



On Contempt for Death

Cicero

1. At a time when I had entirely, or to a great degree, released myself from my labors as an advocate, and from my duties as a senator, I had recourse again, Brutus, principally by your advice, to those studies which never had been out of my mind, although neglected at times, and which after a long interval I resumed; and now, since the principles and rules of all arts which relate to living well depend on the study of wisdom, which is called philosophy, I have thought it an employment worthy of me to illustrate them in the Latin tongue, not because philosophy could not be understood in the Greek language, or by the teaching of Greek masters; but it has always been my opinion that our countrymen have, in some instances, made wiser discoveries than the Greeks, with reference to those subjects which they have considered worthy of devoting their attention to, and in others have improved upon their discoveries, so that in one way or other we surpass them on every point; for, with regard to the manners and habits of private life, and family and domestic affairs, we certainly manage them with more elegance, and better than they did; and as to our republic, that our ancestors have, beyond all dispute, formed on better customs and laws. What shall I say of our military affairs; in which our ancestors have been most eminent in valor, and still more so in discipline? As to those things which are attained not by study, but nature, neither Greece, nor any nation, is comparable to us; for what people has displayed such gravity, such steadiness, such greatness of soul, probity, faith—such distinguished virtue of every kind, as to be equal to our ancestors. In learning, indeed, and all kinds of literature, Greece did excel us, and it was easy to do so where there was no competition; for while among the Greeks the poets were the most ancient species of learned men—since Homer and Hesiod lived before the foundation of Rome, and Archilochus¹ was a contemporary of Romulus—we received poetry much later. For it was about five hundred and ten years after the building of Rome before Livius published a play in the consulship of C. Claudius, the son of Cæcus, and M. Tuditanus, a year before the birth of Ennius, who was older than Plautus and Nævius.

2. It was, therefore, late before poets were either known or received among us; though we find in Cato de Originibus that the guests used, at their entertainments, to sing the praises of famous men to the sound of the flute; but a speech of Cato's shows this kind of poetry to have been in no great esteem, as he censures Marcus Nobilior for carrying poets with him into his province; for that consul, as we know, carried Ennius with him into Ætolia. Therefore the less esteem poets were in, the less were those studies pursued; though even then those who did display the greatest abilities that way were not very inferior to the Greeks. Do we imagine that if it had been considered commendable in Fabius, a man of the highest rank, to paint, we should not have had many Polycleti and Parrhasii? Honor nourishes art, and glory is the spur with all to studies; while those studies are always neglected in every nation which are looked upon disparagingly. The Greeks held skill in vocal and instrumental music as a very important accomplishment, and therefore it is recorded of Epaminondas, who, in my opinion, was the

greatest man among the Greeks, that he played excellently on the flute; and Themistocles, some years before, was deemed ignorant because at an entertainment he declined the lyre when it was offered to him. For this reason musicians flourished in Greece; music was a general study; and whoever was unacquainted with it was not considered as fully instructed in learning. Geometry was in high esteem with them, therefore none were more honorable than mathematicians. But we have confined this art to bare measuring and calculating.

3. But, on the contrary, we early entertained an esteem for the orator; though he was not at first a man of learning, but only quick at speaking: in subsequent times he became learned; for it is reported that Galba, Africanus, and Lælius were men of learning; and that even Cato, who preceded them in point of time, was a studious man: then succeeded the Lepidi, Carbo, and Gracchi, and so many great orators after them, down to our own times, that we were very little, if at all, inferior to the Greeks. Philosophy has been at a low ebb even to this present time, and has had no assistance from our own language, and so now I have undertaken to raise and illustrate it, in order that, as I have been of service to my countrymen, when employed on public affairs, I may, if possible, be so likewise in my retirement; and in this I must take the more pains, because there are already many books in the Latin language which are said to be written inaccurately, having been composed by excellent men, only not of sufficient learning; for, indeed, it is possible that a man may think well, and yet not be able to express his thoughts elegantly; but for any one to publish thoughts which he can neither arrange skilfully nor illustrate so as to entertain his reader, is an unpardonable abuse of letters and retirement: they, therefore, read their books to one another, and no one ever takes them up but those who wish to have the same license for careless writing allowed to themselves. Wherefore, if oratory has acquired any reputation from my industry, I shall take the more pains to open the fountains of philosophy, from which all my eloquence has taken its rise.

4. But, as Aristotle, a man of the greatest genius, and of the most various knowledge, being excited by the glory of the rhetorician Isocrates, commenced teaching young men to speak, and joined philosophy with eloquence: so it is my design not to lay aside my former study of oratory, and yet to employ myself at the same time in this greater and more fruitful art; for I have always thought that to be able to speak copiously and elegantly on the most important questions was the most perfect philosophy. And I have so diligently applied myself to this pursuit, that I have already ventured to have a school like the Greeks. And lately when you left us, having many of my friends about me, I attempted at my Tusculan villa what I could do in that way; for as I formerly used to practise declaiming, which nobody continued longer than myself, so this is now to be the declamation of my old age. I desired any one to propose a question which he wished to have discussed, and then I argued that point either sitting or walking; and so I have compiled the scholæ, as the Greeks call them, of five days, in as many books. We proceeded in this manner: when he who had proposed the subject for discussion had said what he thought proper, I spoke against him; for this is, you know, the old and Socratic method of arguing against another's opinion; for Socrates thought that thus the truth would more easily be arrived at. But to give you a better notion of our disputations, I will not barely send you an account of them, but represent them to you as they were carried on; therefore let the introduction be thus:

5. A. To me death seems to be an evil.

M. What, to those who are already dead? or to those who must die?

A. To both.

M. It is a misery, then, because an evil?

A. Certainly.

M. Then those who have already died, and those who have still got to die, are both miserable?

A. So it appears to me.

M. Then all are miserable?

A. Every one.

M. And, indeed, if you wish to be consistent, all that are already born, or ever shall be, are not only miserable, but always will be so; for should you maintain those only to be miserable, you would not except any one living, for all must die; but there should be an end of misery in death. But seeing that the dead are miserable, we are born to eternal misery, for they must of consequence be miserable who died a hundred thousand years ago; or rather, all that have ever been born.

A. So, indeed, I think.

M. Tell me, I beseech you, are you afraid of the three-headed Cerberus in the shades below, and the roaring waves of Cocytus, and the passage over Acheron, and Tantalus expiring with thirst, while the water touches his chin; and Sisyphus,

Who sweats with arduous toil in vain

The steepy summit of the mount to gain?

Perhaps, too, you dread the inexorable judges, Minos and Rhadamanthus; before whom neither L. Crassus nor M. Antonius can defend you; and where, since the cause lies before Grecian judges, you will not even be able to employ Demosthenes; but you must plead for yourself before a very great assembly. These things perhaps you dread, and therefore look on death as an eternal evil.

6. A. Do you take me to be so imbecile as to give credit to such things?

M. What, do you not believe them?

A. Not in the least.

M. I am sorry to hear that.

A. Why, I beg?

M. Because I could have been very eloquent in speaking against them.

A. And who could not on such a subject? or what trouble is it to refute these monstrous inventions of the poets and painters?

M. And yet you have books of philosophers full of arguments against these.

A. A great waste of time, truly! for who is so weak as to be concerned about them?

M. If, then, there is no one miserable in the infernal regions, there can be no one there at all.

A. I am altogether of that opinion.

M. Where, then, are those you call miserable? or what place do they inhabit? For, if they exist at all, they must be somewhere.

A. I, indeed, am of opinion that they are nowhere.

M. Then they have no existence at all.

A. Even so, and yet they are miserable for this very reason, that they have no existence.

M. I had rather now have you afraid of Cerberus than speak thus inaccurately.

A. In what respect?

M. Because you admit him to exist whose existence you deny with the same breath. Where now is your sagacity? When you say any one is miserable, you say that he who does not exist, does exist.

A. I am not so absurd as to say that.

M. What is it that you do say, then?

A. I say, for instance, that Marcus Crassus is miserable in being deprived of such great riches as his by death; that Cn. Pompey is miserable in being taken from such glory and honor; and, in short, that all are miserable who are deprived of this light of life.

M. You have returned to the same point, for to be miserable implies an existence; but you just now denied that the dead had any existence: if, then, they have not, they can be nothing; and if so, they are not even miserable.

A. Perhaps I do not express what I mean, for I look upon this very circumstance, not to exist after having existed, to be very miserable.

M. What, more so than not to have existed at all? Therefore, those who are not yet born are miserable because they are not; and we ourselves, if we are to be miserable after death, were miserable before we were born: but I do not remember that I was miserable before I was born; and I should be glad to know, if your memory is better, what you recollect of yourself before you were born.

7. A. You are pleasant: as if I had said that those men are miserable who are not born, and not that they are so who are dead.

M. You say, then, that they are so?

A. Yes; I say that because they no longer exist after having existed they are miserable.

M. You do not perceive that you are asserting contradictions; for what is a greater contradiction, than that that should be not only miserable, but should have any existence at all, which does not exist? When you go out at the Capene gate and see the tombs of the Calatini, the Scipios, Servilii, and Metelli, do you look on them as miserable?

A. Because you press me with a word, henceforward I will not say they are miserable absolutely, but miserable on this account, because they have no existence.

M. You do not say, then, "M. Crassus is miserable," but only "Miserable M. Crassus."

A. Exactly so.

M. As if it did not follow that whatever you speak of in that manner either is or is not. Are you not acquainted with the first principles of logic? For this is the first thing they lay down, Whatever is asserted (for that is the best way that occurs to me, at the moment, of rendering the Greek term ἀξιωμα; if I can think of a more accurate expression hereafter, I will use it), is asserted as being either true or false. When, therefore, you say, "Miserable M. Crassus," you either say this, "M. Crassus is miserable," so that some judgment may be made whether it is true or false, or you say nothing at all.

A. Well, then, I now own that the dead are not miserable, since you have drawn from me a concession that they who do not exist at all can not be miserable. What then? We that are alive, are we not wretched, seeing we must die? for what is there agreeable in life, when we must night and day reflect that, at some time or other, we must die?

8. M. Do you not, then, perceive how great is the evil from which you have delivered human nature?

A. By what means?

M. Because, if to die were miserable to the dead, to live would be a kind of infinite and eternal misery. Now, however, I see a goal, and when I have reached it, there is nothing more to be feared; but you seem to me to follow the opinion of Epicharmus,⁷ a man of some discernment, and sharp enough for a Sicilian.

A. What opinion? for I do not recollect it.

M. I will tell you if I can in Latin; for you know I am no more used to bring in Latin sentences in a Greek discourse than Greek in a Latin one.

A. And that is right enough. But what is that opinion of Epicharmus?

M.

I would not die, but yet

Am not concerned that I shall be dead.

A. I now recollect the Greek; but since you have obliged me to grant that the dead are not miserable, proceed to convince me that it is not miserable to be under a necessity of dying.

M. That is easy enough; but I have greater things in hand.

A. How comes that to be so easy? And what are those things of more consequence?

M. Thus: because, if there is no evil after death, then even death itself can be none; for that which immediately succeeds that is a state where you grant that there is no evil: so that even to be obliged to die can be no evil, for that is only the being obliged to arrive at a place where we allow that no evil is.

A. I beg you will be more explicit on this point, for these subtle arguments force me sooner to admissions than to conviction. But what are those more important things about which you say that you are occupied?

M. To teach you, if I can, that death is not only no evil, but a good.

A. I do not insist on that, but should be glad to hear you argue it, for even though you should not prove your point, yet you will prove that death is no evil. But I will not interrupt you; I would rather hear a continued discourse.

M. What, if I should ask you a question, would you not answer?

A. That would look like pride; but I would rather you should not ask but where necessity requires.

9. M. I will comply with your wishes, and explain as well as I can what you require; but not with any idea that, like the Pythian Apollo, what I say must needs be certain and indisputable, but as a mere man, endeavoring to arrive at probabilities by conjecture, for I have no ground to proceed further on than probability. Those men may call their statements indisputable who assert that what they say can be perceived by the senses, and who proclaim themselves philosophers by profession.

A. Do as you please: We are ready to hear you.

M. The first thing, then, is to inquire what death, which seems to be so well understood, really is; for some imagine death to be the departure of the soul from the body; 17others think that there is no such departure, but that soul and body perish together, and that the soul is extinguished with the body. Of those who think that the soul does depart from the body, some believe in its immediate dissolution; others fancy that it continues to exist for a time; and others believe that it lasts forever. There is great dispute even what the soul is, where it is, and whence it is derived: with some, the heart itself (*cor*) seems to be the soul, hence the expressions, *excordes*, *vecordes*, *concordes*; and that prudent *Nasica*, who was twice consul, was called *Corculus*, i.e., wise-heart; and *Ælius Sextus* is described as *Egregie cordatus homo*, *catus Æliu' Sextus*—that great wise-hearted man, sage *Ælius*. *Empedocles* imagines the blood, which is suffused over the heart, to be the soul; to others, a certain part of the brain seems to be the throne of the soul; others neither allow the heart itself, nor any portion of the brain, to be the soul, but think either that the heart is the seat and abode of the soul, or else that the brain is so. Some would have the soul, or spirit, to be the *anima*, as our schools generally agree; and indeed the name signifies as much, for we use the expressions *animam agere*, to live; *animam efflare*, to expire; *animosi*, men of spirit; *bene animati*, men of right feeling; *exanimi sententia*, according to our real opinion; and the very word *animus* is derived from *anima*. Again, the soul seems to *Zeno* the Stoic to be fire.

10. But what I have said as to the heart, the blood, the brain, air, or fire being the soul, are common opinions: the others are only entertained by individuals; and, indeed, there were many among the ancients who held singular opinions on this subject, of whom the latest was *Aristoxenus*, a man who was both a musician and a philosopher. He maintained a certain straining of the body, like what is called harmony in music, to be the soul, and believed that, from the figure

and nature of the whole body, various motions are excited, as sounds are from an instrument. He adhered steadily to his system, and yet he said something, the nature of which, whatever it was, had been detailed and explained a great while before by Plato. Xenocrates denied that the soul had any figure, or anything like a body; but said it was a number, the power of which, as Pythagoras had fancied, some ages before, was the greatest in nature: his master, Plato, imagined a threefold soul, a dominant portion of which—that is to say, reason—he had lodged in the head, as in a tower; and the other two parts—namely, anger and desire—he made subservient to this one, and allotted them distinct abodes, placing anger in the breast, and desire under the præcordia. But Dicæarchus, in that discourse of some learned disputants, held at Corinth, which he details to us in three books—in the first book introduces many speakers; and in the other two he introduces a certain Pherecrates, an old man of Phthia, who, as he said, was descended from Deucalion; asserting, that there is in fact no such thing at all as a soul, but that it is a name without a meaning; and that it is idle to use the expression “animals,” or “animated beings;” that neither men nor beasts have minds or souls, but that all that power by which we act or perceive is equally infused into every living creature, and is inseparable from the body, for if it were not, it would be nothing; nor is there anything whatever really existing except body, which is a single and simple thing, so fashioned as to live and have its sensations in consequence of the regulations of nature. Aristotle, a man superior to all others, both in genius and industry (I always except Plato), after having embraced these four known sorts of principles, from which all things deduce their origin, imagines that there is a certain fifth nature, from whence comes the soul; for to think, to foresee, to learn, to teach, to invent anything, and many other attributes of the same kind, such as to remember, to love, to hate, to desire, to fear, to be pleased or displeased—these, and others like them, exist, he thinks, in none of those first four kinds: on such account he adds a fifth kind, which has no name, and so by a new name he calls the soul ἐνδελεία, as if it were a certain continued and perpetual motion.

11. If I have not forgotten anything unintentionally, these are the principal opinions concerning the soul. I have omitted Democritus, a very great man indeed, but one who deduces the soul from the fortuitous concurrence of small, light, and round substances; for, if you believe men of his school, there is nothing which a crowd of atoms cannot effect. Which of these opinions is true, some God must determine. It is an important question for us, Which has the most appearance of truth? Shall we, then, prefer determining between them, or shall we return to our subject?

A. I could wish both, if possible; but it is difficult to mix them: therefore, if without a discussion of them we can get rid of the fears of death, let us proceed to do so; but if this is not to be done without explaining the question about souls, let us have that now, and the other at another time.

M. I take that plan to be the best, which I perceive you are inclined to; for reason will demonstrate that, whichever of the opinions which I have stated is true, it must follow, then, that death cannot be an evil; or that it must rather be something desirable; for if either the heart, or the blood, or the brain, is the soul, then certainly the soul, being corporeal, must perish with the rest of the body; if it is air, it will perhaps be dissolved; if it is fire, it will be extinguished; if it is Aristoxenus’s harmony, it will be put out of tune. What shall I say of Dicæarchus, who denies that there is any soul? In all these opinions, there is nothing to affect any one after death; for all feeling is lost with life, and where there is no sensation, nothing can interfere to affect us. The opinions of others do indeed bring us hope; if it is any pleasure to you to think that souls, after they leave the body, may go to heaven as to a permanent home.

A. I have great pleasure in that thought, and it is what I most desire; and even if it should not be so, I should still be very willing to believe it.

M. What occasion have you, then, for my assistance? Am I superior to Plato in eloquence? Turn over carefully his book that treats of the soul; you will have there all that you can want.

A. I have, indeed, done that, and often; but, I know not how it comes to pass, I agree with it while I am reading it; but when I have laid down the book, and begin to reflect with myself on the immortality of the soul, all that agreement vanishes.

M. How comes that? Do you admit this—that souls either exist after death, or else that they also perish at the moment of death?

A. I agree to that. And if they do exist, I admit that they are happy; but if they perish, I cannot suppose them to be unhappy, because, in fact, they have no existence at all. You drove me to that concession but just now.

M. How, then, can you, or why do you, assert that you think that death is an evil, when it either makes us happy, in the case of the soul continuing to exist, or, at all events, not unhappy, in the case of our becoming destitute of all sensation?

12. A. Explain, therefore, if it is not troublesome to you, first, if you can, that souls do exist after death; secondly, should you fail in that (and it is a very difficult thing to establish), that death is free from all evil; for I am not without my fears that this itself is an evil: I do not mean the immediate deprivation of sense, but the fact that we shall hereafter suffer deprivation.

M. I have the best authority in support of the opinion you desire to have established, which ought, and generally has, great weight in all cases. And, first, I have all antiquity on that side, which the more near it is to its origin and divine descent, the more clearly, perhaps, on that account, did it discern the truth in these matters. This very doctrine, then, was adopted by all those ancients whom Ennius calls in the Sabine tongue *Casci*; namely, that in death there was a sensation, and that, when men departed this life, they were not so entirely destroyed as to perish absolutely. And this may appear from many other circumstances, and especially from the pontifical rites and funeral obsequies, which men of the greatest genius would not have been so solicitous about, and would not have guarded from any injury by such severe laws, but from a firm persuasion that death was not so entire a destruction as wholly to abolish and destroy everything, but rather a kind of transmigration, as it were, and change of life, which was, in the case of illustrious men and women, usually a guide to heaven, while in that of others it was still confined to the earth, but in such a manner as still to exist. From this, and the sentiments of the Romans,

In heaven Romulus with Gods now lives,

as Ennius saith, agreeing with the common belief; hence, too, Hercules is considered so great and propitious a God among the Greeks, and from them he was introduced among us, and his worship has extended even to the very ocean itself. This is how it was that Bacchus was deified, the offspring of Semele; and from the same illustrious fame we receive Castor and Pollux as Gods, who are reported not only to have helped the Romans to victory in their battles, but to have been the messengers of their success. What shall we say of Ino, the daughter of Cadmus? Is she not called *Leucothea* by the Greeks, and *Matuta* by us? Nay, more; is not the whole of heaven (not to dwell on particulars) almost filled with the offspring of men?

Should I attempt to search into antiquity, and produce from thence what the Greek writers have asserted, it would appear that even those who are called their principal Gods were taken from among men up into heaven.

13. Examine the sepulchres of those which are shown in Greece; recollect, for you have been initiated, what lessons are taught in the mysteries; then will you perceive how extensive this doctrine is. But they who were not acquainted with natural philosophy (for it did not be-

gin to be in vogue till many years later) had no higher belief than what natural reason could give them; they were not acquainted with the principles and causes of things; they were often induced by certain visions, and those generally in the night, to think that those men who had departed from this life were still alive. And this may further be brought as an irrefragable argument for us to believe that there are Gods—that there never was any nation so barbarous, nor any people in the world so savage, as to be without some notion of Gods. Many have wrong notions of the Gods, for that is the nature and ordinary consequence of bad customs, yet all allow that there is a certain divine nature and energy. Nor does this proceed from the conversation of men, or the agreement of philosophers; it is not an opinion established by institutions or by laws; but, no doubt, in every case the consent of all nations is to be looked on as a law of nature. Who is there, then, that does not lament the loss of his friends, principally from 22imagining them deprived of the conveniences of life? Take away this opinion, and you remove with it all grief; for no one is afflicted merely on account of a loss sustained by himself. Perhaps we may be sorry, and grieve a little; but that bitter lamentation and those mournful tears have their origin in our apprehensions that he whom we loved is deprived of all the advantages of life, and is sensible of his loss. And we are led to this opinion by nature, without any arguments or any instruction.

14. But the greatest proof of all is, that nature herself gives a silent judgment in favor of the immortality of the soul, inasmuch as all are anxious, and that to a great degree, about the things which concern futurity:

One plants what future ages shall enjoy,

as Statius saith in his *Synephebi*. What is his object in doing so, except that he is interested in posterity? Shall the industrious husbandman, then, plant trees the fruit of which he shall never see? And shall not the great man found laws, institutions, and a republic? What does the procreation of children imply, and our care to continue our names, and our adoptions, and our scrupulous exactness in drawing up wills, and the inscriptions on monuments, and panegyrics, but that our thoughts run on futurity? There is no doubt but a judgment may be formed of nature in general, from looking at each nature in its most perfect specimens; and what is a more perfect specimen of a man than those are who look on themselves as born for the assistance, the protection, and the preservation of others? Hercules has gone to heaven; he never would have gone thither had he not, while among men, made that road for himself. These things are of old date, and have, besides, the sanction of universal religion.

15. What will you say? What do you imagine that so many and such great men of our republic, who have sacrificed their lives for its good, expected? Do you believe that they thought that their names should not continue beyond their lives? None ever encountered death for their country but under a firm persuasion of immortality! Themistocles might have lived at his ease; so might Epaminondas; and, not to look abroad and among the ancients 23for instances, so might I myself. But, somehow or other there clings to our minds a certain presage of future ages; and this both exists most firmly, and appears most clearly, in men of the loftiest genius and greatest souls. Take away this, and who would be so mad as to spend his life amidst toils and dangers? I speak of those in power. What are the poet's views but to be ennobled after death? What else is the object of these lines,

Behold old Ennius here, who erst
Thy fathers' great exploits rehearsed?

He is challenging the reward of glory from those men whose ancestors he himself had ennobled by his poetry. And in the same spirit he says, in another passage,

Let none with tears my funeral grace, for I
Claim from my works an immortality.

Why do I mention poets? The very mechanics are desirous of fame after death. Why did Phidias include a likeness of himself in the shield of Minerva, when he was not allowed to inscribe his name on it? What do our philosophers think on the subject? Do not they put their names to those very books which they write on the contempt of glory? If, then, universal consent is the voice of nature, and if it is the general opinion everywhere that those who have quitted this life are still interested in something, we also must subscribe to that opinion. And if we think that men of the greatest abilities and virtues see most clearly into the power of nature, because they themselves are her most perfect work, it is very probable that, as every great man is especially anxious to benefit posterity, there is something of which he himself will be sensible after death.

16. But as we are led by nature to think there are Gods, and as we discover, by reason, of what description they are, so, by the consent of all nations, we are induced to believe that our souls survive; but where their habitation is, and of what character they eventually are, must be learned from reason. The want of any certain reason on which to argue has given rise to the idea of the shades below, and to those fears which you seem, not without reason, to despise; for as our bodies fall to the ground, and are covered with earth (humus), from whence we derive the expression to be interred (humari), that has occasioned men to imagine that the dead continue, during the remainder of their existence, under ground; which opinion has drawn after it many errors, which the poets have increased; for the theatre, being frequented by a large crowd, among which are women and children, is wont to be greatly affected on hearing such pompous verses as these,

Lo! here I am, who scarce could gain this place,
Through stony mountains and a dreary waste;
Through cliffs, whose sharpen'd stones tremendous hung,
Where dreadful darkness spread itself around.

And the error prevailed so much, though indeed at present it seems to me to be removed, that although men knew that the bodies of the dead had been burned, yet they conceived such things to be done in the infernal regions as could not be executed or imagined without a body; for they could not conceive how disembodied souls could exist; and, therefore, they looked out for some shape or figure. This was the origin of all that account of the dead in Homer. This was the idea that caused my friend Appius to frame his Necromancy; and this is how there got about that idea of the lake of Avernus, in my neighborhood,

From whence the souls of undistinguish'd shape,
Clad in thick shade, rush from the open gate
Of Acheron, vain phantoms of the dead.

And they must needs have these appearances speak, which is not possible without a tongue, and a palate, and jaws, and without the help of lungs and sides, and without some shape or figure; for they could see nothing by their mind alone—they referred all to their eyes. To withdraw

the mind from sensual objects, and abstract our thoughts from what we are accustomed to, is an attribute of great genius. I am persuaded, indeed, that there were many such men in former ages; but Pherecydes⁸ the Syrian is the first on record who said that the souls of men were immortal, and he was a philosopher of great antiquity, in the reign of my namesake Tullius. His disciple Pythagoras greatly confirmed this opinion, who came into Italy in the reign of Tarquin the Proud; and all that country which is called Great Greece was occupied by his school, and he himself was held in high honor, and had the greatest authority; and the Pythagorean sect was for many ages after in such great credit, that all learning was believed to be confined to that name.

17. But I return to the ancients. They scarcely ever gave any reason for their opinion but what could be explained by numbers or definitions. It is reported of Plato that he came into Italy to make himself acquainted with the Pythagoreans; and that when there, among others, he made an acquaintance with Archytas⁹ and Timæus,¹⁰ and learned from them all the tenets of the Pythagoreans; and that he not only was of the same opinion with Pythagoras concerning the immortality of the soul, but that he also brought reasons in support of it; which, if you have nothing to say against it, I will pass over, and say no more at present about all this hope of immortality.

A. What, will you leave me when you have raised my expectations so high? I had rather, so help me Hercules! be mistaken with Plato, whom I know how much you esteem, and whom I admire myself, from what you say of him, than be in the right with those others.

M. I commend you; for, indeed, I could myself willingly be mistaken in his company. Do we, then, doubt, as we do in other cases (though I think here is very little room for doubt in this case, for the mathematicians prove the facts to us), that the earth is placed in the midst of the world, being, as it were, a sort of point, which they call a κέντρον, surrounded by the whole heavens; and that such is the nature of the four principles which are the generating causes of all things, that they have equally divided among them the constituents of all bodies; moreover, that earthy and humid bodies are carried at equal angles by their own weight and ponderosity into the earth and sea; that the other two parts consist, one of fire, and the other of air? As the two former are carried by their gravity and weight into the middle region of the world, so these, on the other hand, ascend by right lines into the celestial regions, either because, owing to their intrinsic nature, they are always endeavoring to reach the highest place, or else because lighter bodies are naturally repelled by heavier; and as this is notoriously the case, it must evidently follow that souls, when once they have departed from the body, whether they are animal (by which term I mean capable of breathing) or of the nature of fire, must mount upward. But if the soul is some number, as some people assert, speaking with more subtlety than clearness, or if it is that fifth nature, for which it would be more correct to say that we have not given a name to than that we do not correctly understand it—still it is too pure and perfect not to go to a great distance from the earth. Something of this sort, then, we must believe the soul to be, that we may not commit the folly of thinking that so active a principle lies immersed in the heart or brain; or, as Empedocles would have it, in the blood.

18. We will pass over Dicæarchus, with his contemporary and fellow-disciple Aristoxenus, both indeed men of learning. One of them seems never even to have been affected with grief, as he could not perceive that he had a soul; while the other is so pleased with his musical compositions that he endeavors to show an analogy betwixt them and souls. Now, we may understand harmony to arise from the intervals of sounds, whose various compositions occasion many harmonies; but I do not see how a disposition of members, and the figure of a body without a soul, can occasion harmony. He had better, learned as he is, leave these speculations to his master Aristotle, and follow his own trade as a musician. Good advice is given him in that Greek

proverb,

Apply your talents where you best are skill'd.

I will have nothing at all to do with that fortuitous concourse of individual light and round bodies, notwithstanding Democritus insists on their being warm and having breath, that is to say, life. But this soul, which is compounded of either of the four principles from which we assert that all things are derived, is of inflamed air, as seems particularly to have been the opinion of Panætius, and must necessarily mount upward; for air and fire have no tendency downward, but always ascend; so should they be dissipated that must be at some distance from the earth; but should they remain, and preserve their original state, it is clearer still that they must be carried heavenward, and this gross and concrete air, which is nearest the earth, must be divided and broken by them; for the soul is warmer, or rather hotter, than that air, which I just now called gross and concrete: and this may be made evident from this consideration—that our bodies, being compounded of the earthy class of principles, grow warm by the heat of the soul.

19. We may add, that the soul can the more easily escape from this air, which I have often named, and break through it, because nothing is swifter than the soul; no swiftness is comparable to the swiftness of the soul, which, should it remain uncorrupt and without alteration, must necessarily be carried on with such velocity as to penetrate and divide all this atmosphere, where clouds, and rain, and winds are formed, which, in consequence of the exhalations from the earth, is moist and dark: but, when the soul has once got above this region, and falls in with, and recognizes, a nature like its own, it then rests upon fires composed of a combination of thin air and a moderate solar heat, and does not aim at any higher flight; for then, after it has attained a lightness and heat resembling its own, it moves no more, but remains steady, being balanced, as it were, between two equal weights. That, then, is its natural seat where it has penetrated to something like itself, and where, wanting nothing further, it may be supported and maintained by the same aliment which nourishes and maintains the stars.

Now, as we are usually incited to all sorts of desires by the stimulus of the body, and the more so as we endeavor to rival those who are in possession of what we long for, we shall certainly be happy when, being emancipated from that body, we at the same time get rid of these desires and this rivalry. And that which we do at present, when, dismissing all other cares, we curiously examine and look into anything, we shall then do with greater freedom; and we shall employ ourselves entirely in the contemplation and examination of things; because there is naturally in our minds a certain insatiable desire to know the truth, and the very region itself where we shall arrive, as it gives us a more intuitive and easy knowledge of celestial things, will raise our desires after knowledge. For it was this beauty of the heavens, as seen even here upon earth, which gave birth to that national and hereditary philosophy (as Theophrastus calls it), which was thus excited to a desire of knowledge. But those persons will in a most especial degree enjoy this philosophy, who, while they were only inhabitants of this world and enveloped in darkness, were still desirous of looking into these things with the eye of their mind.

20. For if those men now think that they have attained something who have seen the mouth of the Pontus, and those straits which were passed by the ship called Argo, because,

From Argos she did chosen men convey,
Bound to fetch back the Golden Fleece, their prey;
or those who have seen the straits of the ocean,
Where the swift waves divide the neighboring shores
Of Europe, and of Afric;

what kind of sight do you imagine that will be when the whole earth is laid open to our view? and that, too, not only in its position, form, and boundaries, nor those parts of it only which are habitable, but those also that lie uncultivated, through the extremities of heat and cold to which they are exposed; for not even now is it with our eyes that we view what we see, for the body itself has no senses; but (as the naturalists, ay, and even the physicians assure us, who have opened our bodies, and examined them) there are certain perforated channels from the seat of the soul to the eyes, ears, and nose; so that frequently, when either prevented by meditation, or the force of some bodily disorder, we neither hear nor see, though our eyes and ears are open and in good condition; so that we may easily apprehend that it is the soul itself which sees and hears, and not those parts which are, as it were, but windows to the soul, by means of which, however, she can perceive nothing, unless she is on the spot, and exerts herself. How shall we account for the fact that by the same power of thinking we comprehend the most different things—as color, taste, heat, smell, and sound—which the soul could never know by her five messengers, unless every thing were referred to her, and she were the sole judge of all? And we shall certainly discover these things in a more clear and perfect degree when the soul is disengaged from the body, and has arrived at that goal to which nature leads her; for at present, notwithstanding nature has contrived, with the greatest skill, those channels which lead from the body to the soul, yet are they, in some way or other, stopped up with earthy and concrete bodies; but when we shall be nothing but soul, then nothing will interfere to prevent our seeing everything in its real substance and in its true character.

21. It is true, I might expatiate, did the subject require it, on the many and various objects with which the soul will be entertained in those heavenly regions; when I reflect on which, I am apt to wonder at the boldness of some philosophers, who are so struck with admiration at the knowledge of nature as to thank, in an exulting manner, the first inventor and teacher of natural philosophy, and to reverence him as a God; for they declare that they have been delivered by his means from the greatest tyrants, a perpetual terror, and a fear that molested them by night and day. What is this dread—this fear? What old woman is there so weak as to fear these things, which you, forsooth, had you not been acquainted with natural philosophy, would stand in awe of?

The hallow'd roofs of Acheron, the dread
Of Orcus, the pale regions of the dead.

And does it become a philosopher to boast that he is not afraid of these things, and that he has discovered them to be false? And from this we may perceive how acute these men were by nature, who, if they had been left without any instruction, would have believed in these things. But now they have certainly made a very fine acquisition in learning that when the day of their death arrives, they will perish entirely. And if that really is the case—for I say nothing either way—what is there agreeable or glorious in it? Not that I see any reason why the opinion of Pythagoras and Plato may not be true; but even although Plato were to have assigned no reason for his opinion (observe how much I esteem the man), the weight of his authority would have borne me down; but he has brought so many reasons, that he appears to me to have endeavored to convince others, and certainly to have convinced himself.

22. But there are many who labor on the other side of the question, and condemn souls to death, as if they were criminals capitally convicted; nor have they any other reason to allege why the immortality of the soul appears to them to be incredible, except that they are not able to conceive what sort of thing the soul can be when disentangled from the body; just as if they

could really form a correct idea as to what sort of thing it is, even when it is in the body; what its form, and size, and abode are; so that were they able to have a full view of all that is now hidden from them in a living body, they have no idea whether the soul would be discernible by them, or whether it is of so fine a texture that it would escape their sight. Let those consider this, who say that they are unable to form any idea of the soul without the body, and then they will see whether they can form any adequate idea of what it is when it is in the body. For my own part, when I reflect on the nature of the soul, it appears to me a far more perplexing and obscure question to determine what is its character while it is in the body—a place which, as it were, does not belong to it—than to imagine what it is when it leaves it, and has arrived at the free æther, which is, if I may so say, its proper, its own habitation. For unless we are to say that we cannot apprehend the character or nature of anything which we have never seen, we certainly may be able to form some notion of God, and of the divine soul when released from the body. Dicæarchus, indeed, and Aristoxenus, because it was hard to understand the existence and substance and nature of the soul, asserted that there was no such thing as a soul at all. It is, indeed, the most difficult thing imaginable to discern the soul by the soul. And this, doubtless, is the meaning of the precept of Apollo, which advises every one to know himself. For I do not apprehend the meaning of the God to have been that we should understand our members, our stature, and form; for we are not merely bodies; nor, when I say these things to you, am I addressing myself to your body: when, therefore, he says, “Know yourself,” he says this, “Inform yourself of the nature of your soul;” for the body is but a kind of vessel, or receptacle of the soul, and whatever your soul does is your own act. To know the soul, then, unless it had been divine, would not have been a precept of such excellent wisdom as to be attributed to a God; but even though the soul should not know of what nature itself is, will you say that it does not even perceive that ³²it exists at all, or that it has motion? On which is founded that reason of Plato’s, which is explained by Socrates in the Phædrus, and inserted by me, in my sixth book of the Republic.

23. “That which is always moved is eternal; but that which gives motion to something else, and is moved itself by some external cause, when that motion ceases, must necessarily cease to exist. That, therefore, alone, which is self-moved, because it is never forsaken by itself, can never cease to be moved. Besides, it is the beginning and principle of motion to everything else; but whatever is a principle has no beginning, for all things arise from that principle, and it cannot itself owe its rise to anything else; for then it would not be a principle did it proceed from anything else. But if it has no beginning, it never will have any end; for a principle which is once extinguished cannot itself be restored by anything else, nor can it produce anything else from itself; inasmuch as all things must necessarily arise from some first cause. And thus it comes about that the first principle of motion must arise from that thing which is itself moved by itself; and that can neither have a beginning nor an end of its existence, for otherwise the whole heaven and earth would be overset, and all nature would stand still, and not be able to acquire any force by the impulse of which it might be first set in motion. Seeing, then, that it is clear that whatever moves itself is eternal, can there be any doubt that the soul is so? For everything is inanimate which is moved by an external force; but everything which is animate is moved by an interior force, which also belongs to itself. For this is the peculiar nature and power of the soul; and if the soul be the only thing in the whole world which has the power of self-motion, then certainly it never had a beginning, and therefore it is eternal.”

Now, should all the lower order of philosophers (for so I think they may be called who dissent from Plato and Socrates and that school) unite their force, they never would be able to explain anything so elegantly as this, nor even to understand how ingeniously this conclusion is drawn. The soul, then, perceives itself to have motion, ³³and at the same time that it gets that

perception, it is sensible that it derives that motion from its own power, and not from the agency of another; and it is impossible that it should ever forsake itself. And these premises compel you to allow its eternity, unless you have something to say against them.

A. I should myself be very well pleased not to have even a thought arise in my mind against them, so much am I inclined to that opinion.

24. M. Well, then, I appeal to you, if the arguments which prove that there is something divine in the souls of men are not equally strong? But if I could account for the origin of these divine properties, then I might also be able to explain how they might cease to exist; for I think I can account for the manner in which the blood, and bile, and phlegm, and bones, and nerves, and veins, and all the limbs, and the shape of the whole body, were put together and made; ay, and even as to the soul itself, were there nothing more in it than a principle of life, then the life of a man might be put upon the same footing as that of a vine or any other tree, and accounted for as caused by nature; for these things, as we say, live. Besides, if desires and aversions were all that belonged to the soul, it would have them only in common with the beasts; but it has, in the first place, memory, and that, too, so infinite as to recollect an absolute countless number of circumstances, which Plato will have to be a recollection of a former life; for in that book which is inscribed Menon, Socrates asks a child some questions in geometry, with reference to measuring a square; his answers are such as a child would make, and yet the questions are so easy, that while answering them, one by one, he comes to the same point as if he had learned geometry. From whence Socrates would infer that learning is nothing more than recollection; and this topic he explains more accurately in the discourse which he held the very day he died; for he there asserts that, any one, who seeming to be entirely illiterate, is yet able to answer a question well that is proposed to him, does in so doing manifestly show that he is not learning it then, but recollecting it by his memory. Nor is it to be accounted for in any other way, how children come to have notions of so many and such important things as are implanted, and, as it were, sealed up, in their minds (which the Greeks call *ἐννοιαί*), unless the soul, before it entered the body, had been well stored with knowledge. And as it had no existence at all (for this is the invariable doctrine of Plato, who will not admit anything to have a real existence which has a beginning and an end, and who thinks that that alone does really exist which is of such a character as what he calls *εἰδέα*, and we species), therefore, being shut up in the body, it could not while in the body discover what it knows; but it knew it before, and brought the knowledge with it, so that we are no longer surprised at its extensive and multifarious knowledge. Nor does the soul clearly discover its ideas at its first resort to this abode to which it is so unaccustomed, and which is in so disturbed a state; but after having refreshed and recollected itself, it then by its memory recovers them; and, therefore, to learn implies nothing more than to recollect. But I am in a particular manner surprised at memory. For what is that faculty by which we remember? what is its force? what its nature? I am not inquiring how great a memory Simonides¹³ may be said to have had, or Theodectes, or that Cineas who was sent to Rome as ambassador from Pyrrhus; or, in more modern times, Charmadas; or, very lately, Metrodorus the Scepsian, or our own contemporary Hortensius: I am speaking of ordinary memory, and especially of those men who are employed in any important study or art, the great capacity of whose minds it is hard to estimate, such numbers of things do they remember.

25. Should you ask what this leads to, I think we may understand what that power is, and whence we have it. It certainly proceeds neither from the heart, nor from the blood, nor from the brain, nor from atoms; whether it be air or fire, I know not, nor am I, as those men are, ashamed, in cases where I am ignorant, to own that I am so. If in any other obscure matter I were able to assert anything positively, then I would swear that the soul, be it air or fire, is divine. Just think, I beseech you: can you imagine this wonderful power of memory to be sown in

or to be a part of the composition of the earth, or of this dark and gloomy atmosphere? Though you cannot apprehend what it is, yet you see what kind of thing it is, or if you do not quite see that, yet you certainly see how great it is. What, then? Shall we imagine that there is a kind of measure in the soul, into which, as into a vessel, all that we remember is poured? That indeed is absurd; for how shall we form any idea of the bottom, or of the shape or fashion of such a soul as that? And, again, how are we to conceive how much it is able to contain? Shall we imagine the soul to receive impressions like wax, and memory to be marks of the impressions made on the soul? What are the characters of the words, what of the facts themselves? and what, again, is that prodigious greatness which can give rise to impressions of so many things? What, lastly, is that power which investigates secret things, and is called invention and contrivance? Does that man seem to be compounded of this earthly, mortal, and perishing nature who first invented names for everything; which, if you will believe Pythagoras, is the highest pitch of wisdom? or he who collected the dispersed inhabitants of the world, and united them in the bonds of social life? or he who confined the sounds of the voice, which used to seem infinite, to the marks of a few letters? or he who first observed the courses of the planets, their progressive motions, their laws? These were all great men. But they were greater still who invented food, and raiment, and houses; who introduced civilization among us, and armed us against the wild beasts; by whom we were made sociable and polished, and so proceeded from the necessaries of life to its embellishments. For we have provided great entertainments for the ears by inventing and modulating the variety and nature of sounds; we have learned to survey the stars, not only those that are fixed, but also those which are improperly called wandering; and the man who has acquainted himself with all their revolutions and motions is fairly considered to have a soul resembling the soul of that Being who has created those stars in the heavens: for when Archimedes described in a sphere the motions of the moon, sun, and five planets, he did the very same thing as Plato's God, in his *Timæus*, who made the world, causing one revolution to adjust motions differing as much as possible in their slowness and velocity. Now, allowing that what we see in the world could not be effected without a God, Archimedes could not have imitated the same motions in his sphere without a divine soul.

26. To me, indeed, it appears that even those studies which are more common and in greater esteem are not without some divine energy: so that I do not consider that a poet can produce a serious and sublime poem without some divine impulse working on his mind; nor do I think that eloquence, abounding with sonorous words and fruitful sentences, can flow thus without something beyond mere human power. But as to philosophy, that is the parent of all the arts: what can we call that but, as Plato says, a gift, or, as I express it, an invention, of the Gods? This it was which first taught us the worship of the Gods; and then led us on to justice, which arises from the human race being formed into society; and after that ³⁷it imbued us with modesty and elevation of soul. This it was which dispersed darkness from our souls, as it is dispelled from our eyes, enabling us to see all things that are above or below, the beginning, end, and middle of everything. I am convinced entirely that that which could effect so many and such great things must be a divine power. For what is memory of words and circumstances? What, too, is invention? Surely they are things than which nothing greater can be conceived in a God! For I do not imagine the Gods to be delighted with nectar and ambrosia, or with *Juventas* presenting them with a cup; nor do I put any faith in Homer, who says that *Ganymede* was carried away by the Gods on account of his beauty, in order to give Jupiter his wine. Too weak reasons for doing *Laomedon* such injury! These were mere inventions of Homer, who gave his Gods the imperfections of men. I would rather that he had given men the perfections of the Gods! those perfections, I mean, of uninterrupted health, wisdom, invention, memory. Therefore the soul (which is, as I say, divine) is, as Euripides more boldly expresses it, a God. And thus, if the divinity be

air or fire, the soul of man is the same; for as that celestial nature has nothing earthly or humid about it, in like manner the soul of man is also free from both these qualities: but if it is of that fifth kind of nature, first introduced by Aristotle, then both Gods and souls are of the same.

27. As this is my opinion, I have explained it in these very words, in my book on Conso-
lation.¹⁹ The origin of the soul of man is not to be found upon earth, for there is nothing in the soul of a mixed or concrete nature, or that has any appearance of being formed or made out of the earth; nothing even humid, or airy, or fiery. For what is there in natures of that kind which has the power of memory, understanding, or thought? which can recollect the past, foresee the future, and comprehend the present? for these capabilities are confined to divine beings; nor can we discover any source from which men could derive them, but from God. There is therefore a peculiar³⁸nature and power in the soul, distinct from those natures which are more known and familiar to us. Whatever, then, that is which thinks, and which has understanding, and volition, and a principle of life, is heavenly and divine, and on that account must necessarily be eternal; nor can God himself, who is known to us, be conceived to be anything else except a soul free and unembarrassed, distinct from all mortal concretion, acquainted with everything, and giving motion to everything, and itself endued with perpetual motion.

28. Of this kind and nature is the intellect of man. Where, then, is this intellect seated, and of what character is it? where is your own, and what is its character? Are you able to tell? If I have not faculties for knowing all that I could desire to know, will you not even allow me to make use of those which I have? The soul has not sufficient capacity to comprehend itself; yet, the soul, like the eye, though it has no distinct view of itself, sees other things: it does not see (which is of least consequence) its own shape; perhaps not, though it possibly may; but we will pass that by: but it certainly sees that it has vigor, sagacity, memory, motion, and velocity; these are all great, divine, eternal properties. What its appearance is, or where it dwells, it is not necessary even to inquire. As when we behold, first of all, the beauty and brilliant appearance of the heavens; secondly, the vast velocity of its revolutions, beyond power of our imagination to conceive; then the vicissitudes of nights and days, the fourfold division of the seasons, so well adapted to the ripening of the fruits of the earth, and the temperature of our bodies: and after that we look up to the sun, the moderator and governor of all these things; and view the moon, by the increase and decrease of its light, marking, as it were, and appointing our holy days; and see the five planets, borne on in the same circle, divided into twelve parts, preserving the same course with the greatest regularity, but with utterly dissimilar motions among themselves; and the nightly appearance of the heaven, adorned on all sides with stars; then, the globe of the earth, raised above the sea, and placed in the centre of the universe, inhabited and cultivated in its two opposite extremities, one of which, the³⁹place of our habitation, is situated towards the north pole, under the seven stars:

Where the cold northern blasts, with horrid sound,
Harden to ice the snowy cover'd ground;

the other, towards the south pole, is unknown to us, but is called by the Greeks ἀντίχθονα: the other parts are uncultivated, because they are either frozen with cold, or burned up with heat; but where we dwell, it never fails, in its season,

To yield a placid sky, to bid the trees
Assume the lively verdure of their leaves:
The vine to bud, and, joyful, in its shoots,
Foretell the approaching vintage of its fruits:

The ripen'd corn to sing, while all around
Full riv'lets glide; and flowers deck the ground:

then the multitude of cattle, fit part for food, part for tilling the ground, others for carrying us, or for clothing us; and man himself, made, as it were, on purpose to contemplate the heavens and the Gods, and to pay adoration to them: lastly, the whole earth, and wide extending seas, given to man's use. When we view these and numberless other things, can we doubt that they have some being who presides over them, or has made them (if, indeed, they have been made, as is the opinion of Plato, or if, as Aristotle thinks, they are eternal), or who at all events is the regulator of so immense a fabric and so great a blessing to men? Thus, though you see not the soul of man, as you see not the Deity, yet, as by the contemplation of his works you are led to acknowledge a God, so you must own the divine power of the soul, from its remembering things, from its invention, from the quickness of its motion, and from all the beauty of virtue. Where, then, is it seated, you will say?

29. In my opinion, it is seated in the head, and I can bring you reasons for my adopting that opinion. At present, let the soul reside where it will, you certainly have one in you. Should you ask what its nature is? It has one peculiarly its own; but admitting it to consist of fire, or air, it does not affect the present question. Only observe this, that as you are convinced there is a God, though you are ignorant where he resides, and what shape he is of; in like manner you ought to feel assured that you have a soul, though you cannot satisfy yourself of the place of its residence, nor its form. In our knowledge of the soul, unless we are grossly ignorant of natural philosophy, we cannot but be satisfied that it has nothing but what is simple, unmixed, uncompounded, and single; and if this is admitted, then it cannot be separated, nor divided, nor dispersed, nor parted, and therefore it cannot perish; for to perish implies a parting-asunder, a division, a disunion, of those parts which, while it subsisted, were held together by some band. And it was because he was influenced by these and similar reasons that Socrates neither looked out for anybody to plead for him when he was accused, nor begged any favor from his judges, but maintained a manly freedom, which was the effect not of pride, but of the true greatness of his soul; and on the last day of his life he held a long discourse on this subject; and a few days before, when he might have been easily freed from his confinement, he refused to be so; and when he had almost actually hold of that deadly cup, he spoke with the air of a man not forced to die, but ascending into heaven.

30. For so indeed he thought himself, and thus he spoke: "That there were two ways, and that the souls of men, at their departure from the body, took different roads; for those which were polluted with vices that are common to men, and which had given themselves up entirely to unclean desires, and had become so blinded by them as to have habituated themselves to all manner of debauchery and profligacy, or to have laid detestable schemes for the ruin of their country, took a road wide of that which led to the assembly of the Gods; but they who had preserved themselves upright and chaste, and free from the slightest contagion of the body, and had always kept themselves as far as possible at a distance from it, and while on earth had proposed to themselves as a model the life of the Gods, found the return to those beings from whom they had come an easy one." Therefore, he argues, that all good and wise men should take example from the swans, who are considered sacred to Apollo, not without reason, but particularly because they seem to have received the gift of divination from him, by which, foreseeing how happy it is to die, they leave this world with singing and joy. Nor can any one doubt of this, unless it happens to us who think with care and anxiety about the soul (as is often the case with those who look earnestly at the setting sun), to lose the sight of it entirely; and so the mind's eye, viewing itself, sometimes grows dull, and for that reason we become remiss in

our contemplation. Thus our reasoning is borne about, harassed with doubts and anxieties, not knowing how to proceed, but measuring back again those dangerous tracts which it has passed, like a boat tossed about on the boundless ocean. But these reflections are of long standing, and borrowed from the Greeks. But Cato left this world in such a manner as if he were delighted that he had found an opportunity of dying; for that God who presides in us forbids our departure hence without his leave. But when God himself has given us a just cause, as formerly he did to Socrates, and lately to Cato, and often to many others—in such a case, certainly every man of sense would gladly exchange this darkness for that light: not that he would forcibly break from the chains that held him, for that would be against the law; but, like a man released from prison by a magistrate or some lawful authority, so he too would walk away, being released and discharged by God. For the whole life of a philosopher is, as the same philosopher says, a meditation on death.

31. For what else is it that we do, when we call off our minds from pleasure, that is to say, from our attention to the body, from the managing our domestic estate, which is a sort of handmaid and servant of the body, or from duties of a public nature, or from all other serious business whatever? What else is it, I say, that we do, but invite the soul to reflect on itself? oblige it to converse with itself, and, as far as possible, break off its acquaintance with the body? Now, to separate the soul from the body, is to learn to die, and nothing else whatever. Wherefore take my advice; and let us meditate on this, and separate ourselves as far as possible from the body, that is to say, let us accustom ourselves to die. This will be enjoying a life like that of heaven even while we remain on earth; and when we are carried thither and released from these bonds, our souls will make their progress with more rapidity; for the spirit which has always been fettered by the bonds of the body, even when it is disengaged, advances more slowly, just as those do who have worn actual fetters for many years: but when we have arrived at this emancipation from the bonds of the body, then indeed we shall begin to live, for this present life is really death, which I could say a good deal in lamentation for if I chose.

A. You have lamented it sufficiently in your book on Consolation; and when I read that, there is nothing which I desire more than to leave these things; but that desire is increased a great deal by what I have just heard.

M. The time will come, and that soon, and with equal certainty, whether you hang back or press forward; for time flies. But death is so far from being an evil, as it lately appeared to you, that I am inclined to suspect, not that there is no other thing which is an evil to man, but rather that there is nothing else which is a real good to him; if, at least, it is true that we become thereby either Gods ourselves, or companions of the Gods. However, this is not of so much consequence, as there are some of us here who will not allow this. But I will not leave off discussing this point till I have convinced you that death can, upon no consideration whatever, be an evil.

A. How can it, after what I now know?

M. Do you ask how it can? There are crowds of arguers who contradict this; and those not only Epicureans, whom I regard very little, but, somehow or other, almost every man of letters; and, above all, my favorite Dicaearchus is very strenuous in opposing the immortality of the soul: for he has written three books, which are entitled *Lesbiacs*, because the discourse was held at Mitylene, in which he seeks to prove that souls are mortal. The Stoics, on the other hand, allow us as long a time for enjoyment as the life of a raven; they allow the soul to exist a great while, but are against its eternity.

32. Are you willing to hear then why, even allowing this, death cannot be an evil.

A. As you please; but no one shall drive me from my belief in mortality.

M. I commend you, indeed, for that; though we should not be too confident in our belief of

anything; for we are frequently disturbed by some subtle conclusion. We give way and change our opinions even in things that are more evident than this; for in this there certainly is some obscurity. Therefore, should anything of this kind happen, it is well to be on our guard.

A. You are right in that; but I will provide against any accident.

M. Have you any objection to our dismissing our friends the Stoics—those, I mean, who allow that the souls exist after they have left the body, but yet deny that they exist forever?

A. We certainly may dismiss the consideration of those men who admit that which is the most difficult point in the whole question, namely, that a soul can exist independently of the body, and yet refuse to grant that which is not only very easy to believe, but which is even the natural consequence of the concession which they have made—that if they can exist for a length of time; they most likely do so forever.

M. You take it right; that is the very thing. Shall we give, therefore, any credit to Pauæstius, when he dissents from his master, Plato? whom he everywhere calls divine, the wisest, the holiest of men, the Homer of philosophers, and whom he opposes in nothing except this single opinion of the soul's immortality: for he maintains what nobody denies, that everything which has been generated will perish, and that even souls are generated, which he thinks appears from their resemblance to those of the men who begot them; for that likeness is as apparent in the turn of their minds as in their bodies. But he brings another reason—that there is nothing which is sensible of pain which is not also liable to disease; but whatever is liable to disease must be liable to death. The soul is sensible of pain, therefore it is liable to perish.

33. These arguments may be refuted; for they proceed from his not knowing that, while discussing the subject of the immortality of the soul, he is speaking of the intellect, which is free from all turbid motion; but not of those parts of the mind in which those disorders, anger and lust, have their seat, and which he whom he is opposing, when he argues thus, imagines to be distinct and separate from the mind. Now this resemblance is more remarkable in beasts, whose souls are void of reason. But the likeness in men consists more in the configuration of the bodies: and it is of no little consequence in what bodies the soul is lodged; for there are many things which depend on the body that give an edge to the soul, many which blunt it. Aristotle, indeed, says that all men of great genius are melancholy; so that I should not have been displeased to have been somewhat duller than I am. He instances many, and, as if it were matter of fact, brings his reasons for it. But if the power of those things that proceed from the body be so great as to influence the mind (for they are the things, whatever they are, that occasion this likeness), still that does not necessarily prove why a similitude of souls should be generated. I say nothing about cases of unlikeness. I wish Panætius could be here: he lived with Africanus. I would inquire of him which of his family the nephew of Africanus's brother was like? Possibly he may in person have resembled his father; but in his manners he was so like every profligate, abandoned man, that it was impossible to be more so. Whom did the grandson of P. Crassus, that wise and eloquent and most distinguished man, resemble? Or the relations and sons of many other excellent men, whose names there is no occasion to mention? But what are we doing? Have we forgotten that our purpose was, when we had sufficiently spoken on the subject of the immortality of the soul, to prove that, even if the soul did perish, there would be, even then, no evil in death?

A. I remembered it very well; but I had no dislike to your digressing a little from your original design, while you were talking of the soul's immortality.

M. I perceive you have sublime thoughts, and are eager to mount up to heaven.

34. I am not without hopes myself that such may be our fate. But admit what they assert—that the soul does not continue to exist after death.

A. Should it be so, I see that we are then deprived of the hopes of a happier life.

M. But what is there of evil in that opinion? For let the soul perish as the body: is there any pain, or indeed any feeling at all, in the body after death? No one, indeed asserts that; though Epicurus charges Democritus with saying so; but the disciples of Democritus deny it. No sense, therefore, remains in the soul; for the soul is nowhere. Where, then, is the evil? for there is nothing but these two things. Is it because the mere separation of the soul and body cannot be effected without pain? But even should that be granted, how small a pain must that be! Yet I think that it is false, and that it is very often unaccompanied by any sensation at all, and sometimes even attended with pleasure; but certainly the whole must be very trifling, whatever it is, for it is instantaneous. What makes us uneasy, or rather gives us pain, is the leaving all the good things of life. But just consider if I might not more properly say, leaving the evils of life; only there is no reason for my now occupying myself in bewailing the life of man, and yet I might, with very good reason. But what occasion is there, when what I am laboring to prove is that no one is miserable after death, to make life more miserable by lamenting over it? I have done that in the book which I wrote, in order to comfort myself as well as I could. If, then, our inquiry is after truth, death withdraws us from evil, not from good. This subject is indeed so copiously handled by Hegesias, the Cyrenaic philosopher, that he is said to have been forbidden by Ptolemy from delivering his lectures in the schools, because some who heard him made away with themselves. There is, too, an epigram of Callimachus²⁰ on Cleombrotus of Ambracia, who, without any misfortune having befallen him, as he says, threw himself from a wall into the sea, after he had read a book of Plato's. The book I mentioned of that Hegesias is called Ἀποκαρτερητῶν, or "A Man who starves himself," in which a man is represented as killing himself by starvation, till he is prevented by his friends, in reply to whom he reckons up all the miseries of human life. I might do the same, though not so fully as he, who thinks it not worth any man's while to live. I pass over others. Was it even worth my while to live, for, had I died before I was deprived of the comforts of my own family, and of the honors which I received for my public services, would not death have taken me from the evils of life rather than from its blessings?

35. Mention, therefore, some one, who never knew distress; who never received any blow from fortune. The great Metellus had four distinguished sons; but Priam had fifty, seventeen of whom were born to him by his lawful wife. Fortune had the same power over both, though she exercised it but on one; for Metellus was laid on his funeral pile by a great company of sons and daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters; but Priam fell by the hand of an enemy, after having fled to the altar, and having seen himself deprived of all his numerous progeny. Had he died before the death of his sons and the ruin of his kingdom,

With all his mighty wealth elate,
Under rich canopies of state;

would he then have been taken from good or from evil? It would indeed, at that time, have appeared that he was being taken away from good; yet surely it would have turned out advantageous for him; nor should we have had these mournful verses,

Lo! these all perish'd in one flaming pile;
The foe old Priam did of life beguile,
And with his blood, thy altar, Jove, defile.

As if anything better could have happened to him at that time than to lose his life in that manner; but yet, if it had befallen him sooner, it would have prevented all those consequences; but

even as it was, it released him from any further sense of them. The case of our friend Pompey was something better: once, when he had been very ill at Naples, the Neapolitans, on his recovery, put crowns on their heads, as did those of Puteoli; the people flocked from the country to congratulate him—it is a Grecian custom, and a foolish one; still it is a sign of good fortune. But the question is, had he died, would he have been taken from good, or from evil? Certainly from evil. He would not have been engaged in a war with his father-in-law; he would not have taken up arms before he was prepared; he would not have left his own house, nor fled from Italy; he would not, after the loss of his army, have fallen unarmed into the hands of slaves, and been put to death by them; his children would not have been destroyed; nor would his whole fortune have come into the possession of the conquerors. Did not he, then, who, if he had died at that time, would have died in all his glory, owe all the great and terrible misfortunes into which he subsequently fell to the prolongation of his life at that time?

36. These calamities are avoided by death, for even though they should never happen, there is a possibility that they may; but it never occurs to a man that such a disaster may befall him himself. Every one hopes to be as happy as Metellus: as if the number of the happy exceeded that of the miserable; or as if there were any certainty in human affairs; or, again, as if there were more rational foundation for hope than fear. But should we grant them even this, that men are by death deprived of good things; would it follow that the dead are therefore in need of the good things of life, and are miserable on that account? Certainly they must necessarily say so. Can he who does not exist be in need of anything? To be in need of has a melancholy sound, because it in effect amounts to this—he had, but he has not; he regrets, he looks back upon, he wants. Such are, I suppose, the distresses of one who is in need of. Is he deprived of eyes? to be blind is misery. Is he destitute of children? not to have them is misery. These considerations apply to the living, but the dead are neither in need of the blessings of life, nor of life itself. But when I am speaking of the dead, I am speaking of those who have no existence. But would any one say of us, who do exist, that we want horns or wings? Certainly not. Should it be asked, why not? the answer would be, that not to have what neither custom nor nature has fitted you for would not imply a want of them, even though you were sensible that you had them not. This argument should be pressed over and over again, after that point has once been established, which, if souls are mortal, there can be no dispute about—I mean, that the destruction of them by death is so entire as to remove even the least suspicion of any sense remaining. When, therefore, this point is once well grounded and established, we must correctly define what the term to want means; that there may be no mistake in the word. To want, then, signifies this: to be without that which you would be glad to have; for inclination for a thing is implied in the word want, excepting when we use the word in an entirely different sense, as we do when we say that a fever is wanting to any one. For it admits of a different interpretation, when you are without a certain thing, and are sensible that you are without it, but yet can easily dispense with having it. “To want,” then, is an expression which you cannot apply to the dead; nor is the mere fact of wanting something necessarily lamentable. The proper expression ought to be, “that they want a good,” and that is an evil.

But a living man does not want a good, unless he is distressed without it; and yet, we can easily understand how any man alive can be without a kingdom. But this cannot be predicated of you with any accuracy: it might have been asserted of Tarquin, when he was driven from his kingdom. But when such an expression is used respecting the dead, it is absolutely unintelligible. For to want implies to be sensible; but the dead are insensible: therefore, the dead can be in no want.

37. But what occasion is there to philosophize here in a matter with which we see that philosophy is but little concerned? How often have not only our generals but whole armies,

rushed on certain death! But if it had been a thing to be feared, L. Brutus would never have fallen in fight, to prevent the return of that tyrant whom he had expelled; nor would Decius the father have been slain in fighting with the Latins; nor would his son, when engaged with the Etruscans, nor his grandson with Pyrrhus have exposed themselves to the enemy's darts. Spain would never have seen, in one campaign, the Scipios fall fighting for their country; nor would the plains of Cannæ have witnessed the death of Paulus and Geminus, or Venusia that of Marcellus; nor would the Latins have beheld the death of Albinus, nor the Leucanians that of Gracchus. But are any of these miserable now? Nay, they were not so even at the first moment after they had breathed their last; nor can any one be miserable after he has lost all sensation. Oh, but the mere circumstance of being without sensation is miserable. It might be so if being without sensation were the same thing as wanting it; but as it is evident there can be nothing of any kind in that which has no existence, what can there be afflicting to that which can neither feel want nor be sensible of anything? We might be said to have repeated this over too often, only that here lies all that the soul shudders at from the fear of death. For whoever can clearly apprehend that which is as manifest as the light—that when both soul and body are consumed, and there is a total destruction, then that which was an animal becomes nothing—will clearly see that there is no difference between a Hippocentaur, which never had existence, and King Agamemnon, and that M. Camillus is no more concerned about this present civil war than I was at the sacking of Rome, when he was living.

38. Why, then, should Camillus be affected with the thoughts of these things happening three hundred and fifty years after his time? And why should I be uneasy if I were to expect that some nation might possess itself of this city ten thousand years hence? Because so great is our regard for our country, as not to be measured by our own feeling, but by its own actual safety.

Death, then, which threatens us daily from a thousand accidents, and which, by reason of the shortness of life, can never be far off, does not deter a wise man from making such provision for his country and his family as he hopes may last forever; and from regarding posterity, of which he can never have any real perception, as belonging to himself. Wherefore a man may act for eternity, even though he be persuaded that his soul is mortal; not, indeed, from a desire of glory, which he will be insensible of, but from a principle of virtue, which glory will inevitably attend, though that is not his object. The process, indeed, of nature is this: that just in the same manner as our birth was the beginning of things with us, so death will be the end; and as we were noways concerned with anything before we were born, so neither shall we be after we are dead. And in this state of things where can the evil be, since death has no connection with either the living or the dead? The one have no existence at all, the other are not yet affected by it. They who make the least of death consider it as having a great resemblance to sleep; as if any one would choose to live ninety years on condition that, at the expiration of sixty, he should sleep out the remainder. The very swine would not accept of life on those terms, much less I. Endymion, indeed, if you listen to fables, slept once on a time on Latmus, a mountain of Caria, and for such a length of time that I imagine he is not as yet awake. Do you think that he is concerned at the Moon's being in difficulties, though it was by her that he was thrown into that sleep, in order that she might kiss him while sleeping. For what should he be concerned for who has not even any sensation? You look on sleep as an image of death, and you take that on you daily; and have you, then, any doubt that there is no sensation in death, when you see there is none in sleep, which is its near resemblance?

39. Away, then, with those follies, which are little better than the old women's dreams, such as that it is miserable to die before our time. What time do you mean? That of nature? But she has only lent you life, as she might lend you money, without fixing any certain time for its repayment. Have you any grounds of complaint, 51 then, that she recalls it at her pleasure? for

you received it on these terms. They that complain thus allow that if a young child dies, the survivors ought to bear his loss with equanimity; that if an infant in the cradle dies, they ought not even to utter a complaint; and yet nature has been more severe with them in demanding back what she gave. They answer by saying that such have not tasted the sweets of life; while the other had begun to conceive hopes of great happiness, and, indeed, had begun to realize them. Men judge better in other things, and allow a part to be preferable to none. Why do they not admit the same estimate in life? Though Callimachus does not speak amiss in saying that more tears had flowed from Priam than his son; yet they are thought happier who die after they have reached old age. It would be hard to say why; for I do not apprehend that any one, if a longer life were granted to him, would find it happier. There is nothing more agreeable to a man than prudence, which old age most certainly bestows on a man, though it may strip him of everything else. But what age is long, or what is there at all long to a man? Does not

Old age, though unregarded, still attend
On childhood's pastimes, as the cares of men?

But because there is nothing beyond old age, we call that long: all these things are said to be long or short, according to the proportion of time they were given us for. Aristototele saith there is a kind of insect near the river Hypanis, which runs from a certain part of Europe into the Pontus, whose life consists but of one day; those that die at the eighth hour die in full age; those who die when the sun sets are very old, especially when the days are at the longest. Compare our longest life with eternity, and we shall be found almost as short-lived as those little animals.

40. Let us, then, despise all these follies—for what softer name can I give to such levities?—and let us lay the foundation of our happiness in the strength and greatness of our minds, in a contempt and disregard of all earthly things, and in the practice of every virtue. For at present we are enervated by the softness of our imaginations, so that, should we leave this world before the promises of our fortune-tellers are made good to us, we should think ourselves deprived of some great advantages, and seem disappointed and forlorn. But if, through life, we are in continual suspense, still expecting, still desiring, and are in continual pain and torture, good Gods! how pleasant must that journey be which ends in security and ease! How pleased am I with Theramenes! Of how exalted a soul does he appear! For, although we never read of him without tears, yet that illustrious man is not to be lamented in his death, who, when he had been imprisoned by the command of the thirty tyrants, drank off, at one draught, as if he had been thirsty, the poisoned cup, and threw the remainder out of it with such force that it sounded as it fell; and then, on hearing the sound of the drops, he said, with a smile, “I drink this to the most excellent Critias,” who had been his most bitter enemy; for it is customary among the Greeks, at their banquets, to name the person to whom they intend to deliver the cup. This celebrated man was pleasant to the last, even when he had received the poison into his bowels, and truly foretold the death of that man whom he named when he drank the poison, and that death soon followed. Who that thinks death an evil could approve of the evenness of temper in this great man at the instant of dying? Socrates came, a few years after, to the same prison and the same cup by as great iniquity on the part of his judges as the tyrants displayed when they executed Theramenes. What a speech is that which Plato makes him deliver before his judges, after they had condemned him to death!

41. “I am not without hopes, O judges, that it is a favorable circumstance for me that I am condemned to die; for one of these two things must necessarily happen—either that death will deprive me entirely of all sense, or else that, by dying, I shall go from hence into some other place; wherefore, if all sense is utterly extinguished, and if death is like that sleep which some-

times is so undisturbed as to be even without the visions of dreams—in that case, O ye good Gods! what gain is it to die? or what length of days can be imagined which would be preferable to such a night? And if the constant course of future time is to resemble that night, who is happier than I am? But if on the other hand, what is said be true, namely, that death is but a removal to those regions where the souls of the departed dwell, then that state must be more happy still to have escaped from those who call themselves judges, and to appear before such as are truly so—Minos, Rhadamanthus, Æacus, Triptolemus—and to meet with those who have lived with justice and probity! Can this change of abode appear otherwise than great to you? What bounds can you set to the value of conversing with Orpheus, and Musæus, and Homer, and Hesiod? I would even, were it possible, willingly die often, in order to prove the certainty of what I speak of. What delight must it be to meet with Palamedes, and Ajax, and others, who have been betrayed by the iniquity of their judges! Then, also, should I experience the wisdom of even that king of kings, who led his vast troops to Troy, and the prudence of Ulysses and Sisyphus: nor should I then be condemned for prosecuting my inquiries on such subjects in the same way in which I have done here on earth. And even you, my judges, you, I mean, who have voted for my acquittal, do not you fear death, for nothing bad can befall a good man, whether he be alive or dead; nor are his concerns ever overlooked by the Gods; nor in my case either has this befallen me by chance; and I have nothing to charge those men with who accused or condemned me but the fact that they believed that they were doing me harm.” In this manner he proceeded. There is no part of his speech which I admire more than his last words: “But it is time,” says he, “for me now to go hence, that I may die; and for you, that you may continue to live. Which condition of the two is the best, the immortal Gods know; but I do not believe that any mortal man does.”

42. Surely I would rather have had this man’s soul than all the fortunes of those who sat in judgment on him; although that very thing which he says no one except the Gods know, namely, whether life or death is most preferable, he knows himself, for he had previously stated his opinion on it; but he maintained to the last that favorite maxim of his, of affirming nothing. And let us, too, adhere to this rule of not thinking anything an evil which is a general provision of nature; and let us assure ourselves, that if death is an evil, it is an eternal evil, for death seems to be the end of a miserable life; but if death is a misery, there can be no end of that. But why do I mention Socrates, or Theramenes, men distinguished by the glory of virtue and wisdom? when a certain Lacedæmoman, whose name is not so much as known, held death in such contempt, that, when led to it by the ephori, he bore a cheerful and pleasant countenance; and, when he was asked by one of his enemies whether he despised the laws of Lycurgus, “On the contrary,” answered he, “I am greatly obliged to him, for he has amerced me in a fine which I can pay without borrowing, or taking up money at interest.” This was a man worthy of Sparta. And I am almost persuaded of his innocence because of the greatness of his soul. Our own city has produced many such. But why should I name generals, and other men of high rank, when Cato could write that legions have marched with alacrity to that place from whence they never expected to return? With no less greatness of soul fell the Lacedæmonians at Thermopylæ, on whom Simonides wrote the following epitaph:

Go, stranger, tell the Spartans, here we lie,
Who to support their laws durst boldly die.

What was it that Leonidas, their general, said to them? “March on with courage, my Lacedæmonians. To-night, perhaps, we shall sup in the regions below.” This was a brave nation while the laws of Lycurgus were in force. One of them, when a Persian had said to him in conversation, “We shall hide the sun from your sight by the number of our arrows and darts,” replied,

“We shall fight, then in the shade.” Do I talk of their men? How great was that Lacedæmonian woman, who had sent her son to battle, and when she heard that he was slain, said, “I bore him for that purpose, that you might have a man who durst die for his country!” However, it is a matter of notoriety that the Spartans were bold and hardy, for the discipline of a republic has great influence.

43. What, then, have we not reason to admire Theodorus the Cyrenean, a philosopher of no small distinction, who, when Lysimachus threatened to crucify him, bade him keep those menaces for his courtiers? “To Theodorus it makes no difference whether he rot in the air or underground.” By which saying of the philosopher I am reminded to say something of the custom of funerals and sepulture, and of funeral ceremonies, which is, indeed, not a difficult subject, especially if we recollect what has been before said about insensibility. The opinion of Socrates respecting this matter is clearly stated in the book which treats of his death, of which we have already said so much; for when he had discussed the immortality of the soul, and when the time of his dying was approaching rapidly, being asked by Criton how he would be buried, “I have taken a great deal of pains,” saith he, “my friends, to no purpose, for I have not convinced our Criton that I shall fly from hence, and leave no part of me behind. Notwithstanding, Criton, if you can overtake me, wheresoever you get hold of me, bury me as you please: but believe me, none of you will be able to catch me when I have flown away from hence.” That was excellently said, inasmuch as he allows his friend to do as he pleased, and yet shows his indifference about anything of this kind. Diogenes was rougher, though of the same opinion; but in his character of a Cynic he expressed himself in a somewhat harsher manner; he ordered himself to be thrown anywhere without being buried. And when his friends replied, “What! to the birds and beasts?” “By no means,” saith he; “place my staff near me, that I may drive them away.” “How can you do that,” they answer, “for you will not perceive them?” “How am I then 56injured by being torn by those animals, if I have no sensation?” Anaxagoras, when he was at the point of death at Lampsacus, and was asked by his friends, whether, if anything should happen to him, he would not choose to be carried to Clazomenæ, his country, made this excellent answer, “There is,” says he, “no occasion for that, for all places are at an equal distance from the infernal regions.” There is one thing to be observed with respect to the whole subject of burial, that it relates to the body, whether the soul live or die. Now, with regard to the body, it is clear that, whether the soul live or die, that has no sensation....

45. But what occasion is there to animadvert on the opinions of individuals, when we may observe whole nations to fall into all sorts of errors? The Egyptians embalm their dead, and keep them in their houses; the Persians dress them over with wax, and then bury them, that they may preserve their bodies as long as possible. It is customary with the Magi to bury none of their order, unless they have been first torn by wild beasts. In Hyrcania, the people maintain dogs for the public use; the nobles have their own—and we know that they have a good breed of dogs; but every one, according to his ability, 58provides himself with some, in order to be torn by them; and they hold that to be the best kind of interment. Chrysippus, who is curious in all kinds of historical facts, has collected many other things of this kind; but some of them are so offensive as not to admit of being related. All that has been said of burying is not worth our regard with respect to ourselves, though it is not to be neglected as to our friends, provided we are thoroughly aware that the dead are insensible. But the living, indeed, should consider what is due to custom and opinion; only they should at the same time consider that the dead are noways interested in it. But death truly is then met with the greatest tranquillity when the dying man can comfort himself with his own praise. No one dies too soon who has finished the course of perfect virtue. I myself have known many occasions when I have seemed in danger of immediate death; oh! how I wish it had come to me! for I have gained nothing by the delay.

I had gone over and over again the duties of life; nothing remained but to contend with fortune. If reason, then, cannot sufficiently fortify us to enable us to feel a contempt for death, at all events let our past life prove that we have lived long enough, and even longer than was necessary; for notwithstanding the deprivation of sense, the dead are not without that good which peculiarly belongs to them, namely, the praise and glory which they have acquired, even though they are not sensible of it. For although there be nothing in glory to make it desirable, yet it follows virtue as its shadow; and the genuine judgment of the multitude on good men, if ever they form any, is more to their own praise than of any real advantage to the dead. Yet I cannot say, however it may be received, that Lycurgus and Solon have no glory from their laws, and from the political constitution which they established in their country; or that Themistocles and Epaminondas have not glory from their martial virtue.

46. For Neptune shall sooner bury Salamis itself with his waters than the memory of the trophies gained there; and the Bœotian Leuctra shall perish sooner than the glory of that great battle. And longer still shall fame be before it deserts Curius, and Fabricius, and Calatinus, and the two Scipios, and the two Africanus, and Maximus, and Marcellus, and Paulus, and Cato, and Lælius, and numberless other heroes; and whoever has caught any resemblance of them, not estimating it by common fame, but by the real applause of good men, may with confidence, when the occasion requires, approach death, on which we are sure that even if the chief good is not continued, at least no evil is. Such a man would even wish to die while in prosperity; for all the favors that could be heaped on him would not be so agreeable to him as the loss of them would be painful. That speech of the Lacedæmonian seems to have the same meaning, who, when Diagoras the Rhodian, who had himself been a conqueror at the Olympic games, saw two of his own sons conquerors there on the same day, approached the old man, and, congratulating him, said, "You should die now, Diagoras, for no greater happiness can possibly await you." The Greeks look on these as great things; perhaps they think too highly of them, or, rather, they did so then. And so he who said this to Diagoras, looking on it as something very glorious, that three men out of one family should have been conquerors there, thought it could answer no purpose to him to continue any longer in life, where he could only be exposed to a reverse of fortune.

I might have given you a sufficient answer, as it seems to me, on this point, in a few words, as you had allowed the dead were not exposed to any positive evil; but I have spoken at greater length on the subject for this reason, because this is our greatest consolation in the losing and bewailing of our friends. For we ought to bear with moderation any grief which arises from ourselves, or is endured on our own account, lest we should seem to be too much influenced by self-love. But should we suspect our departed friends to be under those evils, which they are generally imagined to be, and to be sensible of them, then such a suspicion would give us intolerable pain; and accordingly I wished, for my own sake, to pluck up this opinion by the roots, and on that account I have been perhaps somewhat more prolix than was necessary.

47. A. More prolix than was necessary? Certainty not, in my opinion. For I was induced, by the former 60 part of your speech, to wish to die; but, by the latter, sometimes not to be unwilling, and at others to be wholly indifferent about it. But the effect of your whole argument is, that I am convinced that death ought not to be classed among the evils.

M. Do you, then, expect that I am to give you a regular peroration, like the rhetoricians, or shall I forego that art?

A. I would not have you give over an art which you have set off to such advantage; and you were in the right to do so, for, to speak the truth, it also has set you off. But what is that peroration? For I should be glad to hear it, whatever it is.

M. It is customary, in the schools, to produce the opinions of the immortal Gods on death;

nor are these opinions the fruits of the imagination alone of the lecturers, but they have the authority of Herodotus and many others. Cleobis and Biton are the first they mention, sons of the Argive priestess; the story is a well-known one. As it was necessary that she should be drawn in a chariot to a certain annual sacrifice, which was solemnized at a temple some considerable distance from the town, and the cattle that were to draw the chariot had not arrived, those two young men whom I have just mentioned, pulling off their garments, and anointing their bodies with oil, harnessed themselves to the yoke. And in this manner the priestess was conveyed to the temple; and when the chariot had arrived at the proper place, she is said to have entreated the Goddess to bestow on them, as a reward for their piety, the greatest gift that a God could confer on man. And the young men, after having feasted with their mother, fell asleep; and in the morning they were found dead. Trophonius and Agamedes are said to have put up the same petition, for they, having built a temple to Apollo at Delphi, offered supplications to the God, and desired of him some extraordinary reward for their care and labor, particularizing nothing, but asking for whatever was best for men. Accordingly, Apollo signified to them that he would bestow it on them in three days, and on the third day at daybreak they were found dead. And so they say that this was a formal decision pronounced by that God to whom the rest of the deities have assigned the province of divining with an accuracy superior to that of all the rest.

48. There is also a story told of Silenus, who, when taken prisoner by Midas, is said to have made him this present for his ransom—namely, that he informed him²⁵ that never to have been born was by far the greatest blessing that could happen to man; and that the next best thing was to die very soon; which very opinion Euripides makes use of in his *Cresphontes*, saying,

When man is born, 'tis fit, with solemn show,
We speak our sense of his approaching woe;
With other gestures and a different eye,
Proclaim our pleasure when he's bid to die.

There is something like this in Crantor's *Consolation*; for he says that Terinæsus of Elysia, when he was bitterly lamenting the loss of his son, came to a place of divination to be informed why he was visited with so great affliction, and received in his tablet these three verses:

Thou fool, to murmur at Euthynous' death!
The blooming youth to fate resigns his breath:
The fate, whereon your happiness depends,
At once the parent and the son befriends.

On these and similar authorities they affirm that the question has been determined by the Gods. Nay, more; Alcidas, an ancient rhetorician of the very highest reputation, wrote even in praise of death, which he endeavored to establish by an enumeration of the evils of life; and his *Dissertation* has a great deal of eloquence in it; but he was unacquainted with the more refined arguments of the philosophers. By the orators, indeed, to die for our country is always considered not only as glorious, but even as happy: they go back as far as Erechtheus, whose very daughters underwent death, for the safety of their fellow-citizens: they instance Codrus, who threw himself into the midst of his enemies, dressed like a common man, that his royal robes might not betray him, because the oracle had declared the Athenians conquerors, if their king was slain. Menæceus is not overlooked by them, who, in compliance with the injunctions of an oracle, freely shed his blood for his country. Iphigenia ordered herself to be conveyed to Aulis, to be sacrificed, that her blood might be the cause of spilling that of her enemies.

49. From hence they proceed to instances of a fresher date. Harmodius and Aristogiton are in everybody's mouth; the memory of Leonidas the Lacedæmonian and Epaminondas the Theban is as fresh as ever. Those philosophers were not acquainted with the many instances in our country—to give a list of whom would take up too much time—who, we see, considered death desirable as long as it was accompanied with honor. But, notwithstanding this is the correct view of the case, we must use much persuasion, speak as if we were endued with some higher authority, in order to bring men to begin to wish to die, or cease to be afraid of death. For if that last day does not occasion an entire extinction, but a change of abode only, what can be more desirable? And if it, on the other hand, destroys, and absolutely puts an end to us, what can be preferable to the having a deep sleep fall on us, in the midst of the fatigues of life, and being thus overtaken, to sleep to eternity? And, should this really be the case, then Ennius's language is more consistent with wisdom than Solon's; for our Ennius says,

Let none bestow upon my passing bier
One needless sigh or unavailing tear.
But the wise Solon says,
Let me not unlamented die, but o'er my bier
Burst forth the tender sigh, the friendly tear.

But let us, if indeed it should be our fate to know the time which is appointed by the Gods for us to die, prepare ourselves for it with a cheerful and grateful mind, thinking ourselves like men who are delivered from a jail, and released from their fetters, for the purpose of going back to our eternal habitation, which may be more emphatically called our own; or else to be divested of all sense and trouble. If, on the other hand, we should have no notice given us of this decree, yet let us cultivate such a disposition as to look on that formidable hour of death as happy for us, though shocking to our friends; and let us never imagine anything to be an evil which is an appointment of the immortal Gods, or of nature, the common parent of all. For it is not by hazard or without design that we have been born and situated as we have. On the contrary, beyond all doubt there is a certain power which consults the happiness of human nature; and this would neither have produced nor provided for a being which, after having gone through the labors of life, was to fall into eternal misery by death. Let us rather infer that we have a retreat and haven prepared for us, which I wish we could crowd all sail and arrive at; but though the winds should not serve, and we should be driven back, yet we shall to a certainty arrive at that point eventually, though somewhat later. But how can that be miserable for one which all must of necessity undergo? I have given you a peroration, that you might not think I had overlooked or neglected anything.

A. I am persuaded you have not; and, indeed, that peroration has confirmed me.

M. I am glad it has had that effect. But it is now time to consult our health. Tomorrow, and all the time we continue in this Tusculan villa, let us consider this subject; and especially those portions of it which may ease our pain, alleviate our fears, and lessen our desires, which is the greatest advantage we can reap from the whole of philosophy.

Marcus Tullius Cicero. *Tusculan Disputations*. Book 1. Trans. C.D. Yonge. New York: Harper and Bros, 1877.

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