

NEXT IN THE NAYIKA WISDOM OF THE WORLD SERIES:

The Art of Worldly Wisdom by Balthasar Gracian.

Be all things to all men;

a discreet Proteus:⁵ learned with the learned, saintly with the sainted. It is a great art to gain everyone's suffrages; their goodwill gains general agreement. Notice men's moods and adapt yourself to each, genial or serious as the case may be. Follow their lead, glossing over the changes as cunningly as possible. This is an indispensable art for dependent persons. But this tactfulness calls for great cleverness. Only one who has a universal genius in his knowledge and universal ingenuity in his wit will find no difficulty.

⁴Alexander the Great, 356-323 BC, was king of Macedonia and one of the greatest generals in history. He brought Greek ideas to all the countries he conquered, and was instrumental in spreading the culture of the Hellenistic Age. Alexander's mother taught him that Achilles was his ancestor, and he learned by heart the Iliad, a story about the deeds of Achilles, which he carried with him wherever he went. Achilles became Alexander's hero and role model.

⁵Proteus is an early sea-god in Greek mythology, whom Homer calls the "Old Man of the Sea." He can foretell the future, but will change his shape to avoid having to do so and will answer only to someone who captures him. From this aspect of Proteus comes the adjective protean, with the general meaning of versatile, mutable, and capable of assuming many forms; it has positive connotations of flexibility and adaptability.

Art of Worldly Wisdom

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Provides 300 maxims for conducting oneself that is useful for maintaining relationships at work, in order to progress further up the corporate ladder. Particularly useful to managers and aspiring leaders alike. Contains advice on dealing with others and maintaining relationships. Also applicable to life, in general, although main aim is business life.

Gracian was a Jesuit monk in 17th century Spain who wrote this book on human nature and how to steer yourself in a politically charged atmosphere. Text follows the original Jacobs translation with slight editing to make it more comprehensible to the modern reader.

Book contains footnotes to elucidate the text, as the excerpt shows.