THE FARMER OF FLEMING

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE:

Ferguson the Politician, Tavares the Farmer, Homeless Man

SCENE: Gilded Age Ohio

FERGUSON: Why have you come to the legislature, Tavares? I thought you are unacquainted with the political matters of the council, unlike myself.

TAVARES: I don’t plan to engage in civil discourse, as that is not my profession, for I am only a farmer of Fleming. I only seek advice.

FERGUSON: And what are your expectations in using the advice?

TAVARES: To secure a position in the political bureaucracy, I suppose. A historian or scholar or ambassador.

FERGUSON: And who birthed your aspiration? It appears with little standing that you inherently grew vexed by farmwork and decided to seek higher work.

TAVARES: The aspiration came from my parents: my father, Meletus, and my mother, Ophelia. They began the prosecution after developing great distress in Fleming, believing that agriculture is an unsustainable living and that it is nearly inevitable that I will fall to poverty.

FERGUSON: The best of Tavares does not even have his own ambition. By God, the political standing is higher than that of the fields; and the proper catalyst of ascension is one’s ambition. However, as the catalyst is bound to your father, and not yourself, the virtues associated with ambition are no more present in you. By logic, Tavares, you are unethical, for you lack courage in the Artistotelian sense, temperance from pleasure, and the vast multitude of other virtuous attributes.

TAVARES: I shall know better. My state of inaction, as you have described, does not imply a complete absence—

HOMELESS MAN: Forgive me for impeding your saunter, is it possible that I receive some bread or drink?

TAVARES (remains silent as conversation never came as a natural trait to Tavares): …

FERGUSON: Of course. Please, take this and feed yourself.

HOMELESS MAN: By the powers, I thank you. Oh! You must be Ferguson, the politician. Ferguson, the great, would be a more suitable moniker that better emblemizes your insurmountable victories in the legislature. You bravely fended off Ramiro, Ranald the Confusing and Cadman the Relentless, that was a sobriquet I created for his verbal impiety.

FERGUSON: You are too kind.

HOMELESS MAN: Rare friend! You are too modest.

FERGUSON (chuckles upon the response of the unnamed man): Very humorous? Oh, the sun is sinking and soon my guiding light shall fall to darkness, I must move along.

HOMELESS MAN(walking away): Of course.

FERGUSON: Close doer of evil! Tavares, rhetoric is but another domain, similar to ambition, in which the common virtues are catalyzed. Rhetoric is wielded by strong-willed men to evangelize their ideals. Rhetoric requires courage to persist in debate, and temperance from appeasement. Silence is the opposite of rhetoric. The weak men default to silence, and cower away in their own reality. They do not serve their society, they are selfish men! Are we to say that you could not converse with the unnamed man?

TAVARES: I had some difficulty, Ferguson, but I also can not say that it was necessary to.

FERGUSON: Then you are merely a young man who is little known, and you lack the virtues required for politics or any more grandiose occupation. I do not know any advice that is properly charitable, especially since I doubt you will utilize it righteously.

TAVARES: Then no longer shall I persist in hiding my alleged flaws. Ferguson, you claim that it is unethical and immoral to act without ambition and without rhetoric, for they are hosts of virtue; now, could I postulate that acting individualistically— shown through lack of ambition that insinuates acceptance for one’s current occupation and silence naturally creates disconnect from society— is unethical?

FERGUSON: Very true.

TAVARES: I am amused, Ferguson, at your making a distinction between what is pious and impious: how little you know of such judgements. Because you have dedicated yourself to the political art, I shall contemplate society, which you have previously claimed to have attached yourself to. Tell me, Ferguson, is government a creation of man?

FERGUSON: Yes, of course it is; and it is also invested by men, who operate it.

TAVARES: Then, would there exist a society without this political hierarchy. If so, who would hold power?

FERGUSON: Naturally, it would be the almighty God, or Zeus, or the deities of Egypt. The temples are full of them and their portraits embroider the walls.

TAVARES: I will refer to this as a pseudo-society, for it is not equipped with distinct features of your “society,” most notably politics. Now, are gods but a reflection of nature? In the Greek sense, for example, just as Zeus the bearer of the skies, Poseidon of the sea, and Demeter, whom I would supposedly hail to, as a field laborer?

FERGUSON: That is correct.

TAVARES: And when the gods are of direct presence to the people, with no church or state as an impediment established yet, they may freely take from nature?

FERGUSON: Yes.

TAVARES: If a desire for olives arises within a man, he may stroll to the ergonomic gardens filled with olives and eat until the absence of hunger. And, Ferguson, forget not that I previously referred to this land as inhabited before the creation of the political art, naturally we would not hold numbers as grand as Egypt! To the mercy of the virgin gods, before the invention of the state and the wise sages, man was endowed with a limitless range of resources.

FERGUSON: Certainly, Tavares.

TAVARES: Then in this natural state, no single man, or limited association of individuals may gain power. If you, Ferguson, attempted to corporatize an industry upon olives— an example where you aspire to assimilate power and thereby have the ability to assimilate people, for they would be subjected to you for a resource— the local inhabitants, whom have an urge for olives, would deviate toward another garden. The people of the world will look up to the sky, look out toward the sea and the forests and the fields and stare directly into the eyes of god. You, or those who you appoint “ambition” to, will persist in your rash endeavors to implement a political system, but you will realize that your attempt is infinitely feeble. Then, you will see that, under nature, man has no need for proper rhetoric or ambition. The former trait would be valueless, for nature can not converse with man. You would agree that it is futile to bargain with Dionysus for a greater yield of grapes?

FERGUSON: Yes. The gods rest above us, not with us.

TAVARES: And you would concur, given by example of the wine deity, that nature or God is indifferent toward the people, for it is external to man: it is not run by man and does not hold the experiences critical to humanity.

FERGUSON: Yes, that is reasonable.

TAVARES: The latter trait— ambition— is unnecessary for the purposes in which I have already described: they are guaranteed access to the conveniences that satisfy bodily needs.

FERGUSON: You may proceed, Tavares, as I have not changed my mind.

TAVARES: Naturally then, man is driven to live individualistically. Societal order does not manifest, as the environment can not reasonably foster corporatization or organized assembly of people, which congregates man into order; and the gods and natural forces would be apathetic in creating society, as to a greater extent, nature is external to man. It is unbound by the charismatics of men, it is alien. For such, it will not judge men, nor advance the likes of some over others, thereby maintaining the population on an equal plane. Man lives dependent on nature, and not among each other, so in the individual livelihoods, would it be that man acts in accordance to bettering himself?

FERGUSON: That is possible.

TAVARES: Surely, they would not deliberately act viciously, or at least, we may reasonably remove the spontaneous irrationally demonstrated by few, which compels the inherently evil actions, like genocide and arson. They may indulge themselves, but those who choose to exhibit ethical practice will dedicate their efforts to self improvement. Now, Ferguson, is that not the purpose of ethics: to improve one’s self? The semantics of the conventional moral development, such as the embrace of logos, the harness of Nichomahcus’ virtues and the like, I will not proceed to.

FERGUSON: I think it is so.

TAVARES: Also, I will add that ethics and self improvement must originate from the self. It can not be correlated to any other, such as another person; but it must remain purely motivated by one’s self to show that such a person inherently desires growth. I will speak more to this later.

FERGUSON: I concede to the point.

TAVARES: Politician, I shall now progress to greater evolution, as I speak toward the contrivance of governance. It is plausible to articulate that the entire previous, paradisal reality, where man lived off the gods with infinite privilege, may exist only in theory. Now, I have removed ceteris paribus, and will incorporate the possible influencers like natural hindrances, the anger of the gods, perhaps, or possibly an inflamed persona that has developed among a few inhabitants. Ferguson, what do you posit would occur among man given the lack of natural goods?

FERGUSON: They shall formate into factions and inevitably war with each other.

TAVARES: Then I will go on to the next point, which may be put in the form of a question: may we look towards the political philosophies that have been deemed as our founders. I am referring to Mr. Hobbes and his Leviathan, and Mr. Locke and the social contract? Excuse me, I am not completely knowledgeable on the governmental thinkers.

FERGUSON: Of course, such references are axiomatic in a political medium.

TAVARES: My friend, could you recall a quotation echoed by one of these men? You certainly must be familiar with such?

FERGUSON: I can tell that “The great and chief end, therefore, of men uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property” and “Thus mankind, notwithstanding all the privileges of the state of nature, being but in an ill condition, while they remain in it, are quickly driven into society!”[[1]](#footnote-0)

TAVARES: Exemplary, Ferguson. Yet, government and society, like a sculpture, must be slowly molded into fitting style. In such desperate times, the purpose of establishing government is the regulation of divine conveniences, which were lacking as a result of God’s anger. Thus, in this developing stage, government is granted utmost control. Ferguson, you understand that our current view of good government, democracy, is a refined version of preceding political configurations?

FERGUSON: Yes, Tavares: I ought to state that the first governments were monarchies, kingsmans, dictators. Yet, I am confused as to whom such power is bestowed upon? Suppose now I ask, why those rulers rather than anybody else?

TAVARES: I am merely a farmer and I do not fully recognize the specificities of choice, but I may speak on their justification of choice. These monarchs are simply representatives of nature. The piety of God and nature has been humanized. I shall confer the creation of the European church, or the Heavenly Mandate of the Chinese. These systems do not truly hold kings, but merely princes of nature, for in their temples there are gods painted on to tapestries and walls, and they are also ingrained in their private texts that they confine themselves with in times of distress.

FERGUSON: Quite so. And may you elaborate upon the morality of this dictatorial state?

TAVARES: Is not the right way of a king, as like King Archon of the Greeks, King George, whom our American brethren escaped from or Nero, to maintain and uphold their ordained power? And I speak the truth, Ferguson, for they rationally would not permit the existence of corporatization, a practice that I have previously initialized, so only the state has the privilege of action, for the action could result in a summation of strength in rivalry to that of the state. If, as Mr. Locke wrote, and a point that we have agreed upon, that we need to secure our property and life, and that man would descend to war without the boundless privilege of nature, they certainly are not to be trusted with high power, as they would essentially force all to return to the original destination of war. So, it is rational that the people surrender their will to the theologians and authoritarians of the state, whom are crowned by nature itself.

FERGUSON: Exactly, like the feudalist hierarchy, which came to dominate Europe and Asia for 10 centuries, emphasizes what you have articulated.

TAVARES: Yes, Ferguson, and that is one structure which you mention, but by no means the only one. The thoughts of Karl Marx, the German, in his manifesto of some 50 years ago, where instead of a few classes sustained by political rule, there is but a solidarity, is another.

FERGUSON: That is how the authorities act; they work to dominate over the influence of the people, and they exert their strength by preventing the cumbersome results of people’s rights.

TAVARES: And would you say that the government, designed not to be puppeteered by the people in fear of being corrupted by their flaws demonstrated when man is faced with the reality of nature’s limitations, is somewhat external to man, for though it may be run by the same species, assumably, one would not understand the rationale of the autocrat, who discourses only with God and heavenly, just as he would not understand the rationale of nature or God itself?

FERGUSON: I agree, certainly.

TAVARES: Indifference, may that be a resulting trait of this political configuration?

FERGUSON: I would say so. But, Tavares, it seems that you are digressing from ethics.

TAVARES: Well, ethics, then, would arise among the populace in a matching fashion of the pseudo-society. If a phenomena, for example, like the increasing influence of an association of individuals or corporation, are prohibited by the order of the king, of whom we have just established to be like nature, man would retire as individuals, in parallel to the pseudo-society. The only difference, I perceive, would be the resources, once plentiful in Earth’s gardens and forests and fields, now are under the new jurisdiction of the state. Ethical behavior would be exhibited by those who deliberately choose to excrete themselves from the norm and philosophize and meditate in order to invoke the introspective motivation for refinement of the self.

FERGUSON: But do you imagine, Tavares, that any ethical distinction accrues from the subtle shifts between the pseudo and autocratic society?

TAVARES: Of course! We know that this monarchy is run by man, and my political friend, do you remember what Mr. James Madison stated about the property of government? You must know, Ferguson.

FERGUSON: To be sure, I have been long acquainted with the Federalist. “But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature?”[[2]](#footnote-1)

TAVARES: Before, I said that nature would do nothing to your unique bargain due to its distanced relationship with man, and such is exhibited by an autocracy as well, for the people are not able to influence incumbencies or allowed to assimilate power in corporations, creating a sense of indifference between government and people. Yet there still exists a reflection of humanity, Mr. Madison dictates; for the government will love to enquire about the interests of the people to which they are inclined. The non-systemic customs— which present no relevance or threat to the power and grandiosity of the state— include the arts and music and poetry, academia, or even the more virile practices like athletics and demonstrations of masculinity, and may be enjoyed by the officials, whom shall properly reward those who succeed in such a craft. Then, because indifference is a direction of sentiment toward all, the opposite, the offering of the state must evade indifference and therefore be a direction of sentiment toward the few, with a blurred ground between the two ends containing a circumstance of acknowledgement, or some kin of it.

FERGUSON: So what is the spirit of the offering?

TAVARES: This category departed from indifference is recognition, which is simply to say a unique reaction in response to a virtuous act. And recognition, by its very nature, must remain finite because the greater the amount of people it is distributed toward, the closer it descends back to acknowledgement and eventually indifference. Man would endeavor to better themselves in an art or academia, resorting to virtues like Nichomachus’ courage and temperance. These virtues will be man’s guns and swords, that they will attempt to develop toward the sharpest point, to use in the battle for finite recognition. And that, Ferguson, is not ethics, but a sort of false ethics, for their divergence toward labor and assiduousness came not from themselves, but from the desire to become recognized by the supreme government. This is the nature of the relationship between man and government: successful action for recognition.

FERGUSON: Then, I persist to say that nothing should be more sternly laid down than the question of why man would be enticed by recognition.

TAVARES: There are many ends to this scrutiny. I would answer, as I should conceive, that first, is the state not what man is reliant upon? In pseudo-society, we say this as nature, and we have already established the shift to the state. With argumentation, if man previously desired the offerings of God, now he must desire the offering of the state. And since recognition is the opposite of indifference, it can be perceived as a variation of love that exists between government and man, and does not man want love? On the second count, I shall impart the wisdom of Socrates on the night of Agathon’s symposium. Socrates spoke of immortality, a power unattainable by man, yet man will consistently pursue such a quest through the means of his children and his action. May we then say that the goods of the state are beneficial to the seeking of immortality for the state will remain even after the passing of many men? If you will excuse me, I shall pass through any other reasoning from other thinkers and arrive at an amalgamation: I enquire, does not the relationship between the government and the people, an exchange of recognition for merit, serve as the fundamental design of society?

FERGUSON: Of course.

TAVARES: And so the minds of the people would consent and embrace the desire for recognition.

FERGUSON: But, the individual certainly does not appeal directly to the state?

TAVARES: I implore that you view the phenomena as a sort of theory. In candidness, and I have not studied the organization of government so well, I believe that the early virtuosos appealed to the state, and over time they have established their institutions. There are universities and athletic federations in America?

FERGUSON: That is true.

TAVARES: Then this is the fastidious alternative. The individual will desire the recognition of these institutions, or the heads of these institutions, and there are many possible lower heads that are less removed, such as the comparison of the dean of a university with a proctor that many children see every week.

FERGUSON: In aggregation over my two enquiries, then, this exchange appears to me as vanity.

TAVARES: Yes, Ferguson. We have arrived at the point of dread. In singular feeling, I present that the influence of man kills good action to replace with vanity. To a greater extent man has evolved, and I will begin at the beginning, and endeavor to repeat the entire conversation of man and history. Ferguson, I shall again recall to you. Great politician, you must know why man has departed from authoritarianism.

FERGUSON: Historically, it has been oppression. The western colonists of America and Canada and the Latin states have been strained too tight by the regimes of the East. The characteristics of the far-removed and the purpose of containing the flaws of humanity demonstrated in the fall of pseudo-society have been interpreted by the European states to justify the removal of action among the individual.

TAVARES: And what is the result?

FERGUSON: They revolt and redefine government to protect the supposed god-ordained rights of man. And in the endeavor “to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”[[3]](#footnote-2) I believe Jefferson’s claim has adequate similarity to that of other figures at the time.

TAVARES: And upon this view, man now lives in a society based on other men, not an extraneous being such as nature or a state representative of nature and God, for the state has been changed to be directed by its citizens and not a higher power. And so man has the freedom to create institutions and corporations tantamount to the state. But the factor serves only as the father, it provides the means of corporatization. The mother, the bearer of the physicality, is the regulation of nature; government still exists and as a result man is not free to take from nature, which stays in the jurisdiction of the bureaucrats. If nature was not maintained by state institutions, then the world shall return to pseudo-society.

FERGUSON: And what may man accomplish at the suspension between these two?

TAVARES: Consider the matter in this way: man now has freedom to create corporations, which is present in the systemic domain. And are not corporations privatized governments?

FERGUSON: That is true.

TAVARES: And so the rise of the plethora of corporations has allowed the recognition system to conquer all of society, for these private governments execute in a mirrored fashion to that of the state, and they have greater influence in regard to the individual. Then the resort to the recognition system, once limited, is now expanded to the practices that hold major relevance toward society itself, such as jobs and work, and vanity becomes institutionalized into the hearts and minds of all mankind. A medium of recognition, held far above its other forms, money, is also institutionalized to control the economic installations which are indicative of technological and social development. I will advance on a new route. Ferguson, are not the words of Mr. Madison— that government is but a reflection of man— applicable toward the state?

FERGUSON: I am unsure.

TAVARES: It must be, as the state is controlled by the people, that is how republics function. The reflectionism of the state, then, transforms society into the shadow of the desire for recognition, and this custom is trickled down into the private corporations, where it shall rain upon a great magnitude of man.

FERGUSON: And what will the evil be, whither tending and what affecting, in the person?

TAVARES: Man misguides itself. It does not have the guide of God or a God-oriented state, for God has departed from the minds and hearts of the people in the free society. This is the essence of society: man on man. I ask, how can man separate his actions from the influence of another. All action, then, is corrupted by vanity. I profess: ethics is dead in contemporary society! We have killed good action! Vanity is the ultimate evil, for our entire civilization has been constructed upon the trait.

FERGUSON: But, Tavares, if it is immoral, then why do we continue with it. Certainly, some philosopher must have come to this realization and attempted to change the norm?

TAVARES: The realization has been notably illuminated, yet it is a bit distorted. Many believe it is greed that runs in the veins of nations. And I suppose that is true, in the comprehension that greed is but the narrow perception of recognition in terms of its greatest medium: currency.

FERGUSON: But that does not explain man’s lack of departure?

TAVARES: Well, there is an enticement that will congregate man even further: industrialism. Machine is truly one of the great works of mankind. No longer does man have to feebly pray to the indifferent actor for large winds to power his sails and ship for a successful voyage, or plead for suitable feed for his steed in order to traverse the vast Western lands; humanity has tamed steam and metal, and made them slaves, ushering humanity into unprecedented dominion. But once more the assertion is repeated, for it is only man’s vanity that compels him to develop industrial machinery. The great inventions of modern times did not come from the order of government bureaus; Rockefeller did not revolutionize the oil industry and Tesla did not arrive at the alternating current because they were forced to by law; but from individuals seeking recognition. Man needs freedom to act, and this is distinct from the government, as well as the incentive for action, which is present among the recognition offered by both the state and private governments. And amidst their discoveries, they may resort back to the former practice of ensembling a private government. The record of history is absolutely clear, in that the great inventions both make the intension of the organization of the free and vain society possible and make it inevitable, with all its consequences, whatever they may be.

FERGUSON: That is a just observation.

TAVARES: Progress is very enticing, it is to it that we owe our increased comfort and abundance. We are none of us ready to sacrifice this. On the contrary, we want more of it. But it is merely a facade of vain and corrupted action. And just as in modern society, ethical action can not exist, progress is a delusion that censors the killing of good spirit, and man moves on. If, in a parallel instance, man could act so well with merely himself, then we would all be desperately alone, with our only solace being ethical practice. There would not be society nor progress. I am willing to take this path, but it requires great strength to face a lonely fate.

FERGUSON: To your morality, I enquire that it seems to be an excuse for indolence and cowardice, but what should I have expected from someone who only has a shallow, hedonistic lifestyle with minimal passion. An hour ago, I had doubt. Now, I am in complete contradiction to your request for advice.

TAVARES: Ferguson, I implore that you think!

FERGUSON: I shall indulge myself a little longer, for I have a final question. Could we live as our brother’s keepers, where we may remain ethical in a society?

TAVARES: Nobody has ever given a reason why man should be their brother’s keepers. Look around and you see man perishing by the attempt to be their brother’s keepers. Just as the athlete does not have loyalty to the team but to the coach, and just as the student does not have loyalty to the class but to the proctor, the citizen is not loyal to his patrons, but instead to the government and the corporate leaders. These doctrines of loyalty are erroneous in the pursuit of recognition. This path is definitely not what led to your political career?

FERGUSON: That is true.

TAVARES: It would be irrational to act with fidelity, as it would be contrary to the design of society and the reception of recognition. I say that fidelity is a lie, the greatest lie ever told, as it has given man a very false sense of faith. In the nature of realism, generosity is but another virtue of the character harnessed by man to acute lengths in order to beg for recognition. Are they inherently helpful and generous?

FERGUSON: No, I suppose they are not. Though the presence of guilt must inspire some sort of ethical action to descend to human affairs, or what of the presence of love and sacrifice and death?

TAVARES: It is true they destroy the perfunctory tangent of many individuals, but they exist as a sense of other divine intervention that need not be contemplated in high regard for they are very seldom. If you are not compelled by the reply, then I say that I have contemplated much on the sole western world, and not that of the more ravaged lands of the Earth.

FERGUSON: It is a rare occurrence, I say.

TAVARES: Now, are you, Ferguson, such a pious politician as the homeless man deemed you? I do not believe so: you are a mere pawn of society, you are just as subject to the disgusting instinct of recognition as any other individual.

FERGUSON: I will no longer entertain your devilish creed!

TAVARES: Alas! My companion, and will you leave me in despair? At least I must instruct you upon the final enquiry: for then to the question that naturally comes, may we do good? I should simply say this: that in all thy ways we act with vanity, it is only a result of our association with one another. Man, alone, will act in an inherent fashion, good or evil. Inherent evil is a result of irrationality, and the unfortunate few are cursed with that; but the general man has reason, it is what separates him from the animals, and with reason, he may do good.

FERGUSON (has left Tavares):...

TAVARES (to himself, quietly): Nevertheless, leave me, Ferguson, to fulfill my farm work, and follow wherever my mother and father lead.

THE END

1. Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government*, Second Treatise [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Madison, James, *Federalist No. 51* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Jefferson, Thomas, et al., *United States Declaration of Independence* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)