The GREAT BOOKS READER

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Contents

ON READING EXCERPTS OF GREAT BOOKS

You are reading a book that intends to introduce you to a better life. It does not intend to save your soul, as there is a greater collection of books in sacred Scripture to do that, but it does hope to help improve your mind. If we want to love the Lord God with our mind, it's best to make that mind as sharp and attractive as possible.

Christians look forward to a better kingdom, the perfect kingdom of God, but on this side of its full manifestation, we go on living. Our goal is to become fit subjects of that civilization, and while all of us were born human, created in God's image, this heritage only grants us the potential to become civilized. Virtuous practices—for example, reading and following an argument—help us to get there.

Great Books Reader is a useful first handbook for facilitating one important virtue: being well-read. Being well-read is not sufficient, and it isn't the highest virtue to which we can strive, but it is both necessary and practical. We are, after all, people of a Great Book; no Christian leader ought to choose illiteracy or intentionally fail to develop the intellectual skills needed to read well.

Brief Defense of a (Nearly) Indefensible Project

Building a book of excerpts from great writers has risks. What if readers stop their exploration? What if instead of using their thoughts to join the discussion, to think for themselves, students simply adopt our opinions about the texts? What if this becomes the kind of volume that's purchased by home decorators to give a living room shelf a touch of class?

Reading only a bit of a great book (e.g., Plato's *Republic*) is like getting engaged but never marrying. The initial experience is pleasurable but can become frustrating if prolonged. Some things are only good in anticipation of a higher good that's coming. Following four consecutive lost Super Bowls, Buffalo Bills fans understand that getting to the big game is not the same as winning it. I'm told that being a bridesmaid (and not a bride) loses its savor sometime around the third wedding.

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Let us warn you, then, away from these misuses of this book.

Do not use this text to avoid reading the books featured here in their entirety. This would twist the intentions of the authors, because though *Great Books Reader* is an introduction to writers you will love, it is not a full courtship. The best writers are approachable, but really getting to know them isn't cheap or easy. Each reflects God's grace in powerful ways—even when they have tried to reject Him. Knowing them will require a lifetime of effort; this book is a start at some literary matchmaking.

Reading an essay about a writer like Shakespeare always risks another sort of silliness. Time spent understanding a piece on *Hamlet* is usually better spent reading *Hamlet*. If the introductions here become a substitute for reading the real things, then this book will have failed. An appetizer will have become the main course!

Some time-pressed soul might question why Christians should bother reading these books at all. Why not just read the Bible? Well, there are solid reasons we should read great books. Again, we are a people of a Great Book and so should have a vested interest in literature in general.

Real love may be exclusive in its devotion, but any particular love creates the possibilities of other loves. In my experience, loving my wife better helps me love my friends better. Higher loves empower lower loves, and lower loves are practice for higher loves. If I love my neighbor as

myself, then loving my country, an accumulation of neighbors, generally will follow.

Growing up loving the Bible made me apt to love other books. I don't love them in the same way I love the Bible, but a lesser love came easily. The splendor of sunlight does not take away from the glory of the stars.

Most important, any reader can fight with the lesser books, great though they may be, without risk of impiety. In contrast, sacred Scriptures are God's Word, and an attitude of reverence is appropriate when touching them; reverence can make it hard to hone skills. Generally, a man should not learn to box with his mother.

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A tough great book is a perfect proving ground to become ready and able to read the Book of Books. All good books reflect God, but not all good books are about Him any more than every good song needs to be a praise song. A good person probably cannot *just* read the Bible . . . even after he has learned to read well.

Man needs more than God; he needs other men. Before the fall, when man walked with God alone in the Garden, God said it was not good for him to be alone. He created family so that men and women could cleave to each other and find natural community. Ideally this community would stretch over the ages, and we could ask Father Adam for advice from his store of wisdom gained over the millennia.

Death has cut us off from some of that community. We cannot ask Michelangelo his view of art deco, or request that Aristotle comment on *Till We Have Faces*. This loneliness is not good for us, yet books lessen it a bit. By reading older books we get a taste of the conversations of heaven.

Furthermore, separation from our ancestors has made us prejudiced. It's easy to love the familiar, but past ages come to us in new ways. For instance, they bore or disturb us. The dead say things we would or could not say and in ways that appall, bless, and startle us.

Reading them is a part of diversity. The easiest voices to ignore are those of the dead; nevertheless, they often are the ones we need most. We don't hear from the Christians of the sixteenth century on television, or the ancient Romans on our radio. We must turn to books and be willing to have open minds as we do so. They're like us in their humanity but different in their time. This difference sometimes will make no difference,

but at other moments it will allow them to speak prophetically. The best revelation of men as they are today often comes from men long dead.

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So this book of excerpts is a guide to the voices we will hear when we open the pages of the greatest books. Nobody *must* read it, but most of us *should*, if we have no other guides.

Why?

For one thing, like losing weight, reading the classics is a goal many of us fail to achieve. Each January I set out to weigh less, but too often I don't succeed because I try to do too much too quickly. Returning to the gym tempts me to start where I left off, but my body isn't ready. Strain or soreness sets in, and I quit without gaining any good from my pain.

Moderation is as important in the life of the mind as it is in the body. Readers lead, but the surrounding world does not encourage us to take the time to read. It has never been easier to get books but never harder to find the quiet needed to study them. Even colleges are full of events where reading gets in the way of floor activities.

We know we should read more, and the temptation is to get a complete "great books set" and plunge into it. This rarely works, though, because few of us are ready for that level of challenge. This book is a chance for the rest of us to begin where we can.

Great Books Reader also provides guides that most of us don't have in our neighborhoods. When Socrates was searching for truth, he practiced it in a community of students. Nobody should learn alone, and it's usually not too difficult to find someone to read with us. But who will teach us?

Of course, fundamentally, believers do not need a teacher for the deepest truths. Jesus lives within us, and the image of God abides in every human being. Based on common grace, there is no person who can fail to find God if God wishes to be found. *But even though we need no gurus, we may need guides.*

Most of us simply do not pursue the Way, the dialectic, "the Great Conversation" long enough. What do we mean by the Way? Reasoned discourse in a community. The path of knowledge. Following the argument moved by love in pursuit of God. Embracing anything that is good, true, and beautiful, and thinking on those things. While you may not *need* a guide in this journey, a good guide is helpful.

Accordingly, this book tries to fill the role of a good tutor in a great books discussion. The tutor does not tell the student what to think but instead learns with the student. Still, he or she has been reading the books for years and can, for example, ask important first questions. Even if the student comes to reject the opinions of the guiding tutor, the Conversation has been aided. View the essays in this volume as guides in your reading of the excerpts that these wise people have chosen. They are all following—and are committed to—the Way.

Some are experts on the books they're commenting on, recognized by the academic community for their scholarship on these particular works. On the other hand, I picked some amateur essay writers who are wise in the Way but are not scholars of the particular book on which they write. They come to the texts with love and experience but without dogmas to defend.

The essay writers are fellow students of the real guides: the authors whose works form the bulk of this book. Spend most of your time poring over Virgil or Aquinas and then watch your fellow students, perhaps further down the Way, as they too wrestle with these guides. The real teachers in this book are the great writers, and you get to listen in to the conversation between them and the bright fellow students in the subsequent essays.

Ultimately, this book presents an immediate overview of the Great Conversation. In the West of the world, this conversation has being going on for three thousand years or more. We have chosen to follow this thread not because it is the only or even the best conversation, but because it is the discussion into which we were born. Other books could introduce other texts and other traditions; even so, regardless of the starting point, the Way will be the same.

Making the "Barely Okay" a Friend of the Good: How to Use This Book

The perfect can be the enemy of the good, because striving for better than the possible can prevent any achievement at all. Turning up our noses at the barely okay can also be the enemy of the good, because it can prevent necessary growth in ourselves or in our students. This book recognizes that all of us are lucky to have avoided Victorian corsets and

collars but unlucky to have missed out on the good parts of a Victorian education. Our Latin and Greek are poor or nonexistent, and we've found long chapters hard.

For those of us raised on (or become accustomed to) reading blogs, *Great Books Reader* is a start at reading great books. You can follow the Way reading blogs, because anything that provokes a discussion among a group of friends is valuable. Sadly, however, most blogs do not have the depth or beauty of the great books. You can learn how to start *better* conversations through being introduced to the best topics and guides.

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Here are five tips on how to use *GBR* in starting or going further along on the Way.

First, after the brief introduction, read the text—the excerpt—quickly; then, read it carefully a second time. Consider taking a moment to write about three hundred words on what you think the author is saying. (If writing is hard for you, record your ideas.) Only then turn to the essay by one of your fellow students and discover what he or she has to say.

Second, read charitably. Don't look for problems in the ideas on the first read. Great men and women have patterned their lives on the books you are reading. Why? What's good about it? What's true? What's beautiful? Try to get inside the world of Homer and see what it would be like to think with his view of reality. Only then can you begin to judge it, because only then do you really understand it.

Third, read argumentatively. Charity does not preclude being opinionated! After your second reading, compare, and bring into line, every thought with God's Word. Then realize that you have only brought those thoughts into line with *your thoughts about* God's Word! Ask yourself: are you right in your comprehension of that Word? Have you rightly understood the author, and the Author?

Embrace a point of view, and argue for it forcefully, but be meek enough to realize you might need to change your ideas. Commit yourself, and then see what you find.

Don't make the mistake of hiding any idea from the Way. Every thought must be examined by God—the Word, the Logos—including our beliefs about Him.

Also, don't make the secondary mistake of starting over all the time

in the vain belief that this shows humility. Ask the questions you really have, not ones you think you should have.

If you come to wonder about God's existence while reading this book, enjoy the wonder. But don't try to force yourself to doubt His existence if you truly do not. A double-minded and unstable man uses "reason" to undermine things he really knows to be true in order to justify his folly or sin. The single-minded man pursues the Logos knowing it's the only choice he actually has.

Fourth, don't try to get a "last word" on any of the authors. There is no harm—and much value—in ending with tentative conclusions. It's highly unlikely any of us will ever fathom all the depths of any of these writers before we get to continue the Discussion in the real City of God. Spend some time with each, wrestle honestly, and then move on to the next. Come back another time and try again.

As with physical fitness, mental fitness is a lifetime project.

Fifth, pick at least one author and go read the entire work found in partial form here. I would recommend starting with Homer, because he is accessible and there are many good translations of his great works. If America does become a post-Christian society, then something like his view of reality may prevail.

One more thing: Avoid secondary sources, and don't try to master all the details about an author. Most of us have loved something or other to death—like the *Star Trek* fan who watches all the episodes and movies too many times and eventually ruins the fun. Being an "expert" on Shakespeare is not the same thing as enjoying and learning from his plays. There's a place for the expert, but most of us will remain happy amateurs. Embrace that status.

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This book is *not* Wikipedia for Christians. If you want to know more about the writer's life, check the Internet, but do so modestly. You're being introduced to the Great Conversation: a dozens-of-centuries-long dialogue between reasonable people. Don't lose the flow of ideas through time by becoming overly focused on details.

It's generally more important to listen to Plato than to know biographical facts about him. Treat the authors as if they were alive and speaking to you. Context is significant for a deeper understanding of them, but first try

to grasp what endures in their work. What do they say that causes their words to speak to most people at most places at most times?

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Note: Each excerpt is preceded by a short introduction to help you form good questions while you read. Different scholars and intellectuals will then respond to the piece in an essay and offer some insights. I'll often intentionally broach different issues than the essay writers. Try to hear the two of us dialogue with the great author.

Once again: Follow the argument, what Plato would call the logos, and keep an open mind. This pursuit is good for your soul and cannot harm you *unless you stop being a follower*.

That might feel scary or tiring: scary because you might think it implies there is no truth, or tiring because it possibly sets up an endless journey. Rather, the passionate pursuit of the argument is *hopeful*—it assumes that wondering can be wonderful and that humankind can continue making progress toward finding the truth. And the journey is not, so far as we know, endless; death brings us to the as-yet "undiscovered country" where, reports suggest, we will find full rest.

It's crucial to grasp that not all the authors in this book are in (or near) the same place in their pursuit of the Logos. Most are Christians, but not all. We represent many traditions within Christendom, though most of the Christian authors are evangelical in practice and in conviction, and most of them resonate with more traditional forms of the faith. I am convinced with Justin Martyr that none of us can follow the argument, the logos, without following the Logos (the Word).

If Christianity is true, then every argument will, if pursued to the end, lead to Jesus.

Of the making of books there is no end, especially if one is allowed to make books out of excerpts of other books. But there is an end to our time, indeed to our lives. We had better prepare for the one certainty of that life: death. These excerpts will demonstrate how to live well and show how to die well.

John Mark N. Reynolds
Torrey Honors Institute, 2011

HOMER

Ancient Greek (c. 850 BC)

Before the dialectical way was discovered (i.e., using reasoned argument in community with others), men told stories to find the truth. There *is* a place for storytelling in the dialect, but these ancient men *only* had the stories. Short of divine revelation, men walked blindly and tried to make sense of the world in the best way they knew.

In the earth's "West," the blind poet Homer was the first known great storyteller. He wove an epic around the fall of the magnificent city of Troy, and he penned a second massive story around the return home of one of the war's victors, Odysseus.

These tales are the epitome of centuries of thought, put together by genius, into a coherent worldview. These storytellers understood the futility of life and the nature of evil. Homer begins his *Iliad* in a war that does not end with the close of the text. His hero, Odysseus, wants only to come home; he recognizes that the life of the Greek gods was not suitable for men.

Hope, in Homer, is less a virtue than a cheat imposed on humanity by the gods to keep us going. His deities are whimsical, and many are wicked.

There is no fundamental order or pattern to the universe, and if Homer is right, then philosophy and science would be impossible.

Homer was so great that Greek culture became imaginatively captive to him. This was a good thing up to a point, because his works were spectacularly wise. They had limits, however, and when those were reached, the Greek religious establishment refused to change. Homer made powerful men slavish devotees of idols unfit for a free man's worship.

Socrates died for his failure to defeat the Homeric idols, and even Plato could not remove Homer's evils from the Western imagination. It fell to a Jewish rabbi named Paul to begin the process, on the Areopagus in Athens, centuries after Socrates died.

Christians are left with a Homer lacking the power of an establishment religion. The wisdom and beauty in the poet remains for us without the great peril. Polytheism may return in the post-Christian parts of the West, but if it does, it would do well to read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, because this is the best of paganism.

There is more virtue in Homer, and less danger, than in a prosperity gospel preacher, after all.

FROM

The Odyssey

Book IX

And Ulysses answered, "King Alcinous, it is a good thing to hear a bard with such a divine voice as this man has. There is nothing better or more delightful than when a whole people make merry together, with the guests sitting orderly to listen, while the table is loaded with bread and meats, and the cup-bearer draws wine and fills his cup for every man. This is indeed as fair a sight as a man can see. Now, however, since you are inclined to ask the story of my sorrows, and rekindle my own sad memories in respect of

them, I do not know how to begin, nor yet how to continue and conclude my tale, for the hand of heaven has been laid heavily upon me.

"Firstly, then, I will tell you my name that you too may know it, and one day, if I outlive this time of sorrow, may become my guests though I live so far away from all of you. I am Ulysses son of Laertes, reknowned among mankind for all manner of subtlety, so that my fame ascends to heaven. I live in Ithaca, where there is a high mountain called Neritum, covered with forests; and not far from it there is a group of islands very near to one another—Dulichium, Same, and the wooded island of Zacynthus. It lies squat on the horizon, all highest up in the sea towards the sunset, while the others lie away from it towards dawn. It is a rugged island, but it breeds brave men, and my eyes know none that they better love to look upon. The goddess Calypso kept me with her in her cave, and wanted me to marry her, as did also the cunning Aeaean goddess Circe; but they could neither of them persuade me, for there is nothing dearer to a man than his own country and his parents, and however splendid a home he may have in a foreign country, if it be far from father or mother, he does not care about it. Now, however, I will tell you of the many hazardous adventures which by Jove's will I met with on my return from Troy.

"When I had set sail thence the wind took me first to Ismarus, which is the city of the Cicons. There I sacked the town and put the people to the sword. We took their wives and also much booty, which we divided equitably amongst us, so that none might have reason to complain. I then said that we had better make off at once, but my men very foolishly would not obey me, so they stayed there drinking much wine and killing great numbers of sheep and oxen on the sea shore. Meanwhile the Cicons cried out for help to other Cicons who lived inland. These were more in number, and stronger, and they were more skilled in the art of war, for they could fight, either from chariots or on foot as the occasion served; in the morning, therefore, they came as thick as leaves and bloom in summer, and the hand of heaven was against us, so that we were hard pressed. They set the battle in array near the ships, and the hosts aimed their bronze-shod spears at one another. So long as the day waxed and it was still morning, we held our own against them, though they were more in number than we; but as the sun went down, towards the time when men loose their oxen,

the Cicons got the better of us, and we lost half a dozen men from every ship we had; so we got away with those that were left.

"Thence we sailed onward with sorrow in our hearts, but glad to have escaped death though we had lost our comrades, nor did we leave till we had thrice invoked each one of the poor fellows who had perished by the hands of the Cicons. Then Jove raised the North wind against us till it blew a hurricane, so that land and sky were hidden in thick clouds, and night sprang forth out of the heavens. We let the ships run before the gale, but the force of the wind tore our sails to tatters, so we took them down for fear of shipwreck, and rowed our hardest towards the land. There we lay two days and two nights suffering much alike from toil and distress of mind, but on the morning of the third day we again raised our masts, set sail, and took our places, letting the wind and steersmen direct our ship. I should have got home at that time unharmed had not the North wind and the currents been against me as I was doubling Cape Malea, and set me off my course hard by the island of Cythera.

"I was driven thence by foul winds for a space of nine days upon the sea, but on the tenth day we reached the land of the Lotus-eaters, who live on a food that comes from a kind of flower. Here we landed to take in fresh water, and our crews got their mid-day meal on the shore near the ships. When they had eaten and drunk I sent two of my company to see what manner of men the people of the place might be, and they had a third man under them. They started at once, and went about among the Lotus-eaters, who did them no hurt, but gave them to eat of the lotus, which was so delicious that those who ate of it left off caring about home, and did not even want to go back and say what had happened to them, but were for staying and munching lotus with the Lotus-eater without thinking further of their return; nevertheless, though they wept bitterly I forced them back to the ships and made them fast under the benches. Then I told the rest to go on board at once, lest any of them should taste of the lotus and leave off wanting to get home, so they took their places and smote the grey sea with their oars.

"We sailed hence, always in much distress, till we came to the land of the lawless and inhuman Cyclopes. Now the Cyclopes neither plant nor plough, but trust in providence, and live on such wheat, barley, and grapes as grow wild without any kind of tillage, and their wild grapes yield

them wine as the sun and the rain may grow them. They have no laws nor assemblies of the people, but live in caves on the tops of high mountains; each is lord and master in his family, and they take no account of their neighbours.

"Now off their harbour there lies a wooded and fertile island not quite close to the land of the Cyclopes, but still not far. It is overrun with wild goats, that breed there in great numbers and are never disturbed by foot of man; for sportsmen—who as a rule will suffer so much hardship in forest or among mountain precipices—do not go there, nor yet again is it ever ploughed or fed down, but it lies a wilderness untilled and unsown from year to year, and has no living thing upon it but only goats. For the Cyclopes have no ships, nor yet shipwrights who could make ships for them; they cannot therefore go from city to city, or sail over the sea to one another's country as people who have ships can do; if they had had these they would have colonized the island, for it is a very good one, and would yield everything in due season. There are meadows that in some places come right down to the sea shore, well watered and full of luscious grass; grapes would do there excellently; there is level land for ploughing, and it would always yield heavily at harvest time, for the soil is deep. There is a good harbour where no cables are wanted, nor yet anchors, nor need a ship be moored, but all one has to do is to beach one's vessel and stay there till the wind becomes fair for putting out to sea again. At the head of the harbour there is a spring of clear water coming out of a cave, and there are poplars growing all round it.

"Here we entered, but so dark was the night that some god must have brought us in, for there was nothing whatever to be seen. A thick mist hung all round our ships; the moon was hidden behind a mass of clouds so that no one could have seen the island if he had looked for it, nor were there any breakers to tell us we were close in shore before we found ourselves upon the land itself; when, however, we had beached the ships, we took down the sails, went ashore and camped upon the beach till daybreak.

"When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, we admired the island and wandered all over it, while the nymphs Jove's daughters roused the wild goats that we might get some meat for our dinner. On this we fetched our spears and bows and arrows from the ships, and dividing ourselves into three bands began to shoot the goats. Heaven

sent us excellent sport; I had twelve ships with me, and each ship got nine goats, while my own ship had ten; thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we ate and drank our fill—and we had plenty of wine left, for each one of us had taken many jars full when we sacked the city of the Cicons, and this had not yet run out. While we were feasting we kept turning our eyes towards the land of the Cyclopes, which was hard by, and saw the smoke of their stubble fires. We could almost fancy we heard their voices and the bleating of their sheep and goats, but when the sun went down and it came on dark, we camped down upon the beach, and next morning I called a council.

"'Stay here, my brave fellows,' said I, 'all the rest of you, while I go with my ship and exploit these people myself: I want to see if they are uncivilized savages, or a hospitable and humane race.'

"I went on board, bidding my men to do so also and loose the hawsers; so they took their places and smote the grey sea with their oars. When we got to the land, which was not far, there, on the face of a cliff near the sea, we saw a great cave overhung with laurels. It was a station for a great many sheep and goats, and outside there was a large yard, with a high wall round it made of stones built into the ground and of trees both pine and oak. This was the abode of a huge monster who was then away from home shepherding his flocks. He would have nothing to do with other people, but led the life of an outlaw. He was a horrid creature, not like a human being at all, but resembling rather some crag that stands out boldly against the sky on the top of a high mountain.

"I told my men to draw the ship ashore, and stay where they were, all but the twelve best among them, who were to go along with myself. I also took a goatskin of sweet black wine which had been given me by Maron, Apollo son of Euanthes, who was priest of Apollo the patron god of Ismarus, and lived within the wooded precincts of the temple. When we were sacking the city we respected him, and spared his life, as also his wife and child; so he made me some presents of great value—seven talents of fine gold, and a bowl of silver, with twelve jars of sweet wine, unblended, and of the most exquisite flavour. Not a man nor maid in the house knew about it, but only himself, his wife, and one housekeeper: when he drank it he mixed twenty parts of water to one of wine, and yet the fragrance from the mixing-bowl was so exquisite that it was impossible to refrain

from drinking. I filled a large skin with this wine, and took a wallet full of provisions with me, for my mind misgave me that I might have to deal with some savage who would be of great strength, and would respect neither right nor law.

"We soon reached his cave, but he was out shepherding, so we went inside and took stock of all that we could see. His cheese-racks were loaded with cheeses, and he had more lambs and kids than his pens could hold. They were kept in separate flocks; first there were the hoggets, then the oldest of the younger lambs and lastly the very young ones all kept apart from one another; as for his dairy, all the vessels, bowls, and milk pails into which he milked, were swimming with whey. When they saw all this, my men begged me to let them first steal some cheeses, and make off with them to the ship; they would then return, drive down the lambs and kids, put them on board and sail away with them. It would have been indeed better if we had done so but I would not listen to them, for I wanted to see the owner himself, in the hope that he might give me a present. When, however, we saw him my poor men found him ill to deal with.

"We lit a fire, offered some of the cheeses in sacrifice, ate others of them, and then sat waiting till the Cyclops should come in with his sheep. When he came, he brought in with him a huge load of dry firewood to light the fire for his supper, and this he flung with such a noise on to the floor of his cave that we hid ourselves for fear at the far end of the cavern. Meanwhile he drove all the ewes inside, as well as the she-goats that he was going to milk, leaving the males, both rams and he-goats, outside in the yards. Then he rolled a huge stone to the mouth of the cave—so huge that two and twenty strong four-wheeled waggons would not be enough to draw it from its place against the doorway. When he had so done he sat down and milked his ewes and goats, all in due course, and then let each of them have her own young. He curdled half the milk and set it aside in wicker strainers, but the other half he poured into bowls that he might drink it for his supper. When he had got through with all his work, he lit the fire, and then caught sight of us, whereon he said:

"'Strangers, who are you? Where do sail from? Are you traders, or do you sail the sea as rovers, with your hands against every man, and every man's hand against you?'

"We were frightened out of our senses by his loud voice and monstrous

form, but I managed to say, 'We are Achaeans on our way home from Troy, but by the will of Jove, and stress of weather, we have been driven far out of our course. We are the people of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, who has won infinite renown throughout the whole world, by sacking so great a city and killing so many people. We therefore humbly pray you to show us some hospitality, and otherwise make us such presents as visitors may reasonably expect. May your excellency fear the wrath of heaven, for we are your suppliants, and Jove takes all respectable travellers under his protection, for he is the avenger of all suppliants and foreigners in distress.'

"To this he gave me but a pitiless answer, 'Stranger,' said he, 'you are a fool, or else you know nothing of this country. Talk to me, indeed, about fearing the gods or shunning their anger? We Cyclopes do not care about Jove or any of your blessed gods, for we are ever so much stronger than they. I shall not spare either yourself or your companions out of any regard for Jove, unless I am in the humour for doing so. And now tell me where you made your ship fast when you came on shore. Was it round the point, or is she lying straight off the land?'

"He said this to draw me out, but I was too cunning to be caught in that way, so I answered with a lie; 'Neptune,' said I, 'sent my ship on to the rocks at the far end of your country, and wrecked it. We were driven on to them from the open sea, but I and those who are with me escaped the jaws of death.'

"The cruel wretch vouchsafed me not one word of answer, but with a sudden clutch he gripped up two of my men at once and dashed them down upon the ground as though they had been puppies. Their brains were shed upon the ground, and the earth was wet with their blood. Then he tore them limb from limb and supped upon them. He gobbled them up like a lion in the wilderness, flesh, bones, marrow, and entrails, without leaving anything uneaten. As for us, we wept and lifted up our hands to heaven on seeing such a horrid sight, for we did not know what else to do; but when the Cyclops had filled his huge paunch, and had washed down his meal of human flesh with a drink of neat milk, he stretched himself full length upon the ground among his sheep, and went to sleep. I was at first inclined to seize my sword, draw it, and drive it into his vitals, but I reflected that if I did we should all certainly be lost, for we should never be able to shift the stone which the monster

had put in front of the door. So we stayed sobbing and sighing where we were till morning came.

"When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, he again lit his fire, milked his goats and ewes, all quite rightly, and then let each have her own young one; as soon as he had got through with all his work, he clutched up two more of my men, and began eating them for his morning's meal. Presently, with the utmost ease, he rolled the stone away from the door and drove out his sheep, but he at once put it back again—as easily as though he were merely clapping the lid on to a quiver full of arrows. As soon as he had done so he shouted, and cried 'Shoo, shoo,' after his sheep to drive them on to the mountain; so I was left to scheme some way of taking my revenge and covering myself with glory.

"In the end I deemed it would be the best plan to do as follows. The Cyclops had a great club which was lying near one of the sheep pens; it was of green olive wood, and he had cut it intending to use it for a staff as soon as it should be dry. It was so huge that we could only compare it to the mast of a twenty-oared merchant vessel of large burden, and able to venture out into open sea. I went up to this club and cut off about six feet of it; I then gave this piece to the men and told them to fine it evenly off at one end, which they proceeded to do, and lastly I brought it to a point myself, charring the end in the fire to make it harder. When I had done this I hid it under dung, which was lying about all over the cave, and told the men to cast lots which of them should venture along with myself to lift it and bore it into the monster's eye while he was asleep. The lot fell upon the very four whom I should have chosen, and I myself made five. In the evening the wretch came back from shepherding, and drove his flocks into the cave—this time driving them all inside, and not leaving any in the yards; I suppose some fancy must have taken him, or a god must have prompted him to do so. As soon as he had put the stone back to its place against the door, he sat down, milked his ewes and his goats all quite rightly, and then let each have her own young one; when he had got through with all this work, he gripped up two more of my men, and made his supper off them. So I went up to him with an ivy-wood bowl of black wine in my hands:

"'Look here, Cyclops,' said I, 'you have been eating a great deal of man's flesh, so take this and drink some wine, that you may see what kind

of liquor we had on board my ship. I was bringing it to you as a drink-offering, in the hope that you would take compassion upon me and further me on my way home, whereas all you do is to go on ramping and raving most intolerably. You ought to be ashamed yourself; how can you expect people to come see you any more if you treat them in this way?'

"He then took the cup and drank. He was so delighted with the taste of the wine that he begged me for another bowl full. 'Be so kind,' he said, 'as to give me some more, and tell me your name at once. I want to make you a present that you will be glad to have. We have wine even in this country, for our soil grows grapes and the sun ripens them, but this drinks like nectar and ambrosia all in one.'

"I then gave him some more; three times did I fill the bowl for him, and three times did he drain it without thought or heed; then, when I saw that the wine had got into his head, I said to him as plausibly as I could: 'Cyclops, you ask my name and I will tell it you; give me, therefore, the present you promised me; my name is Noman; this is what my father and mother and my friends have always called me.'

"But the cruel wretch said, 'Then I will eat all Noman's comrades before Noman himself, and will keep Noman for the last. This is the present that I will make him.'

"As he spoke he reeled, and fell sprawling face upwards on the ground. His great neck hung heavily backwards and a deep sleep took hold upon him. Presently he turned sick, and threw up both wine and the gobbets of human flesh on which he had been gorging, for he was very drunk. Then I thrust the beam of wood far into the embers to heat it, and encouraged my men lest any of them should turn faint-hearted. When the wood, green though it was, was about to blaze, I drew it out of the fire glowing with heat, and my men gathered round me, for heaven had filled their hearts with courage. We drove the sharp end of the beam into the monster's eye, and bearing upon it with all my weight I kept turning it round and round as though I were boring a hole in a ship's plank with an auger, which two men with a wheel and strap can keep on turning as long as they choose. Even thus did we bore the red hot beam into his eye, till the boiling blood bubbled all over it as we worked it round and round, so that the steam from the burning eyeball scalded his eyelids and eyebrows, and the roots of the eye sputtered in the fire. As a blacksmith plunges an axe or hatchet into

cold water to temper it—for it is this that gives strength to the iron—and it makes a great hiss as he does so, even thus did the Cyclops' eye hiss round the beam of olive wood, and his hideous yells made the cave ring again. We ran away in a fright, but he plucked the beam all besmirched with gore from his eye, and hurled it from him in a frenzy of rage and pain, shouting as he did so to the other Cyclopes who lived on the bleak headlands near him; so they gathered from all quarters round his cave when they heard him crying, and asked what was the matter with him.

"'What ails you, Polyphemus,' said they, 'that you make such a noise, breaking the stillness of the night, and preventing us from being able to sleep? Surely no man is carrying off your sheep? Surely no man is trying to kill you either by fraud or by force?'

"But Polyphemus shouted to them from inside the cave, 'Noman is killing me by fraud! Noman is killing me by force!'

"'Then,' said they, 'if no man is attacking you, you must be ill; when Jove makes people ill, there is no help for it, and you had better pray to your father Neptune.'

"Then they went away, and I laughed inwardly at the success of my clever stratagem, but the Cyclops, groaning and in an agony of pain, felt about with his hands till he found the stone and took it from the door; then he sat in the doorway and stretched his hands in front of it to catch anyone going out with the sheep, for he thought I might be foolish enough to attempt this.

"As for myself I kept on puzzling to think how I could best save my own life and those of my companions; I schemed and schemed, as one who knows that his life depends upon it, for the danger was very great. In the end I deemed that this plan would be the best. The male sheep were well grown, and carried a heavy black fleece, so I bound them noiselessly in threes together, with some of the withies on which the wicked monster used to sleep. There was to be a man under the middle sheep, and the two on either side were to cover him, so that there were three sheep to each man. As for myself there was a ram finer than any of the others, so I caught hold of him by the back, esconced myself in the thick wool under his belly, and flung on patiently to his fleece, face upwards, keeping a firm hold on it all the time.

"Thus, then, did we wait in great fear of mind till morning came, but

when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, the male sheep hurried out to feed, while the ewes remained bleating about the pens waiting to be milked, for their udders were full to bursting; but their master in spite of all his pain felt the backs of all the sheep as they stood upright, without being sharp enough to find out that the men were underneath their bellies. As the ram was going out, last of all, heavy with its fleece and with the weight of my crafty self; Polyphemus laid hold of it and said:

"'My good ram, what is it that makes you the last to leave my cave this morning? You are not wont to let the ewes go before you, but lead the mob with a run whether to flowery mead or bubbling fountain, and are the first to come home again at night; but now you lag last of all. Is it because you know your master has lost his eye, and are sorry because that wicked Noman and his horrid crew have got him down in his drink and blinded him? But I will have his life yet. If you could understand and talk, you would tell me where the wretch is hiding, and I would dash his brains upon the ground till they flew all over the cave. I should thus have some satisfaction for the harm this no-good Noman has done me.'

"As he spoke he drove the ram outside, but when we were a little way out from the cave and yards, I first got from under the ram's belly, and then freed my comrades; as for the sheep, which were very fat, by constantly heading them in the right direction we managed to drive them down to the ship. The crew rejoiced greatly at seeing those of us who had escaped death, but wept for the others whom the Cyclops had killed. However, I made signs to them by nodding and frowning that they were to hush their crying, and told them to get all the sheep on board at once and put out to sea; so they went aboard, took their places, and smote the grey sea with their oars. Then, when I had got as far out as my voice would reach, I began to jeer at the Cyclops.

"'Cyclops,' said I, 'you should have taken better measure of your man before eating up his comrades in your cave. You wretch, eat up your visitors in your own house? You might have known that your sin would find you out, and now Jove and the other gods have punished you.'

"He got more and more furious as he heard me, so he tore the top from off a high mountain, and flung it just in front of my ship so that it was within a little of hitting the end of the rudder. The sea quaked as the rock fell into it, and the wash of the wave it raised carried us back towards

the mainland, and forced us towards the shore. But I snatched up a long pole and kept the ship off, making signs to my men by nodding my head, that they must row for their lives, whereon they laid out with a will. When we had got twice as far as we were before, I was for jeering at the Cyclops again, but the men begged and prayed of me to hold my tongue.

"'Do not,' they exclaimed, 'be mad enough to provoke this savage creature further; he has thrown one rock at us already which drove us back again to the mainland, and we made sure it had been the death of us; if he had then heard any further sound of voices he would have pounded our heads and our ship's timbers into a jelly with the rugged rocks he would have heaved at us, for he can throw them a long way.'

"But I would not listen to them, and shouted out to him in my rage, 'Cyclops, if any one asks you who it was that put your eye out and spoiled your beauty, say it was the valiant warrior Ulysses, son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca.'

"On this he groaned, and cried out, 'Alas, alas, then the old prophecy about me is coming true. There was a prophet here, at one time, a man both brave and of great stature, Telemus son of Eurymus, who was an excellent seer, and did all the prophesying for the Cyclopes till he grew old; he told me that all this would happen to me some day, and said I should lose my sight by the hand of Ulysses. I have been all along expecting some one of imposing presence and superhuman strength, whereas he turns out to be a little insignificant weakling, who has managed to blind my eye by taking advantage of me in my drink; come here, then, Ulysses, that I may make you presents to show my hospitality, and urge Neptune to help you forward on your journey—for Neptune and I are father and son. He, if he so will, shall heal me, which no one else neither god nor man can do.'

"Then I said, 'I wish I could be as sure of killing you outright and sending you down to the house of Hades, as I am that it will take more than Neptune to cure that eye of yours.'

"On this he lifted up his hands to the firmament of heaven and prayed, saying, 'Hear me, great Neptune; if I am indeed your own true-begotten son, grant that Ulysses may never reach his home alive; or if he must get back to his friends at last, let him do so late and in sore plight after losing all his men [let him reach his home in another man's ship and find trouble in his house.']

"Thus did he pray, and Neptune heard his prayer. Then he picked up a rock much larger than the first, swung it aloft and hurled it with prodigious force. It fell just short of the ship, but was within a little of hitting the end of the rudder. The sea quaked as the rock fell into it, and the wash of the wave it raised drove us onwards on our way towards the shore of the island.

"When at last we got to the island where we had left the rest of our ships, we found our comrades lamenting us, and anxiously awaiting our return. We ran our vessel upon the sands and got out of her on to the sea shore; we also landed the Cyclops' sheep, and divided them equitably amongst us so that none might have reason to complain. As for the ram, my companions agreed that I should have it as an extra share; so I sacrificed it on the sea shore, and burned its thigh bones to Jove, who is the lord of all. But he heeded not my sacrifice, and only thought how he might destroy my ships and my comrades.

"Thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we feasted our fill on meat and drink, but when the sun went down and it came on dark, we camped upon the beach. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, I bade my men on board and loose the hawsers. Then they took their places and smote the grey sea with their oars; so we sailed on with sorrow in our hearts, but glad to have escaped death though we had lost our comrades."

Translated by Samuel Butler, 1900

Odysseus a Christian?

Al Geier

When Cyclops devours two of his men, Odysseus, their warrior leader, immediately is inclined to take revenge, draw his sword, and slay—or try to slay—the monster. But just at that moment, it is said, a different kind of spiritedness (*heteros thymos*) prevails. Odysseus realizes that if he kills Cyclops, he and his men will be unable to move the boulder that guards

the entrance to the cave they're in; they'll be trapped forever. Odysseus's restraint here is not an act of virtue but rather, under the circumstances, a completely pragmatic act.

A little later, Odysseus suffers a relapse. When he and his men are departing, he cannot keep himself from boasting to the now blinded Cyclops that it was he, Odysseus from Ithaca, who took his sight. Cyclops, provoked, hurls a boulder and almost destroys the ship. This boast is neither virtuous nor pragmatic, but foolish.

We are reminded of a similar foolishness in *The Iliad* by Achilles, the supposed best of the Achaians. As he is drawing his sword to slay Agamemnon, Athena comes down from Olympus and checks Achilles; she tells him to not draw his sword and to put aside his anger. Achilles does cease from drawing his sword but, in flagrant disregard of the command and the authority of the wise goddess, he does not put aside his anger, with terrible consequences developing.

Odysseus, on the other hand, eventually recovers from his failure and, by the end, has become transformed. When Athena commands Odysseus to cease from anger toward the kin of the slain suitors, "he yielded to her, and his heart was glad." Thus, unlike Achilles, Odysseus shows a proper regard for wisdom. Furthermore, his gladness suggests that here his restraint is not only pragmatic but that of a virtuous man. The first word of *The Odyssey* is "man" (*andra*). After all is said and done, it is Odysseus who's the real man, *and* the best of the Achaians.

"I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). The response of he who is smitten is not at all pragmatic, but neither is mere self-restraint virtuous. Nor is it "goodness" simply not to seek revenge. The only way the evil of smiting can be acknowledged is if it is not denied. And the only way it cannot be denied is if it is affirmed. Offering the other cheek, therefore, is a denial of the goodness of retaliation, of "getting even." Getting even is not just; it is the repetition and increase of evil.

On the other hand, offering the other cheek is the ending of any further evil. It too is a "different kind of spiritedness," where the virtue of not getting even prevails over evening the score.

What Odysseus refrained from doing was the manly thing to do. But it was *also* the Christian thing.

PLATO

Classical Greek (428/427–348/347 BC)

Certain critics of great-books education fear that the books will replace the Book. They understand that not everyone who loves wisdom falls into vanity, but they know that some of us do. They are right to worry, because certain authors are so good, so true, and so beautiful that they can appear to be sufficient. Plato is one of these.

Plato is almost enough.

We have every word Plato ever wrote—a sure sign of the regard every culture, from pagan to Muslim, had for the creator of written philosophy. Nobody burned Plato, because reading his work is the clearest introduction to the dialectic, the way of the Logos. In addition, there have always been disciples ready and willing to protect the texts that taught them the best of earthly practices and some glimpses of heavenly truths.

Three things must be kept in mind when reading Plato.

First, he wrote in dialogue form. He believed certain things, but those beliefs were less important to him than the process of reaching those beliefs. He wrote in a way that would provoke argument. Don't be afraid to be bored . . . and then ask why Plato is going on and on. Ask, and you find an answer.

This is because Plato wrote with great care. He was interested in numbers and grew up on the measured poetry of Homer. Perhaps the highest difficulty in reading Plato is knowing when to stop examining a page, a paragraph, a sentence, a word. The first word of *Republic* says Socrates is "going down," and the rest of the book contains a series of upward and downward motions.

Second, Plato does not speak in his own dialogues. Socrates is the main character in most (and certainly in *Republic*), but that does not mean Socrates is always speaking for Plato. The historic Socrates, like Jesus, wrote nothing, and like Jesus, he died for his virtues. Unlike Jesus, though, Socrates was not the perfect son of God. Be willing to argue with Socrates or question the persuasiveness of his arguments. Note that his best students do so at the start of *Republic*'s Book II.

Third, many Christians, from Justin Martyr through Augustine to C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, have found useful philosophy in Plato. His works contain ideas that are not only compatible with Christianity but can also be used to understand the faith. He anticipated many Jewish and Christian ideas.

Plato did not, however, foresee the Incarnation. In Book VII, he pictures humankind trapped in a cave. He imagines what would happen if one man escaped the trap of our captivity, but he never explains how this miracle might occur.

Christmas is the answer, but Plato only saw winter and never Christmas. Plato, like any man without special revelation, could not reason enough to see the history that would be made at Bethlehem when his beloved Logos came down and revealed himself to us, full of grace and truth.

FROM

The Republic

2.11

Socrates—Glaucon

With these words I was thinking that I had made an end of the discussion; but the end, in truth, proved to be only a beginning. For Glaucon, who is always the most pugnacious of men, was dissatisfied at Thrasymachus' retirement; he wanted to have the battle out. So he said to me: Socrates, do you wish really to persuade us, or only to seem to have persuaded us, that to be just is always better than to be unjust?

I should wish really to persuade you, I replied, if I could.

Then you certainly have not succeeded. Let me ask you now: How would you arrange goods—are there not some which we welcome for their own sakes, and independently of their consequences, as, for example, harmless pleasures and enjoyments, which delight us at the time, although nothing follows from them?

I agree in thinking that there is such a class, I replied.

Is there not also a second class of goods, such as knowledge, sight, health, which are desirable not only in themselves, but also for their results?

Certainly, I said.

And would you not recognize a third class, such as gymnastic, and the care of the sick, and the physician's art; also the various ways of money-making—these do us good but we regard them as disagreeable; and no one would choose them for their own sakes, but only for the sake of some reward or result which flows from them?

There is, I said, this third class also. But why do you ask?

Because I want to know in which of the three classes you would place justice?

In the highest class, I replied—among those goods which he who

would be happy desires both for their own sake and for the sake of their results.

Then the many are of another mind; they think that justice is to be reckoned in the troublesome class, among goods which are to be pursued for the sake of rewards and of reputation, but in themselves are disagreeable and rather to be avoided.

I know, I said, that this is their manner of thinking, and that this was the thesis which Thrasymachus was maintaining just now, when he censured justice and praised injustice. But I am too stupid to be convinced by him.

I wish, he said, that you would hear me as well as him, and then I shall see whether you and I agree. For Thrasymachus seems to me, like a snake, to have been charmed by your voice sooner than he ought to have been; but to my mind the nature of justice and injustice have not yet been made clear. Setting aside their rewards and results, I want to know what they are in themselves, and how they inwardly work in the soul. If you please, then, I will revive the argument of Thrasymachus. And first I will speak of the nature and origin of justice according to the common view of them. Secondly, I will show that all men who practise justice do so against their will, of necessity, but not as a good. And thirdly, I will argue that there is reason in this view, for the life of the unjust is after all better far than the life of the just—if what they say is true, Socrates, since I myself am not of their opinion. But still I acknowledge that I am perplexed when I hear the voices of Thrasymachus and myriads of others dinning in my ears; and, on the other hand, I have never yet heard the superiority of justice to injustice maintained by any one in a satisfactory way. I want to hear justice praised in respect of itself; then I shall be satisfied, and you are the person from whom I think that I am most likely to hear this; and therefore I will praise the unjust life to the utmost of my power, and my manner of speaking will indicate the manner in which I desire to hear you too praising justice and censuring injustice. Will you say whether you approve of my proposal?

Indeed I do; nor can I imagine any theme about which a man of sense would oftener wish to converse.

I am delighted, he replied, to hear you say so, and shall begin by speaking, as I proposed, of the nature and origin of justice.

Glaucon

They say that to do injustice is, by nature, good; to suffer injustice, evil; but that the evil is greater than the good. And so when men have both done and suffered injustice and have had experience of both, not being able to avoid the one and obtain the other, they think that they had better agree among themselves to have neither; hence there arise laws and mutual covenants; and that which is ordained by law is termed by them lawful and just. This they affirm to be the origin and nature of justice—it is a mean or compromise, between the best of all, which is to do injustice and not be punished, and the worst of all, which is to suffer injustice without the power of retaliation; and justice, being at a middle point between the two, is tolerated not as a good, but as the lesser evil, and honoured by reason of the inability of men to do injustice. For no man who is worthy to be called a man would ever submit to such an agreement if he were able to resist; he would be mad if he did. Such is the received account, Socrates, of the nature and origin of justice.

Now that those who practise justice do so involuntarily and because they have not the power to be unjust will best appear if we imagine something of this kind: having given both to the just and the unjust power to do what they will, let us watch and see whither desire will lead them; then we shall discover in the very act the just and unjust man to be proceeding along the same road, following their interest, which all natures deem to be their good, and are only diverted into the path of justice by the force of law. The liberty which we are supposing may be most completely given to them in the form of such a power as is said to have been possessed by Gyges the ancestor of Croesus the Lydian. According to the tradition, Gyges was a shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia; there was a great storm, and an earthquake made an opening in the earth at the place where he was feeding his flock. Amazed at the sight, he descended into the opening, where, among other marvels, he beheld a hollow brazen horse, having doors, at which he stooping and looking in saw a dead body of stature, as appeared to him, more than human, and having nothing on but a gold ring; this he took from the finger of the dead and reascended. Now the shepherds met together, according to custom, that they might send their monthly report about the flocks to the king; into their assembly he came having the ring

on his finger, and as he was sitting among them he chanced to turn the collet of the ring inside his hand, when instantly he became invisible to the rest of the company and they began to speak of him as if he were no longer present. He was astonished at this, and again touching the ring he turned the collet outwards and reappeared; he made several trials of the ring, and always with the same result—when he turned the collet inwards he became invisible, when outwards he reappeared. Whereupon he contrived to be chosen one of the messengers who were sent to the court; where as soon as he arrived he seduced the queen, and with her help conspired against the king and slew him, and took the kingdom. Suppose now that there were two such magic rings, and the just put on one of them and the unjust the other; no man can be imagined to be of such an iron nature that he would stand fast in justice. No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked out of the market, or go into houses and lie with any one at his pleasure, or kill or release from prison whom he would, and in all respects be like a God among men. Then the actions of the just would be as the actions of the unjust; they would both come at last to the same point. And this we may truly affirm to be a great proof that a man is just, not willingly or because he thinks that justice is any good to him individually, but of necessity, for wherever any one thinks that he can safely be unjust, there he is unjust. For all men believe in their hearts that injustice is far more profitable to the individual than justice, and he who argues as I have been supposing, will say that they are right. If you could imagine any one obtaining this power of becoming invisible, and never doing any wrong or touching what was another's, he would be thought by the lookers-on to be a most wretched idiot, although they would praise him to one another's faces, and keep up appearances with one another from a fear that they too might suffer injustice. Enough of this.

Now, if we are to form a real judgment of the life of the just and unjust, we must isolate them; there is no other way; and how is the isolation to be effected? I answer: Let the unjust man be entirely unjust, and the just man entirely just; nothing is to be taken away from either of them, and both are to be perfectly furnished for the work of their respective lives. First, let the unjust be like other distinguished masters of craft; like the skilful pilot or physician, who knows intuitively his own powers and keeps within their limits, and who, if he fails at any point, is able to recover himself. So let

the unjust make his unjust attempts in the right way, and lie hidden if he means to be great in his injustice (he who is found out is nobody): for the highest reach of injustice is: to be deemed just when you are not. Therefore I say that in the perfectly unjust man we must assume the most perfect injustice; there is to be no deduction, but we must allow him, while doing the most unjust acts, to have acquired the greatest reputation for justice. If he have taken a false step he must be able to recover himself; he must be one who can speak with effect, if any of his deeds come to light, and who can force his way where force is required his courage and strength, and command of money and friends. And at his side let us place the just man in his nobleness and simplicity, wishing, as Aeschylus says, to be and not to seem good. There must be no seeming, for if he seem to be just he will be honoured and rewarded, and then we shall not know whether he is just for the sake of justice or for the sake of honours and rewards; therefore, let him be clothed in justice only, and have no other covering; and he must be imagined in a state of life the opposite of the former. Let him be the best of men, and let him be thought the worst; then he will have been put to the proof; and we shall see whether he will be affected by the fear of infamy and its consequences. And let him continue thus to the hour of death; being just and seeming to be unjust. When both have reached the uttermost extreme, the one of justice and the other of injustice, let judgment be given which of them is the happier of the two.

Socrates—Glaucon

Heavens! my dear Glaucon, I said, how energetically you polish them up for the decision, first one and then the other, as if they were two statues.

I do my best, he said. And now that we know what they are like there is no difficulty in tracing out the sort of life which awaits either of them. This I will proceed to describe; but as you may think the description a little too coarse, I ask you to suppose, Socrates, that the words which follow are not mine. Let me put them into the mouths of the eulogists of injustice: They will tell you that the just man who is thought unjust will be scourged, racked, bound—will have his eyes burnt out; and, at last, after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled: Then he will understand

that he ought to seem only, and not to be, just; the words of Aeschylus may be more truly spoken of the unjust than of the just. For the unjust is pursuing a reality; he does not live with a view to appearances—he wants to be really unjust and not to seem only:

His mind has a soil deep and fertile,

Out of which spring his prudent counsels.

In the first place, he is thought just, and therefore bears rule in the city; he can marry whom he will, and give in marriage to whom he will; also he can trade and deal where he likes, and always to his own advantage, because he has no misgivings about injustice and at every contest, whether in public or private, he gets the better of his antagonists, and gains at their expense, and is rich, and out of his gains he can benefit his friends, and harm his enemies; moreover, he can offer sacrifices, and dedicate gifts to the gods abundantly and magnificently, and can honour the gods or any man whom he wants to honour in a far better style than the just, and therefore he is likely to be dearer than they are to the gods. And thus, Socrates, gods and men are said to unite in making the life of the unjust better than the life of the just.

Adeimantus—Socrates

I was going to say something in answer to Glaucon, when Adeimantus, his brother, interposed: Socrates, he said, you do not suppose that there is nothing more to be urged?

Why, what else is there? I answered.

The strongest point of all has not been even mentioned, he replied.

Well, then, according to the proverb, 'Let brother help brother'—if he fails in any part do you assist him; although I must confess that Glaucon has already said quite enough to lay me in the dust, and take from me the power of helping justice.

Adeimantus

Nonsense, he replied. But let me add something more: There is another side to Glaucon's argument about the praise and censure of justice and

injustice, which is equally required in order to bring out what I believe to be his meaning. Parents and tutors are always telling their sons and their wards that they are to be just; but why? not for the sake of justice, but for the sake of character and reputation; in the hope of obtaining for him who is reputed just some of those offices, marriages, and the like which Glaucon has enumerated among the advantages accruing to the unjust from the reputation of justice. More, however, is made of appearances by this class of persons than by the others; for they throw in the good opinion of the gods, and will tell you of a shower of benefits which the heavens, as they say, rain upon the pious; and this accords with the testimony of the noble Hesiod and Homer, the first of whom says, that the gods make the oaks of the just—

> To hear acorns at their summit, and bees in the middle;
> And the sheep are bowed down with the weight of their fleeces.

and many other blessings of a like kind are provided for them. And Homer has a very similar strain; for he speaks of one whose fame is—

> As the fame of some blameless king who, like a god,
> Maintains justice to whom the black earth brings forth
> Wheat and barley, whose trees are bowed with fruit,
> And his sheep never fail to bear, and the sea gives him fish.

Still grander are the gifts of heaven which Musaeus and his son vouchsafe to the just; they take them down into the world below, where they have the saints lying on couches at a feast, everlastingly drunk, crowned with garlands; their idea seems to be that an immortality of drunkenness is the highest meed of virtue. Some extend their rewards yet further; the posterity, as they say, of the faithful and just shall survive to the third and fourth generation. This is the style in which they praise justice. But about the wicked there is another strain; they bury them in a slough in Hades, and make them carry water in a sieve; also while they are yet living they bring them to infamy, and inflict upon them the punishments which Glaucon described as the portion of the just who are reputed to be unjust; nothing else does their invention supply. Such is their manner of praising the one and censuring the other.

Once more, Socrates, I will ask you to consider another way of speaking about justice and injustice, which is not confined to the poets, but is found in prose writers. The universal voice of mankind is always declaring that justice and virtue are honourable, but grievous and toilsome; and that the pleasures of vice and injustice are easy of attainment, and are only censured by law and opinion. They say also that honesty is for the most part less profitable than dishonesty; and they are quite ready to call wicked men happy, and to honour them both in public and private when they are rich or in any other way influential, while they despise and overlook those who may be weak and poor, even though acknowledging them to be better than the others. But most extraordinary of all is their mode of speaking about virtue and the gods: they say that the gods apportion calamity and misery to many good men, and good and happiness to the wicked. And mendicant prophets go to rich men's doors and persuade them that they have a power committed to them by the gods of making an atonement for a man's own or his ancestor's sins by sacrifices or charms, with rejoicings and feasts; and they promise to harm an enemy, whether just or unjust, at a small cost; with magic arts and incantations binding heaven, as they say, to execute their will. And the poets are the authorities to whom they appeal, now smoothing the path of vice with the words of Hesiod—

> Vice may be had in abundance without trouble; the way is smooth and her dwelling-place is near. But before virtue the gods have set toil, and a tedious and uphill road:

Then citing Homer as a witness that the gods may be influenced by men; for he also says:

> The gods, too, may be turned from their purpose; and men pray to them and avert their wrath by sacrifices and soothing entreaties, and by libations and the odour of fat, when they have sinned and transgressed.

And they produce a host of books written by Musaeus and Orpheus, who were children of the Moon and the Muses—that is what they say—according to which they perform their ritual, and persuade not only individuals, but whole cities, that expiations and atonements for sin may be

made by sacrifices and amusements which fill a vacant hour, and are equally at the service of the living and the dead; the latter sort they call mysteries, and they redeem us from the pains of hell, but if we neglect them no one knows what awaits us.

He proceeded: And now when the young hear all this said about virtue and vice, and the way in which gods and men regard them, how are their minds likely to be affected, my dear Socrates—those of them, I mean, who are quickwitted, and, like bees on the wing, light on every flower, and from all that they hear are prone to draw conclusions as to what manner of persons they should be and in what way they should walk if they would make the best of life? Probably the youth will say to himself in the words of Pindar—

> Can I by justice or by crooked ways of deceit ascend a loftier tower which may be a fortress to me all my days?

For what men say is that, if I am really just and am not also thought just profit there is none, but the pain and loss on the other hand are unmistakable. But if, though unjust, I acquire the reputation of justice, a heavenly life is promised to me. Since then, as philosophers prove, appearance tyrannizes over truth and is lord of happiness, to appearance I must devote myself. I will describe around me a picture and shadow of virtue to be the vestibule and exterior of my house; behind I will trail the subtle and crafty fox, as Archilochus, greatest of sages, recommends. But I hear some one exclaiming that the concealment of wickedness is often difficult; to which I answer, Nothing great is easy. Nevertheless, the argument indicates this, if we would be happy, to be the path along which we should proceed. With a view to concealment we will establish secret brotherhoods and political clubs. And there are professors of rhetoric who teach the art of persuading courts and assemblies; and so, partly by persuasion and partly by force, I shall make unlawful gains and not be punished. Still I hear a voice saying that the gods cannot be deceived, neither can they be compelled. But what if there are no gods? or, suppose them to have no care of human things—why in either case should we mind about concealment? And even if there are gods, and they do care about us, yet we know of them only from tradition and the genealogies of the poets; and these

are the very persons who say that they may be influenced and turned by 'sacrifices and soothing entreaties and by offerings.' Let us be consistent then, and believe both or neither. If the poets speak truly, why then we had better be unjust, and offer of the fruits of injustice; for if we are just, although we may escape the vengeance of heaven, we shall lose the gains of injustice; but, if we are unjust, we shall keep the gains, and by our sinning and praying, and praying and sinning, the gods will be propitiated, and we shall not be punished. 'But there is a world below in which either we or our posterity will suffer for our unjust deeds.' Yes, my friend, will be the reflection, but there are mysteries and atoning deities, and these have great power. That is what mighty cities declare; and the children of the gods, who were their poets and prophets, bear a like testimony.

On what principle, then, shall we any longer choose justice rather than the worst injustice? when, if we only unite the latter with a deceitful regard to appearances, we shall fare to our mind both with gods and men, in life and after death, as the most numerous and the highest authorities tell us. Knowing all this, Socrates, how can a man who has any superiority of mind or person or rank or wealth, be willing to honour justice; or indeed to refrain from laughing when he hears justice praised? And even if there should be some one who is able to disprove the truth of my words, and who is satisfied that justice is best, still he is not angry with the unjust, but is very ready to forgive them, because he also knows that men are not just of their own free will; unless, peradventure, there be some one whom the divinity within him may have inspired with a hatred of injustice, or who has attained knowledge of the truth—but no other man. He only blames injustice who, owing to cowardice or age or some weakness, has not the power of being unjust. And this is proved by the fact that when he obtains the power, he immediately becomes unjust as far as he can be.

The cause of all this, Socrates, was indicated by us at the beginning of the argument, when my brother and I told you how astonished we were to find that of all the professing panegyrists of justice—beginning with the ancient heroes of whom any memorial has been preserved to us, and ending with the men of our own time—no one has ever blamed injustice or praised justice except with a view to the glories, honours, and benefits which flow from them. No one has ever adequately described either in verse or prose the true essential nature of either of them abiding in the

soul, and invisible to any human or divine eye; or shown that of all the things of a man's soul which he has within him, justice is the greatest good, and injustice the greatest evil. Had this been the universal strain, had you sought to persuade us of this from our youth upwards, we should not have been on the watch to keep one another from doing wrong, but every one would have been his own watchman, because afraid, if he did wrong, of harbouring in himself the greatest of evils. I dare say that Thrasymachus and others would seriously hold the language which I have been merely repeating, and words even stronger than these about justice and injustice, grossly, as I conceive, perverting their true nature. But I speak in this vehement manner, as I must frankly confess to you, because I want to hear from you the opposite side; and I would ask you to show not only the superiority which justice has over injustice, but what effect they have on the possessor of them which makes the one to be a good and the other an evil to him. And please, as Glaucon requested of you, to exclude reputations; for unless you take away from each of them his true reputation and add on the false, we shall say that you do not praise justice, but the appearance of it; we shall think that you are only exhorting us to keep injustice dark, and that you really agree with Thrasymachus in thinking that justice is another's good and the interest of the stronger, and that injustice is a man's own profit and interest, though injurious to the weaker. Now as you have admitted that justice is one of that highest class of goods which are desired indeed for their results, but in a far greater degree for their own sakes—like sight or hearing or knowledge or health, or any other real and natural and not merely conventional good—I would ask you in your praise of justice to regard one point only: I mean the essential good and evil which justice and injustice work in the possessors of them. Let others praise justice and censure injustice, magnifying the rewards and honours of the one and abusing the other; that is a manner of arguing which, coming from them, I am ready to tolerate, but from you who have spent your whole life in the consideration of this question, unless I hear the contrary from your own lips, I expect something better. And therefore, I say, not only prove to us that justice is better than injustice, but show what they either of them do to the possessor of them, which makes the one to be a good and the other an evil, whether seen or unseen by gods and men.

Socrates—Adeimantus

I had always admired the genius of Glaucon and Adeimantus, but on hearing these words I was quite delighted, and said: Sons of an illustrious father, that was not a bad beginning of the Elegiac verses which the admirer of Glaucon made in honour of you after you had distinguished yourselves at the battle of Megara—

> "Sons of Ariston," he sang, "divine offspring of an illustrious hero."

The epithet is very appropriate, for there is something truly divine in being able to argue as you have done for the superiority of injustice, and remaining unconvinced by your own arguments. And I do believe that you are not convinced—this I infer from your general character, for had I judged only from your speeches I should have mistrusted you. But now, the greater my confidence in you, the greater is my difficulty in knowing what to say. For I am in a strait between two; on the one hand I feel that I am unequal to the task; and my inability is brought home to me by the fact that you were not satisfied with the answer which I made to Thrasymachus, proving, as I thought, the superiority which justice has over injustice. And yet I cannot refuse to help, while breath and speech remain to me; I am afraid that there would be an impiety in being present when justice is evil spoken of and not lifting up a hand in her defence. And therefore I had best give such help as I can.

Glaucon and the rest entreated me by all means not to let the question drop, but to proceed in the investigation. They wanted to arrive at the truth, first, about the nature of justice and injustice, and secondly, about their relative advantages. I told them, what I really thought, that the enquiry would be of a serious nature, and would require very good eyes. Seeing then, I said, that we are no great wits, I think that we had better adopt a method which I may illustrate thus; suppose that a short-sighted person had been asked by some one to read small letters from a distance; and it occurred to some one else that they might be found in another place which was larger and in which the letters were larger—if they were the same and he could read the larger letters first, and then proceed to the lesser—this would have been thought a rare piece of good fortune.

Very true, said Adeimantus; but how does the illustration apply to our enquiry?

I will tell you, I replied; justice, which is the subject of our enquiry, is, as you know, sometimes spoken of as the virtue of an individual, and sometimes as the virtue of a State.

True, he replied.

And is not a State larger than an individual?

It is.

Then in the larger the quantity of justice is likely to be larger and more easily discernible. I propose therefore that we enquire into the nature of justice and injustice, first as they appear in the State, and secondly in the individual, proceeding from the greater to the lesser and comparing them.

That, he said, is an excellent proposal.

And if we imagine the State in process of creation, we shall see the justice and injustice of the State in process of creation also.

I dare say.

When the State is completed there may be a hope that the object of our search will be more easily discovered.

Yes, far more easily.

But ought we to attempt to construct one? I said; for to do so, as I am inclined to think, will be a very serious task. Reflect therefore.

I have reflected, said Adeimantus, and am anxious that you should proceed.

A State, I said, arises, as I conceive, out of the needs of mankind; no one is self-sufficing, but all of us have many wants. Can any other origin of a State be imagined?

There can be no other.

Then, as we have many wants, and many persons are needed to supply them, one takes a helper for one purpose and another for another; and when these partners and helpers are gathered together in one habitation the body of inhabitants is termed a State.

True, he said.

And they exchange with one another, and one gives, and another receives, under the idea that the exchange will be for their good.

Very true.

Then, I said, let us begin and create in idea a State; and yet the true creator is necessity, who is the mother of our invention.

Of course, he replied.

Now the first and greatest of necessities is food, which is the condition of life and existence.

Certainly.

The second is a dwelling, and the third clothing and the like.

True.

And now let us see how our city will be able to supply this great demand: We may suppose that one man is a husbandman, another a builder, some one else a weaver—shall we add to them a shoemaker, or perhaps some other purveyor to our bodily wants?

Quite right.

The barest notion of a State must include four or five men.

Clearly.

And how will they proceed? Will each bring the result of his labours into a common stock?—the individual husbandman, for example, producing for four, and labouring four times as long and as much as he need in the provision of food with which he supplies others as well as himself; or will he have nothing to do with others and not be at the trouble of producing for them, but provide for himself alone a fourth of the food in a fourth of the time, and in the remaining three-fourths of his time be employed in making a house or a coat or a pair of shoes, having no partnership with others, but supplying himself all his own wants?

Adeimantus thought that he should aim at producing food only and not at producing everything.

Probably, I replied, that would be the better way; and when I hear you say this, I am myself reminded that we are not all alike; there are diversities of natures among us which are adapted to different occupations.

Very true.

And will you have a work better done when the workman has many occupations, or when he has only one?

When he has only one.

Further, there can be no doubt that a work is spoilt when not done at the right time?

No doubt.

For business is not disposed to wait until the doer of the business is at leisure; but the doer must follow up what he is doing, and make the business his first object.

He must.

And if so, we must infer that all things are produced more plentifully and easily and of a better quality when one man does one thing which is natural to him and does it at the right time, and leaves other things.

Undoubtedly.

Then more than four citizens will be required; for the husbandman will not make his own plough or mattock, or other implements of agriculture, if they are to be good for anything. Neither will the builder make his tools—and he too needs many; and in like manner the weaver and shoemaker.

. . .

And so, I said, we may consider three out of the four virtues to have been discovered in our State. The last of those qualities which make a state virtuous must be justice, if we only knew what that was.

The inference is obvious.

The time then has arrived, Glaucon, when, like huntsmen, we should surround the cover, and look sharp that justice does not steal away, and pass out of sight and escape us; for beyond a doubt she is somewhere in this country: watch therefore and strive to catch a sight of her, and if you see her first, let me know.

Would that I could! but you should regard me rather as a follower who has just eyes enough to see what you show him—that is about as much as I am good for.

Offer up a prayer with me and follow.

I will, but you must show me the way.

Here is no path, I said, and the wood is dark and perplexing; still we must push on.

Let us push on.

Here I saw something: Halloo! I said, I begin to perceive a track, and I believe that the quarry will not escape.

Good news, he said.

Truly, I said, we are stupid fellows.

Why so?

Why, my good sir, at the beginning of our enquiry, ages ago, there was justice tumbling out at our feet, and we never saw her; nothing could be more ridiculous. Like people who go about looking for what they have in their hands—that was the way with us—we looked not at what we were seeking, but at what was far off in the distance; and therefore, I suppose, we missed her.

What do you mean?

I mean to say that in reality for a long time past we have been talking of justice, and have failed to recognise her.

I grow impatient at the length of your exordium.

Well then, tell me, I said, whether I am right or not: You remember the original principle which we were always laying down at the foundation of the State, that one man should practise one thing only, the thing to which his nature was best adapted; now justice is this principle or a part of it.

Yes, we often said that one man should do one thing only.

Further, we affirmed that justice was doing one's own business, and not being a busybody; we said so again and again, and many others have said the same to us.

Yes, we said so.

Then to do one's own business in a certain way may be assumed to be justice. Can you tell me whence I derive this inference?

I cannot, but I should like to be told.

Because I think that this is the only virtue which remains in the State when the other virtues of temperance and courage and wisdom are abstracted; and, that this is the ultimate cause and condition of the existence of all of them, and while remaining in them is also their preservative; and we were saying that if the three were discovered by us, justice would be the fourth or remaining one.

That follows of necessity.

If we are asked to determine which of these four qualities by its presence contributes most to the excellence of the State, whether the agreement of rulers and subjects, or the preservation in the soldiers of the opinion which the law ordains about the true nature of dangers, or wisdom and watchfulness in the rulers, or whether this other which I am mentioning, and which is found in children and women, slave and freeman, artisan, ruler, subject—the quality, I mean, of every one doing his own work, and

not being a busybody, would claim the palm—the question is not so easily answered.

Certainly, he replied, there would be a difficulty in saying which.

Then the power of each individual in the State to do his own work appears to compete with the other political virtues, wisdom, temperance, courage.

Yes, he said.

And the virtue which enters into this competition is justice?

Exactly.

Let us look at the question from another point of view: Are not the rulers in a State those to whom you would entrust the office of determining suits at law?

Certainly.

And are suits decided on any other ground but that a man may neither take what is another's, nor be deprived of what is his own?

Yes; that is their principle.

Which is a just principle?

Yes.

Then on this view also justice will be admitted to be the having and doing what is a man's own, and belongs to him?

Very true.

Think, now, and say whether you agree with me or not. Suppose a carpenter to be doing the business of a cobbler, or a cobbler of a carpenter; and suppose them to exchange their implements or their duties, or the same person to be doing the work of both, or whatever be the change; do you think that any great harm would result to the State?

Not much.

But when the cobbler or any other man whom nature designed to be a trader, having his heart lifted up by wealth or strength or the number of his followers, or any like advantage, attempts to force his way into the class of warriors, or a warrior into that of legislators and guardians, for which he is unfitted, and either to take the implements or the duties of the other; or when one man is trader, legislator, and warrior all in one, then I think you will agree with me in saying that this interchange and this meddling of one with another is the ruin of the State.

Most true.

Seeing then, I said, that there are three distinct classes, any meddling of one with another, or the change of one into another, is the greatest harm to the State, and may be most justly termed evil-doing?

Precisely.

And the greatest degree of evil-doing to one's own city would be termed by you injustice?

Certainly.

This then is injustice; and on the other hand when the trader, the auxiliary, and the guardian each do their own business, that is justice, and will make the city just.

I agree with you.

We will not, I said, be over-positive as yet; but if, on trial, this conception of justice be verified in the individual as well as in the State, there will be no longer any room for doubt; if it be not verified, we must have a fresh enquiry. First let us complete the old investigation, which we began, as you remember, under the impression that, if we could previously examine justice on the larger scale, there would be less difficulty in discerning her in the individual. That larger example appeared to be the State, and accordingly we constructed as good a one as we could, knowing well that in the good State justice would be found. Let the discovery which we made be now applied to the individual—if they agree, we shall be satisfied; or, if there be a difference in the individual, we will come back to the State and have another trial of the theory. The friction of the two when rubbed together may possibly strike a light in which justice will shine forth, and the vision which is then revealed we will fix in our souls.

That will be in regular course; let us do as you say.

I proceeded to ask: When two things, a greater and less, are called by the same name, are they like or unlike in so far as they are called the same?

Like, he replied.

The just man then, if we regard the idea of justice only, will be like the just State?

He will.

And a State was thought by us to be just when the three classes in the State severally did their own business; and also thought to be temperate and valiant and wise by reason of certain other affections and qualities of these same classes?

True, he said.

And so of the individual; we may assume that he has the same three principles in his own soul which are found in the State; and he may be rightly described in the same terms, because he is affected in the same manner?

Certainly, he said.

Once more then, O my friend, we have alighted upon an easy question—whether the soul has these three principles or not?

An easy question! Nay, rather, Socrates, the proverb holds that hard is the good.

Translated by Benjamin Jowett and Lewis Campbell, 1894

On Justice in the Republic

Gary Hartenburg

The *Republic,* Plato's masterpiece of philosophical writing, challenges readers by asking us to examine both our notions of justice and our motivations for just living. The dialogue—while treating subjects that range from ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology to politics, psychology, education, music, theology, art, and mathematics—is centrally a discussion of the nature of justice. In particular, Plato, through the literary lens of Socrates' first-person point of view, poses three questions about justice:

1. What is justice?
2. Is justice a virtue?
3. Is justice better than injustice?

To unify and oversimplify his answers, we can say that justice is the virtue that organizes the capacities of the soul into a stable, harmonious whole and that, since stability and harmony are objectively better than instability and discord, justice is preferable to injustice.

Plato investigates the nature of justice through an analogy between the

soul and the *polis*. Although the discussion of politics is at the forefront of the *Republic*, the true purpose of that discussion is not political: Its point is to get a better view of the human soul (see 368e–369a), which in itself is very difficult to apprehend. Hence, when Plato argues (in a section not included here) that rulers must expunge immoral poetry from their communities, the reader must remember that Plato's concern is not so much with cities or nations but with individuals. His lesson is that it would be better for us if we did not allow ourselves to accept immoral art as a teacher and an authority. Whether such censorship becomes public law is another, secondary, matter.

The concept of the tripartite soul, which has fairly distinct rational, spirited, and desirous elements, is one of Plato's legacies to Western thought. In the *Republic*, the account of the tripartite soul is essentially connected to the account of justice: justice is present in the soul when each part of the soul is doing the work it is best suited to do.

Reason should be in charge of the soul, because it is the only aspect with both the foresight needed for long-term planning and the insight needed for knowing what is good. Desire does not know what is best because it "knows" only what it wants, which is whatever will satisfy it in the moment. Because desire is by nature insatiable, reason's capitulation of its ruling office to desire is the primary way through which most people's souls become disordered.

According to Plato, there is nothing wrong with desire itself. Desire, though, causes problems when it is put in charge of choosing. All the same, reason is too weak to maintain order by itself. It needs the assistance of the spirited element, which, as the seat of anger and courage, rouses individuals to action. Because this element of the soul can be aligned with either reason or desire, it must work with the rational part to maintain the soul's order—otherwise, disorder ensues.

A number of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians throughout history have adopted this notion of the soul's harmony because it makes sense of the Christian doctrines of sin and sanctification, and it provides a model of Christian education. According to C. S. Lewis, for example, sanctification is a matter of *integrating* the dimensions of the human person by repairing the *disintegrating* effects of sin and advancing the soul's capacities into greater harmony with itself and unity with God.

Of course, Lewis does not think such sanctification can be accomplished

without divine grace. Lewis also argues that, because a person's character is set largely by whether the spirited element sides with reason or desire, a central goal of education is to instruct students' sentiments in ways that align them with reason. According to the Christian Platonism of Lewis, education that does not train the sentiments, which are seated in the spirited element, creates students "without chests" who are unable to do what is good even if they have true opinions about it.

It is noteworthy that Plato, living before the time of Christ and probably without any exposure to Jewish Scriptures or teachings, was able to apprehend so clearly the nature of justice. That he was able to maintain his commitment to justice in the face of significant pressure to lend approval to the less scrupulous cultural and political élite of Athens is even more impressive.

Furthermore, Plato defends the goodness of justice without recourse to any utilitarian motivation, including the motivation of rewards in either this life or in the afterlife. A gripping picture of the perfectly just person given in the *Republic* is of a man who, while being completely just, is thought by everyone to be unjust and is persecuted and killed because of it. Plato argues that if this man is just, it is better for him to suffer these things than to be unjust, and not because he will be rewarded in the afterlife.

From what we can tell from his writings, Plato did not believe in a final end to history. The cosmos simply continues forever, and within the cosmos our souls pass from our bodies at our deaths until they take on temporary homes in other bodies and begin embodied life again. This means that although Plato tells a story at the very end of the *Republic* about individuals who face postmortem judgment, he does not think such judgment is either irremediable if one has lived unjustly or irrevocable if one has lived justly. Thus, it is remarkable that Plato does not think a person should be just simply because the just person will fare well in the afterlife.

As contemporary readers of the *Republic*, then, we are left to ponder on a personal level whether we love justice and goodness for their own sakes or only for the benefit of just living promises for the afterlife. Plato seems to have thought that being just so things turn out well after death is pitiful utilitarianism. In his view, we only love goodness when we love it for its own sake. In pressing for this conclusion, Plato did not know the true nature of what he was arguing for, though surely we can marvel at the fact that he bent all his powers to plead for as much as he did.

ARISTOTLE

Classical Greek (384–322 BC)

Aristotle is a father to anyone who wishes to know.

He was a student of Plato, and Plato introduced him to the Way, but it was Aristotle who outlined the knowledge project for the rest of us. It was Aristotle who discovered the first rules of logic, and it was Aristotle who began the systematic examination of the natural world in order to understand it.

Aristotle wanted people to be happy, and he understood that a man cannot be happy unless he can flourish as a man. For people to flourish, we must have our physical needs met, be emotionally mature and satisfied, be virtuous, and—most of all—be able to think freely and rigorously. Aristotle knew a just society would not only allow the pursuit of happiness but, through reasonable social structures, would make happiness likely. Yet Aristotle lived in dangerous times, when politics, ethics, and science were all conspiring against the world into which Socrates and Plato had been born.

Aristotle's student, Alexander, became "the Great" in the eyes of history but not by the standards of Aristotle. Alexander was good at everything he tried *except* flourishing as a man. Conquering the world turned out to be easier for the godlike Alexander than vanquishing his inner demons and learning to control his excesses and passions.

The *Ethics* would have prevented Alexander's failure as a man, if he had been willing to listen to his teacher's ethics. Aristotle would have pointed his brilliant student to mastery of the soul instead of mastery of nations. The teacher assumed the superiority of the small community for human happiness, but Alexander preferred grandiose palaces and great empires. Aristotle urged men to be moderate; Alexander lived large.

Technology has given most of us more entertainment options and access to information than Alexander could ever have dreamed. We are godlike in our choices, and immoderation will amuse us to death just as surely as too much alcohol was bad for Alexander. Some will be tempted to tune out and flee all such choices.

Aristotle's *Ethics* offers us the "golden mean" between excess and defect. He teaches the civilized art of prudence. All of this is accomplished within a theistic framework, but one broadly compatible with any form of monotheism.

Christians will have untold opportunities to talk with non-Christians, and Aristotle gives us a moral language in which to carry on at least some of the conversation. Start getting those resources by reading his *Ethics*.

FROM

Nicomachean Ethics

Books I & II

I.1

Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. But a certain difference is found among ends; some are activities, others are products apart from the

activities that produce them. Where there are ends apart from the actions, it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities. Now, as there are many actions, arts, and sciences, their ends also are many; the end of the medical art is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel, that of strategy victory, that of economics wealth. But where such arts fall under a single capacity . . . in all of these the ends of the master arts are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends; for it is for the sake of the former that the latter are pursued. It makes no difference whether the activities themselves are the ends of the actions, or something else apart from the activities, as in the case of the sciences just mentioned.

I.2

If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good. Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least, to determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object. It would seem to belong to the most authoritative art and that which is most truly the master art. And politics appears to be of this nature; for it is this that ordains which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn and up to what point they should learn them; and we see even the most highly esteemed of capacities to fall under this, e.g. strategy, economics, rhetoric; now, since politics uses the rest of the sciences, and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man. For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve; though it is worth while to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states. These,

then, are the ends at which our inquiry aims, since it is political science, in one sense of that term.

I.3

Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts. Now fine and just actions, which political science investigates, admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion, so that they may be thought to exist only by convention, and not by nature. And goods also give rise to a similar fluctuation because they bring harm to many people; for before now men have been undone by reason of their wealth, and others by reason of their courage. We must be content, then, in speaking of such subjects and with such premisses to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the most part true and with premisses of the same kind to reach conclusions that are no better. In the same spirit, therefore, should each type of statement be received; for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs. . . .

I.4

Let us resume our inquiry and state, in view of the fact that all knowledge and every pursuit aims at some good, what it is that we say political science aims at and what is the highest of all goods achievable by action. Verbally there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and doing well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise. For the former think it is some plain and obvious thing, like pleasure, wealth, or honour; they differ, however, from one another—and often even the same man identifies it with different things, with health when he is ill, with wealth

when he is poor; but, conscious of their ignorance, they admire those who proclaim some great ideal that is above their comprehension. Now some thought that apart from these many goods there is another which is self-subsistent and causes the goodness of all these as well. To examine all the opinions that have been held were perhaps somewhat fruitless; enough to examine those that are most prevalent or that seem to be arguable.

Let us not fail to notice, however, that there is a difference between arguments from and those to the first principles. For Plato, too, was right in raising this question and asking, as he used to do, "are we on the way from or to the first principles?" There is a difference, as there is in a race-course between the course from the judges to the turning-point and the way back. For, while we must begin with what is known, things are objects of knowledge in two senses—some to us, some without qualification. Presumably, then, we must begin with things known to us. Hence any one who is to listen intelligently to lectures about what is noble and just, and generally, about the subjects of political science must have been brought up in good habits. For the fact is the starting-point, and if this is sufficiently plain to him, he will not at the start need the reason as well; and the man who has been well brought up has or can easily get starting points.

. . .

I.7

Let us again return to the good we are seeking, and ask what it can be. It seems different in different actions and arts; it is different in medicine, in strategy, and in the other arts likewise. What then is the good of each? Surely that for whose sake everything else is done. In medicine this is health, in strategy victory, in architecture a house, in any other sphere something else, and in every action and pursuit the end; for it is for the sake of this that all men do whatever else they do. Therefore, if there is an end for all that we do, this will be the good achievable by action, and if there are more than one, these will be the goods achievable by action.

. . . Since there are evidently more than one end, and we choose some of these (e.g. wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are final ends; but the chief good is

evidently something final. Therefore, if there is only one final end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there are more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking. Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else.

Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves . . . but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself.

From the point of view of self-sufficiency the same result seems to follow; for the final good is thought to be self-sufficient. Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship. But some limit must be set to this; for if we extend our requirement to ancestors and descendants and friends' friends we are in for an infinite series. Let us examine this question, however, on another occasion; the self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others—if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable. Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.

Presumably, however, to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude, and a clearer account of what it is still desired. This might perhaps be given, if we could first ascertain the function of man. For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or an artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the "well" is thought to reside in the

function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function. Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he born without a function? Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may one lay it down that man similarly has a function apart from all these? What then can this be? Life seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man. Let us exclude, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be a life of perception, but it also seems to be common even to the horse, the ox, and every animal. There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle; of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing one and exercising thought. And, as "life of the rational element" also has two meanings, we must state that life in the sense of activity is what we mean; for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term. Now if the function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle, and if we say "so-and-so" and "a good so-and-so" have a function which is the same in kind, e.g. a lyre, and a good lyre-player, and so without qualification in all cases, eminence in respect of goodness being added to the name of the function . . . : if this is the case, and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete. But we must add "in a complete life." For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy.

. . .

I.13

Since happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue, we must consider the nature of virtue. . . . [C]learly the virtue we must study is human virtue; for the good we were seeking was human good and the

happiness human happiness. By human virtue we mean not that of the body but that of the soul; and happiness also we call an activity of soul. But if this is so, clearly the student of politics must know somehow the facts about soul. . . .

Some things are said about it, adequately enough . . . and we must use these, e.g. that one element in the soul is irrational and one has a rational principle. . . . Of the irrational element one division seems to be widely distributed, and vegetative in its nature, I mean that which causes nutrition and growth. . . . Now the excellence of this seems to be common to all species and not specifically human. . . . [L]et us leave the nutritive faculty alone, since it has by its nature no share in human excellence.

There seems to be also another irrational element in the soul—one which in a sense, however, shares in a rational principle. For we praise the rational principle of the continent man and of the incontinent, and the part of their soul that has such a principle, since it urges them aright and towards the best objects; but there is found in them also another element naturally opposed to the rational principle, which fights against and resists that principle. For exactly as paralysed limbs when we intend to move them to the right turn on the contrary to the left, so is it with the soul; the impulses of incontinent people move in contrary directions. But while in the body we see that which moves astray, in the soul we do not. No doubt, however, we must none the less suppose that in the soul too there is something contrary to the rational principle, resisting and opposing it. In what sense it is distinct from the other elements does not concern us. Now even this seems to have a share in a rational principle, as we said; at any rate in the continent man it obeys the rational principle and presumably in the temperate and brave man it is still more obedient; for in him it speaks, on all matters, with the same voice as the rational principle.

Therefore the irrational element also appears to be two-fold. For the vegetative element in no way shares in a rational principle, but the appetitive and in general the desiring element in a sense shares in it, in so far as it listens to and obeys it; this is the sense in which we speak of "taking account" of one's father or one's friends, not that in which we speak of "accounting for a mathematical property." That the irrational element is in some sense persuaded by a rational principle is indicated also by the giving of advice and by all reproof and exhortation. And if this element

also must be said to have a rational principle, that which has a rational principle (as well as that which has not) will be twofold, one subdivision having it in the strict sense and in itself, and the other having a tendency to obey as one does one's father.

Virtue too is distinguished into kinds in accordance with this difference; for we say that some of the virtues are intellectual and others moral, philosophic wisdom and understanding and practical wisdom being intellectual, liberality and temperance moral. For in speaking about a man's character we do not say that he is wise or has understanding but that he is good-tempered or temperate; yet we praise the wise man also with respect to his state of mind; and of states of mind we call those which merit praise virtues.

II.1

Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name (*ethike*) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word ethos (habit). From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. For instance the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards, not even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times; nor can fire be habituated to move downwards, nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another. Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.

Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity (this is plain in the case of the senses; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them); but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them,

e.g. men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.

This is confirmed by what happens in states; for legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them, and this is the wish of every legislator, and those who do not effect it miss their mark, and it is in this that a good constitution differs from a bad one.

Again, it is from the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced. And the corresponding statement is true of builders and of all the rest. . . . For if this were not so, there would have been no need of a teacher, but all men would have been born good or bad at their craft. This, then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly. The same is true of appetites and feelings of anger; some men become temperate and good-tempered, others self-indulgent and irascible, by behaving in one way or the other in the appropriate circumstances. Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference.

II.2

Since, then, the present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge . . . we must examine the nature of actions, namely how we ought to do them; for these determine also the nature of the states of character that are produced, as we have said. Now, that we must act according to the right rule is a common principle and must be assumed—it will be discussed later, i.e. both what the right rule is, and how it is related to the other virtues. But this must be agreed upon beforehand, that the

whole account of matters of conduct must be given in outline and not precisely, as we said at the very beginning that the accounts we demand must be in accordance with the subject-matter; matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us have no fixity, any more than matters of health. The general account being of this nature, the account of particular cases is yet more lacking in exactness; for they do not fall under any art or precept but the agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion, as happens also in the art of medicine or of navigation.

But though our present account is of this nature we must give what help we can. First, then, let us consider this, that it is the nature of such things to be destroyed by defect and excess, as we see in the case of strength and of health . . . both excessive and defective exercise destroys the strength, and similarly drink or food which is above or below a certain amount destroys the health, while that which is proportionate both produces and increases and preserves it. So too is it, then, in the case of temperance and courage and the other virtues. For the man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes a coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to meet every danger becomes rash; and similarly the man who indulges in every pleasure and abstains from none becomes self-indulgent, while the man who shuns every pleasure, as boors do, becomes in a way insensible; temperance and courage, then, are destroyed by excess and defect, and preserved by the mean.

But not only are the sources and causes of their origination and growth the same as those of their destruction, but also the sphere of their actualization will be the same; for this is also true of the things which are more evident to sense, e.g. of strength; it is produced by taking much food and undergoing much exertion, and it is the strong man that will be most able to do these things. So too is it with the virtues; by abstaining from pleasures we become temperate, and it is when we have become so that we are most able to abstain from them; and similarly too in the case of courage; for by being habituated to despise things that are terrible and to stand our ground against them we become brave, and it is when we have become so that we shall be most able to stand our ground against them.

II.3

We must take as a sign of states of character the pleasure or pain that ensues on acts; for the man who abstains from bodily pleasures and delights in this very fact is temperate, while the man who is annoyed at it is self-indulgent, and he who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward. For moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; for this is the right education.

Again, if the virtues are concerned with actions and passions, and every passion and every action is accompanied by pleasure and pain, for this reason also virtue will be concerned with pleasures and pains. This is indicated also by the fact that punishment is inflicted by these means; for it is a kind of cure, and it is the nature of cures to be effected by contraries.

Again, as we said but lately, every state of soul has a nature relative to and concerned with the kind of things by which it tends to be made worse or better; but it is by reason of pleasures and pains that men become bad, by pursuing and avoiding these—either the pleasures and pains they ought not or when they ought not or as they ought not, or by going wrong in one of the other similar ways that may be distinguished. Hence men even define the virtues as certain states of impassivity and rest; not well, however, because they speak absolutely, and do not say "as one ought" and "as one ought not" and "when one ought or ought not," and the other things that may be added. We assume, then, that this kind of excellence tends to do what is best with regard to pleasures and pains, and vice does the contrary. . . .

II.4

The question might be asked, what we mean by saying that we must become just by doing just acts, and temperate by doing temperate acts; for if men do just and temperate acts, they are already just and temperate, exactly as, if they do what is in accordance with the laws of grammar and of music, they are grammarians and musicians.

Or is this not true even of the arts? It is possible to do something that is in accordance with the laws of grammar, either by chance or at the suggestion of another. A man will be a grammarian, then, only when he has both done something grammatical and done it grammatically; and this means doing it in accordance with the grammatical knowledge in himself.

Again, the case of the arts and that of the virtues are not similar; for the products of the arts have their goodness in themselves, so that it is enough that they should have a certain character, but if the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. These are not reckoned in as conditions of the possession of the arts, except the bare knowledge; but as a condition of the possession of the virtues knowledge has little or no weight, while the other conditions count not for a little but for everything, i.e. the very conditions which result from often doing just and temperate acts.

Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man would do; but it is not the man who does these that is just and temperate, but the man who also does them as just and temperate men do them. It is well said, then, that it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without doing these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good.

But most people do not do these, but take refuge in theory and think they are being philosophers and will become good in this way, behaving somewhat like patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the things they are ordered to do. As the latter will not be made well in body by such a course of treatment, the former will not be made well in soul by such a course of philosophy.

II.5

Next we must consider what virtue is. Since things that are found in the soul are of three kinds—passions, faculties, states of character—virtue must be

one of these. By passions I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain; by faculties the things in virtue of which we are said to be capable of feeling these, e.g. of becoming angry or being pained or feeling pity; by states of character the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions, e.g. with reference to anger we stand badly if we feel it violently or too weakly, and well if we feel it moderately; and similarly with reference to the other passions.

Now neither the virtues nor the vices are passions, because we are not called good or bad on the ground of our passions, but are so called on the ground of our virtues and our vices, and because we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions . . . but for our virtues and our vices we are praised or blamed.

Again, we feel anger and fear without choice, but the virtues are modes of choice or involve choice. Further, in respect of the passions we are said to be moved, but in respect of the virtues and the vices we are said not to be moved but to be disposed in a particular way.

For these reasons also they are not faculties; for we are neither called good nor bad, nor praised nor blamed, for the simple capacity of feeling the passions; again, we have the faculties by nature, but we are not made good or bad by nature; we have spoken of this before. If, then, the virtues are neither passions nor faculties, all that remains is that they should be states of character. . . .

II.6

We must, however, not only describe virtue as a state of character, but also say what sort of state it is. We may remark, then, that every virtue or excellence both brings into good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well; e.g. the excellence of the eye makes both the eye and its work good; for it is by the excellence of the eye that we see well. . . . Therefore, if this is true in every case, the virtue of man also will be the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well.

How this is to happen we have stated already, but it will be made plain

also by the following consideration of the specific nature of virtue. In everything that is continuous and divisible it is possible to take more, less, or an equal amount, and that either in terms of the thing itself or relatively to us; and the equal is an intermediate between excess and defect. By the intermediate in the object I mean that which is equidistant from each of the extremes, which is one and the same for all men; by the intermediate relatively to us that which is neither too much nor too little—and this is not one, nor the same for all. For instance, if ten is many and two is few, six is the intermediate, taken in terms of the object; for it exceeds and is exceeded by an equal amount; this is intermediate according to arithmetical proportion. But the intermediate relatively to us is not to be taken so; if ten pounds are too much for a particular person to eat and two too little, it does not follow that the trainer will order six pounds; for this also is perhaps too much for the person who is to take it, or too little—too little for Milo, too much for the beginner in athletic exercises. The same is true of running and wrestling. Thus a master of any art avoids excess and defect, but seeks the intermediate and chooses this—the intermediate not in the object but relatively to us.

If it is thus, then, that every art does its work well—by looking to the intermediate and judging its works by this standard . . . and if, further, virtue is more exact and better than any art, as nature also is, then virtue must have the quality of aiming at the intermediate. I mean moral virtue; for it is this that is concerned with passions and actions, and in these there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. Similarly with regard to actions also there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. Now virtue is concerned with passions and actions, in which excess is a form of failure, and so is defect, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success; and being praised and being successful are both characteristics of virtue. Therefore virtue is a kind of mean, since, as we have seen, it aims at what is intermediate.

Again, it is possible to fail in many ways . . . while to succeed is possible only in one way (for which reason also one is easy and the other

difficult—to miss the mark easy, to hit it difficult); for these reasons also, then, excess and defect are characteristic of vice, and the mean of virtue; for men are good in but one way, but bad in many.

Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence in respect of its substance and the definition which states its essence virtue is a mean, with regard to what is best and right an extreme.

But not every action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions adultery, theft, murder; for all of these and suchlike things imply by their names that they are themselves bad, and not the excesses or deficiencies of them. It is not possible, then, ever to be right with regard to them; one must always be wrong.

. . .

II.8

There are three kinds of disposition, then, two of them vices, involving excess and deficiency respectively, and one a virtue, viz. the mean, and all are in a sense opposed to all; for the extreme states are contrary both to the intermediate state and to each other, and the intermediate to the extremes; as the equal is greater relatively to the less, less relatively to the greater, so the middle states are excessive relatively to the deficiencies, deficient relatively to the excesses, both in passions and in actions. For the brave man appears rash relatively to the coward, and cowardly relatively to the rash man. . . . Hence also the people at the extremes push the intermediate man each over to the other, and the brave man is called rash by the coward, cowardly by the rash man, and correspondingly in the other cases.

These states being thus opposed to one another, the greatest contrariety is that of the extremes to each other, rather than to the intermediate; for

these are further from each other than from the intermediate, as the great is further from the small and the small from the great than both are from the equal. Again, to the intermediate some extremes show a certain likeness, as that of rashness to courage and that of prodigality to liberality; but the extremes show the greatest unlikeness to each other; now contraries are defined as the things that are furthest from each other, so that things that are further apart are more contrary.

To the mean in some cases the deficiency, in some the excess is more opposed; e.g. it is not rashness, which is an excess, but cowardice, which is a deficiency, that is more opposed to courage, and not insensibility, which is a deficiency, but self-indulgence, which is an excess, that is more opposed to temperance. . . . We describe as contrary to the mean, then, rather the directions in which we more often go to great lengths; and therefore self-indulgence, which is an excess, is the more contrary to temperance.

II.9

. . . Hence . . . it is no easy task to be good. For in everything it is no easy task to find the middle, e.g. to find the middle of a circle is not for every one but for him who knows; so, too, any one can get angry . . . or give or spend money; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for every one, nor is it easy; wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and noble.

Hence he who aims at the intermediate must first depart from what is the more contrary to it. . . . For of the extremes one is more erroneous, one less so; therefore, since to hit the mean is hard in the extreme, we must as a second best, as people say, take the least of the evils; and this will be done best in the way we describe. But we must consider the things towards which we ourselves also are easily carried away; for some of us tend to one thing, some to another; and this will be recognizable from the pleasure and the pain we feel. We must drag ourselves away to the contrary extreme; for we shall get into the intermediate state by drawing well away from error, as people do in straightening sticks that are bent.

Now in everything the pleasant or pleasure is most to be guarded against; for we do not judge it impartially. We ought, then, to feel towards pleasure

as the elders of the people felt towards Helen, and in all circumstances repeat their saying; for if we dismiss pleasure thus we are less likely to go astray. It is by doing this, then . . . that we shall best be able to hit the mean.

But this is no doubt difficult, and especially in individual cases; for it is not easy to determine both how and with whom and on what provocation and how long one should be angry; for we too sometimes praise those who fall short and call them good-tempered, but sometimes we praise those who get angry and call them manly. The man, however, who deviates little from goodness is not blamed, whether he do so in the direction of the more or of the less, but only the man who deviates more widely; for he does not fail to be noticed. But up to what point and to what extent a man must deviate before he becomes blameworthy it is not easy to determine by reasoning, any more than anything else that is perceived by the senses; such things depend on particular facts, and the decision rests with perception. So much, then, is plain, that the intermediate state is in all things to be praised, but that we must incline sometimes towards the excess, sometimes towards the deficiency; for so shall we most easily hit the mean and what is right.

Translated by W.D. Ross, 1908

Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics

Jeff Lehman

One of the founders of Western philosophy, Aristotle wrote many treatises on a wide variety of topics, including natural science, poetics, rhetoric, logic, and philosophy. Among these works, his *Nicomachean Ethics* has had a profound and enduring influence upon ethical reasoning in the Western tradition, as well as an incalculable influence on Christian moral thought in particular.

Like Socrates and Plato before him, Aristotle understood the moral life to consist in caring for one's soul. He sought to answer fundamental

moral questions: What is the purpose of life? How do we become good? How do we determine what is right in any given situation? Aristotle's account is no ivory-tower philosophy, removed from common experience; rather, he engages our moral common sense from the beginning and uses it to come to solid, real-world conclusions about how we ought to live.

Aristotle begins the *Ethics* by determining the highest human good. In other words, what do we desire always for its own sake and never as a means to something else? He contends that man's highest good is *eudaimonia*, a Greek word typically translated "happiness." While this rendering is adequate, however, we should bear in mind that Aristotle's essential meaning is "complete well-being" or "human flourishing."

Now, while all people tend to agree that happiness is the highest good, there is certainly disagreement over that in which happiness consists. Is it pleasure? Honor? Wealth? Something else? In order to answer, Aristotle identifies man's "function"—i.e., the activity that is proper to his nature. The specific difference of human nature, or what distinguishes him from other species, is his rationality. Thus, happiness must consist in rational activity, which involves both knowing and choosing.

Aristotle defines *happiness* as "the activity of the soul in accordance with [complete] virtue." By "virtue" he means human excellence; since rational activity, again, involves both knowing and choosing, there are both intellectual and moral virtues.

After establishing the general context in Book I, Aristotle gives a more detailed account of moral virtue in Book II. A moral virtue is a deliberately chosen habit that's typically a "mean" between "extremes" of excess and deficiency; for example, the virtue of courage is the mean between the vices of rashness and cowardice. So, for Aristotle, it's not enough simply to act in accordance with reason once in a while. We must cultivate habits of virtue that develop into a firmly established moral character over a lifetime.

Furthermore, Aristotle is convinced that perfect moral virtue is difficult to acquire, at least in part because many particulars must be considered. As he puts it, "Anyone can get angry; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for every one, nor is it easy."

After spending the first half of Book III arguing that we're responsible for those actions we voluntarily choose, Aristotle begins an account of

specific moral virtues (starting with courage and temperance) that continues through Books IV and V; he takes up intellectual virtues, such as wisdom, art, and prudence, in Book VI.

In Book VII, Aristotle addresses the reality of moral weakness in the struggle to do what is right. Unlike the Socrates of Plato's dialogues, Aristotle does not view moral failure as simply an intellectual mistake; even if we know what's right, we may still fail to do it. He concludes Book VII with a discussion of pleasure.

Books VIII and IX concern friendship, which Aristotle considers necessary for happiness. He identifies two imperfect kinds of friendship—those of pleasure and of utility—and a perfect kind, a friendship of virtue. In Book X he returns to a treatment of pleasure and then concludes by making a new claim regarding happiness, namely that the happiness involved in the life of contemplation is superior to the happiness of an active life. This is not to say, however, that the active life is unnecessary. We must live with others, and the life of moral virtue is an indispensable part of happiness.

———

Nicomachean Ethics is one of the few "great books" that's always near the top of anyone's list. Given its influence on the Western tradition, reading the *Ethics* is essential to understanding the Great Conversation that continues to unfold through the centuries. And as for Christian moral reasoning, there is certainly no other work by a non-Christian author that has had so profound an impact on the way we think about morality.

The *Ethics* is filled with pearls of ethical wisdom and provides a detailed, orderly account of what happiness is and how to pursue it. It's also invaluable for the questions it provokes: Is Aristotle's account of moral failure adequate? How does the difficulty of attaining virtue, of which he speaks, point to original sin (a primeval wounding of human nature) and to our need for grace to help us become good? Is his general account of human happiness true, as far as it goes? Is the contemplative life superior to the active life? How does the happiness of which Aristotle speaks relate to the happiness the Christian desires to enjoy in heaven?

VIRGIL

Classical Roman (70–19 BC)

Early Christians were not sure what to make of Virgil.

The Roman sage was an obvious pagan, an apologist for the Roman Empire and its tyrant, Augustus, but he was also the most powerful epic poet since Homer. His work helped create the artistic justification for a new world order. The *Pax Romana* was based not just on law or the legions, but also on the imagination of Virgil.

The Romans were a strong power before Virgil, but the Greeks had captured their imaginations. While Rome conquered physical Greece, Greek mythology had enveloped Rome. The Empire could not be confident in itself until a Roman poet matched Homer and harmonized Greek civilization with Roman ideals.

Virgil took the Trojan War, the historic event at the center of Homer's works, and transformed it into the story of the arrival of Rome—victorious Rome as born from the defeat of Troy. The hero of Virgil's myth, Aeneas, fled a city sacked by the Greeks to build a city that would conquer Greece. Virgil, the poetic Aeneas, took Roman mythology, enthralled to Greek culture, and made it fully Roman again.

This triumph shaped a pattern for Christian intellectuals. They too

could take the best of a great culture (in this case Greece and Rome) and appropriate them for Christendom. The Romans might feed Christians to lions, but if Christians emulated Virgil, they might turn defeat into victory. The blood of the martyrs might become the faith's foundation.

Christians also considered evidence that Virgil may have been a prophet. Why? For one thing, Virgil wrote with divine-like command of his language and with wisdom regarding the human condition; his paganism is a step closer to the truth than Homer's. His description of the afterlife was helpful to Christian apologists, and his defense of many traditional Roman virtues compared favorably with the more decadent members of his culture. Augustus looked good to believers living under Nero, and the Pax Romana made the spread of the Gospel easier.

For another, Virgil seems to anticipate the coming of Jesus. Here's an excerpt:

> Sicilian Muses, let us take a loftier tone.
> Orchards and humble tamarisks don't give delight to all,
> and if we sing of woods, they should be worthy of a consul.
> Now comes the last age of the Cumaean song;
> the great order of the ages arises anew.
> Now the Virgin returns, and Saturn's reign returns;
> now a new generation is sent down from high heaven.
> Only, chaste Lucina, favor the child at his birth,
> by whom, first of all, the iron age will end
> and a golden race arise in all the world;
> now your Apollo reigns. (Eclogue IV)

The reason for the appearance of this seeming oracle in a series of pastoral poems—and its meaning to Virgil—is unknown. To early Christians facing persecution and denigrating attitudes without hope of powerful patrons, the temptation to perceive the greatest Roman poet as a pre-Christian prophet was profound.

This desire to befriend Virgil persisted as well. Even Dante, Christendom's most celebrated poet, picked Virgil as his guide through hell and his companion through purgatory. The American founders knew Virgil.

Literary fashions would change, and Homer would supplant Virgil in the twentieth-century mind. Many contemporary Christians no longer

long for Rome, and they wish to root out any taint from its culture within Christendom.

What of Rome, Christendom's cradle? What of Virgil, its prophet and poet? Read this pagan man who almost lived to see Jesus, and decide for yourself.

FROM

The Aeneid

Book One

Arms, and the man I sing, who, forc'd by fate,
And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate,
Expell'd and exil'd, left the Trojan shore.
Long labors, both by sea and land, he bore,
And in the doubtful war, before he won
The Latian realm, and built the destin'd town;
His banish'd gods restor'd to rites divine,
And settled sure succession in his line,
From whence the race of Alban fathers come,
And the long glories of majestic Rome.

O Muse! the causes and the crimes relate;
What goddess was provok'd, and whence her hate;
For what offense the Queen of Heav'n began
To persecute so brave, so just a man;
Involv'd his anxious life in endless cares,
Expos'd to wants, and hurried into wars!
Can heav'nly minds such high resentment show,
Or exercise their spite in human woe?

Against the Tiber's mouth, but far away,
An ancient town was seated on the sea;
A Tyrian colony; the people made
Stout for the war, and studious of their trade:

Carthage the name; belov'd by Juno more
Than her own Argos, or the Samian shore.
Here stood her chariot; here, if Heav'n were kind,
The seat of awful empire she design'd.
Yet she had heard an ancient rumor fly,
(Long cited by the people of the sky,)
That times to come should see the Trojan race
Her Carthage ruin, and her tow'rs deface;
Nor thus confin'd, the yoke of sov'reign sway
Should on the necks of all the nations lay.
She ponder'd this, and fear'd it was in fate;
Nor could forget the war she wag'd of late
For conqu'ring Greece against the Trojan state.
Besides, long causes working in her mind,
And secret seeds of envy, lay behind;
Deep graven in her heart the doom remain'd
Of partial Paris, and her form disdain'd;
The grace bestow'd on ravish'd Ganymed,
Electra's glories, and her injur'd bed.
Each was a cause alone; and all combin'd
To kindle vengeance in her haughty mind.
For this, far distant from the Latian coast
She drove the remnants of the Trojan host;
And sev'n long years th' unhappy wand'ring train
Were toss'd by storms, and scatter'd thro' the main.
Such time, such toil, requir'd the Roman name,
Such length of labor for so vast a frame.

Now scarce the Trojan fleet, with sails and oars,
Had left behind the fair Sicilian shores,
Ent'ring with cheerful shouts the wat'ry reign,
And plowing frothy furrows in the main;
When, lab'ring still with endless discontent,
The Queen of Heav'n did thus her fury vent:

"Then am I vanquish'd? must I yield?" said she,
"And must the Trojans reign in Italy?
So Fate will have it, and Jove adds his force;
Nor can my pow'r divert their happy course.
Could angry Pallas, with revengeful spleen,
The Grecian navy burn, and drown the men?

She, for the fault of one offending foe,
The bolts of Jove himself presum'd to throw:
With whirlwinds from beneath she toss'd the ship,
And bare expos'd the bosom of the deep;
Then, as an eagle gripes the trembling game,
The wretch, yet hissing with her father's flame,
She strongly seiz'd, and with a burning wound
Transfix'd, and naked, on a rock she bound.
But I, who walk in awful state above,
The majesty of heav'n, the sister wife of Jove,
For length of years my fruitless force employ
Against the thin remains of ruin'd Troy!
What nations now to Juno's pow'r will pray,
Or off'rings on my slighted altars lay?"

Thus rag'd the goddess; and, with fury fraught.
The restless regions of the storms she sought,
Where, in a spacious cave of living stone,
The tyrant Aeolus, from his airy throne,
With pow'r imperial curbs the struggling winds,
And sounding tempests in dark prisons binds.
This way and that th' impatient captives tend,
And, pressing for release, the mountains rend.
High in his hall th' undaunted monarch stands,
And shakes his scepter, and their rage commands;
Which did he not, their unresisted sway
Would sweep the world before them in their way;
Earth, air, and seas thro' empty space would roll,
And heav'n would fly before the driving soul.
In fear of this, the Father of the Gods
Confin'd their fury to those dark abodes,
And lock'd 'em safe within, oppress'd with mountain loads;
Impos'd a king, with arbitrary sway,
To loose their fetters, or their force allay.
To whom the suppliant queen her pray'rs address'd,
And thus the tenor of her suit express'd:

"O Aeolus! for to thee the King of Heav'n
The pow'r of tempests and of winds has giv'n;
Thy force alone their fury can restrain,
And smooth the waves, or swell the troubled main—

A race of wand'ring slaves, abhorr'd by me,
With prosp'rous passage cut the Tuscan sea;
To fruitful Italy their course they steer,
And for their vanquish'd gods design new temples there.
Raise all thy winds; with night involve the skies;
Sink or disperse my fatal enemies.
Twice sev'n, the charming daughters of the main,
Around my person wait, and bear my train:
Succeed my wish, and second my design;
The fairest, Deiopeia, shall be thine,
And make thee father of a happy line."

To this the god: "'Tis yours, O queen, to will
The work which duty binds me to fulfil.
These airy kingdoms, and this wide command,
Are all the presents of your bounteous hand:
Yours is my sov'reign's grace; and, as your guest,
I sit with gods at their celestial feast;
Raise tempests at your pleasure, or subdue;
Dispose of empire, which I hold from you."

He said, and hurl'd against the mountain side
His quiv'ring spear, and all the god applied.
The raging winds rush thro' the hollow wound,
And dance aloft in air, and skim along the ground;
Then, settling on the sea, the surges sweep,
Raise liquid mountains, and disclose the deep.
South, East, and West with mix'd confusion roar,
And roll the foaming billows to the shore.
The cables crack; the sailors' fearful cries
Ascend; and sable night involves the skies;
And heav'n itself is ravish'd from their eyes.
Loud peals of thunder from the poles ensue;
Then flashing fires the transient light renew;
The face of things a frightful image bears,
And present death in various forms appears.
Struck with unusual fright, the Trojan chief,
With lifted hands and eyes, invokes relief;
And, "Thrice and four times happy those," he cried,
"That under Ilian walls before their parents died!
Tydides, bravest of the Grecian train!

Why could not I by that strong arm be slain,
And lie by noble Hector on the plain,
Or great Sarpedon, in those bloody fields
Where Simois rolls the bodies and the shields
Of heroes, whose dismember'd hands yet bear
The dart aloft, and clench the pointed spear!"

Thus while the pious prince his fate bewails,
Fierce Boreas drove against his flying sails,
And rent the sheets; the raging billows rise,
And mount the tossing vessels to the skies:
Nor can the shiv'ring oars sustain the blow;
The galley gives her side, and turns her prow;
While those astern, descending down the steep,
Thro' gaping waves behold the boiling deep.
Three ships were hurried by the southern blast,
And on the secret shelves with fury cast.
Those hidden rocks th' Ausonian sailors knew:
They call'd them Altars, when they rose in view,
And show'd their spacious backs above the flood.
Three more fierce Eurus, in his angry mood,
Dash'd on the shallows of the moving sand,
And in mid ocean left them moor'd aland.
Orontes' bark, that bore the Lycian crew,
(A horrid sight!) ev'n in the hero's view,
From stem to stern by waves was overborne:
The trembling pilot, from his rudder torn,
Was headlong hurl'd; thrice round the ship was toss'd,
Then bulg'd at once, and in the deep was lost;
And here and there above the waves were seen
Arms, pictures, precious goods, and floating men.
The stoutest vessel to the storm gave way,
And suck'd thro' loosen'd planks the rushing sea.
Ilioneus was her chief: Alethes old,
Achates faithful, Abas young and bold,
Endur'd not less; their ships, with gaping seams,
Admit the deluge of the briny streams.

. . .

He stood; and, while secure they fed below,
He took the quiver and the trusty bow

Achates us'd to bear: the leaders first
He laid along, and then the vulgar pierc'd;
Nor ceas'd his arrows, till the shady plain
Sev'n mighty bodies with their blood distain.
For the sev'n ships he made an equal share,
And to the port return'd, triumphant from the war.
The jars of gen'rous wine (Acestes' gift,
When his Trinacrian shores the navy left)
He set abroach, and for the feast prepar'd,
In equal portions with the ven'son shar'd.
Thus while he dealt it round, the pious chief
With cheerful words allay'd the common grief:
"Endure, and conquer! Jove will soon dispose
To future good our past and present woes.
With me, the rocks of Scylla you have tried;
Th' inhuman Cyclops and his den defied.
What greater ills hereafter can you bear?
Resume your courage and dismiss your care,
An hour will come, with pleasure to relate
Your sorrows past, as benefits of Fate.
Thro' various hazards and events, we move
To Latium and the realms foredoom'd by Jove.
Call'd to the seat (the promise of the skies)
Where Trojan kingdoms once again may rise,
Endure the hardships of your present state;
Live, and reserve yourselves for better fate."

These words he spoke, but spoke not from his heart;
His outward smiles conceal'd his inward smart.
The jolly crew, unmindful of the past,
The quarry share, their plenteous dinner haste.
Some strip the skin; some portion out the spoil;
The limbs, yet trembling, in the caldrons boil;
Some on the fire the reeking entrails broil.
Stretch'd on the grassy turf, at ease they dine,
Restore their strength with meat,
And cheer their souls with wine.
Their hunger thus appeas'd, their care attends
The doubtful fortune of their absent friends:
Alternate hopes and fears their minds possess,
Whether to deem 'em dead, or in distress.

Above the rest, Aeneas mourns the fate
Of brave Orontes, and th' uncertain state
Of Gyas, Lycus, and of Amycus.
The day, but not their sorrows, ended thus.

. . .

Some tale, some new pretense, he daily coin'd,
To soothe his sister, and delude her mind.
At length, in dead of night, the ghost appears
Of her unhappy lord: the specter stares,
And, with erected eyes, his bloody bosom bares.
The cruel altars and his fate he tells,
And the dire secret of his house reveals,
Then warns the widow, with her household gods,
To seek a refuge in remote abodes.
Last, to support her in so long a way,
He shows her where his hidden treasure lay.
Admonish'd thus, and seiz'd with mortal fright,
The queen provides companions of her flight:
They meet, and all combine to leave the state,
Who hate the tyrant, or who fear his hate.
They seize a fleet, which ready rigg'd they find;
Nor is Pygmalion's treasure left behind.
The vessels, heavy laden, put to sea
With prosp'rous winds; a woman leads the way.
I know not, if by stress of weather driv'n,
Or was their fatal course dispos'd by Heav'n;
At last they landed, where from far your eyes
May view the turrets of new Carthage rise;
There bought a space of ground, which (Byrsa call'd,
From the bull's hide) they first inclos'd, and wall'd.
"But whence are you? what country claims your birth?
What seek you, strangers, on our Libyan earth?"

To whom, with sorrow streaming from his eyes,
And deeply sighing, thus her son replies:
"Could you with patience hear, or I relate,
O nymph, the tedious annals of our fate!
Thro' such a train of woes if I should run,
The day would sooner than the tale be done!
From ancient Troy, by force expell'd, we came—

If you by chance have heard the Trojan name.
On various seas by various tempests toss'd,
At length we landed on your Libyan coast.
The good Aeneas am I call'd—a name,
While Fortune favor'd, not unknown to fame.
My household gods, companions of my woes,
With pious care I rescued from our foes.
To fruitful Italy my course was bent;
And from the King of Heav'n is my descent.
With twice ten sail I cross'd the Phrygian sea;
Fate and my mother goddess led my way.
Scarce sev'n, the thin remainders of my fleet,
From storms preserv'd, within your harbor meet.
Myself distress'd, an exile, and unknown,
Debarr'd from Europe, and from Asia thrown,
In Libyan desarts wander thus alone."

His tender parent could no longer bear;
But, interposing, sought to soothe his care.
"Whoe'er you are—not unbelov'd by Heav'n,
Since on our friendly shore your ships are driv'n—
Have courage: to the gods permit the rest,
And to the queen expose your just request.
Now take this earnest of success, for more:
Your scatter'd fleet is join'd upon the shore;
The winds are chang'd, your friends from danger free;
Or I renounce my skill in augury.
Twelve swans behold in beauteous order move,
And stoop with closing pinions from above;
Whom late the bird of Jove had driv'n along,
And thro' the clouds pursued the scatt'ring throng:
Now, all united in a goodly team,
They skim the ground, and seek the quiet stream.
As they, with joy returning, clap their wings,
And ride the circuit of the skies in rings;
Not otherwise your ships, and ev'ry friend,
Already hold the port, or with swift sails descend.
No more advice is needful; but pursue
The path before you, and the town in view."

Thus having said, she turn'd, and made appear
Her neck refulgent, and dishevel'd hair,
Which, flowing from her shoulders, reach'd the ground.
And widely spread ambrosial scents around:
In length of train descends her sweeping gown;
And, by her graceful walk, the Queen of Love is known.
The prince pursued the parting deity
With words like these: "Ah! whither do you fly?
Unkind and cruel! to deceive your son
In borrow'd shapes, and his embrace to shun;
Never to bless my sight, but thus unknown;
And still to speak in accents not your own."
Against the goddess these complaints he made,
But took the path, and her commands obey'd.
They march, obscure; for Venus kindly shrouds
With mists their persons, and involves in clouds,
That, thus unseen, their passage none might stay,
Or force to tell the causes of their way.
This part perform'd, the goddess flies sublime
To visit Paphos and her native clime;
Where garlands, ever green and ever fair,
With vows are offer'd, and with solemn pray'r:
A hundred altars in her temple smoke;
A thousand bleeding hearts her pow'r invoke.

They climb the next ascent, and, looking down,
Now at a nearer distance view the town.
The prince with wonder sees the stately tow'rs,
Which late were huts and shepherds' homely bow'rs,
The gates and streets; and hears, from ev'ry part,
The noise and busy concourse of the mart.
The toiling Tyrians on each other call
To ply their labor: some extend the wall;
Some build the citadel; the brawny throng
Or dig, or push unwieldly stones along.
Some for their dwellings choose a spot of ground,
Which, first design'd, with ditches they surround.
Some laws ordain; and some attend the choice
Of holy senates, and elect by voice.
Here some design a mole, while others there
Lay deep foundations for a theater;

From marble quarries mighty columns hew,
For ornaments of scenes, and future view.
Such is their toil, and such their busy pains,
As exercise the bees in flow'ry plains,
When winter past, and summer scarce begun,
Invites them forth to labor in the sun;
Some lead their youth abroad, while some condense
Their liquid store, and some in cells dispense;
Some at the gate stand ready to receive
The golden burthen, and their friends relieve;
All with united force, combine to drive
The lazy drones from the laborious hive:
With envy stung, they view each other's deeds;
The fragrant work with diligence proceeds.
"Thrice happy you, whose walls already rise!"
Aeneas said, and view'd, with lifted eyes,
Their lofty tow'rs; then, entiring at the gate,
Conceal'd in clouds (prodigious to relate)
He mix'd, unmark'd, among the busy throng,
Borne by the tide, and pass'd unseen along.

Full in the center of the town there stood,
Thick set with trees, a venerable wood.
The Tyrians, landing near this holy ground,
And digging here, a prosp'rous omen found:
From under earth a courser's head they drew,
Their growth and future fortune to foreshew.
This fated sign their foundress Juno gave,
Of a soil fruitful, and a people brave.
Sidonian Dido here with solemn state
Did Juno's temple build, and consecrate,
Enrich'd with gifts, and with a golden shrine;
But more the goddess made the place divine.
On brazen steps the marble threshold rose,
And brazen plates the cedar beams inclose:
The rafters are with brazen cov'rings crown'd;
The lofty doors on brazen hinges sound.
What first Aeneas this place beheld,
Reviv'd his courage, and his fear expell'd.
For while, expecting there the queen, he rais'd
His wond'ring eyes, and round the temple gaz'd,

Admir'd the fortune of the rising town,
The striving artists, and their arts' renown;
He saw, in order painted on the wall,
Whatever did unhappy Troy befall:
The wars that fame around the world had blown,
All to the life, and ev'ry leader known.
There Agamemnon, Priam here, he spies,
And fierce Achilles, who both kings defies.
He stopp'd, and weeping said: "O friend! ev'n here
The monuments of Trojan woes appear!
Our known disasters fill ev'n foreign lands:
See there, where old unhappy Priam stands!
Ev'n the mute walls relate the warrior's fame,
And Trojan griefs the Tyrians' pity claim."
He said (his tears a ready passage find),
Devouring what he saw so well design'd,
And with an empty picture fed his mind:
For there he saw the fainting Grecians yield,
And here the trembling Trojans quit the field,
Pursued by fierce Achilles thro' the plain,
On his high chariot driving o'er the slain.
The tents of Rhesus next his grief renew,
By their white sails betray'd to nightly view;
And wakeful Diomede, whose cruel sword
The sentries slew, nor spar'd their slumb'ring lord,
Then took the fiery steeds, ere yet the food
Of Troy they taste, or drink the Xanthian flood.
Elsewhere he saw where Troilus defied
Achilles, and unequal combat tried;
Then, where the boy disarm'd, with loosen'd reins,
Was by his horses hurried o'er the plains,
Hung by the neck and hair, and dragg'd around:
The hostile spear, yet sticking in his wound,
With tracks of blood inscrib'd the dusty ground.
Meantime the Trojan dames, oppress'd with woe,
To Pallas' fane in long procession go,
In hopes to reconcile their heav'nly foe.
They weep, they beat their breasts, they rend their hair,
And rich embroider'd vests for presents bear;
But the stern goddess stands unmov'd with pray'r.
Thrice round the Trojan walls Achilles drew

The corpse of Hector, whom in fight he slew.
Here Priam sues; and there, for sums of gold,
The lifeless body of his son is sold.
So sad an object, and so well express'd,
Drew sighs and groans from the griev'd hero's breast,
To see the figure of his lifeless friend,
And his old sire his helpless hand extend.
Himself he saw amidst the Grecian train,
Mix'd in the bloody battle on the plain;
And swarthy Memnon in his arms he knew,
His pompous ensigns, and his Indian crew.
Penthisilea there, with haughty grace,
Leads to the wars an Amazonian race:
In their right hands a pointed dart they wield;
The left, for ward, sustains the lunar shield.
Athwart her breast a golden belt she throws,
Amidst the press alone provokes a thousand foes,
And dares her maiden arms to manly force oppose.

Thus while the Trojan prince employs his eyes,
Fix'd on the walls with wonder and surprise,
The beauteous Dido, with a num'rous train
And pomp of guards, ascends the sacred fane.
Such on Eurotas' banks, or Cynthus' height,
Diana seems; and so she charms the sight,
When in the dance the graceful goddess leads
The choir of nymphs, and overtops their heads:
Known by her quiver, and her lofty mien,
She walks majestic, and she looks their queen;
Latona sees her shine above the rest,
And feeds with secret joy her silent breast.
Such Dido was; with such becoming state,
Amidst the crowd, she walks serenely great.
Their labor to her future sway she speeds,
And passing with a gracious glance proceeds;
Then mounts the throne, high plac'd before the shrine:
In crowds around, the swarming people join.
She takes petitions, and dispenses laws,
Hears and determines ev'ry private cause;
Their tasks in equal portions she divides,
And, where unequal, there by lots decides.

Another way by chance Aeneas bends
His eyes, and unexpected sees his friends,
Antheus, Sergestus grave, Cloanthus strong,
And at their backs a mighty Trojan throng,
Whom late the tempest on the billows toss'd,
And widely scatter'd on another coast.
The prince, unseen, surpris'd with wonder stands,
And longs, with joyful haste, to join their hands;
But, doubtful of the wish'd event, he stays,
And from the hollow cloud his friends surveys,
Impatient till they told their present state,
And where they left their ships, and what their fate,
And why they came, and what was their request;
For these were sent, commission'd by the rest,
To sue for leave to land their sickly men,
And gain admission to the gracious queen.
Ent'ring, with cries they fill'd the holy fane;
Then thus, with lowly voice, Ilioneus began:

"O queen! indulg'd by favor of the gods
To found an empire in these new abodes,
To build a town, with statutes to restrain
The wild inhabitants beneath thy reign,
We wretched Trojans, toss'd on ev'ry shore,
From sea to sea, thy clemency implore.
Forbid the fires our shipping to deface!
Receive th' unhappy fugitives to grace,
And spare the remnant of a pious race!
We come not with design of wasteful prey,
To drive the country, force the swains away:
Nor such our strength, nor such is our desire;
The vanquish'd dare not to such thoughts aspire.
A land there is, Hesperia nam'd of old;
The soil is fruitful, and the men are bold—
Th' Oenotrians held it once—by common fame
Now call'd Italia, from the leader's name.
To that sweet region was our voyage bent,
When winds and ev'ry warring element
Disturb'd our course, and, far from sight of land,
Cast our torn vessels on the moving sand:
The sea came on; the South, with mighty roar,

Dispers'd and dash'd the rest upon the rocky shore.
Those few you see escap'd the Storm, and fear,
Unless you interpose, a shipwreck here.
What men, what monsters, what inhuman race,
What laws, what barb'rous customs of the place,
Shut up a desart shore to drowning men,
And drive us to the cruel seas again?
If our hard fortune no compassion draws,
Nor hospitable rights, nor human laws,
The gods are just, and will revenge our cause.
Aeneas was our prince: a juster lord,
Or nobler warrior, never drew a sword;
Observant of the right, religious of his word.
If yet he lives, and draws this vital air,
Nor we, his friends, of safety shall despair;
Nor you, great queen, these offices repent,
Which he will equal, and perhaps augment.
We want not cities, nor Sicilian coasts,
Where King Acestes Trojan lineage boasts.
Permit our ships a shelter on your shores,
Refitted from your woods with planks and oars,
That, if our prince be safe, we may renew
Our destin'd course, and Italy pursue.
But if, O best of men, the Fates ordain
That thou art swallow'd in the Libyan main,
And if our young Iulus be no more,
Dismiss our navy from your friendly shore,
That we to good Acestes may return,
And with our friends our common losses mourn."
Thus spoke Ilioneus: the Trojan crew
With cries and clamors his request renew.

The modest queen a while, with downcast eyes,
Ponder'd the speech; then briefly thus replies:
"Trojans, dismiss your fears; my cruel fate,
And doubts attending an unsettled state,
Force me to guard my coast from foreign foes.
Who has not heard the story of your woes,
The name and fortune of your native place,
The fame and valor of the Phrygian race?
We Tyrians are not so devoid of sense,

Nor so remote from Phoebus' influence.
Whether to Latian shores your course is bent,
Or, driv'n by tempests from your first intent,
You seek the good Acestes' government,
Your men shall be receiv'd, your fleet repair'd,
And sail, with ships of convoy for your guard:
Or, would you stay, and join your friendly pow'rs
To raise and to defend the Tyrian tow'rs,
My wealth, my city, and myself are yours.
And would to Heav'n, the Storm, you felt, would bring
On Carthaginian coasts your wand'ring king.
My people shall, by my command, explore
The ports and creeks of ev'ry winding shore,
And towns, and wilds, and shady woods, in quest
Of so renown'd and so desir'd a guest."

Rais'd in his mind the Trojan hero stood,
And long'd to break from out his ambient cloud:
Achates found it, and thus urg'd his way:
"From whence, O goddess-born, this long delay?
What more can you desire, your welcome sure,
Your fleet in safety, and your friends secure?
One only wants; and him we saw in vain
Oppose the Storm, and swallow'd in the main.
Orontes in his fate our forfeit paid;
The rest agrees with what your mother said."
Scarce had he spoken, when the cloud gave way,
The mists flew upward and dissolv'd in day.

The Trojan chief appear'd in open sight,
August in visage, and serenely bright.
His mother goddess, with her hands divine,
Had form'd his curling locks, and made his temples shine,
And giv'n his rolling eyes a sparkling grace,
And breath'd a youthful vigor on his face;
Like polish'd ivory, beauteous to behold,
Or Parian marble, when enchas'd in gold:
Thus radiant from the circling cloud he broke,
And thus with manly modesty he spoke:

"He whom you seek am I; by tempests toss'd,
And sav'd from shipwreck on your Libyan coast;
Presenting, gracious queen, before your throne,
A prince that owes his life to you alone.
Fair majesty, the refuge and redress
Of those whom fate pursues, and wants oppress,
You, who your pious offices employ
To save the relics of abandon'd Troy;
Receive the shipwreck'd on your friendly shore,
With hospitable rites relieve the poor;
Associate in your town a wand'ring train,
And strangers in your palace entertain:
What thanks can wretched fugitives return,
Who, scatter'd thro' the world, in exile mourn?
The gods, if gods to goodness are inclin'd;
If acts of mercy touch their heav'nly mind,
And, more than all the gods, your gen'rous heart.
Conscious of worth, requite its own desert!
In you this age is happy, and this earth,
And parents more than mortal gave you birth.
While rolling rivers into seas shall run,
And round the space of heav'n the radiant sun;
While trees the mountain tops with shades supply,
Your honor, name, and praise shall never die.
Whate'er abode my fortune has assign'd,
Your image shall be present in my mind."
Thus having said, he turn'd with pious haste,
And joyful his expecting friends embrac'd:
With his right hand Ilioneus was grac'd,
Serestus with his left; then to his breast
Cloanthus and the noble Gyas press'd;
And so by turns descended to the rest.

The Tyrian queen stood fix'd upon his face,
Pleas'd with his motions, ravish'd with his grace;
Admir'd his fortunes, more admir'd the man;
Then recollected stood, and thus began:
"What fate, O goddess-born; what angry pow'rs
Have cast you shipwreck'd on our barren shores?
Are you the great Aeneas, known to fame,
Who from celestial seed your lineage claim?

The same Aeneas whom fair Venus bore
To fam'd Anchises on th' Idaean shore?
It calls into my mind, tho' then a child,
When Teucer came, from Salamis exil'd,
And sought my father's aid, to be restor'd:
My father Belus then with fire and sword
Invaded Cyprus, made the region bare,
And, conqu'ring, finish'd the successful war.
From him the Trojan siege I understood,
The Grecian chiefs, and your illustrious blood.
Your foe himself the Dardan valor prais'd,
And his own ancestry from Trojans rais'd.
Enter, my noble guest, and you shall find,
If not a costly welcome, yet a kind:
For I myself, like you, have been distress'd,
Till Heav'n afforded me this place of rest;
Like you, an alien in a land unknown,
I learn to pity woes so like my own."
She said, and to the palace led her guest;
Then offer'd incense, and proclaim'd a feast.
Nor yet less careful for her absent friends,
Twice ten fat oxen to the ships she sends;
Besides a hundred boars, a hundred lambs,
With bleating cries, attend their milky dams;
And jars of gen'rous wine and spacious bowls
She gives, to cheer the sailors' drooping souls.
Now purple hangings clothe the palace walls,
And sumptuous feasts are made in splendid halls:
On Tyrian carpets, richly wrought, they dine;
With loads of massy plate the sideboards shine,
And antique vases, all of gold emboss'd
(The gold itself inferior to the cost),
Of curious work, where on the sides were seen
The fights and figures of illustrious men,
From their first founder to the present queen.

The good Aeneas, paternal care
Iulus' absence could no longer bear,
Dispatch'd Achates to the ships in haste,
To give a glad relation of the past,
And, fraught with precious gifts, to bring the boy,

Snatch'd from the ruins of unhappy Troy:
A robe of tissue, stiff with golden wire;
An upper vest, once Helen's rich attire,
From Argos by the fam'd adultress brought,
With golden flow'rs and winding foliage wrought,
Her mother Leda's present, when she came
To ruin Troy and set the world on flame;
The scepter Priam's eldest daughter bore,
Her orient necklace, and the crown she wore
Of double texture, glorious to behold,
One order set with gems, and one with gold.
Instructed thus, the wise Achates goes,
And in his diligence his duty shows.

But Venus, anxious for her son's affairs,
New counsels tries, and new designs prepares:
That Cupid should assume the shape and face
Of sweet Ascanius, and the sprightly grace;
Should bring the presents, in her nephew's stead,
And in Eliza's veins the gentle poison shed:
For much she fear'd the Tyrians, double-tongued,
And knew the town to Juno's care belong'd.
These thoughts by night her golden slumbers broke,
And thus alarm'd, to winged Love she spoke:
"My son, my strength, whose mighty pow'r alone
Controls the Thund'rer on his awful throne,
To thee thy much-afflicted mother flies,
And on thy succor and thy faith relies.
Thou know'st, my son, how Jove's revengeful wife,
By force and fraud, attempts thy brother's life;
And often hast thou mourn'd with me his pains.
Him Dido now with blandishment detains;
But I suspect the town where Juno reigns.
For this 't is needful to prevent her art,
And fire with love the proud Phoenician's heart:
A love so violent, so strong, so sure,
As neither age can change, nor art can cure.
How this may be perform'd, now take my mind:
Ascanius by his father is design'd
To come, with presents laden, from the port,
To gratify the queen, and gain the court.

I mean to plunge the boy in pleasing sleep,
And, ravish'd, in Idalian bow'rs to keep,
Or high Cythera, that the sweet deceit
May pass unseen, and none prevent the cheat.
Take thou his form and shape. I beg the grace
But only for a night's revolving space:
Thyself a boy, assume a boy's dissembled face;
That when, amidst the fervor of the feast,
The Tyrian hugs and fonds thee on her breast,
And with sweet kisses in her arms constrains,
Thou may'st infuse thy venom in her veins."
The God of Love obeys, and sets aside
His bow and quiver, and his plumy pride;
He walks Iulus in his mother's sight,
And in the sweet resemblance takes delight.

The goddess then to young Ascanius flies,
And in a pleasing slumber seals his eyes:
Lull'd in her lap, amidst a train of Loves,
She gently bears him to her blissful groves,
Then with a wreath of myrtle crowns his head,
And softly lays him on a flow'ry bed.
Cupid meantime assum'd his form and face,
Foll'wing Achates with a shorter pace,
And brought the gifts. The queen already sate
Amidst the Trojan lords, in shining state,
High on a golden bed: her princely guest
Was next her side; in order sate the rest.
Then canisters with bread are heap'd on high;
Th' attendants water for their hands supply,
And, having wash'd, with silken towels dry.
Next fifty handmaids in long order bore
The censers, and with fumes the gods adore:
Then youths, and virgins twice as many, join
To place the dishes, and to serve the wine.
The Tyrian train, admitted to the feast,
Approach, and on the painted couches rest.
All on the Trojan gifts with wonder gaze,
But view the beauteous boy with more amaze,
His rosy-color'd cheeks, his radiant eyes,
His motions, voice, and shape, and all the god's disguise;

Nor pass unprais'd the vest and veil divine,
Which wand'ring foliage and rich flow'rs entwine.
But, far above the rest, the royal dame,
(Already doom'd to love's disastrous flame,)
With eyes insatiate, and tumultuous joy,
Beholds the presents, and admires the boy.
The guileful god about the hero long,
With children's play, and false embraces, hung;
Then sought the queen: she took him to her arms
With greedy pleasure, and devour'd his charms.
Unhappy Dido little thought what guest,
How dire a god, she drew so near her breast;
But he, not mindless of his mother's pray'r,
Works in the pliant bosom of the fair,
And molds her heart anew, and blots her former care.
The dead is to the living love resign'd;
And all Aeneas enters in her mind.

Now, when the rage of hunger was appeas'd,
The meat remov'd, and ev'ry guest was pleas'd,
The golden bowls with sparkling wine are crown'd,
And thro' the palace cheerful cries resound.
From gilded roofs depending lamps display
Nocturnal beams, that emulate the day.
A golden bowl, that shone with gems divine,
The queen commanded to be crown'd with wine:
The bowl that Belus us'd, and all the Tyrian line.
Then, silence thro' the hall proclaim'd, she spoke:
"O hospitable Jove! we thus invoke,
With solemn rites, thy sacred name and pow'r;
Bless to both nations this auspicious hour!
So may the Trojan and the Tyrian line
In lasting concord from this day combine.
Thou, Bacchus, god of joys and friendly cheer,
And gracious Juno, both be present here!
And you, my lords of Tyre, your vows address
To Heav'n with mine, to ratify the peace."
The goblet then she took, with nectar crown'd
(Sprinkling the first libations on the ground,)
And rais'd it to her mouth with sober grace;
Then, sipping, offer'd to the next in place.

'Twas Bitias whom she call'd, a thirsty soul;
He took challenge, and embrac'd the bowl,
With pleasure swill'd the gold, nor ceas'd to draw,
Till he the bottom of the brimmer saw.
The goblet goes around: Iopas brought
His golden lyre, and sung what ancient Atlas taught:
The various labors of the wand'ring moon,
And whence proceed th' eclipses of the sun;
Th' original of men and beasts; and whence
The rains arise, and fires their warmth dispense,
And fix'd and erring stars dispose their influence;
What shakes the solid earth; what cause delays
The summer nights and shortens winter days.
With peals of shouts the Tyrians praise the song:
Those peals are echo'd by the Trojan throng.
Th' unhappy queen with talk prolong'd the night,
And drank large draughts of love with vast delight;
Of Priam much enquir'd, of Hector more;
Then ask'd what arms the swarthy Memnon wore,
What troops he landed on the Trojan shore;
The steeds of Diomede varied the discourse,
And fierce Achilles, with his matchless force;
At length, as fate and her ill stars requir'd,
To hear the series of the war desir'd.
"Relate at large, my godlike guest," she said,
"The Grecian stratagems, the town betray'd:
The fatal issue of so long a war,
Your flight, your wand'rings, and your woes, declare;
For, since on ev'ry sea, on ev'ry coast,
Your men have been distress'd, your navy toss'd,
Sev'n times the sun has either tropic view'd,
The winter banish'd, and the spring renew'd."

Translated by John Dryden, 1697

Virgil's Aeneid

Jeff Lehman

If through the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* Homer is teacher of the Greeks, through the *Aeneid* Virgil is teacher not only of the Romans but of the Western world. No epic poet could replace Homer, founder of the Western epic tradition; every later epic is, in one way or another, an acknowledgement of and response to him. Yet Virgil transcends Homer; the *Aeneid* is an epic not simply of city and home but of a world-embracing civilization that establishes universal peace under the rule of law. Many of our ideas about statesmanship and civic duty, our understanding of the relationship between public and private good, and our concern for the rule of law find expression in Virgil's tale of the wanderings and wars leading up to Rome's founding.

Two basic themes are identified in the opening line, which can be rendered:

> I sing of arms and the man . . .

In the *Aeneid* Virgil reworks the epic themes of Homer's poems in reverse order: the wanderings of Aeneas and his small band of exiles from Troy—taken up in the first six books—remind us of the wanderings of Odysseus, "the man of many ways"; the battles of the remaining six books call to mind the war outside the walls of Troy, the context for Homer's tale of the wrath of Achilles.

What Homer sings in two poems Virgil sings in one; from the first book we get a clear sense that the scope of the *Aeneid* is all-encompassing. Jupiter prophesies of the Romans,

> I've fixed no limits or duration to their possessions:
> I've given them empire without end.

This prophecy of Rome's future greatness sets the stage for Virgil's epic; every *Aeneid* reader lives in a world in which this divine promise has come to fruition.

In the above excerpt from Book I, we are introduced to the story of Aeneas. Essentially, the poem relates the journey of Aeneas and his fellow Trojans as they endeavor to found a new city. Aeneas is a man of many sorrows, duty-bound to lead the remnant of his people to a new fatherland

> hurled about endlessly by land and sea,
> by the will of the gods, by cruel Juno's remorseless anger,
> long suffering also in war, until he founded a city
> and brought his gods to Latium.

The poem's action begins with a furious storm at sea brought on by Juno, queen of the gods, enemy of the Trojans. The ships of Aeneas are devastated, but thanks to the aid of other deities, he and most of his men make it to shore, seeking refuge in Carthage.

The significance of the encounter with Dido and the Carthaginians would be lost on no Roman reader: Carthage was the greatest of Rome's adversaries in her competition for dominance of the Mediterranean; in Aeneas's narrow escape (Book IV), we see a mythical prefiguring of Rome's narrow escape from Hannibal's invasion during the Second Punic War. Book I ends with Dido's request that Aeneas tell her of the fall of Troy and of his subsequent wanderings.

From the beginning, Virgil refers to "pious" Aeneas, who repeatedly faces suffering and sacrifice for the sake of his people and by the will of the gods. His piety is not perfect, we might argue, but it becomes more so as the epic unfolds. In his journey through the Underworld (Book VI), Aeneas gets a glimpse of Rome's future glory and receives what has come to be known as the Roman Mandate:

> Roman, remember by your strength to rule
> Earth's peoples—for your arts are to be these:
> To pacify, to impose the rule of law,
> To spare the conquered, battle down the proud. (Fitzgerald translation.)

Here the duty of Aeneas is linked to the duty of the Roman people. One way to read the *Aeneid*'s last six books is as a progressive realization of this mandate in preparation for Rome's founding.

For the sake of universal peace under the rule of law, Aeneas and his

men must engage in war to "battle down the proud." This brings us to the epic's final scene, where Aeneas is in single combat with Turnus, the fierce leader of the native Italians resisting the Trojan newcomers. Although Turnus is overcome by Aeneas and makes a plea for mercy, Aeneas becomes enraged and "founds" [*condit*] his blade in Turnus's chest. This "founding" reminds us of the poem's opening lines, where we're told that Aeneas will at last "found" [*conderet*] a city. Is the killing of Turnus necessary for the founding of Rome? Is it in accord with the Roman Mandate?

———

Throughout history, Virgil's *Aeneid* has been viewed as a bridge between the classical and Christian traditions. During the Middle Ages, Christian authors saw the conquests of Rome as part of God's plan to establish a universal peace in preparation for Messiah's coming. This peace under the rule of law secured the possibility of pursuing one's own salvation freely.

Furthermore, the *Aeneid* was vital to the development of the Christian epic tradition. Dante speaks of Virgil as *il nostro maggior poeta*, "our greatest poet," and, again, has him serve as the pilgrim's guide through the underworld in his *Commedia*. Dante presents Virgil as one who held a light behind himself for others to see the way to salvation.

AUGUSTINE

Late Roman/Early Medieval (354–430)

By the time of Augustine, Christians had proven they could hold their own against pagan thinkers. In Paul, for instance, they had acquired a first-rate intellect from Judaism. Nonetheless, there remained an outstanding question: "Was Christianity capable of producing a first-rate thinker?"

Augustine proved we could.

Most of the writers in this book were amazing thinkers; many wrote well, and a few did great deeds in their communities. Augustine did all three and did them at the highest level. In the time up to Augustine, the conversation in the West mostly had been a Christian reaction to outside ideas. After Augustine, the Great Conversation would be about *his* ideas for centuries.

Some Christians believe that the harder one thinks, the colder faith will grow. Augustine grew more brilliant as he grew more pious, more creative as he became more orthodox. His period of heresy was imitative, but his traditional Christianity took mental risks.

Augustine wrote so much, so well, for so long that he always is capable of surprising us. Moderns, and even some Christians who should know better, like to blame anything they don't like in Western culture on Augustine,

but most of their accusations are oversimplifications of his complicated thought.

Augustine stood at the moment when all of civilization in the West might have vanished. He placed the weight of his mind, his heart, and his actions into creating a new Christendom on the wreckage.

Any man who would dare write learned works in Latin as the barbarians sacked the Empire had hope in the future. His titanic achievement was to create a lifeboat to save Christians, and the Church, from ruin and decay for the West as it slipped into the depths of a darker age.

What can this pastor for the ages teach us today?

FROM

Confessions

(The beginning)

"Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised . . . And man desires to praise thee, for he is a part of thy creation . . . Still he desires to praise thee . . . Thou hast prompted him, that he should delight to praise thee, for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee.

Grant me, O Lord, to know and understand whether first to invoke thee or to praise thee; whether first to know thee or call upon thee. But who can invoke thee, knowing thee not? For he who knows thee not may invoke thee as another than thou art. It may be that we should invoke thee in order that we may come to know thee . . .

And how shall I call upon my God—my God and my Lord? For when I call on him I ask him to come into me. And what place is there in me into which my God can come? How could God, the God who made both heaven and earth, come into me? Is there anything in me, O Lord my God, that can contain thee? Do even the heaven and the earth, which thou hast made, and in which thou didst make me, contain thee? Is it possible that,

since without thee nothing would be which does exist, thou didst make it so that whatever exists has some capacity to receive thee? Why, then, do I ask thee to come into me, since I also am and could not be if thou wert not in me? . . . Therefore I would not exist—I would simply not be at all—unless I exist in thee, from whom and by whom and in whom all things are. Even so, Lord; even so. Where do I call thee to, when I am already in thee? Or from whence wouldst thou come into me? . . .

Since, then, thou dost fill the heaven and earth, do they contain thee? Or, dost thou fill and overflow them, because they cannot contain thee? And where dost thou pour out what remains of thee after heaven and earth are full? Or, indeed, is there no need that thou, who dost contain all things, shouldst be contained by any, since those things which thou dost fill thou fillest by containing them? . . . Do greater things contain more of thee, and smaller things less? Or, is it not rather that thou art wholly present everywhere, yet in such a way that nothing contains thee wholly? . . .

What, therefore, is my God? . . . most merciful and most just; most secret and most truly present . . . unchangeable, yet changing all things; never new, never old; making all things new . . . always working, ever at rest . . . seeking, and yet possessing all things. Thou dost love, but without passion . . . Yet, O my God, my life, my holy Joy, what is this that I have said? What can any man say when he speaks of thee? But woe to them that keep silence—since even those who say most are dumb . . . "Hear me, O God! Woe to the sins of men!" When a man cries thus, thou showest him mercy, for thou didst create the man but not the sin in him.

(Infancy)

Who brings to remembrance the sins of my infancy? For in thy sight there is none free from sin, not even the infant who has lived but a day upon this earth. Who brings this to my remembrance? Does not each little one, in whom I now observe what I no longer remember of myself? In what ways, in that time, did I sin? Was it that I cried for the breast? If I should now so cry—not indeed for the breast, but for food suitable to my condition—I should be most justly laughed at and rebuked. What I did then deserved rebuke but, since I could not understand those who rebuked

me, neither custom nor common sense permitted me to be rebuked. As we grow we root out and cast away from us such childish habits. Yet I have not seen anyone who is wise who cast away the good when trying to purge the bad. Nor was it good, even in that time, to strive to get by crying what, if it had been given me, would have been hurtful; or to be bitterly indignant at those who, because they were older—not slaves, either, but free—and wiser than I, would not indulge my capricious desires. Was it a good thing for me to try, by struggling as hard as I could, to harm them for not obeying me, even when it would have done me harm to have been obeyed? Thus, the infant's innocence lies in the weakness of his body and not in the infant mind . . .

(Boyhood)

For I did not, O Lord, lack memory or capacity, for, by thy will, I possessed enough for my age. However, my mind was absorbed only in play, and I was punished for this by those who were doing the same things themselves. But the idling of our elders is called business; the idling of boys, though quite like it, is punished by those same elders, and no one pities either the boys or the men. For will any common sense observer agree that I was rightly punished as a boy for playing ball—just because this hindered me from learning more quickly those lessons by means of which, as a man, I could play at more shameful games? . . . I disobeyed them, not because I had chosen a better way, but from a sheer love of play. I loved the vanity of victory, and I loved to have my ears tickled with lying fables, which made them itch even more ardently, and a similar curiosity glowed more and more in my eyes for the shows and sports of my elders. Yet those who put on such shows are held in such high repute that almost all desire the same for their children. They are therefore willing to have them beaten, if their childhood games keep them from the studies by which their parents desire them to grow up to be able to give such shows. Look down on these things with mercy, O Lord, and deliver us who now call upon thee; deliver those also who do not call upon thee, that they may call upon thee, and thou mayest deliver them. . . . I was compelled to learn about the wanderings of a certain Aeneas, oblivious of my own wanderings, and to

weep for Dido dead, who slew herself for love. And all this while I bore with dry eyes my own wretched self dying to thee, O God, my life, in the midst of these things . . .

But woe unto you, O torrent of human custom! Who shall stay your course? When will you ever run dry? . . . Do I not read in you the stories of Jove the thunderer—and the adulterer? How could he be both? But so it says, and the sham thunder served as a cloak for him to play at real adultery . . . Yet which of our gowned masters will give a tempered hearing to a man trained in their own schools who cries out and says: "These were Homer's fictions; he transfers things human to the gods. I could have wished that he would transfer divine things to us." . . .

But in this time of childhood—which was far less dreaded for me than my adolescence—I had no love of learning, and hated to be driven to it. Yet I was driven to it just the same, and good was done for me, even though I did not do it well, for I would not have learned if I had not been forced to it. For no man does well against his will, even if what he does is a good thing . . . from this it is sufficiently clear that a free curiosity is more effective in learning than a discipline based on fear. Yet, by thy ordinance, O God, discipline is given to restrain the excesses of freedom . . .

Actually, was not all that smoke and wind? . . . But it was no wonder that I was thus carried toward vanity and was estranged from thee, O my God, when men were held up as models to me who, when relating a deed of theirs—not in itself evil—were covered with confusion if found guilty of a barbarism or a solecism; but who could tell of their own licentiousness and be applauded for it, so long as they did it in a full and ornate oration of well-chosen words. . . . Look down, O Lord God, and see patiently, as thou art wont to do, how diligently the sons of men observe the conventional rules of letters and syllables, taught them by those who learned their letters beforehand, while they neglect the eternal rules of everlasting salvation taught by thee. They carry it so far that if he who practices or teaches the established rules of pronunciation should speak (contrary to grammatical usage) without aspirating the first syllable of "hominem" ["ominem," and thus make it "a 'uman being"], he will offend men more than if he, a human being, were to hate another human being contrary to thy commandments . . . It is as if he should feel that there is an enemy who could be more destructive to himself than that hatred which excites him against his fellow man; or

that he could destroy him whom he hates more completely than he destroys his own soul by this same hatred. Now, obviously, there is no knowledge of letters more innate than the writing of conscience—against doing unto another what one would not have done to himself. . . .

Is this the innocence of childhood? It is not, O Lord, it is not. I entreat thy mercy, O my God, for these same sins as we grow older are transferred from tutors and masters; they pass from nuts and balls and sparrows, to magistrates and kings, to gold and lands and slaves, just as the rod is succeeded by more severe chastisements. . . . However, O Lord, to thee most excellent and most good, thou Architect and Governor of the universe, thanks would be due thee, O our God, even if thou hadst not willed that I should survive my boyhood. For I existed even then; I lived and felt and was solicitous about my own well-being—a trace of that most mysterious unity from whence I had my being. . . .

(Adolescence)

But what was it that delighted me save to love and to be loved? Still I did not keep the moderate way of the love of mind to mind—the bright path of friendship. Instead, the mists of passion steamed up out of the puddly concupiscence of the flesh, and the hot imagination of puberty, and they so obscured and overcast my heart that I was unable to distinguish pure affection from unholy desire. Both boiled confusedly within me, and dragged my unstable youth down over the cliffs of unchaste desires and plunged me into a gulf of infamy . . .

Theft is punished by thy law, O Lord, and by the law written in men's hearts, which not even ingrained wickedness can erase. For what thief will tolerate another thief stealing from him? . . . There was a pear tree close to our own vineyard, heavily laden with fruit, which was not tempting either for its color or for its flavor . . . We carried off a huge load of pears . . . Doing this pleased us all the more because it was forbidden . . . When, therefore, we inquire why a crime was committed, we do not accept the explanation unless it appears that there was the desire to obtain some of those values which we designate inferior, or else a fear of losing them . . . A man has murdered another man—what was his motive? Either he desired

his wife or his property or else he would steal to support himself . . . What was it in you, O theft of mine, that I, poor wretch, doted on—you deed of darkness—in that sixteenth year of my age? Beautiful you were not, for you were a theft . . .

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. . . And now, O Lord my God, I ask what it was in that theft of mine that caused me such delight; for behold it had no beauty of its own—certainly not the sort of beauty that exists in justice and wisdom, nor such as is in the mind, memory senses, and the animal life of man; nor yet the kind that is the glory and beauty of the stars in their courses; nor the beauty of the earth, or the sea—teeming with spawning life, replacing in birth that which dies and decays. Indeed, it did not have that false and shadowy beauty which attends the deceptions of vice.

For thus we see pride wearing the mask of high-spiritedness, although only thou, O God, art high above all. Ambition seeks honor and glory, whereas only thou shouldst be honored above all, and glorified forever. The powerful man seeks to be feared, because of his cruelty; but who ought really to be feared but God only? . . . The enticements of the wanton claim the name of love; and yet nothing is more enticing than thy love, nor is anything loved more healthfully than thy truth, bright and beautiful above all. . . . Indeed, ignorance and foolishness themselves go masked under the names of simplicity and innocence; yet there is no being that has true simplicity like thine, and none is innocent as thou art. Thus it is that by a sinner's own deeds he is himself harmed. Human sloth pretends to long for rest, but what sure rest is there save in the Lord? Luxury would fain be called plenty and abundance; but thou art the fullness and unfailing abundance of unfading joy. Prodigality presents a show of liberality; but thou art the most lavish giver of all good things. Covetousness desires to possess much; but thou art already the possessor of all things. Envy contends that its aim is for excellence; but what is so excellent as thou? Anger seeks revenge; but who avenges more justly than thou? . . . All things thus imitate thee—but pervertedly—when they separate themselves far from thee and raise themselves up against thee. . . .

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. . . What was it, then, that I loved in that theft? And wherein was I imitating my Lord, even in a corrupted and perverted way? Did I wish, if

only by gesture, to rebel against thy law even though I had no power to do so actually—so that, even as a captive, I might produce a sort of counterfeit liberty, by doing with impunity deeds that were forbidden, in a deluded sense of omnipotence? Behold this servant of thine, fleeing from his Lord and following a shadow! . . .

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And, as the theft itself was nothing, I was all the more wretched in that I loved it so. Yet by myself alone I would not have done it—I still recall how I felt about this then—I could not have done it alone. I loved it then because of the companionship of my accomplices with whom I did it . . . when they say, "Let's go, let's do it," we are ashamed not to be shameless.

('College' at Carthage)

I came to Carthage, where a caldron of unholy loves was seething and bubbling all around me. I was not in love as yet, but I was in love with love . . . I was looking for something to love, for I was in love with loving . . . Within me I had a dearth of that inner food which is thyself, my God—although that dearth caused me no hunger . . . My God, my mercy, with how much bitterness didst thou, out of thy infinite goodness, flavor that sweetness for me! For I was not only beloved but also I secretly reached the climax of enjoyment; and yet I was joyfully bound with troublesome tics, so that I could be scourged with the burning iron rods of jealousy, suspicion, fear, anger, and strife . . .

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Stage plays also captivated me, with their sights full of the images of my own miseries: fuel for my own fire. Now, why does a man like to be made sad by viewing doleful and tragic scenes, which he himself could not by any means endure? Yet, as a spectator, he wishes to experience from them a sense of grief, and in this very sense of grief his pleasure consists . . . But what kind of compassion is it that arises from viewing fictitious and unreal sufferings? The spectator is not expected to aid the sufferer but merely to grieve for him. . . . This is the reason for my love of griefs: that they would not probe into me too deeply (for I did not love to suffer in myself such things as I loved to look at), and they were the sort of grief

which came from hearing those fictions, which affected only the surface of my emotion. . . .

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In the ordinary course of study I came upon a certain book of Cicero's, whose language almost all admire, though not his heart. This particular book of his contains an exhortation to philosophy and was called Hortensius. Now it was this book which quite definitely changed my whole attitude and turned my prayers toward thee, O Lord, and gave me new hope and new desires. Suddenly every vain hope became worthless to me, and with an incredible warmth of heart I yearned for an immortality of wisdom and began now to arise that I might return to thee . . . For with thee is wisdom. In Greek the love of wisdom is called "philosophy," and it was with this love that that book inflamed me . . . Since at that time, as thou knowest, O Light of my heart, the words of the apostle were unknown to me, I was delighted with Cicero's exhortation, at least enough so that I was stimulated by it, and enkindled and inflamed to love, to seek, to obtain, to hold, and to embrace, not this or that sect, but wisdom itself, wherever it might be. . . .

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I resolved, therefore, to direct my mind to the Holy Scriptures, that I might see what they were . . . Yet I was not of the number of those who could enter into it or bend my neck to follow its steps . . . When I then turned toward the Scriptures, they appeared to me to be quite unworthy to be compared with the dignity of Tully. For my inflated pride was repelled by their style, nor could the sharpness of my wit penetrate their inner meaning.

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Thus I fell among men, delirious in their pride, carnal and voluble, whose mouths were the snares of the devil . . . I was hungering and thirsting, not even after those first works of thine, but after thyself the Truth, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." . . . Yet they still served me glowing fantasies in those dishes. And yet because I supposed the illusions to be from thee I fed on them—not with avidity, for thou didst not taste in my mouth as thou art, and thou wast not these empty fictions. Neither was I nourished by them, but was instead exhausted. Food in dreams appears like our food awake; yet the sleepers are not nourished by it, for they are asleep. . . .

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For I was ignorant of that other reality, true Being. And so it was that I was subtly persuaded to agree with these foolish deceivers when they put their questions to me: "Whence comes evil?" and, "Is God limited by a bodily shape, and has he hairs and nails?" and, "Are those patriarchs to be esteemed righteous who had many wives at one time, and who killed men and who sacrificed living creatures?" In my ignorance I was much disturbed over these things and, though I was retreating from the truth, I appeared to myself to be going toward it, because I did not yet know that evil was nothing but a privation of good (that, indeed, it has no being) . . . And I did not know that God is a spirit who has no parts extended in length and breadth, whose being has no mass—for every mass is less in a part than in a whole—and if it be an infinite mass it must be less in such parts as are limited by a certain space than in its infinity. It cannot therefore be wholly everywhere as Spirit is, as God is . . . Nor did I know that true inner righteousness—which does not judge according to custom but by the measure of the most perfect law of God Almighty . . . by which the mores of various places and times were adapted to those places and times . . . as if, in a house, he sees a servant handle something that the butler is not permitted to touch, or when something is done behind a stable that would be prohibited in a dining room, and then a person should be indignant that in one house and one family the same things are not allowed to every member of the household . . . Is justice, then, variable and changeable? No, but the times over which she presides are not all alike because they are different times. . . .

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. . . And now thou didst "stretch forth thy hand from above" and didst draw up my soul out of that profound darkness [of Manicheism] because my mother, thy faithful one, wept to thee on my behalf more than mothers are accustomed to weep for the bodily deaths of their children . . . And thou didst hear her, O Lord . . . But thou gavest her then another answer, by a priest of thine, a certain bishop reared in thy Church and well versed in thy books. When that woman had begged him to agree to have some discussion with me, to refute my errors . . . he answered that I was still unteachable, being inflated with the novelty of that heresy. . . . When he had said this she was not satisfied, but repeated more earnestly

her entreaties, and shed copious tears, still beseeching him to see and talk with me. Finally the bishop, a little vexed at her importunity, exclaimed, "Go your way; as you live, it cannot be that the son of these tears should perish." As she often told me afterward, she accepted this answer as though it were a voice from heaven. . . .

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And what did it profit me that, when I was scarcely twenty years old, a book of Aristotle's entitled The Ten Categories fell into my hands? . . . What did all this profit me, since it actually hindered me when I imagined that whatever existed was comprehended within those ten categories? I tried to interpret them, O my God, so that even thy wonderful and unchangeable unity could be understood as subjected to thy own magnitude or beauty, as if they existed in thee as their Subject—as they do in corporeal bodies—whereas thou art thyself thy own magnitude and beauty. A body is not great or fair because it is a body, because, even if it were less great or less beautiful, it would still be a body. . . . Yet, O Lord God of Truth, is any man pleasing to thee because he knows these things? No, for surely that man is unhappy who knows these things and does not know thee. And that man is happy who knows thee, even though he does not know these things. . . .

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And because my piety—such as it was—still compelled me to believe that the good God never created any evil substance, I formed the idea of two masses, one opposed to the other, both infinite but with the evil more contracted and the good more expansive . . . Furthermore, the things they censured in thy Scriptures I thought impossible to be defended. And yet, occasionally, I desired to confer on various matters with someone well learned in those books, to test what he thought of them. For already the words of one Elpidius, who spoke and disputed face to face against these same Manicheans, had begun to impress me, even when I was at Carthage; because he brought forth things out of the Scriptures that were not easily withstood, to which their answers appeared to me feeble. One of their answers they did not give forth publicly, but only to us in private—when they said that the writings of the New Testament had been tampered with by unknown persons who desired to ingraft the Jewish law into the Christian faith. But they themselves never brought forward any uncorrupted copies. . . .

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. . . I was now half inclined to believe that those philosophers whom they call "The Academics" were wiser than the rest in holding that we ought to doubt everything, and in maintaining that man does not have the power of comprehending any certain truth, for, although I had not yet understood their meaning, I was fully persuaded that they thought just as they are commonly reputed to do.

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. . . I heard him (Ambrose), indeed, every Lord's Day, "rightly dividing the word of truth" among the people. And I became all the more convinced that all those knots of crafty calumnies which those deceivers of ours had knit together against the divine books could be unraveled . . . Still rejoicing, I blushed that for so many years I had bayed, not against the Catholic faith, but against the fables of fleshly imagination. . . .

(Problem of Evil Answered)

Being thus gross-hearted and not clear even to myself, I then held that whatever had neither length nor breadth nor density nor solidity, and did not or could not receive such dimensions, was absolutely nothing. For at that time my mind dwelt only with ideas, which resembled the forms with which my eyes are still familiar, nor could I see that the act of thought, by which I formed those ideas, was itself immaterial . . . And I kept seeking for an answer to the question, Whence is evil? And I sought it in an evil way . . . Where, then, is evil, and whence does it come and how has it crept in? . . . Has it no being at all? Why, then, do we fear and shun what has no being? Or if we fear it needlessly, then surely that fear is evil by which the heart is unnecessarily stabbed and tortured—and indeed a greater evil since we have nothing real to fear, and yet do fear. Therefore, either that is evil which we fear, or the act of fearing is in itself evil . . .

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. . . And it was made clear to me that all things are good even if they are corrupted. They could not be corrupted if they were supremely good; but unless they were good they could not be corrupted. If they were supremely good, they would be incorruptible; if they were not good at all,

there would be nothing in them to be corrupted. For corruption harms; but unless it could diminish goodness, it could not harm . . . So long as they are, therefore, they are good. Therefore, whatsoever is, is good. . . . There is no sanity in those whom anything in creation displeases . . . And I asked what wickedness was, and I found that it was no substance, but a perversion of the will bent aside from thee, O God . . .

(Christ the Way)

And I marveled that I now loved thee, and no fantasm in thy stead, and yet I was not stable enough to enjoy my God steadily. Instead I was transported to thee by thy beauty, and then presently torn away from thee by my own weight, sinking with grief into these lower things. This weight was carnal habit. But thy memory dwelt with me, and I never doubted in the least that there was One for me to cleave to; but I was not yet ready to cleave to thee firmly. . . . I lapsed again into my accustomed ways, carrying along with me nothing but a loving memory of my vision, and an appetite for what I had, as it were, smelled the odor of, but was not yet able to eat. . . .

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I sought, therefore, some way to acquire the strength sufficient to enjoy thee; but I did not find it until I embraced that "Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" . . . And, as yet, I was not humble enough to hold the humble Jesus; nor did I understand what lesson his weakness was meant to teach us . . . in this lower world, he built for himself a humble habitation of our own clay, so that he might pull down from themselves and win over to himself those whom he is to bring subject to him; lowering their pride and heightening their love, to the end that they might go on no farther in self-confidence—but rather should become weak, seeing at their feet the Deity made weak by sharing our coats of skin—so that they might cast themselves, exhausted, upon him and be uplifted by his rising. . . . I now believe that it was thy pleasure that I should . . . distinguish what a difference there is between presumption and confession—between those who saw where they were to go even if they did not see the way, and the Way which leads, not only to the observing, but also the inhabiting of the blessed country. . . .

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With great eagerness, then, I fastened upon the venerable writings of thy Spirit and principally upon the apostle Paul. . . . And I saw that those pure words had but one face, and I learned to rejoice with trembling. . . .

(The Conversion)

Then, as this vehement quarrel, which I waged with my soul in the chamber of my heart, was raging inside my inner dwelling, agitated both in mind and countenance, I seized upon Alypius and exclaimed: "What is the matter with us?" . . . The uninstructed start up and take heaven, and we—with all our learning but so little heart—see where we wallow in flesh and blood! Because others have gone before us, are we ashamed to follow, and not rather ashamed at our not following?" I scarcely knew what I said, and in my excitement I flung away from him, while he gazed at me in silent astonishment. For I did not sound like myself: my face, eyes, color, tone expressed my meaning more clearly than my words.

There was a little garden belonging to our lodging, of which we had the use—as of the whole house—for the master, our landlord, did not live there. The tempest in my breast hurried me out into this garden. . . . I fled into the garden, with Alypius following step by step; for I had no secret in which he did not share, and how could he leave me in such distress? . . . I sent up these sorrowful cries: "How long, how long? Tomorrow and tomorrow? Why not now? Why not this very hour make an end to my uncleanness?". . . . I was saying these things and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when suddenly I heard the voice of a boy or a girl I know not which—coming from the neighboring house, chanting over and over again, "Pick it up, read it; pick it up, read it." Immediately I ceased weeping and began most earnestly to think whether it was usual for children in some kind of game to sing such a song, but I could not remember ever having heard the like. So, damming the torrent of my tears, I got to my feet, for I could not but think that this was a divine command to open the Bible and read the first passage I should light upon. For I had heard how Anthony, accidentally coming into church while the gospel was being read, received the admonition as if what was read had been addressed

to him: "Go and sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." By such an oracle he was forthwith converted to thee.

So I quickly returned to the bench where Alypius was sitting, for there I had put down the apostle's book when I had left there. I snatched it up, opened it, and in silence read the paragraph on which my eyes first fell: "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." I wanted to read no further, nor did I need to. For instantly, as the sentence ended, there was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away. Closing the book, then, and putting my finger or something else for a mark I began—now with a tranquil countenance—to tell it all to Alypius. And he in turn disclosed to me what had been going on in himself, of which I knew nothing. He asked to see what I had read. I showed him, and he looked on even further than I had read. I had not known what followed. But indeed it was this, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive." This he applied to himself, and told me so. By these words of warning he was strengthened, and by exercising his good resolution and purpose—all very much in keeping with his character, in which, in these respects, he was always far different from and better than I—he joined me in full commitment without any restless hesitation . . . Then we went in to my mother, and told her what happened, to her great joy. We explained to her how it had occurred—and she leaped for joy triumphant; and she blessed thee, who art "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." For she saw that thou hadst granted her far more than she had ever asked for. . . .

(Death of Monica)

As the day now approached on which she was to depart this life—a day which thou knewest, but which we did not—it happened (though I believe it was by thy secret ways arranged) that she and I stood alone, leaning in a certain window from which the garden of the house we occupied at Ostia could be seen. Here in this place, removed from the crowd, we were resting

ourselves for the voyage after the fatigues of a long journey. We were conversing alone very pleasantly and "forgetting those things which are past, and reaching forward toward those things which are future." We were in the present—and in the presence of Truth (which thou art)—discussing together what is the nature of the eternal life of the saints: which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man. We opened wide the mouth of our heart, thirsting for those supernal streams of thy fountain, "the fountain of life" which is with thee, that we might be sprinkled with its waters according to our capacity and might in some measure weigh the truth of so profound a mystery. And when our conversation had brought us to the point where the very highest of physical sense and the most intense illumination of physical light seemed, in comparison with the sweetness of that life to come, not worthy of comparison, nor even of mention, we lifted ourselves with a more ardent love toward the Selfsame, and we gradually passed through all the levels of bodily objects, and even through the heaven itself, where the sun and moon and stars shine on the earth. Indeed, we soared higher yet by an inner musing, speaking and marveling at thy works. And we came at last to our own minds and went beyond them, that we might climb as high as that region of unfailing plenty where thou feedest Israel forever with the food of truth . . .

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What we said went something like this: "If to any man the tumult of the flesh were silenced; and the phantoms of earth and waters and air were silenced; and the poles were silent as well; indeed, if the very soul grew silent to herself, and went beyond herself by not thinking of herself; if fancies and imaginary revelations were silenced; if every tongue and every sign and every transient thing—for actually if any man could hear them, all these would say, 'We did not create ourselves, but were created by Him who abides forever'—and if, having uttered this, they too should be silent, having stirred our ears to hear him who created them; and if then he alone spoke, not through them but by himself, that we might hear his word, not in fleshly tongue or angelic voice, nor sound of thunder, nor the obscurity of a parable, but might hear him—him for whose sake we love these things . . . And if this could be sustained, and other visions of a far different kind be taken away, and this one should so ravish and absorb and envelop its beholder in these inward joys that his life might be eternally

like that one moment of knowledge which we now sighed after—would not this be the reality of the saying, 'Enter into the joy of thy Lord'?" . . .

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Then my mother said: "Son, for myself I have no longer any pleasure in anything in this life. Now that my hopes in this world are satisfied, I do not know what more I want here or why I am here. There was indeed one thing for which I wished to tarry a little in this life, and that was that I might see you a Catholic Christian before I died. My God hath answered this more than abundantly, so that I see you now made his servant and spurning all earthly happiness. What more am I to do here?" . . . However, it was scarcely five days later . . . I closed her eyes; and there flowed in a great sadness on my heart. . . .

(Concluding Address)

Let me know thee, O my Knower; let me know thee even as I am known. . . . And what is there in me that could be hidden from thee, Lord, to whose eyes the abysses of man's conscience are naked, even if I were unwilling to confess it to thee? In doing so I would only hide thee from myself, not myself from thee . . . What is it to me that men should hear my confessions as if it were they who were going to cure all my infirmities? People are curious to know the lives of others, but slow to correct their own. Why are they anxious to hear from me what I am, when they are unwilling to hear from thee what they are? . . . Some have heard about me or from me, but their ear is not close to my heart, where I am whatever it is that I am. . . . Now I ask all men whether they would rather rejoice in truth or in falsehood. They will no more hesitate to answer, "In truth," than to say that they wish to be happy. For a happy life is joy in the truth. Yet this is joy in thee, who art the Truth . . . All wish for this happy life; all wish for this life which is the only happy one: joy in the truth is what all men wish . . . I have had experience with many who wished to deceive, but not one who wished to be deceived . . .

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Why, then, does truth generate hatred, and why does thy servant who preaches the truth come to be an enemy to them who also love the happy

life, which is nothing else than joy in the truth—unless it be that truth is loved in such a way that those who love something else besides her wish that to be the truth which they do love. Since they are unwilling to be deceived, they are unwilling to be convinced that they have been deceived. Therefore, they hate the truth for the sake of whatever it is that they love in place of the truth. They love truth when she shines on them; and hate her when she rebukes them. And since they are not willing to be deceived, but do wish to deceive, they love truth when she reveals herself and hate her when she reveals them. On this account, she will so repay them that those who are unwilling to be exposed by her she will indeed expose against their will, and yet will not disclose herself to them. . . .

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It is not with a doubtful consciousness, but one fully certain that I love thee, O Lord. Thou hast smitten my heart with thy Word, and I have loved thee . . . But what is it that I love in loving thee? Not physical beauty, nor the splendor of time, nor the radiance of the light—so pleasant to our eyes—nor the sweet melodies of the various kinds of songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers and ointments and spices; not manna and honey, not the limbs embraced in physical love—it is not these I love when I love my God. Yet it is true that I love a certain kind of light and sound and fragrance and food and embrace in loving my God, who is the light and sound and fragrance and food and embracement of my inner man—where that light shines into my soul which no place can contain, where time does not snatch away the lovely sound, where no breeze disperses the sweet fragrance, where no eating diminishes the food there provided, and where there is an embrace that no satiety comes to sunder. This is what I love when I love my God . . .

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Belatedly I loved thee, O Beauty so ancient and so new, belatedly I loved thee. For see, thou wast within and I was without, and I sought thee out there. Unlovely, I rushed heedlessly among the lovely things thou hast made. Thou wast with me, but I was not with thee. These things kept me far from thee; even though they were not at all unless they were in thee. Thou didst call and cry aloud, and didst force open my deafness. Thou didst gleam and shine, and didst chase away my blindness. Thou didst breathe fragrant odors and I drew in my breath; and now I pant for thee.

I tasted, and now I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me, and I burned for thy peace.

Translated by Albert C. Outler, 1955

The Influence of Saint Augustine

Peter Kreeft

Every person now living would be very different, or would not be at all, if Augustine had been different, or had not been. No Christian in history since the apostle Paul has had more influence. Almost single-handedly, Augustine forged the medieval Christian mind. Since the Reformation, he is the only extra-biblical writer whom both Roman Catholics and Protestant Reformers have loved, appealed to, and claimed as their own.

Augustine lived during the troubled times at the end of one age (the ancient Roman) and the beginning of another (the medieval Christian). He lived through the fall of Rome in AD 410, and he died as the smoke and fires of the barbarians were burning his native North African city. Rome was not just a city but "the eternal city"; not just an empire but civilization itself. The equivalent of a nuclear winter was descending.

To such a powerful crisis, Augustine did one of the most powerful things a man can do: he wrote books, very many of them, but especially two of the greatest, most popular, and most influential ever written.

One, the 1,500-page *The City of God*, is the world's first philosophy of history. It interprets all of the human story, from Creation to the Last Judgment, as the drama of divine providence and human free choice (both of which Augustine strongly defended), especially the choice between the two most fundamental options of membership in one or the other of the "two cities." The City of God is the invisible community of all who love

God as God; the City of the World is all those who love the world and themselves as their God.

"Two loves have made two cities." This produces history's central plotline and drama, culminating in heaven and hell. (*Nothing* is more dramatic than that.)

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The other book, the *Confessions*, is the very same dramatic story in Augustine's own soul and life. It is the most beloved and influential book ever written by a Christian, next to the Bible, and it begins with the most frequently quoted Christian sentence outside the Bible, which summarizes both this book and the fundamental meaning of every human life: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and [therefore] our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." It's the gospel of the restless heart.

Augustine wrote *Confessions* in the form of a prayer. Like Job's speeches, it is addressed *to God*; we human readers are only eavesdroppers. This accounts for its ruthless, searing, Job-like honesty: it's written face-to-face with the One who knows all. That's also why it contains more questions, more interrogative sentences, than any other great book that isn't in literal dialogue format. Augustine simply could not stop asking searching questions, with both his mind and his heart.

Confessions is laced with scriptural quotations, literally hundreds of them. Scripture was more than an object of Augustine's gaze; it was in the heart of the gazer; it was not merely a book but the eyes through which all books, and life, were read. And this was done as naturally and spontaneously as breathing.

No author who ever lived has had both a more brilliant and searching mind *and* a more burning, passionate heart. These two qualities, which can tear other souls in two, united Augustine's. Medieval statuary almost always has him holding an open Bible in one hand and a burning heart in the other.

Yet, paradoxically, it is this very uniqueness and distinctiveness of Augustine, the combination of great mind/great heart, that makes him *Everyman writ large*. These are the two deepest facets in each of us, the two powers that flow from the fact that we are made in the finite image of infinite intelligence and infinite love.

Intelligence, reason, truth—this is of absolute value for Augustine.

But it is the heart that is the deepest. *Heart*, in Augustine, as in Scripture, does not essentially mean sentiment or emotion; it means love. *Amor meus, pondus meum*, he says: My love is my weight, my gravity, my destiny. I go where my love draws me. To love is to will, to choose, to take one fork in life's road rather than another.

The *Confessions* is the story, both inner and outer, of the twofold journey of Augustine's mind and heart. Again, like Job, it is apparently the story of man's search for God, but it's really the story of God's search for man. And in the case of Augustine, God's finding him was momentous. This is the story of the making of that man.

The *Confessions* must be read thoughtfully, not swallowed quickly like a pill but slowly chewed like gum. It is not water; it is rich, fine wine.

It's full of poetic beauties. It sings. It cries. It shouts. It bleeds. So does your soul, if you dare to set it down here in the lines of this book.

These excerpts are just short samples, snippets, "highlights." Please find and read the whole work, and be sure to get Frank Sheed's translation; no other comes close to doing justice to *Confessions*' beauty.

BOETHIUS

Late Roman/Early Medieval (c. 480–524/525)

Boethius was at the end of the world as he knew it, and he felt horrible. Rome was fading away in the West, and Boethius had been educated to be a Roman gentleman, but the political future looked barbaric. Worse, he was facing personal annihilation and feared for the future of his family. Boethius had placed the power of his writing in service to the Christian Church, Rome, and his children; none of them were doing very well.

If the cable news networks are depressing you, then the last literate Roman may be the cure.

As civilization slowly collapsed around him, Boethius faced a time when the next day was measurably worse than the day before. The buildings going up were always inferior to the ruins around him. What was the future?

It could have been a dark era; instead it became a middle age that produced the bedrock ideas for representative government, international law, and the scientific revolution.

Boethius's little book *Consolation of Philosophy* has never stopped selling since he wrote it, even in ages when books were rare and each copy cost a fortune. Men paid the price for his book because it gives a real answer to

human suffering. Boethius faced his own death but, more important, the death of everything he loved. He was miserable, and only "Lady Philosophy" offered him any consolation. Tough love, but it helped him.

In *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius moved from considering history from an actor's point of view to a "timeless" eternal view. From that divine perspective, nothing is ever utterly lost, because all of life is possessed by God in an eternal now.

Though time was gnawing away at Boethius and stealing all he valued, God was beyond time and loss. Gaining this philosophical vantage allowed the last Roman to become one of the first men of the Middle Ages.

The future would belong to Christians who could save what was best from Greek and Roman philosophy. Boethius found consolation in philosophy and helped secure that future from his prison cell. I find this very consoling.

FROM

Consolation of Philosophy

Book I

To pleasant songs my work was erstwhile given, and bright were all my labours then; but now in tears to sad refrains am I compelled to turn. Thus my maimed Muses guide my pen, and gloomy songs make no feigned tears bedew my face. Then could no fear so overcome to leave me companionless upon my way. They were the pride of my earlier bright-lived days: in my later gloomy days they are the comfort of my fate; for hastened by unhappiness has age come upon me without warning, and grief hath set within me the old age of her gloom. White hairs are scattered untimely on my head, and the skin hangs loosely from my worn-out limbs.

Happy is that death which thrusts not itself upon men in their pleasant years, yet comes to them at the oft-repeated cry of their sorrow. Sad is it how death turns away from the unhappy with so deaf an ear, and will not close, cruel, the eyes that weep. Ill is it to trust to Fortune's fickle bounty, and while yet she smiled upon me, the hour of gloom had well-nigh overwhelmed my

head. Now has the cloud put off its alluring face, wherefore without scruple my life drags out its wearying delays.

"Why, O my friends, did ye so often puff me up, telling me that I was fortunate? For he that is fallen low did never firmly stand."

While I was pondering thus in silence, and using my pen to set down so tearful a complaint, there appeared standing over my head a woman's form, whose countenance was full of majesty, whose eyes shone as with fire and in power of insight surpassed the eyes of men, whose colour was full of life, whose strength was yet intact though she was so full of years that none would ever think that she was subject to such age as ours. One could but doubt her varying stature, for at one moment she repressed it to the common measure of a man, at another she seemed to touch with her crown the very heavens: and when she had raised higher her head, it pierced even the sky and baffled the sight of those who would look upon it. Her clothing was wrought of the finest thread by subtle workmanship brought to an indivisible piece. This had she woven with her own hands, as I afterwards did learn by her own shewing. Their beauty was somewhat dimmed by the dullness of long neglect, as is seen in the smoke-grimed masks of our ancestors. On the border below was inwoven the symbol π, on that above was to be read a θ. And between the two letters there could be marked degrees, by which, as by the rungs of a ladder, ascent might be made from the lower principle to the higher. Yet the hands of rough men had torn this garment and snatched such morsels as they could therefrom. In her right hand she carried books, in her left was a sceptre brandished.

When she saw that the Muses of poetry were present by my couch giving words to my lamenting, she was stirred a while; her eyes flashed fiercely, and said she, "Who has suffered these seducing mummers to approach this sick man? Never do they support those in sorrow by any healing remedies, but rather do ever foster the sorrow by poisonous sweets. These are they who stifle the fruit-bearing harvest of reason with the barren briars of the passions: they free not the minds of men from disease, but accustom them thereto. I would think it less grievous if your allurements drew away from me some uninitiated man, as happens in the vulgar herd. In such an one my labours would be naught harmed, but this man has been nourished in the lore of Eleatics and Academics; and to him have ye reached? Away

with you, Sirens, seductive unto destruction! leave him to my Muses to be cared for and to be healed."

Their band thus rated cast a saddened glance upon the ground, confessing their shame in blushes, and passed forth dismally over the threshold. For my part, my eyes were dimmed with tears, and I could not discern who was this woman of such commanding power. I was amazed, and turning my eyes to the ground I began in silence to await what she should do. Then she approached nearer and sat down upon the end of my couch: she looked into my face heavy with grief and cast down by sorrow to the ground, and then she raised her complaint over the trouble of my mind in these words.

> *"Ah me! how blunted grows the mind when sunk below the o'erwhelming flood! Its own true light no longer burns within, and it would break forth to outer darknesses. How often care, when fanned by earthly winds, grows to a larger and unmeasured bane. This man has been free to the open heaven: his habit has it been to wander into the paths of the sky: his to watch the light of the bright sun, his to inquire into the brightness of the chilly moon; he, like a conqueror, held fast bound in its order every star that makes its wandering circle, turning its peculiar course. Nay, more, deeply has he searched into the springs of nature, whence came the roaring blasts that ruffle the ocean's bosom calm: what is the spirit that makes the firmament revolve; wherefore does the evening star sink into the western wave but to rise from the radiant East; what is the cause which so tempers the season of Spring that it decks the earth with rose-blossoms; whence comes it to pass that Autumn is prolific in the years of plenty and overflows with teeming vines: deeply to search these causes was his wont, and to bring forth secrets deep in Nature hid.*

"Now he lies there; extinct his reason's light, his neck in heavy chains thrust down, his countenance with grievous weight downcast; ah! the brute earth is all he can behold.

"But now," said she, "is the time for the physician's art, rather than for complaining." Then fixing her eyes wholly on me, she said, "Are you the man who was nourished upon the milk of my learning, brought up with my food until you had won your way to the power of a manly soul? Surely I had given you such weapons as would keep you safe, and your strength unconquered; if you had not thrown them away. Do you know me? Why do you keep silence? Are you dumb from shame or from dull

amazement? I would it were from shame, but I see that amazement has overwhelmed you."

When she saw that I was not only silent, but utterly tongue-tied and dumb, she put her hand gently upon my breast, and said, "There is no danger: he is suffering from drowsiness, that disease which attacks so many minds which have been deceived. He has forgotten himself for a moment and will quickly remember, as soon as he recognises me. That he may do so, let me brush away from his eyes the darkening cloud of thoughts of matters perishable." So saying, she gathered her robe into a fold and dried my swimming eyes.

> *Then was dark night dispelled, the shadows fled away, and my eyes received returning power as before. 'Twas just as when the heavenly bodies are enveloped by the west wind's rush, and the sky stands thick with watery clouds; the sun is hidden and the stars are not yet come into the sky, and night descending from above o'erspreads the earth: but if the north wind smites this scene, launched forth from the Thracian cave, it unlocks the imprisoned daylight; the sun shines forth, and thus sparkling Phoebus smites with his rays our wondering eyes.*

In such a manner were the clouds of grief scattered. Then I drew breath again and engaged my mind in taking knowledge of my physician's countenance. So when I turned my eyes towards her and fixed my gaze upon her, I recognised my nurse, Philosophy, in whose chambers I had spent my life from earliest manhood. And I asked her, "Wherefore have you, mistress of all virtues, come down from heaven above to visit my lonely place of banishment? Is it that you, as well as I, may be harried, the victim of false charges?" "Should I," said she, "desert you, my nursling? Should I not share and bear my part of the burden which has been laid upon you from spite against my name? Surely Philosophy never allowed herself to let the innocent go upon their journey unbefriended. Think you I would fear calumnies? that I would be terrified as though they were a new misfortune? Think you that this is the first time that wisdom has been harassed by dangers among men of shameless ways? In ancient days before the time of my child, Plato, have we not as well as nowadays fought many a mighty battle against the recklessness of folly? And though Plato did survive, did not his master, Socrates, win his victory of an unjust death, with me present at his side? When after him the followers of Epicurus,

and in turn the Stoics, and then others did all try their utmost to seize his legacy, they dragged me, for all my cries and struggles, as though to share me as plunder; they tore my robe which I had woven with mine own hands, and snatched away the fragments thereof: and when they thought I had altogether yielded myself to them, they departed.

. . .

"Are such your experiences, and do they sink into your soul?" she asked. "Do you listen only as 'the dull ass to the lyre'? Why do you weep? Wherefore flow your tears? 'Speak, nor keep secret in thine heart.' If you expect a physician to help you, you must lay bare your wound." Then did I rally my spirit till it was strong again, and answered, "Does the savage bitterness of my fortune still need recounting? Does it not stand forth plainly enough of itself? Does not the very aspect of this place strike you? Is this the library which you had chosen for yourself as your sure resting-place in my house? Is this the room in which you would so often tarry with me expounding the philosophy of things human and divine? Was my condition like this, or my countenance, when I probed with your aid the secrets of nature, when you marked out with a wand the courses of the stars, when you shaped our habits and the rule of all our life by the pattern of the universe? Are these the rewards we reap by yielding ourselves to you? Nay, you yourself have established this saying by the mouth of Plato, that commonwealths would be blessed if they were guided by those who made wisdom their study, or if those who guided them would make wisdom their study. By the mouth of that same great man did you teach that this was the binding reason why a commonwealth should be governed by philosophers, namely that the helm of government should not be left to unscrupulous or criminal citizens lest they should bring corruption and ruin upon the good citizens. Since, then, I had learned from you in quiet and inaction of this view, I followed it further, for I desired to practise it in public government. You and God Himself, who has grafted you in the minds of philosophers, are my witnesses that never have I applied myself to any office of state except that I might work for the common welfare of all good men. Thence followed bitter quarrels with evil men which could not be appeased, and, for the sake of preserving justice, contempt of the enmity of those in power, for this is the result of a free and fearless conscience."

. . .

But you see what end has fallen upon my innocency. In the place of the rewards of honest virtue, I am suffering the punishments of an ill deed that was not mine. And did ever any direct confession of a crime find its judges so well agreed upon exercising harshness, that neither the liability of the human heart to err, nor the changeableness of the fortune of all mankind, could yield one dissentient voice? If it had been said that I had wished to burn down temples, to murder with sacrilegious sword their priests, that I had planned the massacre of all good citizens, even so I should have been present to plead guilty or to be convicted, before the sentence was executed. But here am I, nearly five hundred-miles away, without the opportunity of defending myself, condemned to death and the confiscation of my property because of my too great zeal for the Senate. Ah! well have they deserved that none should ever be liable to be convicted on such a charge! Even those who laid information have seen the honour of this accusation, for, that they might blacken it with some criminal ingredient, they had need to lie, saying that I had violated my conscience by using unholy means to obtain offices corruptly. But you, by being planted within me, dispelled from the chamber of my soul all craving for that which perishes, and where your eyes were looking there could be no place for any such sacrilege. For you instilled into my ears, and thus into my daily thoughts, that saying of Pythagoras, "Follow after God." Nor was it seemly that I, whom you had built up to such excellence that you made me as a god, should seek the support of the basest wills of men. Yet, further, the innocent life within my home, my gathering of most honourable friends, my father-in-law Symmachus, a man esteemed no less in his public life than for his private conscientiousness, these all put far from me all suspicion of this crime. But—O the shame of it!—it is from you that they think they derive the warrant for such a charge, and we seem to them to be allied to ill-doing from this very fact that we are steeped in the principles of your teaching, and trained in your manners of life. Thus it is not enough that my deep respect for you has profited me nothing, but you yourself have received wanton contumely from the hatred that had rather fallen on me.

. . .

While I grieved thus in long-drawn pratings, Philosophy looked on with a calm countenance, not one whit moved by my complaints Then said she, "When I saw you in grief and in tears I knew thereby that you were unhappy and in exile, but I knew not how distant was your exile until your speech declared it. But you have not been driven so far from your home; you have wandered thence yourself: or if you would rather hold that you have been driven, you have been driven by yourself rather than by any other. No other could have done so to you. For if you recall your true native country, you know that it is not under the rule of the many-headed people, as was Athens of old, but there is one Lord, one King, who rejoices in the greater number of his subjects, not in their banishment. To be guided by his reins, to bow to his justice, is the highest liberty. Know you not that sacred and ancient law of your own state by which it is enacted that no man, who would establish a dwelling-place for himself therein, may lawfully be put forth? For there is no fear that any man should merit exile, if he be kept safe therein by its protecting walls. But any man that may no longer wish to dwell there, does equally no longer deserve to be there. Wherefore it is your looks rather than the aspect of this place which disturb me. It is not the walls of your library, decked with ivory and glass, that I need, but rather the resting-place in your heart, wherein I have not stored books, but I have of old put that which gives value to books, a store of thoughts from books of mine. As to your services to the common weal, you have spoken truly, though but scantily, if you consider your manifold exertions. Of all wherewith you have been charged either truthfully or falsely, you have but recorded what is well known. As for the crimes and wicked lies of the informers, you have rightly thought fit to touch but shortly thereon, for they are better and more fruitfully made common in the mouth of the crowd that discusses all matters. You have loudly and strongly upbraided the unjust ingratitude of the Senate: you have grieved over the charges made against myself, and shed tears over the insult to my fair fame: your last outburst of wrath was against Fortune, when you complained that she paid no fair rewards according to deserts: finally, you have prayed with passionate Muse that the same peace and order, that are seen in the heavens, might also rule the earth. But you are overwhelmed by this variety of mutinous passions: grief, rage, and gloom tear your mind asunder, and so in this present mood stronger measures cannot yet come nigh to

heal you. Let us therefore use gentler means, and since, just as matter in the body hardens into a swelling, so have these disquieting influences, let these means soften by kindly handling the unhealthy spot, until it will bear a sharper remedy.

. . .

"First then," she continued, "will you let me find out and make trial of the state of your mind by a few small questions, that so I may understand what should be the method of your treatment?"

"Ask," said I, "what your judgment would have you ask, and I will answer you."

Then said she, "Think you that this universe is guided only at random and by mere chance? or think you there is any rule of reason constituted in it?"

"No, never would I think it could be so, nor believe that such sure motions could be made at random or by chance. I know that God, the founder of the universe, does overlook His work; nor ever may that day come which shall drive me to abandon this belief as untrue."

"So is it," she said, "and even so you cried just now, and only mourned that mankind alone has no part in this divine guardianship: you were fixed in your belief that all other things are ruled by reason. Yet, how strange! how much I wonder how it is that you can be so sick though you are set in such a health-giving state of mind! But let us look deeper into it: I cannot but think there is something lacking. Since you are not in doubt that the universe is ruled by God, tell me by what method you think that government is guided?"

"I scarcely know the meaning of your question; much less can I answer it."

"Was I wrong," said she, "to think that something was lacking, that there was some opening in your armour, some way by which this distracting disease has crept into your soul? But tell me, do you remember what is the aim and end of all things? what the object to which all nature tends?"

"I have heard indeed, but grief has blunted my memory."

"But do you not some how know whence all things have their source?"

"Yes," I said; "that source is God."

"Is it possible that you, who know the beginning of all things, should not know their end? But such are the ways of these distractions, such is

their power, that though they can move a man's position, they cannot pluck him from himself or wrench him from his roots. But this question would I have you answer: do you remember that you are a man?"

"How can I but remember that?"

"Can you then say what is a man?"

"Need you ask? I know that he is an animal, reasoning and mortal; that I know, and that I confess myself to be."

"Know you naught else that you are?" asked Philosophy.

"Naught," said I.

"Now," said she, "I know the cause, or the chief cause, of your sickness. You have forgotten what you are. Now therefore I have found out to the full the manner of your sickness, and how to attempt the restoring of your health. You are overwhelmed by this forgetfulness of yourself: hence you have been thus sorrowing that you are exiled and robbed of all your possessions. You do not know the aim and end of all things; hence you think that if men are worthless and wicked, they are powerful and fortunate. You have forgotten by what methods the universe is guided; hence you think that the chances of good and bad fortune are tossed about with no ruling hand. These things may lead not to disease only, but even to death as well. But let us thank the Giver of all health, that your nature has not altogether left you. We have yet the chief spark for your health's fire, for you have a true knowledge of the hand that guides the universe: you do believe that its government is not subject to random chance, but to divine reason. Therefore have no fear. From this tiny spark the fire of life shall forthwith shine upon you. But it is not time to use severer remedies, and since we know that it is the way of all minds to clothe themselves ever in false opinions as they throw off the true, and these false ones breed a dark distraction which confuses the true insight, therefore will I try to lessen this darkness for a while with gentle applications of easy remedies, that so the shadows of deceiving passions may be dissipated, and you may have power to perceive the brightness of true light."

"When the stars are hidden by black clouds, no light can they afford. When the boisterous south wind rolls along the sea and stirs the surge, the water, but now as clear as glass, bright as the fair sun's light, is dark, impenetrable to sight, with stirred and scattered sand. The stream, that wanders down the mountain's

side, must often find a stumbling-block, a stone within its path torn from the hill's own rock. So too shalt thou: if thou wouldst see the truth in undimmed light, choose the straight road, the beaten path; away with passing joys! away with fear! put vain hopes to flight! and grant no place to grief! Where these distractions reign, the mind is clouded o'er, the soul is bound in chains."

Book II

Then for a while she held her peace. But when her silence, so discreet, made my thoughts to cease from straying, she thus began to speak: "If I have thoroughly learned the causes and the manner of your sickness, your former good fortune has so affected you that you are being consumed by longing for it. The change of one of her this alone has overturned your peace of mind through your own imagination. I understand the varied disguises of that unnatural state. I know how Fortune is ever most friendly and alluring to those whom she strives to deceive, until she overwhelms them with grief beyond bearing, by deserting them when least expected. If you recall her nature, her ways, or her deserts, you will see that you never had in her, nor have lost with her, aught that was lovely. Yet, I think, I shall not need great labour to recall this to your memory. For then too, when she was at your side with all her flattery, you were wont to reproach her in strong and manly terms; and to revile her with the opinions that you had gathered in worship of me with my favoured ones. But no sudden change of outward affairs can ever come without some upheaval in the mind. Thus has it followed that you, like others, have fallen somewhat away from your calm peace of mind. But it is time now for you to make trial of some gentle and pleasant draught, which by reaching your inmost parts shall prepare the way for yet stronger healing draughts. Try therefore the assuring influence of gentle argument which keeps its straight path only when it holds fast to my instructions. And with this art of orators let my handmaid, the art of song, lend her aid in chanting light or weighty harmonies as we desire.

"What is it, mortal man, that has cast you down into grief and mourning? You have seen something unwonted, it would seem, something strange to you. But if you think that Fortune has changed towards you, you are wrong. These are ever her ways: this is her very nature. She has with you

preserved her own constancy by her very change. She was ever changeable at the time when she smiled upon you, when she was mocking you with the allurements of false good fortune. You have discovered both the different faces of the blind goddess. To the eyes of others she is veiled in part: to you she has made herself wholly known. If you find her welcome, make use of her ways, and so make no complaining. If she fills you with horror by her treachery, treat her with despite; thrust her away from you, for she tempts you to your ruin. For though she is the cause of this great trouble for you, she ought to have been the subject of calmness and peace. For no man can ever make himself sure that she will never desert him, and thus has she deserted you. Do you reckon such happiness to be prized, which is sure to pass away? Is good fortune dear to you, which is with you for a time and is not sure to stay, and which is sure to bring you unhappiness when it is gone? But seeing that it cannot be stayed at will, and that when it flees away it leaves misery behind, what is such a fleeting thing but a sign of coming misery? Nor should it ever satisfy any man to look only at that which is placed before his eyes. Prudence takes measure of the results to come from all things. The very changeableness of good and bad makes Fortune's threats no more fearful, nor her smiles to be desired. And lastly, when you have once put your neck beneath the yoke of Fortune, you must with steadfast heart bear whatever comes to pass within her realm. But if you would dictate the law by which she whom you have freely chosen to be your mistress must stay or go, surely you will be acting without justification; and your very impatience will make more bitter a lot which you cannot change. If you set your sails before the wind, will you not move forward whither the wind drives you, not whither your will may choose to go? If you intrust your seed to the furrow, will you not weigh the rich years and the barren against each other? You have given yourself over to Fortune's rule, and you must bow yourself to your mistress's ways. Are you trying to stay the force of her turning wheel? Ah! dull-witted mortal, if Fortune begin to stay still, she is no longer Fortune.

> *"As thus she turns her wheel of chance with haughty hand, and presses on like the surge of Euripus's tides, fortune now tramples fiercely on a fearsome king, and now deceives no less a conquered man by raising from the ground his humbled face. She hears no wretch's cry, she heeds no tears, but wantonly*

she mocks the sorrow which her cruelty has made. This is her sport: thus she proves her power; if in the selfsame hour one man is raised to happiness, and cast down in despair, 'tis thus she shews her might.

"Now would I argue with you by these few words which Fortune herself might use: and do you consider whether her demands are fair 'Why, O man,' she might say, 'do you daily accuse me with your complainings? What injustice have I wrought upon you? Of what good things have I robbed you? Choose your judge whom you will, and before him strive with me for the right to hold your wealth and honours. If you can prove that any one of these does truly belong to any mortal man, readily will I grant that these you seek to regain were yours. When nature brought you forth from your mother's womb, I received you in my arms naked and bare of all things; I cherished you with my gifts, and I brought you up all too kindly with my favouring care, wherefore now you cannot bear with me, and I surrounded you with glory and all the abundance that was mine to give. Now it pleases me to withdraw my hand: be thankful, as though you had lived upon my loans. You have no just cause of complaint, as though you had really lost what was once your own. Why do you rail against me? I have wrought no violence towards you. Wealth, honours, and all such are within my rights. They are my handmaids; they know their mistress; they come with me and go when I depart. Boldly will I say that if these, of whose loss you complain, were ever yours, you would never have lost them at all. Am I alone to be stayed from using my rightful power? The heavens may grant bright sunlit days, and hide the same beneath the shade of night. The year may deck the earth's countenance with flowers and fruits, and again wrap it with chilling clouds. The sea may charm with its smoothed surface, but no less justly it may soon bristle in storms with rough waves. Is the insatiate discontent of man to bind me to a constancy which belongs not to my ways? Herein lies my very strength; this is my unchanging sport. I turn my wheel that spins its circle fairly; I delight to make the lowest turn to the top, the highest to the bottom. Come you to the top if you will, but on this condition, that you think it no unfairness to sink when the rule of my game demands it. Do you not know my ways?'"

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