it? Are there many types of wisdom? Can wisdom be gained from only observing and experiencing life? Can it be inherited from the past? Alternatively, can wisdom only come from the wise? Who, then, is wise? This chapter aims at distinguishing the notion of wisdom and the acts of wisdom.

2.1.1 Wisdom according to the Western Ancients.

According to its origin, wisdom signifies knowledge, especially of a high and abstruse kind⁵². Earlier use of such word also carried the meaning of enlightenment, expertness in art, science and philosophy⁵³. Ancient Greek's equivalent of such word is *sophia* (Gk. σοφία; Lat. *sapientia*), which denotes good judgement with respect to abstract truth or theoretical matters. They regard wisdom as the most refined and completed of the forms of knowledge. Plato regards philosophical wisdom (*sophia*) as the virtue appropriate to the rational soul and to Aristotle; it is the highest intellectual virtue⁵⁴.

From what has been said it is plain, then, that
philosophic wisdom is scientific knowledge, combined
with intuitive reason, of the things highest by nature.⁵⁵

Intellectual virtue, according to the definition in *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*⁵⁶, is *a habit perfecting the intellect to elicit with readiness acts that are good in reference to their proper object, namely, truth*. To the Greeks such intellect is synonymous to speculative as it confines itself to the exclusive consideration of

truth by the mental faculty. Hence, the speculative intellectual virtues are wisdom, science, and understanding. According to the Ancients, philosophical wisdom is the knowledge of conclusions through their highest rationale. Thus, plainly, philosophy is wisdom because it deliberates truth of the natural order according to its highest principles.

A prominent derivative of the word *sophia* is the early term *sophist* (from *sophos* which means *wise* or *learned*) meant something equivalent to a college professor, although they were, at the time, private teachers who subsisted out of the conventional scene. The best known of *The Sophist* is Protagoras (480 – 411BC), also known as the *Father of Relativism*⁵⁷. Other related words that are still familiar today are *sophistry* and *sophisticated*.

However, Greek is much more pedantic and precise than English. The Greeks had divided wisdom into twofold: distinguishing *sophia*, the theoretical and abstract intellect; from *phrónêsis* (Gk. φρονησις; Lat. *prudentia*; prudence), practical intelligence or sound judgement in concrete affairs of everyday life. According to Aristotle, prudence or practical wisdom is the ability to discover and carry out the proper goals of human life, a vital element in moral deliberation. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, he wrote three characteristics of *phrónêsis*:

Practical wisdom on the other hand is concerned with things human and things about which it is possible to deliberate; for we say this is above all the work of the man of practical wisdom, to deliberate well, but no one deliberates about things invariable, nor about things

which have not an end, and that good can be brought about by action. The man who is without qualification good at deliberating is the man who is capable of aiming in accordance with calculation at the best for man of things attainable by action⁵⁸.

The first quality is: *above all the work of the man of practical wisdom, to deliberate well*; where he indicates that an individual with practical wisdom is able to achieve a fitting deduction by way of intense reasoning or consideration. Second, the 'conclusion' is about what is to be done – the *good can be brought about by action*. The last characteristic, that *end* – that thing to be done, must be an act that is honourable and virtuous. He then summarises by saying *the man who is without qualification good at deliberating is the man who is capable of aiming in accordance with calculation at the best for man of things attainable by action*; that is to say by reasoning, man can identify what is the best action – the morally correct deed - to do within a circumstance and how to accomplish that end.

In his chapter five Aristotle rationalises on how *phrónêsis* is neither scientific knowledge nor art:

...we credit men with practical wisdom in some particular respect when they have calculated well with a view to some good end which is one of those that are not the object of any art. It follows that in the general sense also the man who is capable of deliberating has practical wisdom. Now no one deliberates about things that are invariable, nor about things that it is impossible for him to do. Therefore, since scientific knowledge involves demonstration, but there is no demonstration of things whose principles are variable (for all such things might actually be otherwise), and since it is impossible to deliberate about things that are of necessity, practical wisdom cannot be scientific

knowledge nor art; not science because that which can be done is capable of being otherwise, not art because action and making are different kinds of thing... For while making has an end other than itself, action cannot; for good action itself is its end.⁵⁹

Practical wisdom is not scientific knowledge because the latter is acquired via the intelligent faculty, which requires *demonstration* or revelation such as understanding and grasping theories. For example, one can learn the theory of gravity and apply it to calculate results because the intelligence is capable of comprehending definitions that the theory uses through demonstrations. The understanding of definitions is not attained through the manner of reasoning, according to Aristotle it cannot be worked out by such process. Practical wisdom seeks to determine *some good end* – the morally correct end and the method of reaching it in a given situation – that is achieved only through well-calculated and deliberated reasoning but not by understanding things beyond reason - *no one deliberates about things that are invariable*.

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, chapter eight, Aristotle interestingly adds that:

...it is thought that a young man of practical wisdom cannot be found. The cause is that such wisdom is concerned not only with universals but with particulars, which become familiar from experience, but a young man has no experience, for it is length of time that gives experience...⁶⁰

It is in determining with particulars, that Aristotle links practical knowledge with experience. Accordingly, to achieve a well calculated deliberation or a precise outcome requires experience, which is greatly influenced by culture, and culture is ever dynamic.

An older man would be able to calculate and deliberate reasoning well because he is able to consult to a more extensive vault of experiences as compared to a young man. The experiences corroborate the knowledge. However, such experiences are governed by what his culture dictates – the right and the wrong, the accepted and the taboo et cetera. In addition, it should be noted that culture is always in action; intricately evolving resulting in many variants and hybrids. New experiences transpire, enlighten, and fashion new generation. Hence, the older generation could be embracing a very different culture than the younger generation. Subsequently their vault of experiences cannot help them to deliberate a precise outcome especially in matters pertaining to the younger generation.

Much of practical wisdom is use to aid men in making them happy and noble because it concerns man's own interests. Yet in a much later section, Aristotle concluded that no matter how, it could never surpass philosophic wisdom.

But again it [practical wisdom] is not supreme over philosophic wisdom, i.e. over the superior part of us, anymore than the art of medicine is over health; for it does not use it but provides for its coming into being; it issues orders, then, for its sake, but not to it.⁶¹

2.1.2 Current perception of wisdom

Oxford English Dictionary (1994) gives the definition of wisdom as possessing the capacity of judging correctly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgement in the choice of means and ends; and sometimes, less strictly, sound

sense especially in practical affairs. **Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary** (1987) defines wisdom as a person's ability to use their experience and knowledge in order to make sensible and reasonable decisions or judgements. It seems that the term wisdom in the twentieth century has undergone modification. Modern interpretation of wisdom is both *sophia* and *phrónêsis*. Therefore wisdom is the ability or result of an ability to think as well as act; employing knowledge; exploiting experience; applying understanding; and making use of common sense and insights in endeavouring to resolve matters.

The Ancients consider practical wisdom as not having any consequence on daily life because it is daily life. They accepted practical wisdom as part of their every day routine – it does not affect the survival of humanity thus it is not knowledge. Aristotle, for example, believed that only after man accomplished his daily life's routine, he then is able to contemplate on wisdom (i.e. philosophical wisdom)⁶². Therefore, knowledge or philosophical wisdom (*sophia*) is not meant to promote daily life or to develop the standards of living. The Ancients perceived such advancement in life as of no consequence, because life is pre-ordained by nature and man is incapable of defying nature. Wisdom during this era has an utterly different purpose. Its fundamental function is to prompt man that, though he is part of nature's elements, he is the only animal that recognises the concept of self and the disparities that exist within nature. Wisdom induces man to discover his inner self and not for the intention of obtaining worldly comfort. *Sophia* is utilised for the sole purpose of intellectual practice. Only in such realm, man knows how

to be the perfect being – an individual that is able to secede himself from the beasts, comprehends his nature and is aware of his position, as well as function, within the cosmos.

In contrast, the current perception of wisdom and its function in present society has changed radically. Nowadays, wisdom attends to every aspects of concrete every day living. The present-day importance of wisdom has two assumptions:

1. Everything in the existing affairs of everyday life can be researched through knowledge. This will not only bring better understanding of reality but also the ability to master the numerous facets of life.
2. Every aspect of everyday living demands exploration and in-depth study. Basic human necessities such as water, food, warmth and dwellings will never be sufficient or improved without the expansion of knowledge. Philosophical wisdom functions side by side with practical wisdom in order for progress to transpire.

Currently everything contains knowledge; there is philosophy or theory in everything even in the menial chores. Wisdom is not regarded as something that is only contained in thick volumes. A person is wise if he is able to execute a set task successfully. If a nomad can track across the Sahara Desert successfully, then that nomad is also a wise man who probably has the wisdom of the desert's physical geography. Having mere theory on how to track the Sahara Desert is not sufficient to deem a person wise, only after such a theory is put to practice and one gains

experience then one can be deemed wise. For the theory is then substantiated by the practical experience. Hence, knowledge enhanced by practice and experience generates wisdom.

Interestingly, the Arabs who are also renowned in the realm of philosophy and science, identifies philosophical wisdom (knowledge) and practical wisdom (experience) as one. The root word for wisdom comprises of three letters: ع , ل and

م. They aptly termed philosophical wisdom (knowledge) as *علمو* ('ilmun) and practical wisdom (experience) as *علام* ('alam)⁶³. Hence, the two are actually

derivatives of one holistic wisdom. This strengthens our contemporary's notion that knowledge without practice will never amount to wisdom and vice-versa.

Advancement in basic practical human necessities requires modern society to upgrade practical wisdom to the same status as philosophical wisdom. For example, in building the most fitting house for a nation requires all the available knowledge in housing development, the experienced architect, housing developer and constructor, land surveyor et cetera. Each sector needs theoretical knowledge (*sophia*) and practical experience (*phrónêsis*) in order to realize the project successfully. Moreover, I personally think that theoretical knowledge can be derived from practical experience. If enough houses were built, one can come up with a theory on how to build the best, economical and comfortable dwellings.

Hence, according to contemporary thinking it is not sufficient to have mere theoretical knowledge if one does not have the ability to disseminate such knowledge at the precise time and the right circumstances; such expertise needs the assistance of experience. Then, wisdom is achieved.

2.2 Acts of Wisdom.

For the Lord gives wisdom;
From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;
He stores up sound wisdom for the upright.

Proverbs 2: 6-7

In trying to understand how a man can be deemed wise, I will focus on Prophet Solomon; the wisest man ever lived according to two major religious scriptures in the world – the Bible and the Qur'an. My main objective is to determine how one is judged as seeming wise.

According to both the Bible and the Qur'an, Solomon was the prince of King David. He was Israel's sovereign from c. 968 to 928BC. He was renowned as the epitome of wisdom and opulence. Early in his reign, God addressed him and asked him to choose a gift. Solomon requested for wisdom. The Lord was so delighted that along with wisdom, He blessed Solomon with long life and riches.

Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. **Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.** For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was {known} in all

surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from cedar that is in Lebanon even the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. Men came from all peoples to hear the Wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.⁶⁴

A well-known biblical illustration of Solomon's wisdom is when he had to deal with two women who each asserted to be the rightful mother of an infant. He solved the dilemma by ordering the child to be cut into two and each woman is given a half of the child: by yielding her demand, the real mother identified herself.

The Qur'an also narrated examples of Solomon's gift of wisdom and more.

And We made Sulaimân (Solomon) to understand (the case), and to each of them We gave *Hukman* (right judgment of the affairs and Prophethood) and knowledge...And it was We Who were the doers (of all these things).⁶⁵

And to Sulaimân (Solomon) (We subjected) the wind strongly raging, running by his commands towards the land which We had blessed. And of everything We are the All-Knower. And of the Shayâtin (from the jinns) were some who dived for him, and did other work besides that; and it was We Who guarded them.⁶⁶

And Sulaimân (Solomon) inherited (the knowledge of) Dawûd (David). He said: "O mankind! We have been taught the language of birds, and on us have been bestowed all things. This verily, is an evident of grace (from Allâh).⁶⁷

Besides wisdom, The Lord has provided him with the ability to understand the languages of animals and to influence the elements; even the Jinns were placed under his jurisdiction.

King Solomon has been credited with the composition of numerous sayings including the *Book of Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, the *Song of Solomon* and the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon*. In the *Book of Proverbs*, his concerns were mainly ethical and ways to bring one closer to the ways of The Lord. Below are a few examples of his proverbs regarding wisdom and wise men:

The wise man stores up learning but the mouth of the fool makes way for ruin.

Proverbs 10:14

Wisdom springs forth from the mouth of the virtuous but the corrupt tongue will be torn out.

Proverbs 10:31

From the fool's mouth comes the rod of his pride, the wise man's lips protect him.

Proverbs 14:3

Wise men's lips sow knowledge whereas the fool's thoughts are not safe.

Proverbs 15:7

The discerning heart obtains wisdom, the ear of the wise searches out knowledge.

Proverbs 18:15

Repeatedly the wise King Solomon associates wisdom with lips and mouth. There is a positive indication that a man can be considered wise judging from his words or voice. Moreover, every voice conveys disposition and integrity.

2.3 The Nature of Renaissance Man according to Ancient Western Wisdom

The ideal man – according to Ancient Western Wisdom – had a definite place in the universe, in nature and in the state. His relations to God, to the rest of the creation and to society were universally agreed upon. The 16th century conception

of the ideal man is a man of ancient wisdom who had the integrated elements of Christianity, Aristotelianism, Platonism, Neo-Platonism, and Stoicism. This notion is fundamentally similar to that of the Middle Ages. Either new idea was treated as additions to the accepted picture or as fresh ways of interpreting the one universal truth about which there was no question.

They did not doubt the importance of reason in the process of knowledge; they discussed *what* specific functions reason could perform. They did not question the existence of kingship, though they might be violently anxious about *who* should be king.⁶⁸

There was an eternal law, a general order and it was the business of wise and thoughtful men to discover it and describe it so that through the knowledge of it they could fulfil the end for which God had made them. An *end*, which Spencer (1958) affirms that was also universally agreed upon: *man was made in order to know and love God*.

The soul was made for an end, and good, and therefore for a better than itself, therefore for God, therefore to enjoy union with Him.⁶⁹

Hence, to enjoy such union man is obligated, as far as his ability goes, have knowledge of God.

From the Christian theological point of view, wisdom is the God-given ability to perceive the true nature of a matter and to implement the will of God in that matter⁷⁰. Larry Lea (1990) indicates that there are two facets of wisdom: Natural wisdom and Spiritual wisdom. In nearly every state of affairs or circumstance in one's life can be approached from these two angles. He elaborates that Natural

wisdom is God-given ability to perceive the truth of the matter. What is real or what is true from God's perspective. This is because Man's reality and God's reality, at times, differ to a varying degree. Natural wisdom takes into account merely the facts and delivers decisions only for the welfare of a man. This echoes the philosophy behind *phrónêsis*. Spiritual wisdom, however, formulates man's decision as centred on the entirety of God whereby your whole life is under God's jurisdiction hence, having the utter faith in Him.

Sir Walter Raleigh at the beginning of his *History of the World* wrote that though God could not be tangibly perceived, yet

by his own word, and by this visible world, is God perceived of men; which is also the understood language of the almighty, vouchsafed to all his creatures, whose hieroglyphical characters are the unnumbered stars, the sun and the moon, written on the large volumes of the firmament: written also on the earth and the seas, by the letters of all those living creatures and plants, which inhabit and reside therein. Therefore said that learned Cusanus, *Mundus universus nihil aliud est, quam Deus explicatus*.⁷¹

The universal world is nothing but the setting forth of God, and Marlowe declares that our souls *can comprehend / The wondrous architecture of the world*,⁷²

The Bible expounds that God does not desire to possess wisdom alone. Hence attaining wisdom is an imperative command from God. Proverbs 1:20-29

illustrates what wisdom would say if wisdom were a person:

Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out in the chief concourses, at

the openings of the gates in the city she speaks her words: *How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Turn at my reproof; surely I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes. When your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge. And did not choose the fear of the Lord.*

Wisdom, like any commandments, depends on man's preference. Nevertheless, the quotation above clearly points out that it is an essential choice; for if man does not opt for wisdom he is, in fact, choosing his own destruction. Since according to Christianity, God alone is the Source of ultimate wisdom and true knowledge then man must seek God in order to attain wisdom. Man alone has the ability and capacity to do so among God's creation.

Nearly every 16th century writer addresses the same conventionality, to understand God one must know His works; by knowing His works, one masters the nature of man, for whom those works were designed. By learning the nature of man one learns the end for which man was made, which is the knowledge of God. They are incessantly exclaiming over the beauty of the world, and particularly of the heavens. In his preface to the reader, from *Castle of Knowledge*, Robert Recorde urges his reader to '*look upward to the heavens, as nature hath taught him, and not like beast go poring on the ground*'. The Renaissance writers were fond of

referring to man as the only animal that stood erect, hence blessedly formed to look at the heavens. This was a classical commonplace mentioned by Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Ovid and Seneca; who are major proponents of ancient wisdom and to the belief that the world was created for man.

...man is not something by himself; he is, as Ramón Sabunde says, 'a piece of the order of things,' he is the *nexus et nature vinculum*, the knot and chain of nature; it is impossible to think of him apart from the rest of the creation, for just as man was made for the service of God, so was the rest of the creation including the heavens, made for the service of man, ... man's role is the most important in the universe. To play it properly he must know both himself and the environment...he must understand the universal *order* of which he is so essential a part, and which makes the structure of the world, of living beings, and of society, a single unity created by the hand of God.⁷³

Order is fundamentally behind everything. It is order, says Sir Thomas Elyot in *The Book Named Governor*, which sheds the light for the blind inhabitants of this world. The order reveals the association of everything, the key synthesis of creation. According to Edmund Spenser, order is Nature's sergeant, hence Nature is God's deputy and Nature's law can be found in the book of Scriptures and the book of the World; which God has bestowed to man.

Nature rules over three domains, each of which is a reflection of the other, since they are all parts of the same ordered unity. She rules over the universal world; the world of created objects on earth; and the world of human government, of man in the society. To lead a wise and rational life it is necessary to learn what Nature rules are for *those rules of old discovered, not devis'd*.

Nature's second domain, the sublunary world of elements may be considered as the domain of living creatures and in the 16th century it is arranged, following Aristotle and the Middle Ages, according to the hierarchy of souls. At the bottom are objects that have no soul at all, like stones, which have merely being, but not life. In the higher order are plants, which have the most basic kind of soul, the vegetative or nutritive soul, which is responsible for growth and reproduction. In the position above plants are animals, which in addition to retaining a nutritive soul or faculty, also possess a sensitive soul or faculty; not only they can grow, they can also feel, and hence they have the capability of motion and, to some extent, the faculty of imagination. Above the animals comes man, who in addition to possessing a nutritive and sensitive soul has also a rational soul. Superior to man are the angels, who are pure intellect, and who are able to grasp universal truth without the medium of sense. Above the angels is God, who in Aristotelian terms is absolute actuality.

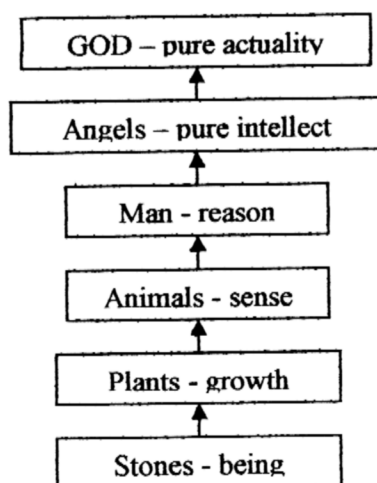


Figure 1: **The Hierarchy of Souls** - naturally the working out of the whole element is far more complex than what is suggested in above simple framework⁷⁴.

Note how crucial man's position in this scheme. In the psychological hierarchy, there is a physical and spiritual region – a world of sense, and a world of intellect. Man in the vital link between them. He is the highest of the animals, and the lowest of the intellectual beings. He is superior to the animals because he can perceive universal truths. However, to arrive at such wisdom he needs the aid of his senses making him inferior to the angels. Hence, man is a composition of two natures, corporeal and celestial. In one he matches the beast and in the other divine elements.

However, man's place in the hierarchy of soul is not merely crucial it is also risky. He has to struggle with his bestowed reason – the lowest of his intellectual powers – to become the latter rather than the former. Reason's responsibility is to work from the information gathered from the senses which memory, sensation and imagination place on the *tabula rasa* of man's mind. Subsequently to distil from those data the immaterial forms. Such are the forms that are apprehended intuitively by the intellect, which is similar to that of the angels. Only the final stage, where in understanding that man and angel may share a common platform in the domain of soul, *arisseth will*⁷⁵. Sir Walter Raleigh asserts that we use our will to incite and innervate us to seek God. This is one substantial detail by which humans are special and disassociated from all other creatures living upon the earth.

To establish the exact division of functions between the sensible soul and the rational soul is quite delicate. According to Thomas Aquinas in his commentary

on Aristotle's treatise, *De Anima (On the Soul)*, the sensible soul has intelligence, however only the rational soul possesses intellect. Intelligence has the power to apprehend, while the intellect has the further potential to judge. Intellect may be called *sapience* or *judgement*. Intelligence, nonetheless, is vulnerable to inaccuracy through going along with false knowledge or opinion. It is also inclined to pursuing *phantasies* or first impressions of things, which calls for the reflective power of reason that permits a man to *judge* between true or false, the right or wrong, in his own beliefs. Intellect may be shrouded by any intense passion, such as wrath, lust, vengeance or fear; by illness – in frenzy or madness; and by sleep – subconsciously or in dreams. In these cases, man's intellect is concealed and he cannot employ rational control over his imaginings. At this point, he resembles a beast because in a beast such an inadequacy is permanent. The rational faculty also allows man to rationalise from the past to anticipate the future, but he has to create an effort to do this. If he dedicates himself exclusively to desires of the present, he does not proceed beyond the condition of a beast. Therefore, physically he is an animal but the added mental capability merits him as a man.

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Christianity similarly echoes Aristotle's perception. In the final chapter of *Ecclesiastes*, Solomon pronounces at the death of a man, *then the dust returns to the earth just as it happened to be and the spirit itself returns to the true God who gave it* ⁷⁶. The rational soul – or the rational faculty of the soul – is the 'spirit' that shall return to God; the body shall join the bodies of beasts in the earth. Hankins (1978) illustrates that to begin with, the rational soul did not originate along with

the body; but was augmented to the embryo some weeks subsequent to conception. The embryo replicated the several stages of creation, existing first in the manner of a plant and later in the manner of a beast, before becoming a complete man.

Christianity's fundamental consideration on what constitutes a man is found in *Psalm 8*, which notably reaffirms the perception of man's centrality in nature as indicated by the ancient Western wisdom.

When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have prepared,

What is mortal man that you keep him in mind, and the
son of earthling man that you take care of him?

You also proceeded to make him a little less than the
angels, and with glory and splendour you then crowned
him.

You make him dominate over the works of your hands;
everything you have put under his feet:

Small cattle and oxen, all of them, and also the beasts
of the open field,

The birds of heaven and the fish of the sea, anything
passing through the paths of the seas.⁷⁷

Here are stated man's pre-eminence among animals, his likeness to angels, consequently his likeness to God. The origin of Man is from the dust, in common with the beasts and is like the beast in his earliest stages of life, nevertheless he has the capabilities of advancing beyond the innate bestial level through the exercise of reason. He may learn what is already known and may extend the bounds of existent knowledge and understanding. In this creative function, he most fully shares in the nature of God. As declared by Thomas Aquinas; man's ultimate felicity lies in his power to consider (*intelligere*), otherwise to exercise his power of thought. Consequently, man's development of the arts is evidence of his advance beyond the capabilities of the beasts.

No matter how complicated or various the details might be, it was clear enough what man should do if he were to follow the law of Nature. He must begin with his senses; such is the predicament of his being. He must also aspire to find the truth. Man's soul must want to thrive to the realm of 'universal understanding' and reside within.

Even though a lot of emphases were given to the man's soul – its position in Nature's hierarchy of Souls is meritorious, his physical body that shelter it is no less dignified; befitting the being who has been created in the image of God. In fact, the direct way to recognise the beauty of the soul is to regard the magnificence of the physical body. Ideally, the outer body illustrates the equivalent inner soul.

Hence, in Nature's world of living beings, man stands with his head erect to observe and ponder the heavens; his soul is capable of ascending from the scope of senses to appreciate the Creator who made him. However, man's duty goes even further than mere contemplation of the world. He is a member of society hence required to govern it.

For the government of men there are approximately three sections of temporal law. Firstly, the law of Nature, law of Nations, which evolves from the former and is generally relevant to all countries; and lastly, civil law that pertains to the customs

of particular nations. Such law brings about, in different countries, the form of government best suited for each. Countries that had made kingship as their legitimate government must ascertain that their kings are not despots. The King's obligation is to act as the disciple of the law of Nature, which is above him moreover, whose principles and ultimate cause he must accomplish.

2.3 The Nature of Man according to the Renaissance

The previous section describes the 16th century's optimistic composition of the complete and ideal man corresponding to the Western Ancients' wisdom. Man possessed the essential rational for he simultaneously linked the intellectual angels and the awkward beast. His body crucially unified the cosmos to the state. Such interconnected hierarchies echoed the arrangement of Nature's law hence, to think of one was instinctively to think of the others. Even so, such harmony is not without limitations. As Richard Hooker analyses:

Let any principle thing, as the sun, the moon, any one of the heavens or elements, but once cease or fail, or swerve, and who doth not easily conceive that the sequel thereof would be ruin both to itself and whatsoever dependeth on it?⁷⁸

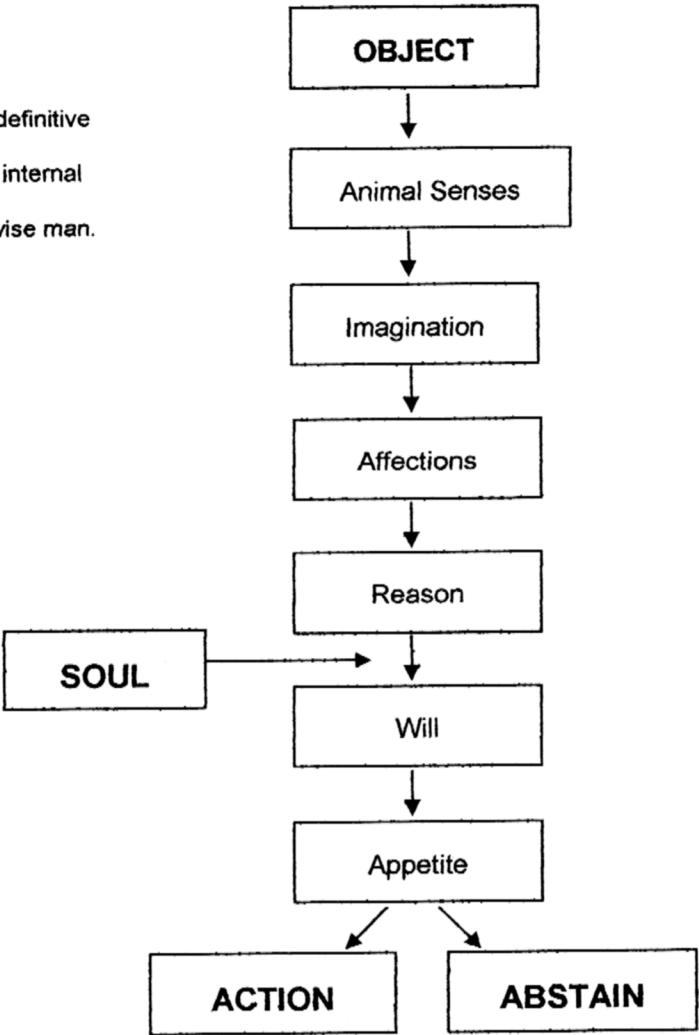
Such suggestion implies that the presumably sound interconnected hierarchies have indeed a daunting outcome. If man stays true to his preordained nature then he is capable of profound understanding of his mortal realm, his responsibilities to the state, his resolution and his union with the celestial God. On the other hand, if man – who was essentially predestined to God's service just as the rest of the

beasts are to his – severed his own natural bond, consequently the eventual end result would be abysmally devastating to man and all the creatures that relied on him.

When Adam devoured the fatal apple and descended, it was not purely a moral depreciation but an intellectual decline too. Favourably for man, Reason was a divine gift thus could not be destroyed completely but, what was left is relatively derisory. Such was the cause why man is linked to the beasts. Similarly to Reason, man's Will survived nevertheless it suffered tremendously and incessantly *lumbered by decadent lust, rendering it ineffectual of pure virtuous desire*. Theodore Spencer claims that a short-circuit has occurred in Man's psyche which, was a direct consequence of Adam's sin. He further clarifies that, ideally, a system of complex internal processes occurs before a man is capable of any form of act - see figure 2 (overleaf).

The animal or outward sense constructs an impression when it perceives an object. The impression is then conveyed to the Imagination who refers the same impression to the faculty of Affections. Here, this particular faculty specifies whether the object is pleasing or displeasing. Consequently, Reason debates the matter and presents its verdict to the will. The Soul eventually oversees the whole process and dictates to Appetite whose central function is to desire. Finally, either Appetite will act or refrain from action when the object is reckoned as good or evil.

Figure 2: Nature's definitive system of complex internal processes for the wise man.



A wise and rational man would abide by each process assiduously. However, because Adam defied God, he along with his descendants could not observe such procedure completely with ease. The short-circuit had left man to determine all of his actions virtually via the Imagination, a faculty that is significantly inferior to Reason yet common amongst the beasts. As a result, man's body reigns the soul or the mind, inverting Nature's definitive rule. Inhibited by mortal passion, man has, in due course, turned into foul vinegar instead of a vintage wine. Furthermore, if man had not fallen from grace, Nature would have been more compassionate

towards him. As it is, all the creatures that relied on him and even the elements are quick to offend and attack him. Man's miseries have become greater than his joys.

2.3.1 The Renaissance Conflict

In his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton asserts that virtually all human enterprise is tormented by misery. Our law has taken the corruption in man for granted. Though such pessimism was, largely, inherited from the medieval writings, the Elizabethans recognised this basic conflict existed between Western man's magnificence and his wretchedness. However, an added conflict that was specific to the Renaissance era was the dubiousness of the aforementioned three interrelated hierarchies – the cosmos, man and state – which were the principal fundamentals of the whole Elizabethan belief (the Elizabethan received wisdom). Copernicus had established doubt on the cosmological arrangement, Montaigne had questioned the natural order and finally, Machiavelli had initiated scepticism on the political organization, and this for the most part instigated tremendous disarray on the Elizabethan frame of mind. As Donne aptly describes:

'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,
All just supply, and all relation.
Prince, subject, father, son, are things forgot,
For every man alone thinks he hath got
To be a phoenix, and that then can be
None of that kind of which he is but he.⁷⁹

2.3.1.1 Copernicus and the Cosmological Hierarchy

The Ptolemaic system placed earth in the centre and everything else revolved around it – typifying the conception of Western man's link and centrality as the micro-cosmos. Copernicus' prevailing findings, however, verifies the sun as the centre and earth is merely a subordinate planet positioned in between Mars and Venus. Such astounding specifics demolished all the previous elaborated definitive structure.

Donne in his *First Anniversary* above illustrated how the annihilation of the ancient cosmological hierarchy brought ruin not only to the individual man but to the state as well. The organisation in the state and family is spent and man perceives himself as an exclusive (even peculiar) individual with no associations to anything else.

2.3.1.2 Montaigne and the Natural Hierarchy

Unfortunately, such dismantling of the old cosmology was rather inconsequential to the elaborate criticism posed by Montaigne towards the natural order. His illuminating arguments hold great relevance to the crux of this dissertation.

Inspired by the Copernican theory and travellers' tales from the new worlds, Montaigne struck deep affecting the whole inherited fundamentals of what it means to be human. He declares that his principal objective in writing the *Essais* is to render the reader conscious of the absurdity, the arrogance and insignificance

of man – *The frailest and most vulnerable of all creature is man, ... and at the same time the most arrogant*⁸⁰. Montaigne reasons that out of the three classifications of animals – those in air, water and on earth – Man populates the lowest element, earth, hence he is in the most horrible and inferior condition. Reminiscent of the Greeks, he also distinguishes how Nature cared for the animals better than men, these creatures are more contented and in moral virtues these beasts are even more superior as they did not bring about war on each other and are more dependable as well as magnanimous than human.

Montaigne continues to ridicule man's vulnerability and ignorance by demonstrating that at his best, man comprehends nothing. First of all, man understands nothing of God. His deductions in supposing that he is created in God's image and all of his affairs are the centre of God's concern are evidently tenuous⁸¹. Man, according to him, can only imagine in relation to his capacity. Montaigne exemplifies by quoting Xenophanes' – who flourished c.530BC - witty observation that if animals were to invent a god, they would likely visualised Him in their own image and hence worshipped themselves as humans do. They would also perceive that they are Nature's darlings for everything in the world concentrates on and is designed for them.

For why should not a gosling say thus: All things in the world concentrate upon me; the earth serves me to walk upon, the sun to give me light, the stars to communicate to me their influence; the winds benefit me in this way, the waters in that. There is nothing the vault of heaven looks upon so favorably as myself. I am the darling of Nature. Does not man keep me,

house me, and wait upon me? For me he sows and grinds. If he eats me, so he does his fellow-man; and so do I the worms that kill and eat him⁸².

According to Montaigne, man and animal are akin. Man is placed in identical food chain as the rest of the animal – in fact, his position is at times considered lower for the gosling consumes the worms that eat him. Hence, Montaigne concluded that there is no true distinction between man and the other creatures; the law that governs man is exactly the identical law that governs the beasts. Such fideism humiliated man from his vital premier position in the natural order.

2.3.1.3 Machiavelli and the Political Hierarchy

Machiavelli's subversive attacks at the ancient's state hierarchy – particularly on Cicero's *De Officiis* – were regarded as formidably menacing because of their immediate influence to the Renaissance man's life in society. The sixteenth century's formal doctrine, pertaining to the conduct of man as the governor, was extensively inherited from *De Officiis*, which was widely read⁸³, and just about all European government treatise of this era conferred with it.

Comparable to the medieval theorists, Cicero maintains that man, as the governor has to embrace justice as the fundamental virtue and moral sincerity as the foundation of his deeds. Such political theory, like the rest of the inherited ancient beliefs of man's nature, presented the western man as the ideal, responsible and morally righteous ruler. Machiavelli, however, saw man in his true disposition. Divorced from grace, man was unsurprisingly wicked and immoral hence the best method to control him was by fear and power.

In the eighteenth chapter – *How princes should honour their word* – of his famous work, *The Prince*, Machiavelli states that the two methods in combat are of men and of beasts. The first is predominantly insufficient that many resort to the second approach. Therefore, in order to be a dominant ruler, man must embrace both methods because men *are wretched creatures who would not keep their word to you, you need not keep your word to them*⁸⁴. Machiavelli's suggestion of his prince adopting the attributes of the beasts corresponds to Montaigne's theory of the intellectually ignorant man. Machiavelli regards man as morally evil hence; is incapable of good action.

Men are so simple, and so much creatures of circumstance, that the deceiver will always find someone ready to be deceived.⁸⁵

All of his practical views, his assertions that the end always justifies the means and other extreme realism of his ruthless philosophies contribute to the desecration of the idealistic social order which the Renaissance men had been groomed to have faith in. Machiavellian reality and practicality are concerned with individual and specific necessities that have no relevance to morality or ideals; thus, having no union to the elaborate structure of interrelated hierarchies or with man's obligation to the universe. By renouncing the sixteenth-century conventional belief in Nature's decree and by discounting universal truth, he has also disputed God's government of the world. This echoes the dismantling of one hierarchy affected the destruction of the other two as well.

Thus, in the late sixteenth century, two principal attacks were launched against ancient wisdom's belief of the nobility and dignity of man. The initial attack conveyed man's misery from the time when he was exiled from heaven but he is still the crucial heart of things. The latter assault occurred in a threefold line of attack that threatened to devastate the entire inherited tenet. These intellectual conflicts arrived at its climax at the same time when Shakespeare's growth in his creative profession reached its pinnacle. This study will endeavour to discover how Shakespeare incorporates this Renaissance intellectual conflict in *The Tempest* and so determine his purpose.