

VIRTVS

Stoic Paradoxes

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

Musean Translation

MOUSEIA

VIRTUS

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Musean Translation

Translated by Michael Berardi

MOUSEIA

THIS EDITION

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TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

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GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

Three losses in section 27 are marked [...]. Source brackets and supplements are retained; English follows the deletion of non in section 17. No human specialist review.

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Preface



SECTION 1

I have often noticed, Brutus, that when your uncle Cato delivered his opinion in the Senate, he would discuss weighty themes drawn from philosophy, far removed from the familiar business of the courts and public life, yet through his eloquence make them seem persuasive even to the people.

SECTION 2

This is a greater achievement for him than for either you or me, because we draw more heavily on the philosophy that has fostered a wealth of eloquence and whose teachings do not differ greatly from popular opinion. Cato, however, in my judgment a consummate Stoic, both holds views that find little favor with the public and belongs to a school that pursues no flowers of rhetoric and gives its arguments no expansive treatment: it establishes its propositions through tiny questions, like pinpricks.

SECTION 3

Yet nothing is so unbelievable that eloquence cannot make it persuasive, nothing so rough and unpolished that speech cannot lend it brilliance and, as it were, refinement. Thinking this, I ventured even further than the very man of whom I speak. For Cato generally confines himself to speaking as a Stoic, with the ornaments of oratory, about greatness of spirit, self-restraint, death, every excellence of virtue, the immortal gods, and love of country. I, as a diversion for

you, have cast into the form of general rhetorical arguments those very doctrines that the Stoics can scarcely win acceptance for even in their lecture halls and hours of leisure.

SECTION 4

Because these doctrines are startling and run counter to everyone's opinion [and are even called "paradoxes" by the Stoics themselves], I wished to test whether they could be brought into the light [that is, into the Forum] and presented persuasively, or whether learned discourse was one thing and popular discourse quite another. I wrote these arguments all the more gladly because these so-called paradoxes seem to me thoroughly Socratic and supremely true.

SECTION 5

You will therefore receive this little work, composed by lamplight during these nights that are now growing shorter, since the gift that cost me longer vigils has already appeared under your name. You will sample the kind of exercises I regularly practice when I transfer what the schools discuss as general propositions into our own oratorical manner of speaking. Yet I do not ask you to enter this work to my credit. It is not something that could be placed on the citadel, like that Minerva of Phidias, but it should at least be recognizable as a product of the same workshop.

Paradox 1



Paradox I

Only what is morally honorable is good.

SECTION 6

CHAPTER 1

I fear that some of you may think this discourse has been drawn from the discussions of the followers of Socrates rather than from my own convictions. Nevertheless, I shall say what I believe, and say it more briefly than so great a subject allows. By Hercules, I have never counted these people's money, magnificent houses, wealth, power, or the pleasures to which they are so tightly bound among things good or worth pursuing. For I saw that those who had these things in abundance still craved most keenly the very things they possessed in plenty. The thirst of desire is never quenched or satisfied; and those who possess these things are tormented not only by the longing to increase them but also by the fear of losing them.

SECTION 7

Here I often find myself questioning the wisdom of our ancestors, those men of such exemplary self-restraint. They thought these frail and changeable things [the components of wealth] should be called "goods," though in practice and conduct their judgment was very different. Can anything good be

harmful to anyone? Or can someone possess good things in abundance without being good himself? Yet we see that all these possessions are such that wicked people have them and good people lack them.

SECTION 8

So let anyone laugh who wishes: sound reasoning will nevertheless carry more weight with me than popular opinion. I shall never say that someone has lost his goods if he has lost livestock or household furnishings. And I shall often praise that wise man—Bias, I believe—who is numbered among the Seven. When the enemy captured his native Priene and the others fled carrying away many of their possessions, someone urged him to do the same. “That is precisely what I am doing,” he said, “for everything that is mine I carry with me.”

SECTION 9

He did not even regard as his own these playthings of fortune that we go so far as to call goods. “What, then,” someone will ask, “is good?” If an action done rightly, honorably, and virtuously is truly said to be done well, then only what is right, honorable, and virtuous is, in my judgment, good.

SECTION 10

CHAPTER 2

But these arguments may seem rather tiresome when pursued at too leisurely a pace. The lives and deeds of the greatest men have cast a clear light on them [these matters that seem to be discussed in language more subtle than necessary]. For I ask you: do the men who left us this republic, so splendidly founded, seem to have given any thought to silver as an object of greed, to pleasant surroundings for their enjoyment, to furnishings for luxurious living, or to banquets for pleasure? Set each one [of the kings] before your eyes.

SECTION 11

Would you begin with Romulus? Or, after the establishment of liberty, with the very men who established it? By what steps, I ask, did Romulus ascend to heaven? By what these people call goods, or by his achievements and virtues?

Again, do we suppose that Numa Pompilius's sacrificial ladles and little earthenware vessels were less pleasing to the immortal gods than the fern-embossed bowls of the Salian priests? I pass over the remaining kings: apart from Tarquin the Proud, they all stand on an equal footing.

SECTION 12

If someone were to ask Brutus what he had sought in freeing his country, and likewise ask his fellow conspirators what they had aimed at and pursued, would any one of them seem to have had pleasure, riches, or indeed anything whatever as his purpose except the duty of a brave and great-hearted man? What drove Gaius Mucius to attempt to kill Porsenna, without any hope of saving himself? What power held Cocles alone on the bridge against the whole enemy army? What sent Decius the father, and Decius the son, into the enemy's armed ranks after solemnly devoting their lives to death? What end did Gaius Fabricius's self-restraint pursue, or Manius Curius's frugal way of life? What of those two bulwarks of the Punic War, Gnaeus and Publius Scipio, who believed they must bar the Carthaginian advance with their own bodies? What of the elder Africanus? What of the younger? What of Cato, whose lifetime fell between theirs? What of countless others—for examples from our own country abound? Did they ever think that anything in life was worth seeking except what appeared praiseworthy and glorious?

SECTION 13

CHAPTER 3

Let those who mock this discourse and its doctrine come forward, then, and judge for themselves whether they would rather resemble one of those men whose marble houses gleam with ivory and gold, who abound in statues, paintings, embossed gold and silver, and Corinthian works of art, or Gaius Fabricius, who possessed none of these things and wished to possess none.

SECTION 14

As for these possessions, which pass now to one person, now to another, people can generally be brought without difficulty to deny that they are good things. But they cling tenaciously to this claim and defend it with care: pleasure is the highest good. To my ears, that is the language of beasts, not human beings. When a god—or nature, the mother, so to speak, of all things—has given you a mind, than which nothing is more excellent or more divine, will you so debase and degrade yourself as to suppose there is no difference between you and some four-footed animal? Can anything be good that does not make its possessor better?

SECTION 15

For the greater a person's share in goodness, the more praiseworthy that person is; nor is there any good in which its possessor cannot honorably take pride. But which of these qualities belongs to pleasure? Does it make a man better or more praiseworthy? Does anyone exalt himself by boasting and proclaiming that he has enjoyed pleasures? Yet if pleasure, defended by so many advocates, is not to be counted among good things—and the greater it is, the more it dislodges the mind from its proper place and balance—then surely to live well and happily is nothing other than to live honorably and rightly.

Paradox 2



Paradox II

Virtue is sufficient for happiness.

[Whoever possesses virtue lacks nothing needed for a happy life.]

SECTION 16

CHAPTER 1

Yet I have never considered Marcus Regulus afflicted, unfortunate, or miserable. It was not his greatness of spirit that the Carthaginians tortured, nor his dignity, his trustworthiness, his steadfastness, or any virtue of his; nor, finally, his soul itself. Protected and attended by so many virtues, his soul certainly could not be taken captive when his body was. And we ourselves saw Gaius Marius, who in prosperity seemed to me one among the fortunate, but in adversity one among the greatest of men—and no mortal can enjoy greater happiness than that.

SECTION 17

You do not know, madman, you do not know how great the power of virtue is. You merely use its name; you have no understanding of its strength. No one can fail to be supremely happy whose whole being rests upon himself and who places everything that is his in himself alone. But someone whose every hope, plan, and thought depends upon fortune can have nothing certain, nothing he

can confidently expect to remain his for a single day. Find such a man, if you can, and frighten him with those threats of death or exile. As for me, whatever may befall me in so ungrateful a state will find me not even objecting, much less resisting. For what have I labored for, what have I accomplished, over what have my anxious thoughts kept watch, if I have produced and achieved nothing that places me beyond the power of fortune's recklessness or my enemies' injustice to shake? Do you threaten me with death,

SECTION 18

so that I must leave the company of human beings altogether, or with exile, so that I must leave the company of the wicked? Death is terrible to those for whom everything is extinguished along with life, not to those whose glory cannot die. Exile is terrible to those whose dwelling place is confined, as it were, within fixed boundaries, not to those who regard the whole world as a single city. It is you whom every misery, every affliction oppresses—you who think yourself happy and flourishing. Your desires torment you. You are tortured day and night: what you have is not enough, and you fear that even that will not last. Awareness of your crimes goads you; fear of the courts and the laws drains your spirit. Wherever you look, your own wrongdoings confront you like Furies and will not let you draw an untroubled breath.

SECTION 19

Therefore, just as no wicked, foolish, or cowardly person can fare well, so no good, wise, and courageous man can be miserable. Surely, if a man's virtue and character deserve praise, his life deserves praise as well. Nor can a life deserving praise be a life to shun; yet it would be one to shun if it were miserable. We should therefore regard whatever deserves praise as also happy, flourishing, and worthy of desire.

Paradox 3



Paradox III

Wrong actions are equal, and so are right actions.

SECTION 20

CHAPTER 1

“The matter is small,” someone says. But the fault is great. Wrongdoing must be measured not by the outcome of events but by the faults of human beings. The thing involved in a wrong may be greater or smaller in one case than another; the wrongdoing itself, whichever way you turn, is one and the same. Whether a helmsman wrecks a ship loaded with gold or one loaded with straw makes a considerable difference to the cargo, but none to the helmsman’s incompetence. Lust has led a man astray with an obscure woman: the suffering touches fewer people than if he had violated a well-born maiden of noble family. Yet he has done no less wrong, if doing wrong is like crossing a boundary. Once you have crossed it, the fault has been committed; how far you proceed after crossing does nothing to increase the fault of crossing itself. Certainly no one is permitted to do wrong. And what is not permitted is condemned on this ground alone: that it is shown to be impermissible. If this can never be greater

or smaller, since the wrong consists in its not being permitted—a condition always one and the same—then the wrong actions arising from it must be equal.

SECTION 21

But if the virtues are equal to one another, the vices must also be equal. And it is very easy to see that the virtues are equal: no one can become better than a good man, more self-controlled than a self-controlled man, braver than a brave man, or wiser than a wise man. Would you call someone good if, with no witness present, he returned ten pounds of gold entrusted to him, though he could have pocketed it with impunity, but would not do the same with ten thousand pounds? Or would you call someone self-controlled who restrained one desire but gave another free rein?

SECTION 22

Virtue is a single, enduring consistency in harmony with reason. Nothing can be added to make it more fully virtue; nothing can be taken away while leaving it the name of virtue. For if good actions are right actions, and nothing is more right than right, then certainly nothing can be found better than good. It follows that the vices too are equal, if distortions of the soul are rightly called vices. Moreover, since the virtues are equal, right actions, because they proceed from virtues, must be equal; likewise, wrong actions, because they flow from vices, must necessarily be equal.

SECTION 23

CHAPTER 2

“You get these ideas from philosophers,” someone says. I was afraid you would say from pimps. “Socrates used to argue that way.” By Hercules, that is welcome news! For tradition tells us that he was a learned and wise man. Still, let me ask you, since we are contending with words, not fists: should we inquire what porters and laborers have thought, or what the most learned men have thought? Especially when no view can be found that is truer than this one, or even more useful to human life. For what force could more effectively restrain

people from every kind of wickedness than their recognizing that there is no distinction among offenses? That they do equal wrong whether they assault private citizens or magistrates? That whatever household they defile with sexual misconduct, the stain of lust is the same?

SECTION 24

“Does it make no difference, then”—for someone will say this—“whether a man kills his father or a slave?” If you present the acts stripped of their circumstances, I cannot readily judge their character. If depriving a father of life is a crime in itself, then the Saguntines, who preferred that their parents die free rather than live as slaves, were murderers of their parents. Thus a parent can sometimes be deprived of life without a crime, while a slave often cannot be deprived of life without injustice. It is the circumstances, then, not the nature of the act, that make the distinction. Whichever act they attach to weighs more heavily; if they attach to both, the acts must be equal.

SECTION 25

There is, however, this difference: in killing a slave, if it is done unjustly, a man commits one wrong; in attacking his father’s life, he commits many. He wrongs the man who brought him into the world, the man who nourished him, the man who educated him, the man who established him in a home, a household, and the commonwealth. His offense exceeds the other in the number of wrongs and therefore deserves a greater punishment. Yet in life we should consider not what punishment belongs to each offense, but how much license anyone has to commit it. Whatever ought not to be done we must regard as criminal; whatever is not permitted, as an outrage against what is sacred. Even in the smallest matters? Yes, for even if we cannot set a limit to the scale of events, we can keep our minds within bounds.

SECTION 26

If an actor moves even slightly out of rhythm, or a line is spoken one syllable too short or too long, he is hissed and driven from the stage. And in life, which ought to be more measured than any gesture, more harmonious than any verse, will you say that your error amounted to a syllable? I will not hear such a plea from a poet over mere trifles; shall I hear it from a citizen in our common life,

counting out his offenses on his fingers? Let them be shorter, if you like; how can they seem lighter? Every wrong is committed through a disruption of reason and order; and once reason and order have been disrupted, nothing can be added that would seem to make the wrongdoing greater.

Paradox 4



Paradox IV

Every fool is mad

[All fools are insane.]

SECTION 27

CHAPTER 1

But I consider you not foolish, as I often have, nor wicked, as I always have, but mad [...]

[...] can remain unconquered in matters essential to life [...]. Will the wise man's mind, fortified as though by walls with greatness of judgment, endurance of human misfortunes, contempt for fortune, and, in short, every virtue, be conquered and taken by storm—a man who cannot even be driven from his country? For what is a civil community? Is it every gathering, even of savage and brutal men? Is it any crowd of runaway slaves and robbers collected in one place? Surely you will say no. Then there was no civil community at that time, when its laws had no force, when its courts lay prostrate, when ancestral custom had perished, when the magistrates had been driven out by the sword and the senate no longer had so much as a name in the republic. That gathering

of plunderers, that banditry established in the Forum under your leadership, those remnants of the conspiracy diverted from Catiline's frenzy to your own criminal madness—that was no civil community.

SECTION 28

And so I was not driven from a community that did not exist. I was summoned back into a civil community when the republic had a consul, where before there had been none; when it had a senate, which before had perished; when the people could freely express their agreement; when respect for law and justice, the bonds of a civil community, had been restored. And see how thoroughly I despised those weapons of your banditry. I always held that you had launched and hurled a monstrous wrong against me; I never thought it had reached me. Unless perhaps, when you were tearing down walls or setting criminal torches to roofs, you imagined that something belonging to me was collapsing or burning.

SECTION 29

Nothing belongs to me—or to anyone—that can be carried off, snatched away, or lost. If you had wrested from me my soul's divine certainty that the republic stands, despite your bitter opposition, through my care, my sleepless vigilance, and my counsels; if you had erased the undying memory of this everlasting service; still more, if you had wrested from me the mind from which those counsels flowed—then I would admit that I had suffered an injury. But if you neither did nor could do these things, your injustice gave me a glorious return, not a disastrous departure. I was therefore always a citizen, and never more so than when the senate entrusted my safety to foreign nations *<as>* that of a citizen of the highest worth. You are not a citizen even now—unless perhaps the same man can be both enemy and citizen. Or do you distinguish citizen from enemy by birth and place, rather than by spirit and deeds?

SECTION 30

CHAPTER 2

You committed slaughter in the Forum; you occupied temples with armed bandits; you burned private homes and sacred buildings. Why was Spartacus an enemy, if you are a citizen? Can you be a citizen, when because of you there was once no civil community? And do you call me by the name that belongs to you, when everyone thinks that the republic itself went into exile at my departure? Will you never look at yourself, you utterly senseless man? Will you never consider either what you do or what you say? Do you not know that exile is a punishment for crimes, while that journey of mine was undertaken because of my most illustrious achievements?

SECTION 31

All criminals and impious men, whose leader you profess to be, whom the laws intend to punish with exile, are exiles even if they have not changed their place of residence. When all the laws command that you be an exile, <will you not be an exile? Should not “exile”> be the name for a man who has carried a weapon? Your dagger was discovered before the senate. For someone who has killed a man? You have killed very many. For someone who has committed arson? The temple of the Nymphs burned down at your hand. For someone who has occupied temples? You pitched your camp in the Forum.

SECTION 32

But why do I cite the general laws, under every one of which you are an exile? Your closest friend carried a special law directed at you, providing for your exile if you had entered the inner sanctuary of the Good Goddess. Yet you habitually boast that you did precisely that. How, then, after so many laws have driven you into exile, do you not shudder at the name of exile? “I am in Rome,” he says. Indeed, and you were in the inner sanctuary too. A man does not therefore possess the rights of whatever place he happens to be in, if the laws forbid his presence there.

Paradox 5



Paradox V

Only the wise man is free, and every fool is a slave

[All wise men are free, and all fools are slaves.]

SECTION 33

CHAPTER 1

Let this man, then, be praised as a commander—or even called one, or thought worthy of the name! How, or over what free man, will someone exercise command when he cannot command his own desires? Let him first rein in his lusts, scorn pleasures, restrain his anger, curb his greed, and drive away the other corruptions of his mind. Then let him begin commanding others, once he himself has ceased obeying the most wicked masters: dishonor and moral baseness. As long as he obeys them, he must not be considered a commander, or even a free man at all. For the most learned thinkers have admirably maintained this principle. I would not appeal to their authority if I had to address some uncultivated audience; but since I am speaking before men of sound judgment, to whom these ideas are not unfamiliar, why should I pretend that any labor I have devoted to these studies has been wasted? These most learned men have declared, then, that no one but the wise man is free.

SECTION 34

For what is freedom? The power to live as you wish. Who, then, lives as he wishes except the man who lives rightly, who takes joy in duty, whose path through life has been considered and planned? A man who obeys even the laws not out of fear, but follows and honors them because he judges this the surest course to his well-being; who says nothing, does nothing, and, in short, thinks nothing except willingly and freely; whose every purpose and every undertaking originates in himself and is directed back to himself, and for whom nothing carries greater weight than his own will and judgment. Even Fortune herself, who is said to wield the greatest power, yields to him, if, as a wise poet said, “She is fashioned for each by his own character.” Only the wise man, then, enjoys the privilege of doing nothing unwillingly, nothing in distress, nothing under compulsion.

SECTION 35

Although establishing this requires a fuller discussion, the following point is brief and must be admitted: no one is free unless he is disposed in this way. All wicked men, therefore, are slaves. This is less startling and paradoxical in substance than in expression. For these thinkers do not call them slaves in the sense of human property that has come to belong to masters through a debt-bond or some other provision of civil law. But if slavery is, as indeed it is, the obedience of a broken and abased spirit that has no will of its own, who can deny that all the fickle, all the covetous, and, in short, all the wicked are slaves?

SECTION 36

CHAPTER 2

Am I to call a man free when a woman commands him? When she imposes laws on him, prescribes his conduct, orders and forbids whatever she pleases? When he can deny none of her commands and dares refuse nothing? She demands: he must give. She calls: he must come. She throws him out: he must go. She threatens: he must tremble. I think that man must be called not merely a slave but a thoroughly worthless slave, even if he was born into the most distinguished family. Equally foolish are those who take excessive delight in stat-

ues, paintings, chased silver, Corinthian works of art, or magnificent buildings. “But we,” someone says, “are the leading men of the state.” You are not even the leading men among your fellow slaves.

SECTION 37

In a great household, some slaves consider themselves more refined—though slaves they remain—such as the hall stewards; while those who handle these objects, who polish, oil, sweep, and sprinkle, do not occupy the most honorable station in slavery. So, in the state, those who have surrendered themselves to a craving for such things occupy almost the lowest station of slavery itself. “I have waged great wars,” he says, “and held great commands and governed great provinces.” Then show a spirit worthy of praise. A painting by Aetion holds you spellbound, or some statue by Polyclitus. I pass over where you took it from and how it came into your possession. When I see you gazing, marveling, and crying out in admiration, I judge you a slave to every sort of foolishness.

SECTION 38

“Are those things not delightful, then?” They are; we too have educated eyes. But I beg you, let their charm be regarded not as a chain for grown men, but as an amusement for children. What do you suppose? If Lucius Mummius, who himself had scorned all Corinth, saw one of these men fondling a Corinthian chamber pot with the utmost longing, would he think him an outstanding citizen or an attentive hall steward? Let Manius Curius come back to life, or any of those men whose country houses and homes contained nothing splendid, nothing adorned, except themselves. Suppose he saw someone who had received the highest honors the people could bestow, scooping little bearded mullets from a fishpond and handling them, and boasting of his abundance of moray eels. Would he not judge this man so thoroughly a slave that he would think him unworthy of any substantial responsibility even within a household of slaves?

SECTION 39

Can there be any doubt about the slavery of those who, in their desire for money of their own, refuse none of the terms of the harshest servitude? What indignity of service will the hope of an inheritance not accept? What nod of a rich, childless old man does it fail to watch? It speaks to please him, does whatever is ordered, follows at his heels, sits at his side, gives him presents. Which of these actions belongs to a free man?

SECTION 40

CHAPTER 3

Which, indeed, is the mark even of a slave who is not worthless? And what of that desire which seems more suited to a free man—the desire for public office, military commands, and provinces? What a harsh mistress it is, how imperious, how violent! It forced men who considered themselves the most distinguished to serve Cethegus, a man of no great virtue: to send him gifts, to visit his house at night, to entreat him, and finally to beg. What is slavery, if this can be considered freedom? And when the reign of desire has passed and another master has arisen from the consciousness of wrongdoing—fear—how wretched, how harsh that slavery is! Some rather talkative young men must be served; everyone who appears to know anything is feared as a master. And the judge—what mastery he exercises, what terror he strikes into the guilty! Is not every fear a form of slavery?

SECTION 41

What force, then, is there in that speech of Lucius Crassus, a man of supreme eloquence—a speech more fluent than wise: “Rescue us from slavery”? What is this slavery that besets so illustrious and noble a man? Every timidity of a weakened, abject, and broken spirit is slavery. “Do not allow us to serve anyone.” Does he wish to be set free? Not at all. For what does he add? “Except all of you together.” He wishes to change masters, not to be free. “Whom we both can and ought to serve.” But we, if indeed our spirit is lofty and exalted and richly endowed with virtues, neither ought nor can. Say that you can, since indeed you can; do not say that you ought, since no one owes

anything except what it would be dishonorable not to render. But enough of this. Let that man consider how he can be a commander, when reason and truth themselves prove that he is not even free.

Paradox 6



Paradox VI

That only the wise man is rich

[That only the wise man is rich.]

SECTION 42

CHAPTER 1

What is this outrageous display you make whenever you mention your money? Are you alone rich? Immortal gods! Should I not rejoice that I have listened and learned something? Are you alone rich? What if you are not even rich? What if you are actually poor? For whom do we understand to be rich? To what sort of man do we apply this word? To someone, I imagine, whose possessions are sufficient for him to live well and be readily content, who seeks nothing, pursues nothing, wishes for nothing more.

SECTION 43

Your own mind must judge itself rich—not other people’s talk, nor your possessions. It thinks it lacks nothing, cares for nothing more, has its fill of money or is at least content with it: I grant that such a man is rich. But if your hunger for money makes you think no profit shameful, although for a man of your rank even honorable profit is out of bounds; if every day you cheat,

deceive, demand, bargain, take away, seize; if you plunder our allies and pillage the treasury; if you do not even wait for your friends' wills but forge them yourself—are these signs of abundance or of need?

SECTION 44

It is a man's mind, not his strongbox, that we ordinarily call rich. However full that box may be, as long as I see you empty, I shall not consider you rich. For people measure wealth by how much is enough for each person. A man has one daughter: he needs money. Two daughters: more money. More daughters: still more. If he has fifty daughters, as Danaus is said to have had, so many dowries require a great fortune. For, as I said before, the measure of wealth is adjusted to the amount each person needs. How, then, am I to call a man rich who has not many daughters but innumerable desires, capable of draining the greatest resources in a short time, when he himself feels that he is in need?

SECTION 45

Many have heard you say that no one is rich unless he can maintain an army from his own income—something the Roman people, with all their revenues, have long been scarcely able to do. With that as your standard, then, you will never be rich until your estates yield enough to maintain six legions and large auxiliary forces of cavalry and infantry. You therefore admit already that you are not rich, since you lack so much of what would fulfill your wishes. And you have never made any secret of that poverty of yours—or rather, that destitution and beggary.

SECTION 46

CHAPTER 2

For just as we understand that people who earn money honorably through trade, labor, or public contracts need an income, so consider anyone who sees the bands of accusers and informers joined together in your house; who sees wealthy, guilty defendants plotting to corrupt a trial, with you again directing the affair; who sees your bargains over fees for legal advocacy, † your cuts of the money in alliances between candidates, your dispatching of freedmen to drain

the provinces through moneylending and plunder; anyone who recalls the expulsion of neighbors, the robberies in the countryside, your partnerships with slaves, freedmen, and clients, the ownerless estates, the proscription of the wealthy, the devastation of towns, that harvest in Sulla's day, the forged wills, the many men put out of the way; anyone who recalls, finally, that everything was for sale—an edict, a decree, another man's verdict or your own, the Forum, your house, your voice, your silence. Who would not think that such a man admits his need for income? And who has ever truly called a man rich when he still needs to acquire more?

SECTION 47

For the benefit of wealth lies in plenty, and plenty is shown by having enough and more than enough. Since you will never attain that, you will never be rich at all. But since you despise my means—and rightly, for in common estimation they are modest, in yours nonexistent, and in mine sufficient—I shall say nothing about myself and speak instead about the question.

SECTION 48

If we must assess and appraise the matter, which should we value more highly: the money Pyrrhus offered Fabricius, or the self-restraint with which Fabricius refused it? The gold of the Samnites, or the answer of Manius Curius? The inheritance of Lucius Paullus, or the generosity of Africanus, who yielded his own share of that inheritance to his brother Quintus Maximus? Surely these examples of the highest virtues must be valued above those things that consist in money. If a man must be considered richest according to his possession of what has the greatest worth, who could doubt that riches lie in virtue? For no estate, no quantity of gold and silver, should be valued more highly than virtue.

SECTION 49

Immortal gods! People do not understand how great an income thrift provides. For I turn now to the extravagant and leave that money-grubber behind. He receives six hundred thousand sesterces from his estates, I one hundred thousand from mine. He installs gilded ceilings and marble floors in his villas and covets statues, paintings, furnishings, and clothing without limit: that

income is too little not only for his expenses but even for the interest he owes. From my modest revenue, after the expenses of my desires have been deducted, there will still be something left over. Which of us, then, is richer: the man who has too little, or the man who has something to spare? The man in need, or the man with abundance? The man whose estate requires more for its maintenance the larger it becomes, or the man whose estate supports itself from its own resources?

SECTION 50

But why speak of myself? Through the faults of our habits and our times, perhaps I too share to some extent in the delusion of this age. To avoid always speaking of men like Curius and Luscius, was Manius Manilius, within our fathers' memory, really poor? He had a little house in the Carinae and a farm in the Labican territory. Are we therefore richer because we have more? If only we were! But the measure of wealth is determined not by a property assessment, but by one's manner of living and standard of comfort.

SECTION 51

To be free of greed is money; to be free of the urge to buy is income. But to be content with what one has is the greatest and surest wealth. Indeed, if those shrewd appraisers value meadows and certain building lots highly because property of that kind is, so to speak, almost immune to harm, how highly should we value virtue? It can neither be seized nor stolen, neither lost in shipwreck nor destroyed by fire; neither the turbulence of storms nor the upheavals of the times can alter it!

SECTION 52

Only those endowed with virtue are rich. They alone possess things both fruitful and everlasting; they alone have what is distinctive of wealth: they are content with their possessions. They think what they have is enough; they pursue nothing, need nothing, feel that nothing is missing, ask for nothing more. But the wicked and the greedy, since their possessions are uncertain and subject to chance, since they always pursue more, and since not one of them has yet been found for whom what he had was enough, must be considered not merely lacking in abundance and riches, but destitute and poor.