

ROMA

Tusculan Disputations

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

Plain English Translation

MOUSEIA

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Translated by Michael Berardi

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TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

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Book 1, Chapter 1

- ¹ Brutus, I finally had some freedom from defending cases and doing my work in the Senate—if not complete freedom, at least a good deal of it. With your encouragement above all, I went back to my studies. They'd stayed in my thoughts, but circumstances had made me set them aside for a long time. The study of wisdom, which we call philosophy, includes the principles and teaching of every art concerned with living the right way. So I thought I should bring that subject to life in Latin writing. It's not that you can't learn philosophy from Greek books and teachers. But I've always held that our people either discovered things for themselves more intelligently than the Greeks did, or improved on what they got from the Greeks—at least in the fields they considered worth working at.
- ² We certainly manage our customs, our way of life, and our homes and families better and with more refinement. Our ancestors certainly organized public life with better institutions and laws. And what about military matters? Our people have been very strong in courage, but stronger still in discipline. Then there are the qualities they developed naturally, without book learning. Neither Greece nor any other nation can compare with them there. Where has anyone shown such seriousness, such steadiness, greatness of spirit, integrity, trustworthiness, or such outstanding virtue of every kind that they could be compared with our ancestors?
- ³ In education and every branch of writing, Greece was ahead of us. There was no difficulty beating us, though: we weren't putting up a fight. Poetry is the oldest kind of learned writing among the Greeks. Homer and Hesiod, after all, came before the founding of Rome; Archilochus lived under King Romulus. Our introduction to poetry came later. It was roughly Rome's 510th year when

Livius put on a play, during the consulship of Gaius Claudius, Caecus' son, and Marcus Tuditanus. Ennius wasn't born until the following year. Livius was older than either Plautus or Naevius.

Book 1, Chapter 2

So our people were late in getting to know poets or welcoming them. The Origins does say that guests at dinners used to sing about the brave deeds of famous men, accompanied by a pipe player. Still, Cato's speech shows how little respect this kind of work received. He attacked Marcus Nobilior for taking poets to his province, treating it as something shameful. As we know, the poet that consul had taken to Aetolia was Ennius. So the less respect poets received, the less enthusiasm there was for poetry. Even so, whenever people with great talent emerged in that field,

⁴ they held their own quite well against the Greeks' fame. Suppose Fabius, a man of the highest birth, had been praised for painting. Don't we think we'd have had plenty of Polyclituses and Parrhasiuses here too? Respect feeds the arts. Fame fires everyone's enthusiasm for study, and activities that a people disapproves of always languish among them. The Greeks thought the highest education lay in singing and playing stringed instruments. So Epaminondas, whom I consider Greece's greatest man, is said to have played the lyre wonderfully. Some years earlier, Themistocles was considered rather poorly educated because he refused to play the lyre at a dinner. Musicians therefore flourished in Greece. Everyone learned music, and anyone who didn't know it wasn't thought adequately educated.

⁵ They gave geometry the greatest respect, so no one was more celebrated than mathematicians. We, on the other hand, limited that art to what was useful for measuring and calculating.

Book 1, Chapter 3

Oratory was a different matter: we welcomed it quickly. At first we welcomed speakers who weren't learned, but were effective at speaking; later we welcomed learned speakers too. Tradition says that Galba, Africanus, and Laelius were learned men. Cato, who was older than they were, worked hard at his studies. Then came Lepidus, Carbo, and the Gracchi. From there down to our own day, our speakers were so great that they gave little ground to the Greeks, if any at all. Philosophy, though, has lain neglected right up to our time. No Latin writing has shed light on it. We must bring it into the light and get it moving. If we've done something useful for our fellow citizens while in public life, let's help them in our free time too, if we can.

- ⁶ We need to work all the harder at this because, I'm told, there are already many carelessly written Latin books by men who are very good people, certainly, but not well enough educated. Someone can think correctly without being able to put those thoughts into polished words. But to put your thoughts into writing when you can't organize them, make them clear, or attract a reader with any pleasure at all—that's an uncontrolled misuse of both leisure and literature. These authors read their books themselves, along with their own followers. No one else touches them, except people who want the same license to write for themselves. So if my hard work has brought any credit to oratory, I'll work much harder still to open up the sources of philosophy. My oratory flowed from those sources too.

Book 1, Chapter 4

- ⁷ Aristotle was a man of extraordinary talent, knowledge, and range. Stirred by the fame of Isocrates the teacher of rhetoric, he began teaching young men to speak too, joining sound judgment with eloquence. In the same way, I intend to keep up my old interest in speaking while working in this greater, richer field. I've always thought philosophy was complete only when it could discuss the greatest questions fully and with style. I've practiced this so eagerly that I've now even dared to hold discussions in the Greek way. Recently, after you left, several friends were with me at my place in Tusculum. I tried out what I could do in this kind of discussion. I used to practice speeches on legal cases—no one kept doing that longer than I did. Now this is my speaking practice in old age. I'd ask someone to put forward a subject they wanted to hear about. Then I'd discuss it, either sitting or walking.
- ⁸ I've put these discussions, or 'schools,' as the Greeks call them, from five days into the same number of books. This is how it worked: the person who wanted to listen would state an opinion, and I'd argue against it. As you know, that's Socrates' old method of discussing things by arguing against someone else's opinion. Socrates thought it was the easiest way to find what was most likely to be true. To make our discussions easier to follow, I'll present them as though they're happening, not as though I'm reporting them. So here's how the beginning will go:

Book 1, Chapter 5

- "I think death is a bad thing."
- ⁹ "For people who've died, or for people who have to die?"
- "Both."

"Then it makes people unhappy, since it's a bad thing."

"Certainly."

"So people who've already had to die are unhappy, and so are people who will have to."

"That's what I think."

"Then there's no one who isn't unhappy."

"Absolutely no one."

"And if you're going to be consistent, everyone who has ever been born or ever will be born isn't just unhappy. They're unhappy forever. If you said only people who still have to die were unhappy, you certainly wouldn't leave out anyone alive—everyone has to die. Still, death would put an end to their unhappiness. But since the dead are unhappy too, we're born into unhappiness that lasts forever. On that view, people who died a hundred thousand years ago must be unhappy—or rather, everyone who's ever been born must be."

"That's exactly what I think."

"Tell me, please:

- ¹⁰ "Are you frightened by those stories—three-headed Cerberus in the underworld, the roaring of Cocytus, the crossing of Acheron, Tantalus 'dying of thirst with the water just touching his chin'? Or that other story, how 'Sisyphus rolls his rock, sweating as he strains, and doesn't get anywhere at all'? Perhaps it's those judges who won't listen to pleas, Minos and Rhadamanthus? Lucius Crassus won't defend you before them, or Marcus Antonius either. And though your case will be heard by Greek judges, you won't be able to bring in Demosthenes. You'll have to plead your own case before a very large crowd. Perhaps those are the things you fear, and that's why you think death is an everlasting bad thing."

Book 1, Chapter 6

"Do you think I'm so crazy that I'd believe those things exist?"

"You don't believe them?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, that's bad news, by Hercules."

"Why, please?"

"Because I could make an eloquent speech against them."

"Who couldn't, on a subject like that? What's so hard about showing that these monsters invented by poets and painters aren't real?"

- 11 "Yet philosophers have filled whole books with arguments against just those things."

"How silly of them. Who's so mindless that those things bother them?"

"Then if there aren't any unhappy people in the underworld, there aren't any people there at all."

"That's exactly what I think."

"So where are these people you call unhappy? What place do they live in? If they exist, they can't be nowhere."

"I think they're nowhere at all."

"Then they don't even exist?"

"That's exactly it. And yet they're unhappy precisely because they don't exist."

- 12 "I'd rather you were afraid of Cerberus than spoke as thoughtlessly as that."

"What do you mean?"

"You say the same person both doesn't exist and does. Where's your sharp thinking? When you say someone is unhappy, you're saying that a person who doesn't exist does exist."

"I'm not so dull that I'd say that."

"Then what are you saying?"

"That Marcus Crassus, for example, is unhappy because death took away his riches, that Gnaeus Pompey is unhappy because he's been stripped of such glory—in short, that everyone who's lost the light of life is unhappy."

"You're going back to the same point. They must exist if they're unhappy. But you just denied that dead people exist. So if they don't exist, they can't be anything. That means they can't be unhappy either."

“Perhaps I’m not saying what I mean. What I think is most unhappy is just that: not to exist when you once did.”

“What?”

- 13 “More unhappy than never to have existed at all? Then people who haven’t been born yet are already unhappy, because they don’t exist. And if we’re going to be unhappy after death, we were unhappy before we were born. I don’t remember being unhappy before I was born. If your memory’s better, I’d like to know whether you remember anything about yourself.”

Book 1, Chapter 7

“You’re joking as though I were saying that people who haven’t been born are unhappy, rather than people who’ve died.”

“So you’re saying they exist.”

“No, I’m saying they’re unhappy because they don’t exist now, though they once did.”

“Don’t you see you’re contradicting yourself? What could be more contradictory than saying someone who doesn’t exist is unhappy, or is anything at all? When you go out through the Capene Gate and see the tombs of Calatinus, the Scipios, the Servilii, and the Metelli, do you think those people are unhappy?”

“Since you’re pinning me down over a word, I won’t say ‘they are unhappy’ from now on. I’ll just say ‘unhappy’—precisely because they don’t exist.”

“So you don’t say, ‘Marcus Crassus is unhappy,’ just ‘unhappy Marcus Crassus?’”

“Exactly.”

“As if anything you assert that way didn’t have to be either so or not so! Haven’t you learned even the basics of logic?”

14 “One of its first lessons is this: every statement—‘statement’ is what occurs to me for now as a word for *axíōma*; I’ll use another later if I find a better one—well, a statement is something that’s either true or false. So when you say ‘unhappy Marcus Crassus,’ you’re either saying ‘Crassus is unhappy,’ so that we can judge whether it’s true or false, or you’re saying nothing at all.”

“All right, I now admit that the dead aren’t unhappy. You’ve forced me to acknowledge that people who don’t exist at all can’t even be unhappy. But what about those of us who are alive? Aren’t we unhappy, since we have to die? How can there be any pleasure in life, when day and night we have to think that we’ll have to die at any moment?”

Book 1, Chapter 8

“Do you realize how much you’ve taken away from what’s bad about the human condition?”

15 “In what way?”

“If death were something unhappy for dead people too, we’d face something bad in life that had no limit and lasted forever. Now I see a finish line. Once we’ve run to it, there’s nothing more to be afraid of. But you seem to agree with a saying of Epicharmus. He was a sharp man, and quite witty, as you’d expect from a Sicilian.”

“What saying? I don’t know it.”

“I’ll put it into Latin if I can. You know I don’t usually speak Greek in a Latin conversation any more than I speak Latin in a Greek one.”

“Quite right too. But what is this saying of Epicharmus?”

“I don’t want to die, but being dead means nothing to me.”

“Now I recognize the Greek. But since you’ve made me admit that dead people aren’t unhappy, finish the job, if you can. Get me to believe that having to die isn’t unhappy either.”

16 “That’s no trouble at all, but I’m aiming for something bigger.”

“How is that no trouble? And just what is this bigger thing?”

“Since there’s nothing bad after death, death itself isn’t bad either. What comes immediately after it is the time after death, and you’ve admitted there’s nothing bad then. So having to die isn’t bad either: it means having to arrive at something we agree isn’t bad.”

“Please go into that more fully. These thorny little arguments force an admission out of me before they convince me. But what’s this bigger thing you say you’re aiming for?”

“To show, if I can, that death isn’t just not bad, but is actually good.”

“I don’t ask that much, but I’m eager to hear it. Even if you don’t achieve what you want, you’ll still show that death isn’t bad. But I won’t interrupt you at all. I’d rather hear a continuous speech.”

“What if I ask you something?”

17 “Won’t you answer?”

“It would be rude not to. But unless it’s necessary, I’d rather you didn’t ask.”

Book 1, Chapter 9

“I’ll do as you like and explain what you want as well as I can. But I’m not Apollo at Delphi, laying down things that are certain and fixed. I’m just one ordinary little person among many, using guesses to follow what’s plausible. Seeing what’s likely is as far as I can get. Leave certainty to people who say these things can be known for certain and who claim to be wise themselves.”

“Take whatever approach you think best. We’re ready to listen.”

18 “First we need to look at what death itself is, although it seems so familiar. Some people think death is the soul’s departure from the body. Others think there’s no departure: soul and body die together, and the soul goes out inside the body. Among those who think the soul leaves, some say it scatters at once, some that it lasts a long time, and some that it lasts forever. There’s also great disagreement about what the soul itself is, where it is, or where it comes from.

Some think the heart itself is the soul. That's why our words for 'brainless,' 'crazy,' and 'in agreement' refer to the heart; why that shrewd Nasica, twice consul, was called 'Corculum,' or 'Little Heart'; and why we have the line 'Sextus Aelius, a man of outstanding heart and sense.' Empedocles thinks the soul is the blood that flows around the heart. Others have thought that a particular part of the brain controls the soul. Still others don't accept that either the heart itself or a part of the brain is the soul,

- 19 "but say the soul has its place and home in the heart, or alternatively in the brain. Others say the soul is breath, as our people generally do. The language makes it clear. We speak of 'drawing one's last breath' and 'breathing out one's life,' of 'spirited' people, 'well-disposed' people, and acting 'according to one's heart.' The word for soul, *animus*, itself comes from *anima*, breath. Zeno the Stoic thinks the soul is fire."

Book 1, Chapter 10

"The views I've just mentioned—heart, brain, breath, fire—are widely held. Most of the others belong to individual thinkers. Aristoxenus, both a musician and a philosopher, proposed a view that earlier thinkers had held long before him. He said the soul was a kind of tension in the body itself, like what's called *harmonía*, or harmony, in singing and stringed music. On this view the makeup and shape of the whole body produce different movements, just as they produce notes in music.

- 20 "That kept him within his own trade. Even so, Plato had already stated and explained the character of this idea long before. With Xenocrates, the soul has no shape and nothing that could count as a body: it's a number. For him, number is the most powerful thing in nature, as it had been for Pythagoras before him. Plato, who taught Xenocrates, imagined three parts to the soul. Reason commands from the head, its fortress. The two others must obey: anger has its separate place in the chest, while desire belongs below the diaphragm.

- ²¹ “Then there’s Dicaearchus. In the first of his three books presenting a discussion among learned men at Corinth, he has many people speak. In the other two he introduces an old man from Phthia, a certain Pherecrates, whom he says is descended from Deucalion. Pherecrates argues that there is no soul at all: the word means absolutely nothing, and it’s pointless to call creatures ‘animals’ or ‘living beings.’ Neither a human nor an animal has a soul or breath of life inside it. All the power by which we do anything or sense anything is spread evenly throughout every living body. It can’t be separated from the body, since it doesn’t exist as a thing at all. There’s nothing but a single, simple body, formed in such a way that its natural balance gives it life and sensation.
- ²² “No one matches Aristotle for talent and thoroughness, leaving Plato aside, as I always do. Aristotle accepted the familiar four basic kinds of matter that give rise to everything. But for the mind he proposed a fifth substance. None of the four, he thought, could contain the abilities to think, to think ahead, to learn or teach, to discover something or remember so much, to love or hate, want or fear, suffer distress or feel joy, and all the other activities like these. So he brings in a fifth kind without a name. For the soul itself, he coins the name *endelécheia*: something like movement that goes on continuously, forever.”

Book 1, Chapter 11

“Unless something has slipped my mind, those are roughly the views about the soul. Let’s leave out Democritus. He’s certainly a great man, but he makes the soul out of a chance collision of tiny, smooth, round bodies. For people of his school, there’s nothing that a swarm of atoms doesn’t produce.

- ²³ “Which of these views is true? Some god may know. Which is most likely to be true is a big question. So would we rather decide between these views or go back to our subject?”

"I'd like to do both, if we could, but it's hard to mix them. So if we can get free of the fear of death without discussing those questions, let's do that. But if we can't do it without settling this question about souls, let's discuss that now, if you agree, and the other thing another time."

"I think your preference is the better course. Reason will show that, whichever of the views I've set out is true, death either isn't bad or is actually good."

- 24 "If the soul is heart or blood or brain, it's certainly a body and will die with the rest of the body. If it's breath, perhaps it will scatter; if fire, it will go out; if Aristoxenus' harmony, it will come apart. What can I say about Dicaearchus, who says there's no soul at all? On all these views, nothing after death can matter to anyone. Sensation goes away along with life. And if someone has no sensation, nothing matters to them in any way. The remaining views offer hope, if you happen to like the idea, that souls can leave their bodies and reach the sky, as though going home."

"I certainly like it. First, I'd like it to be true; next, even if it isn't, I'd still like to be convinced it is."

"Then what do you need my help for? Can I outdo Plato in eloquence? Read his book about the soul carefully, all the way through. There'll be nothing more you want."

"By Hercules, I've done that, and more than once. Somehow, though, while I'm reading, I agree. When I've put the book down and start thinking by myself about the soul's immortality, all that agreement slips away."

"Well?"

- 25 "Do you grant this: either souls survive death, or death itself destroys them?"

"Yes, I do."

"What if they survive?"

"I grant that they're happy."

"And if they're destroyed?"

"They aren't unhappy, since they don't even exist. You forced us to concede that point a little while ago."

“Then how or why can you say death seems bad to you? It will either make us happy, if our souls survive, or leave us without sensation and therefore not unhappy.”

Book 1, Chapter 12

26 “Then please explain, if it isn’t a bother, “first, if you can, that souls survive death; then, if you can’t establish that—it’s a difficult task—you can show that death has nothing bad in it. “What worries me is precisely this: not, I mean, lacking sensation, but having to lose it.”

“We can call on the very best authorities for the view you want established. In every argument, such authorities ought to carry the greatest weight, and usually do. First there’s the whole ancient world. Perhaps those people saw the truth better because they were closer to their origin and divine ancestry.

“Those early people, whom Ennius calls *casci*, ‘the old ones,’ had this one firmly rooted belief: sensation remains in death, and leaving life doesn’t wipe a person out into complete nonexistence;

27 “you can see this from many things, especially the laws of the pontiffs and the rites at graves. Those gifted with the greatest intelligence wouldn’t have observed these so carefully, or made breaking them a religious offense so impossible to atone for, unless this belief had stuck in their minds: death isn’t a destruction that takes everything away and wipes it out. It’s a sort of move, a change of life. For famous men and women, that change generally led to the sky. For others, it kept them on the ground, but their life still continued.

28 “That’s why, in our people’s belief, ‘Romulus lives out his days in the sky with the gods,’ as Ennius said, accepting the tradition. It’s why Hercules is regarded as such a great god, so ready to help, among the Greeks, and from them among us and all the way to the Ocean. That’s where we get Liber, Semele’s son, and the brothers born to Tyndareus, who are just as widely celebrated. They are

said not only to have helped the Roman people win battles, but also to have brought news of victory. And what about Ino, Cadmus' daughter? Don't our people regard her as Matuta, while the Greeks call her Leucothea, the White Goddess? To stop running through more names, isn't almost the whole sky filled with members of the human race?"

Book 1, Chapter 13

- 29 "Suppose I went searching through antiquity, unearthing the accounts left by Greek authors. Even the gods ranked among the greatest would turn out to have started here with us before going up to heaven. In Greece, find out which gods have tombs that people can show you. You've been initiated yourself: think back to the teachings of the mysteries. Then you'll fully grasp the reach of this belief. Those early people, however, knew no natural science; humans only started studying it many years afterward. Nature had prompted them to recognize certain things, and that was as far as their convictions went. They had no grasp of the explanations or causes. Visions often affected them, especially dreams at night in which the dead appeared to be alive.
- 30 "One argument for the gods' existence seems particularly solid: the belief in gods has made its way into every mind, however brutal the person, however savage the nation. Bad habits often give people distorted views of the gods. Still, everyone accepts some divine nature and power. People didn't arrive at this by gathering together or talking it over; neither institutions nor laws secured the belief. Whenever the whole human race agrees on something, we must regard that agreement as nature's law. Now, when we lose someone close to us, isn't our first reason for mourning the thought that they've been robbed of the good things in life? Remove that thought and the mourning disappears. Our own loss isn't what we mourn over. It may hurt and distress us, but the miserable

tears and cries of grief come from believing that someone we loved is missing life's benefits and feels that loss. Nature, not reasoning or teaching of any kind, leads us to feel this."

Book 1, Chapter 14

- 31 "The strongest evidence that nature itself silently judges souls to be immortal is that everyone cares, and cares deeply, about what will happen after death. 'He plants trees that will benefit another generation,' as Statius says in *The Young Companions*. What is he looking toward, unless he thinks later generations concern him too? So a hardworking farmer will plant trees whose fruit he'll never see. Won't a great man plant laws, institutions, a state? What do having children, passing on a name, adopting sons, carefully making wills, or the memorials and inscriptions of tombs themselves mean, except that we're thinking about the future too?
- "And another thing:

- 32 "Surely you don't doubt that we ought to take our sample of nature from its best examples? What better kind of human being is there than those who think they were born to help, protect, and preserve other people? Hercules went away to the gods. He'd never have gone if he hadn't built himself that road while he was among humans. But those are old stories, made sacred by everyone's religious belief:"

Book 1, Chapter 15

"what do we think all those great men who were killed for our republic had in mind? That their name should end where their life did? No one would ever offer to die for their country without a great hope of immortality.

- 33 “Themistocles could have lived quietly. Epaminondas could have too. And, to avoid looking for examples both ancient and foreign, so could I. But somehow a kind of foreknowledge of future generations is lodged in our minds. It comes out most strongly, and shows most clearly, in the greatest talents and the highest spirits. Take it away, and who would be so mad as to spend their whole life in hard work and danger?”
- 34 “I’m talking about leading public figures. But don’t poets want to be famous after death too? Otherwise, why these lines? “‘Citizens, look at this portrait of old Ennius: “‘He put into verse the greatest deeds of your ancestors.’ “He demands the reward of glory from the people whose ancestors he’d given glory. And he also says: “‘Let no one weep for me [...]’ “Why? ‘I fly, alive, on men’s lips.’ “But why stick to poets? Artists want to be famous after death too. Why else did Phidias put a likeness of himself on Minerva’s shield, when he wasn’t allowed to sign his name? And our philosophers—don’t they put their own names on the very books they write about disregarding glory?”
- 35 “So if everyone’s agreement is nature’s voice, and people everywhere agree that something concerns those who’ve left this life, we must think the same. And suppose we believe that people whose minds stand out for talent or virtue see nature’s power most clearly because their own natures are the best. Then, since the best people do the most for future generations, it’s likely that there’s something they’ll be conscious of after death.”

Book 1, Chapter 16

- 36 “Nature gives us our belief that gods exist; reason lets us learn what they’re like. In the same way, agreement among all nations leads us to think souls survive. But we must use reason to learn where they stay and what they’re like. Not knowing this gave rise to the underworld and those terrors you seemed, with good reason, to dismiss. Bodies fell to the ground and were covered with earth

—humus, which gave us humari, ‘to be buried.’ So people thought the dead lived out the rest of their lives underground. Many serious errors followed from that opinion, and poets made them worse.

37 “A packed theater, with women and children in the audience, gets worked up when it hears grand verse like this: “‘I’ve come, I’m here from Acheron, barely making it up that deep, steep road, ““Through caves built of rough, overhanging ““Gigantic rocks, where the underworld’s thick, freezing darkness stands still.’ “The mistake was so powerful—though I think it’s now been cleared away—that people knew bodies had been burned, yet still imagined things happening in the underworld that couldn’t happen, or even be understood, without bodies. They couldn’t grasp in their minds souls living on their own. They kept looking for some shape and form. That’s the source of Homer’s whole visit to the dead, of the attempts to consult the dead that my friend Appius used to make, and of Lake Avernus in our neighborhood, ““From which souls are summoned, images of the dead, wrapped in dark shadow, ““With salted blood, at Acheron’s deep opening.’ “Yet they expect these images to talk. That can’t happen without a tongue, a palate, and the force and form of a throat, sides, and lungs. They couldn’t see anything with the mind. They referred everything back to the eyes.

38 “It takes great intelligence to call the mind away from the senses and lead thought away from habit. I believe others did it over all those centuries too, but the first person on record to say that human souls last forever was Pherecydes of Syros. He was certainly early: the king at the time was a member of my own clan. His pupil Pythagoras did the most to establish this view. He came to Italy while Tarquin the Proud was king and held sway over what was called Greater Greece, both through his teaching and through his personal authority. For many centuries afterward the Pythagoreans’ reputation was so strong that no one else seemed learned.”

Book 1, Chapter 17

“But back to those early thinkers. They generally didn’t give reasons for their view, except when something needed explaining with numbers or diagrams:

- 39 “Plato is said to have gone to Italy to get to know the Pythagoreans and to have learned all their teachings. He was the first not just to agree with Pythagoras that souls last forever, but to give a reason for it too. Unless you have something to say, let’s skip that reason and give up this whole hope of immortality.”

“You’ve made me expect so much, and now you’re leaving me stranded? By Hercules, I’d rather be wrong with Plato—I know how highly you value him, and your words have made me admire him—than right with those other people.”

- 40 “Well done! I’d gladly be wrong with that very man myself. So do we doubt—? Or is it like most things? Though in this case, certainly not. Mathematicians convince us that the earth is situated in the middle of the universe. Compared with the whole sweep of the sky, it takes up something like a point, what they call the center. The four substances that produce everything have a nature like this: they seem to have divided the tendencies to move between them. Earth and water move of their own inclination and weight, at right angles, toward land and sea. The other two parts are fire and air. Just as the first two are carried by heaviness and weight toward the universe’s center, these two fly upward in straight lines to the region of the sky. Either their own nature seeks the heights, or the heavier substances naturally push the lighter ones away. Once these points are established, it ought to be clear that souls rise when they leave the body, whether they’re made of air—that is, something we can breathe—or of fire.

- 41 “If the soul is a kind of number, a statement more subtle than clear, or that fifth substance which lacks a name rather than an explanation, these are much more whole and pure still. They rise as far as possible from the earth. So the

soul [...] is something of these kinds. Let's not have such an active mind lying submerged in a heart or brain, or in Empedocles' blood."

Book 1, Chapter 18

"Let's leave out Dicaearchus and Aristoxenus, his contemporary and fellow student—both certainly learned men. One seems never even to have felt pain, if he can't feel that he has a soul. The other is so delighted with his songs that he tries to carry them over into this subject too. We can recognize harmony from the intervals between notes; different arrangements of those intervals produce several harmonies. But I don't see what harmony the positions of limbs and the shape of a body without a soul could produce. Learned as he admittedly is, let him leave these questions to his teacher Aristotle and teach singing himself. The Greek proverb gives good advice: 'Let everyone practice the art they know.'

⁴² "And let's throw out altogether that chance collision of tiny, smooth, round, indivisible bodies, though Democritus wants it to be warmed up and breathable—that is, alive. But if the soul is made from the four kinds of substance which are said to make up everything, it consists of burning breath. I see that Panaetius especially favors that view. Such a soul must head upward. Neither of those two substances has any downward tendency; both always seek the heights. So if souls scatter, that happens far from earth. If they last and keep their form, it's all the more necessary for them to rise toward the sky and break and cut through this thick, dense air nearest the earth. The soul is hotter, or rather more fiery, than the air I just called thick and dense. We can tell because our bodies, which are made from the earthy kind of basic matter, are warmed by the soul's heat."

Book 1, Chapter 19

⁴³ “There’s another reason the soul can escape and break through this air I’ve mentioned so often all the more easily. Nothing is faster than the soul. No speed can compete with its speed. If it stays intact and remains itself, it must travel in such a way as to pierce and cut through this whole region of sky where clouds, rain, and winds gather. That region is damp and dark because of the vapors rising from earth.

“Once the soul has passed beyond that region and reached and recognized a substance like itself, it comes to rest among fires made from thin air and the sun’s tempered heat. It stops rising any farther. Having reached lightness and warmth like its own, it stays still, like a balance with equal weights, and moves in no direction. Only then, when it has reached something like itself, is it in its natural home. There, lacking nothing, it will be fed and sustained by the same things that sustain and feed the stars.

“The body’s torches usually set us on fire with almost every kind of desire. We’re inflamed all the more because we compete with people who have what we want. So surely we’ll be happy when we leave our bodies behind and are free of both desires and rivalries;

⁴⁴ “and what we do now, when we’re free of worries and want to look at something and see the sights, we’ll do much more freely then. We’ll devote ourselves entirely to studying and understanding things. Our minds have a natural, insatiable desire to see the truth. And the very regions we’ll reach will make us more eager to learn, since they’ll make it easier for us to understand things in the sky.

⁴⁵ “Even here on earth, this beauty stirred up that ‘ancestral’ philosophy, ‘handed down from our grandfathers,’ as Theophrastus calls it, and set it on fire with a desire to know. Those will especially enjoy this beauty who, even when they lived here on earth surrounded by darkness, still longed to see clearly with the sharp eye of the mind.”

Book 1, Chapter 20

“Even now, people think they’ve achieved something if they’ve seen the mouth of the Black Sea and the straits through which the ship passed that was called

“Argo, because chosen Argive men

“Sailed in it to seek the ram’s gold-covered fleece,”

“or if they’ve seen those straits of the Ocean ‘where the rushing water divides Europe and Libya.’ So what a sight do we think it will be when we can look over the whole earth—its position, shape, and outline, its inhabited regions, and also the ones where the force of cold or heat keeps out all human cultivation?

⁴⁶ “Even now, our eyes don’t actually do the seeing. Sensation isn’t located in the body at all. Both natural scientists and doctors—the latter having cut these parts open and examined them—teach that something like channels run from where the soul sits through to the eyes, ears, and nose. Think how often illness or being lost in thought leaves us blind and deaf, although our eyes and ears are open and undamaged. Clearly it’s the soul that hears and sees. Those organs are only its windows, and the mind can’t sense anything through them without being there and attending to it. Consider, too, how one mind takes in such different things: colors, flavors, heat, smells, sounds. Five separate messengers could never make these known to the soul unless their reports all reached it and it alone passed judgment on everything. Once the soul has gone free to the place it naturally seeks, our perception of these things will surely be far clearer and purer.

⁴⁷ “Nature has made those openings from the body to the soul with the most ingenious skill. But as things stand, they’re blocked in a way by bodies made of dense, earthy matter. When there’s nothing but the soul, nothing in its path will keep it from perceiving what each thing is like.”

Book 1, Chapter 21

“If the subject required it, we could talk at great length about the many, varied, magnificent sights the soul would have in the regions of the sky.

48 “When I think about that, the arrogance of some philosophers often amazes me. They’re delighted with the study of nature; they shower excited thanks on its founder and discoverer and honor him as a god. They claim he’s rescued them from terrible masters: terror that never ends, and fear all night and all day. What are they frightened of? Where does this terror come from? You seem to mean the things you’d have feared without your lessons in natural science: ‘Or-cus’ deep halls by Acheron, death’s pale regions, places clouded with darkness.’ What old woman could be crazy enough to fear those? A philosopher boasts that he isn’t afraid of them and has found out they’re untrue—shouldn’t he be ashamed? We can judge their natural intelligence from that: without lessons, they would have believed it all.

49 “And apparently they’ve achieved something splendid in learning that when the time for death comes, they’ll perish completely. Suppose it’s so—I’m not arguing. What’s joyful or glorious about it? Yet I really can’t think of any reason why Pythagoras and Plato shouldn’t be right. Even if Plato gave no argument—notice how much credit I give the man—his authority alone would overcome me. But he’s given so many arguments that, while he seems to want to convince others, he’s certainly convinced himself.”

Book 1, Chapter 22

50 “Yet opponents crowd in, imposing death on souls as though a court had found them guilty of a capital crime. What makes everlasting souls so hard for them to believe in? Nothing but their inability to grasp or imagine the soul apart from

its body. And do they really understand it while it's inside? Can they tell its dimensions, shape, or location? Imagine uncovering everything now hidden inside a living human being. Would that bring the soul into sight? Or would its fineness still put it beyond our eyes?

- 51 “Anyone who claims a bodiless soul is beyond their understanding should reflect on those questions. Let them find out just what they understand about the soul lodged in a body. When I consider its nature, here's the much harder, murkier picture for me: the soul living in the body, in someone else's house, so to speak. It's easier to picture it gone from there, back in the open sky where it's at home. Suppose we can't understand the character of things we've never seen. Even so, our thoughts can certainly take in god himself and the divine soul released from its body. Dicaearchus and Aristoxenus found it difficult to grasp the soul's identity or character, and on that account said it didn't exist at all.
- 52 “For the soul to see itself with its own power is certainly a very great achievement. That's surely the point of Apollo's command that everyone should know themselves. I don't think he's telling us to know our limbs or our height or shape. We aren't bodies, and as I say these things to you, I'm not speaking to your body. When he says ‘Know yourself,’ he means ‘Know your soul.’ The body is a sort of vessel or container for the soul. Whatever your soul does is done by you. If knowing the soul weren't divine, this command, which comes from a particularly keen mind, wouldn't have been credited to a god.
- 53 “Tell me, though: even if the soul can't discover its own character, must it also be unaware that it exists, or that it moves? This is where Plato's argument begins. Socrates develops it in the *Phaedrus*, and I included it in book six of *On the Republic*.”

Book 1, Chapter 23

“Something that always moves lasts forever. Something that gives movement to another thing but is itself set in motion from elsewhere must stop living when its movement ends. Only what moves itself never stops moving, because it never leaves itself. In fact, this is the source, the starting point of movement for all other things that move.

54 “A starting point has no origin. Everything comes from a starting point, but the starting point itself can’t be born from anything else. If it were produced by something else, it wouldn’t be a starting point. And if it never comes into being, it never dies either. If a starting point were destroyed, it wouldn’t be reborn from anything else or create anything else from itself, since everything must come from a starting point. So the starting point of movement is what moves by itself. That can neither be born nor die. Otherwise the whole sky and all of nature must collapse and come to a standstill, with no power to get an initial push that would set them moving. Since it’s clear that what moves itself lasts forever, who can deny that souls have this nature? Anything moved by an outside push is without a soul. But something alive is stirred by an inner movement of its own. That’s the soul’s special nature and power. If it’s the one thing of all that

55 “‘moves itself, then it certainly wasn’t born, and it lasts forever.’ Let all the common sort of philosophers come together against this—that seems the right name for those who disagree with Plato, Socrates, and their school. They’ll never explain anything so beautifully; they won’t even understand how finely reasoned this very argument is. The soul, then, feels itself moving. As it feels this, it also feels that it moves by its own power, not someone else’s, and that it can never leave itself. Its everlasting life follows from this—unless you’ve got something to say against it.”

“I’d gladly make sure that not even a single objection came into my mind. That’s how strongly I favor that view.”

Book 1, Chapter 24

“What about this?

- 56 “Is the evidence for divine powers within human souls really any weaker, in your view? Show me how such powers could come into existence and I could also see how they might end. With blood, bile, phlegm, bones, sinews, and veins, I think I can account for their materials and formation. That goes for the entire shape of the body and its limbs. But take the soul itself. If all it did was enable us to live, I’d think nature sustained human life just as it sustains vines or trees: we say they’re alive too. And if seeking things and shunning things were the human soul’s only abilities, those would be abilities it shared with animals.
- 57 “To begin with, there’s memory: it can hold countless things without limit. For Plato, memory recalls a previous life. Take his book *Meno*. Socrates puts questions about a square’s measurements to a little boy. His replies are a child’s, yet the questions are simple enough to take him, one answer at a time, to the result he would reach with training in geometry. Socrates wants this to establish that what we call learning is simply remembering. He works through the point still more carefully in the discussion on his last day alive. As he shows there, someone who seems utterly uneducated can reveal, by answering well-put questions, that this isn’t new learning: recollection is allowing them to recognize what they knew. Otherwise, how could we have had, right from childhood, notions of so many great subjects planted in our souls, almost stamped into them? These notions are called *énnoiai*. They couldn’t possibly be there unless the soul had been actively getting to know things before it went into a body.

- 58 “And since nothing existed [...], as Plato argues throughout his works—he thinks nothing that comes into being and dies really exists; only what always stays the way it is exists, and he calls it an *idéa*, what we call a form—the soul couldn’t have recognized these things while shut inside the body. It brought them in already known. That removes the mystery of how it knows so many things. The soul doesn’t see them clearly when it’s suddenly moved into such an unfamiliar, confused home. But once it’s gathered itself and recovered, it recognizes them by remembering.
- 59 “So to learn is simply to remember. I find another aspect of memory still more astonishing. This thing that enables us to remember—what is it? What can it do, and where did it originate? My question isn’t about the reports of Simonides’ enormous memory, or Theodectes’, or that of Cineas, Pyrrhus’ envoy to the Senate. Nor am I asking about Charmadas in recent times, Metrodorus of Scepsis just lately, or our own Hortensius. I mean the memory that human beings generally have, particularly those engaged in a more demanding field of study or skilled work. Their minds hold so much that it’s hard to estimate their capacity.”

Book 1, Chapter 25

- 60 “Here’s what I’m getting at in this discussion: we need to grasp the identity and origin of that power. We certainly can’t attribute it to heart, blood, brain, or atoms. Whether breath or fire accounts for it, I don’t know. Those people may be ashamed to acknowledge ignorance; I’m not ashamed to say I don’t know something when I don’t. But if there’s any obscure subject on which I could make a firm assertion, I’d swear to this: a soul made of either breath or fire is divine. Tell me, please, could memory’s enormous power have been sown in the earth, or put together from earth, beneath this murky, cloudy sky? You may not see its identity, but you do see its character. And failing even that, you certainly recognize its greatness.

61 “What then? Do we think there’s some storage space in the soul, so that what we remember is poured into it like something into a jar? That’s absurd. What sort of bottom or shape could we imagine the soul having? How could it possibly hold so much? Or do we think the soul takes impressions like wax, and that memory consists of traces left in the mind by things stamped on it? What traces could words leave, or the things themselves? And how unimaginably large would it have to be to take the impressions of so many things?

“And another thing:

62 “And this ability to uncover what’s hidden—the power we call discovery and invention—what is it? Can you believe it was assembled from matter as earthly, mortal, and short-lived as this? Think of whoever first named everything, a deed Pythagoras thought showed the highest wisdom. Or think of the person who brought scattered humans together and invited them into a common life; the one who reduced the seemingly endless sounds of speech to a small set of letter signs; the one who recorded the wandering stars’ paths, forward movements, and stops. Great people, all of them. Greater still were the discoverers of crops, clothes, shelter, civilized comforts, and defenses against wild beasts. They made us tame and civilized; we then went on from the crafts that supply our needs to the more refined arts. The discovery of the differing characters and kinds of sound, and their combination, brought our ears enormous enjoyment. We also raised our eyes to the stars: some stay fixed in certain spots, while others are only called wanderers and don’t really wander. Whoever mentally grasped all their movements and revolutions proved that his mind resembled the mind that made them in heaven.

63 “Archimedes built the movements of the moon, the sun, and the five wandering stars into a sphere. In doing so he matched Plato’s god, the builder of the universe in the *Timaeus*. Both made one rotation control movements of very different speeds, some slow and some fast. Such a thing can’t happen in the universe without a god. Likewise, it took divine talent for Archimedes to reproduce those movements in his sphere.”

Book 1, Chapter 26

⁶⁴ “Even the better-known, more obvious abilities strike me as needing divine help. Would a poet produce a poem of weight and richness unless something from heaven stirred his mind? Would a speaker pour out resounding language and a wealth of ideas without some higher power? I don’t think so. As for philosophy, the mother of every art, Plato calls it the gods’ gift; I call it their invention. Its first lesson was reverence for the gods. Then it taught us human rights, grounded in the fellowship of our whole race, and then restraint and greatness of spirit. It cleared away the darkness before our minds, as one clears it before the eyes. We could now see things high and low, their beginnings, their endings, and everything between.

⁶⁵ “When a power accomplishes so much, on such a scale, I can only call it divine. Consider remembering facts and words, or making discoveries. Can we imagine anything greater than this, even in a god? Surely not. The gods’ pleasure, I think, doesn’t come from ambrosia, nectar, or Youth pouring their drinks. Nor will I listen to Homer’s account of Ganymede: the gods, he says, kidnapped the handsome boy to serve Jupiter his wine. His looks hardly justified treating Laomedon so badly. Homer invented all that, giving the gods human qualities. I wish he’d done the reverse and given us divine ones. Which ones? Being full of life, being wise, discovering, remembering. The soul that ... is therefore divine, as I put it; Euripides boldly calls it a god. Further, suppose a god consists of breath or fire. A person’s soul consists of the same thing. That heavenly substance has no earth or moisture in it, and neither has a human soul. Or suppose Aristotle was right to introduce a fifth substance: that belongs both to gods and to souls. I adopted that position in my Consolation. Here are my exact words:”

Book 1, Chapter 27

⁶⁶ “Look for the source of souls on earth, and you won’t find it. They contain no blend or compound, nothing apparently formed or grown from earth—not even anything wet, airy, or made of fire. For these substances have no capacity for remembering, understanding, or thinking. They cannot keep the past in mind, see ahead, or grasp what’s happening now. Only these abilities are divine. Nothing but a god will ever explain how they reach us. So the soul has its own distinct power and substance, apart from the ordinary substances familiar to us. Whatever does the feeling and understanding, whatever lives and has energy, must belong to heaven and be divine; consequently it must last forever. Even our conception of a god is possible only as an unfettered, independent mind. We separate it from every mortal mixture: it perceives all things, sets them all in motion, and moves forever itself. Human intelligence is of that very kind, of that very substance.”

“Then where is this mind? What sort of thing is it?”

⁶⁷ “Tell me that about your own. Where is it? What sort of thing? Can you answer? I may lack some of the means of understanding it that I’d like. Will you therefore stop me using the means I have? The mind cannot look at itself; neither can an eye, but both can see other things. Its own shape escapes it, and that matters least. Perhaps it can even see that—let’s put that aside. At least it recognizes its strength and quick perception, its memory, its movement and speed. In these lie its greatness, its divinity, its everlasting life. There’s no need even to inquire about its outward appearance or its dwelling place.”

Book 1, Chapter 28

- ⁶⁸ “Look up: the beauty and brilliance of the sky meet us first, and then its spinning, faster than thought can grasp. Day gives way to night and night to day; the seasons change four times, allowing crops to ripen and our bodies to keep a proper temperature. Over all of this the sun presides and gives direction. As the moon’s light increases and fades, it shows and marks the days like a calendar. Five planets travel within one belt, which has twelve divisions. They move at different speeds, yet each follows its regular course without fail. Stars adorn the night sky on every side. The earth’s round mass rises above the sea and stays fixed at the universe’s center. People inhabit and farm two zones far apart. Our zone is “‘Beneath the pole beside the seven stars, where Aquilo’s “‘Terrifying howl heaps up the icy snow.’ “The other zone lies to the south. We don’t know it; the Greek name is ‘the opposite earth.’ The rest has no inhabitants,
- ⁶⁹ “being either stiff with frost or burning hot. Here where we live, however, every year at the right time “‘The heavens grow bright, the trees break into leaf, “‘The vines that bring delight grow thick with shoots, “‘The branches bow beneath a wealth of berries, “‘The fields give grain, and flowers bloom everywhere, “‘Springs bubble up, and grass covers the meadows.’ “Then consider the herds of animals in all their numbers. Some feed us, some help farm the fields, some provide transport, and some supply clothing for our bodies. Consider humanity itself, a spectator of heaven and a worshiper of the gods, with every field and sea at its service.
- ⁷⁰ “Such sights, and countless more, leave us in no doubt: someone must preside over them. If they had a beginning, as Plato believes, he made them. If they have existed forever, as Aristotle believes, he directs this vast work and the benefits it brings. Treat the human mind in the same way. It is invisible to you, but

so is a god. His works tell you he exists. Likewise, remembering things, inventing, moving so quickly, and displaying goodness in all its beauty tell you that the mind has divine power.”

Book 1, Chapter 29

“So where is it located? I believe it’s in the head, and I can give reasons for that belief. But where the soul is can wait for another time. At any rate, it’s in you. What’s its nature? Something special and distinct, I think. But suppose it’s made of fire; suppose it’s made of breath. That makes no difference to our subject. Just keep this in view: you know a god even though you don’t know either his location or his appearance. In the same way, you should know your own soul even if you don’t know its location or shape.

⁷¹ “Now, unless we’re completely dense about natural science, our understanding of the soul leaves no room for doubt on this point: souls contain nothing mixed, compounded, coupled, fitted together, or made of two elements. So a soul certainly can’t be separated, divided, torn apart, or pulled to pieces. It can’t perish, either. Perishing is a sort of breakup, separation, and dispersal of parts that were held together in some combination before they perished.

“Arguments like these persuaded Socrates not to seek a lawyer at his capital trial or beg the judges for mercy. Instead, he showed an outspoken defiance that came from greatness of spirit, not arrogance. On his last day he discussed this very subject at length. A few days earlier, when he could easily have been brought out of prison, he refused. And then, with that deadly cup practically in his hand, he spoke like someone rising into heaven, not someone being pushed toward death.”

Book 1, Chapter 30

- ⁷² “His belief, as he explained it, was that souls leaving the body have two roads to travel, two different courses. Some people have polluted themselves with human vices and given themselves entirely to their desires. Blinded by those desires, they’ve either stained themselves with private wrongdoing and disgraceful behavior or committed unforgivable crimes by attacking their country. For them there is a roundabout route, cut off from the company of the gods. But others have kept themselves unspoiled and pure. They’ve had as little contact with their bodies as possible, have always drawn themselves away from them, and have copied the gods’ way of life while still in human bodies. For them an easy return lies open to those from whom they came.
- ⁷³ “He therefore brings up the swans. They’re dedicated to Apollo for a reason: they seem to get from him the ability to foresee the future. They can see the good that death holds for them, so they die singing and happy. He says all good and educated people should do the same. (No one could doubt this, except that when we think hard about the soul, something happens to us like what often happens to people who stare intently at the sun during an eclipse: they lose their sight altogether. In the same way, the mind’s vision sometimes grows dull when it looks at itself, and that makes us give up our careful examination. So, doubtful and hesitant, looking around and fearing many obstacles, as though on a raft in an immense sea,
- ⁷⁴ “our discussion is carried along.) But these examples are old and Greek. Cato, by contrast, left life delighted that he had found a reason to die. The god who rules within us forbids us to move out of here without his orders. But when the god himself has given a proper reason—as he did for Socrates then, for Cato just recently, and often for many others—then, by *Dius Fidius*, a wise person will gladly leave this darkness for that light. He won’t have broken his prison chains—the laws forbid that. Instead, he’ll have left at the god’s summons and

with his release, just as though a magistrate or some lawful authority had called him out and let him go. As Socrates also says, a philosopher's whole life is practice for death."

Book 1, Chapter 31

75 "When we turn our thoughts from pleasure, we're turning them from the body. When we turn from property, we're turning from the body's servant and helper. We also set aside public life and every kind of business. What are we doing in all this, I ask? Bringing the soul home to itself, requiring it to keep its own company, and removing it from the body as far as we can. To learn to die means precisely to separate body and soul. Believe me, we should rehearse that separation: we should free ourselves from our bodies, which means getting accustomed to dying. Even here on earth that will give us something like life in heaven. Once these chains are off and we're carried there, our souls will make the journey with fewer delays. People who have always worn the body's fetters are slow to walk even after their release, just like prisoners kept in irons for years. Only on arriving there will we really live. Our present life is death; I could lament it, if I wanted."

"You did plenty of lamenting in your Consolation;

76 "reading it makes me want above all to leave this world behind. What you've just told me makes me want that much more."

"Whether you try to put it off or rush to meet it, your time will come soon enough. Our years race past. You thought earlier that death was bad. Far from that, I almost fear that nothing else is so certainly free of evil, nothing else so truly good for us—provided we shall become gods ourselves or share their company [...]"

"Why does it matter?"

"Because some people reject all this. Whatever argument they use, I won't end our talk leaving you any grounds for thinking death an evil."

“After what I’ve learned, how could I think that?”

“You want to know how?”

- 77 “There’s a whole army of people arguing against us. It isn’t just the Epicureans—I certainly don’t despise them—but, strangely enough, the most learned people too. My beloved Dicaearchus made the strongest attack on immortality. His three books bear the name *Lesbian Dialogues*, since their discussion takes place at Mytilene. Their aim is to prove that souls die. The Stoics lend us a span of life, as they do the crows: souls last a long time, they say, but don’t last forever.”

Book 1, Chapter 32

“So don’t you want to hear why death still isn’t something bad, even if that’s true?”

“I suppose so. But no one will shake my belief in immortality.”

“That’s admirable, though we shouldn’t be too sure of anything.

- 78 “A cleverly constructed argument often influences us. We lose our footing and change our minds even about things that are clearer than these, which do have some obscurity about them. So let’s be ready in case that happens.”

“Certainly. But I’ll see to it that it doesn’t happen.”

“Then is there any reason we shouldn’t send away our friends the Stoics? I mean those who say souls continue to exist after leaving the body, but not forever.”

“Yes, send them away. They accept the hardest point in this whole question: that a soul can continue to exist without a body. But they won’t grant that once it has continued for a long time, it won’t perish. That’s not only easy to believe; it follows from the very thing they want us to accept.”

- 79 “Your criticism is right. That’s exactly how the matter stands. So should we believe Panaetius when he disagrees with his beloved Plato? Everywhere he calls Plato divine, supremely wise, supremely upright, the Homer of philosophers.

Yet this one belief of Plato's, the immortality of souls, he doesn't accept. His point is that everything born must perish, which no one denies. Souls, he says, are born: this is shown by children's resemblance to their parents, which appears in their personalities as well as in their bodies. He also offers another argument. Anything that feels pain can also be sick; anything that becomes sick will also perish. Souls feel pain, so they too perish."

Book 1, Chapter 33

⁸⁰ "These arguments can be answered. They come from someone who doesn't realize that when we speak of souls lasting forever, we mean the mind, which is always free from emotional disturbance. We don't mean the parts in which distress, anger, and desires operate. The man these arguments are aimed at considers those parts separate and cut off from the mind. Besides, resemblance is more obvious in animals, whose souls lack reason. In human beings, resemblance shows up more in bodily shape. And it makes a great difference to a soul what sort of body it's placed in. Many things arise from the body that sharpen the mind, and many that dull it. Aristotle actually says all highly gifted people have a black-bile temperament, so I needn't mind being a little slow myself. He lists many examples and, treating the matter as settled, explains why it happens. Now, if things produced in the body have such a powerful effect on the mind's condition, and if these things, whatever they are, cause the resemblance, then resemblance doesn't force us to conclude that souls are born. I won't go into the lack of resemblance.

⁸¹ "I wish Panaetius could be here—he lived with Africanus. I'd ask him which of his relatives Africanus's brother's grandson resembled. In looks, perhaps his father; in his way of life, all the worst criminals, to such an extent that he easily outdid them. I'd ask the same about the grandson of Publius Crassus, that wise, eloquent, leading citizen, and about the grandsons and sons of many other famous men whom there's no need to name.

“But what are we doing? Have we forgotten
“that our present task, after saying enough about eternity, was to show that
even if souls perish, there’s still nothing bad about death?”
“I did remember. But I was happy to let you stray from the subject when you
were talking about eternity.”

Book 1, Chapter 34

- 82 “You’re aiming high, I see: you want to go and live in heaven. I hope we both get there. Still, let’s accept their claim for a moment: the soul doesn’t outlast death. That would take away our hope of a happier existence, certainly. But where is the evil in that belief? Assume that soul and body perish alike. A dead body feels no pain, does it? Does it feel anything whatever? Nobody claims it does. Epicurus charges Democritus with that claim, but Democritus’s followers deny the charge. The soul, too, can retain no feeling: it no longer exists. With no third thing besides these two, where can the evil be? Perhaps you mean the pain of the soul leaving the body. Even if I granted that pain, how tiny a thing it would be! I don’t believe there is any. Usually the departure isn’t felt; sometimes it’s actually pleasant. Whatever it involves, it matters little,
- 83 “taking only a moment. Someone objects, ‘Leaving everything good in life—that’s what hurts, or rather tortures us.’ Wouldn’t ‘everything bad’ be nearer the truth? I could quite properly describe human life in sorrowful terms. But why do that now? I’m trying to remove the prospect of misery after death, not make life itself more miserable by lamenting it. In the book where I offered myself what comfort I could, I already did that. The truth, then, is that death removes us from evils rather than blessings. Hegesias of Cyrene argued this at such length that, so the story goes, King Ptolemy banned the subject from his classes: many people killed themselves after hearing him.

84 “Callimachus wrote a short poem about Theombrotus, a man from Ambracia. According to it, he read Plato’s book and jumped off a wall into the sea, although he’d suffered no misfortune. The Hegesias I mentioned wrote *The Man Starving Himself*. Its main figure is refusing food in order to die. Friends urge him to go on living; his answer is a list of the hardships people face. I could do the same, though I wouldn’t go as far as he does: he denies that life benefits anyone at all. Never mind anyone else. Does it benefit even us? We’ve been stripped of the comfort and honor we had at home and in public life. Had we died sooner, death would surely have spared us evils rather than deprived us of blessings.”

Book 1, Chapter 35

85 “Let’s imagine a man untouched by misfortune, with no trouble at all. Think of Metellus, father of four sons who reached high office. Or think of Priam, father of fifty, seventeen born to his lawful wife. Fortune could treat either man as she pleased; she exercised that power against only one. Sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, in great numbers carried Metellus onto his pyre. Priam lost that great family and sought refuge at an altar, where an enemy killed him. Suppose he’d died with his children living and his kingdom unharmed, “‘With his foreign army at hand, “‘In halls with carved and coffered ceilings.’ “‘Would death have removed him from blessings or evils? From blessings, it would then have seemed. Yet he would surely have been better off. There would be less cause for tears in the song: “‘I watched the whole place burn, “‘Watched Priam’s life violently ended, “‘Watched blood defile Jupiter’s altar.’ “‘As though that violent end weren’t the best thing that could happen to him at that point! An earlier death would have spared him the entire disaster. Death when it came spared him the feeling of his sufferings.

86 “When our friend Pompey fell dangerously sick at Naples, he got better. Naples celebrated with garlands, as did Puteoli, naturally. Towns everywhere sent official congratulations. A foolish affair, in that petty Greek way, but happy all the same. Had he died on that occasion, what would death have removed him from—blessings or evils? From terrible evils, without question. There would have been no war with his father-in-law, no taking up arms before he was ready, no abandoning his house, no flight out of Italy. He would not have lost his army and then, stripped of protection, met slaves’ swords and hands. †There would have been no mourning of his children, no seizure of his entire fortune by the victors. At that earlier moment he would have died a man enjoying the highest prosperity. Instead, extra years made him swallow disaster after disaster, immense and almost beyond belief.”

Book 1, Chapter 36

“Dying saves us from all this. We escape it even when it hasn’t occurred, since it could occur. People never consider that they themselves may suffer these things. Each expects the luck Metellus had—as if happiness were commoner than unhappiness, as if human life offered any certainty, as if looking forward hopefully were more sensible than being afraid.

“But grant the very point that death takes good things away from people:

87 “must we conclude that dead people miss life’s pleasures and are unhappy as a result? Our opponents certainly have to claim so. Yet how can a nonexistent person miss a thing? ‘Missing’ itself sounds sad. It brings to mind someone who used to have a thing and hasn’t got it now, who wants it, searches for it, needs it. That’s the difficulty, I take it, in missing something. Without eyes, a man suffers the misery of blindness; without children, bereavement. But these are living people. None of the dead misses life’s comforts, or even living itself. By ‘the dead’ I mean people who no longer exist. We do exist. Would you say

we miss horns or wings? Surely nobody would. Why not? Something may be absent, and we may know it's absent, without our missing it: we have neither a use for it nor a natural need for it.

- 88 “This deserves repeated emphasis; we must keep driving it home. If souls die, we cannot doubt that death destroys so completely that no faintest possibility of awareness survives. Settle that firmly first. Then examine ‘missing,’ clearing every misunderstanding from the word. Its meaning is to need what you wish you had. So a wish is involved—except in a different usage, such as being ‘free of a fever.’ There’s another usage too: being without something and knowing it, but taking the lack quite easily. That isn’t the ‘missing’ meant in discussions of death. It would give no cause for grief. What people mean is ‘missing a good thing,’ which is an evil. But even while alive you don’t miss a good thing unless you need it. We can, however, make sense of saying to someone alive, ‘You lack a kingdom.’ In your case that wouldn’t be strictly accurate; it would fit Tarquin after he was driven from his throne. Applied to someone dead, the idea makes no sense at all. Only someone aware can miss things. The dead have no awareness, and therefore nothing is missing for them.”

Book 1, Chapter 37

“Though why do we need philosophy here, when we can see the subject doesn’t much need it?

- 89 “Our history is full of commanders, and indeed entire armies, charging straight toward certain death. Had death frightened them, would Lucius Brutus have died fighting to bar the return of the tyrant he’d expelled? Would three generations of Decii have offered themselves to enemy weapons: the father against the Latins, his son against the Etruscans, his grandson against Pyrrhus? In one war Spain saw the Scipios die for their country. Cannae saw Paulus and Geminus die, Venusia saw Marcellus, Litana Albinus, and the Lucanians Gracchus. If

death were to be feared, none of that would have happened. Are any of them suffering now? They weren't suffering even then, once they'd breathed their last. Destroy awareness and misery becomes impossible.

- 90 “‘Not being aware—that itself is dreadful.’ It would be dreadful if it meant feeling a lack. But a person who doesn’t exist plainly cannot have any condition at all. Where, then, is the dreadfulness for someone who feels neither a lack nor anything else? I repeat myself too often here, I admit. This point, though, contains the whole reason our spirits shrink at the thought of death. The truth is clearer than daylight: once body and soul are consumed, the whole creature wiped out in total destruction, what was a living being becomes nothing. See that clearly, and you see that King Agamemnon is no different from a centaur that never existed. Marcus Camillus is no more concerned with our present civil war than I was with Rome’s capture during his lifetime. Why would he have felt grief, then, if he’d foreseen this war some three hundred and fifty years ahead? Why should I grieve at the thought of another nation taking our city in ten thousand years? We love our country so much that her safety, not what we ourselves experience, is the measure of our love.”

Book 1, Chapter 38

“So death doesn’t stop a wise person

- 91 “from planning for his country and his family for all time to come. Unpredictable accidents threaten him with death every day, and life is so short that death can never be far away. Yet he considers that future generations themselves concern him, even though he won’t be aware of them. So even someone who thinks the soul is mortal can work on things that will last forever. He won’t do it from a desire for fame, which he won’t feel, but from a desire for virtue, which fame necessarily follows, even if he isn’t aiming at it.

“Suppose, though, that nature makes birth the start of everything for us and death the end. Nothing before we were born mattered to us; nothing after we’ve died will matter either. How does that involve any evil? Neither living people nor dead people have anything to do with death:

- 92 “the dead aren’t there, and it won’t touch the living. To make it seem less serious, people compare it closely to sleep. But who would choose a ninety-year life if, on reaching sixty, he had to sleep away every remaining year? His own family wouldn’t choose that, much less he himself. Take Endymion, if you’re prepared to hear a myth. Long ago he went to sleep on Latmus, the mountain in Caria, and, I believe, still hasn’t woken. They say the Moon put him to sleep to kiss him while he slept. When she is eclipsed, do you think he cares? He feels nothing; what could he care about? You have in sleep a picture of death, and every day you take on that likeness. You see no sensation in the picture. How can you still doubt that death itself has none?”

Book 1, Chapter 39

- 93 “Away, then, with this foolish, almost old-womanish notion that an early death makes someone miserable. Early by what timetable? Nature’s? She lent you life as she might lend money, setting no date for its return. If she chooses to call in the loan, what grounds have you to complain? You accepted those terms. The very same people say we should bear a little boy’s death calmly; if he dies in his cradle, we shouldn’t even complain. Yet with the baby nature has been harsher in reclaiming her gift. ‘He never got to taste how sweet life is,’ comes the answer. ‘The older child had begun enjoying it and already had great hopes.’ But everywhere else a taste of something counts as better than none. Why reverse that rule for life? Still, there’s something in Callimachus’s remark: Priam shed tears far oftener than Troilus. Meanwhile, those who die in old age are praised for their good fortune.

- 94 “Why? I suppose a longer life couldn’t possibly have pleased any of them more! In fact, nothing gives us more pleasure than wisdom. Whatever else age removes, wisdom is certainly what it brings. But how many years make a long life? Can anything be long for us? Hasn’t old age “Chased us from behind, now children, now young people running, “‘And overtaken us before we knew?’ “We call our years long because we’ve nothing beyond them. Long and short are simply relative to the portion allotted to each creature. Aristotle describes tiny animals born by the Hypanis, the river entering the Black Sea on its European side. Their whole life lasts a day. One dying in the eighth hour has reached old age; by sunset it’s worn out with years—especially on the summer solstice! Measure our greatest lifespan against eternity, and our lives turn out almost as brief as theirs.”

Book 1, Chapter 40

- 95 “So let’s dismiss all this nonsense—what milder name can I give such foolishness?—and base a good life entirely on strength and greatness of spirit, on disregarding and looking down on all human circumstances, and on every form of virtue. As things stand, our thoughts are so soft that we lose our manliness. If death comes before the Chaldeans’ promises have been fulfilled, we feel we’ve been robbed of some great benefits, cheated and abandoned.
- 96 “When hope and longing keep us on edge, when we torment and distress ourselves, immortal gods, what a delightful journey that must be whose end puts every worry and anxiety behind us! Theramenes fills me with admiration. What spirit he shows! Reading his story brings tears, yet there’s nothing pitiable in this great man’s death. The Thirty Tyrants had him imprisoned. He drank the poison down as if quenching a thirst, then tossed the remainder from his cup, making it ring. With that sound he smiled: ‘Here’s a drink for handsome Critias.’ Critias had been his bitterest persecutor. At Greek drinking parties it’s customary to name the next person to receive the cup. This excellent man

could joke even as he drew his last breath, with death already lodged deep in his breast. His poisoned toast truly foretold the death of the man he toasted: that death followed soon afterward.

“Who would praise this great man’s composure in the very act of dying if he thought death was bad?

- 97 “Only a few years pass, and Socrates enters that same prison to drink from that same cup. His judges act as criminally as the tyrants acted against Theramenes. What words, then, does Plato put into his mouth before the judges, once the death sentence has been passed?”

Book 1, Chapter 41

“I have strong hopes, judges,’ he says, ‘that my sentence of death is a blessing for me. There are only two possibilities. Death either removes every feeling or transfers us somewhere else from here. Suppose feeling ends. Suppose death resembles those nights when sleep brings utter peace, sometimes without a single dream. Good gods, dying would be a wonderful gain! How many days can you name that surpass such a night? If the whole endless future is to be like that, nobody could be happier than I.

- 98 “Or suppose the accounts are true: death carries us to the country inhabited by those who’ve left this life. That’s a still greater happiness. Once free of these men who claim a place among the judges, you’d reach judges who really merit the title—Minos, Rhadamanthus, Aeacus, Triptolemus. You’d join people whose lives were honest and just. Would you call that an ordinary trip? Imagine being able to speak with Orpheus or Musaeus, with Homer or Hesiod. What price would you put on it? I’d choose to die over and over, were it possible, for the chance to visit those I’ve mentioned. Meeting Palamedes, Ajax, and other victims of unjust trials would give me enormous pleasure. I’d probe the wisdom

of that mighty king who took the greatest forces to Troy, as well as Ulysses and Sisyphus. I could carry on questioning as I did here without being condemned to death for it. You judges who voted for my acquittal mustn't fear death either.

- 99 “Nothing bad can happen to a good person, either living or dead. The immortal gods will never neglect his interests. What has happened to me hasn't happened by chance, either. Nor have I any reason to be angry with my accusers or with those who condemned me, except that they believed they were harming me.’ Those were his words on these points. But nothing is better than his ending: ‘Now,’ he says, ‘it’s time to leave this place: for me to die, and for you to go on living. Which is better, the immortal gods know. I don’t think any human being knows.’”

Book 1, Chapter 42

“I’d certainly much rather have his spirit than the fortunes of all the men who judged him. True, although he says no one but the gods knows which is better, he knows it himself—he said so earlier. But he sticks to his characteristic refusal to make definite assertions right to the end.

- 100 “Let’s stick to our own position: nothing nature has given to everyone should be considered bad. And let’s understand that if death is bad, it’s an everlasting bad thing. Death seems to end a miserable life. But if death itself is miserable, there can be no end.

“But why am I bringing up Socrates or Theramenes, men distinguished by their reputation for virtue and wisdom? There was a Spartan whose very name hasn’t been passed down, yet he showed such disregard for death that he looked cheerful and happy as he was led away to it after the ephors condemned him. An enemy said to him, ‘Are you showing contempt for the laws of Lycurgus?’ He replied, ‘On the contrary, I’m deeply grateful to him. He’s given me a

penalty I can pay without borrowing or refinancing a debt.’ A man worthy of Sparta! To my mind, someone with such a great spirit must have been innocent when condemned. Our own country has produced countless men like him.

- 101 “But why name commanders and leading citizens, when Cato writes that whole legions often set off eagerly for a place they didn’t think they’d return from? The Spartans at Thermopylae died in the same spirit. Simonides wrote of them: “Stranger, tell Sparta you saw us lying here, “As we obeyed our country’s sacred laws.’ “What does their commander Leonidas say? ‘Go forward bravely, Spartans. Perhaps we’ll dine in the world below today.’ This was a brave people while the laws of Lycurgus were in force. In a conversation, one of them heard a Persian enemy boast, ‘Our spears and arrows will be so thick you won’t see the sun.’ ‘Then,’ he said, ‘we’ll fight in the shade.’
- 102 “I’m mentioning men. What about the Spartan woman who sent her son into battle and heard he’d been killed? ‘That’s why I gave birth to him,’ she said, ‘so there’d be someone who wouldn’t hesitate to die for his country.’”

Book 1, Chapter 43

“All right, the Spartans were hardy, courageous people. Civic training makes a powerful difference. But surely we also admire Theodorus of Cyrene, a well-known philosopher? King Lysimachus threatened him with crucifixion. ‘Please,’ he answered, ‘frighten your purple-clad courtiers with horrors like that. Whether Theodorus rots below on the ground or above it makes no difference to him.’

“That answer suggests that I should discuss laying the dead in the earth and their funeral rites as well. There isn’t much difficulty here, especially after our earlier account of the absence of feeling. To see what Socrates thought, turn to the book describing his death, which we’ve already said so much about.

103 “He had argued for the soul’s immortality, and death was pressing close. Crito asked him what burial he wanted. ‘Friends,’ he replied, ‘all that effort of mine has been wasted! Our Crito still doesn’t believe I’ll fly off and leave none of myself here. Well, Crito, catch me if you can, or find me somewhere, and you may bury me as you please. But take my word for it: when I’ve gone, none of you will catch up with me.’ What a fine answer! He left his friend free to act and made it clear that none of these matters worried him at all.

104 “Diogenes was tougher. He held the same view, but expressed it more roughly, as a Cynic would: he ordered them to throw him out unburied. His friends asked, ‘For the birds and wild animals?’ ‘Certainly not,’ he said. ‘Put a little stick beside me so I can drive them away.’ ‘How will you be able to?’ they asked. ‘You won’t feel anything.’ ‘Then why should being torn apart by animals hurt me, if I don’t feel anything?’ Anaxagoras also gave an excellent reply when he was dying at Lampsacus. His friends asked whether, if anything happened to him, he wanted to be taken home to Clazomenae. ‘There’s no need,’ he said. ‘It’s just as far to the world below from anywhere.’ On this whole question of burial, keep one thing in mind: it concerns the body, whether the soul has died or is still active. And it’s clear that no sensation remains in the body whether the soul has been put out or has escaped.”

Book 1, Chapter 44

“But mistaken ideas are everywhere.

105 “Achilles ties Hector to his chariot and drags him along. I suppose he thinks Hector feels himself being torn apart. So Achilles is taking revenge, or so he thinks. But the woman mourns it as though it were the bitterest thing of all: “I saw—what it hurt me terribly to see— “‘Hector dragged along by a four-horse chariot.’ “What Hector? How long will he be Hector? Accius does better, and for once Achilles is sensible: “‘No, I gave Priam back a body. I took Hector away.’ “So you didn’t drag Hector, but the body that had been Hector’s.

106 “Here comes someone else out of the earth to keep his mother awake: “‘Mother, hear my call! You put your worries on hold and ease them in sleep, “‘With no pity for me. Rise and give your child a grave—!’ “Set that to low, weeping music that fills whole theaters with sorrow, and it’s hard to avoid thinking people without graves unhappy. ‘Before wild beasts and birds—’ Apparently he’s afraid torn limbs won’t work as well! Burning them doesn’t alarm him. “‘Don’t allow what’s left of me, half eaten, with the bones exposed, “‘To be dragged about in the dirt, filthy with bloody slime—’ “What he fears is beyond me: he can still sing such excellent seven-foot lines to a pipe! Our firm rule must be to trouble ourselves over nothing after death. Yet many people go on punishing enemies who’ve died. Ennius gives Thyestes some splendid verses cursing Atreus. He begins by calling for death at sea. That’s harsh enough: dying in a shipwreck does involve dreadful suffering. The next part means nothing: “‘Pinned high on jagged rocks, his guts torn out, “‘Hanging sideways, splashing the stones with rot, gore, and black blood—’

107 “The man ‘hanging sideways’ will feel no more than the rocks themselves. Thyestes imagines he’s wishing him torture. If the man could feel, these things would be dreadful; without feeling, they amount to nothing. This next wish is especially empty: “‘May he find no tomb to take him in, no sheltering harbor for his body, “‘Where, once human life is over, his body may rest from pain.’ “Look at the confusion behind all this! He imagines a harbor for the body, with the dead man taking his rest inside the grave. Pelops has a lot to answer for: he failed to bring up his son properly and teach him what deserves concern, and how much.”

Book 1, Chapter 45

108 “Why bother with one person’s notions when whole peoples offer us their varied errors? In Egypt they preserve corpses by embalming and keep them in their houses. The Persians even cover them in wax before putting them away, aiming

to make the bodies last as long as they can. The Magi wait until animals have mangled their dead before they bury them. Among the Hyrcanians, the common people feed dogs kept by the community; the wealthy have their own at home. We know the dogs there are of excellent stock. Each person, though, arranges according to his means for dogs to tear him up: they think this the finest burial. Chrysippus supplies countless further instances, inquisitive as he is about every kind of historical detail. Some are so foul that our discussion recoils in horror and passes them by. As regards ourselves, we should set this whole subject aside. As regards our loved ones, we shouldn't neglect it. But we living people must still realize that a corpse feels nothing;

109 “Let the living decide how much to give to custom and reputation, but let them understand that none of it concerns the dead.

“Yet surely we find death easiest to face when, at life's close, our achievements console us. A person who has perfectly fulfilled the work of perfect virtue hasn't had too little time to live. My own life has offered many suitable moments for dying. I wish I'd been able to die then! Nothing further was being gained; life's duties stood fully accomplished. Only struggles with fortune lay ahead. If reasoning can't quite teach us indifference to death, let our past life at least convince us we've lived long enough, indeed more than enough. Feeling may have left the dead, but the praise and glory that are their particular possessions are still theirs, even without their knowing it. Glory isn't desirable for anything it has in itself; nevertheless it trails after virtue as a shadow does.”

Book 1, Chapter 46

110 “When the crowd happens to judge good men rightly, we should commend the judgment rather than call the men happy on its account. Whatever anyone makes of that, I cannot describe Lycurgus or Solon as lacking honor for their legislation and civic discipline. Nor can I deny Themistocles or Epaminondas their fame for excellence in war. Neptune would drown the island of Salamis

sooner than erase the memory of the trophy there; Leuctra would vanish from Boeotia before its battle lost its renown. Renown will take far longer still to leave Curius, Fabricius, Calatinus, the two Scipios and the two men named Africanus, Maximus, Marcellus, Paulus, Cato, Laelius, and numberless others. Take a man who has achieved some likeness to them. If he judges it by honest praise from good people, not the crowd's acclaim, he'll go to his death without fear when the time requires. We have established that death means either the highest blessing or no evil at all. Indeed, amid success he'll actually wish to die. Adding more blessings cannot delight us as much as losing them can hurt. A Spartan seems to have meant this in his remark to Diagoras. Diagoras of Rhodes was a celebrated Olympic victor; in a single day he watched two sons win at Olympia. The Spartan came up to the old man with congratulations:

- 111 “Die, Diagoras. You aren’t going to climb up to heaven.’ The Greeks consider these achievements great—perhaps too great—or at least they did then. The man who said this to Diagoras thought it an enormous thing for one household to produce three Olympic champions. So he thought there was no advantage to Diagoras himself in lingering any longer in life, exposed to fortune. “As for you, I’d thought I’d given you a sufficient answer in a few words. You’d agreed that the dead were in no bad condition at all. But I made an effort to say more because this offers the greatest comfort when we’re grieving and missing someone. We should bear our own pain, felt for our own sake, with moderation, so we don’t seem to be in love with ourselves. But there’s a suspicion that tortures us with unbearable pain: we think the people we’ve lost are aware of being in the bad conditions people commonly imagine. I wanted to tear that belief out of myself by the roots. That’s perhaps why I’ve gone on too long.”

Book 1, Chapter 47

“You, too long?”

112 “Not as far as I’m concerned! Earlier you made me eager for death. Later, at some points you removed my unwillingness to die, and at others you made me quite indifferent. One result of your argument as a whole is beyond doubt: death no longer counts as an evil to me.”

“Do we also want a speaker’s closing appeal, then? Or are we abandoning that art completely now?”

“Certainly don’t abandon the art you’ve always brought distinction to, and rightly so. To tell the truth, it had brought distinction to you. But what is this closing appeal? I’m eager to hear it, whatever it is.”

113 “In their teaching, public speakers commonly cite decisions about death made by the immortal gods. These aren’t stories they make up: they take them from Herodotus and numerous other authors. They begin by praising Cleobis and Bito, the Argive priestess’s sons. You know the tale. Custom required her to travel by chariot to a regular sacrifice on an appointed day, at a temple a fair distance outside the town. The animals were delayed. The two young men I’ve named undressed, oiled themselves, and stepped up to the yoke. Her sons thus pulled the chariot and brought the priestess to the temple. There, they say, she asked the goddess to repay their devotion with the greatest blessing a deity could bestow on a person. The boys ate with their mother and went to sleep afterward. Next morning both lay dead.

114 “They tell a similar story of a prayer by Trophonius and Agamedes. The pair had built Apollo a temple at Delphi. In worshiping him they asked a substantial reward for all their labor, naming nothing specific, only the best thing a person could receive. Apollo promised to grant it on the third day after the day of their prayer. At dawn on that day they were discovered dead. That, people say, was a god’s verdict—and this was the god whom the other gods had allowed to surpass them all in foretelling the future.”

Book 1, Chapter 48

“Another tale they produce concerns Silenus. Midas captured him, and the written account says he bought his freedom with a gift of knowledge for the king. Much the best thing for us, he taught, is never to be born; failing that, the best is an early death—as early as possible.

115 “Euripides gave the same idea a place in Cresphontes: “We ought to gather, filling up the house, “And grieve each time a child is brought to light, “Considering all the ills that vary human life; “But when death ends someone’s burdensome work, “His friends should see him off with joy and every kind of praise.’ “Crantor’s Consolation has a comparable story. A man from Terina named Elysium was in deep grief at losing his son. He went to an oracle of the dead and asked why such a calamity had happened. The answer came on tablets in three little verses: “Through life we humans stray, our minds unknowing; “The Fates’ decree gives Euthynous his death. “This end served both his interests and your own.’

116 “Using these and similar authorities, speakers support their case as one already settled by the immortal gods. Alcidas, one of the most famous early teachers of rhetoric, even wrote a work praising death. It consists of a list of human troubles. It lacked the more carefully developed arguments philosophers collect, but it didn’t lack a wealth of words. And speakers usually regard famous deaths faced for one’s country as not only glorious but happy. They go back to Erechtheus, whose daughters eagerly sought death themselves to save their fellow citizens’ lives. They recall Codrus, who rushed into the middle of the enemy dressed as a servant, so he wouldn’t be recognized, as he would have been in royal clothing. An oracle had declared that Athens would win if its king was killed. They don’t leave out Menoeceus, who likewise gave his blood for his

country after an oracle was delivered. And Iphigenia at Aulis orders them to lead her to be sacrificed, so that her own blood may draw the enemy's. From there they come to more recent examples:"

Book 1, Chapter 49

"Harmodius and Aristogiton are on their lips. Leonidas the Spartan and Epaminondas the Theban are still celebrated. They don't know our own people. Listing them would be a big task: there are so many whose deaths, as we can see, were desirable and glorious.

"Since that's so, do we still need to use great eloquence, addressing people as though from a raised platform, to make them begin to want death, or at least stop being afraid of it?

117 "Suppose that final day is a move elsewhere, not an end to our existence. Could we ask for anything better? Or suppose it utterly destroys us and leaves nothing. What could be better than dropping off to sleep amid the hard work of life, shutting our eyes and sinking into a sleep that never ends? If that's the outcome, Ennius speaks better than Solon. 'Don't pay me honors in tears,' says our poet, 'or weep at my funeral!' But the wise Solon says: "'Don't let my death go tearless; let us leave our friends "'Grief, so they mark our burial with groaning.'

118 "If some event seems to give us a god's command to quit this life, we should comply with thanks and joy. Think of it as release from prison, the removal of our chains. We're either going back to a home that's eternal and genuinely ours, or losing all feeling and distress. Even without any such command, let's regard that day as lucky for us, however terrifying others find it. Nothing decreed by the gods or by nature, who mothers everything, should count as an evil. It wasn't thoughtlessly or accidentally that we were planted here and brought to life. Some power surely took thought for humanity. It wouldn't create and sus-

tain us only to have us pass through every hardship and then meet an endless evil in death. Better to believe a harbor and a refuge await us, made ready for our use.

- 119 “I wish we could reach it under full sail! Should the wind turn against us and drive us back, we must nevertheless be brought there eventually, with only a little delay. If everyone has to undergo something, can it bring misery to one person alone? Well, that’s your closing appeal. You needn’t think I’ve skipped or left anything unfinished.”

“Yes, and that closing appeal has made me still more certain.”

“Excellent,” I said. “But now let’s give our health a little attention. Tomorrow, and every day we’re at Tusculum, let’s discuss these matters, especially the ones that offer relief from distress, fears, and desires. That’s the richest benefit of all philosophy.”

Book 2, Chapter 1

- ¹ In Ennius, Neoptolemus says he needs to study philosophy, but only a little. He says he doesn’t like taking it up fully. I too think I need to study philosophy, Brutus. What better use could I make of my time, especially now that I have nothing to do? But I don’t agree about studying only a little. In philosophy, it’s hard to know a few things without knowing most of it, or all of it. You can’t choose a few things unless you have a lot to choose from. And once you’ve grasped a few things, you’ll put the same effort into pursuing the rest.
- ² Still, when your life is busy, especially with military service, as Neoptolemus’ life was then, even a little philosophy often does a lot of good. It pays off. The results may not be as great as those you can get from philosophy as a whole. Even so, sometimes they can give us some relief from desire, distress, or fear. Take the discussion I recently held at my place in Tusculum. It seemed to do a great deal to remove our concern about death. That’s no small help in freeing

the mind from fear. If you're afraid of something you can't avoid, you can't possibly live with peace of mind. But suppose you aren't afraid of death, not just because you have to die, but because death contains nothing frightening. Then you've given yourself a powerful defense for living happily.

- ³ Of course, I know that plenty of people will be eager to argue against me. There was no way to avoid that, short of writing nothing at all. Think of my speeches. I wanted the public to approve of them. Speaking is a public activity, after all, and eloquence achieves its aim when listeners approve. Yet even there, some people would praise nothing unless they were confident they could copy it. They set the limit of good speaking at the limit of their own hopes of speaking well. When a flood of ideas and words overwhelmed them, they said they'd rather have thinness and starvation than richness and plenty. That gave rise to a kind of Attic speaking that was unknown even to the people who claimed to practice it. By now they've fallen silent, practically laughed down by the courts themselves.
- ⁴ What should we expect now, when I can no longer count on the public's support, as I did before? Philosophy is happy with a small number of judges. It deliberately keeps away from the crowd, and the crowd itself distrusts and dislikes it. Someone who wants to attack philosophy as a whole can therefore count on public applause. And someone who tries to attack the school I chiefly follow can get plenty of help from the other philosophical schools.

Book 2, Chapter 2

I've answered the critics of philosophy as a whole in my *Hortensius*. And I think I've explained the case for the Academy carefully enough in the four books of my *Academics*. Still, I'm very far from objecting to people writing against me. In fact, it's just what I want. Philosophy would never have won such respect even in Greece if debates and disagreements between highly learned people hadn't kept it alive.

- ⁵ So I encourage everyone capable of it to take the glory of this kind of work too away from Greece, which is now losing its energy, and bring it to our city. Through their effort and hard work, our ancestors brought here every other kind of glory worth wanting. The reputation of our public speakers rose from small beginnings to its height. Now, as nature brings about in nearly everything, it's getting old and seems likely to disappear before long. But in Latin literature, at least, philosophy is only now being born. Let's help it grow, and let's allow others to expose our mistakes and refute us. Some people can't bear that. They've virtually pledged and dedicated themselves to a fixed set of settled opinions. That commitment ties them down: for the sake of consistency, they're forced to defend even positions they don't usually approve of. We follow what's probable. We can't go beyond what strikes us as likely to be true. So we're ready to refute people without digging in our heels, and to be refuted without getting angry.
- ⁶ With these subjects established among Romans, even libraries of Greek books will no longer be necessary for us. Those libraries have countless volumes because there have been so many authors. Writer after writer repeats the same ideas; that's how they've managed to fill everything with books. Our own writers will do the same if larger numbers take up philosophy. Still, let's do what we can to draw in people who have a well-rounded education, argue gracefully, and pursue philosophy with a method and a plan.

Book 2, Chapter 3

- ⁷ There is a type of person who wants to be called a philosopher, and people say they've written a great many books in Latin. I don't look down on those books. How could I, when I've never read them? But their authors themselves openly say that their writing has no clarity, organization, grace, or polish. So I don't bother with reading that offers no pleasure. Anyone with even a modest educa-

tion knows what the people in that school say and think. Since they don't care how they say it, I don't see why anyone should read them except others who share their views.

- ⁸ Everyone reads Plato, the other Socratic writers, and their successors, even people who disagree with them or aren't particularly keen to follow their ideas. But hardly anyone outside their own followers picks up Epicurus or Metrodorus. In the same way, only people who think these Latin writers are right read them. I think anything put into writing ought to deserve a readership among all educated people. Even if I can't quite manage that myself, I still think that's how it should be done.
- ⁹ For me, the appeal of the Peripatetics and the Academy has always been their habit of making a case on either side of any issue. Only that approach lets us work out what's probably true in each case. Besides, nothing gives you better practice in speaking. Aristotle pioneered it, and those who came after him followed his lead. In our lifetime Philo, whose lectures I attended often, began giving instruction in public speaking at one time and in philosophy at another. Friends encouraged me to do likewise. That's what I've been doing with the time available to me at Tusculum. As on the previous day, our morning went on speaking exercises; in the afternoon we walked down to the Academy. What follows isn't a narrative account of our discussion there. It's more or less the actual wording of the conversation and arguments.

Book 2, Chapter 4

So, as we walked, our conversation began in something like this way:

- ¹⁰ "Yesterday's argument gave me more pleasure than I can describe. No, 'help' is a better word than 'pleasure.' I've never thought of myself as excessively attached to living. Yet I would sometimes feel frightened and upset at the

thought of daylight one day ending for me, along with every advantage life offers. Believe me, you've taken that worry away so thoroughly that nothing now seems less worth troubling about."

"That's not at all surprising.

- 11 "That's what philosophy does. It treats our minds, takes away pointless worries, frees us from desires, and drives out fears. But its power doesn't have the same effect on everyone. It's very effective when it takes hold of a suitable character. The old saying tells us that fortune helps the brave. Reason helps them much more. It strengthens the force of courage with what you might call rules. Nature has clearly given you a great, high-minded spirit that looks down on human concerns. So the argument against fearing death easily took root in your brave mind. But do you think these same ideas influence more than a very few even of the people who discovered, discussed, and wrote them down? How often do you find a philosopher whose character, attitude, and life match what reason calls for? Who treats his teaching as a rule for living, not a display of knowledge? Who obeys himself and follows his own principles?

- 12 "Look at the frivolous, showy behavior of some of them: they'd have done better not to study at all. Then there are the ones who crave money, others who crave fame, and many who are enslaved to their desires. What they say and how they live clash astonishingly. To me, that's the height of disgrace. Think of a self-described expert in grammar using bad grammar, or a man wanting credit as a musician singing badly. His failure is the more disgraceful because it concerns precisely the skill he claims to possess. The philosopher who goes wrong in his way of life is in the same position, and all the more disgraced: he slips up over the duty he wants to teach. His claim is to teach the art of living, but living is where he fails."

Book 2, Chapter 5

“If that’s how things stand, as you say, shouldn’t you worry that you’re giving philosophy a reputation it hasn’t earned? What stronger evidence could there be that it’s no help than the shameful lives of some fully trained philosophers?”

- 13 “That’s no evidence at all. Not every field that’s cultivated produces crops. Those lines of Accius are false: “‘Even when good seed is put into worse soil, “‘The crop still thrives by its own natural strength.’ “In the same way, not every trained mind bears fruit. To stay with the same comparison, even a fertile field can’t be productive without cultivation, and a mind can’t be productive without teaching. Neither can do much without the other. Philosophy is the cultivation of the mind. It pulls out faults by the roots and prepares our minds to receive seed. It entrusts things to them—plants them, so to speak—that will produce very rich crops when they grow up. So let’s carry on as we began. Tell me what you want us to discuss.”

- 14 “I think pain is the worst of all bad things.”

“Worse even than disgrace?”

“I wouldn’t dare say that. And I’m embarrassed that I’ve been knocked off my position so quickly.”

“You’d have more reason to be embarrassed if you stuck to it. What could be less worthy of you than to think anything worse than disgrace, wrongdoing, and shame? To escape them, what pain should we refuse? Shouldn’t we actively seek it, take it on, and accept it?”

“That’s exactly what I think. All right, pain may not be the worst thing. But it’s certainly something bad.”

“Do you see how much of your terror of pain you’ve dropped after just a brief reminder?”

- 15 “I certainly do. But I’d like more.”

“I’ll try. But it’s a big task, and I need you not to fight against me in your mind.”

“You can count on that. Just as I did yesterday, I’ll follow the reasoning wherever it leads me.”

Book 2, Chapter 6

“First I’ll talk about the weakness of many people and the different schools of philosophy. Among them, Aristippus, a follower of Socrates, comes first both in standing and in date. He had no hesitation in calling pain the worst thing there is. Then Epicurus proved quite ready to learn that spineless, womanish view. After him, Hieronymus of Rhodes said that being free from pain was the greatest good. That shows how much badness he found in pain. Apart from Zeno, Aristo, and Pyrrho, the others said much the same as you did just now: pain is bad, certainly, but other things are worse.

¹⁶ “So philosophy, our teacher in living, has stuck for all these centuries to a position that nature itself and a certain inborn nobility immediately rejected in you. You wouldn’t call pain the worst thing; once disgrace was put against it, you were driven from that view. If someone has convinced himself that pain is the worst thing for him, what duty, what praise, what distinction will be worth enough to him that he’ll choose to gain it at the cost of bodily pain? And once he’s decided pain is the worst thing, what dishonor or shame won’t he put up with to escape it? If extreme pain is the worst thing, who won’t be miserable, not only while suffering it but even when he knows it might happen to him? And who is there it couldn’t happen to? The result is that nobody at all can be happy.

¹⁷ “Metrodorus thinks a person is completely happy if his body is in good condition and he’s sure it will always stay that way. But who could possibly be sure of that?”

Book 2, Chapter 7

“I can only think Epicurus is aiming for laughs with remarks like these. In one passage he makes an assertion about a wise man undergoing burning and torture. Perhaps you’re waiting for, ‘He’ll put up with it; he’ll hold out; he won’t give way.’ Hercules! That would be a wonderful tribute, one worthy of the god Hercules I’ve just invoked. Not enough, though, for a man as rough and tough as Epicurus. Put the wise man inside the bull of Phalaris, and his words will be, ‘This feels wonderful! It doesn’t bother me at all!’ Wonderful as well? Wouldn’t it do if it simply weren’t bitter? People who won’t count pain as a bad thing don’t normally describe torture as enjoyable for anyone. Their descriptions are harsh, difficult, hateful, unnatural—but not bad. Here, by contrast, is someone for whom pain alone is bad, and bad to the greatest possible degree; yet he thinks a wise man will describe the experience as enjoyable.

- 18 “I’m not asking you to describe pain in the same terms Epicurus uses for pleasure. As you know, he’s devoted to pleasure. Let him say the same thing inside Phalaris’ bull that he’d say in a comfortable bed. I don’t give wisdom that much power against pain. If someone bears up bravely, he’s done his duty. I don’t ask him to enjoy it too. Pain is certainly a grim thing: harsh, bitter, hostile to nature, and difficult to suffer and endure.

“Look at Philoctetes. We have to allow him his groans.

- 19 “He had watched Hercules himself on Oeta, screaming under the weight of his suffering. The arrows Hercules had given him could offer Philoctetes no comfort at that moment: “After the viper bit, the veins within his flesh, “Soaked in its poison, set off hideous agonies.’ “He shouts for someone to help him; what he wants is death: “Oh, someone throw me to the salt waves “From a rock’s high summit! “Now, now I’m dying; my life gives out “Under this wound’s attack, this burning sore.’ “Faced with cries like that, it’s hard, it seems, to deny that the man is in trouble—and very serious trouble.”

Book 2, Chapter 8

- 20 “But let’s look at Hercules himself. Pain was breaking him down just as he was seeking immortality through death itself. What cries he lets out in Sophocles’ *Women of Trachis*! Deianira had put a shirt on him soaked in the Centaur’s blood, and it had stuck to his flesh. He says: “So much that’s painful to tell, so hard to endure, “I’ve struggled through and borne in body and mind! “Neither Juno’s unrelenting terror “Nor bitter Eurystheus brought me as much suffering “As this one mad woman, Oeneus’ daughter. “She trapped me, unaware, in a maddening garment. “It clings to my side, biting and tearing my flesh, “Crushing me hard and draining the breath from my lungs. “Already it’s sucked away all my blood and left me pale. “My body has wasted away, destroyed by this horrible disaster. “Caught in this woven plague, I’m being killed. “No enemy’s right hand dealt my body these blows, “Nor the mass of Giants born from Earth, “Nor the Centaur’s charging double form, “Nor any force of Greeks, nor any savage foreign cruelty, “Nor the fierce people driven to the farthest lands. “I traveled through them all and rooted out their savagery. “But now a woman’s hand, a woman’s, kills a man.”

Book 2, Chapter 9

- “My son, show your father you truly deserve that name.
“Don’t let love for your mother outweigh me as I die.
“Drag her away and bring her here in your dutiful hands.
“Then I’ll see whether you care more for me or her.
- 21 “Come, son, take courage! Shed tears for your father’s ruin; “Feel pity; nations will mourn the misery that’s ours. “Ah, my mouth is making a girl’s sobbing sounds, “Though nobody ever saw me groaning under any trouble! “Courage

has gone soft, collapsed, and died. “Come closer, son, stay by me; pity what you see: “Your father’s mangled body, with its flesh torn out! “Everyone, look! And you who fathered the gods, “Please strike me with the flashing force of lightning! “Now, now these whirlwinds of torment twist through me; “Now the heat spreads. Hands that used to conquer,

- 22 “My chest, my back, the bulging muscles in my arms! “Didn’t your pressure make the lion of Nemea “Snarl as it breathed its last heavy breath? “Wasn’t it this right hand that killed the foul Hydra and quieted Lerna? “Wasn’t it this hand that broke the two-bodied troop? “That brought down the destructive creature of Erymanthus? “That pulled from the darkness of Tartarus “The dog with three heads, Hydra’s offspring, and led it out? “That killed the dragon wound in coil after coil, “Its gaze fixed on guarding the tree that grew gold? “My conquering hand has gone through many other trials, “And nobody has taken spoils from my achievements.”

Book 2, Chapter 10

“Can we disregard pain when we see Hercules himself taking it so badly?

- 23 “Let Aeschylus come forward. He wasn’t just a poet but a Pythagorean too, according to what we’ve been told. How does his Prometheus bear the pain he’s given for that theft on Lemnos, “From which fire is said to have secretly reached mortals, “Shared out? Clever Prometheus “Stole it, they say, by a trick, and paid Jupiter “For it with the final punishment fate imposed.’ “Nailed to the Caucasus and paying that penalty, he says this: “Children of Titans, sharing my blood, “Born from Heaven, look at me tied and bound “To jagged rocks, like a ship on a roaring sea “Moored by frightened sailors afraid of the night. “Jupiter, Saturn’s son, has pinned me here like this, “And Jupiter’s power enlisted Mulciber’s hands. “He drove these wedges in with his brutal workmanship “And smashed through my limbs. Pierced through by his skill, “I live in misery in this fortress of the Furies.

- 24 “Now, every third accursed day, “Jupiter’s servant swoops grimly down, tearing with hooked claws, “And rips me apart for its savage meal. “Then, stuffed full with my rich liver, satisfied to the limit, “It lets out an enormous shriek and flies high away, “Brushing my blood with its feathered tail. “But when the eaten liver has swollen and grown back, “It eagerly returns to that dreadful feeding. “So I feed this guardian of my grim torture, “Which ravages me alive with never-ending misery. “As you can see, I’m held tight by Jupiter’s chains “And can’t keep this terrible bird away from my chest.
- 25 “So, all alone, I face these agonizing torments, “Longing for death and searching for an end to suffering. “But Jupiter’s power drives me far away from death, “And this age-old, grief-filled disaster, “Piled up through dreadful ages, is fastened to my body. “Melted drops fall from it in the sun’s heat “And drip continually onto the rocks of the Caucasus.’ “We can hardly avoid calling someone in that condition miserable. And if he’s miserable, then surely pain is bad.”

Book 2, Chapter 11

- 26 “So far you’re arguing my side. But I’ll look at that in a moment. Meanwhile, where do those verses come from? I don’t recognize them.”
- “By Hercules, I’ll tell you. You’re right to ask. You see how much spare time I have?”
- “What of it?”
- “When you were in Athens, you often went to the philosophers’ lectures, I suppose.”
- “Yes, and I really enjoyed them.”
- “So you noticed that they mixed verse into their talks, even though no one at that time was particularly rich in expression.”
- “Dionysius the Stoic certainly used a lot of it.”

“Quite right. But he used it as if he were dictating a lesson, with no selection and no grace. Philo, though, selected poetry that suited the subject and brought it in where it belonged. So, since I developed a taste for this kind of speaking exercise for old age, I’ve been making eager use of our own poets. But whenever they fell short—well, I’ve translated a lot from the Greeks, so that Latin speech wouldn’t lack any embellishment in discussions of this kind.

“But do you see what harm poets do?

- 27 “They bring on the bravest men and show them weeping. They soften our minds. And they’re so delightful that we don’t just read them, we learn them by heart. Add poets to poor training at home and a sheltered, pampered life, and they cut every sinew of courage. So Plato is right to throw them out of the state he imagined while he was searching for the best character and the best form of government. But we, educated by Greece of course, read and memorize these works from childhood. We think this is a broad education and learning.”

Book 2, Chapter 12

“But why are we getting angry with poets?

- 28 “We even find philosophers, supposedly our teachers in goodness, identifying pain as the worst thing of all. You said you thought so yourself just now, young man. But I only had to ask, ‘Worse than disgrace, too?’ and that one word shifted your position. Try putting the question to Epicurus. Even a moderate amount of pain, he’ll answer, is worse than the deepest disgrace. Disgrace has no badness of its own: only the pain that might follow makes it bad. Well, what pain does Epicurus get from this very assertion that pain is the worst thing? No philosopher could say anything more disgraceful, as far as I’m concerned. Your answer that disgrace seems worse to you than pain was therefore enough for me. Keep that conviction, and you’ll see what resistance to pain is called for. Strengthening the mind to endure matters more than debating whether pain is bad.

“The Stoics work out little arguments to prove that it isn’t bad.

- 29 “You’d think we were struggling with terminology rather than reality! Zeno, why this trickery? When you refuse to call a thing bad that I find terrifying, you draw me in. I want to learn how what’s utterly miserable in my eyes can fail even to be bad. His answer is, ‘Only shameful, vicious conduct is bad.’ Back to nonsense! My trouble is still there; you haven’t lifted it. I already know pain isn’t wickedness, so give up that lesson. What I need you to teach me is that having pain or not having it makes no difference. He says, ‘It never makes any difference to happiness, which rests entirely on virtue. All the same, pain is to be turned down.’ Why is that? ‘It’s rough, unnatural, hard to put up with, distressing, severe.’”

Book 2, Chapter 13

- 30 “What a rich vocabulary! You can say in so many ways what we all call bad with one word. When you call pain harsh, against nature, and barely possible to bear or endure, you’re defining it for me, not taking it away. And you’re not lying. But you shouldn’t boast in words and give in when you face the thing itself. ‘Provided that nothing is good except what’s morally right, and nothing bad except what’s shameful—’ That’s a wish, not a lesson. This would be better and truer: everything nature rejects counts as bad, and everything it welcomes counts as good. Accept that and drop the battle over words. Even then, what these people rightly value—what we call morally right, correct, and fitting, and sometimes include under the name of virtue—will stand so far above everything else that the supposed goods of body and fortune will look tiny and trivial. And no bad thing, not even all of them piled together in one place, will compare with the badness of shameful conduct.

31 “So if shameful conduct is worse than pain, as you agreed at the start, pain really amounts to nothing. As long as you think it’s shameful and unworthy of a man to groan, howl, weep, break down, and be crippled by pain, and as long as moral goodness, dignity, and honor stay before you, you’ll keep yourself in check by looking to them. Pain will certainly give way to courage and weaken as you resolve to bear it.

“Either virtue doesn’t exist, or all pain must be treated as beneath our concern. Do you want practical wisdom to exist? Without it, no virtue can even be understood. Well, will it let you do something that achieves nothing and wastes your effort? Will self-control let you act without restraint in anything? Can someone practice justice while the force of pain makes him reveal what’s been entrusted to him, betray his associates, and abandon many of his duties? And what answer will you give courage and its companions—greatness of spirit, firmness, endurance, and disregard for human troubles?

32 “Will you hear people say, ‘What a brave man!’ when you’re crushed, lying on the ground, and crying in a pitiful voice? No one would even call you a man in that state. So either you must throw away courage, or bury pain.”

Book 2, Chapter 14

“Surely you know that if you lose a piece of your Corinthian bronze, the rest of your furnishings can still be safe. But if you lose one virtue—though virtue can’t actually be lost; rather, if you admit you don’t have one—you won’t have any of them.

33 “So can you call that Philoctetes brave, great in spirit, enduring, firm, or above human troubles? I’d rather move the example away from you. He certainly isn’t brave as he lies “In a damp shelter, “Which echoes with howling, complaints, groans, and roars, “And, though speechless, sends back his pitiful cries.’ ‘I’m not denying that pain is pain. Why else would we need courage? I am saying that endurance overcomes it, if there is such a thing as endurance. If there isn’t,

why do we glorify philosophy, or boast of its name? Pain pricks you. All right, let it stab you. If you're unarmed, offer your throat. But if you're covered in Vulcan's armor—that is, courage—stand your ground. If you don't, courage, the guardian of your dignity, will leave you and abandon you.

- ³⁴ “Cretan laws put young people through hardship: hunting and running, hunger and thirst, cold and heat. Whether Jupiter made those laws or Minos did, they certainly had Jupiter's approval, according to the poets. Lycurgus' laws provide the same training. At the Spartan altar boys take a whipping that makes ‘blood pour from deep in their bodies.’ On my visit there I heard that it sometimes even kills them. Yet not a single one has ever shouted, or so much as groaned. Are grown men incapable of what boys manage? Can habit accomplish this, and reason fail to do it?”

Book 2, Chapter 15

- ³⁵ “Effort and pain aren't quite the same. Close neighbors, yes, but there is a distinction. By effort I mean doing a fairly demanding job or task, mentally or physically. Pain, on the other hand, is a rough bodily disturbance that our senses find unwelcome. Greek has a bigger vocabulary than Latin, yet the Greeks give these two things just one name. Their term for people who work hard therefore means ‘keen on pain’—actually, ‘in love with pain.’ Our term, ‘hardworking,’ is more appropriate. To work isn't the same as to hurt. Greece, sometimes you're short of words, for all your claims always to have plenty! Again, hurting is one thing and working is another. When the surgeon cut Gaius Marius' varicose veins, he hurt. Leading a column through intense heat was work. There is a resemblance, though: someone accustomed to demanding work finds it easier to withstand pain.

- 36 “That’s why the people who shaped the constitutions of Greece wanted young men’s bodies strengthened through hard work. The Spartans extended this to women too. In other cities, women are brought up in the greatest luxury, ‘hidden in the shade of walls.’ But the Spartans wanted nothing of that kind “Among the girls of Sparta, “Who care more for the training ground, the Eurotas, sun, dust, work, “And military service than for foreign women’s fertility.’ “So pain sometimes comes into these strenuous exercises too. They’re shoved, hit, thrown down, and fall. The effort itself forms a kind of callus against pain.”

Book 2, Chapter 16

- 37 “Now take military service. I mean ours, not the Spartans’. Their battle line advances to a beat and a flute, and no encouragement is given except in anapestic verse. First, you see where our armies get their name: from exercise. Then think of the work involved in marching. They carry food for more than half a month. They carry anything they want for their own use. They carry stakes for the camp wall. Our soldiers don’t count shield, sword, and helmet as part of the load any more than their shoulders, arms, and hands. They say weapons are a soldier’s limbs. And they carry them so conveniently that, when needed, they can throw down their loads and fight, using their weapons as freely as their limbs. And what about the legions’ drills? What work goes into all that running, charging, and shouting! This is where the spirit comes from that makes them ready for wounds in battle. Bring in an untrained soldier with just as much spirit:
- 38 “He’ll look like a woman. Why is there such an enormous difference between a new army and a veteran one, as we’ve seen for ourselves? The recruits are usually at a better age. But practice teaches men to put up with effort and disregard wounds. We often see wounded men carried out of battle. The raw, untrained man gives the most shameful cries at even a slight blow. But the trained veteran,

braver for that very reason, simply asks for a doctor to bandage him: “Oh, Patroclus,” he says, “I come to you for help and your hands. “‘I beg you, before I meet the grim death an enemy’s hand has sent, “[...] “And there’s no way at all to stop the flowing blood, “If death can somehow be better kept away by your skill.’ “The wounded fill the porches of Asclepius’ sons; “There’s no way in. —’ “Yes, this is certainly Eurypylus. What a well-trained man!”

Book 2, Chapter 17

³⁹ “And no less well-trained, too. With all this grief going on, notice how little self-pity there is in his answer. He even gives a reason why he ought to bear it calmly: “Anyone who plans another’s death “Must know death’s planned for him, so he’ll share the same destruction.’ “Patroclus will take him away, I suppose, to lay him on a bed and bandage his wound. He would, if he were human! But I’ve never seen anyone less so. He asks what happened: “Tell me, tell me how the Greeks are holding up in battle.—’ “Words can’t express as much as the events themselves contain “Of hardship.’ “Then be quiet and bandage the wound! Even if Eurypylus could stand it, Aesopus couldn’t: “When Hector’s good fortune turned our fierce battle line back [...]’ “And he explains the rest, in pain. That’s how unrestrained a brave man’s desire for military glory is. So a veteran soldier can do this, but a learned, wise man can’t?

⁴⁰ “A wise, educated man can certainly do it, and do it far better. But I’m still dealing with what repeated training makes familiar, not yet with wisdom and reason. An old woman will often do without food for two days or three. Deny an athlete his meals for a single day, and there’ll be cries to Jupiter, Olympian Jupiter himself—the god he’s training to compete for! He’ll yell that he can’t take it. Such is the power of what we’re used to. A hunter stays up all night on snowy mountains. People in India submit to burning. Fighters battered by boxing gloves give not even a groan.

⁴¹ “But why talk about them? To them, victory at the Olympics is like a consulship in the old days. Look at gladiators, men who are either ruined or foreigners. What blows they bear! How those who’ve been well trained would rather take a blow than avoid it in a shameful way! How often it’s clear that there’s nothing they’d rather do than satisfy their owner or the crowd! Even when they’re worn out with wounds, they send messengers to their owners to ask what they want. If they’ve done enough to satisfy them, they’re willing to lie down for death. What even moderately good gladiator has ever groaned or changed his expression? Has any behaved shamefully, not just while standing but even when lying down? After lying down and being told to receive the blade, has any drawn back his neck? That’s how much training, preparation, and habit can do. So ‘a Samnite, a filthy man, worthy of that life and station’ can do this, but will a man born for glory have some part of his mind so soft that he can’t strengthen it through preparation and reason? Some people think watching gladiators is cruel and inhuman. Perhaps it is, as it’s done now. But when guilty men fought to the death, there may have been many stronger lessons against pain and death for the ears, but there couldn’t have been a stronger one for the eyes.”

Book 2, Chapter 18

⁴² “I’ve talked about training, habit, and preparation. Now, if you please, let’s look at reason, unless you want to add anything.”

“Interrupt you? I wouldn’t even want to do that. Your argument is leading me so strongly to believe you.”

“Let the Stoics decide whether being in pain is bad or not. They want to prove that pain isn’t bad with twisted little arguments and tiny deductions that never reach our senses. Whatever pain may be, I don’t think it’s as great as it appears. I say people are more violently disturbed by a false picture and appearance of it, and that all pain can be borne.

“So where should I start? Shall I briefly go back over what I just said, to help the argument move further forward?

43 “Everyone agrees on this, educated and uneducated alike: bearing pain patiently is a mark of men who are brave, great in spirit, enduring, and able to rise above human troubles. No one has ever thought a man who bears it that way doesn’t deserve praise. So isn’t it shameful to dread pain as it approaches or fail to bear it when it’s here, when endurance is both expected from the brave and praised when it happens? Now consider this. We call all the mind’s good dispositions virtues. But perhaps that wasn’t originally the name for all of them. Perhaps they all got their name from the one that stood above the rest. The word ‘virtue’ comes from the word for a man. And a man’s most distinctive quality is courage. Its two chief tasks are to disregard death and pain. So we must practice these if we want to possess virtue—or rather, if we want to be men, since virtue borrowed its name from men.

“You may ask how. And rightly so: philosophy claims to provide that sort of treatment.”

Book 2, Chapter 19

44 “Now Epicurus turns up. Far from a bad man, he’s a thoroughly good one, but the advice he gives goes only as far as his understanding. ‘Ignore pain,’ he tells us. Who says so? Surely not the man who ranks it worst of all? Not very consistent. Still, let’s hear him out. ‘The most intense pain has to last a short time.’ ‘Please go over that for me again!’ I don’t really understand either ‘most intense’ or ‘short.’ ‘Most intense: nothing can exceed it. Short: nothing can last less time. The scale of pain doesn’t matter to me, because its brief duration releases me almost before it comes.’ What if someone hurts as much as Philoctetes? ‘That’s certainly very intense, I’d say, but not the most intense pain

possible. His foot is the only part that hurts. The eyes could hurt too, and the head, the sides, the lungs, every part. He's nowhere near the most intense pain. That means,' he says, 'that lasting pain gives more delight than trouble.'

- 45 “Now I can't say such a great man has no sense at all, but I think he's making fun of us. I say the greatest pain isn't necessarily brief. And I call it the greatest even if another pain is ten atoms greater. I could name many good men who've been tortured for years by extreme pain from gout. But this clever man never sets a limit for either intensity or duration, so that I can know what he means by the greatest pain or a brief time. So let's leave him aside. He really says nothing at all. Let's force him to admit that we shouldn't look for remedies for pain from someone who's called pain the worst of all bad things, however plucky he may be himself in facing his stomach cramps and difficulty urinating. So we must look elsewhere for treatment. If we're asking where it's most consistent to look, we should chiefly turn to those who think moral goodness is the greatest good and shameful conduct the worst thing. You certainly won't dare groan or toss about in their presence.”

Book 2, Chapter 20

- 46 “Through these men Virtue herself addresses you: ‘You’ve watched Spartan boys, young men competing at Olympia, foreigners fighting in the arena. They take terrible blows without a sound. If pain should happen to stab at you, are you going to scream like a woman instead of enduring steadily and quietly?’ ‘I can’t; nature won’t let me.’ So you say. Boys endure for fame; others endure out of embarrassment, and many out of fear. After so many people endure it in so many places, are we still afraid nature might not permit it? She does permit it, and more than that, she requires it. Moral goodness, praise, dignity, honor—she has nothing better and wants nothing more. I’m using several labels for a single thing, to express it as fully as I can. Here’s my meaning: the very best thing a human being can have is something worth choosing for its own sake,

something springing from virtue or contained within virtue, deserving praise on its own account. Rather than deny that this is the highest good, I'd say it was the only one. Reverse what I've said about moral goodness, and you have the position of shameful conduct. Nothing is more disgusting, more worth rejecting, less worthy of a human being.

- ⁴⁷ “If you’re convinced of that—and at the start you did say you thought disgrace was worse than pain—all that’s left is to command yourself. Though I don’t quite know how that expression works. As if there were two of us, one to command and one to obey!”

Book 2, Chapter 21

“Still, the expression isn’t foolish. The mind is divided into two parts. One shares in reason, the other doesn’t. So when we’re told to command ourselves, we’re being told to have reason restrain our rash impulses. Almost everyone’s mind naturally has something soft, low, weak, and in a way spineless and sluggish in it. If that were all there was, nothing would be uglier than a human being. But reason is there too, the mistress and queen of everything. When it strives by its own strength and advances far enough, it becomes complete virtue. A man’s job is to make sure it commands the part of the mind that should obey. ‘How?’ you’ll ask.

- ⁴⁸ “Like a master commanding a slave, a general a soldier, or a parent a son. If that part of the mind I’ve called soft behaves disgracefully and gives itself up to womanish weeping and tears, let friends and relatives bind and restrain it by watching over it. We often see shame break down people whom no reasoning could overcome. So we should treat these people almost like slaves, with chains and confinement. Those who are firmer, but still not fully strong, must be reminded of their duty, like good soldiers called back to preserve their dignity.

In *The Washing*, that wisest man in Greece doesn't lament too much when he's wounded—or rather, he does so in moderation. 'Step by step,' he says, "'Go, with slow and steady effort, "So that jolting doesn't bring on worse "Pain.'

49 "Pacuvius does this better than Sophocles: in Sophocles, Ulysses laments his wound very pitifully. Yet even as he groans a little here, the very people carrying the wounded man keep his standing in mind and don't hesitate to say: "'You too, Ulysses, though we see "'You've been badly struck, are almost too "'Soft in spirit, you who've been used "'To spending your life in arms [...]' "The sensible poet understands that the habit of bearing pain is a teacher we shouldn't disregard.

50 "And even in great pain, Ulysses isn't unrestrained: "'Hold me up, hold me! The sore is crushing me. "'Uncover me! Oh, poor me, I'm in agony.' "He begins to slip, then stops at once: "'Cover me, leave me now, now! "'Let me go! Your touching and shaking "'Are making this savage pain worse.' "Do you see? He's fallen silent, not because his bodily pain has been soothed, but because his mental pain has been disciplined. So at the end of *The Washing* he even rebukes others, and does it as he's dying: "'It's right to complain of bad fortune, not to weep over it. "'That's a man's duty; tears belong to a woman's nature.'"

Book 2, Chapter 22

51 "His mind's weaker side took reason's orders as a soldier with a sense of shame takes orders from a stern commander. Now consider perfect wisdom. We ourselves have never met anyone who has it, but philosophers describe the sort of person he would be, if he ever existed. He—or the thoroughly complete, fully developed reason he possesses—will rule the mind's lower side as a just father rules well-behaved sons. A gesture will be enough to get his way, with no strain

or distress. He'll get to his feet, stir himself into action, prepare and arm himself against pain as though facing an enemy. His weapons? Bracing himself, standing firm, talking inwardly to himself:

52 “Nothing disgraceful, nothing feeble, nothing unmanly!’ His mind should keep fine examples in view. He can picture Zeno from Elea, ready to suffer anything rather than name his fellow plotters against the tyranny. He should think about Democritus’ follower Anaxarchus, who fell into King Timocreon’s hands on Cyprus and neither begged to escape any torture nor refused it. There was Callanus too, an Indian born at the Caucasus’ foot, without education, a foreigner, who voluntarily let himself be burned while still alive. Yet let a foot or a tooth hurt us, and we can’t take it. The trouble is a flimsy, womanish belief, no different in matters of pleasure from matters of pain. We give in to it, dissolve, and flow away in softness, until we can’t even take the sting of a bee quietly.

53 “But Gaius Marius was different. He was a country man, but very much a man. As I said earlier, when the cutting began, he first forbade them to tie him down. It’s said no one before Marius had been operated on without being tied. Why did others do it afterward, then? His example had power. So do you see that the badness comes from belief, not nature? Even so, Marius himself showed that the bite of pain was sharp: he didn’t offer the other leg. So he both bore pain like a man and, being human, refused to bear more without a compelling reason.

“The whole point, then, is to command yourself. I’ve shown what kind of command I mean. Thinking about what’s most worthy of endurance, courage, and greatness of spirit doesn’t just keep the mind in check. Somehow it also makes the pain itself milder.”

Book 2, Chapter 23

- 54 “Here’s what happens in battle. A cowardly, frightened soldier sees the enemy, throws down his shield, and runs as fast as he can. Because of that, he sometimes dies without even being wounded, while nothing like that happens to the man who stands his ground. In the same way, people who can’t bear the sight of pain throw themselves down and lie there crushed and lifeless. But those who stand up to it very often come away the winners. The mind has certain similarities to the body. Loads are easier to carry when the body is braced; when it’s slack, they crush it. In just the same way, the mind’s tension pushes back against all the pressure of heavy weights.
- 55 “When it goes slack, it’s pressed down so hard that it can’t raise itself. If we look at the truth, we need to put mental effort into carrying out every duty. That effort alone acts as a kind of guard over duty. But we must be especially careful about this in pain. We mustn’t do anything low, frightened, cowardly, slavish, or womanish. Above all, we must refuse and reject those screams of Philoctetes. A man may groan sometimes, and rarely at that. But not even a woman should howl in grief. That’s surely the ‘wailing’ that the Twelve Tables banned at funerals.
- 56 “Really, even a groan never comes from a brave and wise man, unless perhaps he uses it to pull himself together and stand firm. Think of a runner on the track, shouting at full volume. Athletes use the same technique during practice. A boxer actually groans while throwing a punch, as he swings his weighted glove at the other man. That isn’t an expression of pain or a sign he’s giving up. Forcing the voice out braces every part of the body, and the punch hits with greater force.”

Book 2, Chapter 24

“And what about people who want to shout louder? Is it enough for them to tense their sides, throats, and tongues, the parts we see producing and releasing the voice? They use their whole body to force their voice out—‘with every hoof,’ as the saying goes.

57 “By Hercules, I saw Marcus Antonius touch the ground with his knee as he spoke forcefully in his own defense under the Varian law. Stone-throwing catapults and other missile engines shoot harder the more strongly they’re stretched and drawn back. In the same way, a voice, a run, or a blow has more force the more effort goes into launching it. Since this effort is so powerful, we’ll use groaning if it helps strengthen the mind in pain. But if the groan is a lament, weak, low, and tearful, I’d hardly call someone who gives way to it a man. Even if groaning like that brought some relief, we’d still have to ask what suits a brave, spirited man. But when it doesn’t lessen the pain at all, why do we choose to disgrace ourselves for nothing? What could be more shameful for a man than womanish weeping?

58 “And this rule about pain applies more widely. We have to resist everything, not just pain, with the same mental effort. Anger flares up, desire is stirred: we must retreat to the same fortress and take up the same weapons. But since we’re talking about pain, let’s leave those aside.

“So, to bear pain calmly and quietly, it helps a great deal to think with your whole heart, as people say, about how morally right that is. As I said before—and it needs to be said often—nature gives us an intense interest in and desire for moral goodness. Once we catch a glimpse of what you might call its light, there’s nothing we aren’t ready to bear and endure to gain it. This rush and drive of the mind toward true praise and moral goodness is what makes men face those dangers in battle. Brave men don’t feel their wounds in combat—or they do, but would rather die than be moved down even one step in dignity.

- 59 “The Decii saw the enemies’ flashing swords as they charged into their battle line. The nobility and glory of their death took away all fear of wounds. Do you think Epaminondas groaned when he felt his life pouring out with his blood? He was leaving his country in command of the Spartans, though he’d found it subject to them. These are the comforts, the soothing remedies for the worst pain.”

Book 2, Chapter 25

- 60 “‘What about when there’s peace?’ you’ll ask. ‘What about at home, in bed?’ That brings me back to the philosophers, who aren’t often on the battlefield. Take Dionysius from Heraclea, a rather unreliable fellow. He learned courage from Zeno; pain then undid the teaching. Suffering from kidney trouble, he howled and shouted that his own earlier ideas about pain were wrong. His fellow pupil Cleanthes asked what argument had shifted his view. Dionysius replied, ‘Suppose I’d devoted only a little time to philosophy and couldn’t stand pain even then: that would prove well enough that pain was bad. In fact I’ve given philosophy a great many years, and still can’t stand it. Therefore pain is bad.’ Cleanthes, they say, stamped on the ground and spoke a line from The Epigoni: “‘Amphiaraus, buried under the earth, do you hear this?’ “He was referring to Zeno, distressed that Dionysius was proving unworthy of him.
- 61 “My friend Posidonius wasn’t like that. I’ve often seen him myself, and I’ll tell you a story Pompey used to tell. On his way back from Syria, Pompey arrived at Rhodes and wanted to hear Posidonius speak. Then he heard that Posidonius was very ill, suffering terribly in his joints. Even so, he wanted to visit this very famous philosopher. When he saw him, greeted him, and paid him respectful compliments, he said how sorry he was that he couldn’t hear him speak. Posidonius said, ‘But you can. I won’t let bodily pain mean that such a great man has come to me for nothing.’ Pompey said that, lying there, Posidonius

discussed with great force and fullness this very point: nothing is good except what's morally right. And as if flaming torches of pain were being put to him, he kept saying:"

Book 2, Chapter 26

- ⁶² “Pain, you achieve nothing! Bother me as much as you like: I’ll never acknowledge you as bad.’ Indeed, give any hardship fame and distinction, and it at once becomes something people can bear. Look at the places where the so-called athletic games command great respect: competitors there won’t avoid any pain. Where riding and hunting are praised, those in pursuit of that praise won’t run from pain either. Need I mention our electioneering and hunger for office? The men who once gathered offices vote by vote would have raced through any fire for them. That’s why Africanus was forever reading Xenophon, the follower of Socrates. One observation he especially admired was that a commander and a soldier don’t find the same work equally taxing. The distinction attached to command itself eases the commander’s work.
- ⁶³ “Still, what happens is that the crowd of foolish people responds to an impression of moral goodness, since they can’t see goodness itself. So they’re moved by reputation and the crowd’s judgment. They think whatever most people praise is morally right. But even if you’re in the public eye, I don’t want you to stand by the public’s judgment or think what it thinks is the finest thing. You must use your own judgment. If you approve of what’s right and can satisfy yourself, then you’ll have overcome not just yourself, as I was urging a little while ago, but everyone and everything.
- ⁶⁴ “So put this before yourself: greatness of spirit, a lifting of the spirit to the highest possible level, so to speak, stands out most in disregarding pain and looking down on it. It’s the finest thing of all. And it’s finer still if it’s away from the crowd, not hunting for applause but taking pleasure in itself. In fact, I find

everything done without self-promotion and without the public as a witness more praiseworthy. Not because we should avoid the public—all good deeds want to stand in the light. Even so, virtue has no greater audience than its own conscience.”

Book 2, Chapter 27

- ⁶⁵ “Above all, let’s practice making our endurance of pain consistent in every kind of situation. I’ve often said we must strengthen it through mental effort. Many people have bravely accepted and borne wounds because they wanted victory or glory, or even wanted to preserve their rights and freedom. But once they stop making that effort, they can’t bear the pain of illness. They didn’t bear the pain that came so easily to them through reason or wisdom, but through eagerness and a desire for glory. So some wild and savage peoples can fight fiercely with swords but can’t be manly when they’re sick. Greeks aren’t particularly spirited, but they’re sensible enough by human standards. They can’t face an enemy, yet they bear illness patiently and reasonably. The Cimbri and Celtiberians delight in battle but weep in sickness. Nothing can be consistent unless it starts from a settled principle.
- ⁶⁶ “But when you see people led by eagerness or belief pursuing and gaining their aim without being broken by pain, you should draw this conclusion. Either pain isn’t bad, or, even if we choose to call everything harsh and unwelcome to nature bad, it’s still so small that virtue overwhelms it and leaves no trace of it to be seen. Please think about these things day and night. This reasoning will spread further and cover considerably more ground than the single subject of pain. If everything we do aims at avoiding shameful conduct and gaining moral goodness, we’ll be able to disregard not just the stings of pain but even fortune’s thunderbolts. Especially since we have that refuge ready from yesterday’s discussion.

⁶⁷ “Suppose a man is sailing and pirates are chasing him. A god says to him, ‘Throw yourself out of the ship. There’s someone ready to catch you. A dolphin, as with Arion of Methymna, or those horses Neptune gave Pelops, which are said to have raced over the waves with a chariot held above them, will catch you and carry you wherever you want.’ He’d put all his fear aside. In the same way, when harsh and hateful pains press us, if they’re so great that they can’t be borne, you see where we can find refuge.

“That’s more or less what I thought should be said on this occasion. But perhaps you still hold your opinion.”

“Not at all. I hope that in two days I’ve been freed from fear of the two things I was most afraid of.”

“Then tomorrow we’ll speak by the water clock. That’s what we agreed, and I see you can’t be let off that.”

“Exactly. And that exercise before noon, this one at the same time as today.”

“We’ll do that, and accommodate your excellent interests.”

Book 3, Chapter 1

¹ Brutus, what explanation can I give for this? We consist of mind and body. People have developed an art for caring for and protecting the body, and its benefits have earned it recognition as an invention of the immortal gods. But before a treatment for the mind was discovered, people didn’t feel the same need for it. After it became known, they didn’t give it the same attention. Not as many people welcome or approve of it; more actually distrust and dislike it. Is that because we use our minds to judge bodily discomfort and pain, but don’t feel mental illness in our bodies? That leaves the mind judging itself just when the instrument it uses to judge is sick.

² If nature had enabled us to see her for ourselves and understand her fully, she would have been the best possible guide through life. Nobody would then have needed reasoned teaching. But what we actually receive from her is a few little

sparks. Corrupted very quickly by bad habits and beliefs, we extinguish them; not a trace of nature's light is left. Virtue's seeds are there in us from birth. Given the chance to develop, they would allow nature herself to bring us to happiness. Instead, from the time we come into the world and someone picks us up, we live amid every kind of wickedness and the most completely distorted opinions. Error seems almost to reach us through the milk we drink from our nurse. Then they return us to our parents and entrust us to teachers. We soak up error in so many forms that falsehood defeats truth, and entrenched beliefs defeat nature herself.

Book 3, Chapter 2

- ³ Poets add their influence as well. With their impressive appearance of learning and wisdom, they gain listeners and readers; people learn them by heart, and their words sink far into the mind. Next comes the public, playing the part of the greatest teacher of all. The whole crowd everywhere agrees in encouraging faults. This thoroughly corrupts our beliefs and turns us away from nature. We decide that the people who best understood her power were those who put office, command, and fame with the public above everything else a person could want or possess. It's the best among us who are drawn toward fame. They want the real moral goodness that nature pursues above all else. Yet their search leads them into complete emptiness: instead of a clearly formed image of virtue, they follow a mere outline of fame. True fame does have substance and a definite shape; it isn't an outline. When good people agree in praising outstanding virtue, when sound judges speak without corruption, that is fame. Virtue calls it forth as a sound calls forth its echo. Good people needn't turn it down, since it usually goes together with doing right.
- ⁴ But popular acclaim pretends to copy it. Rash and thoughtless, and usually busy praising wrongdoing and vice, it counterfeits moral goodness and ruins its beauty and appearance. Blinded by this, people have wanted things that were

indeed splendid, without knowing where to find them or what they were like. Some have utterly destroyed their own states; others have brought about their own deaths. These people at least were aiming at the best things. Their mistake wasn't so much in their intention as in taking the wrong route. But what about people driven by greed for money or a craving for pleasure? Their minds are so disturbed that they're close to madness—as happens to everyone who lacks wisdom. Shouldn't they get treatment? Do mental illnesses do less harm than physical ones? Or can bodies be cured, while there is no medicine for minds?

Book 3, Chapter 3

- ⁵ In fact, illnesses of the mind are both more numerous and more destructive than illnesses of the body. Physical illnesses themselves distress us because they affect and trouble the mind. As Ennius says, “A sick mind is always going astray. It can't bear things or keep bearing them, and it never stops wanting.” To leave the others aside, what bodily illnesses could be worse than these two mental ones, distress and desire? And how can anyone prove that the mind can't heal itself? It was the mind that invented medicine for the body. Besides, the body itself and nature contribute a great deal to physical recovery. Not everyone who agrees to treatment actually gets well. But minds that want to be healed and obey the advice of wise people recover without any doubt.
- ⁶ Philosophy really does offer treatment for the mind. For bodily sickness we seek outside help; here that isn't necessary. Our task is to put every resource and all our strength into being able to heal ourselves. I think the Hortensius already says enough about philosophy in general, about the effort we should devote to pursuing and practicing it. Since then I've hardly paused in either writing or discussion about the greatest questions. In these books I've presented the conversations with my friends at Tusculum. Two earlier volumes covered death and pain; the conversation on the third day will furnish volume three.

- ⁷ The day was already well into the afternoon when we went down to our Academy. I asked someone there to propose a subject to argue about. Here's how it went:

Book 3, Chapter 4

"I think a wise person can experience distress."

"What about the other emotional disturbances too—fears, desires, fits of anger? Those are roughly the things the Greeks call *pathē*, 'affections.' I could call them 'illnesses.' That would translate the word directly, but it wouldn't fit our normal usage. The Greeks call pity, envy, excitement, and delight all illnesses: movements of the mind that don't obey reason. I think we're right to call these same movements of an agitated mind 'disturbances.' Calling them 'illnesses' isn't quite normal usage. Unless you think differently?"

"No, I agree with the way you put it."

- ⁸ "So you think a wise person can experience these things?"

"Absolutely."

"Then that much-advertised wisdom can't be worth very much, if it isn't much different from madness."

"What? Do you think every emotional upheaval is madness?"

"I'm not the only one. It's something I often find remarkable, but I understand that our ancestors thought the same, many centuries before Socrates, the originator of all this philosophy about life and conduct."

"How do you make that out?"

"Because the word *insania*, 'madness,' means that the mind is ailing and sick. In other words, it's a lack of health, a sick mind, that they called *insania*."

- ⁹ "Philosophers call all emotional disturbances illnesses, and they say that no foolish person is free of them. People who are ill aren't healthy. All unwise people's minds are ill. So all unwise people are mad. Our ancestors thought that

mental health consisted in a certain calmness and steadiness. When the mind lacked those things, they called it madness. A disturbed mind, like a disturbed body, couldn't be healthy."

Book 3, Chapter 5

- ¹⁰ "They were just as perceptive in naming a mental condition without the light of understanding *amentia* and also *dementia*—both words meaning a loss of mind. That tells us that the people who gave things these names thought the same as the Stoics, who carefully preserved what they'd learned from Socrates: everyone without wisdom is mentally unhealthy. A mind with an illness is no healthier than a body with an illness. As I just said, philosophers call these disturbed movements 'illnesses.' So wisdom is mental health, and lack of wisdom is a kind of poor mental health, which is madness, or loss of mind. The Latin words identify these things much better than the Greek ones.
- ¹¹ "There are plenty of other cases where we'll find this too; we can leave them for later and deal with what's before us. The very meaning of the word reveals the nature and character of our subject. To be mentally healthy must mean being free from any agitating movement like an illness; the opposite condition must therefore be called unhealthy. That makes our everyday Latin phrase 'out of control' especially good. We apply it to someone swept away by unbridled anger or desire. Indeed, anger comes under desire: we define it as wanting revenge. Such people are 'out of control' because understanding no longer controls them. Nature assigned it the rule of the entire mind. Where the Greek name *mania* comes from, I can't readily tell you. Still, we draw a clearer distinction within this condition than the Greeks. The broad madness associated with foolishness is one thing for us; raving insanity is another. They try to distinguish them, but lack a satisfactory word. For our raving insanity they say *melancholia*, 'black bile.' As if minds were only thrown off balance by black bile! Severe anger, fear, and grief often do it too. It's in this sense that we call

Athamas, Alcmaeon, Ajax, and Orestes raving mad. Anyone affected like that is barred by the Twelve Tables from controlling his property. Their wording says ‘if he is raving mad,’ not ‘if he is mad.’ Though foolishness lacks steadiness, or health, the lawgivers thought it could maintain an ordinary level of duty and the familiar practices of shared life. Raving insanity, they held, blinds the mind in every respect. Although that seems the worse condition, it can happen to someone wise, while the madness we’ve been discussing cannot. That belongs to a different inquiry. Back to the question we started with.”

Book 3, Chapter 6

- 12 “I think you said you believed a wise person could experience distress.”

“Yes, I do believe that.”

“That’s a humane belief. After all, we weren’t born out of flint. There’s something naturally tender and soft in our minds, and distress can shake it like a storm. Crantor, one of the most distinguished members of our Academy, wasn’t talking nonsense when he said, ‘I certainly don’t agree with people who heap praise on this supposed freedom from pain. It’s neither possible nor desirable. I hope I don’t get sick. But if I do, let me feel it, whether something is being cut or torn away from my body. You can’t get that total absence of pain without paying a high price: inhumanity in the mind and numbness in the body.’

- 13 “But let’s consider whether this way of talking just flatters our weakness and indulges our softness. Let’s be bold enough not just to cut off misery’s branches, but to pull out every fiber of its roots. Perhaps something will remain even then: foolishness is very deeply rooted. But only what’s unavoidable will remain. Be sure of this: unless the mind is healed—and that can’t happen without philosophy—there will be no end to misery. So now that we’ve begun, let’s hand ourselves over to philosophy for treatment. We’ll get well if we want to. In fact, I’ll go further. I’ll explain not just distress, though that will come first, but

every mental ‘disturbance,’ as I’ve called it, or ‘illness,’ as the Greeks prefer. First, if you agree, let’s follow the Stoics’ practice of tightening arguments into brief proofs. Then we’ll range more freely, in our usual way.”

Book 3, Chapter 7

- ¹⁴ “A courageous person is also confident. I use *fidens* for ‘confident,’ because bad usage has made *confidens* mean something blameworthy, though it comes from ‘being confident,’ which deserves praise. Someone who is confident certainly doesn’t become frightened: confidence is incompatible with fear. But anyone capable of distress is also capable of fear. We fear the approach and arrival of the very things whose presence distresses us. It follows that distress conflicts with courage. So it’s reasonable that anyone capable of distress is also capable of fear, and of having their spirit broken and brought low. Anyone capable of those things is also capable of submitting, and of admitting defeat when it comes. Anyone who accepts these possibilities must also accept cowardice and a lack of spirit. But these aren’t possible for a courageous person. So distress isn’t possible either. And no one is wise without being courageous. So a wise person won’t experience distress.
- ¹⁵ “Here’s another argument. Courage requires greatness of spirit; greatness of spirit requires being unconquerable. Being unconquerable in turn means treating human affairs as beneath you and looking down on them. You can’t look down on anything that has the power to distress you. A courageous man, therefore, never feels distress. Since wisdom always includes courage, the wise can’t experience distress. Think also of the eye: an upset eye isn’t in the right condition for its work. Any other part, or the body as a whole, fails to perform its task once its normal state is disrupted. An upset mind is similarly unfit for its task. What does a mind do? It makes good use of reason. The wise always have

their minds in the state that allows the very best use of reason, so their minds are never upset. Distress, however, is an upset of the mind. It must always be absent from someone wise.”

Book 3, Chapter 8

- 16 “There’s another reasonable argument, about a self-controlled person. The Greeks call such a person *sōphrōn*, and the virtue *sōphrosynē*. I generally call it ‘self-control’ or ‘moderation,’ and sometimes ‘restraint.’ But perhaps the virtue could rightly be called *frugalitas*, ‘sound character.’ The Greek word has a narrower meaning: they call people with sound character *chrēsimoī*, meaning merely ‘useful.’ Our word is broader. It includes all abstinence and all harmlessness. The Greeks have no ordinary word for harmlessness, though they could use *ablabeia*, ‘not causing harm,’ since harmlessness is a state of mind that hurts no one. Sound character also includes the other virtues. If it weren’t so important, and were confined within the narrow limits most people assign to it, Lucius Piso’s surname *Frugi* would never have been so highly praised.
- 17 “We don’t normally describe someone as having sound character if he abandoned his post out of fear, which is cowardice; or secretly failed to return a deposit out of greed, which is injustice; or mismanaged a job through rashness, which is foolishness. So sound character embraces the three virtues of courage, justice, and practical wisdom. Of course, that’s true of the virtues generally: they’re all linked and joined together. So let sound character itself be the remaining, fourth virtue. Its special job seems to be to control and calm the mind’s impulses to get things, and to maintain a balanced steadiness in everything, always resisting uncontrolled desire. The opposite fault is called *nequitia*, ‘worthlessness.’

- 18 “I think *frugalitas* comes from *frux*, ‘produce,’ the best thing the earth brings forth. *Nequitia* comes from the idea that there’s nothing—*nequicquam*—in a person like that. That may be a bit forced, but let’s try it; if there’s nothing in it, take it as a joke. That’s also why he’s called *nihili*, ‘a nobody.’ So someone with sound character—or, if you prefer, someone moderate and self-controlled—must be steady. A steady person is calm. A calm person is free of all disturbance, and therefore of distress too. Those qualities belong to a wise person. So distress will be absent from a wise person.”

Book 3, Chapter 9

“Dionysius of Heraclea makes a sensible argument about Achilles’ complaints in Homer. They run something like this, I think:

“My heart swells deep inside with bitter anger

“When I remember being stripped of honor and all praise.’

“Is a hand in good condition when it’s swollen? Is any other swollen, puffed-up part of the body free of trouble?

- 19 “So a mind that’s puffed up and swollen is in a bad condition too. But a wise person’s mind is always free of defects. It never swells or puffs up. That’s just the condition of an angry mind. So a wise person never gets angry. If they get angry, they also feel desire. An angry person characteristically wants to inflict as much pain as possible on whoever they think injured them. Anyone who wants that must be very pleased if they achieve it. That means taking pleasure in someone else’s suffering. Since a wise person can’t do that, a wise person can’t get angry either. But if a wise person could experience distress, they could also experience anger. Since they’re free of anger, they’ll be free of distress as well.
- 20 “If a wise person could fall into distress, they could also fall into pity and into envy. I didn’t say *invidia*, the word for being envied. We can properly form *invidentia* from *invidere*, ‘to envy,’ to avoid the ambiguity of *invidia*. The word comes from looking too intently at someone else’s good fortune, as in the

Melanippus: ‘Who envied my children’s flowering?’ The Latin may seem wrong, but Accius puts it admirably. Just as we say ‘look at the flowering,’ it’s more correct to say ‘envy the flowering’ with a direct object than an indirect one. Ordinary usage prevents us from doing it;

- ²¹ “the poet exercised his right and spoke more boldly.”

Book 3, Chapter 10

“So the same person is capable of both pity and envy. Anyone who feels pain at someone’s misfortunes also feels pain at someone’s successes. For example, Theophrastus mourns the death of his friend Callisthenes and is troubled by Alexander’s success. He says that Callisthenes encountered a man with the greatest power and good fortune, but no understanding of how to use success properly. Now pity is distress at someone else’s misfortunes, just as envy is distress at someone else’s good fortune. So anyone capable of pity is also capable of envy. But a wise person isn’t capable of envy, and therefore isn’t capable of pity either. If a wise person regularly felt distress, they would regularly feel pity too. So a wise person is free from distress.

- ²² “That’s how the Stoics state their arguments and draw their conclusions, in a rather cramped form. But at some point we need to speak more broadly and fully. Still, we should rely chiefly on the views of those whose reasoning and outlook are the bravest and, so to speak, most manly. Our friends the Peripatetics are unsurpassed in richness of expression, learning, and seriousness. But I don’t really approve of their moderate amounts of emotional disturbance or mental illness. Every bad thing, even a moderate one, is bad. Our aim is that a wise person should have none of it at all. A body isn’t healthy even if it’s only moderately sick. In the same way, this moderation in the mind isn’t health. Our countrymen got it exactly right, as they did with so much else, when they named trouble, anxiety, and anguish *aegritudo*, ‘sickness,’ because of their likeness to sick bodies.

- 23 “The Greeks use much the same word for every disturbance of the mind. Any confused mental movement they call *pathos*, meaning ‘illness.’ Our usage is better. Mental distress is very like a sick body. Uncontrolled desire isn’t like sickness, nor is excessive delight, that excited, jumping pleasure in the mind. Even fear isn’t very like an illness, though it’s closely related to distress. But distress, in the mind, has a name specifically connected with pain, just as sickness does in the body. So we need to explain the origin of this pain: the cause that produces distress in the mind, as a cause produces sickness in the body. Doctors believe that once they’ve found an illness’s cause, they’ve found its treatment. In the same way, once we find the cause of distress, we’ll find a way to treat it.”

Book 3, Chapter 11

- 24 “The whole cause, then, is in belief. That goes not just for distress, but for every other emotional disturbance too. There are four kinds, with more subdivisions. Every disturbance is a movement of the mind that either lacks reason, rejects reason, or disobeys reason. Such a movement is prompted by a belief about something good or bad, in two ways for each. That divides the four disturbances equally. Two come from a belief about something good. One is “excited pleasure, “meaning delight that rises beyond proper limits, based on the belief that some great good is present. The other is “desire, “which can also properly be called lust: an excessive reaching for some supposed great good, which doesn’t obey reason.
- 25 “So these two kinds, excited pleasure and uncontrolled desire, are stirred up by beliefs about good things. The other two, fear and distress, are stirred up by beliefs about bad things. Fear is the belief that something very bad is approaching, while “distress “is the belief that something very bad is present. More precisely, it’s a fresh belief about a bad thing of such a kind that being upset about it seems right. That means the person in pain believes they ought to feel pain.

Foolishness lets these disturbances loose in human life and spurs them on like Furies. We must resist them with every ounce of strength and every resource if we want to get through the life we've been given calmly and peacefully.

"But the others can wait. Let's drive out distress now, if we can. That's our goal, since you said you thought a wise person could experience it. I don't think so at all. It's a dreadful, miserable, hateful thing. We must make every effort to escape it—by sail and oar, so to speak."

Book 3, Chapter 12

- 26 "How would you describe this man? "'Tantalus his ancestor, Pelops his father, who once from his father-in-law "'King Oenomaus carried off Hippodamia as his bride—' "Jupiter is his great-grandfather, no less! Yet he's broken, utterly beaten down? "'Visitors, stay where you are,' he says, 'don't approach me, "'Lest contact with me, or my shadow, harm good people.' "'The force of such a crime has stuck to my body.' "Thyestes, someone else committed that terrible crime. Are you going to sentence yourself for it and deprive yourself of daylight? And look at that son of the Sun: wouldn't you say he's unfit for his own father's light? "'The eyes have drawn back; the body has shrunk and wasted. "'Streaming tears have worn his pale cheeks away. "'On his filthy face the beard bristles with dirt; "'Untrimmed, it darkens a chest made rough by grime.' "Aeetes, what a fool you are! You brought these troubles on yourself, over and above anything chance had brought. The disaster was already old, too, and your mind's swelling had gone down. I'll explain later that distress involves believing an evil is still fresh. Evidently it's your kingship you miss and mourn, not your daughter. You hated her, perhaps justly; what you wouldn't accept was doing without your throne. To waste away in mourning because you can no longer give orders to free people is shameful.

- ²⁷ “After the tyrant Dionysius was driven out of Syracuse, he taught boys at Corinth. That’s how incapable he was of doing without power. And what could be more shameless than Tarquin, waging war against people who wouldn’t put up with his arrogance? When neither the forces of Veii nor those of the Latins could put him back on the throne, he is said to have moved to Cumae, where old age and distress wore him out.”

Book 3, Chapter 13

“Is that really what you think can happen to the wise—being crushed by distress, or, in other words, misery? Misery goes with every disturbance of emotion; distress, though, is a torturer. Desire burns hot, overexcited delight is flighty, fear brings people low. With distress come worse things still: wasting away, anguish, self-torment, disfigurement. The mind is torn and eaten up until nothing remains. Freedom from misery is impossible unless we take distress off and cast it aside.

- ²⁸ “It’s clear that distress comes about when something appears to us in a way that makes a great evil seem present and pressing. Epicurus thinks a belief in something bad naturally produces distress. On his view, if anyone looks at some serious evil and thinks it has happened to them, they immediately feel distress. The Cyrenaics think distress isn’t caused by every evil, but by one that’s unexpected and unforeseen. That certainly adds a good deal to distress. Everything sudden seems harder to bear. That’s why these lines are rightly praised: “‘When I fathered them, I knew they’d die, and raised them for that prospect. “‘And when I sent them off to Troy to fight in Greece’s defense, “‘I knew I was sending them to a deadly war, not to a feast.’”

Book 3, Chapter 14

- ²⁹ “Thinking ahead about future troubles softens the arrival of things you saw coming long before. That’s why people praise what Theseus says in Euripides. We can put it into Latin, as we often do: “Because I remembered hearing this from a learned man, “I used to think over future miseries to myself: “A painful death, or the sad flight of exile, “Or some other weight of trouble I would always consider, “So that, if chance brought some terrible event, “Sudden worry wouldn’t tear me apart unprepared.’
- ³⁰ “When Theseus says he heard it from a learned man, Euripides is talking about himself. He’d studied under Anaxagoras, who reportedly said when told his son was dead, ‘I knew I’d fathered a mortal.’ Those words show that these things hurt people who haven’t thought about them beforehand. So there’s no doubt that everything we think bad is harder when unforeseen. That isn’t the only thing that creates the greatest distress. Still, forethought and mental preparation do a lot to reduce pain. So a human being should always have thought through every human possibility. Surely this is what that outstanding, godlike wisdom means: to have thoroughly grasped and examined human affairs, to be surprised at nothing when it happens, and never, before something happens, to think it can’t happen. “So everyone, just when things are going especially well, should be especially careful “To think through how they’ll handle painful hardship. “Coming home from abroad, a man should always consider dangers and losses, “A son’s wrongdoing, or his wife’s death, or a daughter’s illness: “These things happen to everyone, so none of them should ever strike the mind as new. “Anything that turns out better than expected he should count as profit.”

Book 3, Chapter 15

“Terence took that from philosophy and expressed it so well. Shouldn’t we, whose springs supplied the water he drew, say it better and believe it more consistently?

- 31 “That’s the explanation for the unchanging expression Xanthippe reportedly used to praise in her husband Socrates. She said he always looked the same when she saw him leave the house and come back. It wasn’t the expression of that old Marcus Crassus, who, Lucilius says, laughed just once in his entire life. Socrates’ face was calm and clear, as tradition tells us. Naturally it always looked the same, since there was no change in the mind that shaped it. So I accept these weapons from the Cyrenaics against chance and accident: long preparation in thought can break the force of events as they arrive. At the same time, I judge that the badness lies in belief, not in nature. If it were in the thing itself, why would foreseen troubles be easier to bear?
- 32 “But we can make a more precise argument about these same matters once we’ve looked at Epicurus’ view. He thinks everyone who believes they’re in trouble must feel distress, whether the trouble was foreseen and expected or has been around a long time. Troubles, he says, don’t diminish with time, and anticipating them doesn’t make them easier. In fact, thinking ahead about future troubles is foolish: perhaps they won’t even happen. Every trouble is unpleasant enough once it arrives. Someone who constantly thinks that something bad may happen turns it into a permanent trouble. If it isn’t even going to happen, they take on misery voluntarily and pointlessly. So they are always upset, either by experiencing something bad or by thinking about it.
- 33 “He makes relief from distress depend on two things: turning attention away from thinking about trouble, and turning it back to considering pleasures. He thinks the mind can obey reason and follow wherever it leads. So reason forbids us to look at troubles, pulls us away from painful thoughts, and dulls our focus

on miseries. Once it has sounded the retreat from these, it urges and encourages us again to look at different pleasures and engage with them wholeheartedly. He thinks these fill a wise person's life, both through the memory of past pleasures and the expectation of future ones. I've expressed that in our own manner; the Epicureans express it in theirs. But let's consider what they say, and not worry about how they say it."

Book 3, Chapter 16

³⁴ "To start with, they're wrong to criticize thinking ahead about future events. Nothing does so much to blunt and ease distress as a lifelong habit of thinking that anything can happen: considering the human condition, the terms of life, and how to accept them. This doesn't make us grieve all the time. It keeps us from grieving at all. Someone thinking about the nature of things, life's changes, and human weakness isn't grieving while doing so. On the contrary, they're performing wisdom's task particularly well. They achieve both things at once. By considering human affairs, they get the benefit of philosophy's proper work. And when misfortune comes, they're healed by a three-part consolation. First, nothing has happened to them that they haven't long considered possible. That single thought does more than anything else to reduce and dissolve every trouble. Second, they understand that human troubles must be borne in a human way. Finally, they see that nothing is bad except wrongdoing, and there's no wrongdoing when something happens that a human being couldn't have prevented.

³⁵ "That redirection he offers, turning our attention away from looking at troubles, is worthless. When things we think bad are stabbing at us, we can't simply ignore or forget them at will. They tear at us, torment us, drive in their goads, burn us, and won't let us breathe. And you tell us to forget! That's against nature. Would you wrest away the help nature provides when pain has lasted a long time? Time and the passing days bring a treatment that's slow, certainly,

but powerful all the same. You tell me to think about good things and forget the bad. You'd be saying something significant, something worthy of a great philosopher, if you meant by good things those most worthy of a human being."

Book 3, Chapter 17

"Suppose Pythagoras or Socrates or Plato said this to me:

36 "What keeps you lying there in grief? Why are you letting fortune beat you, why yield to it? It may have pinched or pricked you; it certainly hasn't been able to destroy your strength. The virtues have enormous power: rouse them if they're sleeping. First to arrive will be courage. It will give you the greatness of spirit to dismiss as nothing any event a human being might encounter. Self-control will join it—moderation, the quality I earlier called sound character. Under its protection you won't act shamefully or worthlessly. Could anything be more worthless or shameful than a man becoming unmanly? Justice, too, will stop such conduct, even though it appears to have very little scope here. Its charge will be that you're unjust on two counts. You covet what belongs to someone else by asking, despite your mortal birth, for the life of the immortals. And you bitterly resent returning something lent to you to use.'

37 "Then there's practical wisdom. How will you answer its lesson that virtue provides everything needed for happiness, just as it does for living rightly? Suppose virtue were tethered to outside things, dependent on them. Suppose it didn't begin with itself and come back to itself, keeping all its possessions together and wanting nothing from elsewhere. I wouldn't see why we should either praise it so emphatically or put so much effort into obtaining it.' Direct me to good things like these, Epicurus, and I'll do as you say. I'll follow you, with you yourself to lead me. I'll even put the bad things out of mind at your command. That's easier still because I don't count them as bad in the first place. Instead, you send my thoughts toward pleasures. What pleasures?

Presumably those of the body, or memories and expectations whose object is the body. Are there any others? Have I got your view right? Your people are always saying we don't grasp Epicurus' meaning.

- 38 “This is what he says. I heard that sharp old man Zeno, the most acute of his followers, insist on it in Athens, repeatedly and at the top of his voice. A happy person, he said, enjoys present pleasures and trusts that they'll continue for all or most of life without pain interrupting. If pain does interrupt, it'll be brief if it's extreme; if it lasts longer, it'll have more pleasantness than badness. Someone who thinks that will be happy, especially if they're also satisfied with the good things they've already enjoyed and aren't frightened of either death or the gods. There's Epicurus' picture of a happy life, set out in Zeno's words, so there's no room for denial.”

Book 3, Chapter 18

“Well, then?

- 39 “Could we ease Thyestes' pain by holding out that sort of life for him to think about? Or Aetes' pain—the man I spoke of just now? Or Telamon's, driven out of his homeland, poor and in exile? He prompted this astonishment: “Is this Telamon, so lately lifted by fame to heaven, “The man all watched, the face toward which the Greeks turned theirs?”
- 40 “The same poet speaks of someone whose ‘mind fell when his fortunes fell.’ For a patient like that, we need a remedy from the weighty philosophers of earlier times, not this pleasure-loving school. What abundance of good things does that school offer? We can allow for now that freedom from pain ranks as the highest good. It isn't what we call pleasure, but we don't have to settle every point here. Does turning toward that ease mourning? Allow, too, that pain ranks as the worst evil. If a person isn't in pain and thus lacks that evil, does enjoyment of the greatest good follow on the spot?

- ⁴¹ “Why dodge the issue, Epicurus? Why don’t we admit we’re talking about the pleasure you yourself talk about once you’ve rubbed the shame off your face? Are these your words or not? In the book that contains your whole system, you say the following. I’ll act as translator now, so no one thinks I’m making it up: ‘For my part, I can’t understand that good if I remove the pleasures perceived through taste; if I remove those perceived through sex; if I remove those perceived through hearing songs; if I also remove those pleasant movements perceived by the eyes from beautiful shapes, or any other pleasures produced in the whole person through any of the senses. Nor can it be said that only the mind’s delight counts as a good. Here’s how I understand a delighted mind: it expects that nature will gain possession of everything I’ve mentioned above and so be free of pain.’
- ⁴² “Those are his very words, so anyone can understand what Epicurus means by pleasure. A little later he says, ‘I’ve often asked those who were called wise what they’d have left among good things if they took those pleasures away—unless they wanted to pour out empty words. I’ve learned nothing from them. If they want to gush about virtues and wisdoms, they’ll be describing nothing but the way to produce the pleasures I’ve mentioned above.’ What follows makes the same point. The whole book, which concerns the greatest good, is packed with statements and views like these.
- ⁴³ “So is that the life you’ll call Telamon back to, to ease his distress? If you see one of your followers crushed by grief, will you give him a sturgeon rather than a little book by a follower of Socrates? Will you encourage him to listen to a water organ rather than to Plato’s words? Will you put bright, colorful things on display for him to look at? Hold a bouquet to his nose? Burn perfumes, and tell him to put on garlands and roses? And if there’s something more too—then you’ll have wiped away all his grief completely.”

Book 3, Chapter 19

⁴⁴ “Epicurus must admit this, or remove from his book the passages I’ve just translated word for word. Better still, he must throw out the whole book: it’s crammed with pleasures. So we have to ask how to free someone from distress who speaks like this: “By Pollux, it’s fortune that fails me now, more than my ancestry. “I had a kingdom, I tell you, so you may know from what a height, “From what wealth, from what possessions my fallen fortune has crashed.’ “Well? Should we force a cup of honeyed wine on him to make him stop crying, or something of that sort? Here’s another case, from the same poet: ‘From the greatest wealth to needing your help, Hector.’ We must come to her aid. She’s asking for help: “What protection should I seek or pursue? What “Help can I now rely on in exile or flight? “I’ve lost my fortress and city. Where can I fall? Where can I turn? “At home my country’s altars don’t stand; they lie broken and scattered. “The shrines have burned down; high walls stand scorched, “Disfigured, with fir wood curled—’ “You know what follows, especially these lines: “My father, my country, Priam’s home, “The temple enclosed by a loudly ringing hinge! “I saw you with foreign forces standing in support, “With carved and paneled ceilings, “Royally furnished with gold and ivory.’

⁴⁵ “A wonderful poet! Never mind the contempt of these people who sing Euphorion’s praises. He knows how much worse a blow feels when it strikes suddenly, without warning. That’s why he first magnifies the riches of the royal house, apparently there to last forever. Then what comes next? “I watched the whole place burning, “Priam’s life torn from him by force, “The altar of Jupiter fouled with blood.’

⁴⁶ “What a splendid poem! Its events, words, and rhythms are all mournful. Let’s take away her distress. How? Should we put her on a feather cushion, bring in a woman to play the harp, give her perfume, burn a little dish of incense, and look for some sweet drink and food? Are these really the good things that can

remove the heaviest distress? Just a little while ago you said you couldn't even understand any others. So I'd agree with Epicurus that people should be brought back from grief to thinking about good things—if we agreed on what 'good' meant."

Book 3, Chapter 20

"Here someone may object: 'Do you really think that's what Epicurus intended? Were his principles really so lustful?' Certainly not, as far as I'm concerned. Much of what he says is strict, much admirable. I keep saying that it's his sharpness of thought under examination, not his behavior. He may scorn the very pleasures he was praising all he wants; I won't forget what he identifies as the greatest good. He didn't merely label it 'pleasure.' He spelled it out: 'flavor, bodily embraces, games, singing, and shapes that please the eyes.' Have I made something up? Told a lie? Please prove me wrong. What else am I trying to do in any inquiry but make the truth clear?

⁴⁷ "But he also says pleasure doesn't increase once pain has been removed, and the greatest pleasure is not feeling any pain.' Three big mistakes in a few words. First, he contradicts himself. A moment ago he couldn't even imagine anything good unless the senses were, so to speak, tickled with pleasure. Now the greatest pleasure is being free of pain. Could he contradict himself more? His second mistake is this: there are three natural states—feeling pleasure, feeling pain, and feeling neither pleasure nor pain. He thinks the first and third are the same, and doesn't distinguish pleasure from not feeling pain. His third mistake is one he shares with some others. Virtue is what we seek above all, and philosophy was developed to acquire it. Yet he has separated the greatest good from virtue.

⁴⁸ "He does often praise virtue, though.' So did Gaius Gracchus defend the treasury in words, after enormous giveaways had drained it. With the deeds before me, why pay attention to speeches? Consider Lucius Piso Frugi. He'd opposed the grain law whenever he spoke of it. Once it became law, this former consul

turned up for his allocation of grain. At a public meeting Gracchus spotted him standing there and challenged him before the Roman people: how was applying for grain consistent with having argued against the law? Piso replied, ‘Gracchus, I’d prefer you not to take it into your head to hand my property out person by person. If you do, however, I shall ask for my portion.’ Surely that sensible, thoughtful man made his point plainly: the Sempronian law was scattering the people’s inheritance. Yet read Gracchus’ speeches and you’d call him a defender of the treasury.

- 49 “Epicurus says you can’t live pleasantly without living virtuously. He says fortune has no power over a wise person. He prefers a simple diet to a lavish one, and says there’s no time when a wise person isn’t happy. All these claims suit a philosopher, but they clash with pleasure. ‘That isn’t the pleasure he means.’ Let him mean any pleasure he likes. Whatever he means, it contains no part of virtue. Come on: if we don’t understand pleasure, don’t we even understand pain? So I say that someone who measures the greatest evil by pain has no business mentioning virtue.”

Book 3, Chapter 21

- 50 “Some Epicureans complain that I’m making a point of attacking Epicurus. They’re excellent people—no group is less malicious. Of course: we’re fighting over office or status, aren’t we? I think the greatest good is in the mind; he puts it in the body. I put it in virtue; he puts it in pleasure. They fight and even call on their neighbors to help—and plenty of them rush over immediately. I’m the one who says I don’t mind, and will accept whatever they decide.
- 51 “What is this, a debate about the Punic War? Even when Marcus Cato and Lucius Lentulus disagreed on that subject, they never fought each other over it. These people are much too angry, especially since the view they’re defending isn’t particularly brave. They wouldn’t dare argue for it in the senate, in a pub-

lic meeting, before an army, or in front of the censors. But we'll deal with them another time. I'll do it without starting any fight, and I'll readily give way to them if they're telling the truth. I'll only offer this warning. Suppose it's completely true that a wise person judges everything by the body—or, to put it more respectably, does nothing unless it pays, or judges everything by personal advantage. Since these ideas aren't popular, they should enjoy them privately and stop boasting."

Book 3, Chapter 22

"That leaves the Cyrenaics' view.

- 52 "They think distress arises when something happens unexpectedly. As I said earlier, that is an important factor. I know Chrysippus also thinks that what hasn't been foreseen hits harder. But that isn't the whole story. An enemy's sudden arrival does cause rather more confusion than an expected one. A sudden storm at sea frightens sailors more than one they saw coming. Most similar cases are like that. But examine unexpected events carefully, and you'll find nothing except that everything sudden looks bigger. There are two reasons for that. First, there's no time to consider how serious the things happening really are. Second, when it seems they could have been guarded against if foreseen, the impression that our own fault brought the trouble on makes distress sharper.
- 53 "Time gives us the proof. As it passes, it calms distress despite the troubles themselves remaining unchanged. Usually distress doesn't just lessen; it vanishes. Many Carthaginians lived as slaves in Rome, and Macedonians did too after their king Perseus was captured. In my youth I saw Corinthians in the Peloponnese as well. Every one of them could have taken up Andromache's lament, 'I watched the whole place [...].' Perhaps they'd sung it long enough already. Judging by their expressions, their talk, all their gestures and their pos-

ture, you'd have called them Argives or Sicyonians. My unexpected sight of Corinth's ruined walls stirred me more than it stirred the Corinthians. Years of reflection had put a callus over their minds.

- 54 “I’ve read the work of comfort Clitomachus sent to his captured fellow citizens after the destruction of Carthage. In it he records a discussion of Carneades, saying he entered it in his notes. The claim put forward was that the capture of his homeland would distress a wise man; the book gives Carneades’ reply against it. A philosopher thus supplies a fresh calamity with treatment so strong that an old calamity wouldn’t need it at all. Had the same book reached the captives several years later, it would be attending to scars rather than open wounds. Pain loses its force as it advances slowly, step by step. Not that the facts tend to alter, or even can alter. Rather, experience delivers reason’s missing lesson: what once appeared enormous isn’t so great.”

Book 3, Chapter 23

“Then why,’ someone will ask, ‘do we need reasoning at all, or the sort of consolation we normally use when we want to ease someone’s grief?’

- 55 “At those times, what we usually have ready is the thought that nothing should seem unexpected. Or how will someone bear a setback more easily after learning that something like it must happen to human beings? That argument takes nothing away from the actual size of the trouble. It only adds that nothing has happened that shouldn’t have been expected.’ Yet that kind of talk does help when we’re consoling someone. In fact, I suspect it helps most of all. So unexpected events don’t have such power that all distress comes from them. Perhaps they strike harder, but they don’t make what happens look bigger. Things look bigger because they’re fresh, not because they’re sudden.

- 56 “There are two ways, then, of finding the truth, not just about things that seem bad, but also about things that seem good. Either we ask about the thing itself—what its nature is and how much it matters—as we sometimes do with poverty, lightening its burden through argument by showing how small and few nature’s needs are; or we turn from precise argument to examples. Here we mention Socrates, here Diogenes, here that line from Caecilius: ‘Wisdom is often found even under a dirty little cloak.’ Poverty has the same force in every case. So what reason can we give for its being bearable to Gaius Fabricius, when others say they can’t bear it?
- 57 “The second approach is like the method of consolation that teaches that what’s happened is part of being human. That discussion doesn’t just give us knowledge about the human race. It shows that things are bearable if other people have borne them and still bear them.”

Book 3, Chapter 24

“Take a discussion of poverty: it recalls plenty of poor people who endure it. Or take a discussion of disregarding public office: it produces many people who never held office and were happier precisely because of that. People who chose the quiet of private life over public business have their lives praised individually, by name. We also hear those anapestic verses from a king of immense power. He congratulates the old man, calling him lucky to be destined to end his days without glory, unknown to the world.

- 58 “Bereavement is treated similarly, with examples of parents who lost children. Those who struggle more with their loss find their mourning eased by other people’s cases. Seeing what others endure makes their own experience appear much smaller than they imagined. Little by little, reflection exposes the falsehood in that estimate. Telamon’s words show it too: ‘When I fathered them [...]’ So do Theseus’ ‘I used to think over future miseries to myself,’ and Anaxagoras’ ‘I knew I’d fathered a mortal.’ Long thought about human affairs

had taught them all that these things weren't nearly as frightening as common opinion made them. To my mind, preparing in advance does much the same for someone as the passing days do for others. Reason cures one group; nature on its own cures the other. Both discover the essential fact: what they had imagined a tremendous evil falls far short of being able to overturn happiness.

- 59 “So it follows that being unprepared makes the blow harder. It doesn't follow, as the Cyrenaics think, that when two people suffer similar misfortunes, only the one who didn't expect it feels distress.
“That's why some people are said to have grieved even more deeply after hearing about this shared human condition: we're born on the terms that no one can remain free of trouble forever.”

Book 3, Chapter 25

“I find in our friend Antiochus' writings that this was why Carneades repeatedly challenged Chrysippus over his praise of Euripides' verses:

“No one born to die escapes the touch of pain

“Or sickness. Many must bury their children

“And have others in turn; death awaits everyone.

“These things cause the human race needless distress.

“Earth has to return to earth, and everyone's life

“Must be reaped like grain. Necessity orders it.”

- 60 “He denied that this kind of talk did anything at all to ease distress. The very fact that we'd fallen under such a cruel necessity was something to grieve over, he said. As for that argument that recalled other people's troubles, it was suited to consoling the malicious. I think quite the opposite. The necessity of accepting the human condition stops us from fighting, so to speak, against a god, and reminds us that we're human. That thought does a great deal to ease grief. And

we don't list examples to please a malicious mind. We do it so that someone grieving will think they should bear what they see many people have borne with moderation and calm.

- ⁶¹ “People collapsing under the weight of distress, unable to hold themselves together, need support in every possible way. That’s why Chrysippus thinks distress got its Greek name, *lypē*, from a ‘loosening’ of the whole person. We can pull it out entirely by explaining its cause, as I said at the beginning. That cause is nothing but a belief and judgment that some great evil is present and pressing. So even physical pain, with its extremely sharp bite, will be endured if there’s the prospect of something good. And a life lived honorably and admirably provides so much comfort that distress either doesn’t touch those who’ve lived that way or gives their minds only a very slight painful prick.”

Book 3, Chapter 26

“But when the belief in a great evil is joined by another belief—that one ought to be distressed by what’s happened, that it’s right and part of one’s duty—then that heavy disturbance of distress really takes hold.

- ⁶² “From this belief come those different, hateful forms of mourning: filth, women tearing their cheeks, beating the chest, thighs, and head. From it comes Agamemnon in Homer, and the same Agamemnon in Accius, ‘again and again tearing his uncut hair in pain.’ Bion made a witty remark about him: that utterly foolish king pulled out his hair in grief as if baldness could ease mourning.
- ⁶³ “They behave like this because they believe it’s required of them. The same belief lies behind Aeschines’ assault on Demosthenes for offering animal sacrifices seven days after losing his daughter. What a display of rhetoric, what fullness of language! Look at the thoughts he collects, the verbal weapons he throws! It shows you there’s nothing an orator may not do. Nobody would

endorse his argument without an ingrained conviction that good people should mourn their relatives' deaths as intensely as they can. So some people suffering inwardly look for lonely places. Here's Homer on Bellerophon: "Unhappy, grieving, he roamed across the Aleian fields, "Devouring his own heart and shunning human tracks." "Niobe, too, is represented in stone—because, I imagine, of the everlasting silence of her mourning. Hecuba's imagined change into a dog is explained by a certain harsh bitterness and rage in her mind. Others in mourning often like to address their very solitude, as Ennius' nurse does: "In my misery I now feel the longing to tell "Heaven and earth of the miseries of Medea."

Book 3, Chapter 27

- ⁶⁴ "People in pain do all this thinking it's right, proper, and required. There's a particularly clear sign that they act on a judgment of supposed duty. If people who want to be in mourning happen to do something more natural or speak a little more cheerfully, they pull themselves back into sadness and accuse themselves of wrongdoing because they stopped grieving. Mothers and teachers even punish children, not just with words but with blows, if they've said or done anything too cheerful while the household is in mourning. They force them to cry. And what about when grief itself eases and people realize that mourning achieves nothing? Doesn't that show the whole thing was voluntary?
- ⁶⁵ "Consider the man in Terence's *Self-Tormentor*, or *Heauton Timoroumenos*: "Here's my decision: I'm doing less wrong to my son, "Chremes, while I make myself miserable.' "His misery is a decision. Can a decision be against the decider's will? 'I'd count myself fit for any suffering—' Unless he's miserable, he thinks he deserves suffering. So the evil belongs to his belief, you see, not to nature. Then there are situations that leave no room for mourning. Homer describes daily killing and great numbers of deaths bringing grief to a halt:

“Too many fall before our eyes, and on every day, “For any of us to be able to go without mourning. “All the more reason to bury those killed “Steadfastly, and finish mourning with the tears of a day.’

- 66 “Then we can dismiss pain when we want, by responding to circumstances. If it’s under our control, why ever fail to respond to a situation that calls for us to lay anxiety and distress aside? We know what happened to the witnesses of Gnaeus Pompey’s collapse under his wounds. Even before that most horrible and wretched sight they were frightened for their own lives: an enemy fleet surrounded them. At that moment they did nothing except spur the rowers on and seek safety in escape. Their beating of themselves and lamenting began only on arrival in Tyre. If fear was able to keep distress out in their case, can’t reason do it in someone wise?”

Book 3, Chapter 28

“What could do more to help us put down pain than understanding that it achieves nothing and has been taken on pointlessly? If we can put it down, we can also avoid taking it on. So we must admit that distress is taken on by choice and judgment.

- 67 “Look at the endurance of those who’ve been through repeated suffering: that confirms it. Whatever comes, they stand up to it more readily, feeling that they’re already toughened against fortune. A character in Euripides says: “Had sorrow’s day dawned on me for the first time now, “Had I not sailed a sea so full of hardship, “There would be cause for grief: a colt with a bridle “Newly put on tosses at the strange, sudden touch. “But suffering has already worked me over till I’m numb.’ “Weariness of suffering thus eases distress. We have to recognize, therefore, that grief doesn’t take its origin or cause from the event itself.

- ⁶⁸ “Don’t the greatest philosophers, who still haven’t attained wisdom, understand that they’re in the worst possible trouble? They lack wisdom, and nothing is worse than that. Yet they don’t mourn. Why? Because we don’t tack onto this kind of trouble the belief that it’s right, proper, and a matter of duty to feel distress at not being wise. We do tack that belief onto distress involving mourning, the greatest distress of all.
- ⁶⁹ “Aristotle criticizes the early philosophers for supposing their own abilities had finished philosophy: in his view, they were either exceptionally foolish or exceptionally boastful. So much had been added in just a few years, he says, that he could see philosophy becoming quite complete soon. The dying Theophrastus reportedly complained about nature instead. Deer and crows had received a lengthy lifespan, though it mattered nothing to them; people, to whom it mattered enormously, had received so little time. Given a longer lifetime, every art would have been perfected and people’s lives enriched by every branch of learning. His complaint was that he was going out just as he was beginning to see those things. And surely the best, most thoughtful of the other philosophers admit their ignorance of a great deal, and acknowledge the many lessons still to be learned, again and again?
- ⁷⁰ “They know they remain caught in foolishness, with nothing worse than that. Even so, they aren’t burdened by distress: they don’t attach the belief that pain is something they owe as a duty. Consider also those who say a man shouldn’t mourn. Quintus Maximus showed that spirit at the funeral of his son, a former consul. So did Lucius Paulus, losing two sons in the space of a few days, and Marcus Cato, whose son died after being chosen praetor. There are the other examples gathered in my *Consolation* too.
- ⁷¹ “What calmed them except their belief that grief and mourning weren’t a man’s part? Others usually give themselves up to distress because they think it’s right. These men drove distress away because they thought it shameful. That shows distress lies not in nature but in belief.”

Book 3, Chapter 29

“People argue against this: ‘Who’s so crazy as to grieve willingly? Nature brings pain.’ They say even our Crantor thinks we must yield to it, because it presses and bears down on us and can’t be resisted. In Sophocles, Oileus had earlier consoled Telamon about Ajax’s death. But when he heard about his own son’s death, he broke down. His changed state of mind is described like this:

“No one is so endowed with wisdom

“That, after easing others’ misery with words,

“He won’t, when fortune changes and turns its attack

“Against him, be broken by his own sudden disaster,

“Forgetting the words and advice he gave to others.’

“When they argue like this, they aim to establish that nature can’t be resisted at all. Yet they admit that people take on heavier distress than nature compels them to. So what sort of madness is this—? Let’s put the same question back to them.

⁷² “Pain is taken on for several reasons. The first is believing something evil has happened. Once someone sees it that way and accepts that judgment, distress necessarily follows. Another is the idea that deep mourning is a kindness to the dead. Add a sort of womanish superstition: after the immortal gods strike their blow, people imagine they’ll satisfy them more readily by acknowledging themselves beaten down and prostrate. Few notice the clash between these convictions. They admire someone who meets their own death calmly, but censure the same calmness about someone else’s death. As if the lovers’ talk could ever come true, and anyone could love someone else more than they love themselves!

⁷³ “Loving those who ought to be closest to us on equal terms with ourselves is admirable—and right and true, too, if you ask me. Exceeding that love of ourselves, however, is simply impossible. Friends shouldn’t even want such an

arrangement: that you should love me above yourself, and I should love you above myself. That would throw both life and all its duties into confusion.”

Book 3, Chapter 30

“But that’s for another time. For now, it’s enough that we shouldn’t blame the loss of friends for our misery. We shouldn’t love them more than they themselves would want, if they could feel anything, and certainly not more than we love ourselves. People say that many get no relief from consolation. They add that the consolers themselves admit they’re miserable when fortune turns its attack on them. Both objections can be answered. These aren’t defects in nature; they’re faults. You can accuse foolishness as fully as you like. People who get no relief are themselves inviting misery. And people who handle their own troubles differently from the way they’ve advised others to do are no more at fault than most people: the greedy criticize the greedy, and the ambitious criticize others’ ambition. It’s characteristic of foolishness to see other people’s faults and forget one’s own.

⁷⁴ “Above all, we need to press this point. We agree that distress disappears over time. The effective power, though, belongs to thinking over a long period, not to the days themselves. Keep the same sufferer and the same situation: what could alter the pain? Nothing about either its object or its subject has altered. What heals, then, is extended reflection that the situation contains no evil. Mere duration does not.”

Book 3, Chapter 31

“At this point they propose moderate amounts. Do these arise by nature? Then comfort is unnecessary: nature will keep them within bounds unaided. Do they arise from opinion instead? Then get rid of the opinion altogether.

“I think we’ve said enough to establish that distress is a belief that something bad is present, with the further belief included that one ought to take on distress.

- 75 “Zeno’s addition to the definition is right: the belief about a present evil has to be fresh. Here’s what they understand by that. They don’t restrict ‘fresh’ to an event of a short while ago. They use it for as long as the supposed evil retains an active force, staying vigorous and, as it were, green. Artemisia illustrates it. She was the wife of Mausolus, Caria’s king, and built his celebrated tomb in Halicarnassus. Throughout her remaining life she kept mourning; it wore her out and wasted her away. Each day renewed her belief. Only after time has dried the belief up does it cease to be called fresh.

“So these are the tasks of people offering consolation: to remove distress completely, calm it, reduce it as much as possible, hold it back and not let it spread further, or redirect it to something else.

- 76 “For some, the consoler has a single job: demonstrate that there’s no evil in the event. Cleanthes takes that position. The Peripatetics want to show instead that the evil isn’t great. Epicurus turns us from evils toward good things. The Cyrenaics are among those who think showing that nothing happened unexpectedly is sufficient [...] nothing evil. Chrysippus puts the emphasis elsewhere: take away the belief that mourning fulfills a rightful, obligatory duty. Still others gather every method together, because people respond differently. That’s largely what I did in the Consolation, bringing everything into one attempt to comfort. My mind was swollen; every possible cure was tried on it. But illnesses of mind need properly timed treatment just as bodily ones do. In Aeschylus, Prometheus hears: “Prometheus, I’m sure you know that this is so: “Reason can supply a cure for anger.’ “His reply is: “Yes, provided treatment comes at the proper time “And no heavy hand strikes the wound and makes it worse.”

Book 3, Chapter 32

⁷⁷ “So the first treatment in consolation will be to teach that there is either nothing bad or very little. The second is to discuss both life’s general conditions and anything in the mourner’s own situation that needs discussion. The third is to show that it’s utterly foolish to wear yourself out with pointless grief when you understand it can achieve nothing. Cleanthes, in fact, consoles a wise person, who doesn’t need consolation. If you persuade someone mourning that nothing is bad unless it’s morally wrong, you won’t have removed their grief but their foolishness. And this isn’t the right time for teaching. Besides, I don’t think Cleanthes saw clearly enough that distress can sometimes be taken on because of the very thing he himself admits is the greatest evil. What are we to say about this? Socrates persuaded Alcibiades, as we’re told, that he amounted to nothing as a human being, and that there was no difference between Alcibiades, with his very high birth, and any porter at all. Alcibiades tormented himself, weeping and begging Socrates to give him virtue and drive out his moral failings. What are we to say then, Cleanthes? That there was nothing bad in the thing distressing Alcibiades?

⁷⁸ “Now look at Lyco’s way of talking. In playing distress down, he says minor things arouse it—bodily setbacks and reversals of fortune, rather than evils in the mind. But wasn’t Alcibiades grieving over precisely his mind’s faults and evils? We’ve discussed Epicurus’ way of consoling quite enough already.”

Book 3, Chapter 33

⁷⁹ “A common, often helpful consolation is ‘Others have suffered this as well.’ It isn’t completely reliable either. Useful, yes, as I said—but some reject it; it doesn’t help everyone at every time. The way we offer it matters. Don’t stress

the particular trouble each person suffered. Stress the way people of good judgment endured it. For truth, Chrysippus' comfort has the strongest foundation; for someone in the middle of grief, it's hard to apply. Persuading a mourner that their own judgment and sense of obligation are responsible for their grief is a formidable undertaking. Think of a lawsuit. We don't always employ the same 'issue,' our term for kinds of disputed question. We adjust to the occasion, the sort of dispute, and the individual. Easing distress calls for the same approach: find out which remedy this particular person can take.

80 "But somehow our discussion has wandered away from your proposal. You asked about a wise person. Such a person can see nothing as bad if it involves no moral wrong, or sees it as so slightly bad that wisdom buries it and it's barely visible. They don't invent or add anything to distress through belief, or think it's right to torment themselves as much as possible and be worn out by grief. Nothing could be more misguided than that. Still, our argument seems to me to have taught us something. We weren't specifically asking just now whether anything could be bad unless it could also be called morally wrong. Even so, we saw that whatever badness there is in distress isn't natural: it's brought on by a voluntary judgment and a mistaken belief.

81 "We've dealt with that form of distress which is the greatest of all. Once that's removed, we thought we wouldn't have to search very hard for remedies for the rest."

Book 3, Chapter 34

"Poverty has its standard arguments; so does living without honors and fame. Exile gets a discussion of its own, as do the ruin of one's homeland, enslavement, infirmity, blindness, and every other occurrence that goes by the name of calamity. Greek writers allocate a separate discussion and a separate book to each. They want work to do—though these discussions are full of pleasure.

- 82 “Still, doctors treat even the smallest part of the body when it hurts by treating the whole body. In the same way, when philosophy has removed distress as a whole, it has also removed any error that might have appeared from some particular source: if poverty has bitten, if disgrace has stung, if exile has spread darkness, or if any of the things I just mentioned has occurred. Each situation does have its own particular consolations, and you can hear about them whenever you want. But we must return to the same starting point: all distress is far removed from a wise person. It’s empty, it’s taken on pointlessly, and it doesn’t arise from nature. It arises from judgment, from belief, from a kind of invitation to feel pain, when we’ve decided that’s what ought to happen.
- 83 “Remove that element, which is entirely voluntary, and mournful distress will be gone. A bite and a small contraction of the mind will remain. Let them call that natural, as long as it doesn’t bear that heavy, dreadful, deathly name ‘distress.’ That can’t possibly exist with wisdom or, so to speak, live in the same house. But what roots distress has—how many, and how bitter! Once the trunk itself has been overturned, we must pick out all of them, in separate discussions if necessary. After all, we still have this leisure, such as it is. But every kind of distress has one underlying explanation and many names. Distress includes envy, jealous rivalry, resentfulness, pity, anguish, grieving, mourning, suffering hardship, lamenting, anxiety, sorrow, being troubled, self-torment, and despair.
- 84 “The Stoics define all these. The words I’ve listed each refer to something distinct. They don’t mean the same things, as they appear to, but differ in some way. Perhaps we’ll discuss that elsewhere. These are those fibers of the roots I mentioned at the beginning. We must trace them and pick them all out so none can ever grow again. It’s a big, difficult job—who denies it? But what splendid achievement isn’t also hard? Still, philosophy promises to accomplish it, if we only accept its treatment.
- “Enough of this subject now. Whenever you wish, we’ll have the other subjects ready for you, in this place or in others.”

Book 4, Chapter 1

- ¹ Brutus, there are many occasions when the talents and good qualities of our people amaze me. Above all, I admire their achievement in bringing Greek studies to Rome, despite having begun to seek them out very late. Right from Rome's foundation, arrangements made by the kings, partly through laws as well, gave us a wonderfully ordered system. It covered auspices and religious rites, public assemblies and appeals, the council of senators, the division into mounted and foot soldiers, and military affairs as a whole. Freedom from the kings then brought remarkable advances: the state raced toward excellence of every kind at an almost unbelievable speed. But our ancestors' customs and institutions, and the way the state was trained and kept in balance, aren't my subject here. Elsewhere I've discussed them quite thoroughly, above all in the six books I wrote about the republic.
- ² Here, though, as I think about intellectual studies, I find plenty of reasons to believe that these too were brought in from abroad, and not just sought out, but kept alive and developed. Pythagoras, a man of outstanding wisdom and renown, was practically within our ancestors' sight. He was in Italy at the same time that Lucius Brutus, the famous founder of your distinguished family, freed his country. Pythagoras' teaching spread far and wide, and I believe it reached our city too. That's a reasonable inference, and some surviving traces also point that way. Who could believe our people shut their ears to such learned voices? Greek civilization was flourishing in Italy then, in the very large and powerful cities of what was called Greater Greece. First Pythagoras himself, and later his followers, had an enormous reputation there.
- ³ I also suspect that the Pythagoreans' prestige explains why later people counted King Numa among them. People knew the training and practices Pythagoras taught, and their ancestors had passed down accounts of Numa's justice and

wisdom. With so much time between, though, they no longer knew the dates or when either man had lived. Numa's remarkable wisdom therefore convinced them he had been Pythagoras' student.

Book 4, Chapter 2

So much for what we can infer. There are plenty of traces of Pythagorean influence to collect, but since that isn't today's business, a few will do. We're told they used verse to pass on certain instructions rather secretly. After concentrated thinking, they also restored their peace of mind by singing and playing strings. Now Cato, whose authority carries great weight, reports in his *Origins* an ancestral dinner custom: each reclining guest in turn sang in praise of distinguished men and their virtues, to a pipe's accompaniment. This makes it clear that verse existed then, as did songs arranged according to musical pitch.

- ⁴ Evidence that people were already composing verse also comes from the Twelve Tables. They made it illegal to compose it to harm another person. Consider another indication of the age's learning: stringed instruments lead the music both at the gods' banqueting couches and at magistrates' feasts. That practice particularly belonged to the school under discussion. To my mind, even Appius the Blind's poem has a Pythagorean character; Panaetius praises it warmly in one of his letters addressed to Quintus Tubero. Their influence runs through many more of our institutions. I won't enumerate them: that might suggest we borrowed discoveries for which we ourselves get the credit.
- ⁵ But to get back to the point: think how many poets, and how great, emerged in so short a time—and what speakers too! It readily shows that our people could master anything as soon as they decided to try.

Book 4, Chapter 3

If necessary, I'll return elsewhere to the other branches of learning, as I've often done already. Our people's pursuit of wisdom is old, certainly, but I can't put a name to any practitioner earlier than Laelius and Scipio. In their youth, Athens sent the senate an embassy made up of the Stoic Diogenes and the Academic Carneades, as I find recorded. They had never been involved in any aspect of public administration, and their birthplaces were Babylon and Cyrene, respectively. Surely no one would have fetched them from their schools and picked them for this assignment without an interest in learning among some leading Romans of the day. Those Romans did write other things down: civil law, speeches they had delivered, records of their forebears. Yet they practiced the most important art of all, learning to live well, through their conduct more than through writing.

- ⁶ So we have almost no Latin writings, or at any rate very few, on that genuine, refined philosophy that began with Socrates. It has continued to this day among the Peripatetics, and among the Stoics, who say the same things in a different way, while the Academics judge their disputes. Perhaps the subjects were too large and people too busy. Or perhaps they thought uneducated readers couldn't appreciate them. Meanwhile, while those men kept silent, Gaius Amafinius came forward to speak. The publication of his books stirred the general public, who turned to his school above all others. Perhaps it was very easy to understand; perhaps pleasure's attractive invitations drew them in; or perhaps, since nothing better had been published, they held on to what was available.
- ⁷ After Amafinius, many followers of the same approach wrote a great deal and took over all Italy. Their teaching is so easy to learn by heart and so popular with the uneducated that this is the strongest evidence of its lack of subtlety. Yet they take that as proof of their school's strength.

Book 4, Chapter 4

But let everyone defend what they believe. We're free to make our own judgments. I'll stick to my plan: no single school's rules will bind me or demand my obedience in philosophy. I'll always look for the most convincing view on each question. I've often done that elsewhere, and lately we've done it with particular care at Tusculum. I've set out the discussions from three days; this book completes the fourth. We went down to the lower walk, just as we'd done on the preceding days, and this is how it went:

"Anyone who wants to may say what they'd like us to discuss."

- 8 "I don't think a wise person can be free of every emotional disturbance."

"Yesterday's discussion seemed to show they could be free of distress. Unless you were agreeing with me just to suit the occasion."

"Not at all. I found your argument thoroughly convincing."

"So you don't think a wise person is subject to distress?"

"I certainly don't."

"Well, if that can't disturb a wise person's mind, nothing can. What could? Fear? But we fear things when they're absent that distress us when they're present. So removing distress removes fear. Two disturbances remain: unrestrained delight and craving. If a wise person isn't subject to those, their mind will always be calm."

- 9 "That's exactly how I understand it."

"Which would you prefer, then? Shall we set sail right away, or row a little first, as though we were leaving harbor?"

"What do you mean? I don't understand."

Book 4, Chapter 5

“When Chrysippus and the Stoics discuss emotional disturbances, they spend most of their time classifying and defining them. Very little of what they say actually treats the mind and keeps it from being troubled. The Peripatetics, on the other hand, offer plenty to calm people’s minds, leaving aside the prickly business of classification and definition. So I was asking whether to spread the sails of my talk at once, or first push it forward a little with the logicians’ oars.”

“Yes, do it that way. Both approaches together will give a fuller answer to my whole question.”

“That’s certainly the better way.

10 “But ask afterward if anything isn’t clear.”

“I will. Still, as you usually do, you’ll make even the obscure parts clearer than the Greeks make them.”

“I’ll try. But you’ll need to pay close attention. If one thing slips past you, the whole thing may fall apart. I prefer to call what the Greeks call *pathē* ‘disturbances’ rather than ‘diseases.’ In explaining them, I’ll follow the old division used first by Pythagoras, then by Plato. They divide the mind into two parts, one that shares in reason and another that doesn’t. In the rational part they place calm—a peaceful, quiet steadiness. In the other they place the turbulent movements of anger and desire, which oppose reason and work against it.

11 “Let’s take that as our starting point. But to describe these disturbances, let’s use the Stoics’ definitions and divisions. They seem to me the sharpest thinkers on this question.”

Book 4, Chapter 6

“Here, then, is Zeno’s definition: a disturbance—what he calls a *pathos*—is a movement of the mind that turns away from right reason and goes against nature. Some put it more briefly: a disturbance is an excessive impulse. By ‘excessive’ they mean one that has moved too far from nature’s steadiness. They trace the kinds of disturbance to two supposed goods and two supposed evils, making four in all. From supposed goods come craving and delight: delight concerns good things present, craving good things to come. From supposed evils, they hold, come fear and distress: fear concerns future evils, distress present ones. The very things we fear when they’re approaching distress us when they’re upon us.

- 12 “Delight and craving, then, involve a belief in something good. Craving is attracted and fired up by what seems good and rushes toward it. Delight gets carried away and jumps for joy as though it has already secured something it wanted. Everyone naturally pursues what seems good and avoids its opposite. So as soon as something appears good to us, nature itself drives us to obtain it. When this happens steadily and sensibly, the Stoics call this kind of impulse *boulēsis*. Let’s call it ‘willing.’ They think only a wise person has it, and define it this way: willing is desiring something with reason. But when an impulse grows too strong in defiance of reason, it’s craving, or uncontrolled desire. That’s found in everyone who isn’t wise.
- 13 “Similarly, when we respond to having something good, this can happen in two ways. When the mind moves peacefully and steadily in accordance with reason, it’s called ‘joy.’ But when it jumps about pointlessly and without restraint, we can call that unrestrained or excessive delight. They define it as the mind’s unreasonable swelling. And since we naturally avoid bad things just as we naturally seek good things, let’s call this avoidance ‘caution’ when it’s guided by rea-

son. This too, we should understand, belongs only to a wise person. Avoidance without reason, accompanied by a frightened collapse of spirit, should be called ‘fear.’ Fear, then, is caution that has turned away from reason.

- 14 “A wise person has no response to a present evil; the unwise respond with distress. They experience it amid supposed evils, letting their spirits sink and shrink instead of obeying reason. So the first definition is this: distress is the mind’s shrinking in defiance of reason. There are thus four disturbances and three steady states, since no steady state corresponds to distress.”

Book 4, Chapter 7

“In their view, judgment and belief produce every disturbance. Their tighter definitions aim to show both the wrong involved and the control we have over it. They describe distress as a newly held belief that an evil is here, coupled with the view that sinking and shrinking in spirit is the right response. For delight, the newly held belief is that a good is here, and getting carried away seems the right response. In fear, we believe an evil threatens us and think it beyond endurance. In craving, we believe a good is coming and think our interests require its arrival and presence right now.

- 15 “But when I called disturbances judgments and beliefs, they don’t mean that disturbances consist of these alone. They also include the effects of the disturbances. Thus distress produces something like a bite of pain; fear, a retreat and flight of the mind; delight, overflowing cheerfulness; craving, an unbridled appetite. As for ‘belief,’ which we included in all the definitions above, they mean a weak assent.
- 16 “There are several varieties within each disturbance. Distress includes envying—a less familiar expression is needed for this lesson, since ‘envy’ describes the envied person’s situation as well as the envier’s. It also includes emulation and jealousy; pity and anguish; bereavement and sorrow; hardship and pain; lamen-

tation and worry; lasting trouble, self-torment, despair, and any others belonging to that class. Fear covers reluctance and shame, terror and dread, panic and loss of nerve, bewilderment and lasting fright. Pleasure covers ill will that rejoices at another's misfortune, sensory enjoyment, swaggering, and similar states. Craving covers anger and its flare-up, hatred and enmity, discord, insatiable want, longing, and whatever else resembles these."

Book 4, Chapter 8

"They define these as follows. Envy, they say, is distress taken on because someone else is doing well, although that success does the envious person no harm.

- ¹⁷ "Someone who resents the success of a person who is hurting them wouldn't properly be called envious—Agamemnon resenting Hector's success, for example. But if someone's advantages do another person no harm, and that person still resents their enjoyment of them, that certainly is envy. 'Emulation' has two meanings: the word can express praise or blame. Imitating virtue is called emulation, but we aren't using it that way here; that's praiseworthy. The other kind of emulation is distress when someone else gets what you wanted and you go without. Jealousy, by which I mean the Greek *zēlotypia*, is distress because someone else too gets what you wanted for yourself.
- ¹⁸ "Pity is distress at the suffering of someone who doesn't deserve it. No one feels pity when a parent-killer or traitor is punished. Anguish is distress that presses on you; bereavement, distress at the painful death of someone you loved; sorrow, tearful distress; hardship, distress involving toil; pain, distress that tortures you; lamentation, distress with wailing; worry, distress with brooding; lasting trouble, distress that persists; self-torment, distress with bodily suffering; despair, distress without any hope that things will get better. They define the kinds under fear like this: reluctance is fear of work that will follow;

- ¹⁹ “[...] terror is fear that shakes you. Thus shame is followed by blushing, terror by pallor, trembling, and chattering teeth. Dread is fear of an approaching evil; panic, fear that dislodges the mind. Hence Ennius’ line: ‘Then panic knocks all wisdom from my chest and leaves me breathless.’ Loss of nerve is fear that follows panic, its companion, so to speak; bewilderment, fear that drives out one’s plans; lasting fright, fear that stays.”

Book 4, Chapter 9

- ²⁰ “They describe the kinds of pleasure this way: ill will is pleasure at someone else’s misfortune, with no gain to oneself. Sensory enjoyment is pleasure that soothes the mind through something pleasant to hear. What hearing does here also has its parallels in sight, touch, smell, and taste. These pleasures all belong to one kind: they seem to melt and pour through the mind. Swaggering is pleasure that gets carried away and shows itself off too boldly.
- ²¹ “They define the kinds under craving as follows. Anger is a craving to punish someone thought to have caused an unjust injury. A flare-up is anger just beginning and coming into existence, called *thymōsis* in Greek. Hatred is anger grown old; enmity, anger watching for a chance for revenge; discord, a fiercer anger conceived deep in the mind and heart; insatiable want, a craving that can’t be filled; longing, a craving to see someone who isn’t yet here. They also make this distinction: craving concerns statements made about a particular person or people, what logicians call *katēgorēmata*—for example, having wealth or gaining office. Insatiable want concerns the actual things, such as offices or money.
- ²² “They say the source of all disturbances is lack of self-control. This is the whole mind’s desertion of right reason, turning so far from reason’s instructions that its impulses can’t be governed or held in at all. Self-control calms our impulses, makes them obey right reason, and preserves the mind’s considered judgments.

Its enemy, lack of self-control, does the opposite: it sets the mind's entire condition on fire, confuses it, and stirs it up. So distress, fears, and all the other disturbances arise from it."

Book 4, Chapter 10

"Corrupted blood, too much phlegm, or overflowing bile make the body develop diseases and illnesses. The mind loses its health in much the same way: wrong beliefs throw it into confusion, clash among themselves, and trouble it with diseases.

23 "Disturbances first produce diseases, which they call *nosēmata*, together with their opposites: defective aversions and disgust directed at particular things. Next come illnesses, which the Stoics call *arrōstēmata*, again with their corresponding opposite aversions. The Stoics spend far too much effort here, especially Chrysippus, working out resemblances between diseases of the mind and those of the body. Let's skip that entirely unnecessary discussion and deal with what matters.

24 "We should understand, then, that a disturbance is always in motion, with beliefs tossing about in an unstable, turbulent way. But when this mental heat and agitation has grown old and settled, as though in the veins and marrow, then disease and illness develop, along with the aversions that are their opposites."

Book 4, Chapter 11

"These distinctions exist in thought, although the conditions themselves occur together. Craving and delight give rise to them. Take a desire for money: unless reason intervenes at once, acting as a sort of Socratic medicine to heal the

desire, this evil seeps through the veins and lodges in the organs. It becomes disease and illness; once established, neither can be uprooted. We call that disease greed.

- 25 “A hunger for glory develops the same way, and so does an obsession with women—my expression for the Greek philogynia. The remaining diseases and illnesses follow the same course. Fear, they think, produces the opposite conditions. Examples are woman-hatred, represented in Atilius’ Woman-Hater; hatred for humanity as a whole, recorded of Timon, the man known as misanthrōpos; and hostility to guests. In all these mental illnesses there’s some fear behind people’s avoidance and hatred of their objects.
- 26 “They define mental illness as a powerful belief, firmly fixed and deeply rooted, that something not worth seeking is very much worth seeking. They define what arises from aversion this way: a powerful belief, firmly fixed and deeply rooted, that something not worth avoiding ought to be avoided. This belief is judging that you know what you don’t know. The kinds of illness include greed, ambition, an obsession with women, obstinacy, nibbling at treats, drunkenness, a passion for fine food, and anything similar. Greed is a powerful belief about money, firmly fixed and deeply rooted, that it’s very much worth seeking. The other definitions of this kind follow the same pattern.
- 27 “The definitions of aversions go like this: hostility to guests is a powerful belief, firmly fixed and deeply rooted, that a guest is very much to be avoided. Hatred of women, like Hippolytus’, and of humanity, like Timon’s, are defined in the same way.”

Book 4, Chapter 12

“Now let’s try that comparison with physical health, though we won’t lean on it as heavily as the Stoics do. Certain bodies tend to catch certain diseases. Calling someone subject to colds or colic doesn’t mean they have one now: it

means they often do. Likewise, one person tends toward fear, another toward some other disturbance. Hence we speak of anxiety and anxious people, or of a bad temper in others. Having a bad temper and being angry are different things. Anxiety and anguish differ too: occasional anguish doesn't make everyone anxious, and an anxious person needn't be constantly in anguish. Being drunk differs from habitual drunkenness; being inclined to love differs from actually being in love. This pattern, in which different people tend toward different diseases, has a wide reach. It extends to all the disturbances.

- 28 “It also appears in many defects for which there's no name for the condition. People are called envious, ill-willed, prone to craving, fearful, and pitying because they're disposed to those disturbances, not because they're always carried away by them. By analogy with the body, let's call this tendency toward each particular kind an 'illness,' as long as we understand that it means a tendency to become ill. But in good matters, since some people are better suited to one good thing and some to another, let's call it an 'aptitude.' In bad matters, let's call it a 'proneness,' to suggest slipping downward; in matters neither good nor bad, let it keep the earlier name.”

Book 4, Chapter 13

“Just as the body can have disease, illness, and defect, so can the mind. They call a breakdown of the whole body a disease; disease accompanied by weakness, an illness; and a lack of agreement between the body's parts, a defect. This last produces crooked limbs, distortion, and deformity.

- 29 “Disease and illness, the first two conditions, result from a shock and disruption affecting the body's health as a whole. A defect can show up independently, even without any loss of health. With the mind, however, separating illness from disease is something we can do only conceptually. Defectiveness means an established state or disposition marked throughout life by inconsistency and disagreement with itself. So one corruption of belief gives rise to illness and dis-

ease; the other shows inconsistency and opposition. These conflicts aren't equally severe in every defect. A person close to wisdom still has an internally divided disposition while unwise, but not a twisted or misshapen one. Illnesses and diseases belong within defectiveness. Whether disturbances do too remains open to question.

- 30 “A defect stays in place as a condition, whereas a disturbance moves. A moving thing can't be a component of conditions that stay in place. Our bodily comparison reaches the mind's good qualities as well as its bad ones. Beauty, strength, health, firmness, and speed are the body's main advantages; each has a mental counterpart. Physical health means a balanced combination in which our constituent elements fit together. Mental health similarly means agreement among beliefs and judgments. That is a virtue of mind. Some identify it with self-control; others say it follows self-control, complying with its directions and having no independent character. Either way, they reserve it for the wise. There's another sort of mental health, though, available even to the unwise: doctors can clear away a disturbed mental state by treatment and purging.
- 31 “In bodily beauty, the limbs fit together in suitable proportions and the coloring has a pleasing quality. Mental beauty consists instead in judgments and beliefs that remain even and consistent, with firmness and stability. This either follows virtue or includes virtue's own power. We also speak of mental strength in terms corresponding to bodily strength, sinews, and effectiveness. Quickness is our name for bodily speed. It's a merit we praise in intellectual ability too, since the mind can cover a great many subjects very rapidly.”

Book 4, Chapter 14

“The difference between minds and bodies is this: healthy minds can't be attacked by disease, but healthy bodies can. Physical troubles can occur through no fault of ours. Not so with mental ones: all the mind's diseases and distur-

bances result from rejecting reason. That's why they exist only in humans. Animals do something similar, but they don't fall into disturbances.

32 “Sharp minds and dull ones differ in this: like Corinthian bronze resisting rust, gifted minds take longer to fall ill and recover more quickly. Dull minds don't. Nor does a gifted mind fall into every disease and disturbance. For a gifted mind doesn't fall into many savage, monstrous disorders; some, however, even seem at first to express human kindness, such as pity, distress, and fear. But the mind's illnesses and diseases are thought harder to uproot than those major defects that are the opposites of the virtues. Defects can have been removed while diseases remain, because the diseases aren't cured as quickly as the defects are removed.

33 “There you have the Stoics' detailed discussions of disturbances. They call them *logika*, matters of logic, because they're argued with greater precision. Now that our talk has sailed away from those jagged reefs, let's hold our course for the rest of the discussion—provided I've made those points clear enough, considering how obscure the subject is.”

“Quite clear enough. If anything needs looking into more carefully, we'll ask about it another time. Right now we're waiting for the sails and the voyage you mentioned.”

Book 4, Chapter 15

34 “We've spoken about virtue elsewhere, and we'll often need to speak about it again. Most questions about life and character flow from virtue as their source. Virtue, then, is a steady, consistent disposition of mind. It makes the people who have it praiseworthy, and is itself worth praising simply for what it is, in and of itself, even apart from any advantage it brings. From it come morally right wishes, judgments, and actions, and all right reasoning. In fact, the shortest definition of virtue itself might be 'right reason.' The opposite of this virtue

is defectiveness. I prefer that word to ‘malice’ for the Greek *kakia*: malice names one particular defect, while defectiveness covers them all. From it disturbances are stirred up: as we said a little earlier, these are turbulent, agitated movements of the mind, turned away from reason and deeply hostile to a peaceful mind and life. They bring anxious, bitter distress, and they batter and weaken the mind with fear. They also set it on fire with excessive appetite, which we call sometimes desire, sometimes craving. This is a kind of mental loss of control, very far removed from self-restraint and moderation.

- 35 “If it ever gets what it wanted, it then gets so carried away with excitement that it has ‘no steady idea’ what it’s doing, as in the words of the man who thinks ‘too much mental pleasure is the greatest mistake.’ The cure for these evils lies in virtue alone.”

Book 4, Chapter 16

“What could be not only more miserable but also uglier and more shameful than a person lying broken and helpless with distress? Next in misery is someone who fears an approaching evil and hangs in suspense, frightened out of their wits. To show the power of this evil, the poets place a rock hanging over Tantalus in the underworld, ‘for crimes, an uncontrolled spirit, and arrogant talk.’ That’s the common punishment of foolishness. Everyone whose mind turns away from reason always has some such terror hanging over them.

- 36 “Fear and distress are the disturbances I mean that eat the mind away. Their cheerful counterparts come close to madness too: desire forever reaching greedily for something, and baseless excitement, or unrestrained delight. We can now see the character of someone we describe at different times as moderate, modest, self-controlled, steady, or restrained. Sometimes we group all these descriptions under the general heading ‘sound character.’ That heading must include the virtues; otherwise, ‘The person of sound character does everything right’

wouldn't have become a saying so widespread it counts as a proverb. The Stoics say exactly this of the wise person, yet people hear their claim as astonishing and far too grand."

Book 4, Chapter 17

- 37 "Here, then, is the wise person we're seeking, whoever that may be: moderation and steadiness keep their mind peaceful and reconciled to itself. Troubles don't eat them away, fear doesn't break them, thirsty desire doesn't set them burning, and the leaps of hollow excitement don't dissolve them. Such a person is happy. No human circumstance can appear unbearably crushing or so wonderfully pleasing that it carries them away. Someone acquainted with the whole of eternity and the vastness of the universe—what human matter could look great to them? What importance could a wise person attach to our pursuits or our minutely short lives? Their mind keeps constant watch: no event can arrive unforeseen, unexpected, or in any way new.
- 38 "They also direct a sharp gaze every way, always seeing a position and a place for themselves to live without trouble or anguish. So whatever turn of events fortune brings, they can handle it fittingly and calmly. Anyone who does that will be free not only of distress but of every other disturbance too. A mind free of them makes people happy in a complete and unqualified way. The same mind, when stirred up and dragged away from sound, sure reasoning, loses not just its steadiness but its health.
- "So we should regard the Peripatetics' approach and arguments as soft and spineless. They say minds have to be disturbed, but they set a certain limit that one shouldn't go beyond.
- 39 "You set a limit on a defect? Or isn't disobeying reason a defect? Doesn't reason give clear enough instructions? It tells us that something you either desire passionately or get carried away with once you have it isn't a good; and that some-

thing which either leaves you crushed or barely able to keep your head for fear of being crushed isn't an evil. It also tells us that error makes all these things seem too sad or too joyful. Time wears down that error even for fools: the facts stay the same, but they take them differently once they're old than they did when they were fresh. Surely, then, it shouldn't touch a wise person at all?

- 40 “And where exactly would you put that limit? Take distress, which gets the largest share of their attention. Fannius records that Publius Rupilius suffered over his brother's defeat in the consular election. Apparently he went past the limit: it cost him his life. He ought, then, to have borne it more moderately. Suppose he had been doing so and then lost his children. ‘He'd have had a new distress, but only a moderate one.’ That would still add a great deal. Now add severe physical pain, loss of his possessions, blindness, exile. With a further distress for each separate evil, he'd end up with more than he could bear.”

Book 4, Chapter 18

- 41 “Setting a limit on a defect makes as much sense as imagining that, after leaping off Leucas, you could halt your fall at will. You can't do that. Neither can a mind in an excited disturbance restrain itself or come to a halt wherever it chooses. Whatever becomes ruinous through growth is already wrong at its beginning.
- 42 “Enlarged distress and the other enlarged disturbances are certainly destructive. Even on first entering the mind, therefore, they contain a substantial element of destruction. Leave reason once, and the disturbances supply their own momentum. Weakness gives itself permission, drifts unwittingly into deep water, and can't find a foothold. Accepting them in moderation is consequently just like accepting injustice, cowardice, or lack of self-control in moderation. To allow a

defect within limits is to admit part of that defect. Besides being hateful in itself, this is particularly troublesome because the footing is slippery. Once moving, defects slide down the slope beyond any possibility of checking them.”

Book 4, Chapter 19

“What about this? The very same Peripatetics say that these disturbances, which we think should be rooted out, are not only natural but useful gifts of nature.

⁴³ “Here’s how they argue. They begin with a lengthy tribute to anger: it sharpens courage like a whetstone, they say. An angry attacker strikes harder against a foreign enemy or a bad citizen alike. Compare the feeble scraps of reasoning in a calculation such as ‘Fighting this battle is right; our laws, freedom, and country call us to fight.’ They say such considerations achieve nothing unless anger has fired courage up. This isn’t limited to fighting men. In their view, forceful commands require a harsh edge of temper. They even demand the sting of anger from a speaker, not just in prosecution but in defense. When no real anger is there, words and gestures should copy it, they think, to let the performance kindle the hearers’ anger. They go so far as to deny manliness to anyone who can’t get angry. Gentleness, in our language, becomes sluggishness in their disapproving language.

⁴⁴ “Nor does their praise stop at that one craving—anger means wanting revenge, as I defined it just now. Nature supplied the entire class of craving, or desire, for the greatest possible benefit, they maintain: outstanding achievement is impossible without wanting it. Think of Themistocles pacing the streets at night, unable to sleep. Asked why, he said Miltiades’ trophies kept rousing him from sleep. Demosthenes’ nights of wakeful work are familiar to everyone. He said it hurt him whenever craftsmen starting before dawn got ahead of him in diligence. Nor could the great founders of philosophy have advanced their studies so far without desire burning in them. Pythagoras, Democritus, and Plato,

we're told, journeyed to the earth's furthest reaches. Wherever anything could be learned, they considered it their duty to travel there. Could all that have happened without desire at its hottest?"

Book 4, Chapter 20

⁴⁵ “Even distress itself, which we said should be avoided like a foul and monstrous beast, is something they say nature established for a very useful purpose. When people do wrong, the scolding, blame, and disgrace they suffer should hurt them. People who endure disgrace and a bad reputation without pain seem to have been given permission to do wrong without punishment. It’s better to feel a bite of conscience. Hence Afranius’ words, drawn from life. A wayward son says, ‘Oh, I’m miserable!’ and his strict father answers, ‘As long as something hurts him, let it be anything at all.’

⁴⁶ “They find uses for the remaining kinds of distress as well. Pity prompts help and relief for people suffering undeserved disasters. Even jealousy and emulation have their uses, they argue: you notice either that another has gained something you haven’t, or that another has gained what you have too. Remove fear, they say, and you remove all the care people take over their lives. Those most careful are the ones afraid of laws, magistrates, poverty, disgrace, death, and pain. They do, however, concede a need to prune these feelings. Uprooting them completely, they say, is impossible and unnecessary; in nearly everything they judge the moderate course best. Does their case sound entirely empty to you, or is there something to it?”

“They certainly seem to have a point. So I’m waiting to hear your answer.”

Book 4, Chapter 21

“Perhaps I’ll find one. But first, this:

- ⁴⁷ “Notice the Academics’ caution here. They put the relevant point quite openly: it’s the Stoics who are opposing the Peripatetics. I’m content to leave the sword fight to them. All I have to do is search out whichever position looks most like the truth. What starting point in this question, then, offers us a grasp of probability, the furthest limit of human thought? The definition Zeno gave of disturbance seems right to me. It means a movement in the mind contrary to nature, turned aside from reason. His briefer formulation is ‘an excessive impulse’: excessive means far beyond the steadiness nature gives.
- ⁴⁸ “What could I say against these definitions? Most of this is the work of sensible, sharp thinkers. Those ‘fires of the mind’ and ‘whetstones of the virtues,’ on the other hand, come from the showy display of rhetoricians. Really, can’t a brave man be brave unless he first loses his temper? That’s a gladiator’s notion. Yet even gladiators often show steadiness: ‘They talk, they meet, they ask for something, they make a demand.’ They seem calm rather than angry. Still, let there be a Pacideianus among them with the attitude Lucilius describes: “‘I’ll kill him and beat him, if that’s what you’re asking,’ he says. “‘But I think this will happen: I’ll take a blow to the face myself “‘Before I drive my sword into the thief’s stomach and lungs. “‘I hate the man. I’m angry as I fight. Nothing seems longer “‘Than the time till the other man fits the sword to his right hand. “‘That’s how carried away I am with eagerness, hatred, and anger at him.””

Book 4, Chapter 22

“But in Homer we see Ajax going forward quite cheerfully to fight Hector, without this gladiator’s anger.

- ⁴⁹ “Once he’d put on his armor, the way he advanced brought joy to his comrades and terror to the enemy. Hector himself, as Homer tells it, trembled in his whole chest and regretted issuing the challenge. Before they came to blows, they spoke to one another mildly and calmly. Even in the fight itself, they did

nothing angry or frenzied. I don't think Torquatus, who first won that surname, was angry when he stripped the Gaul of his neck-chain. Nor was Marcellus brave at Clastidium because he was angry.

- 50 "Africanus is closer to our time, so we know him better. I'd be willing to swear that anger wasn't burning in him when he covered Marcus Alliennius the Paelignian with his shield in battle and thrust his sword through the enemy's chest. Perhaps Lucius Brutus is a less certain case: boundless hatred of the tyrant may have driven him against Arruns rather wildly. Both, I observe, fell at close quarters from each other's blows. Still, what need is there to add anger? Must courage go mad before it can launch an attack? Hercules reached heaven through that very courage you insist on calling anger. Was he angry, do you think, in his struggles against the boar of Erymanthus or the lion of Nemea? Did anger make Theseus grab the Marathonian bull's horns? Consider whether courage may be entirely free of frenzy and anger entirely a sign of instability."

Book 4, Chapter 23

- 51 "Reason is essential to any courage at all. Settle in judgment and conviction that 'Human concerns deserve contempt; death deserves no attention; pains and hardships can be endured,' and courage stands strong and firm. Unless we're to label every forceful, energetic, spirited action angry! Think even of Scipio the chief priest, the man who proved the Stoic claim that the wise person never has merely private standing. I don't think he was angry with Tiberius Gracchus when he abandoned the inactive consul and, despite holding no office, gave a consul's order: everyone wanting to save the republic was to follow him.
- 52 "Whether my own public conduct includes any brave act, I don't know. Any I did perform certainly weren't angry ones. What resembles madness more closely than anger? Ennius' description, 'the start of insanity,' is excellent. Look

at the complexion, voice, eyes, breath, uncontrolled speech and deeds: where's sanity in any of it? In Homer's quarrel, could anything be uglier than Achilles or Agamemnon? Ajax's anger actually ended in madness and death. Courage needs no angry helper. Its own equipment, readiness, and weapons are quite sufficient. The same argument would recommend drunkenness for courage, and madness too: drunk and mad people often do things with unusual force. Ajax never lacked courage, yet in madness he showed the most, since "His greatest deed came as the Greeks began to yield: "His hand brought the decisive struggle to success."

Book 4, Chapter 24

"He restored the battle while insane.

- 53 "Does that make madness a useful thing? Look closely at what courage means in these definitions; a bad temper won't be needed. One calls it 'a mental state obedient to the highest law in bearing what happens.' Another says 'keeping judgment firm while undertaking and resisting things that appear alarming.' A third gives 'knowledge of frightening things, of their opposites, and of things to ignore completely, while maintaining a firm judgment about them.' Those were Sphaerus' definitions; the Stoics think him exceptionally good at defining. They're almost all alike overall, although different ones bring out different aspects of our shared ideas. Chrysippus makes it shorter. What does he say? 'Courage means knowing what must be endured, or a mental state that follows the highest law fearlessly in suffering and holding out.' Attack these men as freely as you like, as Carneades did: I'm afraid they may be the only real philosophers. Every one of these definitions reveals something of the idea of courage lying wrapped and hidden in all of us. Once revealed, would anyone demand an extra quality from fighting man, commander, or speaker, believing none could act courageously unless in a rage?

- 54 “The Stoics call all unwise people insane. Aren’t these their grounds? Imagine taking away disturbances, anger above all: their claim would sound monstrous. But as things stand, they explain it by comparing ‘All fools are insane’ to ‘All mud smells bad.’ ‘Not always, though.’ Disturb the mud and your nose will tell you. A bad-tempered person isn’t constantly angry either. Try provoking them and watch the frenzy appear. And this fighting anger—how does it behave back at home with wife, children, and slaves? Are its services needed there as well? Could agitation help the mind do anything better than steadiness would? Could anger occur with no mental agitation? Our people named things aptly. Every defect concerns character, but because anger was the ugliest, they reserved ‘ill-tempered’ for angry people alone.”

Book 4, Chapter 25

- 55 “Anger is thoroughly out of place in a speaker, though pretending to be angry isn’t. Do you think I’m angry when I speak more sharply and forcefully in a case? And when I write speeches after the business is finished and past, am I angry as I write? ‘Is anyone watching this? Tie him up!’ Do you think Aesopus ever acted those words in anger, or Accius wrote them in anger? Such scenes are performed brilliantly, and a speaker, if he really is a speaker, performs them better than any actor. But they’re performed gently, with a peaceful mind.
- “What craving lies behind a tribute to craving itself? Your examples are Themistocles and Demosthenes, then Pythagoras, Democritus, and Plato. Do you really call dedication to a pursuit craving? Even a commitment to the finest objects—such as those you mention—ought to stay peaceful and calm. And which philosophers would recommend distress, the most detestable thing there is? You may quote Afranius approvingly: ‘Let anything hurt him, provided something does.’ But his subject was a dissolute, ruined youth; ours is a wise, steady man. Leave even anger itself to a centurion, a standard-bearer, or others I

needn't name, lest I disclose the rhetoricians' secrets. Emotional energy can serve those unable to use reason. But I keep stressing that it's the wise person we're investigating."

Book 4, Chapter 26

- 56 "You also call emulation, jealousy, and pity useful. If you're able to help, why choose pity over help? Surely generosity doesn't require pity. Our task isn't to burden ourselves with distress on other people's account; it's to ease their distress where we can. What benefit comes from jealousy, or from the wrong kind of emulation that resembles rivalry? In emulation, another person's good hurts because you lack it; in jealousy, it hurts because someone besides you has it. If you want to get something, how could we approve your suffering instead of trying for it? Wanting exclusive possession is sheer madness. "And who could rightly praise moderate amounts of evil?
- 57 "With craving or desire in you, how could you avoid being someone who craves and desires? With anger, how avoid a bad temper; with anguish, anxiety; with fear, fearfulness? Must our wise person therefore be craving, angry, anxious, and fearful? The excellence of wisdom could occupy an enormously long account. To put it briefly, though, it is knowing divine and human matters and understanding what causes each thing. This knowledge leads it to copy the divine and rank everything human below virtue. You said you thought disturbances could enter such wisdom, as they enter a sea exposed to winds. What could shake so much dignity and steadiness? An unexpected, sudden event? Nothing possible for human beings can be unexpected to someone who has rehearsed it all beforehand. They tell us to prune the excess and preserve the natural element. But how can something be natural if the same thing can be excessive? Every one of these states springs from errors at its roots. Dig those roots right out: don't just cut back or lop off their growth."

Book 4, Chapter 27

- 58 “Still, your real question, I suspect, concerns yourself rather than the wise. You already believe the wise person has no disturbances; you want that freedom for yourself. Let’s examine how much philosophy’s treatments can do for mental diseases. A medicine for them certainly exists. Nature wasn’t so cruel an enemy to humanity as to provide a host of bodily remedies and leave minds with none. Indeed, she did better by the mind in this respect: bodily remedies have to come from outside, but minds contain their own means of recovery. Yet their higher, more divine excellence calls for correspondingly greater attention. Used carefully, reason discerns the best course; left unattended, it gets caught in a tangle of errors.
- 59 “Now, then, I must turn my whole talk toward you. You pretend to be asking about a wise person, but perhaps you’re asking about yourself.
“Different disturbances in my account call for different cures. One approach won’t soothe every distress: grief, pity, and envy each need a different medicine. For all four disturbances we must also decide between addressing the whole category—rejection of reason, or excessive impulse—and addressing its individual members, fear, craving, and the others. Another choice is whether to show that the particular cause of distress doesn’t deserve distress, or to rule distress out whatever its cause. If poverty upsets someone, for instance, do you argue against poverty’s being an evil, or against being upset about anything at all? The latter is plainly preferable. Failing to convince them about poverty would otherwise force you to allow distress. Remove distress with the arguments specifically suited to it, the ones we used yesterday, and in a sense you remove poverty’s evil too.”

Book 4, Chapter 28

- ⁶⁰ “Teaching that the source of delight and craving isn’t good, and the source of fear and distress isn’t bad, can indeed calm the mind and wash away any disturbance of this sort. But the reliable cure directed at the condition itself teaches something else: disturbances are wrong in themselves, neither necessary nor natural in any respect. We actually see sorrow lessen when we confront mourners with the weakness of an effeminate mind, or praise the dignity and steadiness of people who meet human misfortunes without turmoil. That often works even on people who count such events as evils but think they must be faced evenly. A believer in pleasure’s goodness can still be turned from lack of self-control; a believer in money’s goodness can still be turned from greed. The alternative argument, removing both distress and false belief together, would be more beneficial. It rarely succeeds, though, and isn’t suitable for the general public.
- ⁶¹ “Some distress can’t be eased by that medicine at all. Imagine being troubled by a complete lack of virtue, spirit, duty, or moral goodness in yourself. Those really are evils causing your anguish. You need another treatment, one available to every philosopher despite their disagreements elsewhere. They should all accept that mental movements opposed to right reason are wrong. Grant that the objects prompting fear and distress really are bad, or those prompting desire and delight really good: the mental movement remains wrong. The man we call brave and high-minded should, we expect, be steady, composed, dignified, and dismissive of everything human. Sorrow, fear, craving, or leaping delight are incompatible with that character. They mark people who rate the power of human events above that of their own minds.”

Book 4, Chapter 29

⁶² “As I said earlier, there’s therefore a treatment common to every philosopher: leave aside the character of what unsettles the mind and address the disturbance alone. Take desire first. If removing it is our only task, whether its object is good or not is beside the point; craving itself needs eliminating. Moral goodness might be the supreme good, or pleasure, or a combination of both, or the three categories of good. Whichever account you adopt, the argument for discouraging excessive desire must stay the same—even when virtue itself is desired excessively. Seeing human nature clearly is the whole basis for peace of mind. We should describe the condition we all share and the law governing life, making that nature stand out more plainly before our eyes.

⁶³ “Hence the story about Socrates has a point: at a performance of Euripides’ *Orestes*, he asked to hear its first three verses again: “‘No tale told aloud can be so dreadful, “‘Nor chance nor heaven’s wrath bring such an evil, “‘That human nature won’t bear its way through it.’ “Listing people who have endured their troubles helps persuade us that we too both can and ought to endure what comes. I’ve already set out the relief of distress in yesterday’s talk and in *Consolation*, my book written in the thick of grief and pain. I wasn’t a wise man. Chrysippus says not to treat mental swellings, so to speak, while still fresh. I did precisely that, forcing nature’s hand until the power of the medicine overcame the power of pain.”

Book 4, Chapter 30

⁶⁴ “But we’ve discussed distress enough. Fear is close to it, and we need to say a little about that. Just as distress concerns a present evil, fear concerns a future one. So some used to call fear a kind of distress; others called it ‘trouble in

advance,’ because it was like a guide leading the trouble that followed. The arguments that help us bear what’s upon us also help us disregard what’s coming. In both cases, we must take care not to do anything low, submissive, soft, unmanly, broken, or abject. We need to discuss the instability, weakness, and unreliability of fear itself. Even so, it helps a great deal to look down on the actual things we fear. So, whether by chance or design, it worked out very conveniently that we discussed death and pain, the things most feared, on the first and second days. If those arguments have convinced us, we’ve been freed from fear to a large extent.”

Book 4, Chapter 31

“That’s enough about the belief in evils.

- ⁶⁵ “Turn now to supposed goods: desire and delight. To me, one point explains the entire subject of mental disturbance. Every disturbance is ours to control; judgment admits each one, and each is voluntary. We have to uproot this error and take away this belief. Things counted as evils must become bearable; things counted as great, delightful goods must lose their power to excite. Both good and evil cases share another feature. Even if persuading someone that none of the mind’s disturbing objects deserves the name good or bad proves difficult, each particular movement still needs its own treatment. Correcting ill will, love, anxiety, and fear will require four different approaches.
- ⁶⁶ “Following the account of good and evil I approve of most, it would be easy to deny that an unwise person can ever feel delight, since they never have anything good. But we’re speaking in everyday terms now. Let’s grant that the supposed goods really are good: offices, wealth, pleasures, and the rest. Even so, leaping, unrestrained delight in possessing these very things is shameful. We may allow laughter but still criticize guffawing. The mind’s outpouring in delight is defective in the same way as its shrinking in pain. Desire shows the same instability in pursuing as delight does in enjoying. People excessively uplifted by delight

are rightly judged unstable, just like those excessively crushed by trouble. And since envy belongs to distress, while taking pleasure in others' misfortunes belongs to delight, we usually correct both by pointing out a certain monstrous cruelty in them. Just as it's proper to be cautious but not to be afraid, it's proper to feel joy but not delight. For teaching purposes, we're distinguishing delight from joy.

- ⁶⁷ “Earlier we said that no shrinking of spirit is ever right, though a rising of spirit can be. Compare two ways of feeling joy. Naevius’ Hector says: “‘Father, praise from you delights me: you yourself have won praise.’” Trabea’s character says instead: “‘Silver will charm the madam; she’ll watch every nod of mine, “‘What I want, what I’m pursuing. Arriving, I’ll tap the door with a finger, “‘And it will swing open. At the sudden sight of me, Chrysis “‘Will come eagerly toward me, craving my arms around her; “‘She’ll surrender herself to me.’” Now hear how splendid he considers his prospects: “‘My good fortune will leave Fortune herself behind.’”

Book 4, Chapter 32

- ⁶⁸ “Anyone who pays careful attention has only to look deeply to see how shameful this delight is.

“Getting swept up in delight during sex is shameful, and so is pursuing sex with desire blazing in your mind. In fact, nothing I can think of matches the instability of what people commonly call love—by Hercules, I can’t find a different name for it either. Caecilius judges ‘the person who won’t rank him highest among gods a fool or someone ignorant of how things are.’

Love has the power

““To decide who is to lose his mind,

““Who is to think clearly, who is to recover, who is to be struck with sickness,

““[...]

““Who is to win love back, who is to be wanted, who is to be summoned.”

⁶⁹ “What an excellent guide to a better life poetry turns out to be! It would seat love, the promoter of instability and disgrace, among the gods in council. I mean comedy: without our approval of these disgraceful acts, comedy couldn’t exist at all. Now consider tragedy. The leader of the Argonauts says: “Love, more than honor, was your reason for saving me.’ “And look at what followed: Medea’s love started such blazing misery! Another poet even lets her tell her father boldly that her ‘husband was the man Love gave her—Love, stronger and mightier than her father.’”

Book 4, Chapter 33

⁷⁰ “Leave the poets to their games: their tales involve Jupiter himself in this disgrace, as we see. Now for the philosophers, our teachers of virtue. They insist love isn’t a matter of illicit sex. In their dispute with Epicurus on this point, I think he’s telling little that’s untrue. What sort of love is this supposed friendship-love? Why is an ugly youth never its object, nor a good-looking old man? I suspect the practice began in Greece’s gymnasiums, where these affairs have freedom and permission. Ennius puts it well: “Stripping in front of fellow citizens is where disgrace starts.’ “They may remain chaste—I recognize that possibility—but they still have worry and anxiety. Indeed, holding back and restraining themselves makes these worse.

⁷¹ “I’ll leave aside love affairs with women, to which nature has allowed more freedom. Does anyone mistake the poets’ meaning in Ganymede’s kidnapping? Is anyone unclear about Laius’ words and desires in Euripides? Look, too, at what the finest poets, men of the greatest learning, disclose about themselves in their poems and songs. Alcaeus was known at home as a courageous man: just consider his writing on love for youths! Anacreon devotes his whole poetry to love. The writings of Ibycus from Rhegium reveal a love burning hotter than any of theirs.”

Book 4, Chapter 34

“We see that all these men’s loves are full of craving. Yet we philosophers have come forward to lend love authority, with our own Plato leading us. Dicaearchus has good reason to criticize him.

72 “According to the Stoics, even the wise man will love. Their definition makes love ‘an effort toward making a friendship prompted by the sight of beauty.’ If any such thing exists without worries, longings, cares, or sighing, I have no objection. There would be no craving in it, whereas craving is what we’re discussing. But there’s certainly another love, scarcely if at all removed from madness. Think of the character in *The Woman of Leucas*: ‘If any god actually has concern for me’—

73 “Of course, all the gods had to concern themselves with how this man could enjoy the pleasure of love! ‘Oh, I’m unhappy!’ Nothing could be truer. The other character puts it well too: ‘Are you sane, wailing so pointlessly?’ So he seems insane even to his own people. And what tragic scenes he creates! “You, holy Apollo, bring help! And you, ruler of the rivers, “Neptune, I call on you, and on you too, Winds!’ “He thinks he’ll set the whole universe in motion to relieve his love. He leaves out only Venus, as unfair: ‘Why should I call on you, Venus?’ He says she’s too full of craving to care about anything—as though he himself weren’t doing and saying such disgraceful things because of craving.”

74 —

Book 4, Chapter 35

“For someone in that state, then, this treatment must be applied: show how trivial the thing he craves is, how contemptible, how utterly worthless; how easily it can be obtained elsewhere or in another way, or ignored altogether.

Sometimes he should also be drawn away to other interests, worries, cares, and business. Finally, like sick people who aren't recovering, he should often be treated by a change of place.

- 75 “One proposal is to use a new love to knock out the old, as a nail knocks out another nail. Most important, though, is reminding him of love’s tremendous madness. No other mental disturbance is more violent, surely. We needn’t even bring charges against the acts themselves: illicit sex, seduction, adultery, even incest. All are ugly enough to deserve blame. Yet put them aside and the mental disturbance involved in love remains ugly on its own.
- 76 “Leave the outright madness aside. Even behavior said to be moderate shows such instability: “Injuries, “Suspensions, hostilities, truces, “War, then peace once more! Ask for these uncertain things “To be made certain by reason, and your efforts will match “The effort to be reasonably insane.’ “Surely the sheer wrongness of this shifting, inconsistent mind ought to drive anyone away? We also need to establish the rule applying to every disturbance: no disturbance exists without belief, none is admitted without judgment, none is involuntary. If love came from nature, everybody would love all the time and love the same thing. Neither shame nor reflection nor having had enough would turn different people away from it.”

Book 4, Chapter 36

“As for anger, there’s no doubt it’s insanity as long as it disturbs the mind. Its impulse produces even a quarrel between brothers like this:

- 77 “What man anywhere on earth has outdone you in shamelessness?”

“And who has outdone you in wickedness?”—

“You know what follows. In alternating lines the brothers hurl the gravest insults at each other. It’s easy to see they’re the sons of Atreus, the man who plans a new punishment for his brother:

“I must stir up a greater mass, a greater evil,

“To batter and crush his bitter heart.’

“So where does this mass burst out? Listen to Thyestes:

“My brother himself urges me, wretched as I am,

“To chew my own sons with my jaws—’

“He serves him their entrails. Where can madness go that anger won’t go too? That’s why we rightly say angry people have gone out of control—that is, out of the control of judgment, reason, and mind. These should have control over the whole spirit.

- 78 “We must either remove the people they’re trying to attack until they collect themselves—what is collecting yourself but bringing the mind’s scattered parts back into their places?—or ask and beg them, if they have any power to take revenge, to put it off to another time until their anger cools. ‘Cools’ certainly means a heat of mind aroused against reason’s wishes. Hence the praise for what Archytas said when he’d become very angry with his estate manager: ‘How I’d have treated you if I weren’t angry!’”

Book 4, Chapter 37

- 79 “What now of those who pronounce anger useful or natural? Does madness have a use? Could something opposed by reason possibly accord with nature? If anger belonged to nature, why would it affect one person more readily than another? Since it’s a wish for revenge, why would it stop before revenge came? Why would anyone feel remorse for angry deeds? Take King Alexander: after he killed his companion Clitus, remorse nearly drove him to kill himself. With these facts before us, surely we can’t doubt that this mental movement too

depends entirely on belief and choice. Mental illnesses such as greed or hunger for glory plainly grow from valuing their objects highly—the very objects making the mind sick. This should teach us that belief underlies every disturbance as well.

80 “Confidence means firm mental trust. If it is a sort of knowledge, a solid belief held by someone who doesn’t accept things rashly, then fear is distrust concerning an evil expected and threatening. Hope expects good; expecting evil must therefore mean fear. Fear is bad, and the other disturbances are bad as well. Knowledge gives steadiness, then, while error gives disturbance. Those we call naturally angry, pitying, envious, and so forth have something like an unhealthy mental constitution. They can nevertheless be healed. The story of Socrates is an example. At a gathering, Zopyrus, who claimed he could tell anyone’s character from their looks, attributed a collection of faults to Socrates. Everyone else laughed, finding no such faults in him. Socrates defended Zopyrus: he said those qualities were inborn in him, but reason had enabled him to throw them off.

81 “So even someone enjoying excellent bodily health may seem naturally more prone to a particular disease. In the same way, different minds are more inclined to different defects. But for those said to be defective through fault rather than nature, their defects consist of false beliefs about good and bad things, so that one person is more prone to one sort of mental movement and disturbance than another. As in the body, a condition that has grown old is harder to drive out than a disturbance. A sudden swelling of the eyes is cured sooner than a long-standing inflammation is removed.”

Book 4, Chapter 38

- 82 “But now we know the cause of disturbances: they all arise from judgments based on beliefs and from acts of will. So let’s bring this discussion to an end. We ought to know that, once we’ve understood the highest good and the worst evil as far as a human can understand them, we can ask nothing greater or more useful from philosophy than what we’ve discussed during these four days. We’ve learned to look down on death and to make pain easier to bear. To these we’ve added the calming of distress, which is the greatest evil a person faces. Every mental disturbance is certainly serious and not much different from madness. Still, when people are in a disturbance of fear, delight, or desire, we usually just call them agitated and disturbed. But people who’ve given themselves over to distress we call miserable, broken, burdened with hardship, and afflicted with disaster.
- 83 “So our discussing distress separately from the other disturbances seems not to have happened by accident, but to have been deliberately proposed by you. Distress is the source and chief cause of misery. Yet there is one cure for both distress and the mind’s other diseases: they’re all matters of belief and will, taken on because it seems right to do so. Philosophy promises to pull this error out completely, like the root of every evil.
- 84 “Let philosophy work on us, then; let it heal us. Happiness is impossible with these evils lodged inside, and so is mental health. One option is to deny reason any power to accomplish things, even though nothing is rightly done without it. Otherwise, since philosophy works by weighing arguments against each other, let’s turn to it for every aid and resource for a good, happy life—if goodness and happiness are what we want.”

Book 5, Chapter 1

- ¹ Brutus, this fifth day will bring our discussions at Tusculum to an end. That day's discussion was about the view you approve of most: virtue is enough, by itself, for a happy life. I've seen how strongly you support it, both in the book you wrote to me with such care and in many conversations with you. It's hard to prove, given all the many different ways fortune can hurt us. Still, it's a claim worth working hard to make easier to accept. Nothing in the whole field of philosophy could be said with greater weight or grandeur.
- ² The first people to devote themselves to philosophy put everything else aside and gave their whole attention to finding the best way to live. That was what drove them. Surely it was the hope of living happily that made them put so much care and effort into their work. If they discovered virtue and brought it to perfection, and if virtue gives us enough protection to live happily, who wouldn't think their work on philosophy was splendidly spent, and that ours is too? But suppose virtue is exposed to all sorts of unpredictable accidents and is a slave to fortune, without enough strength to defend itself. Then I'm afraid we may have to pin our hopes for happiness on prayers rather than confidence in virtue.
- ³ Sometimes, when I think over the misfortunes I've suffered and the harsh treatment fortune has given me, I begin to doubt this view. I grow afraid of how weak and easily broken human beings are. Nature gave us frail bodies, along with incurable diseases and unbearable pains. I worry that she also gave us minds that share our bodies' pain and, quite apart from that, are caught in troubles and anxieties of their own.
- ⁴ But I correct myself here. I'm judging virtue's strength from other people's weakness, and perhaps my own, instead of from virtue itself. If virtue exists at all—and your uncle, Brutus, has put that doubt to rest—it rises above every-

thing that can happen to a human being. It looks down on all of it and dismisses human misfortunes. Free of any fault, it thinks nothing but itself is its concern. We, on the other hand, make approaching troubles worse through fear and present troubles worse through grief. Then we'd rather blame the way things are than our own mistaken judgment.

Book 5, Chapter 2

- ⁵ We must look to philosophy to put this fault right, along with every other failing and wrong of ours. Our own inclinations and enthusiasm drew us into her arms when we were young. Now, after a terrible storm has battered us with these very serious misfortunes, we've fled back to the same harbor we once sailed out of. Philosophy, you guide our lives, you seek out virtue and drive out our faults! What could we have been without you? What could human life itself have been? You brought cities into being. You called scattered human beings together into a shared life. You first joined them through homes, then through marriage, then through common writing and speech. You discovered laws. You taught us decent behavior and an ordered way of life. We run to you for shelter and ask you for help. Before, we gave ourselves largely to you; now we give ourselves completely, holding nothing back. One day lived well, following your teaching, is worth more than an eternity spent doing wrong.
- ⁶ Who else could give us the help you give? It was you who made our lives peaceful and freed us from being terrified of death. But people don't praise philosophy as her service to humanity deserves. Far from it: most neglect her, and many actually speak against her. Who would dare speak against the mother of human life and make himself guilty of killing a parent? How could anyone be so wickedly ungrateful that he brings charges against her? Even if he couldn't understand her very well, he ought to hold her in respect. I suppose ignorance

explains this mistake, this darkness covering people's minds. They can't see far enough into the past to recognize that philosophers were the first to give human life its organized form.

Book 5, Chapter 3

- ⁷ We can see that the activity is extremely old, though we admit the name is recent. Who could deny that wisdom itself is ancient, not just as a thing but as a name too? For people long ago, it earned that very beautiful name through knowledge of divine and human matters and of the beginnings and causes of everything. So we've learned that the Seven, whom the Greeks called and considered sophoi, and our people 'wise men,' really were wise and were thought to be so. The same is true of Lycurgus, many centuries earlier. Homer too is said to have lived in his time, before this city was founded. And already in the age of heroes there were Odysseus and Nestor.
- ⁸ We wouldn't have been told that Atlas holds up the sky, that Prometheus is fastened to the Caucasus, or that Cepheus is among the stars with his wife, son-in-law, and daughter, if their godlike understanding of the heavens hadn't drawn their names into misleading myths. Following their example, everyone who devoted his efforts to studying nature was considered and called wise. That name for them lasted down to Pythagoras' time. Heraclides of Pontus, a student of Plato and an exceptionally learned man, writes that Pythagoras is said to have visited Phlius. There he spoke at length and with learning on certain subjects with Leon, the ruler of the Phliasians. Impressed by his intelligence and skill in speaking, Leon asked which craft he was most sure of his expertise in. Pythagoras replied that he didn't know any craft, but was a philosopher. Leon was surprised by the unfamiliar name. He asked who philosophers were and what made them different from other people.

⁹ Pythagoras gave this answer. To him, our lives resembled a great fair, with games staged on a huge scale and people gathering from every part of Greece. One group trained their bodies, hoping for the fame and distinction of winning a crown. Another came to buy or sell, drawn by earnings and profit. A third group, perhaps the freest of all, wanted neither cheers nor money. Their purpose was to watch: they looked carefully at the proceedings and how they were carried out. Our arrival in this life, he said, is rather like leaving a city to join the crowds at a fair. We have left another life and another state of existence. Some of us become slaves to fame, some to money. Only a few think everything else worthless and devote their attention to understanding nature. His name for these people was ‘lovers of wisdom,’ which is what the word “philosophers” means. At the fair, the activity most suited to a free person was simply to watch, without getting anything for oneself. In our lives too, observing and understanding things ranks far above all other pursuits.

Book 5, Chapter 4

¹⁰ Besides coming up with the name, Pythagoras did much to expand the subject itself. He went to Italy after the conversation at Phlius. There, in the Greek region known as Greater Greece, he introduced excellent practices and skills for public as well as private life. We may have another occasion to speak about his teaching. Early philosophy, all the way down to Socrates, dealt with numbers and motion, the origins of everything and what everything passes back into. Socrates himself had been taught by Archelaus, a pupil of Anaxagoras. Those philosophers took pains to work out how large the stars were, how far apart, and how they moved, along with everything else in the sky. With Socrates, for the first time, philosophy left the heavens and came to live in our cities—even inside our homes. He required it to investigate how people live and behave, and which things are good or bad.

- ¹¹ Socrates had many ways of arguing, a wide range of subjects, and a great intellect. Plato preserved all this in his writings and gave it lasting honor. The result was several different schools of philosophers who disagreed with one another. We have chiefly followed the approach we believed Socrates used: we kept our own opinions to ourselves, freed others from their mistakes, and looked in every discussion for what came closest to the truth. Carneades practiced this method with great sharpness and fullness. We've often argued in that way ourselves, and recently did so at Tusculum. I've written out the conversations of four days in the earlier books and sent them to you. On the fifth day, when we'd sat down in the same place, this was the question put forward for discussion:

Book 5, Chapter 5

- ¹² "I don't think virtue can do enough to make a life happy."
"But, by Hercules, my dear Brutus certainly thinks it can. With your permission, I put his judgment far above yours."
"I don't doubt it. But we're not discussing how much you love him. I want you to argue about the view I said I held, and what to make of it."
"So you're saying virtue can't do enough for a happy life?"
"That's exactly what I'm saying."
"Then tell me this. Does virtue give enough support to live correctly, morally, and in a way that deserves praise—in short, to live well?"
"Certainly it does."
"Can you then avoid calling someone unhappy if he lives badly? Or can you admit that someone lives well but deny that he lives happily?"
"Why couldn't I? Even under torture you can live correctly, morally, and in a way that deserves praise, and so live well. You just have to understand what I mean here by 'well.' I mean with steadiness, seriousness, wisdom, and courage."
- ¹³ "These qualities can even be thrown onto the torture rack. A happy life doesn't come anywhere near it."

“Then what happens? Is a happy life the only thing left outside the door, on the prison’s doorstep? Steadiness, seriousness, courage, wisdom, and all the other virtues are dragged off to the torturer. They refuse no punishment or pain. Is happiness left behind?”

“If you’re going to make any progress, you’ll have to look for some fresh arguments. Those don’t move me at all, not just because they’re so familiar, but much more because those Stoic arguments are like certain light wines: they lose all their strength when you add water. They’re more enjoyable to taste than to drink down. That parade of virtues stretched on the rack, for example, puts some very dignified pictures before our eyes. You’d think a happy life would run straight to them and never let them be abandoned by it.

- 14 “But move your attention from that painting and those pictures of virtues to the actual facts, and you’re left with this bare question: can anyone be happy while being tortured? That’s what we should examine now. Don’t worry that the virtues will protest and complain that a happy life has deserted them. No virtue can lack good judgment. And good judgment itself can see that not all good people are happy as well. It remembers a great deal about Marcus Atilius, Quintus Caepio, and Manius Aquilius. If you want pictures instead of actual facts, good judgment itself holds happiness back as it tries to climb onto the rack. It says happiness has nothing at all in common with pain and torture.”

Book 5, Chapter 6

- 15 “I’m perfectly willing to let you take that approach. Still, it’s unfair for you to dictate how I should make my argument. But let me ask you: do we think we accomplished anything on the previous days, or nothing at all?”
- “We certainly did accomplish something, and quite a lot.”
- “Then if that’s so, this question is already largely settled, and we’re almost at the end of it.”
- “How, exactly?”

“Because wild disturbances and violent upheavals toss the mind about. They rush ahead on reckless impulse and push all reason aside. They leave no room for a happy life. How can someone who fears death or pain avoid being unhappy? Pain is often with us; death is always hanging over us. What if, as usually happens, he also fears poverty, disgrace, and a bad reputation? What if he fears disability and blindness? Or finally, slavery, which has often happened not just to individuals but to powerful nations?

16 “Can anyone who fears these things be happy? And what about someone who not only fears their coming but actually bears and endures them now? Add exile, bereavement, and the loss of children to the list. When these things break him and grief crushes him, can he be anything but utterly unhappy? Or take the person we see on fire with desire, out of his mind, going after everything in a frenzy with an appetite that can’t be filled. The more pleasure he draws in from every direction, the stronger and fiercer his thirst becomes. Wouldn’t you be right to call him utterly unhappy? And the person carried away by shallow, empty delight, jumping for joy and getting wildly excited for no reason—isn’t he more unhappy the happier he thinks he is? So these people are unhappy. The opposite people are happy: no fears frighten them, no grief eats away at them, no desires drive them on, no worthless bursts of joy dissolve them in enfeebling pleasures. We recognize a calm sea when not even the slightest breeze stirs its surface. In the same way, we recognize a quiet, peaceful mind when there’s no disturbance capable of shaking it. Suppose someone considers the force of fortune and all the human experiences that can happen to anyone bearable, so that neither fear nor distress touches him. Suppose he also craves nothing and isn’t carried away by any empty pleasure in his mind. Why wouldn’t he be happy?

17 “And if virtue brings this about, why wouldn’t virtue itself make people happy, all on its own?”

Book 5, Chapter 7

“You certainly can’t deny one of those points: people are happy if they fear nothing, aren’t distressed by anything, crave nothing, and aren’t carried away by uncontrolled delight. So I grant you that. And the other point is no longer open to question. Our earlier discussions established that a wise person is free of every mental disturbance.”

“Then surely the matter is settled.

18 “We seem to have reached the end of the question.”

“Nearly, yes.”

“Still, that’s the mathematicians’ way of doing things, not the philosophers’. When geometers want to demonstrate something, they take anything relevant that they’ve proved before as already granted and established. They explain only the point they haven’t previously set out in writing. Philosophers, on the other hand, bring together everything that bears on whatever subject they’re dealing with, even if they’ve discussed it elsewhere. Otherwise, why would a Stoic have much to say when asked whether virtue can do enough for a happy life? He could simply answer that he’d already shown that nothing is good except what is morally right. Once that’s proved, it follows that virtue is enough for a happy life. And just as the second claim follows from the first, the first follows from the second: if virtue is enough for a happy life, then nothing but what is morally right is good.

19 “But they don’t proceed that way. They write separate books on moral rightness and on the highest good. Those establish that virtue has enough power to make a life happy, yet they discuss that question separately too. Each topic needs to be treated with arguments and reminders suited specifically to it, especially one as important as this. Don’t think philosophy has ever made a more magnificent statement or a richer or greater promise. What does she promise?

Good gods! She promises that anyone who obeys her laws will always be armed against fortune, will have within himself every resource for living well and happily, and, in short, will always be happy.

- 20 “I’ll see later what she achieves. For now, I put great value on the promise itself. Xerxes was loaded with all fortune’s gifts and rewards. His cavalry, his infantry, his huge fleet, his limitless weight of gold—none of it satisfied him. He offered a prize to anyone who discovered a new pleasure. Even that didn’t satisfy him: desire will never find an end. I wish we could use a prize to draw out someone who could bring us something to make our belief in this promise firmer.”

Book 5, Chapter 8

- 21 “I’d like that too, but let me raise a small question. Yes, I accept that the two statements you’ve put forward imply each other. Make moral rightness the only good, and you have to accept that virtue makes life happy. Put happiness in virtue, and you have to rule out any good apart from virtue. Your Brutus, though, follows Aristo and Antiochus on this, and disagrees. He thinks virtue can do it even when other good things exist.”

“What then?

- 22 “Do you think I’m going to argue against Brutus?”

“That’s for you to decide. It isn’t my place to set limits.”

“Let’s leave the question of consistency with each person’s views for another occasion. Antiochus and I have often disagreed about this. I also disagreed recently with Aristo, when I stayed at his house in Athens as a military commander. My view was that nobody could be happy while suffering evils. Yet if bodily conditions or changes of fortune count as evils, even the wise person may suffer them. They answered with arguments Antiochus has put in writing in several places. Virtue, they said, can make life happy on its own, though not as happy as possible. They went on to say that most things take their names

from what makes up most of them, even with a part missing. Take strength, health, wealth, honor, or fame: we assess their kind, not a numerical total. Similarly, a life might limp in one part and still earn the name happy from the far larger part.

- ²³ “There’s no pressing need to go through those details now. Still, the reasoning seems rather inconsistent to me. What more does a happy person need in order to become happier? I can’t understand that: if he lacks something, he isn’t happy to begin with. Their claim that we name and judge each thing by its larger part does work in some cases. But remember their three kinds of bad things. Imagine a person suffering every evil of two kinds. Nothing in his fortunes goes his way, and pain of every sort crushes and wears out his body. Shall we say that he lacks only a little of what makes life happy, never mind what makes it as happy as possible?”

Book 5, Chapter 9

- ²⁴ “This was the difficulty that proved too much for Theophrastus. In his judgment, beatings, torture, agonies, the ruin of one’s country, exile, and losing one’s children could do a great deal to make life wretched and bad. With that low, dispirited view, he couldn’t bring himself to speak in a grand, confident way. Whether his view was right isn’t the issue; at least he kept his reasoning consistent. Once you accept someone’s starting points, I don’t usually approve of attacking what follows from them. No philosopher is more refined or learned than Theophrastus. People hardly object when he divides good things into three kinds. Yet everyone attacks him, first over his book about happiness, where he sets out many arguments against calling a tortured, tormented person happy. He’s even supposed to have written there that happiness won’t mount the wheel—the Greeks use that as an instrument of torture. In fact, he never says it, anywhere. But the things he does say have that effect.

- ²⁵ “If I’ve granted him that bodily pains are bad, and that wrecked fortunes are bad, can I get angry with him for saying that not all good people are happy? Every good person can suffer the things he counts as bad. Theophrastus is also attacked in every philosopher’s books and lectures because, in his *Callisthenes*, he praised this saying: “Fortune runs our lives, not wisdom.” “They say no philosopher has ever said anything more spineless. They’re right about that, but I don’t see how he could have said anything more consistent. If there are so many good things in the body, and so many outside it, subject to chance and fortune, doesn’t it follow that fortune has more power than judgment? She’s in charge of both external things and things to do with the body.
- ²⁶ “Should we copy Epicurus instead? Plenty of his remarks are excellent, and he makes them often. He just doesn’t take the trouble to keep them consistent with one another. Consider his praise of eating simply. Certainly a philosopher might say that: Socrates or Antisthenes, for instance, but not a man who has made pleasure the ultimate good. Or take his denial that a pleasant life is possible without moral conduct, wisdom, and justice. Nothing could be weightier or more worthy of philosophy—if only he didn’t turn that very ‘moral conduct, wisdom, and justice’ into something aimed at pleasure. Or what could improve on his remark that fortune plays only a small part in a wise person’s life? But can he say that? Pain, he tells us, isn’t merely the worst evil; it’s the only evil. Even as he boasts most defiantly against fortune, the fiercest pains may press on every part of his body. Metrodorus puts the same claim in finer language still:
- ²⁷ “‘I’ve got ahead of you, Fortune,’ he says, ‘and caught you. I’ve blocked all your ways in, so you can’t come anywhere near me.’ Splendid—if Aristo of Chios or Zeno the Stoic were saying it. They thought nothing was bad except what was morally wrong. But you, Metrodorus? You’ve put everything good inside our guts and marrow. You’ve defined the highest good as a sound bodily condition and a confident expectation that it will continue. Have you blocked Fortune’s ways in? How? You can be stripped of that good of yours this very moment.”

Book 5, Chapter 10

“Yet the untrained are taken in by this. Sayings like these draw crowds to those men.

- 28 “A sharp thinker, though, looks not at what each person says but at what his position requires him to say. Take the very claim we’ve taken on in this discussion: we want all good people to be happy at all times. It’s clear whom I mean by good people. We use both ‘wise’ and ‘good’ for people fully equipped and furnished with every virtue. Let’s see who should be called happy.
- 29 “I think they are people who have good things with nothing bad mixed in. When we say someone is happy, the word means nothing else than a full collection of good things with everything bad kept out. Virtue can’t achieve that if anything besides itself is good. A whole crowd of bad things will be there, if we count these as bad: poverty, an obscure background, low standing, isolation, the loss of loved ones, severe bodily pain, ruined health, disability, blindness, the fall of one’s country, exile, and finally slavery. A wise person can face all these many, serious troubles—and still more can happen. Chance brings them, and it can strike a wise person. But if they’re bad, who can guarantee that a wise person will always be happy, when he might be in the middle of them all at once?
- 30 “So I can’t readily accept this from Brutus, dear as he is to me, or from our shared teachers. Nor can I accept it from those earlier thinkers, Aristotle, Speusippus, Xenocrates, and Polemo. They classify the things I listed as bad, but still claim uninterrupted happiness for the wise person. Perhaps they’re attracted by that splendid, beautiful declaration, one so worthy of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato. Then they must resolve to despise what now dazzles them: strength and health, beauty and wealth, honors and influence. They must also regard the opposite conditions as nothing. Only then can they announce as

loudly as they please: fortune can attack, public opinion can turn against us, pain and poverty can come, but none frightens us. We have everything in ourselves; we acknowledge no good that lies outside our control.

- 31 “But there’s no accepting both positions at once: speaking with such greatness and strength of character, while counting the same things good and bad as the crowd does. Attracted by the glory of the declaration, Epicurus now comes forward. Even he—would you believe it!—claims lasting happiness for the wise. The claim impresses him with its dignity. If he actually heard himself, though, he’d never make it. Could anything be less consistent? The very man who calls pain the greatest evil, or even the only evil, expects the wise person to cry out under torture, ‘This feels so good!’ Don’t assess philosophers by a remark here and there, then. Look at whether their thinking stays coherent and consistent throughout.”

Book 5, Chapter 11

- 32 “You’re bringing me around to your view. But watch out that your own consistency doesn’t come up short.”
“How so?”
“I recently read your fourth book *On Ends*. There, arguing against Cato, you seemed to want to show that Zeno and the Peripatetics differed only in their new vocabulary. I agree with that. If it’s true, and Zeno can consistently say virtue has enough power for a happy life, why can’t the Peripatetics say the same? Surely we ought to look at the substance, not the words.”
- 33 “You’re bringing sealed documents against me and calling witnesses to something I once said or wrote. Use that approach with people who argue under rules they’ve laid down. We live from day to day. We say whatever has struck our minds as plausible, and so we’re the only ones who are free. Still, since we were just talking about consistency, I don’t think the question here is whether

Zeno and his student Aristo were right to hold that only what is morally right is good. The question is whether, if that were so, it would follow consistently that he placed the whole of happiness in virtue alone.

- 34 “So let’s certainly grant Brutus that a wise person is always happy. He can look after his own consistency. And who deserves the glory of that claim more than he does? But let’s hold on to this ourselves: the same person is also as happy as anyone can be.”

Book 5, Chapter 12

“Perhaps Zeno of Citium seems to have wormed his way into ancient philosophy, an obscure foreigner who makes up words. In that case, let’s ground this important claim in Plato’s authority. He often uses language that declares nothing good except virtue. In the *Gorgias*, for instance, Socrates is asked whether he thinks Archelaus, the son of Perdiccas, is happy. Archelaus was then considered exceptionally fortunate. ‘I don’t know,’ Socrates says.

- 35 “‘I’ve never talked with him.’ ‘Really? Can’t you know any other way?’ ‘Not at all.’ ‘So you can’t even say whether the great king of Persia is happy?’ ‘How could I, when I don’t know how educated or how good a man he is?’ ‘What? You think that’s what a happy life depends on?’ ‘That’s exactly what I think: good people are happy, bad people unhappy.’ ‘Then Archelaus is unhappy?’ ‘Certainly, if he’s unjust.’
- 36 “Doesn’t he seem to put the whole happy life in virtue alone here? And what does the same man say in the Funeral Speech? ‘A man whose resources for happiness all depend on himself has arranged his life in the best way. They aren’t tied to other people’s good or bad luck, forced to hang on someone else’s outcomes and drift with them. This is the self-controlled person, the courageous one, the wise one. As other advantages come and go, and especially as children are born and die, he will follow and obey that old instruction. He will never be

too joyful or grieve too much, because he will always place all his hopes for himself in himself.’ So our whole argument will flow from this source in Plato, a source we can think of as sacred and deeply revered.”

Book 5, Chapter 13

“Where could we better begin, then, than with nature, our common parent?

- 37 “She has wanted everything she produces to be complete in its own kind. That applies not only to animals but also to things that grow from the earth and are supported by their roots. So among trees, vines, and the smaller plants that can’t rise far above the ground, some stay green all year. Others lose their leaves in winter and grow them again when spring warms them. Every one of them thrives through some movement within itself, with its own seeds enclosed in it, and produces flowers, crops, or berries. Everything in every one of them is complete, as far as it can be, if no force gets in the way.
- 38 “We can see nature’s own power even more easily in animals, because she has given them sensation. She wanted some animals to swim and live in water, others to fly and enjoy the open sky, some to crawl, and some to walk. Among these animals, some range alone, others gather in groups. Some are wild, some tame, some hidden away and covered by earth. Each keeps to its own function. Unable to change over to the life of a different kind of creature, it stays within nature’s law. Nature has given different animals their own special qualities, and each keeps its own without departing from it. In the same way, she has given human beings something far superior. Yet we should call things superior only when there’s something to compare them with. The human mind, drawn from the divine mind, can be compared with nothing but God himself, if it’s permissible to say so.

39 “So when this mind has been developed, and its vision has been looked after so that errors don’t blind it, it becomes a perfect mind. That is, it becomes fully developed reason, which is the same thing as virtue. Everything that lacks nothing is happy, everything that is full and complete in its own kind. That completeness is precisely what belongs to virtue. So everyone who possesses virtue is certainly happy.

“On this I agree with Brutus—that is, with Aristotle, Xenocrates, Speusippus, and Polemo. But I think such people are also as happy as anyone can be.

40 “What could someone lack for a happy life if he trusts the good things he has? And how could someone be happy if he doesn’t trust them? Yet anyone who divides good things into three classes is bound to lack that trust.”

Book 5, Chapter 14

“What grounds for confidence are there in bodily strength, or in fortune’s steadiness? Happiness requires a good that stays firmly in place, secure and lasting. Do any of their goods meet that description? They remind me of a Spartan’s answer to a merchant. The merchant boasted of sending many ships out along every coast. ‘Not much to wish for,’ the Spartan replied, ‘a fortune hanging on ships’ ropes.’ Surely anything we might lose must be left out of the class of things that make happiness complete. What our happiness depends on must never dry up, burn out, or collapse. If we’re afraid that some part of it may be lost, we can’t be happy.

41 “We want a happy person to be safe, impossible to conquer, protected and defended. He shouldn’t have just a little fear; he should have none. We call someone harmless not because he does little harm but because he does none. In the same way, we should call someone fearless not because he has little fear but because he’s completely free of fear. What else is courage but a state of mind

that patiently faces danger, hardship, and pain, while keeping far away from all fear? Things certainly couldn't work that way unless all good lay in moral rightness alone.

- 42 “And how can anyone have that freedom from worry which we so much want and seek, if a crowd of bad things is either with him or able to reach him? By freedom from worry I now mean freedom from grief, which is what a happy life rests on. How can anyone stand tall, hold his head up, and consider everything that can happen to a human being unimportant, as we want a wise person to do, unless he thinks everything he needs lies within himself? Philip threatened the Spartans in a letter that he would stop everything they tried to do. They asked whether he would also stop them from dying. Won't we find the person we're looking for with that attitude much more easily than a whole city? And suppose we add self-control to the courage we're discussing—self-control, which governs every emotional movement. What could someone lack for a happy life when courage frees him from grief and fear, while self-control draws him away from desire and doesn't let him jump about in excessive excitement? I'd show that virtue brings these results, if we hadn't already explained them on the previous days.”

Book 5, Chapter 15

- 43 “Disturbances in the mind make us unhappy; a settled mind makes our life happy. Disturbance has two kinds of cause. Grief and fear concern things we think are bad, while bursts of joy and desire concern things we mistakenly think are good. All these states clash with judgment and reason. If you see someone free, released, and clear of such powerful agitations, which also conflict with one another and pull in opposite directions, will you hesitate to call him happy? But a wise person is always in that condition. So a wise person is always happy.

“Also, everything good is a reason for joy. A reason for joy should be talked up and openly displayed. Something like that is also a source of pride. If it’s a source of pride, it certainly deserves praise. And if it deserves praise, it’s surely morally right.

⁴⁴ “So anything good is morally right. But even these thinkers don’t call the things they count as good morally right. So only what is morally right is good. It follows that a happy life rests on moral rightness alone. We mustn’t call or consider things good when someone can have plenty of them and still be utterly unhappy.

⁴⁵ “Do you doubt it? Take a person with outstanding health, strength, and looks, and very sharp, fully functioning senses. Add agility and speed too, if you like. Give him riches, honors, commands, power, and fame. But suppose the person who has all this is unjust, uncontrolled, cowardly, and dull-witted, with no intelligence at all. Would you hesitate to call him unhappy? Then what kind of good things are these, if the person who has them can be utterly unhappy? Perhaps a happy life has to be made out of parts like itself, just as a heap of grain must be made out of grains of its own kind. If that’s so, happiness must be made out of good things, and only morally right things are good. If the parts are a mixture of unlike things, nothing morally right can be made from them. Once you take moral rightness away, what could you understand happiness to be? Besides, whatever is good should be sought. Whatever should be sought should certainly be approved. Whatever you approve should be welcomed and accepted. So it should also be given worth. If so, it must deserve praise. Everything good, then, deserves praise. It follows that only what is morally right is good.”

Book 5, Chapter 16

- ⁴⁶ “If we don’t hold to this, we’ll have to call a great many things good. I’ll leave out wealth. Any person, however unworthy, can have that, so I don’t count it as good: not just anyone can possess what is good. I’ll leave out noble birth and popular fame built up by the agreement of fools and bad people. But we’ll still have to call even these tiny things good: bright little teeth, attractive eyes, a pleasing complexion, and the things Anticlea praises while washing Odysseus’ feet: “‘Gentleness of speech, softness of body.’ “If we count these as good, what could a serious philosopher say that carries more weight or grandeur than popular opinion and a crowd of fools?
- ⁴⁷ “But, you may say, the Stoics call the very same things ‘preferred’ or ‘promoted’ that these people call ‘good.’ They certainly do. But the Stoics deny that these things make life fully happy. The others think there’s no happy life without them, or, if there is, they certainly deny it’s the happiest possible life. We, however, want the happiest possible life. That conclusion of Socrates confirms our position. That leading figure in philosophy argued like this: a person’s character matches the state of his mind. His speech matches the person himself. His actions match his speech, and his life matches his actions. Now a good person’s state of mind deserves praise. So a good person’s life also deserves praise. And since it deserves praise, it’s morally right too. From this we conclude that good people’s lives are happy.
- ⁴⁸ “In the name of gods and men! Didn’t we establish clearly enough in our earlier discussions that a wise person is always free of every stirring of the mind that I call a disturbance, and that the deepest peace is always in his mind? Or were we just talking for amusement and to fill our free time? Isn’t a person happy if he’s self-controlled and steady, without fear, grief, pointless excitement, or desire? Yet a wise person is always like that. So he’s always happy. And how could a good person fail to direct everything he does and thinks toward what deserves

praise? But he directs everything toward living happily. A happy life therefore deserves praise. Nothing deserves praise without virtue. So virtue produces a happy life.”

Book 5, Chapter 17

- 49 “Here’s another way to reach the conclusion. There’s nothing worth boasting or being proud of in an unhappy life, or in a life that’s neither unhappy nor happy. Yet some life does contain something worth boasting about, being proud of, and displaying openly. Take Epaminondas: “Our plans have shaved away the Spartans’ glory.’ “Or Africanus: “From where the sun rises above the Maeotian marshes, ““There’s no one who can match my deeds.’
- 50 “Given that, it must be happiness that we should take pride in, speak up about, and put on display. Nothing else qualifies to be spoken up about and displayed. You can see the conclusion once we’ve accepted those premises. There’s another point. Suppose a happy life isn’t also a morally right one. There would have to be something better than happiness, since they’ll surely agree that moral rightness would be better. Something better than happiness! Could a statement turn things upside down more completely? Again, they acknowledge that faults can make a life thoroughly unhappy. Surely they must acknowledge the same power in virtue to make it happy. Opposites lead to opposite results.
- 51 “Here I ask what weight that pair of scales of Critolaus has. He puts the mind’s good qualities in one pan, and bodily and external goods in the other. He thinks the pan holding the mind’s goods outweighs the other so much that it would drag down the earth and seas.”

Book 5, Chapter 18

“What stops him, then, from putting not just a happy life but the happiest possible life in virtue? Or what stops Xenocrates, that most serious of philosophers? He builds virtue up so high and makes everything else so small, dismissing it.

- 52 “Unless they do that, the virtues will be destroyed. Someone who can experience grief must also be able to experience fear, since fear is anxious expectation of future grief. Someone who can experience fear can also experience terror, timidity, panic, and cowardice. It follows that he’ll sometimes be defeated and won’t think that instruction from Atreus applies to him: “‘So let them prepare for life in a way that leaves them unable to lose.’ “But this person will lose, as I’ve said. Not only that, he’ll also be a slave. Yet we want virtue always free, always undefeated. If it isn’t, virtue has been wiped out.
- 53 “And if virtue gives enough support for living well, it also gives enough for living happily. It certainly gives enough for us to live courageously. If we can live courageously, we can also live with greatness of spirit, never frightened by anything and always undefeated. It follows that we’ll have no regrets, nothing missing, nothing in our way. Everything will then flow smoothly, completely, and successfully—and so happily. Virtue has enough power for living courageously. So it also has enough for living happily.
- 54 “Even after foolishness has got what it craved, it never thinks it has got enough. Wisdom, by contrast, is always content with what’s there and never dissatisfied with itself.”

Book 5, Chapter 19

“Do you think Gaius Laelius’s single term as consul was comparable—and even that after an election defeat (if, when a wise and good man such as he was loses at the polls, it isn’t the people who meet with rejection [by a good consul], rather than he [by a good electorate])—but in any case, given the choice, which would you want: to serve once as Laelius did, or four times as Cinna did?

55 “I’m sure of your answer, so I know whom I’m putting the question to. I wouldn’t put it to just anybody. Another person might prefer four terms to one, or even a single day as Cinna to the entire lifetimes of many distinguished men. Laelius would have faced punishment for laying a finger on someone. Cinna, on the other hand, had his fellow consul Gnaeus Octavius beheaded. He gave the same order for Publius Crassus and Lucius Caesar, men of the highest rank whose virtue had been proved both at home and in war; for Marcus Antonius, a speaker more eloquent than anyone else I’ve heard; and for Gaius Caesar, who seemed to me a model of culture, wit, charm, and humor. Could their killer be happy? I see him as unhappy for the opposite reason: not just for committing those acts, but for having acted so as to gain the freedom to commit them. Of course, nobody has permission to do wrong. It’s our language that goes astray: we speak of permission when we mean

56 “whatever someone is left free to do. Now consider Gaius Marius. Was he happier sharing the credit for defeating the Cimbri with his fellow consul Catulus? Catulus was almost another Laelius; I think the two were very much alike. Or was Marius happier as the furious victor of a civil war, when those close to Catulus begged him for mercy, and he kept answering, over and over, ‘He must die’? The man who obeyed that wicked command was happier than the one who gave such a criminal order. Being wronged is better than doing wrong.

Likewise, when death is already on its way, it is better to step a little forward to meet it, as Catulus did, than to do what Marius did: let the killing of such a man bury six consulships and disgrace the closing years of one's life."

Book 5, Chapter 20

- 57 "Dionysius was tyrant of Syracuse for thirty-eight years. He seized power when he was twenty-five. What a beautiful city he kept in slavery, and how rich a community! Yet reliable writers have passed down this account of him: he was extremely moderate in his way of living, and energetic and hardworking in managing affairs, but also naturally malicious and unjust. Anyone who looks honestly at the truth must therefore see him as utterly unhappy. Even when he thought he could do anything, he wasn't getting the very things he'd craved.
- 58 "He'd been born to good parents and into a respectable family, though different writers give different accounts of that. He had plenty of close friends of his own age and relatives he was on familiar terms with. He also had some young men attached to him as lovers, in the Greek manner. But he trusted none of them. Instead, he entrusted his personal protection to slaves he'd picked out of rich households and personally declared free, and to some foreign drifters and savage barbarians. So his unjust hunger for absolute power had, in a way, locked him in prison. He even taught his daughters to cut hair so he wouldn't have to trust his neck to a barber. These royal girls, doing a dirty job fit for slave women, acted as little barbers, cutting their father's beard and hair. Yet when they grew up he took the blade away even from them. He arranged for them to burn off his beard and hair with glowing-hot walnut shells.
- 59 "He had two wives, Aristomache, a fellow citizen, and Doris, from Locri. Before visiting them at night, he would inspect and search everything. He had a broad ditch dug around the bed in his bedroom, and put a small wooden

bridge across it. Once he'd shut the bedroom door, he would turn even that bridge aside. And because he didn't dare stand on the usual platforms, he used to address public gatherings from a high tower.

- 60 “He liked playing ball and did it often. Once, when he wanted to play and took off his tunic, he's said to have handed his sword to a very young man he loved. A friend joked, ‘Well, you're certainly trusting this one with your life!’ The young man smiled. Dionysius ordered both men killed: one for pointing out a way to kill him, the other for approving the remark by smiling. After doing this he suffered so much that nothing in his life had hurt him more. He'd killed someone he had loved deeply. That's how the desires of people with no self-control pull in opposite directions. Once you've given in to one desire, you have to resist another.”

Book 5, Chapter 21

- 61 “This tyrant actually made his own assessment of his happiness. His flatterer Damocles once talked about the army and resources he possessed, the majesty of his power, his abundant supplies, and the splendor of his royal home. Nobody, Damocles said, had ever been so happy. The tyrant replied, ‘If this way of living appeals to you, Damocles, how about tasting it yourself? Would you like to experience my situation?’ Damocles said he wanted to. So the tyrant ordered a golden couch prepared for him, with a lovely woven blanket decorated with splendid designs. Several sideboards were loaded with engraved silver and gold objects. He also chose boys of exceptional beauty to stand beside the dining table. They were to keep watching Damocles for a signal and attend carefully to his needs.
- 62 “There were perfumes and garlands, incense was burning, and the tables were piled with the choicest dishes. Damocles thought himself a lucky man. In the middle of all this luxury, the tyrant had a gleaming sword lowered from the

paneled ceiling, hanging by a horsehair right above this happy man's neck. Now he couldn't look at those beautiful attendants or the exquisitely worked silver. He couldn't even reach out toward the table. His garlands were already slipping off. In the end he begged the tyrant to let him go: he didn't want to be happy anymore. Didn't Dionysius make it clear enough that there's no happiness for anyone who always has something frightening hanging over him? And he no longer even had the choice of going back to doing what was right and restoring his fellow citizens' freedom and legal rights. He'd trapped himself in wrongdoing when he was young and shortsighted. He'd committed acts that made it impossible to stay safe if he started to act sensibly."

Book 5, Chapter 22

- ⁶³ "He was terrified that friends would betray him, but he showed how much he longed for friendship in the case of those two Pythagoreans. He'd accepted one as a guarantee that the other would return to face death. The other arrived at the appointed hour of execution to release his guarantor. 'If only I could be admitted as your third friend!' he said. How miserable he must have been without the company of friends, without shared meals, without any intimate conversation at all! Especially since he'd been educated from childhood, trained in the liberal arts, and was passionately interested in music. He was a tragic poet too. How good a poet doesn't matter here. Somehow people like their own work in this field even more than in others. I've never yet met a poet who didn't think he was the best—and I was friends with Aquinius. That's just how it is: you enjoy your work, and I enjoy mine. But back to Dionysius. He had no share in a civilized human way of life or human company. He lived with runaway slaves, criminals, and barbarians. He didn't think anyone who deserved to be free, or even wanted to be free at all, could be his friend."

Book 5, Chapter 23

“Now, I can’t imagine a life more foul, more miserable, or more hateful than his. I won’t compare it with the lives of Plato or Archytas, learned men and truly wise ones.

- 64 “I’ll bring forward someone from his own city instead: Archimedes, who lived much later. Here was an unassuming little fellow working with dust and a drawing rod. As quaestor I searched out his tomb, hidden and surrounded on every side by thorns and undergrowth. The Syracusans knew nothing about it and denied that it even existed. But I knew a few short verses in six-foot iambic meter that I had heard were carved on his monument. They described a sphere together with a cylinder standing at the top of the tomb.
- 65 “There are masses of graves near the Agrigentine gates. As I scanned the whole area, I spotted a small column rising just above the brush. A sphere and a cylinder were pictured on it. Some of Syracuse’s leading citizens had come with me. I told them at once that I believed this was the very thing I was searching for. Many men went in with sickles and cut away the growth, uncovering the site.
- 66 “With the approach cleared, we walked up to the front of the base. An inscription was visible, though almost half of it was missing, since the latter parts of the short lines had eroded. This was Greece’s most renowned city, and it had once been its most learned. Yet it would have remained unaware of the memorial to its own exceptionally brilliant citizen without someone from Arpinum telling it! Now back to the point I wandered away from. Anyone who has any contact with the Muses—in other words, with education and culture—would surely prefer to be that mathematician rather than this tyrant. Consider their activities and habits. The mathematician fed his mind by examining problems and developing arguments. Exercising his talent delighted him: nothing feeds the mind more enjoyably. The tyrant occupied his mind with killings and

wrongs and was frightened throughout the day and the night. Put Democritus beside him, or Pythagoras, or Anaxagoras. Can you name a kingdom or a fortune worth more than the interests and pleasures those men had?

- ⁶⁷ “The supreme good we’re looking for must lie in the finest part of us. Nothing in us is finer than a sharp, sound mind. Happiness therefore requires us to enjoy the mind’s particular good. That good is virtue, so virtue must be what makes life happy. That is why fine actions, right actions, and admirable actions all bring abundant joy. I’ve said this already, but the point deserves a fuller explanation. Obviously, happiness in life comes from joys that are complete and continuous. It must therefore come from doing what’s right.”

Book 5, Chapter 24

- ⁶⁸ “But let’s not just touch on what we’re trying to show in words. We need to put some pictures in motion, so to speak, to draw us more directly toward knowing and understanding it. Let’s take a man who excels in the finest pursuits and picture him in our minds for a moment. First, he must have outstanding natural ability. Virtue doesn’t easily go along with a slow mind. Next, he must have an eager drive to discover the truth. This will produce those three kinds of mental achievement. One consists in knowing things and explaining nature. Another sets out what to pursue and what to avoid, and how to live well. The third determines what follows from each thing and what conflicts with it. This last contains both the whole subtle art of argument and sound judgment about the truth.
- ⁶⁹ “What joy must fill a wise person’s mind when these are the interests he lives with, day and night! He’ll have understood the movements and revolutions of the whole universe. He’ll have seen countless stars attached to the sky, fixed in particular places and moving along with the sky itself. Seven others each follow their own paths, at very different heights and depths. Wandering as their move-

ments seem, they mark out regular, fixed stretches of their own courses. The sight of these surely gave those early thinkers the impulse and the hint to ask further questions. This led to the search for beginnings, for the seeds, so to speak, from which everything arose, was generated, and took shape. They asked about the origin, life, and destruction of each kind of thing, lifeless or living, speechless or speaking, and how one thing turns and changes into another. They asked where the earth came from, what weights hold it in balance, and what hollows support the seas. What force of weight pulls everything down toward the center of the universe, always its destination, which in a sphere is also the lowest point?”

Book 5, Chapter 25

- 70 “A mind occupied with these matters, thinking them through by day and by night, develops the self-knowledge required by the god at Delphi. It recognizes itself and senses its bond with divine intelligence. That experience fills it with a joy it cannot have enough of. Reflecting on what the gods are and what they can do sets it burning to share that eternal life. It no longer feels enclosed in the few years of a human lifespan. It sees causes depending on further causes, joined by necessity. Their flow has neither beginning nor end, but intelligence and reason control it.
- 71 “As he looks at these things and looks up to them—or rather looks all around, in every direction and toward every boundary—how calmly he can turn back to the nearer concerns of human life! From this comes knowledge of virtue. The different kinds and branches of virtue blossom. He discovers what nature aims at as the ultimate good, and what is the ultimate bad thing; what standard should guide our duties, and what plan we should choose for living our lives. Examining these and similar questions establishes above all the point we’re discussing here: virtue needs nothing beyond itself for a happy life.

72 “Next comes the third pursuit, the method and knowledge of reasoning. It runs and spreads through every branch of wisdom. It defines things, divides them into kinds, connects what follows, draws complete conclusions, and distinguishes truth from falsehood. Besides being supremely useful in weighing things up, it gives a particularly free and cultivated pleasure, one worthy of wisdom. But these are pursuits for free time. Now let this same wise person take on protecting the state. Who could be better? He sees that the citizens’ welfare is maintained by practical wisdom. His justice keeps him from diverting any of those benefits into his own house, and he uses all those many, varied other virtues. Add the rewards of friendship. For educated people, friendship involves agreement, almost a breathing in unison, about the whole plan of life. It also brings the greatest enjoyment from daily company and shared living. What else does this life need to be happier? Even Fortune herself must give way to a life packed with so many great joys. And if happiness means enjoying such good qualities of mind—that is, virtues—and all wise people fully enjoy those joys, we have to admit that all wise people are happy.”

Book 5, Chapter 26

“Even under torture and torment?”

73 “Were you imagining that I meant lying among roses or violets? Consider Epicurus. He’s only dressed up as a philosopher and given himself the name. Even so, he says something which, under the circumstances, I applaud: at every moment a wise person can shout, ‘This counts for nothing!’ That includes moments when he’s being burned, cut, or tortured. Yet for Epicurus pain defines every evil and pleasure defines every good. He ridicules our distinction between right and wrong. He says we’re preoccupied with words and making empty sounds: only what feels smooth or harsh in the body has any bearing on us. As I said, his judgment hardly differs from a wild animal’s. Is he nevertheless allowed to abandon his own principles and defy fortune? All his goods and

evils depend on fortune. Is he allowed to announce that he's happy while suffering the cruelest torture and agony? He has declared pain to be not merely the worst evil but the only evil.

- 74 “He hasn’t even equipped himself with the resources for enduring pain: a firm mind, a sense of shame about disgraceful behavior, practice and a habit of endurance, the teachings of courage, manly toughness. Instead he says he finds comfort simply by remembering past pleasures. It would be like someone burning up in the heat, finding it hard to stand, deciding to remember how he was once immersed in the cool rivers at my place at Arpinum. I can’t see how pleasures in the past can relieve troubles in the present—
- 75 “But he says a wise person is always happy, even though he couldn’t say it if he wanted to be consistent with himself. So what should people say who think nothing should be sought, or counted as good, unless it’s morally right? My advice even to the Peripatetics and the Old Academics is to stop stammering at last. Let them dare to say openly and in a clear voice that a happy life will go down into Phalaris’ bull.”

Book 5, Chapter 27

- 76 “Suppose we accept three classes of good. I’ve been using more Stoic traps than usual, I notice, so let’s step away from them. We can allow those classes, as long as physical goods and external goods stay down at ground level. They can be called goods only in the sense that we should select them. The mind’s divine goods, by contrast, must spread out in all directions and reach heaven. When someone has acquired those, why call him just happy? Why not say he’s as happy as anyone can be?
- “But will a wise person be frightened of pain? Pain is the strongest objection to this position. Our discussions on earlier days seem to have armed and prepared us well enough against our own death and the deaths of those close to us, and

against distress and the other emotional disturbances. Pain seems to be virtue's fiercest opponent. It points blazing torches at virtue. It threatens to cripple courage, greatness of spirit, and endurance.

77 "So is virtue going to surrender to pain? Is pain going to defeat the happiness of someone wise and firm? What a disgrace that would be, good gods! The whip tears Spartan boys' bodies, yet they make no groan. I've personally watched bands of young men at Sparta battling with astonishing force. They punched, kicked, scratched, and even bit; they died before they would acknowledge defeat. Where is a more uncivilized, rougher country than India? Yet the people they regard as wise live naked there all their lives. Without suffering they bear the Caucasus snows and the violence of winter. They put themselves against the fire and burn without a sound of complaint.

78 "Indian women also provide an example. A husband usually has several wives there. At his death they compete for a ruling on which wife he loved best. The winner is happy as she is put on the funeral pyre beside her husband, with her relatives escorting her. The unsuccessful one leaves in sorrow. Habit could never overcome nature, which is always unconquerable. We, though, have damaged our minds by staying in the shade, indulging in luxury, taking our ease, growing sluggish, and doing nothing. False opinions and bad practices have lulled and weakened them. Everyone knows what happens in Egypt. People there are so steeped in erroneous, perverse ideas that they'd undergo any form of torture sooner than injure an ibis, an asp, a cat, a dog, or a crocodile. If they accidentally harm one, they accept whatever punishment comes.

79 "I'm talking about people. But what about animals? Don't they endure cold, hunger, and roaming and ranging over mountains and through forests? Don't they fight so fiercely for their young that they take wounds without shrinking from any attack, without shrinking from any blow? I'll leave out what ambitious people endure and suffer for office, what those eager for praise endure for glory, and what people burning with love endure for desire. Life is full of examples."

Book 5, Chapter 28

- ⁸⁰ “But let’s put a limit on this discussion and return to where it turned aside. A happy life will, I say, submit to torture. It won’t follow justice, self-control, and above all courage, greatness of spirit, and endurance, only to stop when it sees the torturer’s face. All the virtues will have gone on to torment without any fear in their minds. Happiness won’t hold back outside the prison, beyond its doors and threshold, as I said before. What could look uglier or more disgraceful than happiness left all alone, cut off from that wonderful company? But that can’t possibly happen. The virtues can’t hold together without a happy life, and a happy life can’t hold together without the virtues.
- ⁸¹ “So they won’t let happiness hang back. They’ll carry it along with them into whatever pain and torment they’re led to themselves. A wise person, after all, is distinguished by never doing anything he could regret, or anything against his will. He does everything splendidly, steadily, seriously, and rightly. He doesn’t expect anything as if it were sure to happen. When something does happen, he doesn’t react with amazement, as though it had come as something unexpected and new. He refers everything to his own judgment and stands by his own decisions. I certainly can’t think of anything happier than that.
- ⁸² “The Stoics, at least, reach their conclusion easily. They hold that the highest good is to be in harmony with nature and live consistently with it. That isn’t just a wise person’s duty; it’s also within his power. So the necessary result is that the person who has the highest good in his power also has a happy life in his power. In this way, a wise person’s life is always happy.
“There you have what I consider the most forceful things to say about a happy life. As things stand, I also consider them the truest, unless you can offer something better.”

Book 5, Chapter 29

“Nothing better occurs to me. Still, if you don’t mind, I’d be grateful if you’d explain something. You aren’t committed to one philosophical school: you sample every school and choose whatever seems closest to the truth. Just now you appeared to be encouraging the Peripatetics and the Old Academy to speak out boldly, with no hesitation, and say that wise people always have the greatest happiness. How, in your view, can they make that claim without contradicting themselves? You’ve argued at length against their view and drawn conclusions in the Stoic manner.”

83 “Let’s exercise our philosophical freedom, then. It belongs to our school alone. We make no final ruling in the discussion itself; we put forward arguments on every side. That lets other people assess the discussion for itself, with no appeal to anyone’s authority. You seem to want to establish that virtue provides enough support for happiness whatever the rival philosophers think the final goal is. Carneades, we hear, regularly took that line. His purpose, however, was to attack the Stoics. He pursued their refutation with particular enthusiasm, and opposition to their school fired his abilities. We’ll handle the question without a fight. If the Stoic account of the ultimate good is right, everything is settled: the wise must always be happy.

84 “But let’s examine each of the other positions, to see whether this splendid resolution about a happy life, as we might call it, can be made to fit everyone’s views and teachings.”

Book 5, Chapter 30

“As I see it, the positions about the ultimate ends that have survived and found defenders are these. First there are four simple ones: nothing is good except what’s morally right, as the Stoics say; nothing is good except pleasure, as Epicurus says; nothing is good except freedom from pain, as Hieronymus says; and nothing is good except enjoying all, or the most important, of nature’s primary goods, as Carneades argued against the Stoics.

- 85 “So much for the simple accounts. The combined accounts are these. For the Peripatetics there are three classes of goods: mental goods rank highest, physical ones come next, and external ones come third. The Old Academy takes much the same line. Dinomachus and Callipho put moral worth together with pleasure; Diodorus of the Peripatetic school put it together with absence of pain. Those are the views that have some lasting support. Aristo’s, Pyrrho’s, Erillus’, and a number of others have died out. We should see how the supporters of the surviving views can defend their ground. I think I’ve said enough for the Stoics, so we can set them aside.

“The Peripatetics’ case has already been explained, except for Theophrastus and any followers of his who are weak enough to shudder at pain and shrink from it. The rest can do what they generally do: stress the importance and dignity of virtue. Once they’ve raised it to the sky, as eloquent people regularly do at length, it’s easy to crush everything else by comparison and think nothing of it. People who say we should pursue praise even at the cost of pain can’t deny happiness to those who’ve achieved that praise. They may have some bad things in their lives, but the word ‘happy’ has a very wide reach.”

Book 5, Chapter 31

- ⁸⁶ “We call trade profitable and farming productive, not because the one is always free from every loss and the other always free from every disaster caused by the weather. We use those words if each is successful by a very large margin. In the same way, a life can rightly be called happy not only if it’s packed with good things on every side, but if the good things tip the balance by a much greater and weightier amount.
- ⁸⁷ “On their reasoning, then, a happy life will follow virtue even to execution. With the authority of Aristotle, Xenocrates, Speusippus, and Polemo behind it, it will go down into the bull along with virtue. Neither threats nor flattery will corrupt it and make it desert virtue. Callipho and Diodorus will take the same position. Both embrace moral goodness so firmly that they think everything without it should be placed far behind. The remaining thinkers seem to be in a tighter spot. Yet Epicurus, Hieronymus, and anyone who cares to defend that abandoned end proposed by Carneades still swim to safety. Every one of them thinks the mind judges what’s good. Every one trains it to be able to disregard what seems good or bad.
- ⁸⁸ “Whatever you think Epicurus’ case is, Hieronymus and Carneades will be in the same position—and, by Hercules, so will all the rest. Which of them hasn’t prepared himself well enough to face death or pain?
- “Let’s start, if you like, with the man we call soft and pleasure-loving. Do you think someone is afraid of death or pain if he calls the day he dies a happy day, and, while suffering the greatest pains, overcomes them by recalling and remembering his discoveries? He doesn’t do this as though he’s just blurting something out on the spur of the moment. His view of death is that once a living creature breaks apart, its power of sensation goes out. And he judges that

what has no sensation doesn't concern us at all. In pain, too, he has fixed principles to follow. He finds comfort for severe pain in its shortness, and for lasting pain in its mildness.

89 “How are those big talkers any better off than Epicurus when facing these two things that cause us the most anguish?

“And don't Epicurus and the other philosophers seem well enough prepared for the other things people consider bad? Who isn't terrified of poverty? Yet not one philosopher is.”

Book 5, Chapter 32

“Epicurus himself makes do with so very little! Nobody has written more about a modest diet. What makes people hungry for money is the wish to pay for love, get ahead in public life, and cover their daily spending. None of that comes anywhere near him. Why would he have any strong desire for money? Why would he even give it a thought?

90 “Was Anacharsis the Scythian able to think nothing of money, while our philosophers won't be able to? A letter of his is circulated in these words: ‘Anacharsis sends greetings to Hanno. A Scythian wrap is my clothing; the hard skin on my soles is my footwear; the ground is my bed; hunger is my relish. I live on milk, cheese, and meat. So you can visit me as someone living in peace. But give those gifts that you've enjoyed so much to your fellow citizens or to the immortal gods.’ Nearly all philosophers from every school could have had this same attitude, except those whose flawed nature had twisted them away from right reasoning.

91 “At the sight of gold and silver passing in great quantities in a procession, Socrates exclaimed, ‘All those things I have no wish for!’ Alexander once sent envoys to bring Xenocrates a gift of fifty talents. That was a huge amount then, particularly in Athens. Xenocrates invited the visitors to eat at the Academy

and provided only what they needed, with no elaborate preparations. Next morning they wanted instructions about who should receive the payment. He replied, ‘What? After that small meal yesterday, didn’t you realize I have no need for money?’ They looked unhappy, so he took thirty minas. He didn’t want to appear to spurn the king’s generous offer.

- ⁹² “Diogenes, though, was franker, as a Cynic would be. Alexander asked him to say if there was anything he needed. ‘For now,’ he said, ‘just move a little out of my sunlight.’ Alexander had, you see, blocked the sun while he was sunning himself. Diogenes used to argue how much his life and lot were better than the Persian king’s. He himself lacked nothing, while the king would never have enough of anything. He had no desire for the king’s pleasures, which the king could never get his fill of. And the king couldn’t possibly attain the pleasures Diogenes had.”

Book 5, Chapter 33

“You see, I believe, how Epicurus divided the kinds of desire. Perhaps the division isn’t very precise, but it’s useful.

- ⁹³ “Some are natural and necessary; some natural but not necessary; and some neither. The necessary ones can be satisfied with next to nothing, because the riches nature needs are easy to get. As for the second kind of desire, he thinks it’s neither hard to satisfy nor hard to do without. The third kind he thought should be thrown out altogether: they’re completely empty and have no connection with necessity or even with nature.
- ⁹⁴ “The Epicureans discuss this subject at length. They play down each individual pleasure, even though they don’t dismiss the general kinds of pleasure involved; still, they don’t seek an abundance of them. They say sexual pleasures, too, which they talk a great deal about, are easy, common, and readily available. If nature requires them, they think we should judge them not by birth, position,

or rank but by looks, age, and figure. They think it's not at all difficult to abstain from them if health, duty, or reputation demands it. Overall, this kind of pleasure is desirable if it does no harm, but it never does any good.

- 95 “His teaching on pleasure as a whole is that pleasure itself, simply because it's pleasure, should always be wanted and pursued. By the same reasoning, pain, simply because it's pain, should always be avoided. So a wise person will use this balancing test: avoid even a pleasure if it will bring about greater pain, and accept pain if it will bring about greater pleasure. And although bodily sensation is the judge of everything pleasant, all of it is referred to the mind.
- 96 “That means the body enjoys itself only as long as it feels a pleasure that's present. The mind both takes in the present pleasure along with the body and looks ahead to the pleasure that's coming. Nor does it let past pleasure slip away. So a wise person will always have an unbroken, connected sequence of pleasures: the anticipation of pleasures hoped for will join with the memory of pleasures already experienced.”

Book 5, Chapter 34

- 97 “Similar points apply to food, too. Lavish, expensive banquets are played down, since nature is satisfied with a modest way of life. Doesn't everyone see that the seasoning for all those things is our appetite for them? When Darius was fleeing, he drank muddy water polluted with dead bodies. He said he'd never had a more enjoyable drink. Clearly he'd never drunk when he was thirsty before. Ptolemy had never eaten when he was hungry either. While he was traveling through Egypt, his companions fell behind, and he was given coarse bread in a hut. Nothing seemed more delicious to him than that bread. They say that Socrates was walking quite vigorously right up to evening, and someone asked why he was doing it. He replied that he was shopping for an appetite by walking, so he'd enjoy his dinner more.

- 98 “And don’t we see how the Spartans eat at their common meals? The tyrant Dionysius dined there and said he hadn’t enjoyed the black broth that was the dinner’s main dish. The cook said, ‘No wonder. The seasonings were missing.’ ‘What seasonings?’ he asked. ‘Hard work hunting, sweat, a run to the Eurotas, hunger, thirst. Those are the seasonings for Spartan dinners.’ We can understand this not only from human habits but also from animals. Whatever is thrown to them, as long as it’s not contrary to their nature, satisfies them. They don’t look for anything more.
- 99 “Some whole communities, trained by custom, take pleasure in frugality, as I said a little earlier about the Spartans. Xenophon describes the Persians’ diet. He says they eat nothing with their bread except cress. Still, even if nature does want something a bit tastier, think how many things grow out of the earth and on trees, easy to get in abundance and wonderfully sweet! Add the lean condition that follows this restraint in eating. Add sound health. Compare people who are sweating and belching, stuffed with banquets like fattened oxen.
- 100 “Then you’ll understand that the people who pursue pleasure most get the least of it. Enjoying food depends on wanting it, not being full of it.”

Book 5, Chapter 35

“They say Timotheus, a distinguished man at Athens and a leader of the city, dined with Plato and greatly enjoyed the gathering. When he saw Plato the next day, he said, ‘Your dinners are enjoyable not just at the time, but the next day too.’ And what about the fact that we can’t even use our minds properly when we’re full of food and drink? There’s an excellent letter from Plato to Dion’s relatives, which says roughly this: ‘When I got there, I found no pleasure at all in that supposedly happy life, full of Italian and Syracusan feasts: eating your fill twice a day, never spending the night alone, and everything else that goes with that life. No one will ever become wise in it, much less self-controlled. What natural character could be so wonderfully balanced?’

- 101 “How could anyone enjoy a life without sound judgment or restraint? This exposes the mistake made by Syria’s enormously wealthy king Sardanapallus. He had the following carved on his grave: “‘Mine is the food I ate, and all my fully sated lust “‘Drank in; the many splendid things I left just lie there.’” Aristotle remarks, ‘What different inscription would you put on the grave of an ox rather than a king? He claims to own these things in death. Even in life he owned them only for the time he was enjoying them.’
- 102 “So why should anyone want riches? At what point does poverty keep us from being happy? You’re keen on statues and paintings, I suppose. If someone enjoys them, don’t people of small means enjoy them better than people who own them in abundance? Our city has a vast public supply of all those things. Private owners don’t have as many and see them rarely, when they come to their country homes. And yet something stings them when they remember where they got them. The day would run out if I chose to defend poverty’s case. It’s obvious, and nature herself reminds us every day how few things she needs, how small they are, and how cheap.”

Book 5, Chapter 36

“Then will obscurity, low social standing, or even public unpopularity stop a wise person from being happy?

- 103 “Popularity and the glory people seek may well bring more distress than enjoyment. Think how silly our Demosthenes was. He confessed that he enjoyed a woman’s whispered remark as she carried water, something women regularly do in Greece. She whispered to another woman, ‘There’s that Demosthenes.’ Could anything be sillier? Such a great public speaker, too! Evidently he’d learned to address other people, but hadn’t learned much about talking to himself.

104 “So we need to understand that popular fame isn’t worth pursuing for its own sake, and obscurity isn’t something to fear. Democritus says, ‘I came to Athens, and no one there recognized me.’ What a steady, serious man, to boast that he’d stayed away from fame! Flute players and people who play stringed instruments guide their songs and rhythms by their own judgment, not the crowd’s. Is a wise person, equipped with a far greater art, going to ask not what’s truest, but what the crowd wants? And is anything more foolish than to think people amount to something as a group when you look down on them individually as laborers and barbarians? A wise person will look down instead on our scramble for office and our shallowness. He’ll turn down public honors even when they’re offered without his asking. We, on the other hand, don’t know how to disregard them until we’ve begun to regret them. Heraclitus, the natural philosopher, has a passage about Hermodorus, the leading man of Ephesus.

105 “He says every Ephesian deserves the death penalty. In expelling Hermodorus they declared, ‘No individual here should outshine the rest of us. If anyone does, he should live elsewhere, with someone else.’ Isn’t that the way with every population? They hate any exceptional excellence. Take Aristides—I’d sooner give examples from Greece than from Rome. Wasn’t excessive justice the very reason they banished him? People who stay entirely out of public affairs escape so much misery! Nothing is more enjoyable than having time for study. By study I mean what teaches us about the infinite range of existence and nature, and about heaven, land, and sea in this universe.”

Book 5, Chapter 37

“Once we’ve dismissed public office and dismissed money too, what’s left to frighten us?

106 “Exile, I suppose. It’s counted among the worst things. If it’s bad because the public is hostile and offended, we’ve just said how little we should care about that attitude. But if being away from your country makes you miserable, the

provinces are full of miserable people: very few of them ever return home.

107 “‘Exiles have their possessions confiscated, though.’ And? Haven’t we heard enough arguments for bearing poverty? Forget the discredit attached to the word ‘exile’ and consider the actual situation. Is it so different from a lifetime spent away on foreign travels? A great many celebrated philosophers lived that way: Xenocrates, Crantor, Arcesilaus, Lacydes, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Antipater, Carneades, Clitomachus, Philo, Antiochus, Panaetius, and Posidonius, to name only some of the countless examples. Not one of those men went home after leaving. ‘Their absence wasn’t shameful, though.’ Can banishment shame someone wise? A wise person is the subject of this whole discussion, and he cannot rightly be exiled. Someone who deserves exile shouldn’t be consoled.

108 “Besides, philosophers who guide their choices in life by pleasure have the easiest answer to any misfortune. They can be happy living anywhere that offers pleasure. Teucer’s words can therefore suit any philosophical approach: “Where life goes well, that’s my country.’ “Asked where he came from, Socrates said, ‘The world.’ He thought he lived in the whole world and belonged to it as a citizen. Titus Albucius, too, calmly pursued philosophy at Athens while in exile. He could have avoided exile itself by following Epicurus’ instructions and leaving politics alone.

109 “How was Epicurus happier because he lived in his own country than Metrodorus was because he lived at Athens? Or did Plato surpass Xenocrates in happiness, or Polemo Arcesilaus? And how much should we value a community that drives out good and wise people? Damaratus, the father of our King Tarquin, couldn’t put up with the tyrant Cypselus. He fled from Corinth to Tarquinii, established his fortune there, and had children. Was he foolish to prefer freedom in exile to slavery at home?”

Book 5, Chapter 38

- 110 “What’s more, forgetting eases emotional disturbances, anxieties, and distress, as the mind turns toward pleasure. So Epicurus had reason to venture the claim that a wise person always has more good things than bad, because he’s always experiencing pleasures. Epicurus thinks this establishes the point we’re investigating: a wise person is always happy.
- 111 “Even if he loses his sight or his hearing?’ Yes, even then. He thinks little of those very things. To begin with, what pleasures does that supposedly dreadful blindness actually lack? Some even argue that the other pleasures reside in the senses themselves, but what we take in by sight doesn’t involve any enjoyment in the eyes. Whatever we taste, smell, touch, or hear involves the very part where we feel it. Nothing like that happens in the eyes: the mind takes in what we see. And the mind can enjoy itself in many different ways even without bringing sight into play. I’m talking about a learned, educated person, for whom living means thinking. And when a wise person thinks, he doesn’t generally call his eyes in to help with his investigation.
- 112 “If night doesn’t take away a happy life, why should a day that’s like night take it away? Antipater of Cyrene made a rather indecent remark, but the thought behind it wasn’t silly. Some little women were lamenting his blindness. ‘What are you doing?’ he said. ‘Don’t you think there’s any pleasure at night?’ As for the Appius who lived long ago and was blind for many years, his public offices and achievements show that his condition didn’t make him fail in either his private or his public duties. We’ve heard that Gaius Drusus’ house used to be crowded with people seeking advice. They couldn’t see their way through their own affairs, so they took a blind man as their guide. When I was a boy, Gnaeus Aufidius, who’d been praetor, used to give his opinion in the Senate, help his friends when they were deciding what to do, and write a history in Greek. He found his sight in books.”

Book 5, Chapter 39

- 113 “The Stoic Diodotus lived in my house for many years after going blind. He devoted himself to philosophy even more constantly than before. He played a stringed instrument in the Pythagorean way, and books were read to him day and night. In those pursuits he didn’t need his eyes. But he also did something scarcely believable, something that seems almost impossible without sight: he kept up his teaching of geometry, telling his students in words where to start and end each line they drew. They say Asclepiades, a well-known philosopher of the Eretrian school, was asked what blindness had brought him. He replied, ‘One more boy to keep me company.’ Even the most extreme poverty would be bearable if you could do what certain Greeks do every day. In the same way, blindness could be borne easily if the aids for such conditions weren’t lacking.
- 114 “Once blind, Democritus naturally lost the ability to separate black things from white ones. But he still knew the difference between evil and good, unfair and fair, disgraceful and honorable, useless and useful, small and great. Happiness was possible without different colors to look at, but not without a grasp of things. In fact, he believed seeing with the eyes could obstruct mental insight. People often failed to see what lay directly in front of their feet. Meanwhile he ranged across all infinity, with no outer limit to stop him. Homer is also said to have been blind. Yet we look at his work as pictures rather than poems. He gives us Greece’s regions, its coasts, its places; the appearance and shape of battles; the armies in position; the rowing; the movements of human beings and beasts. Is there any of it he hasn’t depicted so vividly that we can see what he himself never saw? Can we really suppose that Homer ever went without delight and pleasure in his mind? Or that any learned person did?
- 115 “If things weren’t like that, would Anaxagoras or this same Democritus have left their farms and inheritances behind and given themselves wholeheartedly to this divine pleasure of learning and inquiry? And so, when the poets portray

the seer Tiresias as wise, they never bring him on complaining about his blindness. But Homer made Polyphemus monstrous and savage. He even has him talk to his ram and praise its good fortune, because it can go where it likes and reach what it likes. Homer was right to do that. The Cyclops himself had no more sense than that ram.”

Book 5, Chapter 40

116 “And just what’s bad about deafness? Marcus Crassus was rather deaf. But he had a bigger problem: he was badly spoken of, though, in my view, unfairly. Our own [Epicureans] generally don’t know Greek, and Greeks don’t know Latin. So the Greeks are deaf when our people talk, and our people are deaf when the Greeks talk. All of us, likewise, are certainly deaf in the languages we don’t understand, and there are countless ones. ‘But deaf people don’t hear a singer playing the lyre.’ They don’t hear the screech of a saw being sharpened either, or a pig’s grunting as its throat is cut, or the roar of the rumbling sea when they want to rest. And if they happen to enjoy songs, first they should think how many wise people lived happily before songs were invented. Then they should consider how much more pleasure they can get from reading them than from hearing them.

117 “A little earlier we directed blind people toward the pleasures of hearing. In the same way, we can direct deaf people toward the pleasures of sight. Anyone who can talk to himself won’t need someone else’s conversation.

“Pile everything onto one person: let him be both blind and deaf, and let the fiercest bodily pains weigh him down as well. First, pains like that generally finish a person off on their own. But suppose they happen to last a long time, yet still torture him too fiercely for there to be any reason to endure them. Good gods, why should we struggle? A harbor is ready for us, since death is right there, a shelter where we never feel anything again.

- 118 “When Lysimachus threatened Theodorus with death, Theodorus said, ‘A great achievement indeed, if you’ve matched the power of a blister beetle!’ Perseus begged Paulus not to lead him in his triumphal procession. Paulus replied, ‘That’s in your own power.’ We said a great deal about death on the first day, when death itself was our subject, and quite a bit on the next day too, when we discussed pain. Anyone who remembers those points is hardly in danger of failing to think death either desirable or, at least, nothing to fear.”

Book 5, Chapter 41

“I think the rule at Greek banquets should apply to life as well. The rule says, ‘Drink, or get out.’ Quite right, too. Either share the other guests’ enjoyment of drinking or make your exit first, so you don’t stay sober and get caught in drunken violence. That’s how to leave behind the blows of fortune when you cannot bear them: make your escape. Hieronymus gives this very advice in precisely the words Epicurus uses.

- 119 “Some philosophers hold that virtue has no value in itself. They say everything we call morally right and praiseworthy is something empty, dressed up with a meaningless sound. Yet if even they think a wise person is always happy, what are the philosophers who follow Socrates and Plato supposed to do? Some of them say the mind’s good qualities have such superiority that they overwhelm the bodily and external goods. Others don’t even regard those things as good and place everything in the mind.
- 120 “Carneades used to decide their dispute like an unofficial arbitrator. Whatever the Peripatetics considered goods, the Stoics considered advantages. And when you weighed the actual things rather than the words, the Peripatetics didn’t assign any more value to wealth, good health, or other things of that kind than the Stoics did. So he said there was no reason for disagreement. Let the philoso-

phers of the other schools work out for themselves how they can maintain this position. Still, I'm grateful to them for making a declaration worthy of philosophers about wise people's lasting ability to live well.

- 121 “Since we’re leaving tomorrow morning, let’s commit our five days of conversations to memory. I expect I’ll put them in writing as well. Whatever we make of this leisure of ours, how could we spend it better? We’ll send another five books to our friend Brutus. He has done more than urge me to write philosophy: he’s pressed me to take it up. I can’t readily say what benefit my writing will have for anyone else. But nothing else could be found to ease the most bitter grief I feel and all the different troubles pressing in on me from every direction.”