

Valis the Essene

DOM JOSE: What is the law of nature?

VALIS: It is the constant and regular order of events, by which the Creator governs the universe; as an order which Their wisdom represents to the senses and reason of humans, as an equal and common rule for their actions, to guide them, without distinction of race or religion, towards perfection and happiness.

DOM JOSE: Give a clear definition of the word law?

VALIS: An order or prohibition to act, with the express clause of a penalty attached to the infraction, or of a recompense attached to the observance of that order.

DOM JOSE: Does such order exist in nature?

VALIS: Yes.

DOM JOSE: What do the words nature and cosmos signify?

VALIS: The word nature bears three different significations.

One, it signifies the universe, the cosmos, the material world: in this first sense we say the beauties of nature, the riches of nature, that is to say, the objects in the heavens and on the earth exposed to our sight. Two, it signifies the power that animates, that moves the

universe, considering it as a distinct being, such as the soul is to the body; in this second sense we say, "The intentions of nature, the secrets of the universe." Three, it signifies the partial operations of that power on each being, or on each category of beings; and in this third sense we say: "The nature of humanity is an enigma; every being acts according to its nature. Wherefore, as the actions of each being, or of each species of beings, are subject to constant and general rules, which cannot be infringed without interrupting and troubling the general or particular order, those rules of action and of motion are called natural laws or cosmic laws.

DOM JOSE: Give me examples of those laws.

VALIS: It is a law of nature that the sun illuminates successively the surface of the terrestrial globe; - that its presence causes both light and heat; - that heat acting upon water, produces vapors; - that those vapors rising in clouds into the regions of air, dissolve into rain or snow, and renew instantly the waters of fountains and rivers. It is a law of nature that water flows downwards; that it endeavors to find its level; that it is heavier than air; that all bodies tend toward the earth; that flame ascends towards the heavens; - that it disorganizes vegetables and animals; that air is

essential to the life, etc. Wherefore, as all those and similar facts are immutable, constant and regular, so many real orders result from them for humanity to conform themselves to, with express clause of punishment attending the infraction of them, or for welfare attending their observance. So that if humanity pretends to see clearly in darkness, if one goes in contradiction to the course of seasons, or the action of the elements; if he pretends to remain underwater without being drowned, to touch fire without burning oneself, to deprive oneself of air without being suffocated, to swallow poison without destroying oneself, one receives from each of these fractions of the law a corporeal punishment proportional to one's fault; but if, on the contrary, one observes and practices each of those laws according to the regular and exact relations they have to one, one preserves one's existence and renders it as happy as it can be: and as the only and common end of all these laws, considered relatively to mankind, is to preserve, and render them happy, it has been agreed upon to reduce the idea to one simple expression, and to call them collectively the natural and cosmic laws.

Joseph: what are the essentials of the natural and

cosmic laws?

VALIS: There can be assigned ten principal ones.

DOM JOSE: Which is the first?

VALIS: To be inherent to the existence of things, and consequently, primitive and anterior to every other law: so that all those that humanity has received, are only limitations of it, and their perfection is ascertained by the resemblance they bear to this primordial model.

DOM JOSE: Which is the second?

VALIS: To be derived immediately from the Creator, and presented by Them to each one, whereas all other laws are presented to us by humans, who may be either deceived or deceivers.

DOM JOSE: Which is the third?

VALIS: To be common to all times, and to all countries, that is to say, one and universal.

DOM JOSE: Is no other law universal?

VALIS: No: for no other is agreeable or acceptable to all the people of the earth; they are all local and accidental, originating from circumstances of places and of persons; so that if such a person had not existed, or such an event happened, such a law would never have been enacted.

DOM JOSE: Which is the fourth essential?

VALIS: To be uniform and invariable.

DOM JOSE: Is no other law uniform and invariable?

VALIS: No: for what is good and virtue according to one, is evil and vice according to another; and what one and the same law approves of at one time, it often condemns at another.

DOM JOSE: Which is the fifth essential.

VALIS: To be evident and palpable, because it consists entirely of facts incessantly present to the senses, and to demonstration.

DOM JOSE: Are not other laws evident?

VALIS: No: for they are founded on past and doubtful facts, on equivocal and suspicious testimonies, and on proofs inaccessible to the senses.

DOM JOSE: Which is the sixth essential?

VALIS: To be reasonable, because its precepts and entire doctrine are conformable to reason, and to the human understanding.

DOM JOSE: Is no other law reasonable?

VALIS: No: for all are in contradiction to reason and the understanding of humans, and tyrannically impose on one a blind and impracticable belief.

DOM JOSE: Which is the seventh essential?

VALIS: To be just, because in that law, the penalties are

proportionate to the infractions.

DOM JOSE: Are not other laws just?

VALIS: No: for they often exceed bounds, either in rewarding deserts, or in punishing delinquencies, and consider as meritorious or criminal, null or indifferent actions.

DOM JOSE: Which is the eighth essential?

VALIS: To be pacific and tolerant, because in the law of nature, all humans being siblings and equal in rights, it recommends to them only peace and toleration, even for errors.

DOM JOSE: Are not other laws pacific?

VALIS: No: for all preach dissension, discord and war, and divide mankind by exclusive pretensions of truth and domination.

DOM JOSE: Which is the ninth essential?

VALIS: To be equally beneficent to all humans, in teaching them the true means of becoming better and happier.

DOM JOSE: Are not other laws beneficent likewise?

VALIS: No: for none of them teach the real means of attaining happiness; all are confined to pernicious or futile practices; and this is evident from facts, since after so many laws, so many religions, so many

legislators and prophets, humans are still as unhappy and ignorant, as they were eight thousand years ago.

DOM JOSE: Which is the tenth essential of the natural laws?

VALIS: That it is alone sufficient to render people happier and better, because it comprises all that is good and useful in other laws, either civil or religious, that is to say, it constitutes essentially the moral part of them; so that if other laws were divested of it, they would be reduced to unreal and imaginary opinions devoid of any practical utility.

DOM JOSE: Recapitulate all ten essentials.

VALIS: We have said that the law of nature is:

1. Primordial
2. Immediate
3. Universal
4. Invariable
5. Evident
6. Reasonable
7. Just
8. Pacific
9. Beneficent
10. Alone Sufficient

And such is the power of all these attributes of perfection and truth, that when in their disputes the theologians can agree upon no article of belief, they recur to the natural and cosmic laws, the neglect of which, say they, forced God to send from time to time prophets to proclaim new laws; as if God enacted laws for particular circumstances, as men do; especially when the first subsists in such force, that we may assert it to have been at all times and in all countries the rule of conscience for every one of sense or understanding.

DOM JOSE: If, as you say, it emanates immediately from the Creator, does it teach His existence?

VALIS: Yes, most positively: for, to any one whatever, who observes with reflection the astonishing spectacle of the universe, the more one meditates on the properties and attributes of each being, on the admirable order and harmony of their motions, the more it is demonstrated that there exists a supreme Intelligence, a universal and identic Mover, designated by the appellation of God; and so true it is that the natural and cosmic laws suffice to elevate one to the knowledge of the Creator, that all which humans have pretended to know by supernatural means, has constantly turned out ridiculous and absurd, and that

they have ever been obliged to recur to the immutable conceptions of natural and cosmic reasons.

DOM JOSE: Then it is not true that the followers of the natural and cosmic laws are atheists?

VALIS: No: it is not true; on the contrary, they entertain stronger and nobler ideas of the Divinity than most other people; for they do not sully Him with the foul ingredients of all the weaknesses and passions entailed on chaotic humanity.

DOM JOSE: What worship do they pay to Him?

VALIS: A worship wholly of action; the practice and observance of all the rules which the supreme wisdom has imposed on the life of each being; eternal and unalterable rules, by which it maintains the order and harmony of the universe, and which, in their relations to man, constitute the natural and cosmic laws.

DOM JOSE: Were the natural and cosmic laws known before this period?

VALIS: It has been at all times spoken of; most legislators pretend to adopt it as the basis of their laws; but they only quote some of its precepts, and have only vague ideas of its totality.

DOM JOSE: Why?

VALIS: Because, though simple in its basis, it forms in

its developments and consequences, a complicated whole which requires an extensive knowledge of facts, joined to all the sagacity of reasoning.

DOM JOSE: Does not instinct alone teach the natural and cosmic laws?

VALIS: No; for by instinct is meant nothing more than that blind sentiment by which we are actuated indiscriminately towards everything that flatters the senses.

DOM JOSE: Why, then, is it said that the natural and cosmic laws are engraved in the hearts of all people?

VALIS: It is said for two reasons: first, because it has been remarked, that there are acts and sentiments common to all people, and this proceeds from their common organization; secondly, because the first philosophers believed that people were born with ideas already formed, which is now demonstrated to be erroneous.

DOM JOSE: Philosophers, then, are fallible?

VALIS: Yes, sometimes.

DOM JOSE: Why so?

VALIS: First, because they are human; secondly, because the ignorant call all those who reason, right or wrong, philosophers; thirdly, because those who reason on

many subjects, and who are the first to reason on them, are liable to be deceived.

DOM JOSE: if the natural and cosmic laws be not written, must they not become arbitrary and ideal?

VALIS: No: because they consist entirely in facts, the demonstration of which can be incessantly renewed to the senses, and constitutes a science as accurate and precise as geometry and mathematics; and it is because the natural and cosmic laws form an exact science, that humans, born ignorant and living inattentive and heedless, have had hitherto only a superficial knowledge of them.

DOM JOSE: Explain the principles of the natural and cosmic laws with relation to humanity.

VALIS: They are simple; all of them are comprised in one fundamental and single precept.

DOM JOSE: What is that precept?

VALIS: It is self-preservation.

DOM JOSE: Is not happiness also a precept of the law of nature?

VALIS: Yes: but as happiness is an accidental state, resulting only from the development of humanity's faculties and their social system, it is not the immediate and direct object of nature: it is in some measure, a

superstructure annexed to the necessary and fundamental object of preservation.

DOM JOSE: How does nature order humanity to preserve itself?

VALIS: By two powerful and involuntary sensations, which it has attached, as two guides, two guardian angels to all their actions: one a sensation of pain, by which it admonishes him of, and deters them from everything that tends to destroy him; the other, a sensation of pleasure, by which it attracts and carries him towards everything that tends to their preservation and the development of their existence.

DOM JOSE: Pleasure, then, is not an evil, a sin, as fanatics pretend?

VALIS: No, only inasmuch as it tends to destroy life and health, which, by the avowal of those same fanatics, we derive from God Himself.

DOM JOSE: Is pleasure the principal object of our existence, as some philosophers have asserted?

VALIS: No; not more than pain; pleasure is an incitement to live as pain is a repulsion from death.

DOM JOSE: How do you prove this assertion?

VALIS: By two palpable facts: one, that pleasure, when taken immoderately, leads to destruction; for instance,

a person who abuses the pleasure of eating or drinking, attacks their health and injures their life. The other, that pain sometimes leads to self-preservation; for instance, a person who permits a mortified member to be cut off, suffers pain in order not to perish totally.

DOM JOSE: But does not even this prove that our senses can deceive us respecting the end of our preservation?

VALIS: Yes; they can momentarily.

DOM JOSE: How do our sensations deceive us?

VALIS: In two ways: by ignorance, and by passion.

DOM JOSE: When do they deceive us by ignorance?

VALIS: When we act without knowing the action and effect of objects on our senses: for example, when a person touches nettles without knowing their stinging quality, or when one swallows opium without knowing its soporiferous effects.

DOM JOSE: When do they deceive us by passion?

VALIS: When, conscious of the pernicious action of objects, we abandon ourselves, nevertheless, to the impetuosity of our desires and appetites: for example, when a person who knows that wine intoxicates, does nevertheless drink it to excess.

DOM JOSE: What is the result?

VALIS: That the ignorance in which we are born, and the

unbridled appetites to which we abandon ourselves, are contrary to our preservation; that, therefore, the instruction of our minds and the moderation of our passions are two obligations, two laws, which spring directly from the first law of preservation.

DOM JOSE: But being born ignorant, is not ignorance a natural law?

VALIS: No more than to remain in the naked and feeble state of infancy. Far from being a natural law, ignorance is an obstacle to the practice of all its laws. It is the real primordial sin.

DOM JOSE: Why, then, have there been thinkers who have looked upon it as a virtue and perfection?

VALIS: Because, from a strange or perverted disposition, they confounded the abuse of knowledge with knowledge itself; as if, because people abuse the power of speech, their tongues should be cut out; as if perfection and virtue consisted in the nullity, and not in the proper development of our faculties.

DOM JOSE: Instruction, then, is indispensable to humanity's existence?

VALIS: Yes, so indispensable, that without it one is every instant assailed and wounded by all that surrounds them; for if one does not know the effects of fire, one

burns oneself; those of water one drowns oneself; those of poison, one poisons oneself; it in the savage state, one does not know the wiles of animals, and the art of seizing game, one perishes through hunger; if in the social state, one does not know the course of the seasons, one can neither cultivate the ground, nor procure nourishment; and so on, of all their actions, respecting all their wants.

DOM JOSE: But can a person individually acquire this knowledge necessary to their existence, and to the development of one's faculties?

VALIS: No; not without the assistance of their fellow humans and by living in society.

DOM JOSE: But is not society to humanity a state against nature?

VALIS: No: it is on the contrary a necessity, a law that nature imposed on them by the very act of their organization; for, first, nature has so constituted humanity, that they cannot see their species of another sex without feeling emotions and an attraction, which induce them to live in a family, which is already a state of society; secondly, by endowing them with sensibility, she organized one so that the sensations of others reflect within one, and excite reciprocal sentiments of

pleasure and of grief, which are attractions, and indissoluble ties of society; thirdly, and finally, the state of society, founded on the wants of humanity, is only a further means of fulfilling the law of preservation; and to pretend that this state is out of nature, because it is more perfect is the same as to say, that a bitter and wild fruit of the forest, is no longer the production of nature, when rendered sweet and delicious by cultivation in our gardens.

DOM JOSE: Why, then, have some philosophers called the savage state the state of perfection?

VALIS: Because, as I have told you, the vulgar have often given the name of philosopher to whimsical geniuses, who, from moroseness, from wounded vanity, or from a disgust to the vices of society, have conceived unreal ideas of the savage state, in contradiction with their own system of a perfect humanity.

DOM JOSE: What is the true meaning of the word philosopher?

VALIS: The word philosopher signifies a lover of wisdom; and as wisdom consists in the practice of the natural and cosmic laws, the true philosopher is one who knows those laws, and conforms the whole tenor of their conduct to them.

DOM JOSE: What is humanity in the savage state?

VALIS: A brutal, ignorant animal, a wicked and ferocious beast.

DOM JOSE: Is one happy in that state?

VALIS: No; for one only feels momentary sensations, which are habitually of violent wants which one cannot satisfy, since one is ignorant by nature, and weak by being isolated from their race.

DOM JOSE: Is such a one free?

VALIS: No: such a one is the most abject slave that exists; for their life depends on everything that surrounds them: they are not free to eat when hungry, to rest when tired, to warm themselves when cold; they are every instant in danger of perishing; wherefore nature offers but fortuitous examples of such beings; and we see that all the efforts of the human species, since its origin, sorely tends to emerge from that violent state by the pressing necessity of self-preservation.

DOM JOSE: But does not this necessity of preservation engender in individual's egotism, that is to say self-love? And is not egotism contrary to the social state?

VALIS: No; for if by egotism you mean a propensity to hurt our neighbor, it is no longer, self-love, but the hatred of others. Self-love, taken in its true sense, not

only is not contrary to society,
but is its firmest support, by the necessity we lie under
of not injuring others, lest in return they should injure
us. Thus humanities preservation, and the unfolding of
their faculties, directed towards this end, teach the true
natural law in the production of the human being; and it
is from this essential principle that are derived, are
referred, and in its scale are weighed, all ideas of good
and evil, of vice and virtue, of just and unjust, of truth
or error, of lawful or forbidden, on which is founded the
morality of individual or of social humanity.

DOM JOSE: What is good, according to the natural and
cosmic laws?

VALIS: It is everything that tends to preserve and
perfect humanity.

DOM JOSE: What is evil?

VALIS: That which tends to humanity's destruction or
deterioration.

DOM JOSE: What is meant by physical good and evil, and
by moral good and evil?

VALIS: By the word physical is understood, whatever
acts immediately on the body. Health is a physical good;
and sickness a physical evil. By moral, is meant what
acts by consequences more or less remote. Slander is a

moral evil; a fair reputation is a moral good because both one and the other occasion towards us, on the part of other people, dispositions and habitudes, which are useful or hurtful to our preservation, and which attack or favor our means of existence.

DOM JOSE: Everything that tends to preserve, or to produce is therefore a good?

VALIS: Yes; and it is for that reason that certain legislators have classed among the work agreeable to the divinity, the cultivation of a field, the fecundity of a woman and the wisdom of a teacher.

DOM JOSE: Whatever tends to cause death is, therefore, an evil?

VALIS: Yes: and it is for that reason some legislators have extended the idea of evil and of sin even to the killing of animals.

DOM JOSE: The murdering of a person is, therefore, a crime according to the natural and cosmic laws?

VALIS: Yes, and the greatest that can be committed; for every other evil can be repaired, but murder alone is irreparable.

DOM JOSE: What is a sin according to the natural and cosmic laws?

VALIS: Whatever tends to disturb the order established

by nature for the preservation and perfection of humanity and of society.

DOM JOSE: Can intention be a merit or a crime?

VALIS: No, for it is only an idea void of reality; but it is a commencement of sin and evil, by the impulse it gives to action.

DOM JOSE: What is virtue according to the natural and cosmic laws?

VALIS: It is the practice of actions useful to the individual and to society.

DOM JOSE: What is meant by the word individual?

VALIS: It means a person considered separately from every other.

DOM JOSE: What is vice according to the natural and cosmic laws?

VALIS: It is the practice of actions prejudicial to the individual to society.

DOM JOSE: Have not virtue and vice an object purely spiritual and abstracted from the senses?

VALIS: No; it is always to a physical end that they finally relate, and that end is always to destroy or preserve the body.

DOM JOSE: Have vice and virtue degrees of strength and intensity?

VALIS: Yes: according to the importance of the faculties, which they attack or which they favor, and according to the number of persons in whom those faculties are favored or injured.

DOM JOSE: Give me some examples.

VALIS: The action of saving a person's life is more virtuous than the saving of their property; the action of saving the lives of ten people, than that of saving only the life of one, and an action useful to the whole human race is more virtuous than an action that is only useful to one single nation.

DOM JOSE: How does the natural and cosmic law prescribe the practice of good and virtue, and forbid that of evil and vice.

VALIS: By the advantages resulting from the practice of good and virtue for the preservation of our body, and by the losses which result to our existence from the practice of evil and vice.

DOM JOSE: Its precepts are then in action?

VALIS: Yes: they are action itself, considered in its present effect and in its future consequences.

DOM JOSE: How do you divide the virtues?

VALIS: We divide them in three classes, first, individual virtues, as relative to a person alone; secondly,

domestic virtues, as relative to a family; thirdly, social virtues, as relative to society.

DOM JOSE: Which are the individual virtues according to the natural and cosmic laws?

VALIS: There are five principal ones, to wit: first, science, which comprises prudence and wisdom; secondly, temperance, comprising sobriety and moderation; thirdly, courage, or strength of body and mind; fourthly, activity, that is to say, love of labor and employment of time, fifthly, and finally, cleanliness, or purity of body, as well in dress as in habitation.

DOM JOSE: How does the natural and cosmic law prescribe science?

VALIS: Because the person acquainted with the causes and effects of things attends in a careful and sure manner to their preservation, and the development of their faculties. Science is to one the eye and the light, which enable them to discern clearly and accurately all the objects with which they are conversant, and hence by an enlightened person is meant a learned and well-informed person. With science and instruction, a person never wants for resources and means of subsistence: upon this principle a philosopher, who had been shipwrecked, said to their companions, that were

inconsolable for the loss of their wealth: "For my part, I carry all my wealth within me."

DOM JOSE: Which is the vice contrary to science?

VALIS: It is ignorance.

DOM JOSE: How does the natural and cosmic law forbid ignorance?

VALIS: From the grievous detriments resulting from it to our existence; for the ignorant person who knows neither causes nor effects, omits every instant error most pernicious to themselves and to others; resembles a blind person groping their way at random, and who, at every step jostles or is jostled by everyone they meet.

DOM JOSE: What difference is there between an ignorant and a silly person?

VALIS: The same difference as between one who frankly avows their blindness and the blind person who pretends to sight; silliness is the reality of ignorance, to which is superadded the vanity of knowledge.

DOM JOSE: Are ignorance and silliness common?

VALIS: Yes, very common; they are the usual and general distempers of humankind; more than thousands of years ago the wisest of humanity said: "The number of fools is infinite"; and the world has not changed.

DOM JOSE: What is the reason of it?

VALIS: Because much labor and time are necessary to acquire instruction, and because people, both ignorant and indolent, find it more convenient to remain blind, and pretend to see clear.

DOM JOSE: What difference is there between a learned and a wise person?

VALIS: The learned knows, and the wise person practices.

DOM JOSE: What is prudence?

VALIS: It is the anticipated perception, the foresight of the effects and consequences of every action; by means of which foresight, I mean avoids the dangers which threaten one, while one seizes on and creates opportunities favorable to one: one thereby provides for one's present and future safety in a certain and secure manner, whereas the imprudent person, who calculates neither their step nor their conduct, nor efforts, nor resistance, falls every instant into difficulties and dangers, which sooner or later impair their faculties and destroy their existence.

DOM JOSE: What is temperance according to the natural and cosmic law?

VALIS: It is a regular use of our faculties, which makes us never exceed in our sensations the end of nature to

preserve us; it is the moderation of the passions.

DOM JOSE: Which is the vice contrary to temperance?

VALIS: The disorder of the passions, the avidity of all kinds of enjoyments, in a word, cupidity.

DOM JOSE: Which are the principal branches of temperance?

VALIS: Sobriety and continence.

DOM JOSE: How does the law of nature prescribe sobriety?

VALIS: By its powerful influence over our health. The sober person digests with comfort; they are not overpowered by the weight of ailments; their ideas are clear and easy; they fulfil all their functions, they conduct their business with intelligence; their old age is exempt from infirmity; they do not spend their money in remedies, and they enjoy, in mirth and gladness, the wealth which chance and their own prudence have procured them. Thus, from one virtue alone, generous nature derives innumerable recompenses.

DOM JOSE: How does it prohibit gluttony?

VALIS: By the numerous evils that are attached to it. The glutton, oppressed with aliments, digests with anxiety; their head, troubled by the fumes of indigestion, is incapable of conceiving clear and distinct ideas: They

abandon themselves with violence to the disorderly impulse of lust and anger, which impair their health; their body becomes bloated, heavy, and unfit for labor; they endure painful and expensive distempers, they seldom live to be old; and his age is replete with infirmities and sorrows.

DOM JOSE: Should abstinence and fasting be regarded as virtuous actions?

VALIS: Yes, when one has eaten too much; for then fasting and abstinence are simple and efficacious remedies; but when the body is in want of aliment, to refuse it any, and let it suffer from hunger or thirst, is delirium and a real sin against the natural and cosmic law.

DOM JOSE: How is drunkenness considered according to the natural and cosmic law?

VALIS: As a most vile and pernicious vice. The drunkard, deprived of the sense and reason given us by the Creator, profanes the donations of the divinity: one debases oneself to the condition of brutes; unable even to guide one's steps, one staggers and falls as if one were epileptic; one hurts and even risks killing oneself; their debility in this state exposes them to the ridicule and contempt of every person that sees them; one

makes in one's drunkenness, prejudicial and ruinous bargains, and injures one's fortune; one makes use of abusive language, which creates one's enemies and repentance; one fills one's house with trouble and sorrow, and ends by a premature death or by a miserable old age.

DOM JOSE: Does the law of nature interdict absolutely the use of wine?

VALIS: No; it only forbids the abuse; but as the transition from the use to the abuse is easy and prompt among the generality of people, perhaps the legislators, who have proscribed the use of wine, have rendered a service to humanity.

DOM JOSE: Does the law of nature forbid the use of certain kinds of foods on particular days, during certain seasons?

VALIS: No; it absolutely forbids only whatever is injurious to health; its precepts, in this respect, vary according to persons, and even constitute a very delicate and important science; for the quality, the quantity, and the combination of aliments have the greatest influence, not only over the momentary affections of the soul, but even over its habitual disposition. A person is not the same when fasting as

after a meal, even if one were sober. A glass of spirituous liquor, or a drink of mead, gives degrees of vivacity, of mobility, of disposition to anger, sadness, or gaiety; such a meat, because it lies heavy on the stomach, engenders moroseness and melancholy; such a fruit because it facilitates digestion, creates sprightliness, and an inclination to oblige and to love. The use of vegetables, because they are light foods, cleanse the body, and gives a disposition to repose, calmness and ease; the use of meat, because it is full of calories, and of spirituous liquors, because they stimulate the nerves, creates excitement, uneasiness and audacity.

Now from those habitudes of aliment result habits of constitution and of the organs, which form afterwards different kinds of temperaments, each of which is distinguished by a peculiar characteristic. And it is for this reason that, in hot countries especially, legislators have made laws respecting regimen of food. The ancients were taught by long experience that the dietetic science constituted a considerable part of morality; among the Egyptians, the ancient Persians, and even among the Greeks, at the Areopagus, important affairs were examined fasting; and it has

been remarked that, among those people, where public affairs were discussed during the heat of meals, and the fumes of digestion, deliberations were hasty and violent, and the results of them frequently unreasonable, and productive of turbulence and confusion.

DOM JOSE: Does the natural and cosmic law prescribe continence?

VALIS: Yes; Because a moderate use of the most lively of pleasures is not only useful, but indispensable, to the support of strength and health; and because a simple calculation proves that, for some minutes of privation, you increase the number of your days, both in vigor of body and of mind.

DOM JOSE: How does it forbid libertinism?

VALIS: By the numerous evils which result from it to the physical and the moral existence.

He who carries it to an excess enervates and pines away; they can no longer attend to study or labor; they contracts idle and expensive habits, which destroy one's means of existence, their public consideration, and their credit; their intrigues occasion continual embarrassment, cares, quarrels and lawsuits, without mentioning the grievous deep-rooted distempers, and

the loss of their strength by an inward and slow poison; the stupid dullness of their mind, by the exhaustion of the nervous system; and, in fine, a premature and infirm old age.

DOM JOSE: Does the law of nature look on that absolute chastity so recommended in religious institutions, as a virtue?

VALIS: No: for that chastity is of no use either to the society that witnesses, or the individual who practices it; it is even prejudicial to both. First, it injures society by depriving it of population, which is one of its principal sources of wealth and power; and as bachelors confine all their views and affections to the term of their lives, they have in general an egotism unfavorable to the interests of society. In the second place, it injures the individuals who practice it, because it deprives them of a number of affections and relations which are the springs of most domestic and social virtues; and besides, it often happens, from circumstances of age, regimen, or temperament, that absolute continence injures the constitution and causes severe diseases, because it is contrary to the physical laws on which nature has founded the system of the reproduction of beings; and they who recommend so strongly chastity,

even supposing them to be sincere, are in contradiction with their own doctrine, which consecrates the law of nature by the well-known commandment: increase and multiply.

DOM JOSE: Why according to the Mosaic Law is chastity considered a greater virtue in women than in men?

VALIS: Because a want of chastity in women is attended with inconveniences much more serious and dangerous for them and for society; for, without taking into account the pains and diseases they have in common with men, they are further exposed to all the disadvantages and perils that precede, attend, and follow child-birth. When pregnant contrary to law, they become an object of public scandal and contempt, and spend the remainder of their lives in bitterness and misery.

Moreover, all the expense of maintaining and educating their fatherless children falls on them; which expense impoverishes them, and is in every way prejudicial to their physical and moral existence. In this situation, deprived of the freshness and health that constitute their charm, carrying with them an extraneous and expensive burden, they are less prized by men, they find no solid establishment, they fall into poverty,

misery, and wretchedness, and thus drag on in sorrow their unhappy existence.

DOM JOSE: Does the natural and cosmic law extend so far as the scruples of desires and thoughts?

VALIS: Yes; because, in the physical laws of the human body, thoughts and desires inflame the senses, and soon provoke to action: now, by another law of nature in the organization of our body, those actions become mechanical wants which recur at certain periods of days or of weeks, so that, at such a time, the want is renewed of such an action and such a secretion; if this action and this secretion be injurious to health, the habitude of them becomes destructive of life itself. Thus, thoughts and desires have a true and natural importance.

DOM JOSE: Should modesty be considered as a natural virtue?

VALIS: Yes, because modesty, inasmuch as it is a shame of certain actions, maintains the soul and body in all those habits useful to good order, and to self-preservation.

DOM JOSE: Are courage and strength of body and mind virtues according to the natural and cosmic law?

VALIS: Yes, and most important virtues; for they are efficacious - and indispensable means of attending to

our preservation and welfare. The courageous and strong person repulses oppression, defends their life, their liberty, and their property; by their labor they procure themselves an abundant subsistence, which they enjoy in tranquility and peace of mind. If one falls into misfortunes, from which one's prudence could not protect one, one supports them with fortitude and resignation; and it is for this reason that the ancient moralists have reckoned strength and courage among the four principal virtues.

DOM JOSE: Should weakness and cowardice be considered as vices according to the natural and cosmic law?

VALIS: Yes, since it is certain that they produce innumerable calamities. The weak or cowardly person lives in perpetual cares and agonies; they undermine their health by the dread, oftentimes ill founded, of attacks and dangers: and this dread which is an evil, is not a remedy, it renders them, on the contrary, the slave of them who wish to oppress them; and by the servitude and debasement of all their faculties, it degrades and diminishes their means of existence, so far as the being of their life depends on the will and caprice of another person.

DOM JOSE: But, after what you have said on the influence of aliments, are not courage and force, as well as many other virtues, in greater measure the effect of our physical constitution and temperament.

VALIS: Yes, it is true; and so far, that those qualities are transmitted by generation and blood, with the elements on which they depend: the most reiterated and constant facts prove that in the breed of animals of every kind, we see certain physical and moral qualities, attached to the individuals of those species, increase or decay according to the combinations and mixtures they make with other breeds.

DOM JOSE: But, then, as our will is not sufficient to procure us those qualities, is it a crime to be destitute of them?

VALIS: No, it is not a crime, but a misfortune; it is what the ancients call an unlucky fatality; but even then we have it yet in our power to acquire them; for, as soon as we know on what physical elements such or such a quality is founded, we can promote its growth, and hasten its developments, by a skillful management of those elements; and in this consists the science of education, which, according as it is directed, meliorates or degrades individuals, or the whole race, to such a

pitch as totally to change their nature and inclinations; for which reason it is of the greatest importance to be acquainted with the natural and cosmic laws by which those operations and changes are certainly and necessarily effected.

DOM JOSE: Why do you say that activity is a virtue according to the natural and cosmic law?

VALIS: Because the person who works and employs their time usefully, derives from it a thousand precious advantages to their existence. If one is born poor, their labor furnishes them with subsistence; and still more so, if one is sober, continent, and prudent, for one soon acquires a competency, and enjoys the sweets of life; one's very labor gives one virtue; for, while one occupies one's body and mind, one is not affected with unruly desires, time does not lie heavy on one, one contracts mild habits, one augments one's strength and health, and attains a peaceful and happy old age.

DOM JOSE: Are idleness and sloth vices according to the natural and cosmic law?

VALIS: Yes, and the most pernicious of all vices, for they lead to all the others.

By idleness and sloth humanity remains ignorant, they forget even the science they had acquired, and falls into

all the misfortunes which accompany ignorance and folly; by idleness and sloth humans, devoured with disquietude, in order to dissipate it, abandon themselves to all the desires of their senses, which, becoming every day more inordinate, render them intemperate, gluttonous, lascivious, enervated, cowardly, vile, and contemptible. By the certain effect of all those vices, they ruin their fortune, consume their health, and terminates their life in all the agonies of sickness and of poverty.

DOM JOSE: From what you say, one would think that poverty was a vice?

VALIS: No, it is not a vice; but it is still less a virtue, for it is by far more ready to injure than to be useful; it is even commonly the result, or the beginning of vice, for the effect of all individual vices is to lead to indigence, and to the privation of the necessaries of life; and when a person is in want of necessaries, one is tempted to procure them by vicious means, that is to say, by means injurious to society. All the individual virtues tend, on the contrary, to procure to humanity an abundant subsistence: and when one has more than one can consume, it is much easier for one to give to others, and to practice the actions useful to society.

DOM JOSE: Do you look upon opulence as a virtue?

VALIS: No, but still less as a vice: it is the use alone of wealth that can be called virtuous or vicious, according as it is serviceable or prejudicial to humanity and to society. Wealth is an instrument, the use and employment alone of which determine its virtue or vice.

DOM JOSE: Why is cleanliness included among the natural virtues?

VALIS: Because it is, in reality, one of the most important among them, on account of its powerful influence over the health and preservation of the body. Cleanliness, as well in dress and residence, as in food, obviates the pernicious effects of the humidity, baneful odors, and contagious exhalations, proceeding from all things abandoned to putrefaction. Cleanliness maintains free transpiration; it renews the air, refreshes the blood, and disposes even the mind to cheerfulness. From this it appears that persons attentive to the cleanliness of their bodies and habitations are, in general, healthier, and less subject to disease, than those who live in filth and nastiness; and it is further remarked, that cleanliness carries with it, throughout all the branches of domestic administration, habits of order and arrangement, which are the chief means and first

elements of happiness.

DOM JOSE: Uncleaness or filthiness is, then, a real vice according to the natural and cosmic law?

VALIS: Yes, as real a one as drunkenness, or as idleness, from which in a great measure it is derived.

Uncleaness is the second and often the first, cause of many inconveniences, and even of grievous disorders; it is a fact in medicine, that it brings on the itch, the scurf, leprosy's, as much as the use of tainted or sour elements; that it favors the contagious influence of the plague and malignant fevers, that it occasions rheumatism, by encrusting the skin with dirt, and thereby preventing transpiration; without reckoning the shameful inconvenience of being devoured by vermin—the foul appendage of misery and depravity.

Most ancient legislators, therefore, considered cleanliness, which they called purity, as one of the essential dogmas of their religions. It was for this reason that they expelled from society, and even punish corporeally those who were infected with distempers produced by uncleaness; that they instituted and consecrated ceremonies of ablutions, baptisms, and of purification's, even by the aromatic fumes of incense, myrrh, etc., so that the entire system of all those rites

clean and unclean things, degenerated since into abuses and prejudices, were only founded originally on the judicious observation, which wise and learned people had made, of the extreme influence that cleanliness in food, dress and abode exercises over the health of the body, and by an immediate consequence over that of the mind and moral faculties. Thus, all the individual virtues have for their object, more or less direct, more or less near, the preservation of the person who practice them; and by the preservation of each person, they lend to that of families and society, which are composed of the united sum of individuals.

DOM JOSE: What do you mean by domestic virtues?

VALIS: I mean the practice of actions useful to a family, supposed to live in the same house.

DOM JOSE: What are those virtues according to the natural and cosmic law?

VALIS: They are economy, paternal love, filial love, conjugal love, fraternal love, and the accomplishment of the duties of master and servant.

DOM JOSE: What is economy?

VALIS: It is the proper administration of everything that concerns the existence of the family or house; and as subsistence holds the first rank, the word economy is

confined to the best employment of values for the wants of life.

DOM JOSE: Why is economy a virtue?

VALIS: Because a person who makes no useless expenses acquires an abundance, which is true wealth, and by means of which one acquires for oneself and one's family everything that is really convenient and useful; without mentioning one securing thereby resources against accidental and unforeseen losses, so that one and their family enjoy an agreeable and undisturbed competency, which is the basis of human felicity in society.

DOM JOSE: Dissipation and prodigality, therefore, are vices?

VALIS: Yes, for by them humanity, in the end, is deprived of the necessaries of life in society; one falls into poverty and wretchedness.

DOM JOSE: What is paternal love?

VALIS: It is the assiduous care taken by parents to make their children contract the habit of every action useful to themselves and to society.

DOM JOSE: Why is paternal tenderness a virtue in parents?

VALIS: Because parents, who rear their children in those

habits, procure for themselves, during the course of their lives, enjoyments and helps that give a sensible satisfaction at every instant, and which assure to them, when advanced in years, supports and consolations against the wants and calamities of all kinds with which old age is beset.

DOM JOSE: Is paternal love a common virtue?

VALIS: No; notwithstanding the ostentation made of it by parents, it is a rare virtue. They do not love their children; they caress and spoil them. In them they love only the agents of their will, the instruments of their power, the trophies of their vanity, the pastime of their idleness. It is not so much the welfare of their children that they propose to themselves, as their submission and obedience; and if among children so many are seen ungrateful for benefits received, it is because there are among parents as many despotic and ignorant benefactors.

DOM JOSE: Why do you say that conjugal love is a virtue?

VALIS: Because the concord and union resulting from the love of the married, establish in the heart of the family a multitude of habits useful to its prosperity and preservation. The united pair are attached to, and

seldom quit their home; they superintend each particular direction of it; they attend to the education of their children; they prevent all disorder and dissipation; and from the whole of their good conduct, they live in ease and consideration; while married persons who do not love one another, fill their house with quarrels and troubles; the married pair avoid each other, or contend in lawsuits; and the whole family falls into disorder, ruin, disgrace and want.

DOM JOSE: Is adultery an offence according to the Mosaic Law?

VALIS: Yes; for it is attended with a number of habits injurious to the married and to their families.

The wife or husband, whose affections are estranged, neglect their house, avoid it, and deprive it, as much as they can, of its revenues or income, to expend them with the object of their affections; hence arise quarrels, scandal, lawsuits, the neglect of their children and servants, and at last the plundering and ruin of the whole family.

DOM JOSE: What is filial love?

VALIS: It is, on the side of the children, the practice of those actions useful to themselves and to their parents.

DOM JOSE: How does the natural and cosmic law

prescribe filial love?

VALIS: By three principal motives: One, by sentiment; for the affectionate care of parents inspires from the most tender age, mild habits of attachment. Two, by justice; for children owe to their parents a return and indemnity for the cares, and even for the expenses, they have caused them. Three, by personal interest; for, if they use them ill, they give to their own children examples of revolt and ingratitude, which authorize them, at a future day, to behave to themselves in a similar manner.

DOM JOSE: Are we to understand by filial love a passive and blind submission?

VALIS: No; but a reasonable submission, founded on the knowledge of the mutual rights and duties of parents and children; rights - and duties, without the observance of which their mutual conduct is nothing but disorder.

DOM JOSE: Why is fraternal love a virtue?

VALIS: Because the concord and union, which result from the love of brothers, establish the strength, security, and conservation of the family: brothers united defend themselves against all oppression, they aid one another in their wants, they help one another in

their misfortunes, and thus secure their common existence; while siblings disunited, abandoned each to their own personal strength, fall into all the inconveniences attendant on an isolated state and individual weakness.

This is what a certain Scythian king ingeniously expressed when, on his death-bed, calling his children to him, he ordered them to break a bundle of arrows. The young, though strong, being unable to effect it, he took them in his turn, and untying them, broke each of the arrows separately with his fingers. "Behold," said he, "the effects of union; united together, you will be invincible; taken separately, you will be broken like reeds."

DOM JOSE: What are the reciprocal duties of managers and of workers?

VALIS: They consist in the practice of the actions which are respectively and justly useful to them; and here begin the relations of society; for the rule and measure of those respective actions is the equilibrium or equality between the service and the recompense, between what one returns and the other gives; which is the fundamental basis of all society. Thus, all the domestic and individual virtues refer, more or less

mediately, but always with certitude, to the physical object of the improvement and preservation of humanity, and are thereby precepts resulting from the fundamental law of nature in one's formation.

DOM JOSE: What is society?

VALIS: It is every reunion of humans living together under the clauses of an expressed or tacit contract, which has for its end their common preservation.

DOM JOSE: Are the social virtues numerous?

VALIS: Yes; they are in as great number as the kinds of actions useful to society; but all may be reduced to one principle.

DOM JOSE: What is that fundamental principle according to the natural and cosmic law?

VALIS: It is justice, which alone comprises all the virtues of society.

DOM JOSE: Why do you say that justice is the fundamental and almost only virtue of society?

VALIS: Because it alone embraces the practice of all the actions useful to it; and because all the other virtues, under the denominations of charity, humanity, probity, love of one's country, sincerity, generosity, simplicity of manners, and modesty, are only varied forms and diversified applications of the axiom, "Do not do to

another what you do not wish to be done to yourself," which is the definition of justice.

DOM JOSE: How does the natural and cosmic law prescribe justice?

VALIS: By three physical attributes, inherent in the organization of humanity.

DOM JOSE: What are those attributes?

A VALIS: They are equality, liberty, and property.

DOM JOSE: How is equality a physical property of humanity?

VALIS: Because all people, having equally eyes, hands, mouths, ears, and the necessity of making use of them, in order to live, have, by this reason alone, an equal right to life, and to the use of the aliments which maintain it; they are all equal before the Creator.

DOM JOSE: Do you suppose that all people hear equally, see equally, feel equally, have equal wants, and equal passions?

VALIS: No; for it is evident, and daily demonstrated, that one is short, and another long-sighted; that one eats much, another little; that one has mild, another violent passion; in a word, that one is weak in body and mind, while another is strong in both.

DOM JOSE: They are, therefore, really unequal?

VALIS: Yes, in the development of their means, but not in the nature and essence of those means.

They are made of the same stuff, but not in the same dimensions, nor are the weight and value equal. Our language possesses no one word capable of expressing the identity of nature, and the diversity of its form and employment. It is a proportional equality; and it is for this reason I have said, equal before the Creator, and in the order of nature. Consequently, all people have equal right to all preconditions and possibilities of life and individual evolution.

DOM JOSE: How is liberty a physical attribute of humanity?

VALIS: Because all people having senses sufficient for their preservation - no one wanting the eye of another to see, their ear to hear, their mouth to eat, their feet to walk - they are all, by this very reason, constituted naturally independent and free; no person is necessarily subjected to another, nor has one a right to dominate over them.

DOM JOSE: But if a person is born strong, has that one a natural right to master the weak person?

VALIS: No; for it is neither a necessity for one, nor a convention between them; it is an abusive extension of

one's strength; and here an abuse is made of the word right, which in its true meaning implies justice or reciprocal faculty.

DOM JOSE; How is property a physical attribute of humanity?

VALIS: Inasmuch as all people being constituted equal or similar to one another, and consequently independent and free, each is the absolute master, the full proprietor of their body and of the produce of their labor.

DOM JOSE: How is justice derived from these three attributes?

VALIS: In this, that people being equal and free, owing nothing to each other, have no right to require anything from one another only inasmuch as the balance of what is given is in equilibrium with what is returned; and it is this equality, this equilibrium which is called justice, equity, that is to say that quality and justice are but one and the same word, the same natural and cosmic law, of which the social virtues are only applications and derivatives.

DOM JOSE: Explain how the social virtues are derived from the natural and cosmic law. How is charity or the love of one's neighbor a precept and application of it?

VALIS: By reason of equality and reciprocity; for when we injure another, we give one a right to injure us in return; thus, by attacking the existence of our neighbor, we endanger our own, from the effect of reciprocity; on the other hand, by doing good to others, we have room and right to expect an equivalent exchange; and such is the character of all social virtues, that they are useful to the person who practices them, by the right of reciprocity which they give one over those who are benefited by them.

DOM JOSE: Charity is then nothing but justice?

VALIS: Yes, it is only justice; with this slight difference, that strict justice confines itself to saying, "Do not to another the harm you would not wish one should do to you;" and that charity, or the love of one's neighbor, extends so far as to say, "Do to another the good which you would wish to receive from them."

DOM JOSE: Does it enjoin forgiveness of injuries?

VALIS: Yes, when that forgiveness implies self-preservation.

DOM JOSE: Does the law of nature prescribe to do good to others beyond the bounds of reason and measure?

VALIS: No; for it is a sure way of leading them to ingratitude. Such is the force of sentiment and justice

implanted in the heart of humanity, that one is not even grateful for benefits conferred without discretion. There is only one measure with them, and that is to be just

DOM JOSE: Is alms-giving a virtuous action in society?

VALIS: Yes, when it is practiced according to the rule first mentioned; without which it degenerates into imprudence and vice, inasmuch as it encourages laziness, which is hurtful to the beggar and to society; no one has a right to partake of the property and fruits of another's labor, without rendering an equivalent of one's own industry.

DOM JOSE: Does the natural and cosmic law prescribe probity?

VALIS: Yes, for probity is nothing more than respect for one's own rights in those of another; a respect founded on a prudent and well-combined calculation of our interests compared to those of others.

DOM JOSE: But does not this calculation, which embraces the complicated interests and rights of the social state, require an enlightened understanding and knowledge, which make it a difficult science? VALIS:

Yes, and a science so much the more delicate as the honest person pronounces in their own cause.

DOM JOSE: Probity, then, shows an extension and justice

in the mind?

VALIS: Yes, for the honest person almost always neglects present interest, in order not to destroy a future one; whereas the knave does the contrary, and loses a great future interest for a present smaller one.

DOM JOSE: Improbability, then, is a sign of false judgment and a narrow mind?

VALIS: Yes, and rogues may be defined ignorant and silly calculators; for they do not understand their true interest, and they pretend to cunning: nevertheless, their cunning only ends in making known what they are - in losing all confidence and esteem, and the good services resulting from them for their physical and social existence. They neither live in peace with others, nor with themselves and incessantly menaced by their conscience and their enemies, they enjoy no other real happiness but that of not being punished.

DOM JOSE: Does the natural and cosmic law forbid robbery.

VALIS: Yes, for the person who robs another gives them a right to rob him; from that moment there is no security in their property, nor in their means of preservation: thus, in injuring others, they, by counterblow, injures themselves.

DOM JOSE: Does it interdict even an inclination to rob?

VALIS: Yes, for that inclination leads naturally to action, and it is for this reason that envy is considered a sin.

DOM JOSE: How does it forbid murder?

VALIS: By the most powerful motives of self-preservation; for, first, the person who attacks exposes themselves to the risk of being killed, by the fight of defense; secondly, if one kills, one gives to the relations and friends of the deceased, and to society at large, an equal fight of killing them; so that their life is no longer in safety.

DOM JOSE: How can we, by the natural and cosmic law, repair the evil we have done?

VALIS: By rendering a proportionate good to those whom we have injured.

DOM JOSE: Does it allow us to repair it by prayers, vows, offerings to God, fasting and mortifications?

VALIS: No: for all those things are foreign to the action we wish to repair: they neither restore the ox to one from whom it has been stolen, honor to one we have deprived of it, nor life to one from whom it has been taken away; consequently they miss the end of justice; they are only perverse contracts by which a person sells to another goods which do not belong to one; they are a

real deprivation of morality, inasmuch as they embolden to commit crimes through the hope of expiating them; wherefore, they have been the real cause of all the evils by which the people among whom those expiatory practices were used, have been continually tormented.

DOM JOSE: Does the natural and cosmic law order sincerity?

VALIS: Yes; for lying, perfidy, and perjury create distrust, quarrels, hatred, revenge and a crowd of evils among people, which tend to their common destruction; while sincerity and fidelity establish confidence, concord, and peace, besides the infinite good resulting from such a state of things to society.

DOM JOSE: Does it prescribe mildness and modesty?

VALIS: Yes; for harshness and obduracy, by alienating from us the hearts of other people, give them an inclination to hurt us; ostentation and vanity, by wounding their self-love and jealousy, occasion us to miss the end of a real utility.

DOM JOSE: Does it prescribe humility as a virtue?

VALIS: No; for it is a propensity in the human heart to despise secretly everything that presents to it the idea of weakness; and self- debasement encourages pride

and oppression in others; the balance must be kept in equipoise.

DOM JOSE: You have reckoned simplicity of manners among the social virtues; what do you understand by that word?

VALIS: I mean the restricting of our wants and desires to what is truly useful to the existence of the individual and their family; that is to say, the person of simple manners has but few wants, and lives content with a little.

DOM JOSE: How is this virtue prescribed to us?

VALIS: By the numerous advantages which the practice of it procures to the individual and to society; for the person whose wants are few, is free at once from a crowd of cares, perplexities and labors; one avoids many quarrels and contests arising from avidity and a desire of gain; one spares oneself the anxiety of ambition, the inquietudes of possession, and the uneasiness of losses; finding superfluity everywhere, one is the real rich person; always content with what one has, one is happy at little expense; and other people, not fearing any competition from them, leave that one in quiet, and are disposed to render that one the services that one should stand in need of. And if

this virtue of simplicity extends to a whole people, they insure to themselves abundance; rich in everything they do not consume, they acquire immense means of exchange and commerce; they work, fabricate, and sell at a lower price than others, and attain to all kinds of prosperity, both at home and abroad.

DOM JOSE: What is the vice contrary to this virtue?

VALIS: It is cupidity and luxury.

DOM JOSE: Is luxury a vice in the individual and in society?

VALIS: Yes, and to that degree, that it may be said to include all the others; for the person who stands in need of many things, imposes thereby on themselves all the anxiety, and submits to all the means just or unjust of acquiring them. Does one possess an enjoyment, one covets another; and in the bosom of superfluity, one is never rich; a commodious dwelling is not sufficient for one, one must have a beautiful palace; not content with a plenteous table, one must have rare costly viands: he must have splendid furniture, expensive clothes, a train of attendants, horses, carriages, women, theatrical representations and games. Now, to supply so many expenses, much money must be had: and one looks on every method of procuring it as good and even

necessary; at first one borrows, afterwards one steals, robs, plunders, is at war with every one, ruins and is ruined. Should a nation be involved in luxury, it occasions on a larger scale the same devastation's; by reason that it consumes its entire produce, it finds itself poor even with abundance; it has nothing to sell to foreigners; its manufactures are carried on at a great expense and are sold too dear; it becomes tributary for everything it imports; it attacks externally its consideration, power, strength, and means of defense and preservation, while internally it undermines and falls into the dissolution of its members. All its citizens being covetous of enjoyments, are engaged in a perpetual struggle to obtain them; all injure or are near injuring themselves; and hence arise those habits and actions of usurpation, which constitute what is denominated moral corruption, internal war between citizen and citizen. From luxury arises avidity, from avidity, invasion by violence and perfidy; from luxury arises the iniquity of the judge, the venality of the witness, the improbity of the husband, the prostitution of the wife, the obduracy of parents, the ingratitude of children, the avarice of the master, the dishonesty of the servant, the dilapidation of the administrator, the

perversity of the legislator, lying, perfidy, perjury assassination, and all the disorders of the social state; so that it was with a profound sense of truth, that ancient legislators and philosophers have laid the basis of the social virtues on simplicity of manners, restriction of wants, and a contentment with a little; and a sure way of knowing the extent of a humanity's virtues and vices is, to find out if one's expenses are proportionate to one's fortune, and calculate, from one's want of money, one's probity, one's integrity in fulfilling one's engagements, one's devotion to the public weal, and one's sincere or pretended love of one's country and of humanity.

DOM JOSE: What do you mean by the word country?

VALIS: I mean the community of citizens who, united by fraternal sentiments, and reciprocal wants, make of their respective strength one common force, the reaction of which on each of them assumes the noble and beneficent character of paternity. In society, citizens form a unity of interest; in our country we form a family of endearing attachments; it is charity, the love of one's neighbor extended to a whole nation. Now as charity cannot be separated from justice, no member of the family can pretend to the enjoyment of its

advantages, except in proportion to one's labor; if one consumes more than one produces, one necessarily encroaches on one's fellow-citizens; and it is only by consuming less than what one produces or possesses, that one can acquire the means of making sacrifices and being generous.

DOM JOSE: What do you conclude from all this?

VALIS: I conclude from it that all the social virtues are only the habitude of actions useful to society and to the individual who practices them. That they refer to the physical object of humanities preservation; That nature having implanted in us the want of that preservation, has made a law to us of all its consequences, and a crime of everything that deviates from it; That we carry in us the seed of every virtue, and of every perfection; That it only requires to be developed; That we are only happy inasmuch as we observe the rules established by nature for the end of our preservation; And that all wisdom, all perfection, all law, all virtue, all philosophy, consist in the practice of the axioms founded on the natural and cosmic law.

DOM JOSE: What are these axioms?

VALIS: Your Father is the Cosmos. Your Mother is Nature. Your siblings are your fellow humans.

Live in harmony with the laws and forces of the Universe, Nature and of your own being. Preserve thyself. Learn the natural and cosmic laws. Live in peace with yourself, with humanity, with Nature and the Universe. Live in creative love with and for your fellow humans that they may live for thee. Peace be with you.