Tolle Et Lege

Spring 2025

The Center for Law and the Human Person's reading group, that students may "take up and read" classical works in the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Benozzo Gozzoli, *Tolle Lege*

CENTER FOR LAW &
THE HUMAN PERSON

EX CORDE FELLOWSHIP

TOLLE ET LEGE 2024-25: On the Human Person

This packet contains all the readings for Tolle et Lege for the Spring 2025 semester except for Measure for Measure, which is available from Professors Kirk and DeGirolami as an individual volume. The appendix includes a text as background for the February reading, but it will not be discussed. We will also be discussing the movie listed, but it will not be screened prior to our discussion.

January 2025 ~ The Human Person: A Unity of Body and Soul

February 2025 ~ Desire for Happiness and Fulfilled in Virtue

March 2025 ~ Desire for Knowledge and Made for Love

April 2025 ~ Human and Divine Justice

Appendix

Psalm 139 Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition

The Inescapable God

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

139 O LORD, thou hast searched me and known me!
2 Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;
thou discernest my thoughts from afar.
3 Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
and art acquainted with all my ways.
4 Even before a word is on my tongue,
lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
5 Thou dost beset me behind and before,
and layest thy hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high, I cannot attain it.

7 Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!
9 If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
10 even there thy hand shall lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, "Let only darkness cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
12 even the darkness is not dark to thee,
the night is bright as the day;
for darkness is as light with thee.

13 For thou didst form my inward parts,
thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful.[a]
Wonderful are thy works!
Thou knowest me right well;
15 my frame was not hidden from thee,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.
16 Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;
in thy book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.
17 How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
18 If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
When I awake, I am still with thee.[b]

19 O that thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God,
and that men of blood would depart from me,
20 men who maliciously defy thee,
who lift themselves up against thee for evil![c]
21 Do I not hate them that hate thee, O LORD?
And do I not loathe them that rise up against thee?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
24 And see if there be any wicked[d] way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting![e]

Footnotes

a. Psalm 139:14 Cn Compare Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *fearful things I am wonderful*
b. Psalm 139:18 Or *were I to come to the end I would still be with thee*
c. Psalm 139:20 Cn: Heb uncertain
d. Psalm 139:24 Heb *hurtful*
e. Psalm 139:24 Or *the ancient way.* Compare Jer 6.16

PARKER'S BACK

Flannery O'Connor

Gothic Digital Series @ UFSC

Parker's Back

(*Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 1965)

PARKER'S wife was sitting on the front porch floor, snapping beans. Parker was sitting on the step, some distance away, watching her sullenly. She was plain, plain. The skin on her face was thin and drawn as tight as the skin on an onion and her eyes were gray and sharp like the points of two icepicks. Parker understood why he had married her – he couldn't have got her any other way – but he couldn't understand why he stayed with her now. She was pregnant and pregnant women were not his favorite kind. Nevertheless, he stayed as if she had him conjured. He was puzzled and ashamed of himself.

The house they rented sat alone save for a single tall pecan tree on a high embankment overlooking a highway. At intervals a car would shoot past below and his wife's eyes would swerve suspiciously after the sound of it and then come back to rest on the newspaper full of beans in her lap. One of the things she did not approve of was automobiles. In addition to her other bad qualities, she was forever sniffing up sin. She did not smoke or dip, drink whiskey, use bad language or paint her face, and God knew some paint would have improved it, Parker thought. Her being against color, it was the more remarkable she had married him. Sometimes he supposed that she had married him because she meant to save him. At other times he had a suspicion that she actually liked everything she said she didn't. He could account for her one way or another; it was himself he could not understand.

She turned her head in his direction and said, "It's no reason you can't work for a man. It don't have to be a woman."

"Aw shut your mouth for a change," Parker muttered.

If he had been certain she was jealous of the woman he worked for he would have been pleased but more likely she was concerned with the sin that would result if he and the woman took a liking to each other. He had told her that the woman was a hefty young blonde; in fact she was nearly seventy years old and too dried up to have an interest in anything except getting as much work out of him as she could. Not that an old woman didn't sometimes get an interest in a young man, particularly if he was as attractive as Parker felt he was, but this old woman looked at him the same way she looked at her old tractor – as if she had to put up with it because it was all she had. The tractor had broken down the second day Parker was on it and she had set him at once to cutting bushes, saying out of the side of her mouth to the nigger, "Everything he touches, he breaks." She also asked him to wear his shirt when he worked; Parker had removed it even though the day was not sultry; he put it back on reluctantly.

This ugly woman Parker married was his first wife. He had had other women but he had planned never to get himself tied up legally. He had first seen her one morning when his truck broke down on the highway. He had managed to pull it off the road into a neatly swept yard on which sat a peeling two-room house. He got out and opened the hood of the truck and began to study the motor. Parker had an extra sense that told him when there was a woman nearby watching him. After he had leaned over the motor a few minutes, his neck began to prickle. He cast his eye over the empty yard and porch of the house. A woman he could not see was either nearby beyond a clump of honeysuckle or in the house, watching him out the window.

Suddenly Parker began to jump up and down and fling his hand about as if he had mashed it in the machinery. He doubled over and held his hand close to his chest. "God dammit!" he hollered, "Jesus Christ in hell! Jesus God Almighty damm! God dammit to hell!" he went on, flinging out the same few oaths over and over as loud as he could.

Without warning a terrible bristly claw slammed the side of his face and he fell backwards on the hood of the truck. "You don't talk no filth here!" a voice close to him shrilled.

Parker's vision was so blurred that for an instant he thought he had been attacked by some creature from above, a giant hawk-eyed angel wielding a hoary weapon. As his sight cleared, he saw before him a tall raw-boned girl with a broom.

"I hurt my hand," he said. "I HURT my hand." He was so incensed that he forgot that he hadn't hurt his hand. "My hand may be broke," he growled although his voice was still unsteady.

"Lemme see it," the girl demanded.

Parker stuck out his hand and she came closer and looked at it. There was no mark on the palm and she took the hand and turned it over. Her own hand was dry and hot and rough and Parker felt himself jolted back to life by her touch. He looked more closely at her. I don't want nothing to do with this one, he thought.

The girl's sharp eyes peered at the back of the stubby reddish hand she held. There emblazoned in red and blue was a tattooed eagle perched on a cannon. Parker's sleeve was rolled to the elbow. Above the eagle a serpent was coiled about a shield and in the spaces between the eagle and the serpent there were hearts, some with arrows through them. Above the serpent there was a spread hand of cards. Every space on the skin of Parker's arm, from wrist to elbow, was covered in some loud design. The girl gazed at this with an almost stupefied smile of shock, as if she had accidentally grasped a poisonous snake; she dropped the hand.

"I got most of my other ones in foreign parts," Parker said. "These here I mostly got in the United States. I got my first one when I was only fifteen year old."

"Don't tell me," the girl said, "I don't like it. I ain't got any use for it."

"You ought to see the ones you can't see," Parker said and winked.

Two circles of red appeared like apples on the girl's cheeks and softened her appearance. Parker was intrigued. He did not for a minute think that she didn't like the tattoos. He had never yet met a woman who was not attracted to them.

Parker was fourteen when he saw a man in a fair, tattooed from head to foot. Except for his loins which were girded with a panther hide, the man's skin was patterned in what seemed from Parker's distance – he was near the back of the tent, standing on a bench – a single intricate design of brilliant color. The man, who was small and sturdy, moved about on the platform, flexing his muscles so that the arabesque of men and beasts and flowers on his skin appeared to have a subtle motion of its own. Parker was filled with emotion, lifted up as some people are when the flag passes. He was a boy whose mouth habitually hung open. He was heavy and earnest, as ordinary as a loaf of bread. When the show was over, he had remained standing on the bench, staring where the tattooed man had been, until the tent was almost empty.

Parker had never before felt the least motion of wonder in himself. Until he saw the man at the fair, it did not enter his head that there was anything out of the ordinary about the fact that he existed. Even then it did not enter his head, but a peculiar unease settled in him. It was as if a blind boy had been turned so gently in a different direction that he did not know his destination had been changed.

He had his first tattoo some time after – the eagle perched on the cannon. It was done by a local artist. It hurt very little, just enough to make it appear to Parker to be worth doing. This was peculiar too for before he had thought that only what did not hurt was worth doing. The next year he quit school because he was sixteen and could. He went to the trade school for a while, then he quit the trade school and worked for six months in a garage. The only reason he worked at all was to pay for more tattoos. His mother worked in a laundry and could support him, but she would not pay for any tattoo except her name on a heart, which he had put on, grumbling. However, her name was Betty Jean and nobody had to know it was his mother. He found out that the tattoos were attractive to the kind of girls he liked but who had never liked him before. He began to drink beer and get in fights. His mother wept over what was becoming of him. One night she dragged him off to a revival with her, not telling him where they were going. When he saw the big lighted church, he jerked out of her grasp and ran. The next day he lied about his age and joined the navy.

Parker was large for the tight sailor's pants but the silly white cap, sitting low on his forehead, made his face by contrast look thoughtful and almost intense. After a month or two in the navy, his mouth ceased to hang open. His features hardened into the features of a man. He stayed in the navy five years and seemed a natural part of the gray mechanical ship, except for his eyes, which were the same pale slate-color as the ocean and reflected the immense spaces around him as if they were a microcosm of the mysterious sea. In port Parker wandered about comparing the run-down places he was in to Birmingham, Alabama. Everywhere he went he picked up more tattoos.

He had stopped having lifeless ones like anchors and crossed rifles. He had a tiger and a panther on each shoulder, a cobra coiled about a torch on his chest, hawks on his thighs, Elizabeth II and Philip over where his stomach and liver were respectively. He did not care much what the subject was so long as it was colorful; on his abdomen he had a few obscenities but only because that seemed the proper place for them. Parker would be satisfied with each tattoo about a month, then something about it that had attracted him would wear off. Whenever a decent-sized mirror was available, he would get in front of it and study his overall look. The effect was not of one intricate arabesque of colors but of something haphazard and botched. A huge dissatisfaction would come over him and he would go off and find another tattooist and have another space filled up. The front of Parker was almost completely covered but there were no tattoos on his back. He had no desire for one anywhere he could not readily see it himself. As the space on the front of him for tattoos decreased, his dissatisfaction grew and became general.

After one of his furloughs, he didn't go back to the navy but remained away without official leave, drunk, in a rooming house in a city he did not know. His dissatisfaction, from being chronic and latent, had suddenly become acute and raged in him. It was as if the panther and the lion and the serpents and the eagles and the hawks had penetrated his skin and lived inside him in a raging warfare. The navy caught up with him, put him in the brig for nine months and then gave him a dishonorable discharge.

After that Parker decided that country air was the only kind fit to breathe. He rented the shack on the embankment and bought the old truck and took various jobs which he kept as long as it suited him. At the time he met his future wife, he was buying apples by the bushel and selling them for the same price by the pound to isolated homesteaders on back country roads.

"All that there," the woman said, pointing to his arm, "is no better than what a fool Indian would do. It's a heap of vanity." She seemed to have found the word she wanted. "Vanity of vanities," she said.

Well what the hell do I care what she thinks of it? Parker asked himself, but he was plainly bewildered. "I reckon you like one of these better than another anyway," he said, dallying until he thought of something that would impress her.

He thrust the armback at her. "Which you like best?"

"None of them," she said, "but the chicken is not as bad as the rest."

"What chicken?" Parker almost yelled.

She pointed to the eagle.

"That's an eagle," Parker said. "What fool would waste their time having a chicken put on themself?"

"What fool would have any of it?" the girl said and turned away. She went slowly back to the house and left him there to get going. Parker remained for almost five minutes, looking agape at the dark door she had entered.

The next day he returned with a bushel of apples. He was not one to be outdone by anything that looked like her. He liked women with meat on them, so you didn't feel their muscles, much less their old bones. When he arrived, she was sitting on the top step and the yard was full of children, all as thin and poor as herself; Parker remembered it was Saturday. He hated to be making up to a woman when there were children around, but it was fortunate he had brought the bushel of apples off the truck. As the children approached him to see what he carried, he gave each child an apple and told it to get lost; in that way he cleared out the whole crowd.

The girl did nothing to acknowledge his presence. He might have been a stray pig or goat that had wandered into the yard and she too tired to take up the broom and send it off. He set the bushel of apples down next to her on the step. He sat down on a lower step.

"Help yourself," he said, nodding at the basket; then he lapsed into silence.

She took an apple quickly as if the basket might disappear if she didn't make haste. Hungry people made Parker nervous. He had always had plenty to eat himself. He grew very uncomfortable. He reasoned he had nothing to say so why should he say it? He could not think now why he had come or why he didn't go before he wasted another bushel of apples on the crowd of children. He supposed they were her brothers and sisters.

She chewed the apple slowly but with a kind of relish of concentration, bent slightly but looking out ahead. The view from the porch stretched off across a long incline studded with iron weed and across the highway to a vast vista of hills and one small mountain. Long views depressed Parker. You look out into space like that and you begin to feel as if someone were after you, the navy or the government or religion.

"Who them children belong to, you?" he said at length.

"I ain't married yet," she said. "They belong to momma." She said it as if it were only a matter of time before she would be married.

Who in God's name would marry her? Parker thought.

A large barefooted woman with a wide gap-toothed face appeared in the door behind Parker. She had apparently been there for several minutes.

"Good evening," Parker said.

The woman crossed the porch and picked up what was left of the bushel of apples. "We thank you," she said and returned with it into the house.

"That your old woman?" Parker muttered.

The girl nodded. Parker knew a lot of sharp things he could have said like "You got my sympathy," but he was gloomily silent. He just sat there, looking at the view. He thought he must be coming down with something.

"If I pick up some peaches tomorrow I'll bring you some," he said.

"I'll be much obliged to you," the girl said.

Parker had no intention of taking any basket of peaches back there but the next day he found himself doing it. He and the girl had almost nothing to say to each other. One thing he did say was, “I ain’t got any tattoo on my back.”

“What you got on it?” the girl said.

“My shirt,” Parker said. “Haw.”

“Haw, haw,” the girl said politely.

Parker thought he was losing his mind. He could not believe for a minute that he was attracted to a woman like this. She showed not the least interest in anything but what he brought until he appeared the third time with two cantaloups. “What’s your name?” she asked.

“O. E. Parker,” he said.

“What does the O. E. stand for?”

“You can just call me O. E.,” Parker said. “Or Parker. Don’t nobody call me by my name.”

“What’s it stand for?” she persisted.

“Never mind,” Parker said. “What’s yours?”

“I’ll tell you when you tell me what them letters are the short of,” she said. There was just a hint of flirtatiousness in her tone and it went rapidly to Parker’s head. He had never revealed the name to any man or woman, only to the files of the navy and the government, and it was on his baptismal record which he got at the age of a month; his mother was a Methodist. When the name leaked out of the navy files, Parker narrowly missed killing the man who used it.

“You’ll go blab it around,” he said.

“I’ll swear I’ll never tell nobody,” she said. “On God’s holy word I swear it.”

Parker sat for a few minutes in silence. Then he reached for the girl’s neck, drew her ear close to his mouth and revealed the name in low voice.

“Obadiah,” she whispered. Her face slowly brightened as if the name came as a sign to her. “Obadiah,” she said.

The name still stank in Parker’s estimation.

“Obadiah Elihue,” she said in a reverent voice.

“If you call me that aloud, I’ll bust your head open,” Parker said. “What’s yours?”

“Sarah Ruth Cates,” she said.

“Glad to meet you, Sarah Ruth,” Parker said.

Sarah Ruth’s father was a Straight Gospel preacher but he was away, spreading it in Florida. Her mother did not seem to mind his attention to the girl so long as he brought a basket of something with him when he came. As for Sarah Ruth herself, it was plain to Parker after he had visited three times that she was crazy about him. She liked him even though she insisted that pictures on the skin were vanity of vanities and even after hearing him curse, and even after she had asked him if he was saved and he had replied that he didn’t see it was anything in particular to save him from. After that, inspired, Parker had said, “I’d be saved enough if you was to kiss me.”

She scowled. “That ain’t being saved,” she said.

Not long after that she agreed to take a ride in his truck. Parker parked it on a deserted road and suggested to her that they lie down together in the back of it.

"Not until after we're married," she said – just like that.

"Oh that ain't necessary," Parker said and as he reached for her, she thrust him away with such force that the door of the truck came off and he found himself flat on his back on the ground. He made up his mind then and there to have nothing further to do with her.

They were married in the County Ordinary's office because Sarah Ruth thought churches were idolatrous. Parker had no opinion about that one way or the other. The Ordinary's office was lined with cardboard file boxes and record books with dusty yellow slips of paper hanging on out of them. The Ordinary was an old woman with red hair who had held office for forty years and looked as dusty as her books. She married them from behind the iron-grill of a stand-up desk and when she finished, she said with a flourish, "Three dollars and fifty cents and till death do you part!" and yanked some forms out of a machine.

Marriage did not change Sarah Ruth a jot and it made Parker gloomier than ever. Every morning he decided he had had enough and would not return that night; every night he returned. Whenever Parker couldn't stand the way he felt, he would have another tattoo, but the only surface left on him now was his back. To see a tattoo on his own back he would have to get two mirrors and stand between them in just the correct position and this seemed to Parker a good way to make an idiot of himself. Sarah Ruth who, if she had had better sense, could have enjoyed a tattoo on his back, would not even look at the ones he had elsewhere. When he attempted to point out especial details of them, she would shut her eyes tight and turn her back as well. Except in total darkness, she preferred Parker dressed and with his sleeves rolled down.

"At the judgement seat of God, Jesus is going to say to you, 'What you been doing all your life besides have pictures drawn all over you?'" she said.

"You don't fool me none," Parker said, "you're just afraid that hefty girl I work for'll like me so much she'll say, 'Come on, Mr. Parker, let's you and me…'"

"You're tempting sin," she said, "and at the judgement seat of God you'll have to answer for that too. You ought to go back to selling the fruits of the earth."

Parker did nothing much when he was at home but listen to what the judgement seat of God would be like for him if he didn't change his ways. When he could, he broke in with tales of the hefty girl he worked for. "'Mr. Parker,' he said she said, 'I hired you for your brains.'" (She had added, "So why don't you use them?")

"And you should have seen her face the first time she saw me without my shirt," he said. "'Mr. Parker,' she said, 'you're a walking panner-rammer!'" This had, in fact, been her remark but it had been delivered out of one side of her mouth.

Dissatisfaction began to grow so great in Parker that there was no containing it outside of a tattoo. It had to be his back. There was no help for it. A dim half formed inspiration began to work in his mind. He visualized having a tattoo put there that

Sarah Ruth would not be able to resist – a religious subject. He thought of an open book with HOLY BIBLE tattooed under it and an actual verse printed on the page. This seemed just the thing for a while; then he began to hear her say, "Ain't I already got a real Bible? What you think I want to read the same verse over and over for when I can read it all?" He needed something better even than the Bible! He thought about it so much that he began to lose sleep. He was already losing flesh – Sarah Ruth just threw food in the pot and let it boil. Not knowing for certain why he continued to stay with a woman who was both ugly and pregnant and no cook made him generally nervous and irritable, and he developed a little tic in the side of his face.

Once or twice he found himself turning around abruptly as if someone were trailing him. He had had a granddaddy who had ended in the state mental hospital, although not until he was seventy-five, but as urgent as it might be for him to get a tattoo, it was just as urgent that he get exactly the right one to bring Sarah Ruth to heel. As he continued to worry over it, his eyes took on a hollow preoccupied expression. The old woman he worked for told him that if he couldn't keep his mind on what he was doing, she knew where she could find a fourteen-year-old colored boy who could. Parker was too preoccupied even to be offended. At any time previous, he would have left her then and there, saying drily, "Well, you go ahead on and get him then."

Two or three mornings later he was baling hay with the old woman's sorry baler and her broken down tractor in a large field, cleared save for one enormous old tree standing in the middle of it. The old woman was the kind who would not cut down a large old tree because it was a large old tree. She had pointed it out to Parker as if he didn't have eyes and told him to be careful not to hit it as the machine picked up hay near it. Parker began at the outside of the field and made circles inward toward it. He had to get off the tractor every now and then and untangle the baling cord or kick a rock out of the way. The old woman had told him to carry the rocks to the edge of the field, which he did when she was there watching. When he thought he could make it, he ran over them. As he circled the field his mind was on a suitable design for his back. The sun, the size of a golf ball, began to switch regularly from in front to behind him, but he appeared to see it both places as if he had eyes in the back of his head. All at once he saw the tree reaching out to grasp him. A ferocious thud propelled him into the air, and he heard himself yelling in an unbelievably loud voice, "GOD ABOVE!"

He landed on his back while the tractor crashed upside down into the tree and burst into flame. The first thing Parker saw were his shoes, quickly being eaten by the fire; one was caught under the tractor, the other was some distance away, burning by itself. He was not in them. He could feel the hot breath of the burning tree on his face. He scrambled backwards, still sitting, his eyes cavernous, and if he had known how to cross himself he would have done it.

His truck was on a dirt road at the edge of the field. He moved toward it, still sitting, still backwards, but faster and faster; halfway to it he got up and began a kind of forward-bent run from which he collapsed on his knees twice. His legs felt like two

old rusted rain gutters. He reached the truck finally and took off in it, zigzagging up the road. He drove past his house on the embankment and straight for the city, fifty miles distant.

Parker did not allow himself to think on the way to the city. He only knew that there had been a great change in his life, a leap forward into a worse unknown, and that there was nothing he could do about it. It was for all intents accomplished.

The artist had two large cluttered rooms over a chiropodist's office on a back street. Parker, still barefooted, burst silently in on him at a little after three in the afternoon. The artist, who was about Parker's own age – twenty-eight – but thin and bald, was behind a small drawing table, tracing a design in green ink. He looked up with an annoyed glance and did not seem to recognize Parker in the hollow-eyed creature before him.

"Let me see the book you got with all the pictures of God in it," Parker said breathlessly. "The religious one."

The artist continued to look at him with his intellectual, superior stare. "I don't put tattoos on drunks," he said. "You know me!" Parker cried indignantly. "I'm O. E. Parker! You done work for me before and I always paid!" The artist looked at him another moment as if he were not altogether sure. "You've fallen off some," he said. "You must have been in jail."

"Married," Parker said.

"Oh," said the artist. With the aid of mirrors the artist had tattooed on the top of his head a miniature owl, perfect in every detail. It was about the size of a half dollar and served him as a show piece. There were cheaper artists in town but Parker had never wanted anything but the best. The artist went over to a cabinet at the back of the room and began to look over some art books. "Who are you interested in?" he said, "saints, angels, Christs or what?"

"God," Parker said.

"Father, Son or Spirit?"

"Just God," Parker said impatiently. "Christ. I don't care. Just so it's God."

The artist returned with a book. He moved some papers off another table and put the book down on it and told Parker to sit down and see what he liked. "The up-to-date ones are in the back," he said.

Parker sat down with the book and wet his thumb. He began to go through it, beginning at the back where the up-to-date pictures were. Some of them he recognized – The Good Shepherd, Forbid Them Not, The Smiling Jesus, Jesus the Physician's Friend, but he kept turning rapidly backwards and the pictures became less and less reassuring. One showed a gaunt green dead face streaked with blood. One was yellow with sagging purple eyes. Parker's heart began to beat faster and faster until it appeared to be roaring inside him like a great generator. He flipped the pages quickly, feeling that when he reached the one ordained, a sign would come. He continued to flip through until he had almost reached the front of the book. On one of the pages a pair of eyes glanced at him swiftly. Parker sped on, then stopped. His

heart too appeared to cut off; there was absolute silence. It said as plainly as if silence were a language itself, GO BACK.

Parker returned to the picture – the haloed head of a flat stern Byzantine Christ with all-demanding eyes. He sat there trembling; his heart began slowly to beat again as if it were being brought to life by a subtle power.

"You found what you want?" the artist asked.

Parker's throat was too dry to speak. He got up and thrust the book at the artist, opened at the picture.

"That'll cost you plenty," the artist said. "You don't want all those little blocks though, just the outline and some better features."

"Just like it is," Parker said, "just like it is or nothing."

"It's your funeral," the artist said, "but I don't do that kind of work for nothing."

"How much?" Parker asked.

"It'll take maybe two days work."

"How much?" Parker said.

"On time or cash?" the artist asked. Parker's other jobs had been on time, but he had paid.

"Ten down and ten for every day it takes," the artist said.

Parker drew ten dollar bills out of his wallet; he had three left in.

"You come back in the morning," the artist said, putting the money in his own pocket. "First I'll have to trace that out of the book."

"No no!" Parker said. "Trace it now or gimme my money back," and his eyes blared as if he were ready for a fight.

The artist agreed. Any one stupid enough to want a Christ on his back, he reasoned, would be just as likely as not to change his mind the next minute, but once the work was begun he could hardly do so.

While he worked on the tracing, he told Parker to go wash his back at the sink with the special soap he used there. Parker did it and returned to pace back and forth across the room, nervously flexing his shoulders. He wanted to go look at the picture again but at the same time he did not want to. The artist got up finally and had Parker lie down on the table. He swabbed his back with ethyl chloride and then began to outline the head on it with his iodine pencil. Another hour passed before he took up his electric instrument. Parker felt no particular pain. In Japan he had had a tattoo of the Buddha done on his upper arm with ivory needles; in Burma, a little brown root of a man had made a peacock on each of his knees using thin pointed sticks, two feet long; amateurs had worked on him with pins and soot. Parker was usually so relaxed and easy under the hand of the artist that he often went to sleep, but this time he remained awake, every muscle taut.

At midnight the artist said he was ready to quit. He propped one mirror, four feet square, on a table by the wall and took a smaller mirror off the lavatory wall and put it in Parker's hands. Parker stood with his back to the one on the table and moved the other until he saw a flashing burst of color reflected from his back. It was almost

completely covered with little red and blue and ivory and saffron squares; from them he made out the lineaments of the face – a mouth, the beginning of heavy brows, a straight nose, but the face was empty; the eyes had not yet been put in. The impression for the moment was almost as if the artist had tricked him and done the Physician's Friend.

"It don't have eyes," Parker cried out.

"That'll come," the artist said, "in due time. We have another day to go on it yet."

Parker spent the night on a cot at the Haven of Light Christian Mission. He found these the best places to stay in the city because they were free and included a meal of sorts. He got the last available cot and because he was still barefooted, he accepted a pair of secondhand shoes which, in his confusion, he put on to go to bed; he was still shocked from all that had happened to him. All night he lay awake in the long dormitory of cots with lumpy figures on them. The only light was from a phosphorescent cross glowing at the end of the room. The tree reached out to grasp him again, then burst into flame; the shoe burned quietly by itself; the eyes in the book said to him distinctly GO BACK and at the same time did not utter a sound. He wished that he were not in this city, not in this Haven of Light Mission, not in a bed by himself. He longed miserably for Sarah Ruth. Her sharp tongue and icepick eyes were the only comfort he could bring to mind. He decided he was losing it. Her eyes appeared soft and dilatory compared with the eyes in the book, for even though he could not summon up the exact look of those eyes, he could still feel their penetration. He felt as though, under their gaze, he was as transparent as the wing of a fly.

The tattooist had told him not to come until ten in the morning, but when he arrived at that hour, Parker was sitting in the dark hallway on the floor, waiting for him. He had decided upon getting up that, once the tattoo was on him, he would not look at it, that all his sensations of the day and night before were those of a crazy man and that he would return to doing things according to his own sound judgement.

The artist began where he left off. "One thing I want to know," he said presently as he worked over Parker's back, "why do you want this on you? Have you gone and got religion? Are you saved?" he asked in a mocking voice.

Parker's throat felt salty and dry. "Naw," he said, "I ain't got no use for none of that. A man can't save his self from whatever it is he don't deserve none of my sympathy." These words seemed to leave his mouth like wraiths and to evaporate at once as if he had never uttered them.

"Then why…"

"I married this woman that's saved," Parker said. "I never should have done it. I ought to leave her. She's done gone and got pregnant."

"That's too bad," the artist said. "Then it's her making you have this tattoo."

"Naw," Parker said, "she don't know nothing about it. It's a surprise for her."

"You think she'll like it and lay off you a while?"

“She can’t hep herself,” Parker said. “She can’t say she don’t like the looks of God.” He decided he had told the artist enough of his business. Artists were all right in their place but he didn’t like them poking their noses into the affairs of regular people. “I didn’t get no sleep last night,” he said. “I think I’ll get some now.”

That closed the mouth of the artist but it did not bring him any sleep. He lay there, imagining how Sarah Ruth would be struck speechless by the face on his back and every now and then this would be interrupted by a vision of the tree of fire and his empty shoe burning beneath it.

The artist worked steadily until nearly four o’clock, not stopping to have lunch, hardly pausing with the electric instrument except to wipe the dripping dye off Parker’s back as he went along. Finally he finished. “You can get up and look at it now,” he said.

Parker sat up but he remained on the edge of the table.

The artist was pleased with his work and wanted Parker to look at it at once. Instead Parker continued to sit on the edge of the table, bent forward slightly but with a vacant look. “What ails you?” the artist said. “Go look at it.”

“Ain’t nothing ail me,” Parker said in a sudden belligerent voice. “That tattoo ain’t going nowhere. It’ll be there when I get there.” He reached for his shirt and began gingerly to put it on.

The artist took him roughly by the arm and propelled him between the two mirrors. “Now look,” he said, angry at having his work ignored.

Parker looked, turned white and moved away. The eyes in the reflected face continued to look at him – still, straight, all-demanding, enclosed in silence.

“It was your idea, remember,” the artist said. “I would have advised something else.”

Parker said nothing. He put on his shirt and went out the door while the artist shouted, “I’ll expect all of my money!”

Parker headed toward a package shop on the corner. He bought a pint of whiskey and took it into a nearby alley and drank it all in five minutes. Then he moved on to a pool hall nearby which he frequented when he came to the city. It was a well-lighted barnlike place with a bar up one side and gambling machines on the other and pool tables in the back. As soon as Parker entered, a large man in a red and black checkered shirt hailed him by slapping him on the back and yelling, “Yeyyyyyy boy! O. E. Parker!”

Parker was not yet ready to be struck on the back. “Lay off,” he said, “I got a fresh tattoo there.”

“What you got this time?” the man asked and then yelled to a few at the machines. “O.E.’s got him another tattoo.”

“Nothing special this time,” Parker said and slunk over to a machine that was not being used.

“Come on,” the big man said, “let’s have a look at O.E.’s tattoo,” and while Parker squirmed in their hands, they pulled up his shirt. Parker felt all the hands drop away

instantly and his shirt fell again like a veil over the face. There was a silence in the pool room which seemed to Parker to grow from the circle around him until it extended to the foundations under the building and upward through the beams in the roof.

Finally someone said, “Christ!” Then they all broke into noise at once. Parker turned around, an uncertain grin on his face.

“Leave it to O.E.!” the man in the checkered shirt said. “That boy’s a real card!”

“Maybe he’s gone and got religion,” someone yelled.

“Not on your life,” Parker said.

“O.E.’s got religion and is witnessing for Jesus, ain’t you, O.E.?” a little man with a piece of cigar in his mouth said wryly. “An o-riginal way to do it if I ever saw one.”

“Leave it to Parker to think of a new one!” the fat man said.

“Yyeeeeeeyyyyyyy boy!” someone yelled and they all began to whistle and curse in compliment until Parker said, “Aaa shut up.”

“What’d you do it for?” somebody asked.

“For laughs,” Parker said. “What’s it to you?”

“Why ain’t you laughing then?” somebody yelled. Parker lunged into the midst of them and like a whirlwind on a summer’s day there began a fight that raged amid overturned tables and swinging fists until two of them grabbed him and ran to the door with him and threw him out. Then a calm descended on the pool hall as nerve shattering as if the long barnlike room were the ship from which Jonah had been cast into the sea.

Parker sat for a long time on the ground in the alley behind the pool hall, examining his soul. He saw it as a spider web of facts and lies that was not at all important to him but which appeared to be necessary in spite of his opinion. The eyes that were now forever on his back were eyes to be obeyed. He was as certain of it as he had ever been of anything. Throughout his life, grumbling and sometimes cursing, often afraid, once in rapture, Parker had obeyed whatever instinct of this kind had come to him — in rapture when his spirit had lifted at the sight of the tattooed man at the fair, afraid when he had joined the navy, grumbling when he had married Sarah Ruth.

The thought of her brought him slowly to his feet. She would know what he had to do. She would clear up the rest of it, and she would at least be pleased. It seemed to him that, all along, that was what he wanted, to please her. His truck was still parked in front of the building where the artist had his place, but it was not far away. He got in it and drove out of the city and into the country night. His head was almost clear of liquor and he observed that his dissatisfaction was gone, but he felt not quite like himself. It was as if he were himself but a stranger to himself, driving into a new country though everything he saw was familiar to him, even at night.

He arrived finally at the house on the embankment, pulled the truck under the pecan tree and got out. He made as much noise as possible to assert that he was still in charge here, that his leaving her for a night without word meant nothing except it

was the way he did things. He slammed the car door, stamped up the two steps and across the porch and rattled the door knob. It did not respond to his touch. “Sarah Ruth!” he yelled, “let me in.”

There was no lock on the door and she had evidently placed the back of a chair against the knob. He began to beat on the door and rattle the knob at the same time.

He heard the bed springs screak and bent down and put his head to the keyhole, but it was stopped up with paper. “Let me in!” he hollered, bamming on the door again. “What you got me locked out for?”

A sharp voice close to the door said, “Who’s there?”

“Me,” Parker said, “O.E.”

He waited a moment.

“Me,” he said impatiently, “O.E.”

Still no sound from inside.

He tried once more. “O.E.,” he said, bamming the door two or three more times. “O. E. Parker. You know me.”

There was a silence. Then the voice said slowly, “I don’t know no O.E.”

“Quit fooling,” Parker pleaded. “You ain’t got any business doing me this way. It’s me, old O.E., I’m back. You ain’t afraid of me.”

“Who’s there?” the same unfeeling voice said.

Parker turned his head as if he expected someone behind him to give him the answer. The sky had lightened slightly and there were two or three streaks of yellow floating above the horizon. Then as he stood there, a tree of light burst over the skyline.

Parker fell back against the door as if he had been pinned there by a lance.

“Who’s there?” the voice from inside said and there was a quality about it now that seemed final. The knob rattled and the voice said peremptorily, “Who’s there, I ast you?”

Parker bent down and put his mouth near the stuffed keyhole. “Obadiah,” he whispered and all at once he felt the light pouring through him, turning his spider web soul into a perfect arabesque of colors, a garden of trees and birds and beasts.

“Obadiah Elihue!” he whispered.

The door opened and he stumbled in. Sarah Ruth loomed there, hands on her hips. She began at once, “That was no hefty blonde woman you was working for and you’il have to pay her every penny on her tractor you busted up. She don’t keep insurance on it. She came here and her and me had us a long talk and I…”

Trembling, Parker set about lighting the kerosene lamp.

“What’s the matter with you, wasting that kerosene this near daylight?” she demanded. “I ain’t got to look at you.”

A yellow glow enveloped them. Parker put the match down and began to unbutton his shirt.

“And you ain’t going to have none of me this near morning,” she said.

“Shut your mouth,” he said quietly. “Look at this and then I don’t want to hear no more out of you.” He removed the shirt and turned his back to her.

“Another picture,” Sarah Ruth growled. “I might have known you was off after putting some more trash on yourself.”

Parker’s knees went hollow under him. He wheeled around and cried, “Look at it! Don’t just say that! Look at it!”

“I done looked,” she said.

“Don’t you know who it is?” he cried in anguish.

“No, who is it?” Sarah Ruth said. “It ain’t anybody I know.”

“It’s him,” Parker said.

“Him who?”

“God!” Parker cried.

“God? God don’t look like that!”

“What do you know how he looks?” Parker moaned. “You ain’t seen him.”

“He don’t look,” Sarah Ruth said. “He’s a spirit. No man shall see his face.”

“Aw listen,” Parker groaned, “this is just a picture of him.”

“Idolatry!” Sarah Ruth screamed. “Idolatry! Enflaming yourself with idols under every green tree! I can put up with lies and vanity but I don’t want no idolator in this house!” and she grabbed up the broom and began to thrash him across the shoulders with it.

Parker was too stunned to resist. He sat there and let her beat him until she had nearly knocked him senseless and large welts had formed on the face of the tattooed Christ. Then he staggered up and made for the door.

She stamped the broom two or three times on the floor and went to the window and shook it out to get the taint of him off it. Still gripping it, she looked toward the pecan tree and her eyes hardened still more. There he was – who called himself Obadiah Elihue – leaning against the tree, crying like a baby.

GNOSTIC LIBERALISM

by Robert P. George
December 2016

The idea that human beings are non-bodily persons inhabiting non-personal bodies never quite goes away. Although the mainstreams of Christianity and Judaism long ago rejected it, what is sometimes described as "body-self dualism" is back with a vengeance, and its followers are legion. Whether in the courts, on campus, or at boardroom tables, it underwrites and shapes the expressive individualism and social liberalism that are ascendant.

Christianity's rejection of body-self dualism answered the challenge to orthodoxy posed by what was known as "Gnosticism." Gnosticism comprised a variety of ideologies, some ascetical, others quite the opposite. What they held in common was an understanding of the human being—an anthropology—that sharply divides the material or bodily, on the one hand, and the spiritual or mental or affective, on the other. For Gnostics, it was the immaterial, the mental, the affective that ultimately matters. Applied to the human person, this means that the material or bodily is inferior—if not a prison to escape, certainly a mere instrument to be manipulated to serve the goals of the "person," understood as the spirit or mind or psyche. The self is a spiritual or mental substance; the body, its merely material vehicle. You and I, as persons, are identified entirely with the spirit or mind or psyche, and not at all (or in only the most highly attenuated sense) with the body that we occupy (or are somehow "associated with") and use.

Against such dualism, the anti-Gnostic position asserts a view of the human person as a dynamic unity: a personal body, a bodily self. This rival vision is found throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian teaching. This is not to suggest that Christian teaching rules out the view that the individual is numerically identical with his or her immaterial soul. Contemporary Christian thinkers are divided on whether the separated soul is numerically distinct from the human person, or is just the person in radically mutilated form. They agree, however, on the essential point, namely, that the body is no mere extrinsic instrument of the human person (or "self"), but is an integral part of the personal reality of the human being. Christ is resurrected bodily.

Aristotle, who broke with his teacher Plato on the point, defends one form of this "hylomorphism," as it has come to be called. Without denying the existence of the soul, it affirms that the human person is a material being (though not only material). We do not occupy or inhabit our bodies. The living body, far from being our vehicle or external instrument, is part of our personal reality. So while it cannot exist apart from the soul, it is not inferior. It shares in our personal dignity; it is the whole of which our soul is the substantial form. The idea of the soul as the substantial form of the body is orthodox Christianity's alternative to the heretical conception of the soul as a "ghost in a machine." One can separate living body from soul in analysis but not in fact; we are body-soul composites.

So we are animals—rational animals, to be sure, but not pure minds or intellects. Our personal identity across time consists in the endurance of the animal organisms we are. From this follows a crucial proposition: The human person comes to be when the human organism does, and survives—*as a person*—at least until the organism ceases to be.

Yet we are not *brute* animals. We are animals with a *rational nature*—organized from the start for conceptual thought, and for practical deliberation, judgment, and choice. These intellectual powers are not reducible to the purely material. Creatures possessing them are able, with maturity and under favoring circumstances, to grasp intelligible (not just sensible) features of options for action, and to respond to those reasons with choices not determined by antecedent events. It is not that we act arbitrarily or randomly, but that we choose based on judgments of value that incline us toward different options without compelling us. There is no contradiction, on the hylomorphic view, between our animality and our rationality.

If we take the Gnostic view, then human beings—living members of the human species—are not necessarily persons, and some human beings are non-persons. Those in the embryonic, fetal, and early infant stages are *not yet* persons. Those who have lost the immediate exercise of certain mental powers—victims of advanced dementias, the long-term comatose and minimally conscious—are *no longer* persons. And those with severe congenital cognitive disabilities aren't now, never were, and never will be persons.

The moral implications are clear. It is *personal* life that we have reason to hold inviolate and protect against harm; by contrast, we can legitimately use other creatures for our purposes. So someone who buys into a Gnostic anthropology that separates person and body in the way I have described will find it easier to speak of those with undeveloped, defective, or diminished mental capacities as non-persons. They will find it easier to justify abortion; infanticide; euthanasia for the cognitively impaired; and the production, use, and destruction of human embryos for biomedical research.

By the same token, such an anthropology underwrites social liberalism's rejection of traditional marital and sexual ethics and its vision of marriage as a male-female union. That vision makes no sense if the body is a mere instrument of the person, to be used to satisfy subjective goals or produce desirable feelings in the person-as-conscious-subject. If we are not our bodies, marriage cannot essentially involve the one-flesh union of man and woman, as Jewish, Christian, and classical ethics hold. For if the body is not part of the personal reality of the human being, there can be nothing morally or humanly important about "merely biological" union, apart from its contingent psychological effects.

Presupposing body-self dualism makes it harder to appreciate that marriage is a natural (pre-political and even pre-religious) human good with its own objective structure. If sexuality is just a means to our subjective ends, isn't it whatever we want it to be? How could it be oriented to procreation, or require permanent exclusivity, by its *nature*?

We can make sense of this one-flesh union conception of marriage only if we understand the body as truly personal. Then we can see the biological union of a man and woman as a distinct union of persons—achieved, like the biological

union of parts *within* a person, through coordination toward a single bodily end of the whole. For the couple, that end is reproduction. Its orientation to family life thus has human and moral, not "merely biological," significance. Spouses, in their bodily unity, renew the all-encompassing union that is their marriage. This vision, in turn, helps us to make sense of the natural desire to rear one's own children and the normative importance of committing to do so whenever possible, even at great personal cost. (A mother desires to be sent home with the baby she actually delivered, and not with one assigned to her randomly from the pool of babies born during her stay in the maternity center.) This instinct reinforces a sound sexual ethic, which specifies the requirements of faithful conjugal and parental love, an ethic that seems pointless and cruel to contemporary social liberals.

For them, after all, what matters is what goes on in the mind or consciousness, not the body (or the rest of the body). True personal unity, to the extent that it is possible at all, is unity at the affective level, not the biological one. "Marriage" tends to be seen, then, as a socially constructed institution that exists to facilitate desirable romantic bonds and to protect and advance the various feelings and interests of people who enter into such bonds. It is not a conjugal partnership at all, but rather a form of sexual-romantic companionship or domestic partnership. Procreation and children are only contingently related to it. There is no sense, even an indirect one, in which marriage is a procreative partnership or a partnership whose structure and norms are shaped by an inherent orientation of our sexual natures to procreation and the rearing of children. The conjugal conception of marriage as a union of the sort that is naturally fulfilled by the spouses having and bringing up children together strikes the ear of the neo-Gnostic as unintelligible and even bizarre.

Indeed, as contemporary social liberalism presents the matter, sex itself is not an inherent aspect of marriage or part of its meaning; the idea of marital consummation by sexual intercourse also seems bizarre. Just as, for social liberals, two (or more) people can have perfectly legitimate and valuable sex without being married to each other, so two (or more) people can have a perfectly valid and complete marriage without sex. It's all a matter of the partners' subjective preferences. Consensual sexual play is valuable just insofar as it enables the partners to express desired feelings—such as affection or, for that matter, domination or submission. But if they happen not to experience desire for it, sex is pointless even within marriage. It's merely incidental and therefore optional, much as owning a car, or having joint or separate bank accounts is. Different strokes for different folks. The essence of marriage is companionship, not sex, to say nothing of procreation.

And all of this explains, of course, why contemporary liberal ethics endorses same-sex marriage. It even suggests that marriage can exist among three or more individuals in polyamorous sexual (or non-sexual) groups. Because marriage swings free of biology and is distinguished by its emotional intensity and quality—the true "person" being the conscious and feeling self—same-sex and polyamorous "marriages" are possible and valuable in the same basic ways as the conjugal union of man and woman. For partners in these other groupings, too, can feel affection for each other and even believe that the quality of their romantic partnership will be enhanced by mutually agreeable sex play (or not, as the case may be). If that's what marriage is all about, then denying them marital status means denying "marriage equality."

And then there are transsexualism and transgenderism. If we are body-mind (or body-soul) composites and not minds (or souls) inhabiting material bodies, then respect for the person demands respect for the body, which rules out mutilation and other direct attacks on human health. This means that, except in extraordinarily rare cases of congenital deformity to the extreme of indeterminacy, our maleness or femaleness is discernible from our bodies. Sex is constituted by our basic biological organization with respect to reproductive functioning; it is an inherent part of what and who we are. Changing sexes is a metaphysical impossibility because it is a biological impossibility. Or very nearly one. It may become technologically possible to change the sex of a human individual at a

very early stage of embryonic development—either by changing the genome, or in the case of an embryonic male by inducing, say, androgen insensitivity early enough that all sexual development proceeds as it would in a woman. Of course, it would be immoral to do it, since it would involve a radical bodily intervention without consent and with grave risks.

So sex changes are biologically impossible whenever it becomes true that to change the person's sexual capacities down to the root would require reversing so many already-differentiated organs and other sexual traits that one wouldn't end up with the same organism. (I suspect that that point is reached *at least* quite early in utero.) As Paul McHugh has argued, desiring to change sexes is a pathology—a wish to cease being oneself and to be someone else. It is not to will one's good, but to will one's non-existence as who one is.

By contrast, on the contemporary liberal view, no dimension of our personal identity is truly determined biologically. If you feel as though you are a woman trapped in a man's body, then you are just that: a ("transgender") woman. And you may legitimately describe yourself as a woman, despite the fact that you are biologically male, and take steps—even to the point of amputations and hormone treatments—to achieve a feminine outward appearance, especially where you think doing so will enable you more fully to "feel" like a woman.

Even this way of putting it might concede more than is warranted. What is a pre-operative "male-to-female" transgender individual *saying* when he says he's "really a woman" and desires surgery to confirm that fact? He's not saying his *sex* is female; that's obviously false. Nor is he saying that his gender is "woman" or "feminine," even if we grant that gender is partly or wholly a matter of self-presentation and social presence. It is clearly *false* to say that this biological male is *already* perceived as a woman. He wants to be perceived this way. Yet the pre-operative claim that he is "really a woman" is the premise of his plea for surgery. So it has to be prior. What, then, does it refer to? The answer cannot be his inner *sense*. For that would still have to be an inner sense *of something*—but there seems to be no "something" for it to be the sense *of*.

Yet for the neo-Gnostic, the body serves at the pleasure of the conscious self, to which it is subject, and so mutilations and other procedures pose no inherent moral problem. Nor is it contrary to medical ethics to perform them—indeed, it might be unethical for a qualified surgeon to refuse to perform them. At the same time, the neo-Gnostic insists that surgical and even purely cosmetic changes aren't *necessary* for a male to be a woman (or a female a man). The body and its appearance do not matter, except instrumentally. Since your body is not the real you, your (biological) sex and even your appearance need not line up with your "gender identity." You have a right, we are now told, to present yourself however you feel yourself to be.

And since feelings, including feelings about what or who you are, fall on a spectrum, and are even fluid, you are not limited to only two possibilities on the question of gender identity (you may be "gender non-conforming"), nor are you permanently locked into any particular gender. There is the full Facebook 56, or 58, or whatever the number is, and you can find your gender changing over time, or abruptly. It may even be possible to change genders by acts of the will. You might change genders temporarily, for example, for political reasons or for the sake of solidarity with others. Of course, most of these observations about gender identity can extend to the concept of "sexual orientation," and the practice of self-identifying in terms of sexual desire—a concept and practice well served by a view of the human being as a non-bodily person inhabiting a non-personal body.

The anti-dualist position historically embraced by Jews and by Christians (Eastern as well as Western, Protestant as well as Catholic) has been forcefully rearticulated by Pope Francis:

The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one's own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different. In this way we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. It is not a healthy attitude which would seek "to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it."

The pope, who recently outraged partisans of social liberalism by denouncing the practice of teaching children that gender is chosen rather than given as a matter of biological sex, is not engaging in idle or purely speculative philosophizing. He is responding to the specific challenge to Christian orthodoxy represented by the modern revival of a philosophical anthropology against which the Church struggled in its formative early battles with Gnosticism. He knows that this anthropology is now itself a kind of orthodoxy—the orthodoxy of the particular form of liberal secularism that, following Robert Bellah, I have referred to as "expressive individualism," one that has secured dominance among Western cultural elites. It provides the metaphysical foundation of the social practices and ideological challenges against which Orthodox Jews and faithful Christians (as well as many Muslims and others) find themselves contending today: abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, sexual liberation, the redefinition of marriage, and gender ideology.

Are we right to resist? Might the dualistic understanding of the human person have been right all along? Perhaps the person is not the body, but only inhabits it and uses it as an instrument. Perhaps the real person *is* the conscious and feeling self, the psyche, and the body is simply material, the machine in which the ghost resides. To think so, however, is to ignore the fact that our entire experience of ourselves is the experience of being unified actors. Nothing gives us reason to suppose that experience to be illusory. Even if body-self dualism could be made coherent—which I doubt—we would have no more reason to believe it than we have to suppose that we are now dreaming, or stuck in the Matrix.

But there is more. Consider the most common of human experiences: sensing (e.g., hearing or seeing). Sensing is, obviously, a *bodily* action performed by a living being. The agent performing an act of sensing is a bodily creature, an animal. But it's clear that in human beings, as rational animals, it is one and the same agent who both senses and understands or seeks to understand (by mental activity) what it is that he or she is sensing. The agent performing the act of understanding, therefore, is a bodily entity, not a non-bodily substance using the body as some sort of quasi-prosthetic device. Were it otherwise, we would never be able to explain the communication or connection between the thing doing the sensing and the separate thing doing the understanding.

To see the point more clearly, perhaps, let me invite you to consider what you are doing right now. You are perceiving—seeing—words on a page or screen. And you are not only perceiving, considered as an act of receiving impressions (a kind of data) through the medium of vision, you are *understanding* what it is you are perceiving: First, you are understanding that what you are seeing are words (and not, say, numbers, or blotches, or something else), and second, you are understanding what the words themselves mean (as individual words and strung together as sentences). Now what, exactly, is the entity—namely, you—that is simultaneously doing the perceiving and understanding? And, more to the point, is it one entity or two? Perception or perceiving is indeed a bodily act, but is it not the same actor (namely you, as a unified being) that is seeing the words and understanding that they are words and what they mean? It would make no sense to suppose that the body is doing the perceiving and the mind, considered as an ontologically separate and distinct substance, is doing the understanding. For one thing, it would generate an infinite regress of explanations

in trying to account for the relationship between the separate substances. We wouldn't be able to make sense of the idea that you are doing the understanding, but an instrument you are using, not you yourself as a unified agent, is doing the perceiving.

Or consider a simple case of predication and thought. You approach your desk and judge that what lies on it—*that thing there*—is a journal (let's say, as it happens, an issue of First Things). That's a single judgment, and both parts of it (subject and predicate) must have a *single* agent: a being that does both the seeing and the thinking, that both *sees* the particular, concrete thing and *understands* it by applying an abstract concept (*journal*). How could it be otherwise? How could any being hold both parts together in a single judgment—the sensory image and the abstract concept—if he weren't exercising both sensory and intellectual abilities?

Furthermore, the agent sensing the particular—*that thing there*—must be an animal, a body with perceptual organs. And the predication that goes with perception is a personal act; the agent applying a universal concept (*journal*) must be a person. (A non-rational creature, such as a dog, might perceive, but lacking rationality of the sort that makes possible the formation of universal concepts, it would not understand what it is perceiving to be a particular instance of a universal.) It follows that the subject performing the act of judging—*that thing there is a journal*—is one being, personal and animal. We are not two separate entities. Nor can "person" plausibly be just a stage in the life of a human animal. If it were, after all, a categorical difference in moral status (person vs. not) would be based on a mere difference in *degree* (rather than a difference in the *kind* of thing the being is), which is absurd. We are, at every moment of our existence as human beings, bodily selves and personal bodies.

In the domain of moral thought and practice, there are few projects more urgent than recovering the commonsense view that human persons are indeed dynamic unities, creatures whose bodies are parts of our very selves—not extrinsic instruments. Contemporary social liberalism rests on an error, the tragic mistake behind so many efforts to justify—and even immunize from moral criticism—acts and practices that are, in truth, contrary to our profound, inherent, and equal dignity.

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PREV ARTICLE

NEXT ARTICLE

ARTICLES *by* ROBERT P. GEORGE

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MORE CONFUSION ABOUT SAME-SEX BLESSINGS
MONDAY, JANUARY 15

DESTROYING MARRIAGE IN ORDER TO SAVE IT
THURSDAY, JANUARY 11

THE FOUR LOVES OF ROBERT JENSON
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13

Psalm 1 Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition

BOOK I

The Two Ways

1 Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
3 He is like a tree
planted by streams of water,
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.

4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff which the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

‹ Job 42 Psalm 2 ›

PLATO

Five Dialogues

Second Edition

Euthyphro
Apology
Crito
Meno
Phaedo

Translated by
G. M. A. GRUBE

Revised by
JOHN M. COOPER

Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
Indianapolis/Cambridge

Printed in the United States of America

12 11 10 09 5 6 7 8

For further information, please address:
Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
P.O. Box 44937
Indianapolis, IN 46244-0937

www.hackettpublishing.com

Cover design by Listenberger & Associates

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Plato.
[Dialogues. English. Selections]
Five Dialogues / Plato ; translated by G.M.A. Grube.—2nd ed. / revised by John M. Cooper.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
Contents: Euthyphro—Apology—Crito—Meno—Phaedo.
ISBN 0-87220-633-5 (pbk.)—ISBN 0-87220-634-3 (cloth)
1. Philosophy, Ancient. I. Grube, G.M.A. (George Maximilian Anthony) II. Title.
B358.G7813 2002
184—dc21 2002022754

ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-634-2 (cloth)
ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-633-5 (pbk.)

e-ISBN: 978-1-60384-226-6 (Adobe e-book)

APOLOGY

The Apology[1] *professes to be a record of the actual speech that Socrates delivered in his own defense at the trial. This claim makes the question of its historicity more acute than in the dialogues in which the conversations themselves are mostly fictional and the question of historicity is concerned only with how far the theories that Socrates is represented as expressing were those of the historical Socrates. Here, however, we are dealing with a speech that Socrates made as a matter of history. How far is Plato's account accurate? We should always remember that the ancients did not expect historical accuracy in the way we do. On the other hand, Plato makes it clear that he was present at the trial (34a, 38b). Moreover, if, as is generally believed, the* Apology *was written not long after the event, many Athenians would remember the actual speech, and it would be a poor way to vindicate the Master, which is the obvious intent, to put a completely different speech into his mouth. Some liberties could no doubt be allowed, but the main arguments and the general tone of the defense must surely be faithful to the original. The beauty of language and style is certainly Plato's, but the serene spiritual and moral beauty of character belongs to Socrates. It is a powerful combination.*

Athenian juries were very large, in this case 501, and they combined the duties of jury and judge as we know them by both convicting and sentencing. Obviously, it would have been virtually impossible for so large a body to discuss various penalties and decide on one. The problem was resolved rather neatly, however, by having the prosecutor, after conviction, assess the penalty he thought appropriate, followed by a counter-assessment by the defendant. The jury would then decide between the two. This procedure generally made for moderation on both sides.

Thus the Apology *is in three parts. The first and major part is the main speech (17a–35d), followed by the counter-assessment (35e–38b),*

1. The word *apology* is a transliteration, not a translation, of the Greek *apologia*, which means defense. There is certainly nothing apologetic about the speech.

and finally, last words to the jury (38c–42a), both to those who voted for the death sentence and those who voted for acquittal.

G.M.A.G.

17 I do not know, men of Athens,[2] how my accusers affected you; as for me, I was almost carried away in spite of myself, so persuasively did they speak. And yet, hardly anything of what they said is true. Of the many lies they told, one in particular surprised me, namely that you should be careful not to be deceived by an accomplished speaker like
b me. That they were not ashamed to be immediately proved wrong by the facts, when I show myself not to be an accomplished speaker at all, that I thought was most shameless on their part—unless indeed they call an accomplished speaker the man who speaks the truth. If they mean that, I would agree that I am an orator, but not after their manner, for indeed, as I say, practically nothing they said was true. From me you will hear the whole truth, though not, by Zeus, gentlemen,
c expressed in embroidered and stylized phrases like theirs, but things spoken at random and expressed in the first words that come to mind, for I put my trust in the justice of what I say, and let none of you expect anything else. It would not be fitting at my age, as it might be for a young man, to toy with words when I appear before you.

One thing I do ask and beg of you, gentlemen: if you hear me making my defense in the same kind of language as I am accustomed to use in the marketplace by the bankers' tables,[3] where many of you
d have heard me, and elsewhere, do not be surprised or create a distur-

2. Jurors were selected by lot from all the male citizens thirty years of age or older who offered themselves on the given day for service. They thus functioned as representatives of the Athenian people and the Athenian democracy. In cases like Socrates', they judged on behalf of the whole citizen body whether or not their interests had been undermined by the accused's behavior. Hence Socrates can address them as if he were addressing the people of Athens at large, and in particular the partisans of the democracy against its oligarchic opponents (see, for example, 21a, 32d). Socrates addresses the jury as "men of Athens" rather than employing the usual mode of address, "gentlemen of the jury" (as Meletus does at 26d). At 40a he explains that only those who voted to acquit him deserved that honor.

3. The bankers or money-changers had their counters in the marketplace. It seems that this was a favorite place for gossip.

bance on that account. The position is this: This is my first appearance in a lawcourt, at the age of seventy; I am therefore simply a stranger to the manner of speaking here. Just as if I were really a stranger, you would certainly excuse me if I spoke in that dialect and manner in which I had been brought up, so too my present request seems a just 18
one, for you to pay no attention to my manner of speech—be it better or worse—but to concentrate your attention on whether what I say is just or not, for the excellence of a judge lies in this, as that of a speaker lies in telling the truth.

It is right for me, gentlemen, to defend myself first against the first lying accusations made against me and my first accusers, and then against the later accusations and the later accusers. There have been many who have accused me to you for many years now, and none of b
their accusations are true. These I fear much more than I fear Anytus and his friends, though they too are formidable. These earlier ones, however, are more so, gentlemen; they got hold of most of you from childhood, persuaded you and accused me quite falsely, saying that there is a man called Socrates, a wise man, a student of all things in the sky and below the earth, who makes the worse argument the stronger. Those who spread that rumor, gentlemen, are my dangerous c
accusers, for their hearers believe that those who study these things do not even believe in the gods. Moreover, these accusers are numerous, and have been at it a long time; also, they spoke to you at an age when you would most readily believe them, some of you being children and adolescents, and they won their case by default, as there was no defense.

What is most absurd in all this is that one cannot even know or mention their names unless one of them is a writer of comedies.[4] Those d
who maliciously and slanderously persuaded you—who also, when persuaded themselves then persuaded others—all those are most difficult to deal with: one cannot bring one of them into court or refute him; one must simply fight with shadows, as it were, in making one's defense, and cross-examine when no one answers. I want you to realize too that my accusers are of two kinds: those who have accused me recently, and the old ones I mention; and to think that I must first defend myself against the latter, for you have also heard their accusations e
first, and to a much greater extent than the more recent.

4. This is Aristophanes. Socrates refers below (19c) to the character Socrates in his *Clouds* (225 ff.), first produced in 423 B.C.

Very well then, men of Athens. I must surely defend myself and
19 attempt to uproot from your minds in so short a time the slander that has resided there so long. I wish this may happen, if it is in any way better for you and me, and that my defense may be successful, but I think this is very difficult and I am fully aware of how difficult it is. Even so, let the matter proceed as the god may wish, but I must obey the law and make my defense.

Let us then take up the case from its beginning. What is the accusa-
b tion from which arose the slander in which Meletus trusted when he wrote out the charge against me? What did they say when they slandered me? I must, as if they were my actual prosecutors, read the affidavit they would have sworn. It goes something like this: Socrates is guilty of wrongdoing in that he busies himself studying things in the sky and below the earth; he makes the worse into the stronger argument, and
c he teaches these same things to others. You have seen this yourself in the comedy of Aristophanes, a Socrates swinging about there, saying he was walking on air and talking a lot of other nonsense about things of which I know nothing at all. I do not speak in contempt of such knowledge, if someone is wise in these things—lest Meletus bring more cases against me—but, gentlemen, I have no part in it, and on this point I call upon the majority of you as witnesses. I think it right that
d all those of you who have heard me conversing, and many of you have, should tell each other if any one of you has ever heard me discussing such subjects to any extent at all. From this you will learn that the other things said about me by the majority are of the same kind.

Not one of them is true. And if you have heard from anyone that I undertake to teach people and charge a fee for it, that is not true either.
e Yet I think it a fine thing to be able to teach people as Gorgias of Leontini does, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis.[5] Each of these men can go to any city and persuade the young, who can keep company with any one of their own fellow citizens they want without
20 paying, to leave the company of these, to join with themselves, pay

5. These were all well-known Sophists. Gorgias, after whom Plato named one of his dialogues, was a celebrated rhetorician and teacher of rhetoric. He came to Athens in 427 B.C., and his rhetorical tricks took the city by storm. Two dialogues, the authenticity of which has been doubted, are named after Hippias, whose knowledge was encyclopedic. Prodicus was known for his insistence on the precise meaning of words. Both he and Hippias are characters in *Protagoras* (named after another famous Sophist).

them a fee, and be grateful to them besides. Indeed, I learned that there is another wise man from Paros who is visiting us, for I met a man who has spent more money on sophists than everybody else put together, Callias, the son of Hipponicus. So I asked him—he has two sons—"Callias," I said, "if your sons were colts or calves, we could find and engage a supervisor for them who would make them excel in their proper qualities, some horse breeder or farmer. Now since they are b men, whom do you have in mind to supervise them? Who is an expert in this kind of excellence, the human and social kind? I think you must have given thought to this since you have sons. Is there such a person," I asked, "or is there not?" "Certainly there is," he said. "Who is he?" I asked. "What is his name, where is he from? And what is his fee?" "His name, Socrates, is Evenus, he comes from Paros, and his fee is five minas."[6] I thought Evenus a happy man, if he really possesses this art, and teaches for so moderate a fee. Certainly I would pride and preen c myself if I had this knowledge, but I do not have it, gentlemen.

One of you might perhaps interrupt me and say: "But Socrates, what is your occupation? From where have these slanders come? For surely if you did not busy yourself with something out of the common, all these rumors and talk would not have arisen unless you did something other than most people. Tell us what it is, that we may not speak inadvisedly about you." Anyone who says that seems to be right, and I d will try to show you what has caused this reputation and slander. Listen then. Perhaps some of you will think I am jesting, but be sure that all that I shall say is true. What has caused my reputation is none other than a certain kind of wisdom. What kind of wisdom? Human wisdom, perhaps. It may be that I really possess this, while those whom I mentioned just now are wise with a wisdom more than human; else I cannot e explain it, for I certainly do not possess it, and whoever says I do is lying and speaks to slander me. Do not create a disturbance, gentlemen, even if you think I am boasting, for the story I shall tell does not originate with me, but I will refer you to a trustworthy source. I shall call upon the god at Delphi as witness to the existence and nature of 21 my wisdom, if it be such.[7] You know Chaerephon. He was my friend from youth, and the friend of most of you, as he shared your exile and

6. A mina equaled 100 drachmas. In Socrates' time one drachma was the daily wage of a day-laborer. So Evenus' fee was a considerable sum.

7. The god Apollo had a very famous shrine at Delphi, where his oracles were delivered through the mouth of a priestess, the "Pythian."

your return. You surely know the kind of man he was, how impulsive in any course of action. He went to Delphi at one time and ventured to ask the oracle—as I say, gentlemen, do not create a disturbance—he asked if any man was wiser than I, and the Pythian replied that no one was wiser. Chaerephon is dead, but his brother will testify to you about this.

b Consider that I tell you this because I would inform you about the origin of the slander. When I heard of this reply I asked myself: "Whatever does the god mean? What is his riddle? I am very conscious that I am not wise at all; what then does he mean by saying that I am the wisest? For surely he does not lie; it is not legitimate for him to do so." For a long time I was at a loss as to his meaning; then I very reluctantly turned to some such investigation as this; I went to one of those reputed
c wise, thinking that there, if anywhere, I could refute the oracle and say to it: "This man is wiser than I, but you said I was." Then, when I examined this man—there is no need for me to tell you his name, he was one of our public men—my experience was something like this: I thought that he appeared wise to many people and especially to himself,
d but he was not. I then tried to show him that he thought himself wise, but that he was not. As a result he came to dislike me, and so did many of the bystanders. So I withdrew and thought to myself: "I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know."
e After this I approached another man, one of those thought to be wiser than he, and I thought the same thing, and so I came to be disliked both by him and by many others.

After that I proceeded systematically. I realized, to my sorrow and alarm, that I was getting unpopular, but I thought that I must attach the greatest importance to the god's oracle, so I must go to all those who had any reputation for knowledge to examine its meaning. And
22 by the dog,[8] men of Athens—for I must tell you the truth—I experienced something like this: In my investigation in the service of the god I found that those who had the highest reputation were nearly the most deficient, while those who were thought to be inferior were more knowledgeable. I must give you an account of my journeyings as if they

8. A curious oath, occasionally used by Socrates, it appears in a longer form in *Gorgias* (482b) as "by the dog, the god of the Egyptians."

were labors I had undertaken to prove the oracle irrefutable. After the politicians, I went to the poets, the writers of tragedies and dithyrambs and the others, intending in their case to catch myself being more b
ignorant than they. So I took up those poems with which they seemed to have taken most trouble and asked them what they meant, in order that I might at the same time learn something from them. I am ashamed to tell you the truth, gentlemen, but I must. Almost all the bystanders might have explained the poems better than their authors could. I soon realized that poets do not compose their poems with knowledge, but c
by some inborn talent and by inspiration, like seers and prophets who also say many fine things without any understanding of what they say. The poets seemed to me to have had a similar experience. At the same time I saw that, because of their poetry, they thought themselves very wise men in other respects, which they were not. So there again I withdrew, thinking that I had the same advantage over them as I had over the politicians.

Finally I went to the craftsmen, for I was conscious of knowing practically nothing, and I knew that I would find that they had knowl- d
edge of many fine things. In this I was not mistaken; they knew things I did not know, and to that extent they were wiser than I. But, men of Athens, the good craftsmen seemed to me to have the same fault as the poets: each of them, because of his success at his craft, thought himself very wise in other most important pursuits, and this error of e
theirs overshadowed the wisdom they had, so that I asked myself, on behalf of the oracle, whether I should prefer to be as I am, with neither their wisdom nor their ignorance, or to have both. The answer I gave myself and the oracle was that it was to my advantage to be as I am.

As a result of this investigation, men of Athens, I acquired much unpopularity, of a kind that is hard to deal with and is a heavy burden; 23
many slanders came from these people and a reputation for wisdom, for in each case the bystanders thought that I myself possessed the wisdom that I proved that my interlocutor did not have. What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing, and that when he says this man, Socrates, he is using my name as an example, b
as if he said: "This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless." So even now I continue this investigation as the god bade me—and I go around seeking out anyone, citizen or stranger, whom I think wise. Then if I do not think he is, I come to the assistance of the god and show him that he is not wise.

Because of this occupation, I do not have the leisure to engage in public affairs to any extent, nor indeed to look after my own, but I live in great poverty because of my service to the god.

c Furthermore, the young men who follow me around of their own free will, those who have most leisure, the sons of the very rich, take pleasure in hearing people questioned; they themselves often imitate me and try to question others. I think they find an abundance of men who believe they have some knowledge but know little or nothing. The result is that those whom they question are angry, not with themselves d but with me. They say: "That man Socrates is a pestilential fellow who corrupts the young." If one asks them what he does and what he teaches to corrupt them, they are silent, as they do not know, but, so as not to appear at a loss, they mention those accusations that are available against all philosophers, about "things in the sky and things below the earth," about "not believing in the gods" and "making the worse the stronger argument"; they would not want to tell the truth, I'm sure, that they have been proved to lay claim to knowledge when they know nothing. e These people are ambitious, violent, and numerous; they are continually and convincingly talking about me; they have been filling your ears for a long time with vehement slanders against me. From them Meletus attacked me, and Anytus and Lycon, Meletus being vexed on behalf of the poets, Anytus on behalf of the craftsmen and the politicians, 24 Lycon on behalf of the orators, so that, as I started out by saying, I should be surprised if I could rid you of so much slander in so short a time. That, men of Athens, is the truth for you. I have hidden or disguised nothing. I know well enough that this very conduct makes b me unpopular, and this is proof that what I say is true, that such is the slander against me, and that such are its causes. If you look into this either now or later, this is what you will find.

Let this suffice as a defense against the charges of my earlier accusers. After this I shall try to defend myself against Meletus, that good and patriotic man, as he says he is, and my later accusers. As these are a different lot of accusers, let us again take up their sworn deposition. It goes something like this: Socrates is guilty of corrupting the young and of not believing in the gods in whom the city believes, but in other c new spiritual things. Such is their charge. Let us examine it point by point.

He says that I am guilty of corrupting the young, but I say that Meletus is guilty of dealing frivolously with serious matters, of irresponsibly bringing people into court, and of professing to be seriously con-

cerned with things about none of which he has ever cared, and I shall try to prove that this is so. Come here and tell me, Meletus. Surely d
you consider it of the greatest importance that our young men be as good as possible?[9] — Indeed I do.

Come then, tell these men who improves them. You obviously know, in view of your concern. You say you have discovered the one who corrupts them, namely me, and you bring me here and accuse me to these men. Come, inform these men and tell them who it is who improves them. You see, Meletus, that you are silent and know not what to say. Does this not seem shameful to you and a sufficient proof of what I say, that you have not been concerned with any of this? Tell me, my good sir, who improves our young men? — The laws. e

That is not what I am asking, but what person who has knowledge of the laws to begin with? — These jurymen, Socrates.

How do you mean, Meletus? Are these able to educate the young and improve them? — Certainly.

All of them, or some but not others? — All of them.

Very good, by Hera. You mention a great abundance of benefactors. 25
But what about the audience? Do they improve the young or not? — They do, too.

What about the members of Council?[10] — The Councillors, also.

But, Meletus, what about the assembly? Do members of the assembly corrupt the young, or do they all improve them? — They improve them.

All the Athenians, it seems, make the young into fine good men, except me, and I alone corrupt them. Is that what you mean? — That is most definitely what I mean.

You condemn me to a great misfortune. Tell me: does this also apply b
to horses, do you think? That all men improve them and one individual corrupts them? Or is quite the contrary true, one individual is able to improve them, or very few, namely, the horse breeders, whereas the majority, if they have horses and use them, corrupt them? Is that not the case, Meletus, both with horses and all other animals? Of course

9. Socrates here drops into his usual method of discussion by question and answer. This, no doubt, is what Plato had in mind, at least in part, when he made him ask the indulgence of the jury if he spoke "in his usual manner."

10. The Council was a body of 500 men, elected annually by lot, that prepared the agenda for meetings of the assembly and together with the magistrates conducted the public business of Athens. (On the assembly, see note to *Euthyphro* 3c.)

it is, whether you and Anytus say so or not. It would be a very happy state of affairs if only one person corrupted our youth, while the others improved them.

c You have made it sufficiently obvious, Meletus, that you have never had any concern for our youth; you show your indifference clearly; that you have given no thought to the subjects about which you bring me to trial.

And by Zeus, Meletus, tell us also whether it is better for a man to live among good or wicked fellow citizens. Answer, my good man, for I am not asking a difficult question. Do not the wicked do some harm to those who are ever closest to them, whereas good people benefit them? — Certainly.

d And does the man exist who would rather be harmed than benefited by his associates? Answer, my good sir, for the law orders you to answer. Is there any man who wants to be harmed? — Of course not.

Come now, do you accuse me here of corrupting the young and making them worse deliberately or unwillingly? — Deliberately.

What follows, Meletus? Are you so much wiser at your age than I am at mine that you understand that wicked people always do some e harm to their closest neighbors while good people do them good, but I have reached such a pitch of ignorance that I do not realize this, namely that if I make one of my associates wicked I run the risk of being harmed by him so that I do such a great evil deliberately, as you say? I do not believe you, Meletus, and I do not think anyone else will.
26 Either I do not corrupt the young or, if I do, it is unwillingly, and you are lying in either case. Now if I corrupt them unwillingly, the law does not require you to bring people to court for such unwilling wrongdoings, but to get hold of them privately, to instruct them and exhort them; for clearly, if I learn better, I shall cease to do what I am doing unwillingly. You, however, have avoided my company and were unwilling to instruct me, but you bring me here, where the law requires one to bring those who are in need of punishment, not of instruction.

b And so, men of Athens, what I said is clearly true: Meletus has never been at all concerned with these matters. Nonetheless tell us, Meletus, how you say that I corrupt the young; or is it obvious from your deposition that it is by teaching them not to believe in the gods in whom the city believes but in other new spiritual things? Is this not what you say I teach and so corrupt them? — That is most certainly what I do say.

c Then by those very gods about whom we are talking, Meletus, make this clearer to me and to these men: I cannot be sure whether you

mean that I teach the belief that there are some gods—and therefore I myself believe that there are gods and am not altogether an atheist, nor am I guilty of that—not, however, the gods in whom the city believes, but others, and that this is the charge against me, that they are others. Or whether you mean that I do not believe in gods at all, and that this is what I teach to others. — This is what I mean, that you do not believe in gods at all.

You are a strange fellow, Meletus. Why do you say this? Do I not d
believe, as other men do, that the sun and the moon are gods? — No, by Zeus, gentlemen of the jury, for he says that the sun is stone, and the moon earth.

My dear Meletus, do you think you are prosecuting Anaxagoras? Are you so contemptuous of these men and think them so ignorant of letters as not to know that the books of Anaxagoras[11] of Clazomenae are full of those theories, and further, that the young men learn from me what they can buy from time to time for a drachma, at most, in e
the bookshops, and ridicule Socrates if he pretends that these theories are his own, especially as they are so absurd? Is that, by Zeus, what you think of me, Meletus, that I do not believe that there are any gods? — That is what I say, that you do not believe in the gods at all.

You cannot be believed, Meletus, even, I think, by yourself. The man appears to me, men of Athens, highly insolent and uncontrolled. He seems to have made this deposition out of insolence, violence, and 27
youthful zeal. He is like one who composed a riddle and is trying it out: "Will the wise Socrates realize that I am jesting and contradicting myself, or shall I deceive him and others?" I think he contradicts himself in the affidavit, as if he said: "Socrates is guilty of not believing in gods but believing in gods," and surely that is the part of a jester!

Examine with me, gentlemen, how he appears to contradict himself, b
and you, Meletus, answer us. Remember, gentlemen, what I asked you when I began, not to create a disturbance if I proceed in my usual manner.

Does any man, Meletus, believe in human activities who does not believe in humans? Make him answer, and not again and again create

11. Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, born about the beginning of the fifth century B.C., came to Athens as a young man and spent his time in the pursuit of natural philosophy. He claimed that the universe was directed by Nous (Mind) and that matter was indestructible but always combining in various ways. He left Athens after being prosecuted for impiety.

a disturbance. Does any man who does not believe in horses believe in horsemen's activities? Or in flute-playing activities but not in flute-players? No, my good sir, no man could. If you are not willing to answer, I will tell you and these men. Answer the next question, how-
c ever. Does any man believe in spiritual activities who does not believe in spirits? — No one.

Thank you for answering, if reluctantly, when these gentlemen made you. Now you say that I believe in spiritual things and teach about them, whether new or old, but at any rate spiritual things according to what you say, and to this you have sworn in your deposition. But if I believe in spiritual things I must quite inevitably believe in spirits. Is that not so? It is indeed. I shall assume that you agree, as you do not
d answer. Do we not believe spirits to be either gods or the children of gods? Yes or no? — Of course.

Then since I do believe in spirits, as you admit, if spirits are gods, this is what I mean when I say you speak in riddles and in jest, as you state that I do not believe in gods and then again that I do, since I do believe in spirits. If, on the other hand, the spirits are children of the gods, bastard children of the gods by nymphs or some other mothers, as they are said to be, what man would believe children of the gods to exist, but not gods? That would be just as absurd as to believe the young
e of horses and asses, namely mules, to exist, but not to believe in the existence of horses and asses. You must have made this deposition, Meletus, either to test us or because you were at a loss to find any true wrongdoing of which to accuse me. There is no way in which you could persuade anyone of even small intelligence that it is possible for one and the same man to believe in spiritual but not also in divine
28 things, and then again for that same man to believe neither in spirits nor in gods nor in heroes.

I do not think, men of Athens, that it requires a prolonged defense to prove that I am not guilty of the charges in Meletus' deposition, but this is sufficient. On the other hand, you know that what I said earlier is true, that I am very unpopular with many people. This will be my undoing, if I am undone, not Meletus or Anytus but the slanders and
b envy of many people. This has destroyed many other good men and will, I think, continue to do so. There is no danger that it will stop at me.

Someone might say: "Are you not ashamed, Socrates, to have followed the kind of occupation that has led to your being now in danger of death?" However, I should be right to reply to him: "You are wrong, sir, if you think that a man who is any good at all should take into account the risk of life or death; he should look to this only in his

actions, whether what he does is right or wrong, whether he is acting like a good or a bad man." According to your view, all the heroes who c
died at Troy were inferior people, especially the son of Thetis who was so contemptuous of danger compared with disgrace.[12] When he was eager to kill Hector, his goddess mother warned him, as I believe, in some such words as these: "My child, if you avenge the death of your comrade, Patroclus, and you kill Hector, you will die yourself, for your death is to follow immediately after Hector's." Hearing this, he despised death and danger and was much more afraid to live a coward who did d
not avenge his friends. "Let me die at once," he said, "when once I have given the wrongdoer his deserts, rather than remain here, a laughingstock by the curved ships, a burden upon the earth." Do you think he gave thought to death and danger?

This is the truth of the matter, men of Athens: wherever a man has taken a position that he believes to be best, or has been placed by his commander, there he must I think remain and face danger, without a thought for death or anything else, rather than disgrace. It would have e
been a dreadful way to behave, men of Athens, if, at Potidaea, Amphipolis, and Delium, I had, at the risk of death, like anyone else, remained at my post where those you had elected to command had ordered me, and then, when the god ordered me, as I thought and believed, to live the life of a philosopher, to examine myself and others, I had abandoned my post for fear of death or anything else. That would have been a 29
dreadful thing, and then I might truly have justly been brought here for not believing that there are gods, disobeying the oracle, fearing death, and thinking I was wise when I was not. To fear death, gentlemen, is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know. No one knows whether death may not be the greatest of all blessings for a man, yet men fear it as if they knew that it is the greatest of evils. And surely it is the most blameworthy b
ignorance to believe that one knows what one does not know. It is perhaps on this point and in this respect, gentlemen, that I differ from the majority of men, and if I were to claim that I am wiser than anyone in anything, it would be in this, that, as I have no adequate knowledge of things in the underworld, so I do not think I have. I do know, however, that it is wicked and shameful to do wrong, to disobey one's superior, be he god or man. I shall never fear or avoid things of which I do not know, whether they may not be good rather than things that c

12. The scene between Thetis and Achilles is from the *Iliad* xviii.94 ff.

I know to be bad. Even if you acquitted me now and did not believe Anytus, who said to you that either I should not have been brought here in the first place, or that now I am here, you cannot avoid executing me, for if I should be acquitted, your sons would practice the teachings of Socrates and all be thoroughly corrupted; if you said to me in this regard: "Socrates, we do not believe Anytus now; we acquit you, but only on condition that you spend no more time on this investigation
d and do not practice philosophy, and if you are caught doing so you will die"; if, as I say, you were to acquit me on those terms, I would say to you: "Men of Athens, I am grateful and I am your friend, but I will obey the god rather than you, and as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy, to exhort you and in my usual way to point out to any one of you whom I happen to meet: 'Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the
e greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation, and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?' Then, if one of you disputes this and says he does care, I shall not let him go at once or leave him, but I shall question him, examine him, and test him, and if I do not think he has attained the goodness that he says he has, I shall reproach
30 him because he attaches little importance to the most important things and greater importance to inferior things. I shall treat in this way anyone I happen to meet, young and old, citizen and stranger, and more so the citizens because you are more kindred to me. Be sure that this is what the god orders me to do, and I think there is no greater blessing for the city than my service to the god. For I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your
b body or your wealth in preference to or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul, as I say to you: Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively."[13]

Now if by saying this I corrupt the young, this advice must be harmful, but if anyone says that I give different advice, he is talking nonsense. On this point I would say to you, men of Athens: "Whether
c you believe Anytus or not, whether you acquit me or not, do so on the understanding that this is my course of action, even if I am to face

13. Alternatively, this sentence could be translated: "Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence brings about wealth and all other public and private blessings for men."

death many times." Do not create a disturbance, gentlemen, but abide by my request not to cry out at what I say but to listen, for I think it will be to your advantage to listen, and I am about to say other things at which you will perhaps cry out. By no means do this. Be sure that if you kill the sort of man I say I am, you will not harm me more than yourselves. Neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me in any way; he could not harm me, for I do not think it is permitted that a better man d
be harmed by a worse; certainly he might kill me, or perhaps banish or disfranchise me, which he and maybe others think to be great harm, but I do not think so. I think he is doing himself much greater harm doing what he is doing now, attempting to have a man executed unjustly. Indeed, men of Athens, I am far from making a defense now on my own behalf, as might be thought, but on yours, to prevent you from wrongdoing by mistreating the god's gift to you by condemning me; e
for if you kill me you will not easily find another like me. I was attached to this city by the god—though it seems a ridiculous thing to say—as upon a great and noble horse which was somewhat sluggish because of its size and needed to be stirred up by a kind of gadfly. It is to fulfill some such function that I believe the god has placed me in the city. I never cease to rouse each and every one of you, to persuade and reproach you all day long and everywhere I find myself in your company. 31

Another such man will not easily come to be among you, gentlemen, and if you believe me you will spare me. You might easily be annoyed with me as people are when they are aroused from a doze, and strike out at me; if convinced by Anytus you could easily kill me, and then you could sleep on for the rest of your days, unless the god, in his care for you, sent you someone else. That I am the kind of person to be a gift of the god to the city you might realize from the fact that it does not seem like human nature for me to have neglected all my own affairs b
and to have tolerated this neglect now for so many years while I was always concerned with you, approaching each one of you like a father or an elder brother to persuade you to care for virtue. Now if I profited from this by charging a fee for my advice, there would be some sense to it, but you can see for yourselves that, for all their shameless accusations, my accusers have not been able in their impudence to bring forward a witness to say that I have ever received a fee or ever asked c
for one. I, on the other hand, have a convincing witness that I speak the truth, my poverty.

It may seem strange that while I go around and give this advice privately and interfere in private affairs, I do not venture to go to the assembly and there advise the city. You have heard me give the reason

d for this in many places. I have a divine or spiritual sign which Meletus has ridiculed in his deposition. This began when I was a child. It is a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything. This is what has prevented me from taking part in public affairs, and I think it was quite right to prevent me. Be sure, men of Athens, that if I had long e ago attempted to take part in politics, I should have died long ago, and benefited neither you nor myself. Do not be angry with me for speaking the truth; no man will survive who genuinely opposes you or any 32 other crowd and prevents the occurrence of many unjust and illegal happenings in the city. A man who really fights for justice must lead a private, not a public, life if he is to survive for even a short time.

I shall give you great proofs of this, not words but what you esteem, deeds. Listen to what happened to me, that you may know that I will not yield to any man contrary to what is right, for fear of death, even if I should die at once for not yielding. The things I shall tell you are commonplace and smack of the lawcourts, but they are true. I have b never held any other office in the city, but I served as a member of the Council, and our tribe Antiochis was presiding at the time when you wanted to try as a body the ten generals who had failed to pick up the survivors of the naval battle.[14] This was illegal, as you all recognized later. I was the only member of the presiding committee to oppose your doing something contrary to the laws, and I voted against it. The orators were ready to prosecute me and take me away, and your shouts were egging them on, but I thought I should run any risk on the side c of law and justice rather than join you, for fear of prison or death, when you were engaged in an unjust course.

This happened when the city was still a democracy. When the oligarchy was established, the Thirty[15] summoned me to the Hall, along

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14. This was the battle of Arginusae (south of Lesbos) in 406 B.C., the last Athenian victory of the war. A violent storm prevented the Athenian generals from rescuing their survivors. For this they were tried in Athens and sentenced to death by the assembly. They were tried in a body, and it is this to which Socrates objected in the Council's presiding committee which prepared the business of the assembly. He obstinately persisted in his opposition, in which he stood alone, and was overruled by the majority. Six generals who were in Athens were executed.

15. This was the harsh oligarchy that was set up after the final defeat of Athens by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War in 404 B.C. and that ruled Athens for some nine months in 404–3 before the democracy was restored.

with four others, and ordered us to bring Leon from Salamis, that he might be executed. They gave many such orders to many people, in order to implicate as many as possible in their guilt. Then I showed again, not in words but in action, that, if it were not rather vulgar to d
say so, death is something I couldn't care less about, but that my whole concern is not to do anything unjust or impious. That government, powerful as it was, did not frighten me into any wrongdoing. When we left the Hall, the other four went to Salamis and brought in Leon, but I went home. I might have been put to death for this, had not the government fallen shortly afterwards. There are many who will witness e
to these events.

Do you think I would have survived all these years if I were engaged in public affairs and, acting as a good man must, came to the help of justice and considered this the most important thing? Far from it, men of Athens, nor would any other man. Throughout my life, in any public 33
activity I may have engaged in, I am the same man as I am in private life. I have never come to an agreement with anyone to act unjustly, neither with anyone else nor with any one of those who they slanderously say are my pupils. I have never been anyone's teacher. If anyone, young or old, desires to listen to me when I am talking and dealing with my own concerns, I have never begrudged this to anyone, but I do not converse when I receive a fee and not when I do not. I am equally b
ready to question the rich and the poor if anyone is willing to answer my questions and listen to what I say. And I cannot justly be held responsible for the good or bad conduct of these people, as I never promised to teach them anything and have not done so. If anyone says that he has learned anything from me, or that he heard anything privately that the others did not hear, be assured that he is not telling the truth.

Why then do some people enjoy spending considerable time in my c
company? You have heard why, men of Athens; I have told you the whole truth. They enjoy hearing those being questioned who think they are wise, but are not. And this is not unpleasant. To do this has, as I say, been enjoined upon me by the god, by means of oracles and dreams, and in every other way that a divine manifestation has ever ordered a man to do anything. This is true, gentlemen, and can easily be established.

If I corrupt some young men and have corrupted others, then surely d
some of them who have grown older and realized that I gave them bad advice when they were young should now themselves come up here to accuse me and avenge themselves. If they were unwilling to do so themselves, then some of their kindred, their fathers or brothers or

other relations should recall it now if their family had been harmed by me. I see many of these present here, first Crito, my contemporary
e and fellow demesman, the father of Critobulus here; next Lysanias of Sphettus, the father of Aeschines here; also Antiphon the Cephisian, the father of Epigenes; and others whose brothers spent their time in this way; Nicostratus, the son of Theozotides, brother of Theodotus, and Theodotus has died so he could not influence him; Paralius here, son of Demodocus, whose brother was Theages; there is Adeimantus,
34 son of Ariston, brother of Plato here; Aeantodorus, brother of Apollodorus here.

I could mention many others, some one of whom surely Meletus should have brought in as witness in his own speech. If he forgot to do so, then let him do it now; I will yield time if he has anything of the kind to say. You will find quite the contrary, gentlemen. These men are all ready to come to the help of the corruptor, the man who
b has harmed their kindred, as Meletus and Anytus say. Now those who were corrupted might well have reason to help me, but the uncorrupted, their kindred who are older men, have no reason to help me except the right and proper one, that they know that Meletus is lying and that I am telling the truth.

Very well, gentlemen. This, and maybe other similar things, is what
c I have to say in my defense. Perhaps one of you might be angry as he recalls that when he himself stood trial on a less dangerous charge, he begged and implored the jurymen with many tears, that he brought his children and many of his friends and family into court to arouse as much pity as he could, but that I do none of these things, even
d though I may seem to be running the ultimate risk. Thinking of this, he might feel resentful towards me and, angry about this, cast his vote in anger. If there is such a one among you—I do not deem there is, but if there is—I think it would be right to say in reply: My good sir, I too have a household and, in Homer's phrase, I am not born "from oak or rock" but from men, so that I have a family, indeed three sons, men of Athens, of whom one is an adolescent while two are children. Nevertheless, I will not beg you to acquit me by bringing them here.
e Why do I do none of these things? Not through arrogance, gentlemen, nor through lack of respect for you. Whether I am brave in the face of death is another matter, but with regard to my reputation and yours and that of the whole city, it does not seem right to me to do these things, especially at my age and with my reputation. For it is generally
35 believed, whether it be true or false, that in certain respects Socrates is

superior to the majority of men. Now if those of you who are considered superior, be it in wisdom or courage or whatever other virtue makes them so, are seen behaving like that, it would be a disgrace. Yet I have often seen them do this sort of thing when standing trial, men who are thought to be somebody, doing amazing things as if they thought it a terrible thing to die, and as if they were to be immortal if you did not execute them. I think these men bring shame upon the city so that a b
stranger, too, would assume that those who are outstanding in virtue among the Athenians, whom they themselves select from themselves to fill offices of state and receive other honors, are in no way better than women. You should not act like that, men of Athens, those of you who have any reputation at all, and if we do, you should not allow it. You should make it very clear that you will more readily convict a man who performs these pitiful dramatics in court and so makes the city a laughingstock, than a man who keeps quiet.

Quite apart from the question of reputation, gentlemen, I do not think it right to supplicate the jury and to be acquitted because of this, c
but to teach and persuade them. It is not the purpose of a juryman's office to give justice as a favor to whoever seems good to him, but to judge according to law, and this he has sworn to do. We should not accustom you to perjure yourselves, nor should you make a habit of it. This is irreverent conduct for either of us.

Do not deem it right for me, men of Athens, that I should act towards d
you in a way that I do not consider to be good or just or pious, especially, by Zeus, as I am being prosecuted by Meletus here for impiety; clearly, if I convinced you by my supplication to do violence to your oath of office, I would be teaching you not to believe that there are gods, and my defense would convict me of not believing in them. This is far from being the case, gentlemen, for I do believe in them as none of my accusers do. I leave it to you and the god to judge me in the way that will be best for me and for you.

[The jury now gives its verdict of guilty, and Meletus asks for the penalty of death.]

There are many other reasons for my not being angry with you for e
convicting me, men of Athens, and what happened was not unexpected. 36
I am much more surprised at the number of votes cast on each side, for I did not think the decision would be by so few votes but by a great many. As it is, a switch of only thirty votes would have acquitted me. I think myself that I have been cleared of Meletus' charges, and not b

only this, but it is clear to all that, if Anytus and Lycon had not joined him in accusing me, he would have been fined a thousand drachmas for not receiving a fifth of the votes.

He assesses the penalty at death. So be it. What counter-assessment should I propose to you, men of Athens? Clearly it should be a penalty I deserve, and what do I deserve to suffer or to pay because I have deliberately not led a quiet life but have neglected what occupies most people: wealth, household affairs, the position of general or public orator or the other offices, the political clubs and factions that exist in the city? I thought myself too honest to survive if I occupied myself
c with those things. I did not follow that path that would have made me of no use either to you or to myself, but I went to each of you privately and conferred upon him what I say is the greatest benefit, by trying to persuade him not to care for any of his belongings before caring that he himself should be as good and as wise as possible, not to care for the city's possessions more than for the city itself, and to care for other
d things in the same way. What do I deserve for being such a man? Some good, men of Athens, if I must truly make an assessment according to my deserts, and something suitable. What is suitable for a poor benefactor who needs leisure to exhort you? Nothing is more suitable, gentlemen, than for such a man to be fed in the Prytaneum[16]—much more suitable for him than for any one of you who has won a victory at Olympia with a pair or a team of horses. The Olympian victor makes
e you think yourself happy; I make you be happy. Besides, he does not need food, but I do. So if I must make a just assessment of what I
37 deserve, I assess it as this: free meals in the Prytaneum.

When I say this you may think, as when I spoke of appeals to pity and entreaties, that I speak arrogantly, but that is not the case, men of Athens; rather it is like this: I am convinced that I never willingly wrong anyone, but I am not convincing you of this, for we have talked together
b but a short time. If it were the law with us, as it is elsewhere, that a trial for life should not last one but many days, you would be convinced, but now it is not easy to dispel great slanders in a short time. Since I am convinced that I wrong no one, I am not likely to wrong myself, to say that I deserve some evil and to make some such assessment against myself. What should I fear? That I should suffer the penalty

16. The Prytaneum was the magistrates' hall or town hall of Athens in which public entertainments were given, particularly to Olympian victors on their return home.

Meletus has assessed against me, of which I say I do not know whether it is good or bad? Am I then to choose in preference to this something that I know very well to be an evil and assess the penalty at that? c
Imprisonment? Why should I live in prison, always subjected to the ruling magistrates, the Eleven? A fine, and imprisonment until I pay it? That would be the same thing for me, as I have no money. Exile? For perhaps you might accept that assessment.

I should have to be inordinately fond of life, men of Athens, to be so unreasonable as to suppose that other men will easily tolerate my company and conversation when you, my fellow citizens, have been d
unable to endure them, but found them a burden and resented them so that you are now seeking to get rid of them. Far from it, gentlemen. It would be a fine life at my age to be driven out of one city after another, for I know very well that wherever I go the young men will listen to my talk as they do here. If I drive them away, they will themselves persuade their elders to drive me out; if I do not drive them away, their e
fathers and relations will drive me out on their behalf.

Perhaps someone might say: But Socrates, if you leave us will you not be able to live quietly, without talking? Now this is the most difficult point on which to convince some of you. If I say that it is impossible 38
for me to keep quiet because that means disobeying the god, you will not believe me and will think I am being ironical. On the other hand, if I say that it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living for men, you will believe me even less.

What I say is true, gentlemen, but it is not easy to convince you. At the same time, I am not accustomed to think that I deserve any penalty. If I had money, I would assess the penalty at the amount I could pay, b
for that would not hurt me, but I have none, unless you are willing to set the penalty at the amount I can pay, and perhaps I could pay you one mina of silver. So that is my assessment.

Plato here, men of Athens, and Crito and Critobulus and Apollodorus bid me put the penalty at thirty minas, and they will stand surety for the money. Well then, that is my assessment, and they will be sufficient guarantee of payment.

[The jury now votes again and sentences Socrates to death.]

It is for the sake of a short time, men of Athens, that you will acquire c
the reputation and the guilt, in the eyes of those who want to denigrate

the city, of having killed Socrates, a wise man, for they who want to revile you will say that I am wise even if I am not. If you had waited but a little while, this would have happened of its own accord. You see
d my age, that I am already advanced in years and close to death. I am saying this not to all of you but to those who condemned me to death, and to these same ones I say: Perhaps you think that I was convicted for lack of such words as might have convinced you, if I thought I should say or do all I could to avoid my sentence. Far from it. I was convicted because I lacked not words but boldness and shamelessness and the willingness to say to you what you would most gladly have
e heard from me, lamentations and tears and my saying and doing many things that I say are unworthy of me but that you are accustomed to hear from others. I did not think then that the danger I ran should make me do anything mean, nor do I now regret the nature of my defense. I would much rather die after this kind of defense than live after making the other kind. Neither I nor any other man should, on
39 trial or in war, contrive to avoid death at any cost. Indeed it is often obvious in battle that one could escape death by throwing away one's weapons and by turning to supplicate one's pursuers, and there are many ways to avoid death in every kind of danger if one will venture to do or say anything to avoid it. It is not difficult to avoid death,
b gentlemen; it is much more difficult to avoid wickedness, for it runs faster than death. Slow and elderly as I am, I have been caught by the slower pursuer, whereas my accusers, being clever and sharp, have been caught by the quicker, wickedness. I leave you now, condemned to death by you, but they are condemned by truth to wickedness and injustice. So I maintain my assessment, and they maintain theirs. This perhaps had to happen, and I think it is as it should be.

c Now I want to prophesy to those who convicted me, for I am at the point when men prophesy most, when they are about to die. I say, gentlemen, to those who voted to kill me, that vengeance will come upon you immediately after my death, a vengeance much harder to bear than that which you took in killing me. You did this in the belief that you would avoid giving an account of your life, but I maintain that quite the opposite will happen to you. There will be more people
d to test you, whom I now held back, but you did not notice it. They will be more difficult to deal with as they will be younger and you will resent them more. You are wrong if you believe that by killing people you will prevent anyone from reproaching you for not living in the right way. To escape such tests is neither possible nor good, but it is

best and easiest not to discredit others but to prepare oneself to be as good as possible. With this prophecy to you who convicted me, I part from you.

I should be glad to discuss what has happened with those who voted e
for my acquittal during the time that the officers of the court are busy and I do not yet have to depart to my death. So, gentlemen, stay with me awhile, for nothing prevents us from talking to each other while it is allowed. To you, as being my friends, I want to show the meaning 40
of what has occurred. A surprising thing has happened to me, jurymen—you I would rightly call jurymen. At all previous times my familiar prophetic power, my spiritual manifestation, frequently opposed me, even in small matters, when I was about to do something wrong, but now that, as you can see for yourselves, I was faced with what one might think, and what is generally thought to be, the worst of evils, my divine sign has not opposed me, either when I left home at dawn, or b
when I came into court, or at any time that I was about to say something during my speech. Yet in other talks it often held me back in the middle of my speaking, but now it has opposed no word or deed of mine. What do I think is the reason for this? I will tell you. What has happened to me may well be a good thing, and those of us who believe death to be an evil are certainly mistaken. I have convincing proof of this, for it is c
impossible that my familiar sign did not oppose me if I was not about to do what was right.

Let us reflect in this way, too, that there is good hope that death is a blessing, for it is one of two things: either the dead are nothing and have no perception of anything, or it is, as we are told, a change and a relocating for the soul from here to another place. If it is complete d
lack of perception, like a dreamless sleep, then death would be a great advantage. For I think that if one had to pick out that night during which a man slept soundly and did not dream, put beside it the other nights and days of his life, and then see how many days and nights had been better and more pleasant than that night, not only a private person but the great king would find them easy to count compared with the e
other days and nights. If death is like this I say it is an advantage, for all eternity would then seem to be no more than a single night. If, on the other hand, death is a change from here to another place, and what we are told is true and all who have died are there, what greater blessing could there be, gentlemen of the jury? If anyone arriving in Hades will 41
have escaped from those who call themselves jurymen here, and will find those true jurymen who are said to sit in judgment there, Minos

and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Triptolemus and the other demi-
gods who have been upright in their own life, would that be a poor
kind of change? Again, what would one of you give to keep company
with Orpheus and Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer? I am willing to die
many times if that is true. It would be a wonderful way for me to spend
b my time whenever I met Palamedes and Ajax, the son of Telamon,
and any other of the men of old who died through an unjust conviction,
to compare my experience with theirs. I think it would be pleasant.
Most important, I could spend my time testing and examining people
there, as I do here, as to who among them is wise, and who thinks he
is, but is not.

What would one not give, gentlemen of the jury, for the opportunity
c to examine the man who led the great expedition against Troy, or
Odysseus, or Sisyphus, and innumerable other men and women one
could mention? It would be an extraordinary happiness to talk with
them, to keep company with them and examine them. In any case,
they would certainly not put one to death for doing so. They are happier
there than we are here in other respects, and for the rest of time they
are deathless, if indeed what we are told is true.

You too must be of good hope as regards death, gentlemen of the
jury, and keep this one truth in mind, that a good man cannot be
d harmed either in life or in death, and that his affairs are not neglected
by the gods. What has happened to me now has not happened of itself,
but it is clear to me that it was better for me to die now and to escape
from trouble. That is why my divine sign did not oppose me at any
point. So I am certainly not angry with those who convicted me, or
with my accusers. Of course that was not their purpose when they
accused and convicted me, but they thought they were hurting me,
e and for this they deserve blame. This much I ask from them: When
my sons grow up, avenge yourselves by causing them the same kind of
grief that I caused you, if you think they care for money or anything
else more than they care for virtue, or if they think they are somebody
when they are nobody. Reproach them as I reproach you, that they do
not care for the right things and think they are worthy when they are
42 not worthy of anything. If you do this, I shall have been justly treated
by you, and my sons also.

Now the hour to part has come. I go to die, you go to live. Which
of us goes to the better lot is known to no one, except the god.

ARISTOTLE

NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

Translated
with Introduction, Notes, and Glossary, by

TERENCE IRWIN

Second Edition

Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
Indianapolis/Cambridge

Printed in the United States of America

17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 7 8 9 10 11

For further information, please address
Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
P. O. Box 44937
Indianapolis, Indiana 46244-0937

www.hackettpublishing.com

Cover design by Listenberger & Associates
Interior design by Meera Dash and Abigail Coyle

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Aristotle.
[Nicomachean ethics. English]
Nicomachean ethics / Aristotle : translated, with introduction, notes, and glossary by Terence Irwin.—2nd ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-87220-465-0—ISBN 0-87220-464-2 (pbk.)
1. Ethics. I. Irwin, Terence. II. Title.
B430.A5N5313 1999
171'.3—dc21

99-26709
CIP

ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-465-2 (cloth)
ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-464-5 (pbk.)
Adobe PDF ebook ISBN: 978-1-60384-567-0

NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

BOOK I

[HAPPINESS]

1

[Ends and Goods]

§1 Every craft and every line of inquiry, and likewise every action and 1094a
decision, seems to seek some good;* that is why some people were right
to describe the good as what everything seeks.* §2 But the ends [that
are sought] appear to differ; some are activities, and others are products 5
apart from the activities.* Wherever there are ends apart from the actions,
the products are by nature better than the activities.

§3 Since there are many actions, crafts, and sciences, the ends turn out to be many as well; for health is the end of medicine, a boat of boat building, victory of generalship, and wealth of household management. §4 But some of these pursuits are subordinate to some one capacity; for 10
instance, bridle making and every other science producing equipment for horses are subordinate to horsemanship, while this and every action in warfare are, in turn, subordinate to generalship, and in the same way other pursuits are subordinate to further ones.* In all such cases, then,*
the ends of the ruling sciences are more choiceworthy than all the ends 15
subordinate to them, since the lower ends are also pursued for the sake of the higher. §5 Here it does not matter whether the ends of the actions are the activities themselves, or something apart from them, as in the sciences we have mentioned.

2

[The Highest Good and Political Science]

§1 Suppose, then, that the things achievable by action have some end that we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for the other things, and that we do not choose everything because of something 20
else—for if we do, it will go on without limit, so that desire will prove to be empty and futile. Clearly, this end will be the good, that is to say, the best good.*

1094a §2 Then does knowledge of this good carry great weight for [our] way of life, and would it make us better able, like archers who have a target to 25 aim at, to hit the right mark?* §3 If so, we should try to grasp, in outline at any rate, what the good is, and which is its proper science or capacity.

§4 It seems proper to the most controlling science—the highest ruling science.* §5 And this appears characteristic of political science. §6 For it is the one that prescribes which of the sciences ought to be stud-1094b ied in cities, and which ones each class in the city should learn, and how far; indeed we see that even the most honored capacities—generalship, household management, and rhetoric, for instance—are subordinate to 5 it. §7 And since it uses the other sciences concerned with action,* and moreover legislates what must be done and what avoided, its end will include the ends of the other sciences, and so this will be the human good. §8 For even if the good is the same for a city as for an individual, still the good of the city is apparently a greater and more complete good to acquire and preserve. For while it is satisfactory to acquire and pre-10 serve the good even for an individual, it is finer and more divine to acquire and preserve it for a people and for cities.* And so, since our line of inquiry seeks these [goods, for an individual and for a community], it is a sort of political science.*

3

[The Method of Political Science]

Our discussion will be adequate if we make things perspicuous enough to accord with the subject matter; for we would not seek the same degree of exactness in all sorts of arguments alike, any more than in the products 15 of different crafts.* §2 Now, fine and just things, which political science examines, differ and vary so much as to seem to rest on convention only, not on nature.* §3 But [this is not a good reason, since] goods also vary in the same way, because they result in harm to many people—for some have been destroyed because of their wealth, others because of their 20 bravery.* §4 And so, since this is our subject and these are our premises, we shall be satisfied to indicate the truth roughly and in outline; since our subject and our premises are things that hold good usually [but not universally], we shall be satisfied to draw conclusions of the same sort.

Each of our claims, then, ought to be accepted in the same way [as claiming to hold good usually]. For the educated person seeks exactness 25 in each area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows; for apparently it is just as mistaken to demand demonstrations from a rhetorician as to accept [merely] persuasive arguments from a mathematician.* 1095a §5 Further, each person judges rightly what he knows, and is a good judge about that; hence the good judge in a given area is the person edu-

cated in that area, and the unqualifiedly good judge is the person educated in every area. *1095a*

This is why a youth is not a suitable student of political science; for he lacks experience of the actions in life, which are the subject and premises of our arguments. §6 Moreover, since he tends to follow his feelings, his study will be futile and useless; for the end [of political science] is action, not knowledge.* §7 It does not matter whether he is young in years or immature in character, since the deficiency does not depend on age, but results from following his feelings in his life and in a given pursuit; for an immature person, like an incontinent person, gets no benefit from his knowledge. But for those who accord with reason in forming their desires and in their actions, knowledge of political science will be of great benefit.

§8 These are the preliminary points about the student, about the way our claims are to be accepted, and about what we propose to do.*

4

[Common Beliefs]

Let us, then, begin again.* Since every sort of knowledge and decision* pursues some good, what is the good that we say political science seeks? What, [in other words,] is the highest of all the goods achievable in action?

§2 As far as its name goes, most people virtually agree; for both the many and the cultivated call it happiness, and they suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy.* But they disagree about what happiness is, and the many do not give the same answer as the wise.*

§3 For the many think it is something obvious and evident—for instance, pleasure, wealth, or honor. Some take it to be one thing, others another. Indeed, the same person often changes his mind; for when he has fallen ill, he thinks happiness is health, and when he has fallen into poverty, he thinks it is wealth. And when they are conscious of their own ignorance, they admire anyone who speaks of something grand and above their heads. [Among the wise,] however, some used to think that besides these many goods there is some other good that exists in its own right and that causes all these goods to be goods.*

§4 Presumably, then, it is rather futile to examine all these beliefs, and it is enough to examine those that are most current or seem to have some argument for them.

§5 We must notice, however, the difference between arguments from principles and arguments toward principles.* For indeed Plato was right to be puzzled about this, when he used to ask if [the argument] set out from the principles or led toward them*—just as on a race course the path may go from the starting line to the far end,* or back again. For we should *1095b*

1095b certainly begin from things known, but things are known in two ways;* for some are known to us, some known without qualification. Presumably, then, *we* ought to begin from things known to *us*.

§6 That is why we need to have been brought up in fine habits if we are to be adequate students of fine and just things, and of political questions generally. §7 For we begin from the [belief] that [something is true]; if this is apparent enough to us, we can begin without also [knowing] why [it is true].* Someone who is well brought up has the beginnings, or can easily acquire them.* Someone who neither has them nor can acquire them should listen to Hesiod:* 'He who grasps everything himself is best of all; he is noble also who listens to one who has spoken well; but he who neither grasps it himself nor takes to heart what he hears from another is a useless man.'

5

[The Three Lives]

But let us begin again from the point from which we digressed.* For, it would seem, people quite reasonably reach their conception of the good, i.e., of happiness, from the lives [they lead]; §2 for there are roughly three most favored lives: the lives of gratification, of political activity, and, third, of study.*

The many, the most vulgar, would seem to conceive the good and happiness as pleasure, and hence they also like the life of gratification. §3 In this they appear completely slavish, since the life they decide on is a life for grazing animals.* Still, they have some argument in their defense, since many in positions of power feel as Sardanapallus* felt, [and also choose this life].

§4 The cultivated people, those active [in politics], conceive the good as honor, since this is more or less the end [normally pursued] in the political life. This, however, appears to be too superficial to be what we are seeking;* for it seems to depend more on those who honor than on the one honored, whereas we intuitively believe that the good is something of our own and hard to take from us.* §5 Further, it would seem, they pursue honor to convince themselves that they are good; at any rate, they seek to be honored by prudent people, among people who know them, and for virtue. It is clear, then, that—in their view at any rate—virtue is superior [to honor].

§6 Perhaps, indeed, one might conceive virtue more than honor to be the end of the political life. However, this also is apparently too incomplete [to be the good]. For it seems possible for someone to possess virtue 1096a but be asleep or inactive throughout his life, and, moreover, to suffer the worst evils and misfortunes. If this is the sort of life he leads, no one would count him happy, except to defend a philosopher's paradox.*

Enough about this, since it has been adequately discussed in the popular works* as well. *1096a*

§7 The third life is the life of study, which we shall examine in what follows.*

§8 The moneymaker's life is in a way forced on him [not chosen for itself];* and clearly wealth is not the good we are seeking, since it is [merely] useful, [choiceworthy only] for some other end. Hence one would be more inclined to suppose that [any of] the goods mentioned earlier is the end, since they are liked for themselves. But apparently they are not [the end] either; and many arguments have been presented against them.* Let us, then, dismiss them.

6

[The Platonic Form of the Good]

Presumably, though, we had better examine the universal good, and puzzle out what is meant in speaking of it.* This sort of inquiry is, to be sure, unwelcome to us, because those who introduced the Forms were friends* of ours; still, it presumably seems better, indeed only right, to destroy even what is close to us if that is the way to preserve truth. We must especially do this as philosophers, [lovers of wisdom]; for though we love both the truth and our friends, reverence is due to the truth first.

§2 Those who introduced this view did not mean to produce an Idea for any [series] in which they spoke of prior and posterior [members];* that was why they did not mean to establish an Idea [of number] for [the series of] numbers. But the good is spoken of both in what-it-is [that is, substance], and in quality and relative;* and what exists in its own right, that is, substance, is by nature prior to the relative,* since a relative would seem to be an appendage and coincident of being. And so there is no common Idea over these.

§3 Further, good is spoken of in as many ways as being [is spoken of]:* in what-it-is, as god and mind;* in quality, as the virtues; in quantity, as the measured amount; in relative, as the useful; in time, as the opportune moment; in place, as the [right] situation; and so on. Hence it is clear that the good cannot be some common and single universal; for if it were, it would be spoken of in only one [of the types of] predication, not in them all.

§4 Further, if a number of things have a single Idea, there is also a single science of them; hence [if there were an Idea of good] there would also be some single science of all goods. But, in fact, there are many sciences even of the goods under one [type of] predication; for the science of the opportune moment, for instance, in war is generalship, in disease medicine. And similarly the science of the measured amount in food is medicine, in exertion gymnastics. [Hence there is no single science of the good, and so no Idea.]

1096a35 §5 One might be puzzled about what [the believers in Ideas] really
1096b mean in speaking of the So-and-So Itself,* since Man Itself and man* have one and the same account of man; for insofar as each is man, they will not differ at all. If that is so, then [Good Itself and good have the same account of good]; hence they also will not differ at all insofar as each is good, [hence there is no point in appealing to Good Itself].

§6 Moreover, Good Itself will be no more of a good by being eternal;
5 for a white thing is no whiter if it lasts a long time than if it lasts a day.

§7 The Pythagoreans would seem to have a more plausible view about the good, since they place the One in the column of goods. Indeed, Speusippus seems to have followed them. §8 But let us leave this for another discussion.

A dispute emerges, however, about what we have said, because the
10 arguments [in favor of the Idea] are not concerned with every sort of good. Goods pursued and liked in their own right are spoken of as one species of goods, whereas those that in some way tend to produce or preserve these goods, or to prevent their contraries, are spoken of as goods because of these and in a different way. §9 Clearly, then, goods are spoken of in two ways, and some are goods in their own right, and others
15 goods because of these.* Let us, then, separate the goods in their own right from the [merely] useful goods, and consider whether goods in their own right correspond to a single Idea.

§10 But what sorts of goods may we take to be goods in their own right? Are they the goods that are pursued even on their own—for instance, prudence, seeing, some types of pleasures, and honors?* For even if we also pursue these because of something else, we may nonethe-
20 less take them to be goods in their own right. Alternatively, is nothing except the Idea good in its own right, so that the Form will be futile?* §11 But if these other things are also goods in their own right, then, [if there is an Idea of good,] the same account of good will have to turn up in all of them, just as the same account of whiteness turns up in snow and in chalk.* In fact, however, honor, prudence, and pleasure have different
25 and dissimilar accounts, precisely insofar as they are goods. Hence the good is not something common corresponding to a single Idea.

§12 But how, then, is good spoken of? For it is not like homonyms resulting from chance.* Is it spoken of from the fact that goods derive from one thing or all contribute to one thing? Or is it spoken of more by analogy? For as sight is to body, so understanding is to soul, and so on for other cases.*

30 §13 Presumably, though, we should leave these questions for now, since their exact treatment is more appropriate for another [branch of] philosophy.* And the same is true about the Idea. For even if there is some one good predicated in common,* or some separable good, itself in its own right, clearly that is not the sort of good a human being can
35 achieve in action or possess; but that is the sort we are looking for now.

6

§14 Perhaps, however, someone might think it is better to get to know *1096b*
the Idea with a view to the goods that we can possess and achieve in 1097a
action; for [one might suppose that] if we have this as a sort of pattern, we shall also know better about the goods that are goods for us, and if we know about them, we shall hit on them. §15 This argument certainly has some plausibility, but it would seem to clash with the sciences. For 5
each of these, though it aims at some good and seeks to supply what is lacking, leaves out knowledge of the Idea; but if the Idea were such an important aid, surely it would not be reasonable for all craftsmen to know nothing about it and not even to look for it.

§16 Moreover, it is a puzzle to know what the weaver or carpenter will gain for his own craft from knowing this Good Itself, or how anyone 10
will be better at medicine or generalship from having gazed on the Idea Itself. For what the doctor appears to consider is not even health [universally, let alone good universally], but human health, and presumably the health of this human being even more, since he treats one particular patient at a time.*

So much, then, for these questions.

7

[An Account of the Human Good]

But let us return once again to the good we are looking for, and con- 15
sider just what it could be.* For it is apparently one thing in one action or craft, and another thing in another; for it is one thing in medicine, another in generalship, and so on for the rest. What, then, is the good of each action or craft? Surely it is that for the sake of which the other things are done; in medicine this is health, in generalship victory, in house-building 20
a house, in another case something else, but in every action and decision it is the end, since it is for the sake of the end that everyone does the other actions.* And so, if there is some end of everything achievable in action, the good achievable in action will be this end; if there are more ends than one, [the good achievable in action] will be these ends.*

§2 Our argument, then, has followed a different route to reach the same conclusion.* But we must try to make this still more perspicuous.* 25
§3 Since there are apparently many ends, and we choose some of them (for instance, wealth, flutes, and, in general, instruments) because of something else, it is clear that not all ends are complete.* But the best good is apparently something complete. And so, if only one end is complete, the good we are looking for will be this end; if more ends than one are complete, it will be the most complete end of these.* 30

§4 We say that an end pursued in its own right is more complete than an end pursued because of something else, and that an end that is never choiceworthy because of something else is more complete than ends that

1097a are choiceworthy both in their own right and because of this end. Hence an end that is always choiceworthy in its own right,* never because of something else, is complete without qualification.

§5 Now happiness, more than anything else, seems complete without 1097b qualification.* For we always choose it because of itself,* never because of something else. Honor, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we would choose each of them even if it had no further result; but we also choose them for the sake of hap- 5 piness, supposing that through them we shall be happy.* Happiness, by contrast, no one ever chooses for their sake, or for the sake of anything else at all.

§6 The same conclusion [that happiness is complete] also appears to follow from self-sufficiency. For the complete good seems to be self-sufficient.* What we count as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary 10 person by himself, living an isolated life, but what suffices also for parents, children, wife, and, in general, for friends and fellow citizens, since a human being is a naturally political [animal].* §7 Here, however, we must impose some limit; for if we extend the good to parents' parents and children's children and to friends of friends, we shall go on without limit; but we must examine this another time.

15 Anyhow, we regard something as self-sufficient when all by itself it makes a life choiceworthy and lacking nothing; and that is what we think happiness does. §8 Moreover, we think happiness is most choiceworthy of all goods, [since] it is not counted as one good among many.* [If it were] counted as one among many,* then, clearly, we think it would be more choiceworthy if the smallest of goods were added; for the good that is added becomes an extra quantity of goods, and the larger of two goods 20 is always more choiceworthy.*

Happiness, then, is apparently something complete and self-sufficient, since it is the end of the things achievable in action.*

§9 But presumably the remark that the best good is happiness is apparently something [generally] agreed, and we still need a clearer statement of what the best good is.* §10 Perhaps, then, we shall find 25 this if we first grasp the function of a human being. For just as the good, i.e., [doing] well, for a flautist, a sculptor, and every craftsman, and, in general, for whatever has a function and [characteristic] action, seems to depend on its function,* the same seems to be true for a human being, if a human being has some function.

30 §11 Then do the carpenter and the leather worker have their functions and actions, but has a human being no function?* Is he by nature idle, without any function?* Or, just as eye, hand, foot, and, in general, every [bodily] part apparently has its function, may we likewise ascribe to a human being some function apart from all of these?*

§12 What, then, could this be? For living is apparently shared with 1098a plants, but what we are looking for is the special function of a human

being; hence we should set aside the life of nutrition and growth.* The life *1098a*
next in order is some sort of life of sense perception; but this too is apparently shared with horse, ox, and every animal.*

§13 The remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action* of the [part of the soul] that has reason.* One [part] of it has reason as obeying reason; the other has it as itself having reason and thinking.* Moreover, life is also spoken of in two ways [as capacity and as activity], and we must take [a human being's special function to be] life as activity, since this seems to be called life more fully.* §14 We have found, then, that the human function is activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason.*

Now we say that the function of a [kind of thing]—of a harpist, for instance—is the same in kind as the function of an excellent individual of the kind—of an excellent harpist, for instance. And the same is true without qualification in every case, if we add to the function the superior achievement in accord with the virtue; for the function of a harpist is to play the harp, and the function of a good harpist is to play it well.* Moreover, we take the human function to be a certain kind of life, and take this life to be activity and actions of the soul that involve reason; hence the function of the excellent man is to do this well and finely.

§15 Now each function is completed well by being completed in accord with the virtue proper [to that kind of thing].* And so the human good proves to be activity of the soul in accord with virtue,* and indeed with the best and most complete virtue, if there are more virtues than one.* §16 Moreover, in a complete life.* For one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one day; nor, similarly, does one day or a short time make us blessed and happy.

§17 This, then, is a sketch of the good; for, presumably, we must draw the outline first, and fill it in later.* If the sketch is good, anyone, it seems, can advance and articulate it, and in such cases time discovers more, or is a good partner in discovery. That is also how the crafts have improved, since anyone can add what is lacking [in the outline].

§18 We must also remember our previous remarks, so that we do not look for the same degree of exactness in all areas, but the degree that accords with a given subject matter and is proper to a given line of inquiry.* §19 For the carpenter's and the geometer's inquiries about the right angle are different also; the carpenter restricts himself to what helps his work, but the geometer inquires into what, or what sort* of thing, the right angle is, since he studies the truth. We must do the same, then, in other areas too, [seeking the proper degree of exactness], so that digressions do not overwhelm our main task.

§20 Nor should we make the same demand for an explanation in all *1098b*
cases. On the contrary, in some cases it is enough to prove rightly that [something is true, without also explaining why it is true]. This is so, for

1098b instance, with principles, where the fact that [something is true] is the first thing, that is to say, the principle.*

§21 Some principles are studied by means of induction, some by means of perception, some by means of some sort of habituation, and others by other means.* §22 In each case we should try to find them out by means suited to their nature, and work hard to define them rightly. §23 For they carry great weight* for what follows; for the principle seems to be more than half the whole,* and makes evident the answer to many of our questions.

8

[Defense of the Account of the Good]

We should examine the principle, however, not only from the conclusion and premises [of a deduction], but also from what is said about it;* for all the facts harmonize with a true account, whereas the truth soon clashes with a false one.*

§2 Goods are divided, then, into three types, some called external, some goods of the soul, others goods of the body.* We say that the goods of the soul are goods most fully, and more than the others, and we take actions and activities of the soul to be [goods] of the soul. And so our account [of the good] is right, to judge by this belief anyhow—and it is an ancient belief, and accepted by philosophers.

§3 Our account is also correct in saying that some sort of actions and activities are the end; for in that way the end turns out to be a good of the soul, not an external good.

§4 The belief that the happy person lives well and does well also agrees with our account, since we have virtually said that the end is a sort of living well and doing well.

§5 Further, all the features that people look for in happiness appear to be true of the end described in our account.* §6 For to some people happiness seems to be virtue; to others prudence; to others some sort of wisdom; to others again it seems to be these, or one of these, involving pleasure or requiring it to be added;* others add in external prosperity as well. §7 Some of these views are traditional, held by many, while others are held by a few men who are widely esteemed. It is reasonable for each group not to be completely wrong, but to be correct on one point at least, or even on most points.

§8 First, our account agrees with those who say happiness is virtue [in general] or some [particular] virtue; for activity in accord with virtue is proper to virtue. §9 Presumably, though, it matters quite a bit whether we suppose that the best good consists in possessing or in using—that is to say, in a state or in an activity [that actualizes the state].* For someone

may be in a state that achieves no good—if, for instance, he is asleep or 1099a
inactive in some other way—but this cannot be true of the activity; for it will necessarily act and act well. And just as Olympic prizes are not for the finest and strongest, but for the contestants—since it is only these who 5
win—the same is true in life; among the fine and good people, only those who act correctly* win the prize.

§10 Moreover, the life of these active people is also pleasant in itself.* For being pleased is a condition of the soul, [and hence is included in the activity of the soul]. Further, each type of person finds pleasure in whatever he is called a lover of; a horse, for instance, pleases the horse-lover, a spectacle the lover of spectacles. Similarly, what is just pleases the lover of 10
justice, and in general what accords with virtue pleases the lover of virtue.

§11 Now the things that please most people conflict,* because they are not pleasant by nature, whereas the things that please lovers of the fine are things pleasant by nature. Actions in accord with virtue are pleasant by nature, so that they both please lovers of the fine and are pleasant in 15
their own right.

§12 Hence these people's life does not need pleasure to be added [to virtuous activity] as some sort of extra decoration; rather, it has its pleasure within itself.* For besides the reasons already given, someone who does not enjoy fine actions is not good; for no one would call a person just, for instance, if he did not enjoy doing just actions, or generous if he did not enjoy generous actions, and similarly for the other virtues. 20

§13 If this is so, actions in accord with the virtues are pleasant in their own right. Moreover, these actions are good and fine as well as pleasant; indeed, they are good, fine, and pleasant more than anything else is, since on this question the excellent person judges rightly, and his judgment agrees with what we have said.

§14 Happiness, then, is best, finest, and most pleasant, and the Delian 25
inscription is wrong to distinguish these things: 'What is most just is finest; being healthy is most beneficial; but it is most pleasant to win our heart's desire.'* For all three features are found in the best activities, and we say happiness is these activities, or [rather] one of them, the best one.*

§15 Nonetheless, happiness evidently also needs external goods to be added, as we said, since we cannot, or cannot easily, do fine actions if we lack the resources.* For, first of all, in many actions we use friends, 1099b
wealth, and political power just as we use instruments. §16 Further, deprivation of certain [externals]—for instance, good birth, good children, beauty—mars our blessedness. For we do not altogether have the character of happiness* if we look utterly repulsive or are ill-born, solitary, or childless; and we have it even less, presumably, if our children or 5
friends are totally bad, or were good but have died.

§17 And so, as we have said, happiness would seem to need this sort of prosperity added also. That is why some people identify happiness with good fortune, and others identify it with virtue.

9

[How Is Happiness Achieved?]

1099b This also leads to a puzzle: Is happiness acquired by learning, or habituation, or by some other form of cultivation? Or is it the result of some divine fate, or even of fortune?*

§2 First, then, if the gods give any gift at all to human beings, it is reasonable for them to give us happiness more than any other human good, insofar as it is the best of human goods. §3 Presumably, however, this question is more suitable for a different inquiry.

But even if it is not sent by the gods, but instead results from virtue and some sort of learning or cultivation, happiness appears to be one of the most divine things, since the prize and goal of virtue appears to be the best good, something divine and blessed. §4 Moreover [if happiness comes in this way] it will be widely shared; for anyone who is not deformed [in his capacity] for virtue will be able to achieve happiness through some sort of learning and attention.

§5 And since it is better to be happy in this way than because of fortune, it is reasonable for this to be the way [we become] happy. For whatever is natural is naturally in the finest state possible. §6 The same is true of the products of crafts and of every other cause, especially the best cause; and it would be seriously inappropriate to entrust what is greatest and finest to fortune.*

§7 The answer to our question is also evident from our account. For we have said that happiness is a certain sort of activity of the soul in accord with virtue, [and hence not a result of fortune]. Of the other goods, some are necessary conditions of happiness, while others are naturally useful and cooperative as instruments [but are not parts of it].

§8 Further, this conclusion agrees with our opening remarks. For we took the goal of political science to be the best good; and most of its attention is devoted to the character of the citizens, to make them good people who do fine actions.*

§9 It is not surprising, then, that we regard neither ox, nor horse, nor *1100a* any other kind of animal as happy; for none of them can share in this sort of activity. §10 For the same reason a child is not happy either, since his age prevents him from doing these sorts of actions. If he is called happy, he is being congratulated [simply] because of anticipated blessedness; for, as we have said, happiness requires both complete virtue and a complete life.*

§10 It needs a complete life because life includes many reversals of fortune, good and bad, and the most prosperous person may fall into a terrible disaster in old age, as the Trojan stories tell us about Priam. If someone has suffered these sorts of misfortunes and comes to a miserable end, no one counts him happy.

10

[Can We Be Happy during Our Lifetime?]

Then should we count no human being happy during his lifetime, but follow Solon's advice to wait to see the end?* §2 But if we agree with Solon, can someone really be happy during the time after he has died? Surely that is completely absurd, especially when we say happiness is an activity. *1100a10*

§3 We do not say, then, that someone is happy during the time he is dead, and Solon's point is not this [absurd one], but rather that when a human being has died, we can safely pronounce [that he was] blessed [before he died], on the assumption that he is now finally beyond evils and misfortunes.* But this claim is also disputable. For if a living person has good or evil of which he is not aware, a dead person also, it seems, has good or evil, if, for instance, he receives honors or dishonors, and his children, and descendants in general, do well or suffer misfortune.*

§4 However, this conclusion also raises a puzzle. For even if someone has lived in blessedness until old age, and has died appropriately, many fluctuations of his descendants' fortunes may still happen to him; for some may be good people and get the life they deserve, while the contrary may be true of others, and clearly they may be as distantly related to their ancestor as you please. Surely, then, it would be an absurd result if the dead person's condition changed along with the fortunes of his descendants, so that at one time he would turn out to have been happy [in his lifetime] and at another time he would turn out to have been miserable.* §5 But it would also be absurd if the condition of descendants did not affect their ancestors at all or for any length of time.

§6 But we must return to the previous puzzle, since that will perhaps also show us the answer to our present question. §7 Let us grant that we must wait to see the end, and must then count someone blessed, not as now being blessed [during the time he is dead] but because he previously was blessed. Would it not be absurd, then, if, at the very time when he is happy, we refused to ascribe truly to him the happiness he has?* Such refusal results from reluctance to call him happy during his lifetime, 1100b because of its ups and downs; for we suppose happiness is enduring and definitely not prone to fluctuate, but the same person's fortunes often turn to and fro.* §8 For clearly, if we take our cue from his fortunes, we shall often call him happy and then miserable again, thereby representing the happy person as a kind of chameleon, insecurely based.

§9 But surely it is quite wrong to take our cue from someone's fortunes. For his doing well or badly does not rest on them.* A human life, as we said, needs these added, but activities in accord with virtue control happiness, and the contrary activities control its contrary. §10 Indeed, the present puzzle is further evidence for our account [of happiness]. For no human achievement has the stability of activities in accord with virtue, since these seem to be more enduring even than our knowledge of

1100b15 the sciences.* Indeed, the most honorable among the virtues themselves are more enduring than the other virtues, because blessed people devote their lives to them more fully and more continually than to anything else—for this continual activity would seem to be the reason we do not forget them.

§11 It follows, then, that the happy person has the [stability] we are looking for and keeps the character he has throughout his life. For always, or more than anything else, he will do and study the actions in accord with virtue, and will bear fortunes most finely, in every way and in all conditions appropriately, since he is truly 'good, foursquare, and blameless'.*

§12 Many events, however, are subject to fortune; some are minor, some major. Hence, minor strokes of good or ill fortune clearly will not carry any weight for his life. But many major strokes of good fortune will make it more blessed; for in themselves they naturally add adornment to it, and his use of them proves to be fine and excellent.* Conversely, if he suffers many major misfortunes, they oppress and spoil his blessedness, since they involve pain and impede many activities. And yet, even here what is fine shines through, whenever someone bears many severe misfortunes with good temper, not because he feels no distress, but because he is noble and magnanimous.*

§13 And since it is activities that control life, as we said, no blessed person could ever become miserable, since he will never do hateful and *1101a* base actions. For a truly good and prudent person,* we suppose, will bear strokes of fortune suitably, and from his resources at any time will do the finest actions, just as a good general will make the best use of his forces in war, and a good shoemaker will make the finest shoe from the hides given to him, and similarly for all other craftsmen.

§14 If this is so, the happy person could never become miserable, but neither will he be blessed if he falls into misfortunes as bad as Priam's.* Nor, however, will he be inconstant and prone to fluctuate, since he will neither be easily shaken from his happiness nor shaken by just any misfortunes.* He will be shaken from it, though, by many serious misfortunes, and from these a return to happiness will take no short time. At best, it will take a long and complete length of time that includes great and fine successes.

§15 Then why not say that the happy person is the one whose activities accord with complete virtue, with an adequate supply of external goods, not for just any time but for a complete life? Or should we add that he will also go on living this way and will come to an appropriate end, since the future is not apparent to us, and we take happiness to be the end, and altogether complete in every way? §16 Given these facts [about the future and about happiness], we shall say that a living person who has, and will keep, the goods we mentioned is blessed, but blessed as a human being is.* So much for a determination of this question.

11

[How Happiness Can Be Affected after One's Death]

Still, it is apparently rather unfriendly and contrary to the [common] beliefs to claim that the fortunes of our descendants and all our friends contribute nothing. §2 But since they can find themselves in many and various circumstances, some of which affect us more, some less, it is apparently a long—indeed endless—task to differentiate all the particular cases. Perhaps a general outline will be enough of an answer. *1101a*

§3 Misfortunes, then, even to the person himself, differ, and some have a certain gravity and weight for his life, whereas others would seem to be lighter. The same is true for the misfortunes of his friends; §4 and it matters whether they happen to living or to dead people—much more than it matters whether lawless and terrible crimes are committed before a tragic drama begins or in the course of it.*

§5 In our reasoning, then, we should also take account of this difference, but even more account, presumably, of the puzzle about whether the dead share in any good or evil. For if we consider this, anything good or evil penetrating to the dead would seem to be weak and unimportant, either without qualification or for them. Even if the good or evil is not so weak and unimportant, still its importance and character are not enough to make people happy who are not already happy, or to take away the blessedness of those who are happy. §6 And so, when friends do well, and likewise when they do badly, it appears to contribute something to the dead, but of a character and size that neither makes happy people not happy nor anything of this sort. 1101b

12

[Praise and Honor]

Now that we have determined these points, let us consider whether happiness is something praiseworthy, or instead something honorable; for clearly it is not a capacity [which is neither praiseworthy nor honorable].

§2 Whatever is praiseworthy appears to be praised for its character and its state in relation to something.* We praise the just and the brave person, for instance, and in general the good person and virtue, because of their actions and achievements; and we praise the strong person, the good runner, and each of the others because he naturally has a certain character and is in a certain state in relation to something good and excellent. §3 This is clear also from praises of the gods; for these praises appear ridiculous because they are referred to us, but they are referred to us because, as we said, praise depends on such a reference.

§4 If praise is for these sorts of things, then clearly for the best things there is no praise, but something greater and better. And indeed this is

1101b how it appears. For the gods and the most godlike* of men are [not praised, but] congratulated for their blessedness and happiness. The same is true of goods; for we never praise happiness, as we praise justice, but we count it blessed, as something better and more godlike [than anything that is praised].

§5 Indeed, Eudoxus seems to have used the right sort of argument in defending the supremacy of pleasure.* By not praising pleasure, though it is a good, we indicate—so he thought—that it is superior to everything praiseworthy; [only] the god and the good have this superiority since the other goods are [praised] by reference to them.

§6 [Here he seems to have argued correctly.] For praise is given to virtue, since it makes us do fine actions; but celebrations are for achievements, either of body or of soul. §7 But an exact treatment of this is presumably more proper for specialists in celebrations. For us, anyhow, it *1102a* is clear from what has been said that happiness is something honorable and complete.

§8 A further reason why this would seem to be correct is that happiness is a principle; for [the principle] is what we all aim at in all our other actions;* and we take the principle and cause of goods to be something honorable and divine.

13

[Introduction to the Virtues]

Since happiness is a certain sort of activity of the soul in accord with complete virtue, we must examine virtue; for that will perhaps also be a way to study happiness better.* §2 Moreover, the true politician* seems to have put more effort into virtue than into anything else, since he wants to make the citizens good and law-abiding. §3 We find an example of this in the Spartan and Cretan legislators and in any others who share their concerns. §4 Since, then, the examination of virtue is proper for political science, the inquiry clearly suits our decision at the beginning.*

§5 It is clear that the virtue we must examine is human virtue, since we are also seeking the human good and human happiness. §6 By human virtue we mean virtue of the soul, not of the body, since we also say that happiness is an activity of the soul. §7 If this is so, it is clear that the politician must in some way know about the soul, just as someone setting out to heal the eyes must know about the whole body as well.* This is all the more true to the extent that political science is better and more honorable than medicine; even among doctors, the cultivated ones devote a lot of effort to finding out about the body. Hence the politician as well [as the student of nature] must study the soul.* §8 But he must study it for his specific purpose, far enough for his inquiry [into virtue];

for a more exact treatment would presumably take more effort than his purpose requires.* 1102a

§9 [We] have discussed the soul sufficiently [for our purposes] in [our] popular works as well [as our less popular],* and we should use this discussion. We have said, for instance, that one [part] of the soul is nonrational, while one has reason. §10 Are these distinguished as parts of a body and everything divisible into parts are? Or are they two [only] in definition, and inseparable by nature, as the convex and the concave are in a surface? It does not matter for present purposes.*

§11 Consider the nonrational [part]. One [part] of it, i.e., the cause of nutrition and growth, would seem to be plantlike and shared [with all living things]; for we can ascribe this capacity of the soul to everything that is nourished, including embryos, and the same capacity to full-grown living things, since this is more reasonable than to ascribe another capacity to them.* 1102b

§12 Hence the virtue of this capacity is apparently shared, not [specifically] human. For this part and this capacity more than others seem to be active in sleep, and here the good and the bad person are least distinct; hence happy people are said to be no better off than miserable people for half their lives. §13 This lack of distinction is not surprising, since sleep is inactivity of the soul insofar as it is called excellent or base, unless to some small extent some movements penetrate [to our awareness], and in this way the decent person comes to have better images [in dreams] than just any random person has. §14 Enough about this, however, and let us leave aside the nutritive part, since by nature it has no share in human virtue.

§15 Another nature in the soul would also seem to be nonrational, though in a way it shares in reason. For in the continent and the incontinent person we praise their reason, that is to say, the [part] of the soul that has reason, because it exhorts them correctly and toward what is best; but they evidently also have in them some other [part] that is by nature something apart from reason, clashing and struggling with reason. For just as paralyzed parts of a body, when we decide to move them to the right, do the contrary and move off to the left, the same is true of the soul; for incontinent people have impulses in contrary directions. §16 In bodies, admittedly, we see the part go astray, whereas we do not see it in the soul; nonetheless, presumably, we should suppose that the soul also has something apart from reason, countering and opposing reason. The [precise] way it is different does not matter.

§17 However, this [part] as well [as the rational part] appears, as we said, to share in reason. At any rate, in the continent person it obeys reason; and in the temperate and the brave person it presumably listens still better to reason, since there it agrees with reason in everything.*

§18 The nonrational [part], then, as well [as the whole soul] apparently has two parts. For while the plantlike [part] shares in reason not at

1102b all, the [part] with appetites and in general desires* shares in reason in a way, insofar as it both listens to reason and obeys it. This is the way in which we are said to 'listen to reason' from father or friends, as opposed to the way in which [we 'give the reason'] in mathematics.* The nonrational part also [obeys and] is persuaded in some way by reason, as is 1103a shown by correction, and by every sort of reproof and exhortation.

§19 If, then, we ought to say that this [part] also has reason, then the [part] that has reason, as well [as the nonrational part], will have two parts. One will have reason fully, by having it within itself; the other will have reason by listening to reason as to a father.*

The division between virtues accords with this difference. For some virtues are called virtues of thought, others virtues of character; wisdom, comprehension, and prudence are called virtues of thought, generosity and temperance virtues of character.* For when we speak of someone's character we do not say that he is wise or has good comprehension, but that he is gentle or temperate. And yet, we also praise the wise person for his state, and the states that are praiseworthy are the ones we call virtues.

BOOK II

[VIRTUE OF CHARACTER]

1

[How a Virtue of Character Is Acquired]

Virtue, then, is of two sorts, virtue of thought and virtue of character. Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching; that is why it needs experience and time. Virtue of character [i.e., of *ēthos*] results from habit [*ethos*]; hence its name 'ethical', slightly varied from 'ethos'.*

§2 Hence it is also clear that none of the virtues of character arises in us naturally. For if something is by nature in one condition, habituation cannot bring it into another condition. A stone, for instance, by nature moves downwards, and habituation could not make it move upwards, not even if you threw it up ten thousand times to habituate it; nor could habituation make fire move downwards, or bring anything that is by nature in one condition into another condition. §3 And so the virtues arise in us neither by nature nor against nature. Rather, we are by nature able to acquire them, and we are completed through habit.*

§4 Further, if something arises in us by nature, we first have the capacity for it, and later perform the activity. This is clear in the case of the senses; for we did not acquire them by frequent seeing or hearing, but we already had them when we exercised them, and did not get them by exercising them. Virtues, by contrast, we acquire, just as we acquire crafts, by

having first activated them. For we learn a craft by producing the same 1103a
product that we must produce when we have learned it; we become builders, for instance, by building, and we become harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate 1103b
by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions.

§5 What goes on in cities is also evidence for this. For the legislator makes the citizens good by habituating them, and this is the wish of every 5
legislator; if he fails to do it well he misses his goal.* Correct habituation distinguishes a good political system from a bad one.

§6 Further, the sources and means that develop each virtue also ruin it, just as they do in a craft. For playing the harp makes both good and bad harpists, and it is analogous in the case of builders and all the rest; for 10
building well makes good builders, and building badly makes bad ones. §7 Otherwise no teacher would be needed, but everyone would be born a good or a bad craftsman.

It is the same, then, with the virtues. For what we do in our dealings with other people makes some of us just, some unjust; what we do in ter- 15
rifying situations, and the habits of fear or confidence that we acquire, make some of us brave and others cowardly. The same is true of situations involving appetites and anger; for one or another sort of conduct in these situations makes some temperate and mild, others intemperate and 20
irascible. To sum it up in a single account: a state [of character] results from [the repetition of] similar activities.*

§8 That is why we must perform the right activities, since differences in these imply corresponding differences in the states.* It is not unimportant, then, to acquire one sort of habit or another, right from our youth. On the contrary, it is very important, indeed all-important. 25

2

[Habituation]

Our present discussion does not aim, as our others do, at study; for the purpose of our examination is not to know what virtue is, but to become good, since otherwise the inquiry would be of no benefit to us.* And so 30
we must examine the right ways of acting; for, as we have said, the actions also control the sorts of states we acquire.

§2 First, then, actions should accord with the correct reason.* That is a common [belief], and let us assume it. We shall discuss it later, and say what the correct reason is and how it is related to the other virtues.

§3 But let us take it as agreed in advance that every account of the 1104a
actions we must do has to be stated in outline, not exactly. As we also said at the beginning, the type of accounts we demand should accord with the subject matter; and questions about actions and expediency, like questions about health, have no fixed answers.*

1104a5 §4 While this is the character of our general account, the account of particular cases is still more inexact. For these fall under no craft or profession; the agents themselves must consider in each case what the opportune action is, as doctors and navigators do.* §5 The account we offer, then, in our present inquiry is of this inexact sort; still, we must try to offer help.*

§6 First, then, we should observe that these sorts of states naturally tend to be ruined by excess and deficiency. We see this happen with strength and health—for we must use evident cases [such as these] as witnesses to things that are not evident.* For both excessive and deficient exercise ruin bodily strength, and, similarly, too much or too little eating or drinking ruins health, whereas the proportionate amount produces, increases, and preserves it.

§7 The same is true, then, of temperance, bravery, and the other virtues. For if, for instance, someone avoids and is afraid of everything, standing firm against nothing, he becomes cowardly; if he is afraid of nothing at all and goes to face everything, he becomes rash. Similarly, if he gratifies himself with every pleasure and abstains from none, he becomes intemperate; if he avoids them all, as boors do, he becomes some sort of insensible person. Temperance and bravery, then, are ruined by excess and deficiency, but preserved by the mean.*

§8 But these actions are not only the sources and causes both of the emergence and growth of virtues and of their ruin; the activities of the virtues [once we have acquired them] also consist in these same actions.* For this is also true of more evident cases; strength, for instance, arises from eating a lot and from withstanding much hard labor, and it is the strong person who is most capable of these very actions. §9 It is the same with the virtues. For abstaining from pleasures makes us become temperate, and once we have become temperate
1104b we are most capable of abstaining from pleasures. It is similar with bravery; habituation in disdain for frightening situations and in standing firm against them makes us become brave, and once we have become brave we shall be most capable of standing firm.

3

[The Importance of Pleasure and Pain]

But we must take someone's pleasure or pain following on his actions to be a sign of his state.* For if someone who abstains from bodily pleasures enjoys the abstinence itself, he is temperate; if he is grieved by it, he is intemperate.* Again, if he stands firm against terrifying situations and enjoys it, or at least does not find it painful, he is brave; if he finds it painful, he is cowardly. For virtue of character is about pleasures and pains.*

For pleasure causes us to do base actions, and pain causes us to abstain *1104b10*
from fine ones. §2 That is why we need to have had the appropriate upbringing—right from early youth, as Plato says*—to make us find enjoyment or pain in the right things; for this is the correct education.

§3 Further, virtues are concerned with actions and feelings; but every feeling and every action implies pleasure or pain;* hence, for this reason 15
too, virtue is about pleasures and pains. §4 Corrective treatments also indicate this, since they use pleasures and pains; for correction is a form of medical treatment, and medical treatment naturally operates through contraries.

§5 Further, as we said earlier, every state of soul is naturally related to and about whatever naturally makes it better or worse; and pleasures and 20
pains make people base, from pursuing and avoiding the wrong ones, at the wrong time, in the wrong ways, or whatever other distinctions of that sort are needed in an account. These [bad effects of pleasure and pain] are the reason why people actually define the virtues as ways of being unaffected and undisturbed [by pleasures and pains].* They are wrong, how- 25
ever, because they speak of being unaffected without qualification, not of being unaffected in the right or wrong way, at the right or wrong time, and the added qualifications.

§6 We assume, then, that virtue is the sort of state that does the best actions concerning pleasures and pains, and that vice is the contrary state.

§7 The following will also make it evident that virtue and vice are 30
about the same things. For there are three objects of choice—fine, expedient, and pleasant—and three objects of avoidance—their contraries, shameful, harmful, and painful.* About all these, then, the good person is correct and the bad person is in error, and especially about pleasure. For 35
pleasure is shared with animals, and implied by every object of choice, 1105a
since what is fine and what is expedient appear pleasant as well.

§8 Further, pleasure grows up with all of us from infancy on. That is why it is hard to rub out this feeling that is dyed into our lives. We also estimate actions [as well as feelings]—some of us more, some less—by 5
pleasure and pain. §9 For this reason, our whole discussion must be about these; for good or bad enjoyment or pain is very important for our actions.

§10 Further, it is more difficult to fight pleasure than to fight spirit—and Heracleitus tells us [how difficult it is to fight spirit].* Now both craft and virtue are in every case about what is more difficult, since a good 10
result is even better when it is more difficult. Hence, for this reason also, the whole discussion, for virtue and political science alike, must consider pleasures and pains; for if we use these well, we shall be good, and if badly, bad.

§11 To sum up: Virtue is about pleasures and pains; the actions that are 15
its sources also increase it or, if they are done badly, ruin it; and its activity is about the same actions as those that are its sources.

4

[Virtuous Actions versus Virtuous Character]

1105a Someone might be puzzled, however, about what we mean by saying that we become just by doing just actions and become temperate by doing temperate actions.* For [one might suppose that] if we do grammatical or
20 musical actions, we are grammarians or musicians, and, similarly, if we do just or temperate actions, we are thereby just or temperate.

§2 But surely actions are not enough, even in the case of crafts;* for it is possible to produce a grammatical result by chance, or by following someone else's instructions. To be grammarians, then, we must both pro-
25 duce a grammatical result and produce it grammatically—that is to say, produce it in accord with the grammatical knowledge in us.

§3 Moreover, in any case, what is true of crafts is not true of virtues.* For the products of a craft determine by their own qualities whether they have been produced well; and so it suffices that they have the right qualities when they have been produced.* But for actions in accord with the
30 virtues to be done temperately or justly it does not suffice that they themselves have the right qualities.* Rather, the agent must also be in the right state when he does them. First, he must know [that he is doing virtuous actions]; second, he must decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and, third, he must also do them from a firm and unchanging state.

1105b As conditions for having a craft, these three do not count, except for the bare knowing.* As a condition for having a virtue, however, the knowing counts for nothing, or [rather] for only a little, whereas the other two conditions are very important, indeed all-important. And we achieve
5 these other two conditions by the frequent doing of just and temperate actions.

§4 Hence actions are called just or temperate when they are the sort that a just or temperate person would do. But the just and temperate person is not the one who [merely] does these actions, but the one who also does them in the way in which just or temperate people do them.

10 §5 It is right, then, to say that a person comes to be just from doing just actions and temperate from doing temperate actions; for no one has the least prospect of becoming good from failing to do them.

§6 The many, however, do not do these actions. They take refuge in arguments, thinking that they are doing philosophy, and that this is the
15 way to become excellent people. They are like a sick person who listens attentively to the doctor, but acts on none of his instructions. Such a course of treatment will not improve the state of the sick person's body; nor will the many improve the state of their souls by this attitude to philosophy.*

5

[Virtue of Character: Its Genus]

Next we must examine what virtue is. Since there are three conditions *1105b20*
arising in the soul—feelings, capacities, and states—virtue must be one of these.*

§2 By feelings I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, jealousy, pity, and in general whatever implies pleasure or pain. By capacities I mean what we have when we are said to be capable 25
of these feelings—capable of being angry, for instance, or of being afraid* or of feeling pity. By states I mean what we have when we are well or badly off in relation to feelings.* If, for instance, our feeling is too intense or slack, we are badly off in relation to anger, but if it is intermediate, we are well off; the same is true in the other cases.

§3 First, then, neither virtues nor vices are feelings. For we are called 30
excellent or base insofar as we have virtues or vices, not insofar as we have feelings. Further, we are neither praised nor blamed insofar as we have feelings; for we do not praise the angry or the frightened person, and do not blame the person who is simply angry, but only the person 1106a
who is angry in a particular way. We are praised or blamed, however, insofar as we have virtues or vices.* §4 Further, we are angry and afraid without decision; but the virtues are decisions of some kind, or [rather] require decision.* Besides, insofar as we have feelings, we are said to be 5
moved; but insofar as we have virtues or vices, we are said to be in some condition rather than moved.

§5 For these reasons the virtues are not capacities either; for we are neither called good nor called bad, nor are we praised or blamed, insofar as we are simply capable of feelings. Further, while we have capacities by 10
nature, we do not become good or bad by nature; we have discussed this before.*

§6 If, then, the virtues are neither feelings nor capacities, the remaining possibility is that they are states. And so we have said what the genus of virtue is.

6

[Virtue of Character: Its Differentia]

But we must say not only, as we already have, that it is a state, but also 15
what sort of state it is.*

§2 It should be said, then, that every virtue causes its possessors to be in a good state and to perform their functions well.* The virtue of eyes, for instance, makes the eyes and their functioning excellent, because it makes us see well; and similarly, the virtue of a horse makes the horse 20
excellent, and thereby good at galloping, at carrying its rider, and at

1106a standing steady in the face of the enemy. §3 If this is true in every case, the virtue of a human being will likewise be the state that makes a human being good and makes him perform his function well.

§4 We have already said how this will be true, and it will also be evident from our next remarks, if we consider the sort of nature that virtue has.*

In everything continuous and divisible we can take more, less, and equal, and each of them either in the object itself or relative to us; and the equal is some intermediate between excess and deficiency. §5 By the intermediate in the object I mean what is equidistant from each extremity; this is one and the same for all. But relative to us the intermediate is what is neither superfluous nor deficient; this is not one, and is not the same for all.*

§6 If, for instance, ten are many and two are few, we take six as intermediate in the object, since it exceeds [two] and is exceeded [by ten] by an equal amount, [four]. §7 This is what is intermediate by numerical proportion. But that is not how we must take the intermediate that is relative to us. For if ten pounds [of food], for instance, are a lot for someone to eat, and two pounds a little, it does not follow that the trainer will prescribe six, since this might also be either a little or a lot for the person who is to take it—for Milo [the athlete] a little, but for the beginner in gymnastics a lot; and the same is true for running and wrestling. §8 In this way every scientific expert avoids excess and deficiency and seeks and chooses what is intermediate—but intermediate relative to us, not in the object.

§9 This, then, is how each science produces its product well, by focusing on what is intermediate and making the product conform to that.* This, indeed, is why people regularly comment on well-made products that nothing could be added or subtracted; they assume that excess or deficiency ruins a good [result], whereas the mean preserves it. Good craftsmen also, we say, focus on what is intermediate when they produce their product. And since virtue, like nature, is better and more exact than any craft, it will also aim at what is intermediate.*

§10 By virtue I mean virtue of character; for this is about feelings and actions, and these admit of excess, deficiency, and an intermediate condition. We can be afraid, for instance, or be confident, or have appetites, or get angry, or feel pity, and in general have pleasure or pain, both too much and too little, and in both ways not well. §11 But having these feelings at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue. §12 Similarly, actions also admit of excess, deficiency, and an intermediate condition.

Now virtue is about feelings and actions, in which excess and deficiency are in error and incur blame, whereas the intermediate condition is correct and wins praise,* which are both proper to virtue. §13 Virtue, then, is a mean, insofar as it aims at what is intermediate.

§14 Moreover, there are many ways to be in error—for badness is proper to the indeterminate, as the Pythagoreans pictured it, and good to

the determinate. But there is only one way to be correct. That is why error *1106b*
is easy and correctness is difficult, since it is easy to miss the target and
difficult to hit it. And so for this reason also excess and deficiency are
proper to vice, the mean to virtue; 'for we are noble in only one way, but 35
bad in all sorts of ways.'*

§15 Virtue, then, is a state that decides, consisting in a mean, the mean 1107a
relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason, that is to say, to the
reason by reference to which the prudent person would define it.* It is a
mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency.

§16 It is a mean for this reason also: Some vices miss what is right
because they are deficient, others because they are excessive, in feelings 5
or in actions, whereas virtue finds and chooses what is intermediate.

§17 That is why virtue, as far as its essence and the account stating
what it is are concerned, is a mean, but, as far as the best [condition] and
the good [result] are concerned, it is an extremity.

§18 Now not every action or feeling admits of the mean.* For the 10
names of some automatically include baseness—for instance, spite,
shamelessness, envy [among feelings], and adultery, theft, murder,
among actions.* For all of these and similar things are called by these
names because they themselves, not their excesses or deficiencies, are
base. Hence in doing these things we can never be correct, but must 15
invariably be in error. We cannot do them well or not well—by commit-
ting adultery, for instance, with the right woman at the right time in the
right way. On the contrary, it is true without qualification that to do any
of them is to be in error.

§19 [To think these admit of a mean], therefore, is like thinking that
unjust or cowardly or intemperate action also admits of a mean, an excess 20
and a deficiency. If it did, there would be a mean of excess, a mean of defi-
ciency, an excess of excess and a deficiency of deficiency. §20 On the
contrary, just as there is no excess or deficiency of temperance or of brav-
ery (since the intermediate is a sort of extreme), so also there is no mean
of these vicious actions either, but whatever way anyone does them, he is
in error. For in general there is no mean of excess or of deficiency, and no 25
excess or deficiency of a mean.

7

[The Particular Virtues of Character]

However, we must not only state this general account but also apply it to
the particular cases. For among accounts concerning actions, though the 30
general ones are common to more cases, the specific ones are truer, since
actions are about particular cases, and our account must accord with
these.* Let us, then, find these from the chart.*

1107b §2 First, then, in feelings of fear and confidence the mean is bravery. The excessively fearless person is nameless (indeed many cases are nameless), and the one who is excessively confident is rash. The one who is excessive in fear and deficient in confidence is cowardly.

5 §3 In pleasures and pains—though not in all types, and in pains less than in pleasures*—the mean is temperance and the excess intemperance. People deficient in pleasure are not often found, which is why they also lack even a name; let us call them insensible.

10 §4 In giving and taking money the mean is generosity, the excess wastefulness and the deficiency ungenerosity. Here the vicious people have contrary excesses and defects; for the wasteful person is excessive in spending and deficient in taking, whereas the ungenerous person is excessive in taking and deficient in spending. §5 At the moment we are 15 speaking in outline and summary, and that is enough; later we shall define these things more exactly.

§6 In questions of money there are also other conditions. Another mean is magnificence; for the magnificent person differs from the generous by being concerned with large matters, while the generous person is 20 concerned with small. The excess is ostentation and vulgarity, and the deficiency is stinginess. These differ from the vices related to generosity in ways we shall describe later.

§7 In honor and dishonor the mean is magnanimity, the excess some- 25 thing called a sort of vanity, and the deficiency pusillanimity. §8 And just as we said that generosity differs from magnificence in its concern with small matters, similarly there is a virtue concerned with small honors, differing in the same way from magnanimity, which is concerned with great honors. For honor can be desired either in the right way or more or less than is right. If someone desires it to excess, he is called an 30 honor-lover, and if his desire is deficient he is called indifferent to honor, but if he is intermediate he has no name. The corresponding conditions have no name either, except the condition of the honor-lover, which is called honor-loving.

This is why people at the extremes lay claim to the intermediate area. Moreover, we also sometimes call the intermediate person an honor-lover, and sometimes call him indifferent to honor; and sometimes we 1108a praise the honor-lover, sometimes the person indifferent to honor.* §9 We will mention later the reason we do this; for the moment, let us speak of the other cases in the way we have laid down.

5 §10 Anger also admits of an excess, deficiency, and mean. These are all practically nameless; but since we call the intermediate person mild, let us call the mean mildness. Among the extreme people, let the excessive person be irascible, and his vice irascibility, and let the deficient person be a sort of inirascible person, and his deficiency inirascibility.

10 §11 There are also three other means, somewhat similar to one another, but different. For they are all concerned with common dealings

in conversations and actions, but differ insofar as one is concerned with truth telling in these areas, the other two with sources of pleasure, some of which are found in amusement, and the others in daily life in general. Hence we should also discuss these states, so that we can better observe that in every case the mean is praiseworthy, whereas the extremes are neither praiseworthy nor correct, but blameworthy. Most of these cases are also nameless, and we must try, as in the other cases also, to supply names ourselves, to make things clear and easy to follow. *1108a* 15

§12 In truth-telling, then, let us call the intermediate person truthful, and the mean truthfulness; pretense that overstates will be boastfulness, and the person who has it boastful; pretense that understates will be self-deprecation, and the person who has it self-deprecating. 20

§13 In sources of pleasure in amusements let us call the intermediate person witty, and the condition wit; the excess buffoonery and the person who has it a buffoon; and the deficient person a sort of boor and the state boorishness. 25

In the other sources of pleasure, those in daily life, let us call the person who is pleasant in the right way friendly, and the mean state friendliness. If someone goes to excess with no [ulterior] aim, he will be ingratiating; if he does it for his own advantage, a flatterer. The deficient person, unpleasant in everything, will be a sort of quarrelsome and ill-tempered person. 30

§14 There are also means in feelings and about feelings. Shame, for instance, is not a virtue, but the person prone to shame as well as [the virtuous people we have described] receives praise. For here also one person is called intermediate, and another—the person excessively prone to shame, who is ashamed about everything—is called excessive; the person who is deficient in shame or never feels shame at all is said to have no sense of disgrace; and the intermediate one is called prone to shame. 35 1108b

§15 Proper indignation is the mean between envy and spite; these conditions are concerned with pleasure and pain at what happens to our neighbors. For the properly indignant person feels pain when someone does well undeservedly; the envious person exceeds him by feeling pain when anyone does well, while the spiteful person is so deficient in feeling pain that he actually enjoys [other people's misfortunes].* 5

§16 There will also be an opportunity elsewhere to speak of these. We must consider justice after these.* Since it is spoken of in more than one way, we shall distinguish its two types and say how each of them is a mean. Similarly, we must also consider the virtues that belong to reason. 10

8

[Relations between Mean and Extreme States]

Among these three conditions, then, two are vices—one of excess, one of deficiency—and one, the mean, is virtue. In a way, each of them is

1108b opposed to each of the others, since each extreme is contrary both to the intermediate condition and to the other extreme, while the intermediate is
15 contrary to the extremes.

§2 For, just as the equal is greater in comparison to the smaller, and smaller in comparison to the greater, so also the intermediate states are excessive in comparison to the deficiencies and deficient in comparison to
20 the excesses—both in feelings and in actions. For the brave person, for instance, appears rash in comparison to the coward, and cowardly in comparison to the rash person; the temperate person appears intemperate in comparison to the insensible person, and insensible in comparison with the intemperate person; and the generous person appears wasteful in comparison to the ungenerous, and ungenerous in comparison to the wasteful person.* §3 That is why each of the extreme people tries to
25 push the intermediate person to the other extreme, so that the coward, for instance, calls the brave person rash, and the rash person calls him a coward, and similarly in the other cases.

§4 Since these conditions of soul are opposed to each other in these ways, the extremes are more contrary to each other than to the intermediate. For they are further from each other than from the intermediate, just
30 as the large is further from the small, and the small from the large, than either is from the equal.

§5 Further, sometimes one extreme—rashness or wastefulness, for instance—appears somewhat like the intermediate state, bravery or generosity. But the extremes are most unlike one another; and the things that
35 are furthest apart from each other are defined as contraries. And so the things that are further apart are more contrary.

1109a §6 In some cases the deficiency, in others the excess, is more opposed to the intermediate condition. For instance, cowardice, the deficiency, not rashness, the excess, is more opposed to bravery, whereas intemper-
5 ance, the excess, not insensibility, the deficiency, is more opposed to temperance.

§7 This happens for two reasons: One reason is derived from the object itself. Since sometimes one extreme is closer and more similar to the intermediate condition, we oppose the contrary extreme, more than this closer one, to the intermediate condition.* Since rashness, for
10 instance, seems to be closer and more similar to bravery, and cowardice less similar, we oppose cowardice, more than rashness, to bravery; for what is further from the intermediate condition seems to be more contrary to it. This, then, is one reason, derived from the object itself.

§8 The other reason is derived from ourselves. For when we ourselves have some natural tendency to one extreme more than to the other, this extreme appears more opposed to the intermediate condition. Since, for
15 instance, we have more of a natural tendency to pleasure, we drift more easily toward intemperance than toward orderliness. Hence we say that an extreme is more contrary if we naturally develop more in that direc-

tion; and this is why intemperance is more contrary to temperance, since it is the excess [of pleasure]. *1109a*

9

[How Can We Reach the Mean?]

We have said enough, then, to show that virtue of character is a mean and what sort of mean it is; that it is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency; and that it is a mean because it aims at the intermediate condition in feelings and actions.

§2 That is why it is also hard work to be excellent. For in each case it is hard work to find the intermediate; for instance, not everyone, but only one who knows, finds the midpoint in a circle. So also getting angry, or giving and spending money, is easy and everyone can do it; but doing it to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, for the right end, and in the right way is no longer easy, nor can everyone do it. Hence doing these things well is rare, praiseworthy, and fine.

§3 That is why anyone who aims at the intermediate condition must first of all steer clear of the more contrary extreme, following the advice that Calypso also gives: 'Hold the ship outside the spray and surge.'* For one extreme is more in error, the other less. §4 Since, therefore, it is hard to hit the intermediate extremely accurately,* the second-best tack, as they say, is to take the lesser of the evils. We shall succeed best in this by the method we describe. *1109b*

We must also examine what we ourselves drift into easily. For different people have different natural tendencies toward different goals, and we shall come to know our own tendencies from the pleasure or pain that arises in us. §5 We must drag ourselves off in the contrary direction; for if we pull far away from error, as they do in straightening bent wood, we shall reach the intermediate condition.

§6 And in everything we must beware above all of pleasure and its sources; for we are already biased in its favor when we come to judge it. Hence we must react to it as the elders reacted to Helen, and on each occasion repeat what they said; for if we do this, and send it off, we shall be less in error.*

§7 In summary, then, if we do these things we shall best be able to reach the intermediate condition. But presumably this is difficult, especially in particular cases, since it is not easy to define the way we should be angry, with whom, about what, for how long. For sometimes, indeed, we ourselves praise deficient people and call them mild, and sometimes praise quarrelsome people and call them manly.

§8 Still, we are not blamed if we deviate a little in excess or deficiency from doing well, but only if we deviate a long way, since then we are easily noticed. But how great and how serious a deviation receives blame is

1109b not easy to define in an account; for nothing else perceptible is easily defined either. Such things* are among particulars,* and the judgment depends on perception.*

§9 This is enough, then, to make it clear that in every case the intermediate state is praised, but we must sometimes incline toward the excess, sometimes toward the deficiency; for that is the easiest way to hit the intermediate and good condition.

BOOK III

[PRECONDITIONS OF VIRTUE]

1

[Voluntary Action]

Virtue, then, is about feelings and actions. These receive praise or blame if they are voluntary, but pardon, sometimes even pity, if they are involuntary.* Hence, presumably, in examining virtue we must define the voluntary and the involuntary. §2 This is also useful to legislators, both for honors and for corrective treatments.*

1110a §3 Now it seems that things coming about by force or because of ignorance are involuntary.*

What is forced has an external principle, the sort of principle in which the agent, or [rather] the victim,* contributes nothing*—if, for instance, a wind or people who have him in their control were to carry him off.

§4 But what about actions done because of fear of greater evils, or because of something fine?* Suppose, for instance, a tyrant tells you to do something shameful, when he has control over your parents and children, and if you do it, they will live, but if not, they will die.* These cases raise dispute about whether they are voluntary or involuntary.

§5 However, the same sort [of unwelcome choice] is found in throwing cargo overboard in storms.* For no one willingly throws cargo overboard, without qualification,* but anyone with any sense throws it overboard to save himself and the others.

§6 These sorts of actions, then, are mixed,* but they are more like voluntary actions. For at the time they are done they are choiceworthy, and the goal of an action accords with the specific occasion; hence we should also call the action voluntary or involuntary on the occasion when he does it. Now in fact he does it willingly. For in such actions he has within him the principle of moving the limbs that are the instruments [of the action]; but if the principle of the actions is in him, it is also up to him to do them or not to do them.* Hence actions of this sort are voluntary, though presumably the actions without [the appropriate] qualification are involuntary, since no one would choose any such action in its own right.

Psalm 53 Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition

Denunciation of Godlessness

To the choirmaster: according to Mahalath. A Maskil of David.

53 The fool says in his heart,
"There is no God."
They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity;
there is none that does good.

2 God looks down from heaven
upon the sons of men
to see if there are any that are wise,
that seek after God.

3 They have all fallen away;
they are all alike depraved;
there is none that does good,
no, not one.

4 Have those who work evil no understanding,
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and do not call upon God?

5 There they are, in great terror,
in terror such as has not been!
For God will scatter the bones of the ungodly;[a]
they will be put to shame,[b] for God has rejected them.

6 O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!
When God restores the fortunes of his people,
Jacob will rejoice and Israel be glad.

Footnotes

1 Corinthians 3 Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition

On Divisions in the Corinthian Church

3 But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. **2** I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, **3** for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men? **4** For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apol'los," are you not merely men?

5 What then is Apol'los? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. **6** I planted, Apol'los watered, but God gave the growth. **7** So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. **8** He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor. **9** For we are God's fellow workers;[a] you are God's field, God's building.

10 According to the commission of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. **11** For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. **12** Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble— **13** each man's work will become manifest; for the Day[b] will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. **14** If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. **15** If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

16 Do you not know that you are God's temple[c] and that God's Spirit dwells in you? **17** If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.

18 Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. **19** For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," **20** and again,

"The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." **21** So let no one boast of men. For all things are yours, **22** whether Paul or Apol'los or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; **23** and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Footnotes

a. 1 Corinthians 3:9 Or *fellow workers for God*

b. 3.13 *the Day:* i.e., the day of the Lord: God's searching judgment.

c. 3.16 *God's temple:* The dignity of the Christians.

‹ 1 Corinthians 2 1 Corinthians 4 ›

Metaphysics
By Aristotle
Translated by W. D. Ross

Book 1
Part 1

"ALL men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer seeing (one might say) to everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things.

"By nature animals are born with the faculty of sensation, and from sensation memory is produced in some of them, though not in others. And therefore the former are more intelligent and apt at learning than those which cannot remember; those which are incapable of hearing sounds are intelligent though they cannot be taught, e.g. the bee, and any other race of animals that may be like it; and those which besides memory have this sense of hearing can be taught.

"The animals other than man live by appearances and memories, and have but little of connected experience; but the human race lives also by art and reasonings. Now from memory experience is produced in men; for the several memories of the same thing produce finally the capacity for a single experience. And experience seems pretty much like science and art, but really science and art come to men through experience; for 'experience made art', as Polus says, 'but inexperience luck.' Now art arises when from many notions gained by experience one universal judgement about a class of objects is produced. For to have a judgement that when Callias was ill of this disease this did him good, and similarly in the case of Socrates and in many individual cases, is a matter of experience; but to judge that it has done good to all persons of a certain constitution, marked off in one class, when they were ill of this disease, e.g. to phlegmatic or bilious people when burning with fevers-this is a matter of art.

"With a view to action experience seems in no respect inferior to art, and men of experience succeed even better than those who have theory without experience. (The reason is that experience is knowledge of individuals, art of universals, and actions and productions are all concerned with the individual; for the physician does not cure man, except in an incidental way, but Callias or Socrates or some other called by some such individual name, who happens to be a man. If, then, a man has the theory without the experience, and recognizes the universal but does not know the individual included in this, he will often fail to cure; for it is the individual

that is to be cured.) But yet we think that knowledge and understanding belong to art rather than to experience, and we suppose artists to be wiser than men of experience (which implies that Wisdom depends in all cases rather on knowledge); and this because the former know the cause, but the latter do not. For men of experience know that the thing is so, but do not know why, while the others know the 'why' and the cause. Hence we think also that the masterworkers in each craft are more honourable and know in a truer sense and are wiser than the manual workers, because they know the causes of the things that are done (we think the manual workers are like certain lifeless things which act indeed, but act without knowing what they do, as fire burns,-but while the lifeless things perform each of their functions by a natural tendency, the labourers perform them through habit); thus we view them as being wiser not in virtue of being able to act, but of having the theory for themselves and knowing the causes. And in general it is a sign of the man who knows and of the man who does not know, that the former can teach, and therefore we think art more truly knowledge than experience is; for artists can teach, and men of mere experience cannot.

"Again, we do not regard any of the senses as Wisdom; yet surely these give the most authoritative knowledge of particulars. But they do not tell us the 'why' of anything-e.g. why fire is hot; they only say that it is hot.

"At first he who invented any art whatever that went beyond the common perceptions of man was naturally admired by men, not only because there was something useful in the inventions, but because he was thought wise and superior to the rest. But as more arts were invented, and some were directed to the necessities of life, others to recreation, the inventors of the latter were naturally always regarded as wiser than the inventors of the former, because their branches of knowledge did not aim at utility. Hence when all such inventions were already established, the sciences which do not aim at giving pleasure or at the necessities of life were discovered, and first in the places where men first began to have leisure. This is why the mathematical arts were founded in Egypt; for there the priestly caste was allowed to be at leisure.

"We have said in the Ethics what the difference is between art and science and the other kindred faculties; but the point of our present discussion is this, that all men suppose what is called Wisdom to deal with the first causes and the principles of things; so that, as has been said before, the man of experience is thought to be wiser than the possessors of any sense-perception whatever, the artist wiser than the men of experience, the masterworker than the mechanic, and the theoretical kinds of knowledge to be more of the nature of Wisdom than the productive. Clearly then Wisdom is knowledge about certain principles and causes.

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: “Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
‘My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!’
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

Credit

About this Poem

Percy Shelley wrote competing sonnets with his friend, Horace Smith, both called “Ozymandias.” But Smith later changed his title to “On A Stupendous Leg of Granite, Discovered Standing by Itself in the Deserts of Egypt, with the Inscription Inserted Below,” which begins, redundantly: “In Egypt’s sandy silence, all alone, / Stands a gigantic Leg...” Shelley’s poem remains the obvious winner of said competition.

Author

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley, whose literary career was marked with controversy due to his views on religion, atheism, socialism, and free love, is known as a talented lyrical poet and one of the major figures of English romanticism.

C. S. LEWIS

LEARNING IN WAR-TIME

A sermon preached in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford, Autumn, 1939

A UNIVERSITY is a society for the pursuit of learning. As students, you will be expected to make yourselves, or to start making yourselves, into what the Middle Ages called clerks: into philosophers, scientists, scholars, critics, or historians. And at first sight this seems to be an odd thing to do during a great war. What is the use of beginning a task which we have so little chance of finishing? Or, even if we ourselves should happen not to be interrupted by death or military service, why should we—indeed how can we—continue to take an interest in these placid occupations when the lives of our friends and the liberties of Europe are in the balance? Is it not like fiddling while Rome burns?

Now it seems to me that we shall not be able to answer these questions until we have put them by the side of certain other questions which every Christian ought to have asked himself in peace-time. I spoke just now of fiddling while Rome burns. But to a Christian the true tragedy of Nero must be not that he fiddled while the city was on fire but that he fiddled on the brink of hell. You must forgive me for the crude monosyllable. I know that many wiser and better Christians than I in these days do not like to mention heaven and hell even in a pulpit. I know, too, that nearly all the references to this subject in the New Testament come from a single source. But then that source is Our Lord Himself. People will tell you it is St. Paul, but that is untrue. These overwhelming doctrines are dominical. They are not really removable from the teaching of Christ or of His Church. If we do not believe them, our presence in this church is great tomfoolery. If we do, we must sometime overcome our spiritual prudery and mention them.

The moment we do so we can see that every Christian who comes to a university must at all times face a question compared with which the questions raised by the war are relatively unimportant. He must ask himself how it is right, or even psychologically possible, for creatures who are every moment advancing either to heaven or to hell, to spend any fraction of the little time allowed them in this world on such comparative trivialities as literature or art, mathematics or biology, if human culture can stand up to that, it can stand up to anything. To admit that we can retain our interest in learning under the shadow of these eternal issues, but not under the shadow of a European war, would be to admit that our ears are closed to the voice of reason and very wide open to the voice of our nerves and our mass emotions.

This indeed is the case with most of us: certainly with me. For that reason I think it important to try to see the present calamity in a true perspective. The war creates no absolutely new situation: it simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it. Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice. Human culture has always had to exist under the shadow of something infinitely more important than itself. If men had postponed the

search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure, the search would never have begun. We are mistaken when we compare war with "normal life". Life has never been normal. Even those periods which we think most tranquil, like the nineteenth century, turn out, on closer inspection, to be full of crises, alarms, difficulties, emergencies. Plausible reasons have never been lacking for putting off all merely cultural activities until some imminent danger has been averted or some crying injustice put right. But humanity long ago chose to neglect those plausible reasons. They wanted knowledge and beauty now, and would not wait for the suitable moment that never comes. Periclean Athens leaves us not only the Parthenon but, significantly, the Funeral Oration. The insects have chosen a different line: they have sought first the material welfare and security of the hive, and presumably they have their reward. Men are different. They propound mathematical theorems in beleaguered cities, conduct metaphysical arguments in condemned cells, make jokes on scaffolds, discuss the last new poem while advancing to the walls of Quebec, and comb their hair at Thermopylae. This is not *panache*: it is our nature.

But since we are fallen creatures the fact that this is now our nature would not, by itself, prove that it is rational or right. We have to inquire whether there is really any legitimate place for the activities of the scholar in a world such as this. That is, we have always to answer the question: "How can you be so frivolous and selfish as to think about anything but the salvation of human souls?" and we have, at the moment, to answer the additional question, "How can you be so frivolous and selfish as to think of anything but the war?" Now part of our answer will be the same for both questions. The one implies that our life can, and ought, to become exclusively and explicitly religious: the other, that it can and ought to become exclusively national. I believe that our whole life can, and indeed must, become religious in a sense to be explained later. But if it is meant that all our activities are to be of the kind that can be recognized as "sacred" and opposed to "secular" then I would give a single reply to both my imaginary assailants. I would say, "Whether it ought to happen or not, the thing you are recommending is not going to happen." Before I became a Christian I do not think I fully realized that one's life, after conversion, would inevitably consist in doing most of the same things one had been doing before: one hopes, in a new spirit, but still the same things. Before I went to the last war I certainly expected that my life in the trenches would, in some mysterious sense, be all war. In fact, I found that the nearer you got to the front line the less everyone spoke and thought of the allied cause and the progress of the campaign; and I am pleased to find that Tolstoi, in the greatest war book ever written, records the same thing--and so, in its own way, does the Iliad. Neither conversion nor enlistment in the army is really going to obliterate our human life. Christians and soldiers are still men: the infidel's idea of a religious life, and the civilian's idea of active service, are fantastic. If you attempted, in either case, to suspend your whole intellectual and aesthetic activity, you would only succeed in substituting a worse cultural life for a better. You are not, in fact, going to read nothing, either in the Church or in the line: if you don't read good books you will read bad ones. If you don't go on thinking rationally, you will think irrationally. If you reject aesthetic satisfactions you will fall into sensual satisfactions.

There is therefore this analogy between the claims of our religion and the claims of the war: neither of them, for most of

us, will simply cancel or remove from the slate the merely human life which we were leading before we entered them. But they will operate in this way for different reasons. The war will fail to absorb our whole attention because it is a finite object, and therefore intrinsically unfitted to support the whole attention of a human soul. In order to avoid misunderstanding I must here make a few distinctions. I believe our cause to be, as human causes go, very righteous, and I therefore believe it to be a duty to participate in this war. And every duty is a religious duty, and our obligation to perform every duty is therefore absolute. Thus we may have a duty to rescue a drowning man, and perhaps, if we live on a dangerous coast, to learn life-saving so as to be ready for any drowning man when he turns up. It may be our duty to lose our own lives in saving him. But if anyone devoted himself to life-saving in the sense of giving it his total attention--so that he thought and spoke of nothing else and demanded the cessation of all other human activities until everyone had learned to swim--he would be a monomaniac. The rescue of drowning men is, then, a duty worth dying for, but not worth living for. It seems to me that all political duties (among which I include military duties) are of this kind. A man may have to die for our country: but no man must, in any exclusive sense, live for his country. He who surrenders himself without reservation to the temporal claims of a nation, or a party, or a class is rendering to Caesar that which, of all things, most emphatically belongs to God: himself.

It is for a very different reason that religion cannot occupy the whole of life in the sense of excluding all our natural activities. For, of course, in some sense, it must occupy the whole of life. There is no question of a compromise between the claims of God and the claims of culture, or politics, or anything else. God's claim is infinite and inexorable. You can refuse it: or you can begin to try to grant it. There is no middle way. Yet in spite of this it is clear that Christianity does not exclude any of the ordinary human activities. St. Paul tells people to get on with their jobs. He even assumes that Christians may go to dinner parties, and, what is more, dinner parties given by pagans. Our Lord attends a wedding and provides miraculous wine. Under the aegis of His Church, and in the most Christian ages, learning and the arts flourish. The solution of this paradox is, of course, well known to you. "Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

All our merely natural activities will be accepted, if they are offered to God, even the humblest: and all of them, even the noblest, will be sinful if they are not. Christianity does not simply replace our natural life and substitute a new one: it is rather a new organization which exploits, to its own supernatural ends, these natural materials. No doubt, in a given situation, it demands the surrender of some, or of all, our merely human pursuits: it is better to be saved with one eye, than, having two, to be cast into Gehenna. But it does this, in a sense, *per accidens*–because, in those special circumstances, it has ceased to be possible to practise this or that activity to the glory of God. There is no essential quarrel between the spiritual life and the human activities as such. Thus the omnipresence of obedience to God in a Christian's life is, in a way, analogous to the omnipresence of God in space. God does not fill space as a body fills it, in the sense that parts of Him are in different parts of space, excluding

other objects from them. Yet He is everywhere--totally present at every point of space--according to good theologians.

We are now in a position to answer the view that human culture is an inexcusable frivolity on the part of creatures loaded with such awful responsibilities as we. I reject at once an idea which lingers in the mind of some modern people that cultural activities are in their own right spiritual and meritorious--as though scholars and poets were intrinsically more pleasing to God than scavengers and bootblacks. I think it was Matthew Arnold who first used the English word *spiritual* in the sense of the German *geistlich,* and so inaugurated this most dangerous and most anti-Christian error. Let us clear it forever from our minds. The work of a Beethoven, and the work of a charwoman, become spiritual on precisely the same condition, that of being offered to God, of being done humbly "as to the Lord". This does not, of course, mean that it is for anyone a mere toss-up whether he should sweep rooms or compose symphonies. A mole must dig to the glory of God and a cock must crow. We are members of one body, but differentiated members, each with his own vocation. A man's upbringing, his talents, his circumstances, are usually a tolerable index of his vocation. If our parents have sent us to Oxford, if our country allows us to remain there, this is *prima facie* evidence that the life which we, at any rate, can best lead to the glory of God at present is the learned life. By leading that life to the glory of God I do not, of course, mean any attempt to make our intellectual inquiries work out to edifying conclusions. That would be, as Bacon says, to offer to the author of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie. I mean the pursuit of knowledge and beauty, in a sense, for their own sake, but in a sense which does not exclude their being for God's sake. An appetite for these things exists in the human mind, and God makes no appetite in vain. We can therefore pursue knowledge as such, and beauty, as such, in the sure confidence that by so doing we are either advancing to the vision of God ourselves or indirectly helping others to do so. Humility, no less than the appetite, encourages us to concentrate simply on the knowledge or the beauty, not too much concerning ourselves with their ultimate relevance to the vision of God. That relevance may not be intended for us but for our betters--for men who come after and find the spiritual significance of what we dug out in blind and humble obedience to our vocation. This is the teleological argument that the existence of the impulse and the faculty prove that they must have a proper function in God's scheme--the argument by which Thomas Aquinas proves that sexuality would have existed even without the Fall. The soundness of the argument, as regards culture, is proved by experience. The intellectual life is not the only road to God, nor the safest, but we find it to be a road, and it may be the appointed road for us. Of course it will be so only so long as we keep the impulse pure and disinterested. That is the great difficulty. As the author of the *Theologia Germanica* says, we may come to love knowledge--*our* knowing--more than the thing known: to delight not in the exercise of our talents but in the fact that they are ours, or even in the reputation they bring us. Every success in the scholar's life increases this danger. If it becomes irresistible, he must give up his scholarly work. The time for plucking out the right eye has arrived.

That is the essential nature of the learned life as I see it. But it has indirect values which are especially important to-day. If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were uneducated. But, as it is, a cultural life will exist outside

the Church whether it exists inside or not. To be ignorant and simple now--not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground--would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defence but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered. The cool intellect must work not only against cool intellect on the other side, but against the muddy heathen mysticisms which deny intellect altogether. Most of all, perhaps, we need intimate knowledge of the past. Not that the past has any magic about it, but because we cannot study the future, and yet need something to set against the present, to remind us that the basic assumptions have been quite different in different periods and that much which seems certain to the uneducated is merely temporary fashion. A man who has lived in many places is not likely to be deceived by the local errors of his native village: the scholar has lived in many times and is therefore in some degree immune from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age.

The learned life then is, for some, a duty. At the moment it looks as if it were your duty. I am well aware that there may seem to be an almost comic discrepancy between the high issues we have been considering and the immediate task you may be set down to, such as Anglo-Saxon sound laws or chemical formulae. But there is a similar shock awaiting us in every vocation--a young priest finds himself involved in choir treats and a young subaltern in accounting for pots of jam. It is well that it should be so. It weeds out the vain, windy people and keeps in those who are both humble and tough. On that kind of difficulty we need waste no sympathy. But the peculiar difficulty imposed on you by the war is another matter: and of it I would again repeat, what I have been saying in one form or another ever since I started--do not let your nerves and emotions lead you into thinking your predicament more abnormal than it really is. Perhaps it may be useful to mention the three mental exercises which may serve as defences against the three enemies which war raises up against the scholar.

The first enemy is excitement--the tendency to think and feel about the war when we had intended to think about our work. The best defence is a recognition that in this, as in everything else, the war has not really raised up a new enemy but only aggravated an old one. There are always plenty of rivals to our work. We are always falling in love or quarrelling, looking for jobs or fearing to lose them, getting ill and recovering, following public affairs. If we let ourselves, we shall always be waiting for some distraction or other to end before we can really get down to our work. The only people who achieve much are those who want knowledge so badly that they seek it while the conditions are still unfavourable. Favourable conditions never come. There are, of course, moments when the pressure of the excitement is so great that only superhuman self-control could resist it. They come both in war and peace. We must do the best we can.

The second enemy is frustration--the feeling that we shall not have time to finish. If I say to you that no one has time to finish, that the longest human life leaves a man, in any branch of learning, a beginner, I shall seem to you to be saying something quite academic and theoretical. You would be surprised if you knew how soon one begins to feel the shortness of the tether: of how many things, even in middle life, we have to say "No time for that", "Too late now", and "Not for me".

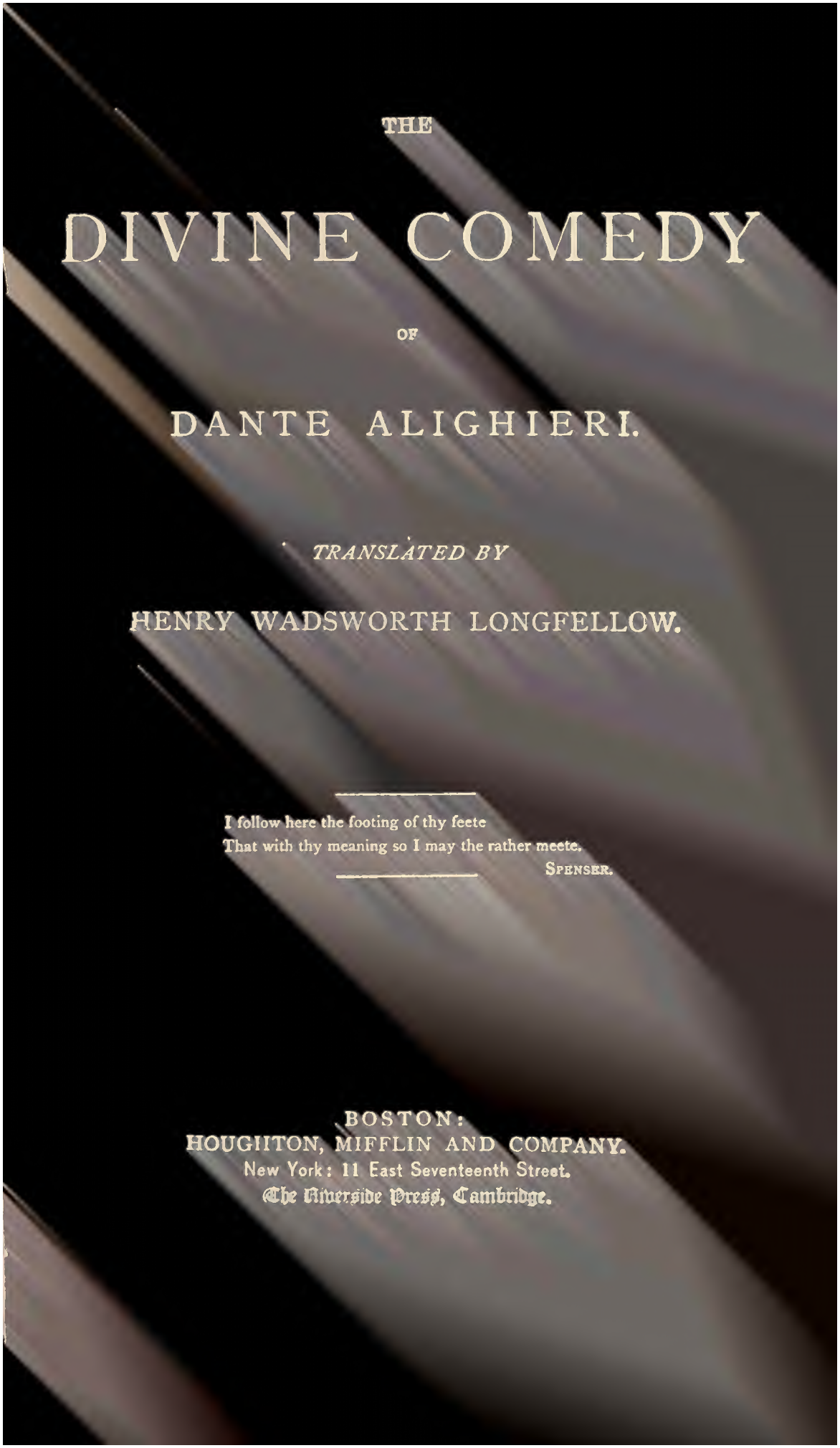
5

But Nature herself forbids you to share that experience. A more Christian attitude, which can be attained at any age, is that of leaving futurity in God's hands. We may as well, for God will certainly retain it whether we leave it to Him or not. Never, in peace or war, commit your virtue or your happiness to the future. Happy work is best done by the man who takes his long-term plans somewhat lightly and works from moment to moment "as to the Lord". It is only our *daily* bread that we are encouraged to ask for. The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received.

The third enemy is fear. War threatens us with death and pain. No man—and specially no Christian who remembers Gethsemane—need try to attain a stoic indifference about these things: but we can guard against the illusions of the imagination. We think of the streets of Warsaw and contrast the deaths there suffered with an abstraction called Life. But there is no question of death or life for any of us; only a question of this death or of that—of a machine gun bullet now or a cancer forty years later. What does war do to death? It certainly does not make it more frequent: 100 per cent of us die, and the percentage cannot be increased. It puts several deaths earlier: but I hardly suppose that that is what we fear. Certainly when the moment comes, it will make little difference how many years we have behind us. Does it increase our chances of a painful death? I doubt it. As far as I can find out, what we call natural death is usually preceded by suffering: and a battlefield is one of the very few places where one has a reasonable prospect of dying with no pain at all. Does it decrease our chances of dying at peace with God? I cannot believe it. If active service does not persuade a man to prepare for death, what conceivable concatenation of circumstances would? Yet war does do something to death. It forces us to remember it. The only reason why the cancer at sixty or the paralysis at seventy-five do not bother us is that we forget them. War makes death real to us: and that would have been regarded as one of its blessings by most of the great Christians of the past. They thought it good for us to be always aware of our mortality. I am inclined to think they were right. All the animal life in us, all schemes of happiness that centred in this world, were always doomed to a final frustration. In ordinary times only a wise man can realize it. Now the stupidest of us knows. We see unmistakably the sort of universe in which we have all along been living, and must come to terms with it. If we had foolish un-Christian hopes about human culture, they are now shattered. If we thought we were building up a heaven on earth, if we looked for something that would turn the present world from a place of pilgrimage into a permanent city satisfying the soul of man, we are disillusioned, and not a moment too soon. But if we thought that for some souls, and at some times, the life of learning, humbly offered to God, was, in its own small way, one of the appointed approaches to the Divine reality and the Divine beauty which we hope to enjoy hereafter, we can think so still.

The Divine Comedy
of
Dante Alighieri

Longfellow



THE

DIVINE COMEDY

OF

DANTE ALIGHIERI.

TRANSLATED BY

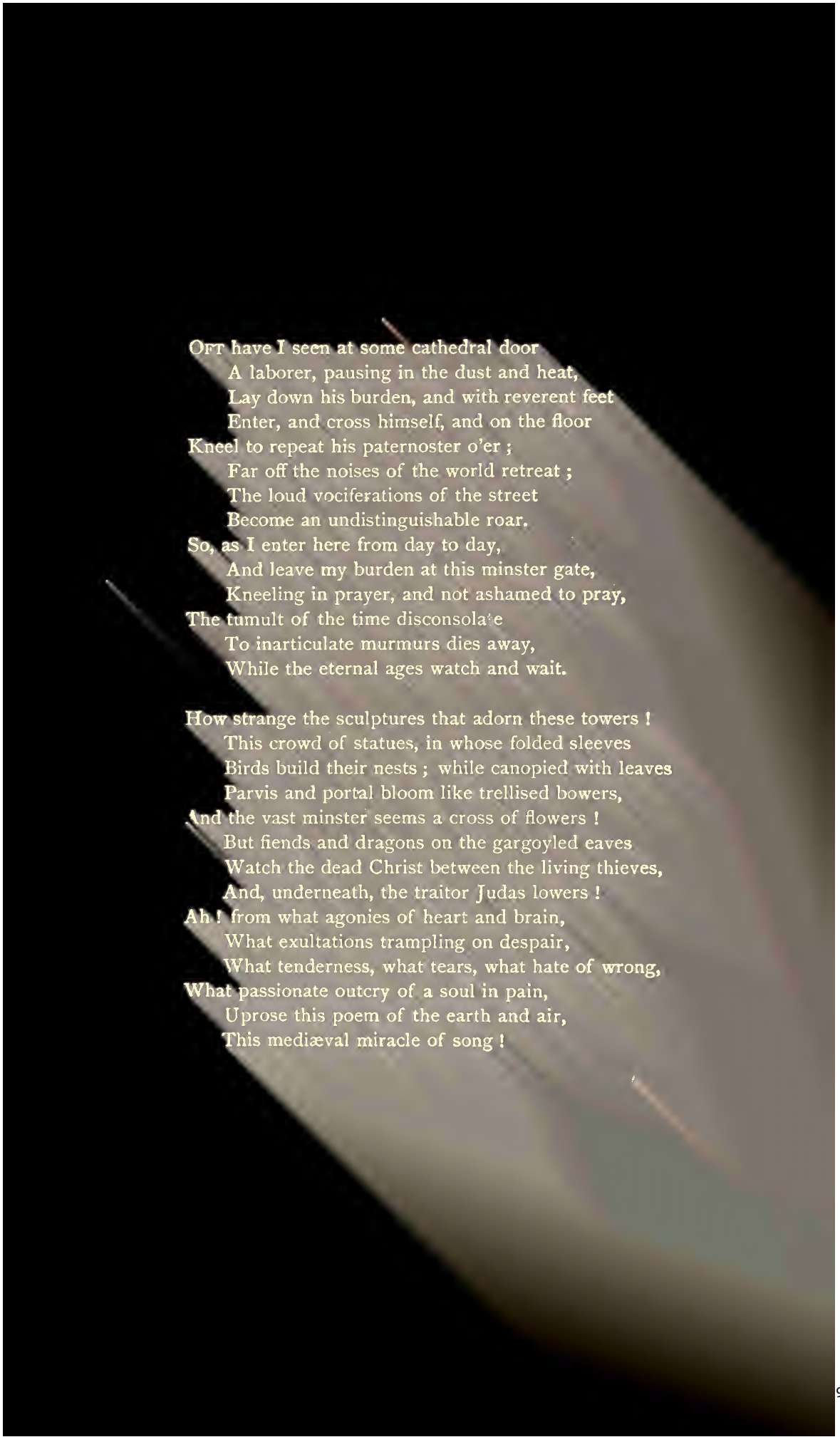
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

I follow here the footing of thy feete
That with thy meaning so I may the rather meete.

SPENSER.

BOSTON:
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY.
New York: 11 East Seventeenth Street.
The Riverside Press, Cambridge.


INFERNO.



Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate,
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

How strange the sculptures that adorn these towers!
This crowd of statues, in whose folded sleeves
Birds build their nests; while canopied with leaves
Parvis and portal bloom like trellised bowers,
And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers!
But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled eaves
Watch the dead Christ between the living thieves,
And, underneath, the traitor Judas lowers!
Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,
What exultations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This mediæval miracle of song!

He who lay prostrate thrusts his muzzle forward,
And backward draws the ears into his head,
In the same manner as the snail its horns;
And so the tongue, which was entire and apt
For speech before, is cleft, and the bi-forked
In the other closes up, and the smoke ceases.
The soul, which to a reptile had been changed,
Along the valley hissing takes to flight,
And after him the other speaking sputters.
Then did he turn upon him his new shoulders,
And said to the other: "I'll have Buoso run,
Crawling as I have done, along this road."
In this way I beheld the seventh ballast
Shift and reshift, and here be my excuse
The novelty, if aught my pen transgress.
And notwithstanding that mine eyes might be
Somewhat bewildered, and my mind dismayed,
They could not flee away so secretly
But that I plainly saw Puccio Sciancato;
And he it was who sole of three companions,
Which came in the beginning, was not changed;
The other was he whom thou, Gaville, weepest.

CANTO XXVI.

Rejoice, O Florence, since thou art so great,
That over sea and land thou beatest thy wings,
And throughout Hell thy name is spread abroad!
Among the thieves five citizens of thine
Like these I found, whence shame comes unto me,
And thou thereby to no great honour risest.
But if when morn is near our dreams are true,
Feel shalt thou in a little time from now
What Prato, if none other, craves for thee.
And if it now were, it were not too soon;
Would that it were, seeing it needs must be,
For 'twill aggrieve me more the more I age.
We went our way, and up along the stairs
The bourns had made us to descend before,
Remounted my Conductor and drew me.
And following the solitary path
Among the rocks and ridges of the crag,
The foot without the hand sped not at all.

Then sorrowed I, and sorrow now again,
When I direct my mind to what I saw,
And more my genius curb than I am wont,
That it may run not unless virtue guide it;
So that if some good star, or better thing,
Have given me good, I may myself not grudge it.
As many as the hind (who on the hill
Rests at the time when he who lights the world
His countenance keeps least concealed from us,
While as the fly gives place unto the gnat)
Seeth the glow-worms down along the valley,
Perchance there where he ploughs and makes his vintage;
With flames as manifold resplendent all
Was the eighth Bolgia, as I grew aware
As soon as I was where the depth appeared.
And such as he who with the bears avenged him
Beheld Elijah's chariot at departing,
What time the steeds to heaven erect uprose,
For with his eye he could not follow it
So as to see aught else than flame alone,
Even as a little cloud ascending upward,
Thus each along the gorge of the intrenchment
Was moving; for not one reveals the theft,
And every flame a sinner steals away.
I stood upon the bridge uprisen to see,
So that, if I had seized not on a rock,
Down had I fallen without being pushed.
And the Leader, who beheld me so attent,
Exclaimed: "Within the fires the spirits are;
Each swathes himself with that wherewith he burns."
'My Master," I replied, "by hearing thee
I am more sure; but I surmised already
It might be so, and already wished to ask thee
Who is within that fire, which comes so cleft
At top, it seems uprising from the pyre
Where was Eteocles with his brother placed."
He answered me: "Within there are tormented
Ulysses and Diomed, and thus together
They unto vengeance run as unto wrath.
And there within their flame do they lament
The ambush of the horse, which made the door
Whence issued forth the Romans' gentle seed;
Therein is wept the craft, for which being dead
Deidamia still deplores Achilles,
And pain for the Palladium there is borne."

"If they within those sparks possess the power
To speak," I said, "thee, Master, much I pray,
And re-pray, that the prayer be worth a thousand,
That thou make no denial of awaiting
Until the hornëd flame shall hither come;
Thou seest that with desire I lean towards it."
And he to me: "Worthy is thy entreaty
Of much applause, and therefore I accept it;
But take heed that thy tongue restrain itself.
Leave me to speak, because I have conceived
That which thou wishest; for they might disdain
Perchance, since they were Greeks, discourse of thine."
When now the flame had come unto that point,
Where to my Leader it seemed time and place,
After this fashion did I hear him speak:
"O ye, who are twofold within one fire,
If I deserved of you, while I was living,
If I deserved of you or much or little
When in the world I wrote the lofty verses,
Do not move on, but one of you declare
Whither, being lost, he went away to die."
Then of the antique flame the greater horn,
Murmuring, began to wave itself about
Even as a flame doth which the wind fatigues.
Thereafterward, the summit to and fro
Moving as if it were the tongue that spake,
It uttered forth a voice, and said: "When I
From Circe had departed, who concealed me
More than a year there near unto Gaëta,
Or ever yet Æneas named it so,
Nor fondness for my son, nor reverence
For my old father, nor the due affection
Which joyous should have made Penelope,
Could overcome within me the desire
I had to be experienced of the world,
And of the vice and virtue of mankind;
But I put forth on the high open sea
With one sole ship, and that small company
By which I never had deserted been.
Both of the shores I saw as far as Spain,
Far as Morocco, and the isle of Sardes,
And the others which that sea bathes round about.
I and my company were old and slow
When at that narrow passage we arrived
Where Hercules his landmarks set as signals,

That man no farther onward should adventure.
On the right hand behind me left I Seville,
And on the other already had left Ceuta.
'O brothers, who amid a hundred thousand
Perils,' I said, 'have come unto the West,
To this so inconsiderable vigil
Which is remaining of your senses still
Be ye unwilling to deny the knowledge,
Following the sun, of the unpeopled world.
Consider ye the seed from which ye sprang;
Ye were not made to live like unto brutes,
But for pursuit of virtue and of knowledge.'
So eager did I render my companions,
With this brief exhortation, for the voyage,
That then I hardly could have held them back.
And having turned our stern unto the morning,
We of the oars made wings for our mad flight,
Evermore gaining on the larboard side.
Already all the stars of the other pole
The night beheld, and ours so very low
It did not rise above the ocean floor.
Five times rekindled and as many quenched
Had been the splendour underneath the moon,
Since we had entered into the deep pass,
When there appeared to us a mountain, dim
From distance, and it seemed to me so high
As I had never any one beheld.
Joyful were we, and soon it turned to weeping;
For out of the new land a whirlwind rose,
And smote upon the fore part of the ship.
Three times it made her whirl with all the waters,
At the fourth time it made the stern uplift,
And the prow downward go, as pleased Another,
Until the sea above us closed again."

CANTO XXVII.

Already was the flame erect and quiet,
To speak no more, and now departed from us
With the permission of the gentle Poet;
When yet another, which behind it came,
Caused us to turn our eyes upon its top
By a confusëd sound that issued from it.

Canto 26

WHILE I was doubting for my vision quenched, [603]
Out of the flame refulgent that had quenched it
Issued a breathing, that attentive made me,

Saying: "While thou recoverest the sense
Of seeing which in me thou hast consumed,
'Tis well that speaking thou shouldst compensate it.

Begin then, and declare to what thy soul
Is aimed, and count it for a certainty,
Sight is in thee bewildered and not dead;

Because the Lady, who through this divine
Region conducteth thee, has in her look
The power the hand of Ananias had." [604]

I said: "As pleaseth her, or soon or late
Let the cure come to eyes that portals were
When she with fire I ever burn with entered.

The Good, that gives contentment to this Court,
The Alpha and Omega is of all [605]
The writing that love reads me low or loud."

The selfsame voice, that taken had from me
The terror of the sudden dazzlement,
To speak still farther put it in my thought;

[603]The Heaven of the Fixed Stars continued. St. John examines Dante on Charity, in the sense of Love.

[604]Ananias, the disciple at Damascus, whose touch restored the sight of Saul. *Acts* IX. 17: "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

[605]God is the beginning and end of all my love.

And said: "In verity with finer sieve
Behoveth thee to sift; thee it behoveth
To say who aimed thy bow at such a target."

And I: "By philosophic arguments,
And by authority that hence descends,
Such love must needs imprint itself in me;

For Good, so far as good, when comprehended
Doth straight enkindle love, and so much greater
As more of goodness in itself it holds;

Then to that Essence (whose is such advantage
That every good which out of it is found
Is nothing but a ray of its own light)

More than elsewhither must the mind be moved
Of every one, in loving, who discerns
The truth in which this evidence is founded.

Such truth he to my intellect reveals
Who demonstrates to me the primal love [606]
Of all the sempiternal substances. [607]

The voice reveals it of the truthful Author,
Who says to Moses, speaking of Himself,
'I will make all my goodness pass before thee.' [608]

Thou too revealest it to me, beginning
The loud Evangel, that proclaims the secret [609]
Of heaven to earth above all other edict."

And I heard say: "By human intellect [610]
And by authority concordant with it,
Of all thy loves reserve for God the highest.

But say again if other cords thou feelest,
Draw thee towards Him, that thou mayst proclaim
With how many teeth this love is biting thee."

[606] The commentators differ as to which of the philosophers Dante here refers; whether to Aristotle, Plato, or Pythagoras.
[607] The angels.
[608] *Exodus* XXXIII. 19: "And he said, I will make all my goodliess pass before thee."
[609] *John* I. 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth."
[610] By all the dictates of human reason and divine authority.

The holy purpose of the Eagle of Christ [611]
Not latent was, nay, rather I perceived
Whither he fain would my profession lead.

Therefore I recommenced: "All of those bites
Which have the power to turn the heart to God
Unto my charity have been concurrent.

The being of the world, and my own being,
The death which He endured that I may live,
And that which all the faithful hope, as I do,

With the forementioned vivid consciousness
Have drawn me from the sea of love perverse,
And of the right have placed me on the shore.

The leaves, wherewith embowered is all the garden [612]
Of the Eternal Gardener, do I love
As much as he has granted them of good."

As soon as I had ceased, a song most sweet
Throughout the heaven resounded, and my Lady
Said with the others, "Holy, holy, holy!" [613]

And as at some keen light one wakes from sleep
By reason of the visual spirit that runs
Unto the splendour passed from coat to coat,

And he who wakes abhorreth what he sees,
So all unconscious is his sudden waking,
Until the judgment cometh to his aid,

So from before mine eyes did Beatrice
Chase every mote with radiance of her own,
That cast its light a thousand miles and more.

Whence better after than before I saw,
And in a kind of wonderment I asked
About a fourth light that I saw with us.

And said my Lady: "There within those rays

[611] In Christian art the eagle is the symbol of St. John, indicating his more fervid imagination and deeper insight into divine mysteries. Sometimes even the saint was represented with the head and feet of an eagle, and the hands and body of a man.
[612] All living creatures.
[613] *Isaiah* VI. 3: "As one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Gazes upon its Maker the first soul [614]
That ever the first virtue did create."

Even as the bough that downward bends its top
At transit of the wind, and then is lifted
By its own virtue, which inclines it upward,

Likewise did I, the while that she was speaking,
Being amazed, and then I was made bold
By a desire to speak wherewith I burned.

And I began: "O apple, that mature
Alone hast been produced, O ancient father,
To whom each wife is daughter and daughter-in-law,

Devoutly as I can I supplicate thee
That thou wouldst speak to me; thou seest my wish;
And I, to hear thee quickly, speak it not."

Sometimes an animal, when covered, struggles
So that his impulse needs must be apparent,
By reason of the wrappage following it;

And in like manner the primeval soul
Made clear to me athwart its covering
How jubilant it was to give me pleasure.

Then breathed: "Without thy uttering it to me,
Thine inclination better I discern
Than thou whatever thing is surest to thee;

For I behold it in the truthful mirror,
That of Himself all things parhelion makes, [615]
And none makes Him parhelion of itself.

Thou fain wouldst hear how long ago God placed me
Within the lofty garden, where this Lady
Unto so long a stairway thee disposed.

And how long to mine eyes it was a pleasure,
And of the great disdain the proper cause,
And the language that I used and that I made.

[614] The soul of Adam.

[615] Parhelion is an imperfect image of the sun, formed by reflection in the clouds. All things are such faint reflections of the Creator; but he is the reflection of none of them. Buti interprets the passage differently, giving to the word *pareglio* the meaning of *ricettacolo* – receptacle.

Now, son of mine, the tasting of the tree
Not in itself was cause of so great exile,
But solely the o'erstepping of the bounds.

There, whence thy Lady moved Virgilius, [616]
Four thousand and three hundred and two circuits
Made by the sun, this Council I desired;

And him I saw return to all the lights
Of his highway nine hundred times and thirty,
Whilst I upon the earth was tarrying.

The language that I spake was quite extinct [617]
Before that in the work interminable
The people under Nimrod were employed;

For nevermore result of reasoning
(Because of human pleasure that doth change,
Obedient to the heavens) was durable. [618]

A natural action is it that man speaks;
But whether thus or thus, doth nature leave
To your own art, as seemeth best to you.

Ere I descended to the infernal anguish,
El was on earth the name of the Chief Good, [619]
From whom comes all the joy that wraps me round

Eli he then was called, and that is proper, [620]
Because the use of men is like a leaf [621]
On bough, which goeth and another cometh.

[616]In Limbo, longing for Paradise, where the only punishment is to live in desire, but without hope. *Inferno* IV. 41: "Lost are we, and are only so far punished, that without hope we live on in desire."

[617]Most of the Oriental languages claim the honour of being the language spoken by Adam in Paradise. Juan Bautista de Erro claims it for the Basque, or Vascongada. See *Alphabet of Prim. Lang. of Spain*, Pt. II. Ch. 2, Erving's Tr.

[618]See Canto XVI. 79: "All things of yours have their mortality, even as yourselves."

[619]Dante, *De Volg. Eloq.*, I. Ch. 4, says, speaking of Adam: "What was the first word he spake will, I doubt not, readily suggest itself to every one of sound mind as being what God is, namely, *El*, either in the way of question or of answer."

[620]The word used by *Matthew*, XXVII. 46, is *Eli*, and by *Mark*, XV. 34, *Eloi*, which Dante assumes to be of later use than *El*. There is, I believe, no authority for this. *El* is God; *Eli*, or *Eloi*, my God.

[621]Horace, *Ars Poet.*, 60: "As the woods change their leaves in autumn, and the earliest fall, so the ancient words pass away, and the new flourish in the freshness of youth. ... Many that now have fallen shall spring up again, and others fall which now are held in honour, if usage wills, which is the judge, the law, and the rule of language.

Upon the mount that highest o'er the wave [622]
Rises was I, in life or pure or sinful,
From the first hour to that which is the second,
As the sun changes quadrant, to the sixth." [623]

[622]The mount of Purgatory, on whose summit was the Terrestrial Paradise.

[623]The sixth hour is noon in the old way of reckoning; and at noon the sun has completed one quarter or quadrant of the arc of his revolution, and changes to the next. The hour which is second to the sixth, is the hour which follows it, or one o'clock. This gives seven hours for Adam's stay in Paradise; and so says Peter Comestor (Dante's Peter Mangiador) in his ecclesiastical history. The *Talmud*, as quoted by Stehelin, *Traditions of the Jews*, I. 20, gives the following account: "The day has twelve hours. In the first hour the dust of which Adam was formed was brought together. In the second, this dust was made a rude, unshapely mass. In the third, the limbs were stretched out. In the fourth, a soul was lodged in it. In the the fifth, Adam stood upon his feet. In the sixth, he assigned the names of all things that were created. In the seventh, he received Eve for his consort. In the eighth, two went to bed and four rose out of it; the begetting and birth of two children in that time, namely, Cain and his sister. In the ninth, he was forbid to eat of the fruit of the tree. In the tenth, he disobeyed. In the eleventh, he was tried, convicted, and sentenced. In the twelfth, he was banished, or driven out of the garden."

Psalm 82 Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition

A Plea for Justice

A Psalm of Asaph.

82 God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:
2 "How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah*
3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.
4 Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6 I say, "You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you;
7 nevertheless, you shall die like men,
and fall like any prince."[a]

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
for to thee belong all the nations!

Footnotes

a. Psalm 82:7 Or *fall as one man, O princes*

Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (RSVCE)

The Knights of Columbus presents
The Luke E. Hart Series
Basic Elements of the Catholic Faith

VIRTUES AND VICES

PART THREE • SECTION FOUR OF CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

What does a Catholic believe?
How does a Catholic worship?
How does a Catholic live?

Based on the
Catechism of the Catholic Church

by
Peter Kreeft

General Editor
Father John A. Farren, O.P.
Catholic Information Service
Knights of Columbus Supreme Council

SECTION 4: VIRTUES AND VICES

(This booklet, which is Part III, Section 4 of our course on **Catholic Christianity,** together with the preceding booklet, *Some Fundamental Principles of Catholic Morality* (Part III, Section 3), explains some basic principles of "natural law" morality, as defined in *Human Nature as the Basis for Morality* (Part III, Section 2). Part III, Sections 5-10 will focus on the "divine law," that is, the Ten Commandments.)

1. The meaning of virtue

"Virtue" is a very simple concept to define. As vice is a bad habit, so virtue is a good habit. "A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good" (CCC 1803). Virtues and vices form a person's "character."

2. The importance of virtue

a) Without personal virtue, we will do good only sporadically. The main source of a good and happy life – for the human race, for each nation and community, and for each family – is the personal virtue of each individual. No system or set of laws, however perfect, can work for good without virtuous individuals. A Chinese parable says: "When the

wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way." Bad bricks, however well arranged, don't make a good building. Nothing can improve the world the way a saint does.

b) Virtues – unless we lose them! – last forever. They are cultivated by each external good action, and underlie the habitual quality of virtuous actions.

c) Virtues improve not just what you do but what you are. And every lover knows that the object of love is not just deeds but persons. Your boss may care more about what you do (your work) than about what you are (your character), but the opposite is true for those who love you. And God is not our boss, but our loving Father.

3. The goal of virtue

"Why should I be good?" The question is simple and profound, and requires a simple and profound answer.

Personal virtue is the key to improving the world, finding happiness, and helping other people to be good and happy too; yet the ultimate end of virtue is even greater than these great goals: "'the goal of a virtuous life is to become like God'[63]" (CCC 1803).

No secular answer to the question of the goal of virtue can rival this one.

4. The four cardinal virtues

From ancient times (Plato, Aristotle) and in various cultures four virtues have traditionally been recognized as the indispensable foundation of all the others, as the "hinges" *(cardines* in Latin, thus "cardinal") on which all others turn. "Four virtues play a pivotal role and accordingly are called 'cardinal'; all the others are grouped around them. They are: prudence [or wisdom], justice [or fairness], fortitude [or courage], and temperance [or self-control]" (CCC 1805). They are mentioned in Scripture by name (Wisdom 8:7) and

"are praised under other names in many passages of Scripture" (CCC 1805).

5. Prudence

Prudence "is not to be confused with timidity or fear" (CCC 1806). Perhaps "practical moral wisdom" is a clearer term for this virtue today. Prudence is "the virtue that disposes practical reason [the mind thinking about what should be done] to discover our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it…. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases…" (CCC 1806).

6. Justice

"*Justice* is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the 'virtue of religion' [or 'piety']. Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships…harmony…" (CCC 1807).

Justice gives to each "what is due," or "what is right," or "just desserts." This logical and almost mathematical aspect of justice, focusing on *equality and rights for individuals,* is balanced and complemented by a more intuitive and holistic aspect which aims at *harmony and right relationships.* Typically, men are especially sensitive to the first aspect, and women to the second. Complete justice requires both.

Justice transforms power and is transformed by love.

Power is meant to serve justice – might should serve right – and justice is meant to serve love.

We are born first knowing power and weakness, like the animals. As children, we learn a sense of justice from our conscience *and* from parents and teachers. As adults, we realize that justice, though necessary, is not sufficient; that our only hope is love and mercy and forgiveness – from God and from each other.

Wars will not cease and peace will not come, to nations or to families or to individuals, without justice. But neither will lasting peace come through justice alone.

7. Fortitude

"*Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause" (CCC 1808).

Of all the virtues this is perhaps the one most conspicuously lacking in the lives of most people today in technologically developed and relatively pain-free modern societies. Alexander Solzhenitsyn in 1978 dedicated his Harvard Commencement Address to this challenging subject.

Fortitude is a necessary ingredient in all virtues, for no virtue "just happens," but must be fought for.

8. Temperance

"*Temperance* is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures…" (CCC 1809), as fortitude moderates the fear of pains. (Thus it is also called "moderation.") Without it we do not rise above the level of animals who live by their instincts, desires, and fears, especially the instinct to seek pleasure and flee pain. Temperance "ensures the will's mastery over instincts [thus it is also called "self-control"] and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable…and provides balance [i.e. moderation: not too little and not too much] in the use of created goods" (CCC 1809).

Our instinctive desire for pleasure and fear of pain is the matter, or raw material, to be formed and controlled by all four cardinal virtues. Prudence provides the map, fortitude tames the

fears, temperance tames the appetites, and justice regulates the resulting activities.

All four cardinal virtues have deeper and wider meanings than their names suggest in current usage. Prudence is not just "playing it safe," justice is not just punishment, fortitude is not bull-headedness, and temperance is not just sobriety.

9. The three theological virtues

The four cardinal virtues are *natural.* That is, 1) they are *known* by natural human reason, 2) their *origin* is human nature, and 3) their *goal* is the perfecting of human character and life. They are also 1) known more perfectly by divine revelation, 2) aided and increased by divine grace, and 3) incorporated into the higher goal of union with God (see paragraph 3 on the goal of virtue).

The three "theological virtues," on the other hand, are *supernatural,* for they are 1) revealed by God and known by faith, 2) "infused by God into the souls of the faithful" (CCC 1813), and 3) their purpose is our participation in the divine nature.

They are called "theological" because they have God as their object. "Faith, hope, and love" mean faith *in God,* hope *in God,* and love *of God,* and of neighbor for God's sake.

10. The relation between the natural and the supernatural virtues

The three theological virtues are not an "extra," a second story added onto the natural virtues. "The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character" (CCC 1813). The Christian is prudent, just, courageous, and temperate *out of faith in God, hope in God, and love of God.*

11. Faith

"Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy

Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself" (CCC 1814).

The proximate, or immediate, object of faith is all the truths God has revealed. The ultimate object of faith is the person of God himself (see Part I, Section 2).

Faith is living and not dead only when it "'works through charity'[79]" (CCC 1814). "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). Faith, hope, and charity are three parts of the same living organism; the root, stem, and flower of the same living plant.

12. Hope

"Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit" (CCC 1817). "The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration of happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man" (CCC 1818).

Hope is not merely our natural desire for happiness; everyone has that. Like faith, hope is our freely chosen affirmative response to a divine revelation: in the case of hope, our response to divinely revealed promises. Hope is faith directed to the future.

Hope is the strongest source of fortitude. If you trust God's promises of the incomparable happiness of Heaven, you can give up any earthly good or endure any earthly deprivation for that. "Man can endure almost any how if only he has a why," wrote Viktor Frankl from the Auschwitz death camp *(Man's Search for Meaning)*. A "why" is a hope, a goal, a meaning and purpose to your life.

13. Love

What word shall we use to translate *agape* in the New Testament? It is a crucial point, for this is the most indispensable of all virtues (1 Corinthians 1:1-3), the greatest of all the virtues (1 Corinthians 13:13), the greatest of the commandments (Matthew

22:36-37), and the very nature of God (1 John 4:16), of ultimate reality.

"Love" is too broad a word, for it usually connotes the natural loves – of sex, food, beauty, comfort, friends, etc. "Charity," the old word for *agape,* is now too narrow, for it usually connotes only giving money to good causes. We shall use both words, to compensate for the defects in the way each word is used.

"Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake [because he is worthy of such love], and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God" (CCC 1822).

Charity is *not a feeling* or emotion, but a choosing by the will and an obeying. Here is how it was defined by Christ, the perfect incarnation of charity and the supreme authority on the subject: "he who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me" (John 14:21).

Christ commands charity to everyone, even our enemies: "You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:43-45). "Christ died out of love for us while we were still 'enemies.'[100] The Lord asks us to love as he does…" (CCC 1825).

Charity is *freeing*. "The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who 'first loved us….'[106]" (CCC 1828) "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Indeed "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). But it is not the end. Love is.

14. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit

Seven qualities are traditionally listed as the "gifts of the Holy Spirit." "The seven *gifts* of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:1-2; CCC 1831).

15. The twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit

"The *fruits* of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory. The tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: 'charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity'[112]" (Galatians 5:22-23; CCC 1832).

16. The Beatitudes

"The Beatitudes ["blesseds"] are at the heart of Jesus' preaching" (CCC 1716). "The Beatitudes depict the countenance [face, character] of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful…" (CCC 1717) to be like Christ. They all appeal to the theological virtue of hope by including promises of rewards to be fully given in the next life.

They are:

1. "'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
3. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
4. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
5. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
6. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
7. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you

when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven'[12]" (Matthew 5:3-12).

17. Vices

The four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) have opposite vices: folly, injustice, cowardice, and intemperance.

The three theological virtues have even more serious opposite vices – more serious because they directly imperil our eternal salvation.

1) The knowing and deliberate repudiation of faith is *apostasy.*
2) The deliberate refusal of hope is *despair*. This is not to be confused with feelings like pessimism or depression, for two reasons. First, no mere feeling in itself is virtuous or vicious; only the will's free consent to a feeling makes it morally good or evil. Second, despair is not psychological but theological. That is, just as the theological virtues have God as their object – they are three ways of saying Yes to God – so their opposites are three ways of saying No *to God.*

   Presumption is the opposite extreme from despair, and an equally serious sin against hope. "There are two kinds of *presumption.* Either man presumes upon his own capacities (hoping to be able to save himself without help from on high), or he presumes upon God's almighty power or his mercy (hoping to obtain his forgiveness without conversion and glory without merit)" (CCC 2092).
3) The deliberate refusal of charity includes indifference, ingratitude, lukewarmness, spiritual sloth, and hate. Hate wills evil and harm to another, and refuses to forgive.

Christ clearly tells us that if we do not forgive, we cannot be forgiven (Matthew 6:14-15).

18. Sin

Sin is any deliberate thought, word, or deed contrary to God's law. Sin is disobedience to God's law, thus God's will, thus God himself. It is "a revolt against God" (CCC 1850). Sin is the very worst thing there is, since it is the contrary of God, the very best thing there is.

"Sin" means more than "evil" or "vice." It is a specifically religious term. It means evil *in its relation to God.* It means damaging or breaking the relationship with God, the spiritual marriage covenant.

19. Kinds of sin

"Sins can be distinguished:

[1] "according to their objects, as can every human act;

[2] "or according to the virtues they oppose, by excess or defect;

[3] "or according to the commandments they violate.

[4] "They can also be classed according to whether they concern God, neighbor, or oneself;

[5] "they can be divided into spiritual and carnal sins,

[6] "or again as sins in thought, word, deed, or omission" (CCC 1853).

[7] The most important distinction is between mortal and venial sins.

20. Mortal and venial sin

"The distinction between mortal and venial sin, already evident in Scripture [1 John 5:16-17],[129] became part of the tradition of the Church. It is corroborated by human experience" (CCC 1854).

Venial sin *damages* the relationship with God; mortal sin *destroys* it. Venial sin is like a fight between spouses, mortal sin is like a divorce. To die in a state of mortal sin is to lose Heaven forever. For there is *no more time* for repentance and conversion after death. To die with venial sins on the soul is to need Purgatory to purify the soul before Heaven. To die with neither kind of sin, and without their consequences in the soul is to merit heaven without the need for Purgatory.

21. The three conditions for mortal sin

There are three conditions necessary for mortal sin. All three must be present for the sin to be mortal; if any one is missing, the sin is venial.

They are: "grave matter," "full knowledge," and "full consent."

First, the sin must be a "grave matter," an act in itself seriously sinful, like adultery, grand larceny, blasphemy, or murder (including the murder of unborn children or old people). The objective act itself must be seriously (gravely) sinful.

Second, there must be full knowledge that the act is a serious sin.

Third, there must be full consent of the will. Sins of weakness, committed reluctantly, in spite of a sincere effort to avoid them, are not mortal sins. Fear, addiction, and compulsion diminish personal freedom and therefore responsibility for evil acts, but they do not wholly remove it. "The promptings of feelings and passions can also diminish the voluntary and free character of the offense, as can external pressures or pathological disorders" (CCC 1860) – as is probably the case in many suicides.

The first of the three conditions for mortal sin is public, objective, and the same for everyone; it is easy to tell whether a sin is a serious sin, or grave matter, since "[*g*]*rave* matter is specified by the Ten Commandments…" (CCC 1858). But the other two

conditions are subjective, psychological, personal conditions. They are much harder to discern, even in oneself, much less in others. Therefore although we can define and judge what mortal sin is in itself, we cannot judge who is in the state of mortal sin, and should not try to (see Matthew 7:7). "[A]lthough we can judge that an act is in itself a grave offense, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God" (CCC 1861), for we do not know others' deepest minds, hearts, and motives.

22. Why venial sins require our attention

"Venial" sins are not *unimportant.* All sins are sin; in fact, sin is the most terrible thing in the world, for it separates us from God, whether partially (venial sin) or totally (mortal sin), and God is the ultimate source of *all* good and all our happiness. But venial sin, because it concerns less serious matter, does not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace or of friendship with God or of eternal happiness.

The *Catechism* gives three specific reasons why venial sins require our attention:

1) "Venial sin weakens charity," i.e. weakens the life and grace of God in us.
2) "[I]t merits temporal punishment…"
3) Worst of all, "[d]eliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin" (CCC 1863).

"'While he is in the flesh, man cannot help but have at least some light sins. But do not despise these sins which we call 'light'…. A number of light objects makes a great mass; a number of drops fills a river; a number of grains makes a heap. What then is our hope? Above all, confession….'[135]" (Saint Augustine; CCC 1863). For sacramental confession is not just an x-ray, it is an

operation: it really removes the cancer of sin (see Part I, Section 8 and Part II, Section 5).

23. The seven deadly sins

Tradition highlights seven sins as especially dangerous, or "deadly." They are the soul-deadening opposites to the soul-enlivening virtues commended in the Beatitudes.

Pride is self-assertion and selfishness; *poverty of spirit* is humility and selflessness.

Avarice is greed, the selfish reach to grab and keep for oneself; *mercy* is the reach to give, to share with others, even the undeserving.

Envy resents another's happiness; *mourning* shares another's unhappiness.

Wrath wills harm and destruction; *meekness* refuses to harm and *peacemaking* prevents destruction.

Sloth refuses to exert the will toward the good, even when it is present; *hunger and thirst for righteousness* are the passionate desire for good even when it is absent.

Lust dissipates and divides the soul, desiring every attractive body; *purity of heart* centers and unifies the soul, desiring the one God alone.

Gluttony wants to consume an inordinate amount of worldly goods; *being persecuted* is being deprived of even ordinate necessities.

24. Sin and grace

The saints understand both sin and grace most clearly, for sanctity clarifies our vision, while sin clouds it.

The saints are always clearer than anyone else about four facts about human sin and divine grace:

1) that they themselves are sinners;

2) about the great harm all sins, even "little" sins, do to eternal souls, to divine charity and beatitude (thus the saints often pity the murderer more than the murdered);
3) about the inexhaustibility of divine mercy and forgiveness ("where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" – Romans 5:20);
4) and about our need to repent and confess in order to receive this forgiveness.

For "'God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us'[116]" (Saint Augustine; CCC 1847). That is why "[t]o receive his mercy, we must admit our faults [repent and confess]" (CCC 1847). Thus the denial of the very existence of sin ("I'm OK, you're OK") imperils our very salvation, as living in denial of a life-threatening disease imperils our life. God offers free grace and mercy, like a doctor offering a free operation, but "to do its work grace must uncover sin…" (CCC 1848).

This is a very unpopular and misunderstood message to our modern "therapeutic" culture of self-esteem. But it is far better to experience undeserved rejection from a million ignorant men then deserved rejection from the one all-knowing God.

Notes from the Catechism in Order of Their Appearance in Quotations Used in this Section

63 Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus*, 1: PG 44, 1200D.

79 *Rom* 1:17; *Gal* 5:6.

100 *Rom* 5:10.

106 Cf. *1 Jn* 4:19.

112 *Gal* 5:22-23 (Vulg.).

12 *Mt* 5:3-12.

129 Cf. *1 Jn* 5:16-17.

135 Saint Augustine, *In ep. Jo.* 1, 6: PL 35, 1982.

116 Saint Augustine, *Sermo* 169, 11, 13: PL 38, 923.