



**ACADEMIC
ORIENTATION
PROGRAM**

2021

***KNOWLEDGE
AND
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Contents

* Jonathan Becker, “What a Liberal Arts Education is...and is Not?”	3	From <i>Another Time</i> (1940)	
➡ Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”	14	William Carlos Williams, “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus” From <i>Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems</i> (1962)	82
Herodotus Selections (c.460 BCE – 425 BCE) From <i>The History</i> , David Grene, trans.	19	Muriel Rukeyser, “Waiting for Icarus” From <i>Breaking Open</i> (1973)	82
* Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book 7 (the Allegory of the Cave) (c. 360 BCE), from <i>Complete Works</i> (G.M Grube, trans.).	20	Zbigniew Herbert, “Daedalus and Icarus”. From <i>The Collected Poems 1956-1998</i> , tr. Alissa Valles, 2014	83
* Rene Descartes, “Meditations I and II” From <i>Meditations</i> , tr. Michael Moriarty	33	Carol Ann Duffy, “Mrs. Icarus” From <i>The World's Wife</i> , 1999	84
The White Ministers’ Law and Order Statement (1963) and White Ministers’ Good Friday Statement (1963)	39	Anne Sexton, “To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Triumph”. From <i>Selected Poems</i> , 2000	85
* Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter From a Birmingham Jail” (1963) From <i>Letters of a Nation: A Collection of Extraordinary Letters</i>	41	Edward Field, “Icarus” From <i>Stand Up, Friend, with Me</i> , 1963	85
➡ Franz Kafka, “A Report to An Academy” Willa and Edwin Muir, trans.	52	Joanie V. Mackowski, “Consciousness”, From <i>Poetry</i> , 2012	86
➡ Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, “The Nose”, From <i>Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories</i> , tr. Jay Rubin 2006.	58	Alykul Osmonov, “Native Tongue”, “Man” From, <i>Waves of the Lake</i> , 1995.	87
➡ Nikolay Gogol. “The Nose”, From <i>Diary of a Madman and Other Stories</i> , tr. Ronald Wilks, 1987.	63	Rainer Maria Rilke, “The Panther”, “Der Panther” From <i>Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke</i> , Stephen Mitchell, trans.	88
Stephen Dunn, “Allegory of the Cave,” “Landscape at the End of the Century” From <i>Landscape at the End of the Century</i> (1991)	79	* Sophocles, “Antigone”, Ian Johnston, trans. 2005.	91
Wystan Hugh Auden, “Musée de Beaux Arts”	81		

* **Texts designated with this symbol are core texts and should be read by all freshmen during Orientation.**

➡ **We ask faculty to cover at least *one* text designated with this symbol.**

What a Liberal Arts and Sciences Education

is...and is Not

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Preface to 2014 version of *What a Liberal Arts and Sciences Education is...and is Not*¹

The following article is a revised and updated version of a piece I wrote more than a decade ago entitled 'What a Liberal Arts Education is ...and is Not.' That article was written when experiments in liberal arts and sciences education in central and Eastern Europe were in their infancy. The article reflected experiences that emerged during the context of the creation of Smolny College, a partnership between Bard College, a hundred and fifty year-old residential liberal arts college in upstate New York, and St. Petersburg State University, one of Russia's oldest and most respected universities. Since then much has changed. Smolny has moved from a program within the Philology Faculty of SpBU to becoming Russia's first Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Several Russian universities, from tiny arts institutions to federal research institutions, have expressed interest in developing liberal arts education. Bard College has set up new partnerships in the Kyrgyz Republic, Palestine, and Germany, and is exploring new programs in China and South Africa. Meanwhile, liberal arts education is blossoming in several places in Europe, particularly in the Netherlands, where several institutions have distinguished themselves.

In the decade since the first time the article appeared, the environment has changed and lessons have been learned. While the structure and the essence changes, starting with the title, which now refers to liberal arts *and sciences* to make clear from the start that natural sciences and mathematics form a part of the system of liberal arts education discussed here.

of the argument in this article remain largely the same, there are some notable I am certain that a decade from now, with advances in technology, MOOCs, and the like, that there will be further changes, but in spite of this, the basic tenets of a liberal arts and sciences education will remain the same.

Introduction

In recent years, higher education leaders across the globe have been confronted with a series of challenges, from cost, to the emergence of new technologies and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), to a greater focus on direct links between university education and employment outcomes. In searching for new approaches, many educators, especially those who are embedded in European/Humboldtian traditions, are turning back the clock by beginning experiments in (re-) introducing liberal arts and sciences education.

In central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where this author was based for several years and has worked for more than two decades, liberal arts and sciences ('LAS') education first drew interest because academics saw it as an antidote to the Marxist-Leninist ideology that permeated the teaching process in Soviet times. It was often linked to the notion of enhancing citizens' agency in the wake of the collapse of authoritarian regimes. Many also saw LAS education as a means of introducing interdisciplinary curricular approaches and thus as a remedy to the disciplinary rigidity that dominated higher education in the region. Some were enthusiastic about bringing the arts, which had been consigned to conservatories and specialty schools, into university curriculums. Still others were attracted to new student-centered pedagogical approaches. With the passage of time, interest in LAS education in the post-Communist world has come to reflect similar sentiments of educators in other parts of the world with different histories and traditions: whether in Europe, Asia, Latin America or Africa, university faculty and administrators are increasingly looking to introduce and adapt liberal models of higher education to their own environments.²

² See Susan Gillespie, 'Opening Minds: The International Liberal Education Movement,' *World Policy Journal*, Winter 2001/2002, pp. 79-89 and Patti McGill Peterson, 'A Global Framework: Liberal Education in the Undergraduate Curriculum,' in Patti McGill Peterson, editor, *Confronting Challenges to the Liberal Arts Curriculum*, New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 1-23. Paradoxically, interest has grown worldwide as LAS education is often under attack in the United States. LAS education has been derided as elitist and dismissed as outmoded and 'in trouble.' Even its advocates speak of a need for 'revitalization' and 'restructuring.' W.R. Conner, 'Liberal Arts Education in the Twenty-First Century,' AALE Occasional Paper # 2, 25 May 1998, www.aale.org/conner.htm. Carol M. Barker, Liberal Arts Education for a Global Society, Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2002, www.carnegie.org, p. 9; Stanley Katz, 'Restructuring for the Twenty- First Century,' in Nicholas H. Farnham and Adam Yarmolinsky eds., *Rethinking Liberal Education*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 77-90.

¹ The article is a modification of a talk of the same title given at the Open Society Institute's UEP Alumni Conference in Budapest Hungary, June 2003.

For some it is a response to new structures: in Europe the distinction between the baccalaureate and master's degree that is a product of the Bologna process left the opportunity to allow students to experiment more before specializing.³ For others, LAS education is about competition in the educational marketplace: educators recognize the limits of old teaching methods, particularly in light of competition from Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Still others view it as an issue of modernization: with an ever-changing economy, and diminishing prospects for graduates having lifetime employment in one narrow specialty, today's students need to be good learners, flexible and adaptable thinkers, and prepared to move beyond the rigid boundaries that are the product of hyper-specialization and traditional disciplinary approaches. The visual of Steve Jobs (who briefly attended Reed College) introducing the iPad as emerging from the intersection of two streets named 'liberal arts' and 'technology' has replaced that of an undergraduate sitting studiously with an Oxford don.

Adapting the LAS to new educational environments has not always proved a simple task. Reformers are often more eager than knowledgeable. They are sometimes assisted by 'experts' from abroad who are unfamiliar with domestic conditions and who focus more on lofty goals than institution- building. At too many conferences and workshops I have attended in Eastern Europe, I have seen the glazed eyes of educational reformers from the region as they listen to Americans offer sweeping generalizations about LAS education and/or prescriptions divorced from participants' reality. When the best that we can offer are soaring images and a paraphrase from Justice Potter Stewart's famous dictum on obscenity--you 'know it' when you 'see it'--we fail as educators and increase the likelihood of misinterpretations, unreflective applications and, ultimately, dead ends. It is our duty as critical thinkers and educators to move beyond generalizations and sift out what is essential to a LAS education. In this way we can move towards context-sensitive adaptations without sacrificing that which is essential.

My goal in this essay is a very practical one: to provide a definition of a modern LAS education that will assist those involved in developing LAS institutions. I hope to articulate how, in a very practical way, LAS education works in higher educational institutions, particularly in the classroom.

This task is not simply an intellectual exercise. In the past sixteen years, colleagues at Bard College and I have been involved in a project with St. Petersburg State University in Russia to create Smolny College, Russia's first accredited LAS institution, which is now the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences at St. Petersburg State University. We have also been involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in other projects in Russia, where Smolny's accreditation by the Ministry of Education has created a precedent for the

spread of the LAS, as well as in Germany, the Kyrgyz Republic, Palestine, South Africa and China. While much that is presented here might seem obvious to those who are steeped in contemporary LAS traditions, particularly in the United States, where it has had the most resonance, each issue addressed has surfaced at some point as a real-world concern. One area that I focus on in particular, which is often overlooked, is what I call the nexus of administration, curriculum and pedagogy: the infrastructure that makes a LAS education possible. By articulating clearly how LAS systems work and dismissing misconceptions about LAS education, we can inform potential reformers more clearly of the nature of the project they may wish to embark upon and the pitfalls they might face. The LAS is not an easy system to understand and can be challenging to adapt. People should know where they are sailing before leaving port.

It is important to note that the process is not a one-way street: there is a significant degree of reciprocity of learning when one goes through the process of examining different traditions and adapting a familiar system in a new environment. By deconstructing the LAS and building it from the ground up, by engaging with others who adapt and reimagine old approaches, we refine our thinking about our own educational system and learn of shortcomings as well as potential opportunities for change.

The essay relies much on the work of Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl whose essay, 'What Democracy is... and is Not,' which explores an even more timeworn and elusive concept⁴ In adapting Schmitter and Karl's approach, I will attempt to define the essential characteristics and concepts that distinguish LAS as a unique system of education, the procedures, rules and arrangements that create an enabling environment necessary for a LAS system to succeed, and highlight common misinterpretations and erroneous conclusions about LAS education.

³ See Marijk van der Wende, 'Trends towards Global Excellence in Undergraduate Education: Taking the Liberal Arts Experience into the 21st Century,' *International Journal of Chinese Education*, vol. 2, 2013, pp. 289-307.

⁴ Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, 'What Democracy is... and is Not,' *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 2, no. 3, Summer 1991, pp. 75-88.

DEFINITION

In order to clarify what we mean by LAS education, we should start with a definition. The following definition focuses on the goals of liberal learning, an issue about which there is general consensus, as well as the means for obtaining these goals, something that is less frequently discussed at length.

Modern liberal arts and sciences education is a system of higher education designed to foster in students the desire and capacity to learn, think critically, and communicate proficiently, and to prepare them to function as engaged citizens. It is distinguished by a flexible curriculum that demands breadth as well as depth of study, encourages inter-disciplinarity, and enables student choice. It is realized through a student-centered pedagogy that is interactive and requires students to engage directly with texts within and outside of the classroom.

There are a number of points that should be made about this definition.

First, it is important to emphasize that we are looking at a ‘system’ of education, by which I mean ‘an ensemble of patterns’ that determine the educational process, including the curriculum and pedagogy.⁵ In order to work properly, the ensemble must be ‘institutionalized,’ which is to say ‘habitually known, practiced and accepted by most, if not all’ of the relevant actors, including faculty, students, administrators, governing bodies and accreditors.⁶ In other words, the vast majority of participants in a system of LAS education necessarily must be knowledgeable of, and willing to conform to, the expectations and requirements of that system. This notion of a system differs from the use of ‘liberal arts’ exclusively as collection of subjects to be studied, be it the classical *trivium* (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy), or the more contemporary association with arts and humanities. It may be true that a modern LAS education can include all of these subjects (arts, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences, as opposed to pre-professional education), but as a system it not only includes subjects, but curricular structures, specified processes that allow for things like student choice, interdisciplinary study and teaching approaches that democratize learning.

Second, I explicitly use the term ‘LAS’ education as opposed to ‘liberal’ education. While the two notions share similar goals and are often used interchangeably, in my view ‘LAS’ education *as a system* is a more comprehensive package. For example, a teacher can reflect liberal educational pedagogy by using interactive teaching methods, but she might be isolated within her institution and constrained by a narrowly defined highly specialized and inflexible curriculum. Similarly, a curriculum can allow for some student choice of area of specialty, but that area might be limited to humanities or social sciences.

I view the approaches and practices associated with term ‘liberal education’ (interactive teaching, close reading of texts, flexible curriculum that emphasizes breadth as well as depth) as the building blocks of the LAS system. While these building blocks might be beneficial in and of themselves, isolated from other components they may be insufficient to constitute a system of LAS education.⁷ **Third**, in this paper I use the term ‘liberal arts *and sciences*’ intentionally: while in recent times ‘liberal arts’ curriculums are most often associated with literature and the humanities, natural sciences and mathematics historically have formed part of the LAS curriculum and are critically linked to some of the most important challenges facing citizens today, be they related to disease, nutrition, or the environment. If students are to participate in important decisions confronting contemporary society then they must be numerate to understand quantitative social sciences and modern scientific concepts.

As Shirley Tilghman, former president of Princeton, pointed out, liberal arts colleges and universities have two distinct and critical missions in the sphere of the natural sciences: to educate scientifically literate citizens and to create a new generation of scientists⁸. Assumptions about the sciences also belie a prejudice that assumes that the sciences employ pedagogies utterly distinct from those employed elsewhere in the university and which are devoid of student-centered approaches. As will be addressed below, this is not the case: innovative, student-centered science teaching engages students early in their academic careers and promotes strong learning outcomes.

Fourth, I specifically modify the term ‘LAS’ with the word ‘modern’ in order to underline my focus on contemporary practices. There is a long history of liberal arts education and some institutions take pride in their traditional ways. For example, St. John’s College, which has branches in Annapolis, Maryland and Santa Fe, New Mexico, maintains a distinctive ‘great books curriculum’ throughout its students’ four years of study, harking back to the origins of liberal arts education in Europe and the United States.

⁵ Schmitter and Karl, ‘What Democracy is...,’ p. 76.

⁶ Schmitter and Karl, ‘What Democracy is...,’ p. 76.

⁷ **The American Association of Colleges and Universities defines liberal education as** ‘an approach to college learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. This approach emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth achievement in a specific field of interest. It helps students develop a sense of social responsibility; strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills; and the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.’ See <https://www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education>, downloaded September 29, 2014.

⁸ See van der Wende, ‘Trends towards Global Excellence in Undergraduate Education,’ pp. 289-307. Shirley M. Tilghman, ‘The Future of Science Education in the Liberal Arts College,’ January, 2010, <http://www.princeton.edu/president/tilghman/speeches/20100105/>

There is much that is of value in this approach, but it is important to stress that this is neither modern nor the norm, and thus falls outside of the definition offered here.⁹

Finally, I use the phrase ‘higher education institutions’ to avoid confusion associated with the terms college and university. While in the United States the terms are used interchangeably, that is not the case in Europe and many other parts of the world, where the term college is associated with secondary education or technical training. Many observers do not recognize that at many of the most prestigious research universities in the US, undergraduates study in what are termed undergraduate colleges, be it Harvard College, Yale College or Columbia College. Moreover residential liberal arts colleges, like Amherst College, Swarthmore College, and William College, are considered amongst the best places for undergraduates to study, in spite of the fact that they do not appear in most of the world rankings that many educators and government officials in the BRIC countries and elsewhere often obsess over. The reality is that LAS education comes in many different structures, be it the residential liberal arts college in the US, the ‘university college’ in Europe, the Honors College in major US state universities, or in the curriculums of research universities that regularly appear at the top of international rankings. Let us now return to the substance of LAS education in more detail.

Goals

The first part of our definition speaks of goals. *The central tenet of LAS education is that it is more concerned with the development of the individual than the preparation of the student for a specific vocation.* Harking back to its Greek origins, it is concerned with shaping citizens who are capable of being active participants in democratic society. In modern times, it goes beyond this to prepare students to function in dynamic social and economic environments. The LAS wager is that love of learning, capacity for critical thinking, and ability to communicate effectively are, in the course of their lives, more valuable to students than depth of knowledge in one subject. These qualities are particularly important in allowing graduates to adapt to changing social and economic conditions and to help them to continue to grow, learn, and adapt to changing conditions long after they have left the halls of academe.

Curriculum

The second part of the definition, which focuses on curriculum and pedagogy, is equally important and more critical to the international context in which LAS education now finds itself. It is one thing to speak of lofty goals; it is another to clarify the real-life circumstances that allow institutions to pursue

such goals.

In terms of curriculum the first important characteristic of a LAS system is *student choice*. Student choice comes in two important forms: the curriculum is sufficiently flexible that students have substantial leeway to *choose courses* that they will take, and it offers students the possibility to *choose an area of academic concentration* (often called a ‘major’) after they have entered a higher educational institution. The very fact that students play a significant role in shaping their program of study is critical to the democratization of the educational process. Symbolically, it confirms that there is not a single path or a master plan to higher learning. Perhaps more importantly, the engagement of young adults in making critical educational choices prepares them for important decisions they will make later in life. Moreover, allowing students the flexibility to choose their area(s) of academic concentration after they have entered college/university underlines LAS’ belief in the capacity of people for growth and change, its emphasis on continuous learning, and its stress on the importance of critical thinking, as opposed to the accumulation of knowledge. As such, the LAS approach strongly contrasts with classical continental European systems (West and East), adapted throughout the world, where students enter faculties/departments that are autonomous and operate effectively as mini-universities: students enter the faculty of law, history, or engineering and never leave that faculty for their four or five years of study. The classical European system not only presupposes that students are certain of their main educational foci upon entrance to college/university, but it narrows their breadth of study once they have entered a higher educational institution.

The emphasis on student choice in LAS education does not mean that anything is permitted (a source of great disappointment for many undergraduates who take the term ‘liberal’ in liberal arts and sciences too literally). The educational process in a LAS system is governed by what can be called ‘*bounded uncertainty*’.¹⁰ As our definition indicates, modern LAS education is supported by a curriculum designed to promote breadth as well as depth.

Breadth of study is often ensured through requirements that students take a certain number of mandatory courses (often referred to as the ‘general education requirements’ or the ‘core curriculum’) that are designed to ensure that all students are exposed to classics and/or important modes of inquiry and approaches to knowledge.¹¹

⁹ For further information on St. John’s see <http://www.sjca.edu>.

¹⁰ Schmitter and Karl, ‘What Democracy is...,’ p. 82.

¹¹ See for example University of Chicago, <http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/thecurriculum/> or Columbia University, <http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/core>. (Downloaded September 10, 2015).

Breadth can also be ensured through so-called ‘distribution requirements,’ which oblige students to take courses in different groupings of disciplines, but without necessarily specifying which courses are required.¹²

These requirements are the subject of continual debate at most institutions (Bard, for example, is now undergoing one of its regular curricular reviews). Three important points should be raised here.

First, to meet the LAS standard there must be some structure that requires students to have curricular breadth. If breadth of study is optional, then the system’s goals are critically undermined.

Second, in the modern version of LAS education, curricular requirements should go beyond arts and humanities and extend to mathematics and the natural sciences.

As stated above, this is essential in order for students to be engaged with some of the most important challenges facing today’s citizens. Finally, the number of requirements cannot be so great as to preclude student choice, the importance of which was discussed above.

As far as depth is concerned, modern curriculums regularly require students to follow or design (together with faculty) a program of concentration or a major, the requirements of which must be clearly articulated and transparent. Academic programs may require students to take a certain number of courses in a given subject area, may specify certain mandatory courses, and may require or recommend a specific sequence of courses. They also may require or recommend courses in related areas. The overall goal is to ensure that graduates have a minimum proficiency in at least one coherent intellectual sphere (sometimes students focus on more than one area). It should also be stressed that concentrations or majors are not limited to traditional academic disciplines. LAS institutions have been particularly strong at developing interdisciplinary programs that have supplemented and in some cases supplanted age-old approaches while maintaining intellectual integrity. Environmental studies, cognitive studies, public health, and human rights are all examples of subjects that address some of the most poignant challenges facing humanity and which require inter-disciplinary approaches.

One note of caution is important to mention here: there is always going to be a tension between breadth and depth of curriculum. One tendency, particularly in institutions which operate in a milieu in which the continental European model dominates, is to over-plan concentrations/majors, which is to say to make majors so demanding that they emulate pre-existing structures in terms of requirements. This risks imperiling the breadth element of LAS education. Ideally, student choice should not be limited to the breadth requirements

outlined above but should be possible viable, within reason, throughout a student’s education.

Teaching

The other critical component of our definition of modern LAS education is pedagogy.¹³ As Vartan Gregorian has argued, ‘At the heart of liberal education is the act of teaching.’¹⁴ Teachers sharpen their students’ analytic skills by exposing them to different points of view, familiarizing them with a variety of theoretical approaches to probe issues, and requiring them to read texts with a critical eye. However, it is not simply the substance of teaching that is different but the entire approach to the educational process. An interactive, student-centered pedagogy means that the classroom is not a one-way conveyor belt of knowledge from professor to student. Specifically, instruction does not simply consist of a teacher reading lectures to students, as is common throughout much of the world. Instead, learning within the classroom is an interactive process. The classroom is an environment in which students are encouraged to question assumptions and conclusions, analyze texts and derive their own interpretations, debate and role play,¹⁵ and to learn from one another, thus democratizing the learning experience. In order to be prepared to participate in this democratized classroom, a significant amount of learning must take place outside of the classroom. Students are expected to engage in primary and/or secondary texts that analyze issues to be addressed during a class. In the natural sciences, for example, this can mean engaging students in ‘discovery-based research,’ placing them in the labs from day one of their study. As Graham Hatfull, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute researcher from the University of Pittsburg said ‘Students should be *doing* science

¹² For example, my institution currently requires students to take classes in nine areas: Analysis of Arts; Foreign Language, Literature, and Culture; History; Humanities; Laboratory Science; Literature in English; Mathematics and Computing; Practicing Arts; and Social Science. All courses are classified according to the requirements that they fulfill.

¹³ For a useful exploration of teaching and pedagogy, see Carol Geary Schneider and Robert Shornberg, ‘Contemporary Understandings of Liberal Education,’ Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2001.

¹⁴ Vartan Gregorian, quoted in Eugene M. Lang, ‘Distinctively American: The Liberal Arts College,’ *Daedalus*, Winter 1999, p. 135.

¹⁵ Debate and role-playing, like Model United Nations, are particularly effective learning tools within the classroom. See, for example, William W. Newmann and Judyth L. Twigg, ‘Active Engagement of the Intro IR Student: A Simulation Approach,’ *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Dec 2000; vol. 33, no. 5 pp. 835-842 and Christopher C. Joyner, ‘Foreign Policy: Classroom Debates As Pedagogical Devices,’ *ILSA Journal of International & Comparative Law*; Winter 2003, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 331. The impact of simulations and debate goes well beyond foreign policy: studies have demonstrated that they can be impactful tools across the curriculum, including social studies, natural sciences and literature.

from day one, not just reading about what others have done.’¹⁶ Because of this students are empowered to offer informed insights and even to draw conclusions different from the teacher. The teacher provides guidance, clarifies issues, expresses her views and evaluates the performance of students. However, she does not stand alone, unquestioned: in discarding the lecture-only format, the professor must be willing to give up some authority.

Of course, specific pedagogic approaches will vary according to teacher and subject matter. A LAS system leaves room for different teaching styles. Not all teaching in LAS institutions depends on a pure Socratic method. Moreover, the degree of interactivity can vary according to the subject matter: a course in physics will offer different challenges and take a different structure from a course in history. However, regardless of the teacher and the subject matter, there are certain characteristics that must predominate in a LAS system: learning is interactive, students are encouraged to raise questions, challenge assumptions, and make their own discoveries, the teacher does not have a monopoly on knowledge, and a significant amount of learning takes place outside of the classroom.

Procedures, Rules and Arrangements of a Liberal Arts and Sciences Education

Now that we have examined some of the essential characteristics and concepts that distinguish the LAS as a system of higher education, we must turn our attention to the factors that enable such a system to exist. Here we will look at structural issues that exist at the nexus of administration, curriculum and pedagogy and then some more specific issues pertaining to teaching methodology. The former are particularly important because they are too often afterthoughts: educators are so often focused on the goals of the LAS that they give short shrift to critical mechanisms which make a LAS system work.

Structural Issues

The first important structural issue that has an important impact on a LAS system is the framework that determines the amount of time students regularly spend in the classroom and the number of courses they can take at any one time. Because LAS education consists of a student-centered pedagogy with a democratized classroom it requires that *students prepare for class by reading texts on their own*. It also requires that *students produce written work*: written work enhances communication skills, helps students clarify their understanding of texts, develop ideas and arguments, and analyze and deploy evidence. As a consequence, students are expected to attend and participate in class and must have time to

prepare outside work. A logical corollary of this is that students cannot be in class every day for six or seven hours and that they cannot take ten, twelve or even fourteen courses at one time, as was common in many countries of the former Soviet Union. Such structures, which are often created in response to state requirements, leave little time for independent reading and writing by students, thus creating a dependency on the teacher as a purveyor of knowledge. In reality, if the pedagogy at an institution were consistent with the LAS approach it would be difficult, in my mind, for most students to take more than four or five standard courses at one time. (There might be variation for courses with fewer than the standard number of credits). This does not, however, mean that attending class is unimportant. On the contrary: since so much emphasis is placed on learning in the classroom, students must be expected to attend class regularly and to contribute to the learning process by raising questions and participating in discussions. This is not the case in the classical European systems where attendance at lectures is often optional. Indeed, attendance is so important that many LAS institutions have specific policies that lower grades of students who do not attend class regularly.

A second important structural issue, which moves closer to the issue of teaching, relates to the classroom. In short, *classes must be small* enough or structured in such a way to make interactive teaching is possible. There may be regular small classes (Bard College, where I work, limits most classes to 22 or fewer students) or large classes with a limited degree of interactivity that are regularly divide into smaller discussion sections to discuss in more detail the substance of the lecture and assigned readings. There is no magic number, and much depends on subject and teacher. However, it is clear that an education that takes place exclusively in large lecture halls filled with students is incompatible with LAS teaching methodologies. In most cases, the vast majority of classes at a LAS institution would allow for substantive discussion, and many would have the intimate environment of an academic seminar.

In other words, we are talking about low tens of students.¹⁷ The final structural area of importance is the administrative framework: there must be *an academic calendar, credit system, and class schedule that facilitate rather than impede the pillars of breadth and depth* in a LAS educational system.

¹⁶ Studies have shown that, ‘Introducing discovery-based research—challenging, messy, real—into early educational experiences can dramatically improve their outcomes, according to several studies. Students who participate in research earn higher grades, show more interest in STEM majors, take less time to earn degrees, and show more interest in post-graduate education.’ <http://www.hhmi.org/advance-science/building-authentic-research-experiences> downloaded September 10, 2014.

¹⁷ It is also beneficial, although not essential, that the physical set-up of the classroom is such that chairs are set up in a circular or rectangular pattern, rather than facing forward towards the teacher. This breaks down barriers, encourages participation, and reinforces the democratic nature of learning.

This might sound banal, but one would be surprised at how frequently inattention to such structures can skew the educational process. The most extreme case of this that I have witnessed happened at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest,¹⁸ a new and very progressive ‘liberal’ (but not liberal arts) institution, where I worked in the mid-1990s: due to the speed with which CEU was established in the wake of the collapse of Communism, it fell into the trap of replicating continental European traditions of departmental autonomy, with departments acting effectively as separate institutions. Departments created their own academic programs from the bottom up, the result being that one relatively small (500 student) university had eight departments with six academic calendars, five credit systems and three definitions of a class hour.

These structures created the equivalent of non-tariff barriers between departments, crippling the capacity of students to take courses in other departments (for example, the second trimester for political science students was ten weeks while it was sixteen weeks for history) and impeding the development of interdisciplinary programs, a critical element of the institution’s mission. In other milder cases, even at my current institution, conflicting class scheduling between, for example, the sciences and studio arts, has created insuperable conflicts between disciplines even when there is consistency in calendar and credit system.¹⁹

Teaching Methods

We begin our examination of the procedures, rules and arrangements associated with teaching by focusing on the preparation that must take place prior to the meeting between teachers and students in the classroom. As suggested above, it is essential that students be *assigned readings* prior to classes at which the subject of the readings is discussed. Interactive teaching and the democratization of the classroom are fundamentally constrained if students have not read preparatory materials. If no such materials are provided, substantive discussion is extremely difficult and students are reduced largely to asking questions about facts. They are not in a position to challenge their teacher’s interpretation or to learn effectively from one another. It should be noted that the nature of assignments could change according to discipline—in the natural sciences students might be assigned a lab or in the arts they may have a photographic assignment or be asked to analyze paintings—but the principle remains the same: students prepare for class because they are participants, not passive recipients of information.

In this context it is essential that *students be provided with a syllabus structured in such a way as to outline specific readings and/or tasks for specific class sessions.*²⁰ A long list of recommended readings for a course, as is common in many countries, does not suffice for two critical reasons. First, there is no assurance that students will know what readings are appropriate for any given class, let alone that they will

have read them. Second, the interactive process is paralyzed if there are no common referent points amongst the students: active engagement in the class is necessary and absent the knowledge of what is being discussed and the empowerment that comes from reading primary and secondary texts to be addressed in class that is not possible and the class will devolve into a monologue.²¹

A logical corollary to this is that *assigned readings must be readily available to students.* Whether assigned readings can be purchased, accessed through a library or over the Internet, or given to students, environmental circumstances must exist so that all students can reasonably have the opportunity to read the assigned materials. This might sound intuitive, but I have seen a case in which an entire class was assigned to read a book, one copy of which was available in the entire city. In other circumstances, assigned readings have not been available at all. A fancy syllabus that is not supported by available materials is close to worthless. This speaks to a potentially uncomfortable reality: in order for a LAS system to succeed, extensive investment in libraries and/or modern communications technology must occur.

Another key area of teaching and pedagogy is found in the *evaluation of student work.* While there are many theories about effective evaluation methods, there are certain issues that are critical to the system of LAS education, particularly in terms of promoting transparency and accountability necessary for democratic learning. First, there must be transparency about what types of work contribute to the teacher’s evaluation of students.

The course syllabus should outline the assignments and tasks that are expected of students and how their performance on those assignments contributes to their final evaluation. Second, contemporary LAS education places an emphasis on continuous assessment, which is to say that the final mark is based on an accumulation of results from a number of assignments, including, but not limited

¹⁸ At the time, CEU, founded by George Soros, had campuses in Budapest, Prague and Warsaw. Currently its sole campus is in Budapest.

¹⁹ For example, at Bard we discovered that students were discouraged, and in some cases prevented, from taking classes in the sciences because core science courses were scheduled to meet on Mondays and Thursdays (with Thursdays including long periods of lab work) while the vast majority of courses in the social studies, arts and humanities were scheduled on Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays.

²⁰ This syllabus may include many other things, such as a clear articulation of the primary issues addressed in the course, a summary of the main questions to be examined during the course, study tips, and recommended readings. As is discussed below, it should also contain a clear articulation of expectations of students, including all elements that contribute to a student’s final grade.

²¹ Informing students of assigned readings as the course unfolds, as opposed to providing them in a syllabus, can theoretically allow students to be prepared for interactive discussion. However, real-world experience leads me to believe that it is a vastly inferior and, in fact, unworkable alternative. In reality, it almost always results in difficulties because materials prove not to be available on short notice, students who are absent do not learn of the assignments, and students are deprived of the opportunity to plan ahead.

to: mid-way exams, final exams, essays, research papers, oral reports, laboratory research, art projects, and class participation.

There are a number of important points that follow from this. The modern LAS education rejects the near or total dependence on the final examination for a student's grade. In particular it rejects a mark largely or totally dependent on a one-on-one oral exam, a method regularly used in Europe and the former Soviet space. Why is this the case? It is assumed that the goal of the evaluation project is not simply to assess students but to help them to learn and improve: a highly weighted final examination simply does not offer the opportunity for useful feedback. Oral finals are particularly problematic because they are neither transparent nor verifiable. They reinforce the omnipotence of the faculty member and, experience has shown, they leave great latitude for results based inappropriately on extra-curricular issues, including some that are clearly not in keeping with the democratic principles underlying LAS education or liberal education more generally. Does this mean that a modern LAS educational system rejects final exams? The answer is no. A final or an exam at the end of the course can form part of a final mark. Some subjects are more conducive to finals than others. The point is that a final exam should not, as a matter of habit, dominate the evaluation process within a LAS system and that efforts should be made to reduce the circumstances in which the final constitutes all or the predominant part of the grade.

The discussion of evaluation and continuous assessment raises two additional issues. The first one focuses on the type of assignments students are given: it is extremely important in the modern LAS education to require students to write essays and research papers. If a primary goal of LAS education is to foster in students the capacity to communicate proficiently, then students must be required to develop their written skills. Oral skills are no doubt important, and one product of my experience in Russia is a belief that American institutions need to place a greater emphasis here. However, there is no substitute for written communication for developing the capacity to analyze and argue, and through the writing process to develop and refine ideas. It is worth adding that, especially in the Internet age, cultivating in students the capacity to conduct effective research is also vitally important. The necessary skills needed by engaged citizens have changed: instead of learning how to find information they must now learn how to sift critically through the huge volume of information available in print and online.

One final element in terms of evaluation of student work that is important to examine is the nature of faculty feedback to students. A LAS education places a *premium on substantive and timely feedback*.

Teacher feedback is one of the primary ways through which learning occurs,

particularly in the development of research and writing skills. I have witnessed circumstances in which teachers have made the shift to continuous assessment and assigned research papers but failed to provide students with substantive comments on their work. In some cases students received minimal comments and in other cases they received only grades. This reflects one of the great challenges of LAS education: it is time intensive for the faculty and thus can be costly.

Additional Issues

A number of other procedures, rules and arrangements critical to a LAS system of education are worth mentioning:

- The admissions system must be transparent, free and fair. It is impossible to have a democratic form of education if the starting point is riddled with corruption and nepotism.
- Students need to be advised effectively. Because the system celebrates student choice but maintains a number of requirements, it is essential that students be guided through the educational process.
- The development of a credit system that is translatable across national boundaries is a great benefit. Given that notions of citizenship have gone global and the ever expanding demands for student mobility during the undergraduate years, modern LAS institutions should attempt to ensure that their product is transferable globally and that the system for doing so is both coherent and transparent.

What Liberal Arts and Sciences Education Is Not

Thus far we have attempted to define modern LAS education and identify some of the procedures, rules and arrangements that make such a system of education possible. We have also attempted to articulate why a LAS education cannot be reduced simply to the goals it espouses. For the sake of clarity, however, it is worth devoting some time to underlining what LAS education is *not*. Often LAS education appears to be an empty vessel into which numerous ideas and assumptions are poured. Addressing some common misunderstandings, some of which have been alluded to above, will help to avoid some dead ends.

First, modern LAS education does not take place exclusively at the so-called residential liberal arts colleges that have flourished in the United States and which have long been considered the best institutions for student-centered undergraduate learning.²² Leading international research universities, including large state universities, have managed to create effective LAS approaches.

²² See 'Distinctively American: The Liberal Arts College, *Daedalus*, vol. 128, no. 1, Winter 1999.

In some cases they have done they have made significant compromises: adjunct professors and graduate students do much of the teaching, and, unlike at the residential liberal arts colleges, some leading professors rarely engage with undergraduates. Others have taken the approach of essentially creating schools or institutes within universities, sometimes called honors colleges.²³ Such an approach is particularly useful in countries undergoing educational reform because it allows reformers to graft modern LAS structures onto established institutions. In so doing the LAS institutions benefit from the universities' resources, particularly faculty, teaching space, and libraries. The faculty can work exclusively in the LAS program or can lead dual lives, as it were, working in the LAS unit while maintaining a foothold in the more traditional faculties/departments.

Second, the LAS focus on teaching does not preclude active research agendas for faculty. Indeed, in spite of sometimes heavy teaching demands, faculty should be encouraged to pursue academic research. Faculty who conduct research tend to be better teachers because they are more knowledgeable about, and engaged with, their subjects and more aware of new theoretical developments within their fields. As Michael Roth, President of Wesleyan, one of America's oldest and most prestigious residential liberal arts colleges, says, 'At liberal arts schools like Wesleyan... the scholar-teacher model means that our faculty believe in a virtuous circle connecting their scholarship to their undergraduate teaching. Stimulation in the classroom, they find, advances their research in ways that, in turn, invigorate their teaching and stimulate curriculum development.'²⁴

Third, there is nothing incompatible between LAS undergraduate education and high international rankings that, unfortunately, are the focus of so many educational administrators. In fact, the opposite may be true: most of the top-ranked institutions in the most cited ratings (*Times Higher Education*, Shanghai Index, QS etc.) are committed to LAS education. Yale University sees its undergraduate school, Yale College, as 'the heart of the University' in which 'more than 2,000 undergraduate courses in the liberal arts and sciences are offered each year, forming a curriculum of remarkable breadth and depth.'²⁵ Columbia University describes its rigorous core as 'one of the nation's oldest and most renowned liberal arts programs and the hallmark of the Columbia academic experience.'²⁶ According to Stanford University, 'A Stanford undergraduate education emphasizes a broad liberal foundation, development of deep subject-area knowledge, a variety of rich learning experiences inside and outside the classroom, and the cultivation of skills to help students become lifelong learners.'²⁷ While they often have larger classes than residential liberal arts colleges and rarely have the same commitment to undergraduate learning, particularly amongst their most prominent faculty, they still provide a LAS

education.

Conversely, it is worth stressing again that residential liberal arts colleges, which offer the most pure form of LAS education, offer incredibly strong educations in spite of the fact that the best among them never appear on the world rankings. They have too few professors to meet ranking criteria and the methodologies for most of the major rankings de-emphasize, and in fact devalue, undergraduate teaching. If, for example, one were to change the formula of some surveys to assess universities on the number of Nobel Laureates who studied there as undergraduates, as opposed to who teach there, a much better indicator of teaching success, one would find that a liberal arts college like Swarthmore has had more undergraduate recipients than Princeton and Amherst has had more recipients than Stanford. The rankings are a poor indicator of what educators should care about, but they should not deter those interested in developing quality undergraduate LAS education.

Fourth, a LAS education does not sentence graduates to a lifetime of unemployment. The opposite is true: many employers, including those in areas of business and finance, seek to hire LAS graduates, and many are LAS graduates themselves.²⁸ LAS education prepares graduates for new economic conditions that emphasize flexibility and adaptability instead of single-company or single- industry lifetime employment.²⁹

²³ See, for example, the University of Michigan, http://www.lsa.umich.edu/lsa/parents/liberal_arts/.

²⁴ Michael Roth, 'The Proper Role of Interdisciplinary Studies,' http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-roth/the-proper-role-of-interd_b_471063.html, downloaded September 10, 2014.

²⁵ <http://www.yale.edu/academics/> downloaded September 10, 2014.

²⁶ <https://undergrad.admissions.columbia.edu/collections/academiclife/core>.

²⁷ <http://www.stanford.edu/academics/> downloaded September 10, 2014.

²⁸ Hart Research Associates, 'It takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success: What Employers Want from College Graduates,' *Liberal Education*, Spring 2013, vol. 99, no. 2. <http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/le-sp13/hartresearchassociates.cfm>, downloaded September 27, 2014. See also, Richard H. Hersh, 'The Liberal Arts College: The Most Practical and Professional Education for the Twenty-First Century,' *Liberal Education*, Summer 1997, pp. 26-33.

²⁹ A World Bank report on education in Europe and Central Asia stresses that the shift from centrally planned to market economies 'will increasingly require workers with better information-processing, problem-solving, and knowing-how-to-learn skills. Available international test data show that ECA (Europe and Central Asia) countries are significantly behind OECD countries in many such skills.' Sue E. Berryman, 'Hidden Challenges to Education Systems in Transition Economies,' The World Bank, Europe and Central Asia Region, Human Development Sector, September 2000, p. 13.

By focusing on the development of the person and endowing students with the capacity to think critically, problem solve, and communicate effectively, LAS education fosters in students the capacity to respond to changing circumstances. That is an essential part of the LAS wager. LAS graduates might start with as much content knowledge as non-LAS students, but they come with a training in research, skills in knowledge acquisition, and the ability to problem-solve that in the long run are likely to make them greater contributors to their places of employment than their more narrowly trained colleagues.

Fifth, LAS graduates are not less competitive in pursuing specialized graduate study. In fact, quite the opposite is true. A study by Nobel laureate Thomas R. Cech that focused on the performance of graduates of liberal arts colleges demonstrated that, 'Liberal arts colleges as a group produce about twice as many eventual science Ph.Ds. per graduate as do baccalaureate institutions in general, and the top colleges vie with the nation's very best research universities in their efficiency of production of eventual science Ph.Ds.'³⁰ Indeed, at the time of Cech's study, liberal arts colleges constituted three of the top six and eleven of the top 25 institutions in the US in terms of producing undergraduates who completed doctorates in science and engineering.³¹

Sixth, the LAS need not replace the predominant educational system. It can coexist with and even productively interact with more traditional systems. One important point worth noting is that we have found in our experience in Russia that faculty who teach both in the LAS college and in traditional departments internalize many of the LAS teaching methods they are required to incorporate into their teaching in the LAS program and apply them, where possible, to their other educational contexts. Liberal arts institutions can impart some of the values of LAS education even to traditional institutions. The LAS model, then, should be viewed as complementary rather than competitive.

Seventh, LAS institutions are not associated exclusively with politically liberal outlooks. Indeed, if they wish to develop critical thinkers and active citizens, they should ensure that students are exposed to a number of perspectives, including those associated with more politically conservative approaches to issues. LAS institutions have ample room for faculty and students, as well as assigned readings that represent the political spectrum.

Finally, LAS is not a static system of education. One of the reasons it has thrived for so long is its capacity to modify its procedures, rules and arrangements in response to changing circumstances. As technological changes continue, teaching approaches will evolve. As the LAS system goes global, it will incorporate national traditions and adjust to new environments. There are many

elements that will remain essential to a LAS education, but as a system it is not stuck in time.

Concluding Reflections

To a large extent, this paper has been written in response to the growing interest in LAS education across the globe. However, as potential reformers and their supporters consider embarking upon the LAS project, there are a number of challenges to keep in mind:

- The LAS system is resource-intensive. The LAS system needs more faculty and a greater number of classrooms than other systems of higher education. It also requires a library and/or communications technology that can accommodate the large volume of assigned readings and sufficient administrative resources to ensure that the complex structure remains coherent. Given increasing demands on state budgets, potential reformers will have to be creative in finding ways to adapt the system if it is to 'go global' as so many seek.
- The LAS curriculum can conflict with state standards. In countries where there are many curricular requirements (ranging from the number of courses to the subjects that must be covered), there need to be compromises on the part of the state or creative solutions within the curriculum. Smolny College in Russia has been fortunate that the Ministry of Education has been so responsive to this new form of education and, in fact, implemented one of the most important educational reforms in post-Communist Europe in response to the curricular demands of the LAS. Not all ministries will be so responsive.
- The LAS pedagogy can be tremendously challenging to faculty accustomed to more didactic approaches. For teachers who are used to reading lectures, particularly ones who have been doing so for decades, the democratization of the classroom can prove extremely troubling, particularly when it entails students challenging their interpretations. Moreover, as we mentioned earlier, the time commitment necessary for LAS teaching can also prove problematic: faculty need to prepare their course syllabi and ensure readings are available, read multiple written assignments and provide feedback to students.

³⁰ Thomas R. Cech, 'Science at Liberal Arts Colleges: A Better Education?' *Daedalus*, vol. 128, no. 1, Winter 1999, p. 213. Cech continued, 'On a more subjective note, when highly successful scientists compare their liberal arts college education to what they likely would have received at a large research university, most rate their college experience as a substantial advantage to their career.'

³¹ Cech, 'Science at Liberal Arts...' p. 200.

In places where economies dictate that faculty have two or three jobs, they simply may not be able to devote the time necessary to respond to the demands of the LAS.

That having been said, many faculty who have recently been introduced to the LAS approach have found it to be liberating and tremendously rewarding. They happily trade in their old notes and their total command of the classroom for the new learning environment, complete with stimulating interchanges and challenging discussion. The diverse curriculum can also allow them to explore new issues in their classes and shape their courses by drawing on different disciplines.

- Considerable thought needs to be given to how a LAS undergraduate degree can mesh with graduate programs designed for more intensive forms of education. The depth that LAS provides should qualify students for graduate programs, but much negotiating may need to take place with faculty and administrators of graduate programs who are more accustomed to looking at the volume of courses instead of quality of learning. In some instances accommodations will have to be made to allow for a smooth transition. However, this does not mean that LAS graduates are not up to the challenge. Nothing illustrates this better than the US experience in science and engineering in the work by Thomas Cech cited above, areas in which one would think LAS graduates might not be competitive in terms of their capacity to succeed in graduate school.

The LAS system is not a magic bullet that will solve all of society's problems. However, when properly constituted, it offers a coherent approach that endows students with abilities that will prepare them for a lifetime of civic engagement, learning, and employment. In countries where vocational training, hyper-specialization and didactic pedagogic approaches dominate higher education, it can offer an alternative that will resonate amongst students and faculty. It is not an easy system to adopt, but the rewards may well be worth the investment.

An Answer to the Question: WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT? [1]

IMMANUEL KANT

(1784)

Translated by Ted Humphrey

Hackett Publishing, 1992

1. *Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity.* [2]

Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is *self-imposed* when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. *Sapere Aude!* [3] "Have courage to use your own understanding!"--that is the motto of enlightenment.

2. Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a proportion of men, long after nature has released them from alien guidance (*natura-liter maiorennes*), [4] nonetheless gladly remain in lifelong immaturity, and why it is so easy for others to establish themselves as their guardians. It is so easy to be immature. If I have a book to serve as my understanding, a pastor to serve as my conscience, a physician to determine my diet for me, and so on, I need not exert myself at all. I need not think, if only I can pay: others will readily undertake the irksome work for me. The guardians who have so benevolently taken over the supervision of men have carefully seen to it that the far greatest part of them (including the entire fair sex) regard taking the step to maturity as very dangerous, not to mention difficult. Having first made their domestic livestock dumb, and having carefully made sure that these docile creatures will not take a single step without the go-cart to which they are harnessed, these guardians then show them the danger that threatens them, should they attempt to walk alone.

Now this danger is not actually so great, for after falling a few times they would in the end certainly learn to walk; but an example of this kind makes men timid and usually frightens them out of all further attempts.

3. Thus, it is difficult for any individual man to work himself out of the immaturity that has all but become his nature. He has even become fond of this state and for the time being is actually incapable of using his own understanding, for no one has ever allowed him to attempt it. Rules and formulas, those mechanical aids to the rational use, or rather misuse, of his natural gifts, are the shackles of a permanent immaturity. Whoever threw them off would still make only an uncertain leap over the smallest ditch, since he is unaccustomed to this kind of free movement. Consequently, only a few have succeeded, by cultivating their own minds, in freeing themselves from immaturity and pursuing a secure course.

4. But that the public should enlighten itself is more likely; indeed, if it is only allowed freedom, enlightenment is almost inevitable. For even among the entrenched guardians of the great masses a few will always think for themselves, a few who, after having themselves thrown off the yoke of immaturity, will spread the spirit of a rational appreciation for both their own worth and for each person's calling to think for himself. But it should be particularly noted that if a public that was first placed in this yoke by the guardians is suitably aroused by some of those who are altogether incapable of enlightenment, it may force the guardians themselves to remain under the yoke--so pernicious is it to instill prejudices, for they finally take revenge upon their originators, or on their descendants. Thus a public can only attain enlightenment slowly. Perhaps a revolution can overthrow autocratic despotism and profiteering or power-grabbing oppression, but it can never truly reform a

manner of thinking; [5] instead, new prejudices, just like the old ones they replace, will serve as a leash for the great unthinking mass.

5. Nothing is required for this enlightenment, however, except freedom; and the freedom in question is the least harmful of all, namely, the freedom to use reason *publicly* in all matters. But on all sides I hear: “*Do not argue!*” The officer says, “Do not argue, drill!” The tax man says, “Do not argue, pay!” The pastor says, “Do not argue, believe!” (Only one ruler in the world [6] says, “*Argue as much as you want and about what you want, but obey!*”) In this we have [examples of] pervasive restrictions on freedom. But which restriction hinders enlightenment and which does not, but instead actually advances it? I reply: The *public* use of one’s reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among mankind; the *private use* of reason may, however, often be very narrowly restricted, without otherwise hindering the progress of enlightenment. By the public use of one’s own reason I understand the use that anyone as a *scholar* makes of reason before the entire *literate world*. I call the private use of reason that which a person may make in a *civic post* or office that has been entrusted to him. [7] Now in many affairs conducted in the interests of a community, a certain mechanism is required by means of which some of its members must conduct themselves in an entirely passive manner so that through an artificial unanimity the government may guide them toward public ends, or at least prevent them from destroying such ends. Here one certainly must not argue, instead one must obey. However, insofar as this part of the machine also regards himself as a member of the community as a whole, or even of the world community, and as a consequence addresses the public in the role of a scholar, in the proper sense of that term, he can most certainly argue, without thereby harming the affairs for which as a passive member he is partly responsible. Thus it would be disastrous if an officer on duty who was given a command by his

superior were to question the appropriateness or utility of the order. He must obey. But as a scholar he cannot be justly constrained from making comments about errors in military service, or from placing them before the public for its judgment. The citizen cannot refuse to pay the taxes imposed on him; indeed, impertinent criticism of such levies, when they should be paid by him, can be punished as a scandal (since it can lead to widespread insubordination). But the same person does not act contrary to civic duty when, as a scholar, he publicly expresses his thoughts regarding the impropriety or even injustice of such taxes. Likewise a pastor is bound to instruct his catechumens and congregation in accordance with the symbol of the church he serves, for he was appointed on that condition. But as a scholar he has complete freedom, indeed even the calling, to impart to the public all of his carefully considered and well-intentioned thoughts concerning mistaken aspects of that symbol, [8] as well as his suggestions for the better arrangement of religious and church matters. Nothing in this can weigh on his conscience. What he teaches in consequence of his office as a servant of the church he sets out as something with regard to which he has no discretion to teach in accord with his own lights; rather, he offers it under the direction and in the name of another. He will say, “Our church teaches this or that and these are the demonstrations it uses.” He thereby extracts for his congregation all practical uses from precepts to which he would not himself subscribe with complete conviction, but whose presentation he can nonetheless undertake, since it is not entirely impossible that truth lies hidden in them, and, in any case, nothing contrary to the very nature of religion is to be found in them. If he believed he could find anything of the latter sort in them, he could not in good conscience serve in his position; he would have to resign. Thus an appointed teacher’s use of his reason for the sake of his congregation is merely *private*, because, however large the congregation is, this use is always

only domestic; in this regard, as a priest, he is not free and cannot be such because he is acting under instructions from someone else. By contrast, the cleric--as a scholar who speaks through his writings to the public as such, i.e., the world--enjoys in this *public use* of reason an unrestricted freedom to use his own rational capacities and to speak his own mind. For that the (spiritual) guardians of a people should themselves be immature is an absurdity that would insure the perpetuation of absurdities.

6. But would a society of pastors, perhaps a church assembly or venerable presbytery (as those among the Dutch call themselves), not be justified in binding itself by oath to a certain unalterable symbol in order to secure a constant guardianship over each of its members and through them over the people, and this for all time: I say that this is wholly impossible. Such a contract, whose intention is to preclude forever all further enlightenment of the human race, is absolutely null and void, even if it should be ratified by the supreme power, by parliaments, and by the most solemn peace treaties. One age cannot bind itself, and thus conspire, to place a succeeding one in a condition whereby it would be impossible for the later age to expand its knowledge (particularly where it is so very important), to rid itself of errors, and generally to increase its enlightenment. That would be a crime against human nature, whose essential destiny lies precisely in such progress; subsequent generations are thus completely justified in dismissing such agreements as unauthorized and criminal. The criterion of everything that can be agreed upon as a law by a people lies in this question: Can a people impose such a law on itself? [9] Now it might be possible, in anticipation of a better state of affairs, to introduce a provisional order for a specific, short time, all the while giving all citizens, especially clergy, in their role as scholars, the freedom to comment publicly, i.e., in writing, on the present institution's

shortcomings. The provisional order might last until insight into the nature of these matters had become so widespread and obvious that the combined (if not unanimous) voices of the populace could propose to the crown that it take under its protection those congregations that, in accord with their newly gained insight, had organized themselves under altered religious institutions, but without interfering with those wishing to allow matters to remain as before. However, it is absolutely forbidden that they unite into a religious organization that nobody may for the duration of a man's lifetime publicly question, for so doing would deny, render fruitless, and make detrimental to succeeding generations an era in man's progress toward improvement. A man may put off enlightenment with regard to what he ought to know, though only for a short time and for his own person; but to renounce it for himself, or, even more, for subsequent generations, is to violate and trample man's divine rights underfoot. And what a people may not decree for itself may still less be imposed on it by a monarch, for his lawgiving authority rests on his unification of the people's collective will in his own. If he only sees to it that all genuine or purported improvement is consonant with civil order, he can allow his subjects to do what they find necessary to their spiritual well-being, which is not his affair. However, he must prevent anyone from forcibly interfering with another's working as best he can to determine and promote his well-being. It detracts from his own majesty when he interferes in these matters, since the writings in which his subjects attempt to clarify their insights lend value to his conception of governance. This holds whether he acts from his own highest insight--whereby he calls upon himself the reproach, "*Caesar non eat supra grammaticos*" [10]—as well as, indeed even more, when he despoils his highest authority by supporting the spiritual despotism of some tyrants in his state over his other subjects.

7. If it is now asked, “Do we presently live in an *enlightened age*?” the answer is, “No, but we do live in an *age of enlightenment*.” As matters now stand, a great deal is still lacking in order for men as a whole to be, or even to put themselves into a position to be able without external guidance to apply understanding confidently to religious issues. But we do have clear indications that the way is now being opened for men to proceed freely in this direction and that the obstacles to general enlightenment—to their release from their self-imposed immaturity—are gradually diminishing. In this regard, this age is the age of enlightenment, the century of Frederick. [11]

8. A prince who does not find it beneath him to say that he takes it to be his duty to prescribe nothing, but rather to allow men complete freedom in religious matters—who thereby renounces the arrogant title of *tolerance*—is himself enlightened and deserves to be praised by a grateful present and by posterity as the first, at least where the government is concerned, to release the human race from immaturity and to leave everyone free to use his own reason in all matters of conscience. Under his rule, venerable pastors, in their role as scholars and without prejudice to their official duties, may freely and openly set out for the world's scrutiny their judgments and views, even where these occasionally differ from the accepted symbol. Still greater freedom is afforded to those who are not restricted by an official post. This spirit of freedom is expanding even where it must struggle against the external obstacles of governments that misunderstand their own function. Such governments are illuminated by the example that the existence of freedom need not give cause for the least concern regarding public order and harmony in the commonwealth. If only they refrain from inventing artifices to keep themselves in it, men will gradually raise themselves from barbarism.

9. I have focused on religious matters in setting out my main point concerning

enlightenment, i.e., man's emergence from self-imposed immaturity, first because our rulers have no interest in assuming the role of their subjects' guardians with respect to the arts and sciences, and secondly because that form of immaturity is both the most pernicious and disgraceful of all. But the manner of thinking of a head of state who favors religious enlightenment goes even further, for he realizes that there is no danger to his *legislation* in allowing his subjects to use reason *publicly* and to set before the world their thoughts concerning better formulations of his laws, even if this involves frank criticism of legislation currently in effect. We have before us a shining example, with respect to which no monarch surpasses the one whom we honor.

10. But only a ruler who is himself enlightened and has no dread of shadows, yet who likewise has a well-disciplined, numerous army to guarantee public peace, can say what no republic [12] may dare, namely: “*Argue as much as you want and about what you want, but obey!*” Here as elsewhere, when things are considered in broad perspective, a strange, unexpected pattern in human affairs reveals itself, one in which almost everything is paradoxical. A greater degree of civil freedom seems advantageous to a people's *spiritual* freedom; yet the former established impassable boundaries for the latter; conversely, a lesser degree of civil freedom provides enough room for all fully to expand their abilities. Thus, once nature has removed the hard shell from this kernel for which she has most fondly cared, namely, the inclination to and vocation for free *thinking*, the kernel gradually reacts on a people's mentality (whereby they become increasingly able to act *freely*), and it finally even influences the principles of *government*, which finds that it can profit by treating men, *who are now more than machines*, in accord with their dignity.*

Immanuel Kant,

Konigsberg in Prussia, 30 September 1784

*Today I read in *Büsching's Wöchentliche Nachrichten* for September 13th a notice concerning this month's *Berlinischen Monatsschrift* that mentions *Mendelssohn's* answer to this same question. I have not yet seen this journal, otherwise I would have withheld the foregoing reflections, which I now set out in order to see to what extent two persons thoughts may coincidentally agree.

Herodotus

38. There are indeed, on every hand, clear proofs that Cambyses was violently distracted. If it were not so, he would never have set about the mockery of what other men hold sacred and customary. For if there were a proposition put before mankind, according to which each should, after examination, choose the best customs in the world, each nation would certainly think its own customs the best. Indeed, it is natural for no one but a madman to make a mockery of such things. That this is how all men think about their customs one can see from many other pieces of evidence and from the following case in particular. Darius, during his own rule, called together some of the Greeks who were in attendance on him and asked them what would they take to eat their dead fathers. They said that no price in the world would make them do so. After that Darius summoned those of the Indians who are called Callatians, who *do* eat their parents, and, in the presence of the Greeks (who understood the conversation through an interpreter), asked them what price would make them burn their dead fathers with fire. They shouted aloud, “Don’t mention such horrors!” These are matters of the settled custom, and I think Pindar is right when he says, “Custom is king of all.”

Pindar’s quote as preserved in Plato’s *Gorgias* 484B: “Custom, king of all things mortal and immortal, leads the way, justifying the most violent course by the hand of superiority.” Herodotus by quoting only the first three words has given quite different significance to them. The original is

a justification of the rule of the stronger—a justification by “natural law,” i.e. what *actually happens regularly*. Herodotus gives a more interesting meaning: what people habitually do to give the impression to what they think of as right, or as sound, is absolutely master of everything—through what he means by ‘everything’ is vague.

Herodotus (c.484 BCE – c. 425 BCE) was born in Halicarnassus (modern day Turkey) and is the author of a work known today as *The Histories*, an account of the period of the Greco-Persian Wars, and a compendium of ancient knowledge from many domains. It is regarded as a foundational text in the study and recording of history.

PLATO

REPUBLIC 380 BC

The Republic's ancient subtitle—On Justice—much understates the scope of the work. It begins as a discussion of the nature of justice, much in the manner of 'Socratic' dialogues like Laches or Charmides, with Socrates examining and refuting successive views of his interlocutors on this subject. But in book II he renews the inquiry, now agreeing to cease examining and refuting the opinions of others, and to present his own account. He will say what justice really is and show that people who are truly and fully just thereby lead a better, happier life than any unjust person could. The horizon lifts to reveal ever-expanding vistas of philosophy. Socrates presents his views on the original purposes for which political communities—cities—were founded, the basic principles of just social and political organization, and the education of young people that those principles demand (books II, III, and V). He decides that a truly just society requires philosophic rulers—both men and women—living in a communistic 'guardhouse' within the larger community. The need for such rulers leads him on to wider topics. He discusses the variety and nature (and proper regimentation) of human desires, and the precise nature of justice and the other virtues—and of the corresponding vices—both in the individual person's psychology and in the organization of political society (IV, VIII, IX). He explains the nature of knowledge and its proper objects (V–VII): The world revealed by our senses—the world of everyday, traditional life—is, he argues, cognitively and metaphysically deficient. It depends upon a prior realm of separately existing Forms, organized beneath the Form of the Good and graspable not by our senses but only through rigorous dialectical thought and discussion, after preparation in extended mathematical studies. There is even a discussion of the basic principles of visual and literary art and art criticism (X). All this is necessary, Socrates says, finally to answer the basic question about justice— not what it is, but why it must make the just person live a good, happy life, and the unjust person a bad, miserable one. Speaking throughout to no identified person—that is, directly to the reader—Socrates relates a conversation he took part in one day in the Athenian port city of Piraeus. All the others present, a considerable company, represent historical personages: among them were the noted sophist and teacher of oratory, Thrasymachus, and Glaucon and Adeimantus, Plato's brothers. Glaucon is an ambitious, energetic,

'manly' young man, much interested in public affairs and drawn to the life of politics. An intelligent and argumentative person, he scorns ordinary pleasures and aspires to 'higher' things. Always especially attracted by such people, it was with him that Socrates had gone down to Socrates/Cephalus Piraeus in the first place. Adeimantus, equally a decent young man, is less driven, less demanding of himself, more easily satisfied and less gifted in philosophical argument. After book I Socrates carries on his discussion first with one, then with the other of these two men. The conversation as a whole aims at answering to their satisfaction the challenge they jointly raise against Socrates' conviction that justice is a preeminent good for the just person, but Socrates addresses different parts of his reply to a different one of them. (To assist the reader, we have inserted the names of the speakers at the tops of the pages of the translation.) Though in books II–X Socrates no longer searches for the truth by criticizing his interlocutors' ideas, he proceeds nonetheless in a spirit of exploration and discovery, proposing bold hypotheses and seeking their confirmation in the first instance through examining their consequences. He often emphasizes the tentativeness of his results, and the need for a more extensive treatment. Quite different is the main speaker in the late dialogues Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, and Laws—whether Socrates himself, or a visitor from Elea or Athens: there, we get confident, reasoned delivery of philosophical results assumed by the speaker to be well established.

J.M.C.

They're like us. Do you suppose, first of all, that these prisoners see anything of themselves and one another besides the shadows that the fire casts on the wall in front of them?

How could they, if they have to keep their heads motionless throughout life?

What about the things being carried along the wall? Isn't the same true of them?

Of course.

And if they could talk to one another, don't you think they'd suppose that the names they used applied to the things they see passing before them?¹

They'd have to.

And what if their prison also had an echo from the wall facing them? Don't you think they'd believe that the shadows passing in front of them were talking whenever one of the carriers passing along the wall was doing so?

I certainly do.

Then the prisoners would in every way believe that the truth is nothing other than the shadows of those artifacts.

They must surely believe that.

Consider, then, what being released from their bonds and cured of their ignorance would naturally be like, if something like this came to pass.² When one of them was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up, turn his head, walk, and look up toward the light, he'd be pained and dazzled and unable to see the things whose shadows he'd seen before. What do you think he'd say, if we told him that what he'd seen before was inconsequential, but that now—because he is a bit closer to the things that are and is turned towards things that are more—he sees more correctly? Or, to put it another way, if we pointed to each of the things passing by, asked him what each of them is, and compelled him to answer, don't you think he'd be at a loss and that he'd believe that the things he saw earlier were truer than the ones he was now being shown?

Much truer.

And if someone compelled him to look at the light itself, wouldn't his eyes hurt, and wouldn't he turn around and flee towards the things he's able to see, believing that they're really clearer than the ones he's being shown?

He would.

And if someone dragged him away from there by force, up the rough, steep path, and didn't let him go until he had dragged him into the sunlight, wouldn't he be pained and irritated at being treated that way? And when he came into the light, with the sun filling his eyes, wouldn't he be unable to see a single one of the things now said to be true?

Book VII

514 Next, I said, compare the effect of education and of the lack of it on our nature to an experience like this: Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They've been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around. Light is provided by a fire burning far above and behind them. Also behind them, but on higher ground, there is a path stretching between them and the fire. Imagine that along this path a low wall has been built, like the screen in front of puppeteers above which they show their puppets.

I'm imagining it.

Then also imagine that there are people along the wall, carrying all kinds of artifacts that project above it—statues of people and other animals, made out of stone, wood, and every material. And, as you'd expect, some of the carriers are talking, and some are silent.

It's a strange image you're describing, and strange prisoners.

1. Reading *parionta autous nomizein onomazein* in b5.

2. Reading *hoia tis an ephusei, ei* in c5.

He would be unable to see them, at least at first.

I suppose, then, that he'd need time to get adjusted before he could see things in the world above. At first, he'd see shadows most easily, then images of men and other things in water, then the things themselves. Of these, he'd be able to study the things in the sky and the sky itself more easily at night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon, than during the day, looking at the sun and the light of the sun.

Of course.

Finally, I suppose, he'd be able to see the sun, not images of it in water or some alien place, but the sun itself, in its own place, and be able to study it.

Necessarily so.

And at this point he would infer and conclude that the sun provides the seasons and the years, governs everything in the visible world, and is in some way the cause of all the things that he used to see.

It's clear that would be his next step.

What about when he reminds himself of his first dwelling place, his fellow prisoners, and what passed for wisdom there? Don't you think that he'd count himself happy for the change and pity the others?

Certainly.

And if there had been any honors, praises, or prizes among them for the one who was sharpest at identifying the shadows as they passed by and who best remembered which usually came earlier, which later, and which simultaneously, and who could thus best divine the future, do you think that our man would desire these rewards or envy those among the prisoners who were honored and held power? Instead, wouldn't he feel, with Homer, that he'd much prefer to "work the earth as a serf to another, one without possessions,"³ and go through any sufferings, rather than share their opinions and live as they do?

I suppose he would rather suffer anything than live like that.

Consider this too. If this man went down into the cave again and sat down in his same seat, wouldn't his eyes—coming suddenly out of the sun like that—be filled with darkness?

They certainly would.

And before his eyes had recovered—and the adjustment would not be quick—while his vision was still dim, if he had to compete again with the perpetual prisoners in recognizing the shadows, wouldn't he invite ridicule? Wouldn't it be said of him that he'd returned from his upward journey with his eyesight ruined and that it isn't worthwhile even to try to travel upward? And, as for anyone who tried to free them and lead them upward, if they could somehow get their hands on him, wouldn't they kill him?

They certainly would.

This whole image, Glaucon, must be fitted together with what we said before. The visible realm should be likened to the prison dwelling, and the light of the fire inside it to the power of the sun. And if you interpret the upward journey and the study of things above as the upward journey of the soul to the intelligible realm, you'll grasp what I hope to convey, since that is what you wanted to hear about. Whether it's true or not, only the god knows. But this is how I see it: In the knowable realm, the form of the good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty. Once one has seen it, however, one must conclude that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything, that it produces both light and its source in the visible realm, and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding, so that anyone who is to act sensibly in private or public must see it.

I have the same thought, at least as far as I'm able.

Come, then, share with me this thought also: It isn't surprising that the ones who get to this point are unwilling to occupy themselves with human affairs and that their souls are always pressing upwards, eager to spend their time above, for, after all, this is surely what we'd expect, if indeed things fit the image I described before.

It is.

What about what happens when someone turns from divine study to the evils of human life? Do you think it's surprising, since his sight is still dim, and he hasn't yet become accustomed to the darkness around him, that he behaves awkwardly and appears completely ridiculous if he's compelled, either in the courts or elsewhere, to contend about the shadows of justice or the statues of which they are the shadows and to dispute about the way these things are understood by people who have never seen justice itself?

That's not surprising at all.

No, it isn't. But anyone with any understanding would remember that the eyes may be confused in two ways and from two causes, namely, when they've come from the light into the darkness *and* when they've come from the darkness into the light. Realizing that the same applies to the soul, when someone sees a soul disturbed and unable to see something, he won't laugh mindlessly, but he'll take into consideration whether it has come from a brighter life and is dimmed through not having yet become accustomed to the dark or whether it has come from greater ignorance into greater light and is dazzled by the increased brilliance. Then he'll declare the first soul happy in its experience and life, and he'll pity the latter—but even if he chose to make fun of it, at least he'd be less ridiculous than if he laughed at a soul that has come from the light above.

What you say is very reasonable.

If that's true, then here's what we must think about these matters: Education isn't what some people declare it to be, namely, putting knowledge into souls that lack it, like putting sight into blind eyes.

They do say that.

3. *Odyssey* xi.489–90.

But our present discussion, on the other hand, shows that the power to learn is present in everyone's soul and that the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body. This instrument cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely, the one we call the good. Isn't that right?

Yes.

Then education is the craft concerned with doing this very thing, this turning around, and with how the soul can most easily and effectively be made to do it. It isn't the craft of putting sight into the soul. Education takes for granted that sight is there but that it isn't turned the right way or looking where it ought to look, and it tries to redirect it appropriately.

So it seems.

Now, it looks as though the other so-called virtues of the soul are akin to those of the body, for they really aren't there beforehand but are added later by habit and practice. However, the virtue of reason seems to belong above all to something more divine, which never loses its power but is either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned. Or have you never noticed this about people who are said to be vicious but clever, how keen the vision of their little souls is and how sharply it distinguishes the things it is turned towards? This shows that its sight isn't inferior but rather is forced to serve evil ends, so that the sharper it sees, the more evil it accomplishes.

Absolutely.

However, if a nature of this sort had been hammered at from childhood and freed from the bonds of kinship with becoming, which have been fastened to it by feasting, greed, and other such pleasures and which, like leaden weights, pull its vision downwards—if, being rid of these, it turned to look at true things, then I say that the same soul of the same person would see these most sharply, just as it now does the things it is presently turned towards.

Probably so.

And what about the uneducated who have no experience of truth? Isn't it likely—indeed, doesn't it follow necessarily from what was said before—that they will never adequately govern a city? But neither would those who've been allowed to spend their whole lives being educated. The former would fail because they don't have a single goal at which all their actions, public and private, inevitably aim; the latter would fail because they'd refuse to act, thinking that they had settled while still alive in the faraway Isles of the Blessed.

That's true.

It is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to reach the study we said before is the most important, namely, to make the ascent and see the good. But when they've made it and looked sufficiently, we mustn't allow them to do what they're allowed to do today.

What's that?

To stay there and refuse to go down again to the prisoners in the cave and share their labors and honors, whether they are of less worth or of greater.

Then are we to do them an injustice by making them live a worse life when they could live a better one?

You are forgetting again that it isn't the law's concern to make any one class in the city outstandingly happy but to contrive to spread happiness throughout the city by bringing the citizens into harmony with each other through persuasion or compulsion and by making them share with each other the benefits that each class can confer on the community.⁴ The law produces such people in the city, not in order to allow them to turn in whatever direction they want, but to make use of them to bind the city together.

That's true, I had forgotten.

Observe, then, Glaucon, that we won't be doing an injustice to those who've become philosophers in our city and that what we'll say to them, when we compel them to guard and care for the others, will be just. We'll say: "When people like you come to be in other cities, they're justified in not sharing in their city's labors, for they've grown there spontaneously, against the will of the constitution. And what grows of its own accord and owes no debt for its upbringing has justice on its side when it isn't keen to pay anyone for that upbringing. But we've made you kings in our city and leaders of the swarm, as it were, both for yourselves and for the rest of the city. You're better and more completely educated than the others and are better able to share in both types of life. Therefore each of you in turn must go down to live in the common dwelling place of the others and grow accustomed to seeing in the dark. When you are used to it, you'll see vastly better than the people there. And because you've seen the truth about fine, just, and good things, you'll know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image. Thus, for you and for us, the city will be governed, not like the majority of cities nowadays, by people who fight over shadows and struggle against one another in order to rule—as if that were a great good—but by people who are awake rather than dreaming, for the truth is surely this: A city whose prospective rulers are least eager to rule must of necessity be most free from civil war, whereas a city with the opposite kind of rulers is governed in the opposite way."

Absolutely.

Then do you think that those we've nurtured will disobey us and refuse to share the labors of the city, each in turn, while living the greater part of their time with one another in the pure realm?

It isn't possible, for we'll be giving just orders to just people. Each of them will certainly go to rule as to something compulsory, however, which is exactly the opposite of what's done by those who now rule in each city.

4. See 420b–421c, 462a–466c.

521 This is how it is. If you can find a way of life that's better than ruling for the prospective rulers, your well-governed city will become a possibility, for only in it will the truly rich rule—not those who are rich in gold but those who are rich in the wealth that the happy must have, namely, a good and rational life. But if beggars hungry for private goods go into public life, thinking that the good is there for the seizing, then the well-governed city is impossible, for then ruling is something fought over, and this civil and domestic war destroys these people and the rest of the city as well.

That's very true.

b Can you name any life that despises political rule besides that of the true philosopher?

No, by god, I can't.

But surely it is those who are not lovers of ruling who must rule, for if they don't, the lovers of it, who are rivals, will fight over it.

Of course.

Then who will you compel to become guardians of the city, if not those who have the best understanding of what matters for good government and who have other honors than political ones, and a better life as well?

No one.

c Do you want us to consider now how such people will come to be in our city and how—just as some are said to have gone up from Hades to the gods—we'll lead them up to the light?

Of course I do.

This isn't, it seems, a matter of tossing a coin, but of turning a soul from a day that is a kind of night to the true day—the ascent to what is, which we say is true philosophy.

Indeed.

d Then mustn't we try to discover the subjects that have the power to bring this about?

Of course.

So what subject is it, Glaucon, that draws the soul from the realm of becoming to the realm of what is? And it occurs to me as I'm speaking that we said, didn't we, that it is necessary for the prospective rulers to be athletes in war when they're young?

Yes, we did.

Then the subject we're looking for must also have this characteristic in addition to the former one.

Which one?

It mustn't be useless to warlike men.

If it's at all possible, it mustn't.

e Now, prior to this, we educated them in music and poetry and physical training.

We did.

And physical training is concerned with what comes into being and dies, for it oversees the growth and decay of the body.

Apparently.

So it couldn't be the subject we're looking for.

No, it couldn't.

522

Then, could it be the music and poetry we described before?

But that, if you remember, is just the counterpart of physical training. It educated the guardians through habits. Its harmonies gave them a certain harmoniousness, not knowledge; its rhythms gave them a certain rhythmic quality; and its stories, whether fictional or nearer the truth, cultivated other habits akin to these. But as for the subject you're looking for now, there's nothing like that in music and poetry.

b

Your reminder is exactly to the point; there's really nothing like that in music and poetry. But, Glaucon, what is there that does have this? The crafts all seem to be base or mechanical.

How could they be otherwise? But apart from music and poetry, physical training, and the crafts, what subject is left?

Well, if we can't find anything apart from these, let's consider one of the subjects that touches all of them.

What sort of thing?

For example, that common thing that every craft, every type of thought, and every science uses and that is among the first compulsory subjects for everyone.

c

What's that?

That inconsequential matter of distinguishing the one, the two, and the three. In short, I mean number and calculation, for isn't it true that every craft and science must have a share in that?

They certainly must.

Then so must warfare.

Absolutely.

In the tragedies, at any rate, Palamedes is always showing up Agamemnon as a totally ridiculous general. Haven't you noticed? He says that, by inventing numbers, he established how many troops there were in the Trojan army and counted their ships and everything else—implying that they were uncounted before and that Agamemnon (if indeed he didn't know how to count) didn't even know how many feet he had? What kind of general do you think that made him?

d

A very strange one, if that's true.

Then won't we set down this subject as compulsory for a warrior, so that he is able to count and calculate?

e

More compulsory than anything. If, that is, he's to understand anything about setting his troops in order or if he's even to be properly human.

Then do you notice the same thing about this subject that I do?

What's that?

That this turns out to be one of the subjects we were looking for that naturally lead to understanding. But no one uses it correctly, namely, as something that is really fitted in every way to draw one towards being.

523

What do you mean?

I'll try to make my view clear as follows: I'll distinguish for myself the things that do or don't lead in the direction we mentioned, and you must study them along with me and either agree or disagree, and that way we may come to know more clearly whether things are indeed as I divine.

Point them out.

I'll point out, then, if you can grasp it, that some sense perceptions *don't* summon the understanding to look into them, because the judgment of sense perception is itself adequate, while others encourage it in every way to look into them, because sense perception seems to produce no sound result.

You're obviously referring to things appearing in the distance and to *trompe l'oeil* paintings.

You're not quite getting my meaning.

Then what do you mean?

The ones that don't summon the understanding are all those that don't go off into opposite perceptions at the same time. But the ones that do go off in that way I call *summoners*—whenever sense perception doesn't declare one thing any more than its opposite, no matter whether the object striking the senses is near at hand or far away. You'll understand my meaning better if I put it this way: These, we say, are three fingers—the smallest, the second, and the middle finger.

That's right.

Assume that I'm talking about them as being seen from close by. Now, this is my question about them.

What?

It's apparent that each of them is equally a finger, and it makes no difference in this regard whether the finger is seen to be in the middle or at either end, whether it is dark or pale, thick or thin, or anything else of that sort, for in all these cases, an ordinary soul isn't compelled to ask the understanding what a finger is, since sight doesn't suggest to it that a finger is at the same time the opposite of a finger.

No, it doesn't.

Therefore, it isn't likely that anything of that sort would summon or awaken the understanding.

No, it isn't.

But what about the bigness and smallness of fingers? Does sight perceive them adequately? Does it make no difference to it whether the finger is in the middle or at the end? And is it the same with the sense of touch, as regards the thick and the thin, the hard and the soft? And do the other senses reveal such things clearly and adequately? Doesn't each of them rather do the following: The sense set over the hard is, in the first place, of necessity also set over the soft, and it reports to the soul that the same thing is perceived by it to be both hard and soft?

That's right.

And isn't it necessary that in such cases the soul is puzzled as to what this sense means by the hard, if it indicates that the same thing is also

soft, or what it means by the light and the heavy, if it indicates that the heavy is light, or the light, heavy?

Yes, indeed, these are strange reports for the soul to receive, and they do demand to be looked into.

Then it's likely that in such cases the soul, summoning calculation and understanding, first tries to determine whether each of the things announced to it is one or two.

Of course.

If it's evidently two, won't each be evidently distinct and one?

Yes.

Then, if each is one, and both two, the soul will understand that the two are separate, for it wouldn't understand the inseparable to be two, but rather one.

That's right.

Sight, however, saw the big and small, not as separate, but as mixed up together. Isn't that so?

Yes.

And in order to get clear about all this, understanding was compelled to see the big and the small, not as mixed up together, but as separate—the opposite way from sight.

True.

And isn't it from these cases that it first occurs to us to ask what the big is and what the small is?

Absolutely.

And, because of this, we called the one the intelligible and the other the visible.

That's right.

This, then, is what I was trying to express before, when I said that some things summon thought, while others don't. Those that strike the relevant sense at the same time as their opposites I call *summoners*, those that don't do this do not awaken understanding.

Now I understand, and I think you're right.

Well, then, to which of them do number and the one belong?

I don't know.

Reason it out from what was said before. If the one is adequately seen itself by itself or is so perceived by any of the other senses, then, as we were saying in the case of fingers, it wouldn't draw the soul towards being. But if something opposite to it is always seen at the same time, so that nothing is apparently any more one than the opposite of one, then something would be needed to judge the matter. The soul would then be puzzled, would look for an answer, would stir up its understanding, and would ask what the one itself is. And so this would be among the subjects that lead the soul and turn it around towards the study of that which is.

But surely the sight of the one does possess this characteristic to a remarkable degree, for we see the same thing to be both one and an unlimited number at the same time.

Then, if this is true of the one, won't it also be true of all numbers?

Of course.

Now, calculation and arithmetic are wholly concerned with numbers.

That's right.

b Then evidently they lead us towards truth.

Supernaturally so.

Then they belong, it seems, to the subjects we're seeking. They are compulsory for warriors because of their orderly ranks and for philosophers because they have to learn to rise up out of becoming and grasp being, if they are ever to become rational.

That's right.

And our guardian must be both a warrior and a philosopher.

Certainly.

Then it would be appropriate, Glaucon, to legislate this subject for those who are going to share in the highest offices in the city and to persuade them to turn to calculation and take it up, not as laymen do, but staying with it until they reach the study of the natures of the numbers by means of understanding itself, nor like tradesmen and retailers, for the sake of buying and selling, but for the sake of war and for ease in turning the soul around, away from becoming and towards truth and being.

Well put.

Moreover, it strikes me, now that it has been mentioned, how sophisticated the subject of calculation is and in how many ways it is useful for our purposes, provided that one practices it for the sake of knowing rather than trading.

d How is it useful?

In the very way we were talking about. It leads the soul forcibly upward and compels it to discuss the numbers themselves, never permitting anyone to propose for discussion numbers attached to visible or tangible bodies. You know what those who are clever in these matters are like: If, in the course of the argument, someone tries to divide the one itself, they laugh and won't permit it. If you divide it, they multiply it, taking care that one thing never be found to be many parts rather than one.

e That's very true.

526 Then what do you think would happen, Glaucon, if someone were to ask them: "What kind of numbers are you talking about, in which the one is as you assume it to be, each one equal to every other, without the least difference and containing no internal parts?"

I think they'd answer that they are talking about those numbers that can be grasped only in thought and can't be dealt with in any other way.

b Then do you see that it's likely that this subject really is compulsory for us, since it apparently compels the soul to use understanding itself on the truth itself?

Indeed, it most certainly does do that.

And what about those who are naturally good at calculation or reasoning? Have you already noticed that they're naturally sharp, so to speak,

in all subjects, and that those who are slow at it, if they're educated and exercised in it, even if they're benefited in no other way, nonetheless improve and become generally sharper than they were?

That's true.

Moreover, I don't think you'll easily find subjects that are harder to learn or practice than this.

No, indeed.

Then, for all these reasons, this subject isn't to be neglected, and the best natures must be educated in it.

I agree.

Let that, then, be one of our subjects. Second, let's consider whether the subject that comes next is also appropriate for our purposes.

What subject is that? Do you mean geometry?

That's the very one I had in mind.

Insofar as it pertains to war, it's obviously appropriate, for when it comes to setting up camp, occupying a region, concentrating troops, deploying them, or with regard to any of the other formations an army adopts in battle or on the march, it makes all the difference whether someone is a geometer or not.

But, for things like that, even a little geometry—or calculation for that matter—would suffice. What we need to consider is whether the greater and more advanced part of it tends to make it easier to see the form of the good. And we say that anything has that tendency if it compels the soul to turn itself around towards the region in which lies the happiest of the things that are, the one the soul must see at any cost.

e You're right.

Therefore, if geometry compels the soul to study being, it's appropriate, but if it compels it to study becoming, it's inappropriate.

So we've said, at any rate.

Now, no one with even a little experience of geometry will dispute that this science is entirely the opposite of what is said about it in the accounts of its practitioners.

How do you mean?

They give ridiculous accounts of it, though they can't help it, for they speak like practical men, and all their accounts refer to doing things. They talk of "squaring," "applying," "adding," and the like, whereas the entire subject is pursued for the sake of knowledge.

Absolutely.

And mustn't we also agree on a further point?

What is that?

That their accounts are for the sake of knowing what always is, not what comes into being and passes away.

That's easy to agree to, for geometry is knowledge of what always is.

Then it draws the soul towards truth and produces philosophic thought by directing upwards what we now wrongly direct downwards.

As far as anything possibly can.

c Then as far as *we* possibly can, we must require those in your fine city not to neglect geometry in any way, for even its by-products are not insignificant.

What are they?

The ones concerned with war that you mentioned. But we also surely know that, when it comes to better understanding any subject, there is a world of difference between someone who has grasped geometry and someone who hasn't.

Yes, by god, a world of difference.

Then shall we set this down as a second subject for the young?

Let's do so, he said.

d And what about astronomy? Shall we make it the third? Or do you disagree?

That's fine with me, for a better awareness of the seasons, months, and years is no less appropriate for a general than for a farmer or navigator.

e You amuse me: You're like someone who's afraid that the majority will think he is prescribing useless subjects. It's no easy task—indeed it's very difficult—to realize that in every soul there is an instrument that is purified and rekindled by such subjects when it has been blinded and destroyed by other ways of life, an instrument that it is more important to preserve than ten thousand eyes, since only with it can the truth be seen. Those who share your belief that this is so will think you're speaking incredibly well, while those who've never been aware of it will probably think you're

528 talking nonsense, since they see no benefit worth mentioning in these subjects. So decide right now which group you're addressing. Or are your arguments for neither of them but mostly for your own sake—though you won't begrudge anyone else whatever benefit he's able to get from them?

The latter: I want to speak, question, and answer mostly for my own sake.

Then let's fall back to our earlier position, for we were wrong just now about the subject that comes after geometry.

What was our error?

b After plane surfaces, we went on to revolving solids before dealing with solids by themselves. But the right thing to do is to take up the third dimension right after the second. And this, I suppose, consists of cubes and of whatever shares in depth.

You're right, Socrates, but this subject hasn't been developed yet.

c There are two reasons for that: First, because no city values it, this difficult subject is little researched. Second, the researchers need a director, for, without one, they won't discover anything. To begin with, such a director is hard to find, and, then, even if he could be found, those who currently do research in this field would be too arrogant to follow him. If an entire city helped him to supervise it, however, and took the lead in valuing it, then he would be followed. And, if the subject was consistently and vigorously pursued, it would soon be developed. Even now, when it isn't valued and is held in contempt by the majority and is pursued by

researchers who are unable to give an account of its usefulness, nevertheless, in spite of all these handicaps, the force of its charm has caused it to develop somewhat, so that it wouldn't be surprising if it were further developed even as things stand.

d The subject *has* outstanding charm. But explain more clearly what you were saying just now. The subject that deals with plane surfaces you took to be geometry.

Yes.

And at first you put astronomy after it, but later you went back on that. In my haste to go through them all, I've only progressed more slowly. The subject dealing with the dimension of depth was next. But because it is in a ridiculous state, I passed it by and spoke of astronomy (which deals with the motion of things having depth) after geometry.

e That's right.

Let's then put astronomy as the fourth subject, on the assumption that solid geometry will be available if a city takes it up.

That seems reasonable. And since you reproached me before for praising astronomy in a vulgar manner, I'll now praise it your way, for I think it's clear to everyone that astronomy compels the soul to look upward and leads it from things here to things there.

It may be obvious to everyone except me, but that's not my view about it.

Then what *is* your view?

As it's practiced today by those who teach philosophy, it makes the soul look very much downward.

How do you mean?

b In my opinion, your conception of "higher studies" is a good deal too generous, for if someone were to study something by leaning his head back and studying ornaments on a ceiling, it looks as though you'd say he's studying not with his eyes but with his understanding. Perhaps you're right, and I'm foolish, but I can't conceive of any subject making the soul look upward except one concerned with that which is, and that which is invisible. If anyone attempts to learn something about sensible things, whether by gazing upward or squinting downward, I'd claim—since there's no knowledge of such things—that he never learns anything and that, even if he studies lying on his back on the ground or floating on it in the sea, his soul is looking not up but down.

c You're right to reproach me, and I've been justly punished, but what did you mean when you said that astronomy must be learned in a different way from the way in which it is learned at present if it is to be a useful subject for our purposes?

d It's like this: We should consider the decorations in the sky to be the most beautiful and most exact of visible things, seeing that they're embroidered on a visible surface. But we should consider their motions to fall far short of the true ones—motions that are really fast or slow as measured in true numbers, that trace out true geometrical figures, that are all in

relation to one another, and that are the true motions of the things carried along in them. And these, of course, must be grasped by reason and thought, not by sight. Or do you think otherwise?

Not at all.

Therefore, we should use the embroidery in the sky as a model in the study of these other things. If someone experienced in geometry were to come upon plans very carefully drawn and worked out by Daedalus or some other craftsman or artist, he'd consider them to be very finely executed, but he'd think it ridiculous to examine them seriously in order to find the truth in them about the equal, the double, or any other ratio.

How could it be anything other than ridiculous?

Then don't you think that a real astronomer will feel the same when he looks at the motions of the stars? He'll believe that the craftsman of the heavens arranged them and all that's in them in the finest way possible for such things. But as for the ratio of night to day, of days to a month, of a month to a year, or of the motions of the stars to any of them or to each other, don't you think he'll consider it strange to believe that they're always the same and never deviate anywhere at all or to try in any sort of way to grasp the truth about them, since they're connected to body and visible?

That's my opinion anyway, now that I hear it from you.

Then if, by really taking part in astronomy, we're to make the naturally intelligent part of the soul useful instead of useless, let's study astronomy by means of problems, as we do geometry, and leave the things in the sky alone.

The task you're prescribing is a lot harder than anything now attempted in astronomy.

And I suppose that, if we are to be of any benefit as lawgivers, our prescriptions for the other subjects will be of the same kind. But have you any other appropriate subject to suggest?

Not offhand.

Well, there isn't just one form of motion but several. Perhaps a wise person could list them all, but there are two that are evident even to us.

What are they?

Besides the one we've discussed, there is also its counterpart.

What's that?

It's likely that, as the eyes fasten on astronomical motions, so the ears fasten on harmonic ones, and that the sciences of astronomy and harmonics are closely akin. This is what the Pythagoreans say, Glaucon, and we agree, don't we?

We do.

Therefore, since the subject is so huge, shouldn't we ask them what they have to say about harmonic motions and whether there is anything else besides them, all the while keeping our own goal squarely in view?

What's that?

That those whom we are rearing should never try to learn anything incomplete, anything that doesn't reach the end that everything should reach—the end we mentioned just now in the case of astronomy. Or don't you know that people do something similar in harmonics? Measuring audible consonances and sounds against one another, they labor in vain, just like present-day astronomers.

Yes, by the gods, and pretty ridiculous they are too. They talk about something they call a "dense interval" or quartertone—putting their ears to their instruments like someone trying to overhear what the neighbors are saying. And some say that they hear a tone in between and that it is the shortest interval by which they must measure, while others argue that this tone sounds the same as a quarter tone. Both put ears before understanding.

You mean those excellent fellows who torment their strings, torturing them, and stretching them on pegs. I won't draw out the analogy by speaking of blows with the plectrum or the accusations or denials and boastings on the part of the strings; instead I'll cut it short by saying that these aren't the people I'm talking about. The ones I mean are the ones we just said we were going to question about harmonics, for they do the same as the astronomers. They seek out the numbers that are to be found in these audible consonances, but they do not make the ascent to problems. They don't investigate, for example, which numbers are consonant and which aren't or what the explanation is of each.

But that would be a superhuman task.

Yet it's useful in the search for the beautiful and the good. But pursued for any other purpose, it's useless.

Probably so.

Moreover, I take it that, if inquiry into all the subjects we've mentioned brings out their association and relationship with one another and draws conclusions about their kinship, it does contribute something to our goal and isn't labor in vain, but that otherwise it is in vain.

I, too, divine that this is true. But you're still talking about a very big task, Socrates.

Do you mean the prelude, or what? Or don't you know that all these subjects are merely preludes to the song itself that must also be learned? Surely you don't think that people who are clever in these matters are dialecticians.

No, by god, I don't. Although I have met a few exceptions.

But did it ever seem to you that those who can neither give nor follow an account know anything at all of the things we say they must know?

My answer to that is also no.

Then isn't this at last, Glaucon, the song that dialectic sings? It is intelligible, but it is imitated by the power of sight. We said that sight tries at last to look at the animals themselves, the stars themselves, and, in the end, at the sun itself. In the same way, whenever someone tries through

argument and apart from all sense perceptions to find the being itself of each thing and doesn't give up until he grasps the good itself with understanding itself, he reaches the end of the intelligible, just as the other reached the end of the visible.

Absolutely.

And what about this journey? Don't you call it dialectic?

I do.

Then the release from bonds and the turning around from shadows to statues and the light of the fire and, then, the way up out of the cave to the sunlight and, there, the continuing inability to look at the animals, the plants, and the light of the sun, but the newly acquired ability to look at divine images in water and shadows of the things that are, rather than, as before, merely at shadows of statues thrown by another source of light that is itself a shadow in relation to the sun—all this business of the crafts we've mentioned has the power to awaken the best part of the soul and lead it upward to the study of the best among the things that are, just as, before, the clearest thing in the body was led to the brightest thing in the bodily and visible realm.

I accept that this is so, even though it seems very hard to accept in one way and hard not to accept in another. All the same, since we'll have to return to these things often in the future, rather than having to hear them just once now, let's assume that what you've said is so and turn to the song itself, discussing it in the same way as we did the prelude. So tell us: what is the sort of power dialectic has, what forms is it divided into, and what paths does it follow? For these lead at last, it seems, towards that place which is a rest from the road, so to speak, and an end of journeying for the one who reaches it.

You won't be able to follow me any longer, Glaucon, even though there is no lack of eagerness on my part to lead you, for you would no longer be seeing an image of what we're describing, but the truth itself. At any rate, that's how it seems to me. That it is really so is not worth insisting on any further. But that there is some such thing to be seen, *that* is something we must insist on. Isn't that so?

Of course.

And mustn't we also insist that the power of dialectic could reveal it only to someone experienced in the subjects we've described and that it cannot reveal it in any other way?

That too is worth insisting on.

At any rate, no one will dispute it when we say that there is no other inquiry that systematically attempts to grasp with respect to each thing itself what the being of it is, for all the other crafts are concerned with human opinions and desires, with growing or construction, or with the care of growing or constructed things. And as for the rest, I mean geometry and the subjects that follow it, we described them as to some extent grasping what is, for we saw that, while they do dream about what is, they are unable to command a waking view of it as long as they make use of

hypotheses that they leave untouched and that they cannot give any account of. What mechanism could possibly turn any agreement into knowledge when it begins with something unknown and puts together the conclusion and the steps in between from what is unknown?

None.

Therefore, dialectic is the only inquiry that travels this road, doing away with hypotheses and proceeding to the first principle itself, so as to be secure. And when the eye of the soul is really buried in a sort of barbaric bog, dialectic gently pulls it out and leads it upwards, using the crafts we described to help it and cooperate with it in turning the soul around. From force of habit, we've often called these crafts sciences or kinds of knowledge, but they need another name, clearer than opinion, darker than knowledge. We called them thought somewhere before.⁵ But I presume that we won't dispute about a name when we have so many more important matters to investigate.

Of course not.

It will therefore be enough to call the first section knowledge, the second thought, the third belief, and the fourth imaging, just as we did before.

The last two together we call opinion, the other two, intellect. Opinion is concerned with becoming, intellect with being. And as being is to becoming, so intellect is to opinion, and as intellect is to opinion, so knowledge is to belief and thought to imaging. But as for the ratios between the things these are set over and the division of either the opinable or the intelligible section into two, let's pass them by, Glaucon, lest they involve us in arguments many times longer than the ones we've already gone through.

I agree with you about the others in any case, insofar as I'm able to follow.

Then, do you call someone who is able to give an account of the being of each thing dialectical? But insofar as he's unable to give an account of something, either to himself or to another, do you deny that he has any understanding of it?

How could I do anything else?

Then the same applies to the good. Unless someone can distinguish in an account the form of the good from everything else, can survive all refutation, as if in a battle, striving to judge things not in accordance with opinion but in accordance with being, and can come through all this with his account still intact, you'll say that he doesn't know the good itself or any other good. And if he gets hold of some image of it, you'll say that it's through opinion, not knowledge, for he is dreaming and asleep throughout his present life, and, before he wakes up here, he will arrive in Hades and go to sleep forever.

Yes, by god, I'll certainly say all of that.

Then, as for those children of yours whom you're rearing and educating in theory, if you ever reared them in fact, I don't think that you'd allow

5. See 511d–e.

them to rule in your city or be responsible for the most important things while they are as irrational as incommensurable lines.

Certainly not.

Then you'll legislate that they are to give most attention to the education that will enable them to ask and answer questions most knowledgeably?

I'll legislate it along with you.

Then do you think that we've placed dialectic at the top of the other subjects like a coping stone and that no other subject can rightly be placed above it, but that our account of the subjects that a future ruler must learn has come to an end?

Probably so.

Then it remains for you to deal with the distribution of these subjects, with the question of to whom we'll assign them and in what way.

That's clearly next.

Do you remember what sort of people we chose in our earlier selection of rulers?⁶

Of course I do.

In the other respects, the same natures have to be chosen: we have to select the most stable, the most courageous, and as far as possible the most graceful. In addition, we must look not only for people who have a noble and tough character but for those who have the natural qualities conducive to this education of ours.

Which ones exactly?

They must be keen on the subjects and learn them easily, for people's souls give up much more easily in hard study than in physical training, since the pain—being peculiar to them and not shared with their body—is more their own.

That's true.

We must also look for someone who has got a good memory, is persistent, and is in every way a lover of hard work. How else do you think he'd be willing to carry out both the requisite bodily labors and also complete so much study and practice?

Nobody would, unless his nature was in every way a good one.

In any case, the present error, which as we said before explains why philosophy isn't valued, is that she's taken up by people who are unworthy of her, for illegitimate students shouldn't be allowed to take her up, but only legitimate ones.

How so?

In the first place, no student should be lame in his love of hard work, really loving one half of it, and hating the other half. This happens when someone is a lover of physical training, hunting, or any kind of bodily labor and isn't a lover of learning, listening, or inquiry, but hates the work involved in them. And someone whose love of hard work tends in the opposite direction is also lame.

That's very true.

Similarly with regard to truth, won't we say that a soul is maimed if it hates a voluntary falsehood, cannot endure to have one in itself, and is greatly angered when it exists in others, but is nonetheless content to accept an involuntary falsehood, isn't angry when it is caught being ignorant, and bears its lack of learning easily, wallowing in it like a pig?

Absolutely.

And with regard to moderation, courage, high-mindedness, and all the other parts of virtue, it is also important to distinguish the illegitimate from the legitimate, for when either a city or an individual doesn't know how to do this, it unwittingly employs the lame and illegitimate as friends or rulers for whatever services it wants done.

That's just how it is.

So we must be careful in all these matters, for if we bring people who are sound of limb and mind to so great a subject and training, and educate them in it, even justice itself won't blame us, and we'll save the city and its constitution. But if we bring people of a different sort, we'll do the opposite, and let loose an even greater flood of ridicule upon philosophy.

And it would be shameful to do that.

It certainly would. But I seem to have done something a bit ridiculous myself just now.

What's that?

I forgot that we were only playing, and so I spoke too vehemently. But I looked upon philosophy as I spoke, and seeing her undeservedly besmirched, I seem to have lost my temper and said what I had to say too earnestly, as if I were angry with those responsible for it.

That certainly wasn't my impression as I listened to you.

But it was mine as I was speaking. In any case, let's not forget that in our earlier selection we chose older people but that that isn't permitted in this one, for we mustn't believe Solon⁷ when he says that as someone grows older he's able to learn a lot. He can do that even less well than he can run races, for all great and numerous labors belong to the young.

Necessarily.

Therefore, calculation, geometry, and all the preliminary education required for dialectic must be offered to the future rulers in childhood, and not in the shape of compulsory learning either.

Why's that?

Because no free person should learn anything like a slave. Forced bodily labor does no harm to the body, but nothing taught by force stays in the soul.

That's true.

Then don't use force to train the children in these subjects; use play instead. That way you'll also see better what each of them is naturally fitted for.

6. See 412b ff.

7. Athenian statesman, lawgiver, and poet (c. 640–560).

That seems reasonable.

Do you remember that we stated that the children were to be led into war on horseback as observers and that, wherever it is safe to do so, they should be brought close and taste blood, like puppies?

I remember.

In all these things—in labors, studies, and fears—the ones who always show the greatest aptitude are to be inscribed on a list.

b At what age?

When they're released from compulsory physical training, for during that period, whether it's two or three years, young people are incapable of doing anything else, since weariness and sleep are enemies of learning. At the same time, how they fare in this physical training is itself an important test.

Of course it is.

c And after that, that is to say, from the age of twenty, those who are chosen will also receive more honors than the others. Moreover, the subjects they learned in no particular order as children they must now bring together to form a unified vision of their kinship both with one another and with the nature of that which is.

At any rate, only learning of that sort holds firm in those who receive it.

It is also the greatest test of who is naturally dialectical and who isn't, for anyone who can achieve a unified vision is dialectical, and anyone who can't isn't.

I agree.

d Well, then, you'll have to look out for the ones who most of all have this ability in them and who also remain steadfast in their studies, in war, and in the other activities laid down by law. And after they have reached their thirtieth year, you'll select them in turn from among those chosen earlier and assign them yet greater honors. Then you'll have to test them by means of the power of dialectic, to discover which of them can relinquish his eyes and other senses, going on with the help of truth to that which by itself is. And this is a task that requires great care.

What's the main reason for that?

e Don't you realize what a great evil comes from dialectic as it is currently practiced?

What evil is that?

Those who practice it are filled with lawlessness.

They certainly are.

Do you think it's surprising that this happens to them? Aren't you sympathetic?

Why isn't it surprising? And why should I be sympathetic?

538 Because it's like the case of a child brought up surrounded by much wealth and many flatterers in a great and numerous family, who finds out, when he has become a man, that he isn't the child of his professed parents and that he can't discover his real ones. Can you divine what the

attitude of someone like that would be to the flatterers, on the one hand, and to his supposed parents, on the other, before he knew about his parentage, and what it would be when he found out? Or would you rather hear what I divine about it?

I'd rather hear your views.

b Well, then, I divine that during the time that he didn't know the truth, he'd honor his father, mother, and the rest of his supposed family more than he would the flatterers, that he'd pay greater attention to their needs, be less likely to treat them lawlessly in word or deed, and be more likely to obey them than the flatterers in any matters of importance.

Probably so.

c When he became aware of the truth, however, his honor and enthusiasm would lessen for his family and increase for the flatterers, he'd obey the latter far more than before, begin to live in the way that they did, and keep company with them openly, and, unless he was very decent by nature, he'd eventually care nothing for that father of his or any of the rest of his supposed family.

All this would probably happen as you say, but in what way is it an image of those who take up arguments?

As follows. We hold from childhood certain convictions about just and fine things; we're brought up with them as with our parents, we obey and honor them.

Indeed, we do.

d There are other ways of living, however, opposite to these and full of pleasures, that flatter the soul and attract it to themselves but which don't persuade sensible people, who continue to honor and obey the convictions of their fathers.

That's right.

e And then a questioner comes along and asks someone of this sort, "What is the fine?" And, when he answers what he has heard from the traditional lawgiver, the argument refutes him, and by refuting him often and in many places shakes him from his convictions, and makes him believe that the fine is no more fine than shameful, and the same with the just, the good, and the things he honored most. What do you think his attitude will be then to honoring and obeying his earlier convictions?

Of necessity he won't honor or obey them in the same way.

Then, when he no longer honors and obeys those convictions and can't discover the true ones, will he be likely to adopt any other way of life than that which flatters him?

No, he won't.

And so, I suppose, from being law-abiding he becomes lawless.

Inevitably.

Then, as I asked before, isn't it only to be expected that this is what happens to those who take up arguments in this way, and don't they therefore deserve a lot of sympathy?

Yes, and they deserve pity too.

Then, if you don't want your thirty-year-olds to be objects of such pity, you'll have to be extremely careful about how you introduce them to arguments.

That's right.

And isn't it one lasting precaution not to let them taste arguments while they're young? I don't suppose that it has escaped your notice that, when young people get their first taste of arguments, they misuse it by treating it as a kind of game of contradiction. They imitate those who've refuted them by refuting others themselves, and, like puppies, they enjoy dragging and tearing those around them with their arguments.

They're excessively fond of it.

Then, when they've refuted many and been refuted by them in turn, they forcefully and quickly fall into disbelieving what they believed before. And, as a result, they themselves and the whole of philosophy are discredited in the eyes of others.

That's very true.

But an older person won't want to take part in such madness. He'll imitate someone who is willing to engage in discussion in order to look for the truth, rather than someone who plays at contradiction for sport. He'll be more sensible himself and will bring honor rather than discredit to the philosophical way of life.

That's right.

And when we said before that those allowed to take part in arguments should be orderly and steady by nature, not as nowadays, when even the unfit are allowed to engage in them—wasn't all that also said as a precaution?

Of course.

Then if someone continuously, strenuously, and exclusively devotes himself to participation in arguments, exercising himself in them just as he did in the bodily physical training, which is their counterpart, would that be enough?

Do you mean six years or four?

It doesn't matter. Make it five. And after that, you must make them go down into the cave again, and compel them to take command in matters of war and occupy the other offices suitable for young people, so that they won't be inferior to the others in experience. But in these, too, they must be tested to see whether they'll remain steadfast when they're pulled this way and that or shift their ground.

How much time do you allow for that?

Fifteen years. Then, at the age of fifty, those who've survived the tests and been successful both in practical matters and in the sciences must be led to the goal and compelled to lift up the radiant light of their souls to what itself provides light for everything. And once they've seen the good itself, they must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in order, using it as their model. Each of them will spend most of his time

with philosophy, but, when his turn comes, he must labor in politics and rule for the city's sake, not as if he were doing something fine, but rather something that has to be done. Then, having educated others like himself to take his place as guardians of the city, he will depart for the Isles of the Blessed and dwell there. And, if the Pythia agrees, the city will publicly establish memorials and sacrifices to him as a daemon, but if not, then as a happy and divine human being.

Like a sculptor, Socrates, you've produced ruling men that are completely fine.

And ruling women, too, Glaucon, for you mustn't think that what I've said applies any more to men than it does to women who are born with the appropriate natures.

That's right, if indeed they are to share everything equally with the men, as we said they should.

Then, do you agree that the things we've said about the city and its constitution aren't altogether wishful thinking, that it's hard for them to come about, but not impossible? And do you also agree that they can come about only in the way we indicated, namely, when one or more true philosophers come to power in a city, who despise present honors, thinking them slavish and worthless, and who prize what is right and the honors that come from it above everything, and regard justice as the most important and most essential thing, serving it and increasing it as they set their city in order?

How will they do that?

They'll send everyone in the city who is over ten years old into the country. Then they'll take possession of the children, who are now free from the ethos of their parents, and bring them up in their own customs and laws, which are the ones we've described. This is the quickest and easiest way for the city and constitution we've discussed to be established, become happy, and bring most benefit to the people among whom it's established.

That's by far the quickest and easiest way. And in my opinion, Socrates, you've described well how it would come into being, if it ever did.

Then, isn't that enough about this city and the man who is like it? Surely it is clear what sort of man we'll say he has to be.

It is clear, he said. And as for your question, I think that we have reached the end of this topic.

FIRST MEDITATION

17

of those things that may be called into doubt

It is some years now since I realized how many false opinions I had accepted as true from childhood onwards,* and that, whatever I had since built on such shaky foundations, could only be highly doubtful. Hence I saw that at some stage in my life the whole structure would have to be utterly demolished, and that I should have to begin again from the bottom up if I wished to construct something lasting and unshakeable in the sciences. But this seemed to be a massive task, and so I postponed it until I had reached the age when one is as fit as one will ever be to master the various disciplines. Hence I have delayed so long that now I should be at fault if I used up in deliberating the time that is left for acting. The moment has come, and so today I have discharged my mind from all its cares, and have carved out a space of 18 untroubled leisure. I have withdrawn into seclusion and shall at last be able to devote myself seriously and without encumbrance to the task of destroying all my former opinions.

To this end, however, it will not be necessary to prove them all false—a thing I should perhaps never be able to achieve. But since reason already persuades me that I should no less scrupulously withhold my assent from what is not fully certain and indubitable than from what is blatantly false, then, in order to reject them all, it will be sufficient to find some reason for doubting each one. Nor shall I therefore have to go through them each individually, which would be an endless task: but since, once the foundations are undermined, the building will collapse of its own accord, I shall straight away attack the very principles that form the basis of all my former beliefs.

Certainly, up to now whatever I have accepted as fully true I have learned either from or by means of the senses: but I have discovered that they sometimes deceive us, and prudence dictates that we should never fully trust those who have deceived us even once.

But perhaps, although they sometimes deceive us about things that are little, or rather a long way away, there are plenty of other things of which there is clearly no doubt, although it was from the senses that we learned them: for instance, that I am now here, sitting by the fire, wrapped in a warm winter gown, handling this paper,

and suchlike. Indeed, that these hands themselves, and this whole body are mine—what reason could there be for doubting this? Unless perhaps I were to compare myself to one of those madmen, whose little brains have been so befuddled by a pestilential vapour arising from the black bile,* that they swear blind that they are kings, though they are beggars, or that they are clad in purple, when they are naked, or that their head is made of clay, or that their whole body is a jug, or made entirely of glass. But they are lunatics, and I should seem no less of a madman myself if I should follow their example in any way.

19

This is all very well, to be sure. But am I not a human being, and therefore in the habit of sleeping at night, when in my dreams I have all the same experiences as these madmen do when they are awake—or sometimes even stranger ones? How often my sleep at night has convinced me of all these familiar things—that I was here, wrapped in my gown, sitting by the fire—when in fact I was lying naked under the bedclothes.—All the same, I am now perceiving this paper with eyes that are certainly awake; the head I am nodding is not drowsy; I stretch out my hand and feel it knowingly and deliberately; a sleeper would not have these experiences so distinctly.—But have I then forgotten those other occasions on which I have been deceived by similar thoughts in my dreams? When I think this over more carefully I see so clearly that waking can never be distinguished from sleep by any conclusive indications that I am stupefied; and this very stupor comes close to persuading me that I am asleep after all.

Let us then suppose* that we are dreaming, and that these particular things (that we have our eyes open, are moving our head, stretching out our hands) are not true; and that perhaps we do not even have hands or the rest of a body like what we see. It must nonetheless be admitted that the things we see in sleep are, so to speak, painted images, which could not be formed except on the basis of a resemblance with real things; and that for this reason these general things at least (such as eyes, head, hands, and the rest of the body) are not imaginary things, but real and existing. For the fact is that when painters desire to represent sirens and little satyrs with utterly unfamiliar shapes, they cannot devise altogether new natures for them, but simply combine parts from different animals; or if perhaps they do think up something so new that nothing at all like it has ever been seen, which is thus altogether fictitious and false, it is certain that at

20

least the colours which they combine to form images must be real. By the same token, even though these general things—eyes, head, hands, and so forth—might be imaginary, it must necessarily be admitted that at least some other still more simple and universal realities must exist, from which (as the painter's image is produced from real colours) all these images of things— be they true or false— that occur in our thoughts are produced.

In this category it seems we should include bodily nature in general, and its extension; likewise the shape of extended things and their quantity (magnitude and number); likewise the place in which they exist, the time during which they exist, and suchlike.

From all this, perhaps, we may safely conclude that physics, astronomy, medicine, and all the other disciplines which involve the study of composite things are indeed doubtful; but that arithmetic, geometry, and other disciplines of the same kind, which deal only with the very simplest and most general things, and care little whether they exist in nature or not, contain something certain and indubitable. For whether I am waking or sleeping, two plus three equals five, and a square has no more than four sides; nor does it seem possible that such obvious truths could be affected by any suspicion that they are false.

However, there is a certain opinion long fixed in my mind, that 21 there is a God who is all-powerful, and by whom I was created such as I am now. Now how do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth at all, no heavens, no extended things, no shape, no magnitude, no place—and yet that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now? Or even—just as I judge now and again that other people are mistaken about things they believe they know with the greatest certitude—that I too should be similarly deceived whenever I add two and three, or count the sides of a square, or make a judgement about something even simpler, if anything simpler can be imagined?

But perhaps God has not willed that I should be so cheated, for he is said to be supremely good.—But if it were incompatible with his goodness to have created me such that I am perpetually deceived, it would seem equally inconsistent with that quality to permit me to be sometimes deceived. Nonetheless, I cannot doubt that he does permit it.

Perhaps, indeed, there might be some people who would prefer to deny the existence of any God so powerful, rather than believing that all other things are uncertain. But let us not quarrel with them, and

let us grant that all this we have said of God is only a fiction; and let them suppose that it is by fate or chance or a continuous sequence of things that I have come to be what I am. Since, though, to be deceived and to err appear to be some kind of imperfection, the less powerful the source they invoke to explain my being, the more probable it will be that I am so imperfect that I am perpetually deceived. To all these arguments, indeed, I have no answer, but at length I am forced to admit that there is nothing of all those things I once thought true, of which it is not legitimate to doubt—and not out of any thoughtlessness or irresponsibility, but for sound and well-weighed reasons; and therefore that, from these things as well, no less than from what is blatantly false, I must now carefully withhold 22 my assent if I wish to discover any thing that is certain.*

But it is not enough to have realized all this, I must take care to remember it: for my accustomed opinions continually creep back into my mind, and take possession of my belief, which has, so to speak, been enslaved to them by long experience and familiarity, for the most part against my will. Nor shall I ever break the habit of assenting to them and relying on them, as long as I go on supposing them to be such as they are in truth, that is to say, doubtful indeed in some respect, as has been shown just now, and yet nonetheless highly probable, so that it is much more rational to believe than to deny them. Hence, it seems to me, I shall not be acting unwisely if, willing myself to believe the contrary, I deceive myself, and make believe, for some considerable time, that they are altogether false and imaginary, until, once the prior judgements on each side have been evenly balanced in the scales, no evil custom can any longer twist my judgement away from the correct perception of things. For I know for sure that no danger or error will ensue as a result of this, and that there is no risk that I shall be giving too free a rein to my distrustfulness, since my concern at the moment is not with action but only with the attainment of knowledge.*

I will therefore suppose that, not God, who is perfectly good and the source of truth, but some evil spirit, supremely powerful and cunning, has devoted all his efforts to deceiving me.* I will think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds, and all external things are no different from the illusions of our dreams, and that they are traps he has laid for my credulity; I will consider myself as having 23 no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, and no senses, but yet as falsely

believing that I have all these;* I will obstinately cling to these thoughts, and in this way, if indeed it is not in my power to discover any truth,* yet certainly to the best of my ability and determination I will take care not to give my assent to anything false, or to allow this deceiver, however powerful and cunning he may be, to impose upon me in any way.

But to carry out this plan requires great effort, and there is a kind of indolence that drags me back to my customary way of life. Just as a prisoner, who was perhaps enjoying an imaginary freedom in his dreams, when he then begins to suspect that he is asleep is afraid of being woken up, and lets himself sink back into his soothing illusions; so I of my own accord slip back into my former opinions, and am scared to awake, for fear that tranquil sleep will give way to laborious hours of waking, which from now on I shall have to spend not in any kind of light, but in the unrelenting darkness of the difficulties just stirred up.

SECOND MEDITATION

of the nature of the human mind; that it is more easily known than the body

Yesterday's meditation has plunged me into so many doubts that I still cannot put them out of my mind, nor, on the other hand, can I see any way to resolve them; but, as if I had suddenly slipped into a deep whirlpool, I am in such difficulties that I can neither touch bottom with my foot nor swim back to the surface. Yet I will struggle on, and I will try the same path again as the one I set out on yesterday, that is to say, eliminating everything in which there is the smallest element of doubt, exactly as if I had found it to be false through and through; and I shall pursue my way until I discover something certain; or, failing that, discover that it is certain only that nothing is certain. Archimedes* claimed, that if only he had a point that was firm and immovable, he would move the whole earth; and great things are likewise to be hoped, if I can find just one little thing that is certain and unshakeable.

I therefore suppose that all I see is false; I believe that none of those things represented by my deceitful memory has ever existed; in fact I have no senses at all; body, shape, extension in space, motion,

and place itself are all illusions. What truth then is left? Perhaps this alone, that nothing is certain.

But how do I know that there is not something different from all those things I have just listed, about which there is not the slightest room for doubt? Is there not, after all, some God, or whatever he should be called, that puts these thoughts into my mind? But why should I think that, when perhaps I myself could be the source of these thoughts? But am I at least not something, after all? But I have already denied that I have any senses or any body. Now I am at a loss, because what follows from this? Am I so bound up with my body 25 and senses that I cannot exist without them? But I convinced myself that there was nothing at all in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Did I therefore not also convince myself that I did not exist either? No: certainly I did exist, if I convinced myself of something.— But there is some deceiver or other, supremely powerful and cunning, who is deliberately deceiving me all the time.— Beyond doubt then, I also exist, if he is deceiving me; and he can deceive me all he likes, but he will never bring it about that I should be nothing as long as I think I am something. So that, having weighed all these considerations sufficiently and more than sufficiently, I can finally decide* that this proposition, 'I am, I exist', whenever it is uttered by me, or conceived in the mind, is necessarily true.

But indeed I do not yet sufficiently understand what in fact this 'I' is that now necessarily exists;* so that from now on I must take care in case I should happen imprudently to take something else to be me that is not me, and thus go astray in the very knowledge [*cognitione*] that I claim to be the most certain and evident of all. Hence I shall now meditate afresh on what I once believed myself to be, before I fell into this train of thought. From this I shall then subtract whatever it has been possible to cast doubt on, even in the slightest degree, by the reasons put forward above, so that in the end there shall remain exactly and only that which is certain and unshakeable.

So what in fact did I think I was before all this? A human being, of course. But what is a human being? Shall I say, 'a rational animal'?* No, for then I should have to examine what exactly an animal is, and what 'rational' is, and hence, starting with one question, I should stumble into more and more difficult ones. Nor do I now have so much leisure that I can afford to fritter it away on subtleties of this kind. But here I shall rather direct my attention to the thoughts that

spontaneously and by nature's prompting came to my mind before-
26 hand, whenever I considered what I was. The first was that I have a face, hands, arms, and this whole mechanism of limbs, such as we see even in corpses; this I referred to as the body. Next, that I took nourishment, moved, perceived with my senses, and thought: these actions indeed I attributed to the soul.* What this soul was, however, either I never considered, or I imagined it as something very rarefied and subtle, like a wind, or fire, or thin air, infused into my coarser parts. But about the body itself, on the other hand, I had no doubts, but I thought I distinctly knew its nature, which, if I had attempted to describe how I conceived it in my mind, I would have explained as follows: by body I mean everything that is capable of being bounded by some shape, of existing in a definite place, of filling a space in such a way as to exclude the presence of any other body within it; of being perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste, or smell, and also of being moved in various ways, not indeed by itself, but by some other thing by which it is touched; for to have the power of moving itself, and also of perceiving by the senses or thinking, I judged could in no way belong to the nature of body; rather, I was puzzled by the fact that such capacities were found in certain bodies.

But what about now, when I am supposing that some deceiver, who is supremely powerful and, if I may venture to say so, evil, has been exerting all his efforts to delude me in every way? Can I affirm that I possess the slightest thing of all those that I have just said belong to the nature of body? I consider, I think, I go over it all in my
27 mind: nothing comes up. It would be a waste of effort to go through the list again. But what about the attributes I used to ascribe to the soul? What about taking nourishment or moving? But since I now have no body, these also are nothing but illusions. What about sense-perception? But certainly this does not take place without a body, and I have seemed to perceive very many things when asleep that I later realized I had not perceived. What about thinking? Here I do find something: it is thought; this alone cannot be stripped from me. I am, I exist, this is certain. But for how long? Certainly only for as long as I am thinking; for perhaps if I were to cease from all thinking it might also come to pass that I might immediately cease altogether to exist. I am now admitting nothing except what is necessarily true: I am therefore, speaking precisely, only a thinking thing, that is, a mind, or a soul, or an intellect, or a reason—words the meaning of

which was previously unknown to me. I am therefore a true thing, and one that truly exists; but what kind of thing? I have said it already: one that thinks.

What comes next? I will imagine: I am not that framework of limbs that is called a human body; I am not some thin air infused into these limbs, or a wind, or a fire, or a vapour, or a breath, or whatever I can picture myself as: for I have supposed that these things do not exist. But even if I keep to this supposition, nonetheless I am still something.*—But all the same, it is perhaps still the case that these very things I am supposing to be nothing, are nevertheless not distinct from this 'me' that I know* [*novi*].—Perhaps: I don't know. But this is not the point at issue at present. I can pass judgement only on those things that are known to me. I know [*novi*] that I exist; I am trying to find out what this 'I' is, whom I know [*novi*]. It is absolutely certain that this knowledge [*notitia*], in the precise sense in question here, does not depend on things of which I do not yet know [*novi*] 28 whether they exist; and therefore it depends on none of those things I picture in my imagination. This very word 'imagination' shows where I am going wrong. For I should certainly be 'imagining things' if I *imagined* myself to be anything, since imagining is nothing other than contemplating the shape or image of a bodily thing. Now, however, I know [*scio*] for certain that I exist; and that, at the same time, it could be the case that all these images, and in general everything that pertains to the nature of body, are nothing but illusions. Now this is clear to me, it would seem as foolish of me to say: 'I shall use my imagination, in order to recognize more clearly what I am', as it would be to say: 'Now I am awake, and I see something true; but because I cannot yet see it clearly enough, I shall do my best to get back to sleep again so that my dreams can show it to me more truly and more clearly.' And so I realize [*cognosco*] that nothing that I can grasp by means of the imagination has to do with this knowledge [*notitiam*] I have of myself, and that I need to withdraw my mind from such things as thoroughly as possible, if it is to perceive its own nature as distinctly as possible.

But what therefore am I? A thinking thing. What is that? I mean a thing that doubts, that understands, that affirms, that denies, that wishes to do this and does not wish to do that, and also that imagines and perceives by the senses.

Well, indeed, there is quite a lot there, if all these things really do belong to me. But why should they not belong to me? Is it not me who currently doubts virtually everything, who nonetheless understands something, who affirms this alone to be true, and denies the rest, who wishes to know more, and wishes not to be deceived, who imagines many things, even against his will, and is aware of many things that appear to come via the senses? Is there any of these things 29 that is not equally true as the fact that I exist— even if I am always asleep, and even if my creator is deceiving me to the best of his ability? Is there any of them that can be distinguished from my thinking?

Is there any that can be said to be separate from me? For that it is I that am doubting, understanding, wishing, is so obvious that nothing further is needed in order to explain it more clearly. But indeed it is also this same I that is imagining; for although it might be the case, as I have been supposing, that none of these imagined things is true, yet the actual power of imagining certainly does exist, and is part of my thinking. And finally it is the same I that perceives by means of the senses, or who is aware of corporeal things as if by means of the senses: for example, I am seeing a light, hearing a noise, feeling heat.— But these things are false, since I am asleep!— But certainly I *seem* to be seeing, hearing, getting hot. This cannot be false. This is what is properly meant by speaking of myself as having sensations; and, understood in this precise sense, it is nothing other than thinking.

From all of this, I am indeed beginning to know [*nosse*] rather better what I in fact am. But it still seems (and I cannot help thinking this) that the bodily things of which the images are formed in our thought, and which the senses themselves investigate, are much more distinctly recognized than that part of myself, whatever it is, that cannot be represented by the imagination. Although, indeed, it is strange that things that I realize are doubtful, unknown, unrelated to me should be more distinctly grasped by me than what is true and what is known— more distinctly grasped even than myself. But I see what is happening. My mind enjoys wandering off the track, and will not yet allow itself to be confined within the boundaries of truth. Very well, then: let us, once again, slacken its reins as far as possible— 30 then, before too long, a tug on them at the right moment will bring it more easily back to obedience.*

Let us consider those things which are commonly thought to be more distinctly grasped than anything else: I mean the bodies we

touch and see; but not bodies in general, for these general perceptions are usually considerably more confused, but one body in particular. Let us, for example, take this wax: it has only just been removed from the honeycomb; it has not yet lost all the flavour of its honey; it retains some of the scent of the flowers among which it was gathered; its colour, shape, and size are clearly visible; it is hard, cold, easy to touch, and if you tap it with your knuckle, it makes a sound. In short, it has all the properties that seem to be required for a given body to be known as distinctly as possible. But wait— while I am speaking, it is brought close to the fire. The remains of its flavour evaporate; the smell fades; the colour is changed, the shape is taken away, it grows in size, becomes liquid, becomes warm, it can hardly be touched, and now, if you strike it, it will give off no sound. Does the same wax still remain? We must admit it does remain: no one would say or think it does not. So what was there in it that was so distinctly grasped? Certainly, none of those qualities I apprehended by the senses: for whatever came under taste, or smell, or sight, or touch, or hearing, has now changed: but the wax remains.

Perhaps the truth of the matter was what I now think it is: namely, that the wax itself was not in fact this sweetness of the honey, or the fragrance of the flowers, or the whiteness, shape, or sonority, but the body which not long ago appeared to me as perceptible in these modes,* but now appears in others. But what exactly is this that I am imagining in this way? Let us consider the matter, and, thinking 31 away those things that do not belong to the wax, let us see what remains. Something extended, flexible, mutable: certainly, that is all. But in what do this flexibility and mutability consist? Is it in the fact that I can imagine this wax being changed in shape, from a circle to a square, and from a square into a triangle? That cannot be right: for I understand that it is capable of innumerable changes of this sort, yet I cannot keep track of all these by using my imagination. Therefore my understanding of these properties is not achieved by using the faculty of imagination. What about 'extended'? Surely I know something about the nature of its extension. For it is greater when the wax is melting, greater still when it is boiling, and greater still when the heat is further increased. And I would not be correctly judging what the wax is if I failed to see that it is capable of receiving more varieties, as regards extension, than I have ever grasped in my imagination. So I am left with no alternative, but to accept that I am

not at all *imagining* what this wax is, I am perceiving it with my mind alone: I say 'this wax' in particular, for the point is even clearer about wax in general. So then, what is this wax, which is only perceived by the mind? Certainly it is the same wax I see, touch, and imagine, and in short it is the same wax I judged it to be from the beginning. But yet—and this is important—the perception of it is not sight, touch, or imagination, and never was, although it seemed to be so at first: it is an inspection by the mind alone, which can be either imperfect and confused, as it was before in this case, or clear and distinct, as it now is, depending on the greater or lesser degree of attention I pay to what it consists of.

But in the meantime I am amazed by the proneness of my mind to error. For although I am considering all this in myself silently and without speech, yet I am still ensnared by words themselves, and all 32 but deceived by the very ways in which we usually put things.

For we say that we 'see' the wax itself, if it is present, not that we judge it to be there on the basis of its colour or shape. From this I would have immediately concluded that I therefore knew the wax by the sight of my eyes, not by the inspection of the mind alone—if I had not happened to glance out of the window at people walking along the street. Using the customary expression, I say that I 'see' them, just as I 'see' the wax. But what do I actually see other than hats and coats, which could be covering automata? But I judge that they are people. And therefore what I thought I saw with my eyes, I in fact grasp only by the faculty of judging that is in my mind.

But one who desires to know more than the common herd might be ashamed to have gone to the speech of the common herd to find a reason for doubting. Let us then go on where we left off by considering whether I perceived more perfectly and more evidently what the wax was, when I first encountered it, and believed that I knew [*cognoscere*] it by these external senses, or at least by what they call the 'common sense',* that is, the imaginative power; or whether I perceive it better now, after I have more carefully investigated both what it is and how it is known [*cognoscatur*]. Certainly it would be foolish to doubt that I have a much better grasp of it now. For what, if anything, was distinct in my original perception? What was there, if anything, that seemed to go beyond the perception of the lowest animals? But on the other hand, when I distinguish the wax from its external forms, and, as if I had stripped off its garments, consider it in all its

nakedness, then, indeed, although there may still be error in my judgments, I cannot perceive it in this way except by the human mind. But what, then, shall I say about this mind, or about myself? For I do not yet accept that there is anything in me but a mind. What, I say, am I who seem to perceive this wax so distinctly? Do I not know [*cognosco*] myself not only much more truly, much more certainly, but also much more distinctly and evidently than the wax? For, if I judge that the wax exists, for the reason that I see it, it is certainly much more evident that I myself also exist, from the very fact that I am seeing it. For it could be the case that what I am seeing is not really wax; it could be the case that I do not even have eyes with which to see anything; but it certainly cannot be the case, when I see something, or when I think I am seeing something (the difference is irrelevant for the moment), that I myself who think should not be something. By the same token, if I judge that the wax exists, for the reason that I am touching it, the same consequence follows: namely, that I exist. If I judge it exists, for the reason I am imagining it, or for any other reason, again, the same certainly applies. But what I have realized in the case of the wax, I can apply to anything that exists outside myself. Moreover, if the perception of the wax appeared more distinct after it became known to me from many sources, and not from sight or touch alone, how much more distinctly—it must be admitted—I now know [*cognosco*] myself. For there are no reasons that can enhance the perception either of the wax or of any other body at all that do not at the same time prove better to me the nature of my own mind. But there are so many things besides in the mind itself that can serve to make the knowledge [*notitia*] of it more distinct, that there seems scarcely any point in listing all the perceptions that flow into it from the body.

But I see now that, without realizing it, I have ended up back where I wanted to be. For since I have now learned that bodies themselves are perceived not, strictly speaking, by the senses or by the imaginative faculty, but by the intellect alone, and that they are not perceived because they are touched or seen, but only because they are understood, I clearly realize [*cognosco*] that nothing can be perceived by me more easily or more clearly than my own mind. But since a long-held opinion is a habit that cannot so readily be laid aside, I intend to stop here for a while, in order to fix this newly acquired knowledge more deeply in my memory by long meditation.

The White Ministers' Law and Order Statement

January 16, 1963

In these times of tremendous tensions, and change in cherished patterns of life in our beloved Southland, it is essential that men who occupy places of responsibility and leadership shall speak concerning their honest convictions.

We the undersigned clergymen have been chosen to carry heavy responsibility in our religious groups. We speak in a spirit of humility, and only for ourselves. We do not pretend to know all the answers, for the issues are not simple. Nevertheless, we believe our people expect and deserve leadership from us, and we speak with firm conviction for we do know the ultimate spirit in which all problems of human relations must be solved.

It is clear that a series of court decisions will soon bring about desegregation of certain schools and colleges in Alabama. Many sincere people oppose this change and are deeply troubled by it. As southerners, we understand this. We nevertheless feel that defiance is neither the right answer nor the solution. And we feel that inflammatory and rebellious statements can lead only to violence, discord, confusion, and disgrace for our beloved state.

We therefore affirm, and commend to our people:

1. That hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions.
2. That there may be disagreement concerning laws and social change without advocating defiance, anarchy, and subversion.
3. That laws may be tested in courts or changed by legislatures, but not ignored by whims of individuals.

4. That constitutions may be amended or judges impeached by proper action, but our American way of life depends upon obedience to the decisions of courts of competent jurisdiction in the meantime.

5. That no person's freedom is safe unless every person's freedom is equally protected.

6. That freedom of speech must at all costs be preserved and exercised without fear of recrimination or harassment.

7. That every human being is created in the image of God and is entitled to respect as a fellow human being with all basic rights, privileges, and responsibilities which belong to humanity.

We respectfully urge those who strongly oppose desegregation to pursue their convictions in the courts, and in the meantime peacefully to abide by the decisions of those same courts.

We recognize that our problems cannot be solved in our strength or on the basis of human wisdom alone. The situation that confronts us calls for earnest prayer, for clear thought, for understanding love, and for courageous action. Thus we call on all people of goodwill to join us in seeking divine guidance as we make our appeal for law and order and common sense.

Signed by:

Bishop Nolan B. Harmon

Rabbi Milton L. Grafman

Bishop Paul Hardin

Rev. Edward V. Ramage

Bishop C. C. J. Carpenter

Rev. Soterios D. Gouvellis

Bishop Joseph A. Durick

Rabbi Eugene Blackschleger

Rev. Earl Stallings

J. T. Beale

Rev. George M. Murray

The White Ministers' Good Friday Statement

April 12, 1963

We the undersigned clergymen are among those who, in January, issued "an appeal for law and order and common sense," in dealing with racial problems in Alabama. We expressed understanding that honest convictions in racial matters could properly be pursued in the courts, but urged decisions of those courts should in the meantime be peacefully obeyed.

Since that time there had been some evidence of increased forbearance and a willingness to face facts. Responsible citizens have undertaken to work on various problems that cause racial friction and unrest. In Birmingham, recent public events have given indication that we all have opportunity for a new constructive and realistic approach to racial problems.

However, we are now confronted by a series of demonstrations by some of our Negro citizens, directed and led in part by outsiders. We recognize the natural impatience of people who feel that their hopes are slow in being realized. But we are convinced that these demonstrations are unwise and untimely.

We agree rather with certain local Negro leadership that has called for honest and open negotiations of racial issues in our area. And we believe this kind of facing of issues can best be accomplished by citizens of our own metropolitan area, white and Negro, meeting with their knowledge and experience of the local situation. All of us need to face that responsibility and find proper channels for its accomplishment.

Just as we formerly pointed out that "hatred and violence have no sanction in our religious and political traditions," we also point out that such actions as incite to hatred and violence, however, technically

peaceful those actions may be, have not contributed the resolution of our local problems. We do not believe that these days of new hope are days when extreme measures are justified in Birmingham.

We commend the community as a whole, and the local news media and law enforcement officials in particular, on the calm manner in which these demonstrations have been handled.

We urge the public to continue to show restraint should the demonstrations continue, and the law enforcement officials to remain calm and continue to protect our city from violence.

We further strongly urge our own Negro community to withdraw support from these demonstrations, and to unite locally in working peacefully for a better Birmingham. When rights are consistently denied, a cause should be pressed in the courts and in negotiations among local leaders, and not in the streets. We appeal to both our white and Negro citizenry to observe the principles of law and order and common sense.

Signed by:

<i>Bishop C. C. J. Carpenter</i>	<i>Bishop Nolan B. Harmon</i>
<i>Bishop Joseph A. Durick</i>	<i>Rev. George M. Murray</i>
<i>Rabbi Milton L. Grafman</i>	<i>Rev. Edward V. Ramage</i>
<i>Bishop Paul Hardin</i>	<i>Rev. Earl Stallings</i>

Letter from a Birmingham Jail

Martin Luther King, JR.

Confined in a small jail for “Civil Disobedience” in Birmingham, Alabama, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. learned that eight prominent clergy-men, all white, had issued an “Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense” essentially condemning King. They believe his marches, sit-ins, and demonstrations—although nonviolent—were nevertheless igniting the flames of fear and racial strife in the towns and cities in which they occurred. The clergymen recommended that King try to solve racial problems through the local and federal courts. Result would come more slowly, they conceded, but at least there would be no possibility of confrontation or social discord. Despite his imprisonment King felt it necessary to respond immediately to their criticisms, as well as to their praise for the Birmingham Police Department, led by Eugene “Bull” Connor, who assaulted demonstrators with fire hoses and police dogs. Initially written in the margins of a newspaper and on scraps of paper in this cell (he was then provided a notepad by his attorneys), King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” has since become of the most famous letters in American History.

16 April 1963

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities “unwise and untimely.” Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought

to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against “outsiders coming in.” I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what

happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial “outside agitator” idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city’s white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation.

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham’s economic community. In the course of the negotiations,

certain promises were made by the merchants--for example, to remove the stores’ humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained. As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: “Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?” “Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?” We decided to schedule our direct action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic-withdrawal program would be the by product of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change.

Then it occurred to us that Birmingham’s mayoral election was coming up in March, and we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene “Bull” Connor, had piled up enough votes to be in the run off, we decided again to postpone action until the day after the run off so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. Like many others, we waited to see Mr. Connor defeated, and to this end we endured

postponement after postponement. Having aided in this community need, we felt that our direct action program could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one,

before it will act. We are sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Albert Boutwell as mayor will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is a much more gentle person than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to maintenance of the status quo. I have hope that Mr. Boutwell will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at

whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"--then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly

a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all." Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a manmade code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I it" relationship for an "I thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal. Let me give another explanation. A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First-Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.

I hope you are able to see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in

order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I

agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action”; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a “more convenient season.” Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn’t this like condemning a robbed man because his

possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn’t this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn’t this like condemning Jesus because his unique God consciousness and never ceasing devotion to God’s will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber. I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: “All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth.” Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to

make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I began thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency, made up in part of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, are so drained of self-respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation; and in part of a few middle-class Negroes who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because in some ways they profit by segregation, have become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up across the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. Nourished by the Negro's frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination, this movement is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incorrigible "devil."

I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need emulate neither the "do nothingism" of the complacent nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the

influence of the Negro church, the way of nonviolence became an integral part of our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged, by now many streets of the South would, I am convinced, be flowing with blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who employ nonviolent direct action, and if they refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies--a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides -and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of

nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist. But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal . . ." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime--the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this need. Perhaps I was too optimistic; perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep

groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers in the South have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still all too few in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some -such as Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, James McBride Dabbs, Ann Braden and Sarah Patton Boyle--have written about our struggle in eloquent and prophetic terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy, roach infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of policemen who view them as "dirty nigger-lovers." Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation. Let me take note of my other major disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to your worship service on a nonsegregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Spring Hill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was

nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.

When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.

I have heard numerous southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and because the Negro is your brother." In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern." And I have watched many churches commit themselves

to a completely other worldly religion which makes a strange, un-Biblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular.

I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at the South's beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlines of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over I have found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor Barnett dripped with words of interposition and nullification? Where were they when Governor Wallace gave a clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"

Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists.

There was a time when the church was very powerful--in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a

thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being “disturbers of the peace” and “outside agitators.” But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were “a colony of heaven,” called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be “astronomically intimidated.” By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests. Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church’s silent--and often even vocal--sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today’s church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust.

Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true ekklesia and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom.

They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the South on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. Some have been dismissed from their churches, have lost the support of their bishops and fellow ministers. But they have acted in the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment. I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are at present misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America’s destiny. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation -and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands. Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping “order” and

“preventing violence.” I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have exercised a degree of discipline in handling the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather “nonviolently” in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the past few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Perhaps Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather nonviolent in public, as was Chief Pritchett in Albany, Georgia, but they have used the moral means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of racial injustice. As T. S. Eliot has said: “The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason.”

I wish you had commended the Negro sit inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeering and

hostile mobs, and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy two year old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness: “My feet is tired, but my soul is at rest.” They will be the young high school and college students, the young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience’ sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written so long a letter. I’m afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not

as an integrationist or a civil-rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Letters of a Nation: A Collection of Extraordinary American Letters
Carroll, Andrew, ed. Kodansha International: New York · Tokyo · London, 1997.

A Report to an Academy

by Franz Kafka

Honored members of the Academy!

You have done me the honor of inviting me to give your Academy an account of the life I formerly led as an ape.

I regret that I cannot comply with your request to the extent you desire. It is now nearly five years since I was an ape, a short space of time, perhaps, according to the calendar, but an infinitely long time to gallop through at full speed, as I have done, more or less accompanied by excellent mentors, good advice, applause, and orchestral music, and yet essentially alone, since all my escorts, to keep the image, kept well off the course. I could never have achieved what I have done had I been stubbornly set on clinging to my origins, to the remembrances of my youth. In fact, to give up being stubborn was the supreme commandment I laid upon myself; free ape as I was, I submitted myself to that yoke. In revenge, however, my memory of the past has closed the door against me more and more. I could have returned at first, had human beings allowed it, through an archway as wide as the span of heaven over the earth, but as I spurred myself on in my forced career, the opening narrowed and shrank behind me; I felt more comfortable in the world of men and fitted it better; the strong wind that blew after me out of my past began to slacken; today it is only a gentle puff of air that plays around my heels; and the opening in the distance, through which it comes and through which I once came myself, has grown so small that, even if my strength and my willpower sufficed to get me back to it, I should have to scrape

the very skin from my body to crawl through. To put it plainly, much as I like expressing myself in images, to put it plainly: your life as apes, gentlemen, insofar as something of that kind lies behind you, cannot be farther removed from you than mine is from me. Yet everyone on earth feels a tickling at the heels; the small chimpanzee and the great Achilles alike.

But to a lesser extent I can perhaps meet your demand, and indeed I do so with the greatest pleasure. The first thing I learned was to give a handshake; a handshake betokens frankness; well, today now that I stand at the very peak of my career, I hope to add frankness in words to the frankness of that first handshake. What I have to tell the Academy will contribute nothing essentially new, and will fall far behind what you have asked of me and what with the best will in the world I cannot communicate—nonetheless, it should indicate the line an erstwhile ape has had to follow in entering and establishing himself in the world of men. Yet I could not risk putting into words even such insignificant information as I am going to give you if I were not quite sure of myself and if my position on all the great variety stages of the civilized world had not become quite unassailable.

I belong to the Gold Coast. For the story of my capture I must depend on the evidence of others. A hunting expedition sent out by the firm of Hagenbeck—by the way, I have drunk many a bottle of good red wine since then with the leader of that expedition—had taken up its position in the bushes by the shore when I came down for a drink at evening among a troop of apes. They shot at us; I was the only one that was hit; I was hit in two places.

Once in the cheek; a slight wound; but it left a large, naked, red scar which earned me the name of Red Peter, a horrible name, utterly inappropriate, which only some ape could have thought of, as if the only difference between me and the performing ape Peter, who died not so long ago and had some small local reputation, were the red mark on my cheek. This by the way. The second shot hit me below the hip. It was a severe wound, it is the cause of my limping a little to this day. I read an article recently by one of the ten thousand windbags who vent themselves concerning me in the newspapers, saying: my ape nature is not yet quite under control; the proof being that when visitors come to see me, I have a predilection for taking down my trousers to show them where the shot went in. The hand which wrote that should have its fingers shot away one by one. As for me, I can take my trousers down before anyone if I like; you would find nothing but a well-groomed fur and the scar made—let me be particular in the choice of a word for this particular purpose, to avoid misunderstanding—the scar made by a wanton shot. Everything is open and aboveboard; there is nothing to conceal; when the plain truth is in question, great minds discard the niceties of refinement. But if the writer of the article were to take down his trousers before a visitor, that would be quite another story, and I will let it stand to his credit that he does not do it. In return, let him leave me alone with his delicacy!

After these two shots I came to myself—and this is where my own memories gradually begin—between decks in the Hagenbeck steamer, inside a cage. It was not a four-sided barred cage; it was only a three-sided cage nailed to a locker; the locker made the fourth side of it. The whole construction was too low for me to stand up in and too narrow to sit down in. So I had to squat with my knees bent and trembling all the

time, and also, since probably for a time I wished to see no one, and to stay in the dark, my face was turned toward the locker while the bars of the cage cut into my flesh behind. Such a method of confining wild beasts is supposed to have its advantages during the first days of captivity, and out of my own experiences I cannot deny that from the human point of view this is really the case.

But that did not occur to me then. For the first time in my life I could see no way out; at least no direct way out; directly in front of me was the locker, board fitted close to board. True, there was a gap running right through the boards which I greeted with the blissful howl of ignorance when I first discovered it, but the hole was not even wide enough to stick one's tail through and not all the strength of an ape could enlarge it.

I am supposed to have made uncommonly little noise, as I was later informed, from which the conclusion was drawn that I would either soon die or if I managed to survive the first critical period would be very amenable to training. I did survive this period. Hopelessly sobbing, painfully hunting for fleas, apathetically licking a coconut, beating my skull against the locker, sticking out my tongue at anyone who came near me—that was how I filled in time at first in my new life. But over and above it all only the one feeling: no way out. Of course what I felt then as an ape I can represent now only in human terms, and therefore I misrepresent it, but although I cannot reach back to the truth of the old ape life, there is no doubt that it lies somewhere in the direction I have indicated.

Until then I had had so many ways out of everything, and now I had none. I was pinned down. Had I been nailed down, my right to free

movement would not have been lessened. Why so? Scratch your flesh raw between your toes, but you won't find the answer. Press yourself against the bar behind you till it nearly cuts you in two, you won't find the answer. I had no way out but I had to devise one, for without it I could not live. All the time facing that locker—I should certainly have perished. Yet as far as Hagenbeck was concerned, the place for apes was in front of a locker—well then, I had to stop being an ape. A fine, clear train of thought, which I must have constructed somehow with my belly, since apes think with their bellies.

I fear that perhaps you do not quite understand what I mean by "way out." I use the expression in its fullest and most popular sense—I deliberately do not use the word "freedom." I do not mean the spacious feeling of freedom on all sides. As an ape, perhaps, I knew that, and I have met men who yearn for it. But for my part I desired such freedom neither then nor now. In passing: may I say that all too often men are betrayed by the word freedom. And as freedom is counted among the most sublime feelings, so the corresponding disillusionment can be also sublime. In variety theaters I have often watched, before my turn came on, a couple of acrobats performing on trapezes high in the roof. They swung themselves, they rocked to and fro, they sprang into the air, they floated into each other's arms, one hung by the hair from the teeth of the other. "And that too is human freedom," I thought, "self-controlled movement." What a mockery of holy Mother Nature! Were the apes to see such a spectacle, no theater walls could stand the shock of their laughter.

No, freedom was not what I wanted. Only a way out; right or left, or in any direction; I made no other demand; even should the way out prove to

be an illusion; the demand was a small one, the disappointment could be no bigger. To get out somewhere, to get out! Only not to stay motionless with raised arms, crushed against a wooden wall.

Today I can see it clearly; without the most profound inward calm I could never have found my way out. And indeed perhaps I owe all that I have become to the calm that settled within me after my first few days in the ship. And again for that calmness it was the ship's crew I had to thank.

They were good creatures, in spite of everything. I find it still pleasant to remember the sound of their heavy footfalls which used to echo through my half-dreaming head. They had a habit of doing everything as slowly as possible. If one of them wanted to rub his eyes, he lifted a hand as if it were a drooping weight. Their jests were coarse, but hearty. Their laughter had always a gruff bark in it that sounded dangerous but meant nothing. They always had something in their mouths to spit out and did not care where they spat it. They always grumbled that they got fleas from me; yet they were not seriously angry about it, they knew that my fur fostered fleas, and that fleas jump; it was a simple matter of fact to them. When they were off duty some of them often used to sit down in a semicircle around me; they hardly spoke but only grunted to each other; smoked their pipes, stretched out on lockers; smacked their knees as soon as I made one slightest movement; and now and then one of them would take a stick and tickle me where I liked being tickled. If I were to be invited today to take a cruise on that ship I should certainly refuse the invitation, but just as certainly the memories I could recall between its decks would not all be hateful.

The calmness I acquired among these people kept me above all from trying to escape. As I look back now, it seems to me I must have had at least an inkling that I had to find a way out or die, but that my way out could not be reached through flight. I cannot tell now whether escape was possible, but I believe it must have been; for an ape it must always be possible. With my teeth as they are today I have to be careful even in simply cracking nuts, but at that time I could certainly have managed by degrees to bite through the lock of my cage. I did not do it. What good would it have done me? As soon as I had poked out my head I should have been caught again and put in a worse cage; or I might have slipped among the other animals without being noticed, among the pythons, say, who were opposite me, and so breathed out my life in their embrace; or supposing I had actually succeeded in sneaking out as far as the deck and leaping overboard I should have rocked for a little on the deep sea and then been drowned. Desperate remedies. I did not think it out in this human way, but under the influence of my surroundings I acted as if I had thought it out.

I did not think things out; but I observed everything quietly. I watched these men go to and fro, always the same faces, the same movements, often it seemed to me there was only the same man. So this man or these men walked about unimpeded. A lofty goal faintly dawned before me. No one promised me that if I became like them the bars of my cage would be taken away. Such promises for apparently impossible contingencies are not given. But if one achieves the impossible, the promises appear later retrospectively precisely where one had looked in vain for them before. Now, these men in themselves had no great attraction for me. Had I been devoted to the aforementioned idea of

freedom, I should certainly have preferred the deep sea to the way out that suggested itself in the heavy faces of these men. At any rate, I watched them for a long time before I even thought of such things, indeed, it was only the mass weight of my observations that impelled me in the right direction.

It was so easy to imitate these people. I learned to spit in the very first days. We used to spit in each other's faces; the only difference was that I licked my face clean afterwards and they did not. I could soon smoke a pipe like an old hand; and if I also pressed my thumb into the bowl of the pipe, a roar of appreciation went up between decks; only it took me a very long time to understand the difference between a full pipe and an empty one.

My worst trouble came from the schnapps bottle. The smell of it revolted me; I forced myself to it as best I could; but it took weeks for me to master my repulsion. This inward conflict, strangely enough, was taken more seriously by the crew than anything else about me. I cannot distinguish the men from each other in my recollection, but there was one of them who came again and again, alone or with friends, by day, by night, at all kinds of hours; he would post himself before me with the bottle and give me instructions. He could not understand me, he wanted to solve the enigma of my being. He would slowly uncork the bottle and then look at me to see if I had followed him; I admit that I always watched him with wildly eager, too eager attention; such a student of humankind no human teacher ever found on earth. After the bottle was uncorked he lifted it to his mouth; I followed it with my eyes right up to his jaws; he would nod, pleased with me, and set the bottle to his lips; I, enchanted with my gradual enlightenment, squealed and scratched myself

comprehensively wherever scratching was called for; he rejoiced, tilted the bottle, and took a drink; I, impatient and desperate to emulate him, befouled myself in my cage, which again gave him great satisfaction; and then, holding the bottle at arm's length and bringing it up with a swing, he would empty it at one draught, leaning back at an exaggerated angle for my better instruction. I, exhausted by too much effort, could follow him no farther and hung limply to the bars, while he ended his theoretical exposition by rubbing his belly and grinning.

After theory came practice. Was I not already quite exhausted by my theoretical instruction? Indeed I was; utterly exhausted. That was part of my destiny. And yet I would take hold of the proffered bottle as well as I was able; uncork it, trembling; this successful action would gradually inspire me with new energy; I would lift the bottle, already following my original model almost exactly; put it to my lips and—and then throw it down in disgust, utter disgust, although it was empty and filled only with the smell of the spirit, throw it down on the floor in disgust. To the sorrow of my teacher, to the greater sorrow of myself; neither of us being really comforted by the fact that I did not forget, even though I had thrown away the bottle, to rub my belly most admirably and to grin.

Far too often my lesson ended in that way. And to the credit of my teacher, he was not angry; sometimes indeed he would hold his burning pipe against my fur, until it began to smolder in some place I could not easily reach, but then he would himself extinguish it with his own kind, enormous hand; he was not angry with me, he perceived that we were both fighting on the same side against the nature of apes and that I had the more difficult task.

What a triumph it was then both for him and for me, when one evening before a large circle of spectators—perhaps there was a celebration of some kind, a gramophone was playing, an officer was circulating among the crew—when on this evening, just as no one was looking, I took hold of a schnapps bottle that had been carelessly left standing before my cage, uncorked it in the best style, while the company began to watch me with mounting attention, set it to my lips without hesitation, with no grimace, like a professional drinker, with rolling eyes and full throat, actually and truly drank it empty; then threw the bottle away, not this time in despair but as an artistic performer; forgot, indeed, to rub my belly; but instead of that, because I could not help it, because my senses were reeling, called a brief and unmistakable "Hallo!" breaking into human speech, and with this outburst broke into the human community, and felt its echo: "Listen, he's talking!" like a caress over the whole of my sweat-drenched body.

I repeat: there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason. And even that triumph of mine did not achieve much. I lost my human voice again at once; it did not come back for months; my aversion for the schnapps bottle returned again with even greater force. But the line I was to follow had in any case been decided, once for all.

When I was handed over to my first trainer in Hamburg I soon realized that there were two alternatives before me: the Zoological Gardens or the variety stage. I did not hesitate. I said to myself: do your utmost to get onto the variety stage; the Zoological Gardens means only a new cage; once there, you are done for.

And so I learned things, gentlemen. Ah, one learns when one has to; one learns when one needs a way out; one learns at all costs. One stands over oneself with a whip; one flays oneself at the slightest opposition. My ape nature fled out of me, head over heels and away, so that my first teacher was almost himself turned into an ape by it, had soon to give up teaching and was taken away to a mental hospital. Fortunately he was soon let out again.

But I used up many teachers, indeed, several teachers at once. As I became more confident of my abilities, as the public took an interest in my progress and my future began to look bright, I engaged teachers for myself, established them in five communicating rooms, and took lessons from them all at once by dint of leaping from one room to the other.

That progress of mine! How the rays of knowledge penetrated from all sides into my awakening brain! I do not deny it: I found it exhilarating. But I must also confess: I did not overestimate it, not even then, much less now. With an effort which up till now has never been repeated I managed to reach the cultural level of an average European. In itself that might be nothing to speak of, but it is something insofar as it has helped me out of my cage and opened a special way out for me, the way of humanity. There is an excellent idiom: to fight one's way through the thick of things; that is what I have done, I have fought through the thick of things. There was nothing else for me to do, provided always that freedom was not to be my choice.

As I look back over my development and survey what I have achieved so far, I do not complain, but I am not complacent either. With my hands in my trouser pockets, my bottle of wine on the table, I half lie and half sit

in my rocking chair and gaze out of the window: if a visitor arrives, I receive him with propriety. My manager sits in the anteroom; when I ring, he comes and listens to what I have to say. Nearly every evening I give a performance, and I have a success that could hardly be increased. When I come home late at night from banquets, from scientific receptions, from social gatherings, there sits waiting for me a half-trained little chimpanzee and I take comfort from her as apes do. By day I cannot bear to see her; for she has the insane look of the bewildered half-broken animal in her eye; no one else sees it, but I do, and I cannot bear it. On the whole, at any rate, I have achieved what I set out to achieve. But do not tell me that it was not worth the trouble. In any case, I am not appealing for any man's verdict, I am only imparting knowledge, I am only making a report. To you also, honored Members of the Academy, I have only made a report.

Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir
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Franz Kafka (1883-1924) lived in an ethnically- German part of Prague and spent his evenings writing and his days drafting legal notices and working as a specialist in accident prevention and work-place safety for a large insurance firm. He wrote many short works and novels, including the *Metamorphosis*, *The Judgment* and *The Trial*. He died of tuberculosis of the larynx and is buried in a Jewish cemetery in the present-day Czech Republic.

The Nose

by Ryūnosuke Akutagawa

You just had to mention “Zenchi Naigu's nose,”¹ and everyone in Ike-no-o knew what you were talking about. Never mind that his name ascribed to him the “wisdom of Zen” (Zenchi) or that he was one of only ten priests honored to “minister within” (Naigu) the imperial palace in Kyoto: all that mattered was that nose of his. Uniform in thickness from base to tip, it hung a full six inches from above his upper lip to below his chin, like a sausage dangling down from the middle of his face.

The nose had been a constant source of torment for the Naigu from his earliest days as a young acolyte until now, past the age of fifty, when he had reached his present lofty post. On the surface, of course, he pretended it did not bother him—and not only because he felt it wrong for a priest to worry over his nose when he should be thirsting exclusively for the Pure Land to come. What he hated most of all was for other people to become aware of his concern over his nose. And what he feared most of all was for other people to become aware of his concern over his nose. And what he feared most of all was that the word “nose” would come up in conversation.

There were two reasons why his nose was more than the Naigu could manage. One was that it actually got in his way much of the time. He could not eat by himself; whenever he tried to, the tip of his nose

¹ “Naigu,” an honorary title for a priest privileged to perform rites within the Imperial Palace, is pronounced “nigh-goo.” While his name, Zenchi, derives from an abstract Zen Buddhist concept of enlightenment, he is a practitioner of a simpler, more widely practiced kind of Buddhism, in which the believer is transported to a more concretely conceived western paradise, or Pure Land, after death. His fictional temple is located in Ike-no-o, a village now part of the city of Uji, south of Kyoto.

would touch the rice in his metal bowl. To deal with this problem, he had a disciple sit across from him at mealtime and hold his nose up with a long, narrow wooden slat, an inch wide and two feet long. This was not an easy thing to do – either for the slat-wielding disciple or for the Naigu himself. A temple page who stood in for the disciple at one meal sneezed and let the nose drop into the rice gruel. The story immediately spread across the river to Kyoto. Still, this was not the main reason the Naigu was troubled by his nose. He suffered most because of the harm it was doing to his self-esteem.

The people of Ike-no-o used to say that Zenchi Naigu was lucky to be a priest: no woman would ever want to marry a man with a nose like that. Some even claimed it was because of his nose that he had entered the priesthood to begin with. The Naigu himself, however, never felt that he suffered any less over his nose for being a priest. Indeed, his self-esteem was already far too fragile to be affected by such a secondary fact as whether or not he had a wife. And so, by means both active and passive, he sought to repair the damage to his self-esteem.

He tried first of all to find ways to make his nose look shorter. When there was no one around, he would hold up his mirror and, with feverish intensity, examine his reflection from every angle. Sometimes it took more than simply changing the position of his face to comfort him, and he would try one pose after another – resting his cheek on his hand or stroking his chin with his fingertips. Never once, though, was he satisfied that his nose looked any shorter. In fact, he sometimes felt that the harder he tried, the longer it looked. Then, heaving fresh sighs of despair, he would put the mirror away in its box and drag himself back to the

scripture stand to resume chanting the Kannon Sutra.²

The second way he dealt with his problem was to keep a vigilant eye out for other people's noses. Many public events took place at the Ike-no-o temple –banquets to benefit the priests, lectures on the sutras, and so forth. Row upon row of monks' cells filled the temple grounds, and each day the monks would heat up bath water for the temple's many residents and lay visitors, all of whom the Naigu would study closely. He hoped to gain peace from discovering even one face with a nose like his. And so his eyes took in neither blue robes nor white; orange caps, skirts of gray: the priestly garb he knew so well hardly existed for him. The Naigu saw not people but noses. While a great hooked beak might come into his view now and then, never did he discover a nose like his own. And with each failure to find what he was looking for, the Naigu's resentment would increase. It was entirely due to this feeling that often, while speaking to a person, he would unconsciously grasp the dangling end of his nose and blush like a youngster.

And finally, the Naigu would comb the Buddhist scriptures and other classic texts, searching for a character with a nose like his own in the hope that it would provide him some measure of comfort. Nowhere, however, was it written that the nose of either Mokuren or Sharihotsu was long. And Ryūju and Memyō, of course, were Bodhisattvas with normal human noses. Listening to a Chinese story once, he heard that Liu

² Actually a chapter of the Lotus Sutra (*Myōhō renge-kyō*; Sanskrit: *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra*; English: *Sutra on the Wonderful Law or Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*), which is the premier scripture of Japanese Mahayana Buddhism. Chapter 25 details the miraculous power of the bodhisattva of compassion, Kannon (Sanskrit: Avalokitesvara), to respond to all cries for help from the world's faithful. Akutagawa's choice of scriptures in the story is not entirely consistent with any one Buddhist sect.

Bei, the Shu Han emperor, had long ears.³ “Oh, if only it had been his nose,” he thought, “how much better I would feel!”

We need hardly mention here that, even as he pursued these passive efforts, the Naigu also took more active steps to shorten his nose. He tried everything: he drank a decoction of boiled snake gourd; he rubbed his nose with rat urine. Nothing did any good, however: the nose continued to dangle six inches down over his lips.

One autumn, however, a disciple of his who had gone to Kyoto – in part on an errand for the Naigu himself – came back to Ike-no-o with a new method for shortening noses that he learned from a doctor friend. This doctor was a man from China who had become a high-ranking priest at a major Kyoto temple, the Chōrakuji.

Pretending, as usual, that he was unconcerned about his nose, the Naigu would not at first agree to submit to the new treatment. Instead, at mealtimes he would offer a casual expression of regret that the disciple had gone to so much trouble. Inwardly, of course, he was hoping that the disciple would press him to try the treatment. And the disciple must have been aware of the Naigu’s tactics. But his master’s very willingness to employ such tactics seemed to rouse the aide to sympathy more than resentment. Just as the Naigu had hoped, the disciple used every argument he could think of to persuade his master to adopt the treatment. And, as he knew he would, the Naigu finally submitted to the disciple’s fervent exhortations.

The treatment itself was actually quite simple: boil the nose and have someone tread on it.

³ Mokuren and Sharihotsu: two of Shakyamuni Buddha’s sixteen disciples; Sanskrit: Maudgalyayana and Sariputra. Ryūju and Memyō: Sanskrit: Nagarjuna and Asvaghosa. Liu Bei (162-223) was the first emperor of the Shu Han dynasty (221-64) in southwestern China.

Boiling water could be had any day at the temple bathhouse. The disciple immediately brought a bucket full of water that was too hot for him to touch. If the Naigu simply dipped his nose straight into the bucket, however, his face might be scalded by the rising steam. So they bored a hole in a tray, set the tray on the bucket, and lowered the nose through the hole into the boiling water. The nose itself felt no heat at all.

After the nose had been soaking for a short while, the disciple said, “I believe it has cooked long enough, Your Reverence.”

The Naigu gave him a contorted smile. At least, he thought with some satisfaction, no one overhearing this one remark would imagine that the subject was a nose. The boiled nose itself, however, was itching now as if it had been bitten by fleas.

The Naigu withdrew his nose from the hole in the tray, and the disciple began to tread on the still-steaming thing with all his might. The Naigu lay with his nose stretched out on the floorboards, watching the disciple’s feet moving up and down before his eyes. Every now and then, the disciple would cast a pitying glance down toward the Naigu’s bald head and say, “Does it hurt, Your Reverence? The doctor told me to stamp on it as hard as I could, but... does it hurt?”

The Naigu tried to shake his head to signal that it did not hurt, but with the disciple’s feet pressing down on his nose, he was unable to do so. Instead, he turned his eyes upward until he could see the raw cracks in the disciple’s chapped feet and gave an angry-sounding shout: “No, it doesn’t hurt!”

Far from hurting, his itchy nose almost felt good to have the young man treading on it.

After this had been going on for some time, little bumps like millet grains began to form on the nose until it looked like a bird that had been

plucked clean and roasted whole. When he saw this, the disciple stopped his treading and muttered as if to himself, “Now I’m supposed to pull those out with tweezers.”

The Naigu puffed out his cheeks in apparent exasperation as he silently watched the disciple proceed with the treatment. Not that he was ungrateful for the efforts. But as much as he appreciated the young man’s kindness, he did not like having his nose handled like some kind of *thing*. The Naigu watched in apprehension, like a patient being operated on by a doctor he mistrusts, as the disciple plucked beads of fat from the pores of his nose with the tweezers. The beads protruded half an inch from each pore like stumps of feathers.

Once he was through, the disciple said with a look of relief, “Now we just have to cook it again.”

Brows knit in apparent disapproval, the Naigu did as he was told. After the second boiling, the nose looked far shorter than it ever had before. Indeed, it was not much different from an ordinary hooked nose. Stroking his newly shortened nose, the Naigu darted a few timid glances into the mirror the young man held out to him.

The nose – which once had dangled down below his chin – now had shrunk to such an unbelievable degree that it seemed only to be hanging on above his upper lip by a feeble last breath. The red blotches that marked it were probably left from the trampling. No one would laugh at *this* nose anymore. The face of the Naigu inside the mirror looked at the face of the Naigu outside the mirror, eyelids fluttering in satisfaction. Still, he felt uneasy for the rest of that day lest his nose grow long again. Whether intoning scriptures or taking his meals, he would unobtrusively

reach up at every opportunity and touch his nose. Each time, he would find it exactly where it belonged, above his upper lip, with no sign that it intended to let itself down any lower. Then came a night of sleep, and the first thing he did upon waking the next day was to feel his nose again. It was still short. Only then did the Naigu begin to enjoy the kind of relief he had experienced once before, years ago, when he had accumulated religious merit for having copied out the entire Lotus Sutra by hand.

Not three full days had passed, however, before the Naigu made a surprising discovery. First, a certain samurai with business at the Ike-no-o temple seemed even more amused than before when, barely speaking to the Naigu, he stared hard at the nose. Then the page who had dropped his nose into the gruel passed him outside the lecture hall; the boy first looked down as he tried to keep his laughter in check, but finally, unable to control himself, he let it burst out. And finally, on more than one occasion, a subordinate priest who remained perfectly respectful while taking orders from the Naigu face-to-face would start giggling as soon as the Naigu had turned away.

At first the Naigu ascribed this behavior to the change in his appearance. But that alone did not seem to explain it sufficiently. True, this may have been what caused the laughter of the page and the subordinate. But the way they were laughing now was somehow different from the way they had laughed before, when his nose was long. Perhaps it was simply that they found the unfamiliar short nose funnier than the familiar long one. But there seemed to be more to it than that.

They never laughed so openly before. Our dear Naigu would sometimes break off intoning the scriptures and mutter this sort of thing to himself,

tilting his bald head to one side. His eyes would wander up to the portrait of the Bodhisattva Fugen⁴ hanging beside him. And he would sink into gloom, thinking about how it had been for him a few days earlier, when he still had his long nose, “just as he who can now sink no lower fondly recalls his days of glory.” The Naigu, unfortunately, lacked the wisdom to find a solution to this problem.

The human heart harbors two conflicting sentiments. Everyone of course sympathizes with people who suffer misfortunes. Yet when those people manage to overcome their misfortunes, we feel a certain disappointment. We may even feel (to overstate the case somewhat) a desire to plunge them back into those misfortunes. And before we know it, we come (if only passively) to harbor some degree of hostility toward them. It was precisely because he sensed this kind of spectator's egoism in both the lay and the priestly communities of Ike-no-o that the Naigu, while unaware of the reason, felt an indefinable malaise.

And so the Naigu's mood worsened with each passing day. He could hardly say a word to people without snapping at them – until finally, even the disciple who had performed the treatment on his nose began to whisper behind his back: “The Naigu will be punished for treating us so harshly instead of teaching us Buddha's Law.” The one who made the Naigu especially angry was that mischievous page. One day the Naigu heard some loud barking, and without giving it much thought, he stepped outside to see what was going on. There, he found the page waving a long stick in pursuit of a scrawny long-haired dog. The boy was not

simply chasing after the dog, however. He was also shouting as if for the dog, ““Can't hit my nose! Ha ha! Can't hit my nose!”” The Naigu ripped the stick from the boy's hand and smacked him in the face with it. Then he realized this “stick” was the slat they had used to hold his nose up at mealtimes.

His nose had been shortened all right, thought the Naigu, but he hated what it was doing to him.

And then one night something happened. The wind must have risen quite suddenly after the sun went down, to judge by the annoying jangle of the pagoda wind chimes that reached him at his pillow. The air was much colder as well, and the aging Naigu was finding it impossible to sleep. Eyes wide open in the darkness, he became aware of a new itching sensation in his nose. He reached up and found the nose slightly swollen to the touch. It (and only it) seemed to be feverish as well.

“We took such drastic steps to shorten it: maybe that gave me some kind of illness,” the Naigu muttered to himself, cupping the nose in hands he held as if reverentially offering flowers or incense before the Buddha.

When he woke early as usual the next morning, the Naigu found that the temple's gingko and horse-chestnut trees had dropped their leaves overnight, spreading a bright, golden carpet over the temple grounds. And perhaps because of the frost on the roof of the pagoda, the nine-ring spire atop it flashed in the still-faint glimmer of the rising sun. Standing on the veranda where the latticed shutters had been raised, Zenchi Naigu took a deep breath of morning air.

It was at this moment that an all-but-forgotten sensation returned to him.

⁴ Sanskrit: Samantabhadra. Often depicted riding a white elephant to the Buddha's right, Fugen symbolizes, among other things, the Buddha's concentration of mind. The trunk of the elephant might also have attracted the Naigu's attention.

The Naigu shot his hand up to his nose, but what he felt there was not the short nose he had touched in the night. It was the same old long nose he had always had, dangling down a good six inches from above his upper lip to below his chin. In the space of a single night, his nose had grown as long as ever. When he realized this, the Naigu felt that same bright sense of relief he had experienced when his nose became short.

Now no one will laugh at me anymore, the Naigu whispered silently in his heart, letting his long nose sway in the dawn's autumn wind.

From Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories*, tr. Jay Rubin (London: Penguin, 2006).

The Nose

by Nikolai Gogol

1

An extraordinarily strange thing happened in St. Petersburg on 25 March. Ivan Yakovlevich, a barber who lived on Voznesensky Avenue (his surname has got lost and all that his shop-front signboard shows is a gentleman with a lathered cheep and the inscription 'We also let blood'), woke up rather early one morning and smelt hot bread. As he sat up in bed he saw his wife, who was a quite respectable lady and a great coffee-drinker, taking some freshly baked rolls out of the oven.

'I don't want any coffee today, Praskovya Osipovna', said Ivan Yakovlevich, 'I'll make do with some hot rolls and onion instead.' (Here I must explain that Ivan Yakovlevich would really have liked to have had some coffee as well, but knew it was quite out of the question to expect both coffee *and* rolls since Praskovya Osipovna did not take very kindly to these whims of his.) 'Let the old fool have his bread, I don't mind,' she thought. 'That means extra coffee for me!' And she threw a roll on to the table.

Ivan pulled his frock-coat over his nightshirt for decency's sake, sat down at the table, poured out some salt, peeled two onions, took a knife and with a determined expression on his face started cutting one of the rolls.

When he had sliced the roll in two, he peered into the middle and was amazed to see something white there. Ivan carefully picked at it with his knife, and felt it with his finger. 'Quite thick,' he said to himself. 'What on earth can it be?'

He poked two fingers in and pulled out – a nose!

He flopped back in his chair, and began rubbing his eyes and feeling around in the roll again. Yes, it was a nose all right, no mistake about that. And, what's more, it seemed a very familiar nose. His face filled with horror. But this horror was nothing compared with his wife's indignation.

'You beast, whose nose is *that* you've cut off?' she cried furiously. 'You scoundrel! You drunkard! I'll report it to the police myself, I will. You thief! Come to think of it, I've heard three customers say that when they come in for a shave you start pulling their noses about so much it's a wonder they stay on at all!'

But Ivan felt more dead than alive. He knew that the nose belonged to none other than Collegiate Assessor Kovalyov, whom he shaved on Wednesdays and Sundays.

'Wait a minute, Praskovya! I'll wrap it up in a piece of cloth and dump it in the corner. Let's leave it there for a bit, then I'll try and get rid of it.' 'I don't want to know! Do you think I'm going to let a sawn-off nose lie around in my room...you fathead! All you can do is strop that blasted razor of yours and let everything else go to pot. Layabout! Night-bird! And you expect me to cover up for you with the police! You filthy pig! Blockhead! Get that nose out of here, out! Do what you like with it, but I don't want that thing hanging around here a minute longer!'

Ivan Yakovlevich was absolutely stunned. He thought and thought, but just didn't know what to make of it.

'I'm damned if I know what's happened!' he said at last, scratching the back of his ear. 'I can't say for certain if I came home drunk or not last

night. All I know is, it's crazy. After all, bread is baked in an oven, and you don't get noses in bakeries. Can't make head or tail of it!...'

Ivan Yakovlevich lapsed into silence. The thought that the police might search the place, find the nose and afterwards bring a charge against him, very nearly sent him out of his mind. Already he could see that scarlet collar beautifully embroidered with silver, that sword...and he began shaking all over. Finally he put on his scruffy old trousers and shoes and with Praskovya Osipovna's vigorous invective ringing in his ears, wrapped the nose up in a piece of cloth and went out into the street. All he wanted was to stuff it away somewhere, either hiding it between two curb-stones by someone's front door or else 'accidentally' dropping it and slinking off down a side street. But as luck would have it, he kept bumping into friends, who would insist on asking: 'Where are *you* off to?' or 'It's a bit early for shaving customers, isn't it?' with the result that he didn't have a chance to get rid of it. Once he *did* manage to drop it, but a policeman pointed with his hadberd and said: 'Pick that up! Can't you see you dropped something!' And Ivan Yakovlevich had to pick it up and hide it in his pocket. Despair gripped him, especially as the streets were getting more and more crowded now as the shops and stalls began to open.

He decided to make his way to St Isaac's Bridge and see if he could throw the nose into the River Neva without anyone seeing him. But here I am rather at fault for not telling you before something about Ivan Yakovlevich, who in many ways was a man you could respect.

Ivan Yakovlevich, like any honest Russian working man, was a terrible drunkard. And although he spent all day shaving other people's beards, he never touched his own. His frock-coat (Ivan Yakovlevich never wore a dress-coat) could best be described as piebald: that is to say, it was

black, but with brownish-yellow and grey spots all over it. His collar was very shiny, and three loosely hanging threads showed that some buttons had once been there. Ivan Yakovlevich was a very phlegmatic character, and whenever Kovalyov the Collegiate Assessor said ‘Your hands always stink!’ while he was being shaved, Ivan Yakovlevich would say: ‘But why should they stink?’ The Collegiate Assessor used to reply: ‘Don’t ask me, my dear chap. All I know is, they stink.’ Ivan Yakovlevich would answer by taking a pinch of snuff and then, by way of retaliation, lather all over Kovalyov’s cheeks, under his nose, behind the ears and beneath his beard – in short, wherever he felt like covering him with soap.

By now this respectable citizen of ours had already reached St Isaac’s Bridge. First of all he had a good look around. Then he leant over the rails, trying to pretend he was looking under the bridge to see if there were many fish there, and furtively threw the packet into the water. He felt as if a couple of hundredweight had been lifted from his shoulders and he even managed to produce a smile.

Instead of going off to shave civil servants’ chins, he headed for a shop bearing a sign ‘Hot Meals and Tea’ for a glass of punch. Suddenly he saw a policeman at one end of the bridge, in a very smart uniform, with broad whiskers, a three-cornered hat and a sword. He went cold all over as the policeman beckoned to him and said: ‘Come here, my friend!’ Recognizing the uniform, Ivan Yakovlevich took his cap off before he had taken half a dozen steps, tripped up to him and greeted him with:

‘Good morning, Your Excellency!’

‘No, no, my dear chap, none of your ‘Excellencies’. Just tell me what you were up to on the bridge?’

‘Honest, officer, I was on my way to shave a customer and stopped to see how fast the current was.’

‘You’re lying. You really can’t expect me to believe that! You’d better come clean at once!’

‘I’ll give Your Excellency a free shave twice, even three times a week, honest I will,’ answered Ivan Yakovlevich.

‘No, no, my friend, that won’t do. Three barbers look after me already, and it’s an *honour* for them to shave me. Will you please tell me what you were up to?’

Ivan Yakovlevich turned pale... But at this point everything became so completely enveloped in mist it is really impossible to say what happened afterwards.

2

Collegiate Assessor Kovalyov woke up rather early and made a ‘brring’ noise with his lips. He always did this when he woke up, though, if you asked him why, he could not give any good reason. Kovalyov stretched himself and asked for the small mirror that stood on the table to be brought over to him. He wanted to have a look at a pimple that had made its appearance on his nose the previous evening, but to his extreme astonishment found that instead of a nose there was nothing but an absolutely flat surface! In a terrible panic Kovalyov asked for some water and rubbed his eyes with a towel. No mistake about it: his nose had gone. He began pinching himself to make sure he was not sleeping, but to all intents and purposes he was wide awake. Collegiate Assessor Kovalyov sprang out of bed and shook himself: still no nose! He asked for his clothes and off he dashed straight to the Head of Police.

In the meantime, however, a few words should be said about Kovalyov,

so that the reader may see what kind of collegiate assessor this man was. You really cannot compare those collegiate assessors who acquire office through testimonials with the variety appointed in the Caucasus. The two species are quite distinct. Collegiate assessors with diplomas from learned bodies... But Russia is such an amazing country, that if you pass any remark about one collegiate assessor, every assessor from Riga to Kamchatka will take it personally. And the same goes for all people holding titles and government ranks. Kovalyov belonged to the Caucasian variety.

He had been a collegiate assessor for only two years and therefore could not forget it for a single minute. To make himself sound more important and to give more weight to his status he never called himself collegiate assessor, but 'Major'. If he met a woman in the street selling shirt fronts he would say: 'Listen dear, come and see me at home. My flat's in Sadovaya Street. All you have to do is ask if Major Kovalyov lives there and anyone will show you the way.' And if the woman was at all pretty he would whisper some secret instructions and then say: 'Just ask for Major Kovalyov, my dear.' Therefore, throughout this story, we will call this collegiate assessor 'Major'. Major Kovalyov was in the habit of taking a daily stroll along the Nevsky Avenue. His shirt collar was always immaculately clean and well-starched. His whiskers were the kind you usually find among provincial surveyors, architects and regimental surgeons, among people who have some sort of connection with the police, on anyone in fact who has full rosy cheeks and plays a good hand at whist. These whiskers grew right from the middle of his cheeks up to his nostrils. Major Kovalyov always carried plenty of seals with him – seals bearing coats of arms or engraved with the words: 'Wednesday, Thursday, Monday,' and so on. Major Kovalyov had come

to St Petersburg with the set purpose of finding a position in keeping with his rank. If he was lucky, he would get a vice-governorship, but failing that, a job as an administrative clerk in some important government department would have to do. Major Kovalyov was not averse to marriage, as long as his bride happened to be worth 200,000 rubles. And now the reader can judge for himself how this Major felt when, instead of a fairly presentable and reasonably sized nose, all he saw was an absolutely preposterous smooth flat space.

As if this were not bad enough, there was not a cab in sight, and he had to walk home, keeping himself huddled up in his cloak and with a handkerchief over his face to make people think he was bleeding. 'But perhaps I dreamt it! How could I be so stupid as to go and lose my nose?' With these thoughts he dropped into a coffee-house to take a look at himself in a mirror. Fortunately the shop was empty, except for some waiters sweeping up and tidying the chairs. A few of them, rather bleary-eyed, were carrying trays laden with hot pies. Yesterday's newspapers, covered in coffee stains, lay scattered on the tables and chairs. 'Well, thank God thee's no one about,' he said. 'Now I can have a look.' He approached the mirror rather gingerly and peered into it. 'Damn it! What kind of trick is this?' he cried, spitting on the floor. 'If only there were *something* to take its place, but there's nothing!'

He bit his lips in annoyance, left the coffee-house and decided not to smile or look at anyone, which was not like him at all. Suddenly he stood rooted to the spot near the front door of some house and witnessed a most incredible sight. A carriage drew up at the entrance porch. The doors flew open and out jumped a uniformed, stooping gentleman who dashed up the steps. The feeling of horror and amazement that gripped Kovalyov when he recognized his own nose defies description! After this

extraordinary sight everything went topsy-turvy. He could hardly keep to his feet, but decided at all costs to wait until the nose returned to the carriage, although he was shaking all over and felt quite feverish.

About two minutes later a nose really did come out. It was wearing a gold-braided uniform with a high stand-up collar and chamois trousers, and had a sword at its side. From the plumes on its hat one could tell that it held the exalted rank of state councilor.⁵ And it was abundantly clear that the nose was going to visit someone. It looked right, then left, shouted to the coachman ‘Let’s go!’, climbed in and drove off.

Poor Kovalyov nearly went out of his mind. He did not know what to make of it. How, in fact, could a nose, which only yesterday was in the middle of his face, and which could not possibly walk around or drive in a carriage, suddenly turn up in a uniform! He ran after the carriage which fortunately did not travel very far and came to a halt outside Kazan Cathedral.⁶ Kovalyov rushed into the cathedral square, elbowed his way through a crowd of beggar women who always used to make him laugh because of the way they covered their faces, leaving only slits for the eyes, and made his way in. Only a few people were at prayer, all of them standing by the entrance. Kovalyov felt so distraught that he was in no condition for praying, and his eyes searched every nook and cranny for the nose in uniform. At length he spotted it standing by one of the walls to the side. The nose’s face was completely hidden by the high collar and it was praying with an expression of profound piety.

⁵ A state councilor held the fifth of the fourteen ranks in the civil service hierarchy. A college assessor was three grades lower.

⁶ Such was the severity and idiocy of the censorship of Gogol’s day that in the original version Kazan Cathedral had to be replaced by a shopping arcade on the grounds of “blasphemy”.

‘What’s the best way of approaching it?’ thought Kovalyov. ‘Judging by its uniform, its hat, and its whole appearance, it must be a state councilor. But I’m damned if I know!’

He tried to attract its attention by coughing, but the nose did not interrupt its devotions for one second and continued bowing towards the altar.

‘My dear sir,’ Kovalyov said, summoning up his courage, ‘my dear sir...’

‘What do you want?’ replied the nose, turning around. ‘I don’t know how best to put it, sir, but it strikes me as very peculiar... Don’t you know where you belong? And where do I find you? In church, of all places! I’m sure you’ll agree that...’

‘Please forgive me, but would you mind telling me what you’re talking about?... Explain yourself.’

‘How can I make myself clear?’ Kovalyov wondered. Nerving himself once more he said: ‘Of course, I am, as it happens, a Major. You will agree that it’s not done for someone in my position to walk around minus a nose. It’s all right for some old woman selling peeled oranges on the Voskresensky Bridge to go around without one. But as I’m hoping to be promoted soon... Besides, as I’m acquainted with several highly-placed ladies: Madame Chekhtaryev, for example, a state councillor’s wife... you can judge for yourself... I really don’t know what to say, my dear sir... (He shrugged his shoulders as he said this.) Forgive me, but you must look upon this as a matter of honour and principle. You can see for yourself...’

‘I can’t see anything,’ the nose replied. ‘Please come to the point.’

‘My dear sir,’ continued Kovalyov in a smug voice, ‘I really don’t know what you mean by that. It’s plain enough for anyone to see... Unless you want... Don’t you realize you are *my own nose!*’

The nose looked at the Major and frowned a little.

‘My dear fellow, you are mistaken. I am a person in my own right.

Furthermore, I don’t see that we can have anything in common. Judging from your uniform buttons, I should say you’re from another government department.’

With these words the nose turned away and continued its prayers.

Kovalyov was so confused he did not know what to do or think. At that moment he heard a pleasant rustling of a woman’s dress, and an elderly lady, bedecked with lace, came by, accompanied by a slim girl wearing a white dress, which showed her shapely figure to very good advantage, and a pale yellow hat as light as pastry. A tall footman, with enormous whiskers and what seemed to be a dozen collars, stationed himself behind them and opened his snuff-box. Kovalyov went closer, pulled the linen collar of his shirt front up high, straightened the seals hanging on his gold watch chain and, smiling all over his face, turned his attention to the slim girl, who bent over to pray like a spring flower and kept lifting her little white hand with its almost transparent fingers to her forehead.

The smile on Kovalyov’s face grew even more expansive when he saw, beneath her hat, a little rounded chin of dazzling white, and cheeks flushed with the colour of the first rose of spring.

But suddenly he jumped backwards as though he had been burnt: he remembered that instead of a nose he had nothing, and tears streamed from his eyes. He turned round to tell the nose in uniform straight out that it was only masquerading as a state councilor, that it was an impostor and a scoundrel, and really nothing else than his own private property, *his* nose... But the nose had already gone: it managed to slip off unseen, probably to pay somebody a visit.

This reduced Kovalyov to absolute despair. He went out, and stood for a

minute or so under the colonnade, carefully looking around him in the hope of spotting the nose. He remembered quite distinctly that it was wearing a plumed hat and a gold-embroidered uniform. But he had not noticed what its greatcoat was like, or the colour of its carriage, or its horses, or even if there was a liveried footman at the back. What’s more, there were so many carriages careering to and fro, so fast, that it was practically impossible to recognize any of them, and even if he could, there was no way of making them stop.

It was a beautiful sunny day. Nevsky Avenue was packed. From the Police Headquarters right down to the Anichkov Bridge people flowed along the pavements in a cascade of colour. Not far off he could see that court councilor whom he referred to as Lieutenant-Colonel,⁷ especially if there happened to be other people around. And over there was Yaygin, a head clerk in the Senate, and a very close friend of his who always lost at whist when he played in a party of eight. Another Major, a collegiate assessor, of the Caucasian variety, waved to him to come over and have a chat.

‘Blast and damn!’ said Kovalyov, hailing a droshky. ‘Driver, take me straight to the Chief of Police.’

He climbed into the droshky and shouted: ‘Drive like the devil!’

‘Is the Police Commissioner in?’ he said as soon as he entered the hall.

‘No, he’s not, sir,’ said the porter. ‘He left only a few minutes ago.’

‘This really *is* my day.’

‘Yes,’ added the porter, ‘you’ve only just missed him. A minute ago you’d have caught him.’

Kovalyov, his handkerchief still pressed to his face, climbed into the droshky again and cried out in a despairing voice: ‘Let’s go!’

⁷ The civil service ranks had their corresponding ranks in the army.

‘Where?’ asked the driver.

‘Straight on!’

‘Straight on? But it’s a dead-end here – you can only go right or left.’

This last question made Kovalyov stop and think. In his position the best thing to do was to go first to the City Security Office, not because it was directly connected with the police, but because things got done there much quicker than in any other government department. There was no sense in going direct to the head of the department where the nose claimed to work since anyone could see from the answers he had got before that the nose considered nothing holy and would have no difficulty in convincing its superiors by its brazen lying that it had never set eyes on Kovalyov before.

So just as Kovalyov was about to tell the driver to go straight to the Security Office, it struck him that the scoundrel and impostor who had behaved so shamelessly could quite easily take advantage of the delay and slip out of the city, in which event all his efforts to find it would be futile and might even drag on for another month, God forbid. Finally inspiration came from above. He decided to go straight to the newspaper offices and publish an advertisement, giving such a detailed description of the nose that anyone who happened to meet it would at once turn it over to Kovalyov, or at least tell him where he could find it. Deciding this was the best course of action, he ordered the driver to go straight to the newspaper offices and throughout the whole journey never once stopped pummeling the driver in the back with his fist and shouting:

‘Faster, damn you, faster!’

‘But sir...’ the driver retorted as he shook his head and flicked his reins at his horse, which had a coat as long as a spaniel’s. Finally the droshky came to a halt and the breathless Kovalyov tore into a small waiting-

room where a grey-haired bespectacled clerk in an old frock-coat was sitting at a table with his pen between his teeth, counting out copper coins.

‘Who sees to advertisements here?’ Kovalyov shouted. ‘Ah, good morning.’

‘Good morning,’ replied the grey-haired clerk, raising his eyes for one second, then looking down again at the little piles of money spread out on the table.

‘I want to publish an advertisement.’ ‘Just one moment, if you don’t mind,’ the clerk answered, as he wrote down a figure with one hand and moved two beads on his abacus with the other.

A footman who, judging by his gold-braided livery and generally very smart appearance, obviously worked in some noble house, was standing by the table holding a piece of paper and, just to show he could hob-nob with high and low, startled rattling away:

‘Believe me, that nasty little dog just isn’t worth eighty kopecks. I wouldn’t give more than sixteen for it. But the Countess dotes on it, and that’s why she makes no bones about offering a hundred roubles to the person who finds it. If we’re going to be honest with one another, I’ll tell you quite openly, there’s no accounting for taste. I can understand a fancier paying anything up to five hundred, even a thousand for a deerhound or a poodle, as long as it’s a good dog.’

The elderly clerk listened to him solemnly while he carried on totting up the words in the advertisement. The room was crowded with old women, shopkeepers, and house-porters, all holding advertisements. In one of these a coachman of ‘sober disposition’ was seeking employment; in another a carriage, hardly used, and brought from Paris in 1814, was up for sale; in another a nineteen yearold servant girl, with laundry

experience, and prepared to do *other* work, was looking for a job. Other advertisements offered a droshky for sale – in good condition apart from one missing spring; a ‘young’ and spirited dapple-grey colt seventeen years old; radish and turnip seeds only just arrived from London; a country house, with every modern convenience, including stabling for two horses and enough land for planting an excellent birch or fir forest. And one invited prospective buyers of old boot soles to attend certain auction rooms between the hours of eight and three daily. The room into which all these people were crammed was small and extremely stuffy. But Collegiate Assessor Kovalyov could not smell anything as he had covered his face with a handkerchief – and he could not have smelt anything anyway, as his nose had disappeared God knows where.

‘My dear sir, will you take the details down now, *please*. I really can’t wait any longer,’ he said, beginning to lose patience.

‘Just a minute, if you *don’t* mind! Two roubles forty-three kopecks. Nearly ready. One rouble sixty-four kopecks,’ the grey-haired clerk muttered as he shoved pieces of paper at the old ladies and servants standing around. Finally he turned to Kovalyov and said: ‘What do you want?’

‘I want...’ Kovalyov began. ‘Something very fishy’s been going on, whether it’s some nasty practical joke or a plain case of fraud I can’t say as yet. All I want you to do is to offer a substantial reward for the first person to find the blackguard...’

‘Name, please.’

‘Why do you need that? I can’t tell you. Too many people know me – Mrs. Chekharyev, for example, who’s married to a state councilor, Mrs. Palageya Podtochin, a staff officer’s wife...they’d find out who it was at once, God forbid! Just put ‘Collegiate Assessor’, or even better, ‘Major’.

‘And the missing person was a household serf of yours?’

‘Household serf? The crime wouldn’t be half as serious! It’s my *nose* that’s disappeared.’

‘Hm, strange name. And did this Mr. Nose steal much?’

‘*My* nose, I’m trying to say. You don’t understand! It’s my own nose that’s disappeared. It’s a diabolical practical joke someone’s played on me.’

‘How did it disappear? I don’t follow.’

‘I can’t tell you how. But please understand, my nose is traveling at this very moment all over the town, calling itself a state councilor. That’s why I’m asking you to print this advertisement announcing the first person who catches it should return the nose to its rightful owner as soon as possible. Imagine what it’s like being without such a conspicuous part of your body! If it were just a small toe, then I could put my shoe on and no one would be any the wiser. On Thursdays I go to Mrs. Chekharyev’s (she’s married to a state councilor) and Mrs. Podtochin, who has a staff officer for a husband – and a very pretty little daughter as well. They’re all very close friends of mine, so just imagine what it would be like...In *my* state how can I visit any of them?’

The clerk’s tightly pressed lips showed he was deep in thought. ‘I can’t print an advertisement like that in our paper,’ he said after a long silence.

‘What? Why not?’

‘I’ll tell you. A paper can get a bad name. If everyone started announcing his nose had run away, I don’t know how it would all end. And enough false reports and rumours get past editorial already...’

‘By why does it strike you as so absurd? I certainly don’t think so.’

‘That’s what *you* think. But only last week there was a similar case. A clerk came here with an advertisement, just like you. It cost him two

roubles seventy-three kopecks, and all he wanted to advertise was a runaway black poodle. And what do you think he was up to really? In the end we had a libel case on our hands: the poodle was meant as a satire on a government cashier – I can't remember what ministry he came from.'

'But I want to publish an advertisement about my nose, not a poodle, and that's as near myself as dammit!'

'No, I can't accept that kind of advertisement.'

'But I've lost my *nose*!'

'Then you'd better see a doctor about it. I've heard there's a certain kind of specialist who can fix you up with any kind of nose you like. Anyway, you seem a cheery sort, and I can see you like to have your little joke.'

'By all that's holy, I swear I'm telling you the truth. If you really want me to, I'll *show* you what I mean.'

'I shouldn't bother if I were you,' the clerk continued, taking a pinch of snuff. 'However, if it's *really* no trouble,' he added, leaning forward out of curiosity, 'then I shouldn't mind having a quick look.'

The collegiate assessor removed his handkerchief.

'Well, how very peculiar! It's quite flat, just like a freshly cooked pancake. Incredibly flat.'

'So much for your objections! Now you've seen it with your own eyes and you can't possibly refuse. I will be particularly grateful for this little favour, and it's been a real pleasure meeting you.'

The Major, evidently, had decided that flattery might do the trick.

'Of course, it's no problem *printing* the advertisement,' the clerk said.

'But I can't see what you can stand to gain by it. If you like, why not give it to someone with a flair for journalism, then he can write it up as a very

rare freak of nature and have it published in *The Northern Bee*⁸ (here he took another pinch of snuff) so that young people might benefit from it (here he wiped his nose). Or else, as something of interest to the general public.'

The collegiate assessor's hopes vanished completely. He looked down at the bottom of the page at the theatre guide. The name of a rather pretty actress almost brought a smile to his face, and he reached down to his pocket to see if he had a five-rouble note, since in his opinion staff officers should sit only in the stalls. But then he remembered his nose, and knew he could not possibly think of going to the theatre.

Apparently even the clerk was touched by Kovalyov's terrible predicament and thought it would not hurt to cheer him up with a few words of sympathy.

'Really, I can't say how sorry I am at what's happened. How about a pinch of snuff? It's very good for headaches – and puts fresh heart into you. It even cures piles.'

With these words he offered Kovalyov his snuff-box, deftly flipping back the lid which bore a portrait of some lady in a hat.

This unintentionally thoughtless action made Kovalyov lose patience altogether.

'I don't understand how you can joke at a time like this,' he said angrily.

'Are you so blind you can't see that I've nothing to smell with? You know what you can do with your snuff! I can't bear to look at it, and anyway you might at least offer me some real French rapee, not that filthy Berezinsky brand.'

After this declaration he strode furiously out of the newspaper office and

⁸ A reactionary St. Petersburg periodical notorious for its vicious attacks on writers of talent, including Gogol.

went off to the local Inspector of Police (a fanatical lover of sugar, whose hall and dining room were crammed full of sugar-cubes presented by merchants who wanted to keep well in with him). Kovalyov arrived just when he was having a good stretch, grunting, and saying, 'Now for a nice two hours nap.' Our collegiate assessor had clearly chosen a very bad time for his visit.

The Inspector was a great patron of the arts and industry, but most of all he loved government banknotes. 'There's nothing finer than banknotes,' he used to say. 'They don't need feeding, take up very little room and slip nicely into the pocket. And they don't break if you drop them.' The Inspector gave Kovalyov a rather cold welcome and said that after dinner wasn't at all the time to start investigations, that nature herself had decreed a rest after meals (from this our collegiate assessor concluded that Inspector was well versed in the wisdom of antiquity), that *respectable* men do not get their noses ripped off, and that there were no end of majors knocking around who were not too fussy about their underwear and who were in the habit of visiting the most disreputable places.

These few home truths stung Kovalyov to the quick. Here I must point out that Kovalyov was an extremely sensitive man. He did not so much mind people making personal remarks about him, but it was a different matter when aspersions were cast on his rank or social standing. As far as he was concerned they could say what they liked about subalterns on the stage, but staff officers should be exempt from attack. The reception given him by the Inspector startled him so much that he shook his head, threw out his arms and said in a dignified voice, 'To be frank, after these remarks of yours, which I find very offensive, I have nothing more to say...' and walked out. He arrived home hardly able to

feel his feet beneath him. It was already getting dark. After his fruitless inquiries his flat seemed extremely dismal and depressing. As he entered the hall he saw his footman Ivan lying on a soiled leather couch spitting at the ceiling, managing to hit the same spot with a fair degree of success. The nonchalance of the man infuriated him and Kovalyov hit him across the forehead with his hat and said: 'You fat pig! Haven't you anything better to do!'

Ivan promptly jumped up and rushed to take off Kovalyov's coat. Tired and depressed, the Major went to his room, threw himself into an armchair and after a few sighs said:

'My God, my God! What have I done to deserve this? If I'd lost an arm or a leg it wouldn't be so bad. Even without any *ears* things wouldn't be very pleasant, but it wouldn't be the end of the world. A man without a nose, though, is God knows what, neither fish nor fowl. Just something to be thrown out of the window. If my nose had been lopped off during the war, or in a duel, at least I might have had some say in the matter. But to lose it for no reason at all and with nothing to show for it, not even a kopeck! No, it's absolutely impossible...It can't have gone just like that! Never! Must have been a dream, or perhaps I drank some of that vodka I use for rubbing down my beard after shaving instead of water: that idiot Ivan couldn't have put it back in the cupboard.'

To prove to himself he was not drunk the Major pinched himself so hard that he cried out in pain, which really did convince him he was awake and in full possession of his senses. He stealthily crept over to the mirror and screwed up his eyes in the hope that his nose would reappear in its proper place, but at once he jumped back, exclaiming:

'That ridiculous blank space again!'

It was absolutely incomprehensible. If a button, or a silver spoon, or his

watch, or something of that sort had been missing, that would have been understandable. But for his *nose* to disappear from his own flat...Major Kovalyov weighed up all the evidence and decided that the most likely explanation of all was that Mrs. Podtochin, the staff officer's wife, who wanted to marry off her daughter to him, was to blame, and no one else. In fact he liked chasing after her, but never came to proposing. And when the staff officer's wife used to tell him straight out that she was offering him her daughter's hand, he would politely withdraw, excusing himself on the grounds that he was still a young man, and that he wanted to devote another five years to the service, by which time he would be just forty two. So, to get her revenge, the staff officer's wife must have hired some witches to spirit it away, and this was the only way his nose could possibly have been cut off – no one had visited him in his flat, his barber Ivan Yakovlevich had shaved him only last Wednesday, and the rest of that day and the whole of Thursday his nose had been intact. All this he remembered quite clearly. Moreover, he would have been in pain and the wound could not have healed as smooth as a pancake in such a short time. He began planning what to do: either he would sue the staff officer's wife for damages, or he would go and see her personally and accuse her point blank.

But he was distracted from these thoughts by the sight of some chinks of light in the door, which meant Ivan had lit a candle in the hall. Soon afterwards Ivan appeared in person, holding the candle in front of him, so that it brightened up the whole room. Kovalyov's first reaction was to seize his handkerchief and cover up the bare place where only yesterday his nose had been, to prevent that stupid idiot from standing there gaping at him. No sooner had Ivan left than a strange voice was heard in the hall: 'Does Collegiate Assessor Kovalyov live here?'

'Please come in. The Major's home, said Kovalyov, springing to his feet and opening the door.

A smart-looking police officer, with plump cheeks and whiskers that were neither too light nor too dark – the same police officer who had stood on St Isaac's Bridge at the beginning of our story – made his entrance.

'Are you the gentleman who has lost his nose?'

'Yes, that's me.'

'It's been found.'

'What did you say?' cried Major Kovalyov. He could hardly speak for joy. He looked wide-eyed at the police officer, the candle-light flickering on his fat cheeks and thick lips.

'How did you find it?'

'Very strange. We caught it just as it was about to drive off in the Riga stagecoach. Its passport was made out in the name of some civil servant. Stangely enough, I mistook it for a gentleman at first. Fortunately I had my spectacles with me so I could see it was really a nose. I'm very short-sighted, and if you happen to stand just in front of me, I can only make out your face, but not your nose, or beard, or anything else in fact. My mother-in-law (that's to say, on my *wife's* side) suffers from the same complaint.

Kovalyov was beside himself.

'Where is it? I'll go right away to claim it.'

'Don't excite yourself, sir. I knew how much you wanted it back, so I've brought it with me. Very strange, but the main culprit in this little affair seems to be that swindler of a barber from Voznesensky Street: he's down at the station now. I've had my eyes on him a long time on suspicion of drunkenness and larceny, and only three days ago he was

found stealing a dozen buttons from a shop. You'll find your nose just as it was when you lost it.'

And the police officer dipped into his pocket and pulled out the nose wrapped up in a piece of paper. 'That's it!' cried Kovalyov, 'no mistake! You must stay and have a cup of tea.'

'I'd like to, but I'm expected back at the prison... The price of food has rocketed... My mother-in-law (on my *wife's* side) is living with me, and all the children as well; the eldest boy seems very promising, very bright, but we haven't the money to send him to school...'

Kovalyov guessed what he was after and took a note from the table and pressed it into the officer's hands. The police officer bowed very low and went out into the street, where Kovalyov could hear him telling some stupid peasant who had driven his cart up on the pavement what he thought of him.

When the police officer had gone, our collegiate assessor felt rather bemused and only after a few minutes did he come to his senses at all, so intense was his joy. He carefully took the nose in his cupped hands and once more subjected it to close scrutiny.

'Yes, that's it, that's it!' Major Kovalyov said, 'and there's the pimple that came up yesterday on the left-hand side.' The Major almost laughed with joy.

But nothing is lasting in this world. Even joy begins to fade after only one minute. Two minutes later, and it is weaker still, until finally it is swallowed up in our everyday, prosaic state of mind, just as a ripple made by a pebble gradually merges with the smooth surface of the water. After some thought Kovalyov concluded that all was not right again yet and there still remained the problem of putting the nose back in place. 'What if it doesn't stick?'

With a feeling of inexpressible horror he rushed to the table, and pulled the mirror nearer, as he was afraid that he might stick the nose on crooked. His hands trembled. With great care and caution he pushed it into place. But oh! the nose just would not stick. He warmed it a little by pressing it to his mouth and breathing on it, and then pressed it again to the smooth space between his cheeks. But try as he might the nose would not stay on.

'Stay on, you fool!' he said. But the nose seemed to be made of wood and fell on to the table with a strange cork-like sound. The Major's face quivered convulsively. 'Perhaps I can graft it,' he said apprehensively. But no matter how many times he tried to put it back, all his efforts were futile.

He called Ivan and told him to fetch the doctor, who happened to live in the same block, in one of the best flats on the first floor.

This doctor was a handsome man with fine whiskers as black as pitch, and a freshlooking, healthy wife. Every morning he used to eat apples and was terribly meticulous about keeping his mouth clean, spending at least three quarters of an hour rinsing it out every day and using five different varieties of toothbrush. He came right away. When he had asked the Major if he had had this trouble for very long the doctor pushed back Kovalyov's chin and prodded him with his thumb in the spot once occupied by his nose – so sharply that the Major hit the wall very hard with the back of his head. The doctor told him not to worry and made him stand a little way from the wall and lean his head first to the right. Pinching the place where his nose had been the doctor said 'Hm!' Then he ordered him to move his head to the left and produced another 'Hm!' Finally he prodded him again, making Kovalyov's head twitch like a horse having its teeth inspected.

After this examination the doctor shook his head and said: 'It's no good. It's best to stay as you are, otherwise you'll only make it worse. Of course, it's possible to have it stuck on, and I could do this for you quite easily. But I assure you it would look terrible.'

'That's *marvellous*, that is! How can I carry on without a nose?' said Kovalyov. '*Whatever* you do it couldn't look any worse; and God knows, that's bad enough! How can I go around looking like a freak? I mix with nice people. I'm expected at two soirees today. I know nearly all the best people – Mrs Chekharyev, a state councillor's wife, Mrs Podtochin, a staff officer's wife... after the way *she's* behaved I won't have any more to do with *her*, except when I get the police on her trail.' Kovalyov went on pleading: 'Please do me this one favour – isn't there any way? Even if you only get it to hold on, it wouldn't be so bad, and if there were any risk of it falling off, I could keep it there with my hand. I don't dance, which is a help, because any violent movement might make it drop off. And you may rest assured I wouldn't be slow in showing my appreciation – as far as my pocket will allow of course...'

The doctor then said in a voice which could not be called loud, or even soft, but persuasive and arresting: 'I never practice my art from purely mercenary motives. That is contrary to my code of conduct and all professional ethics. True, I make a charge for private visits, but only so as not to offend patients by refusing to take their money. Of course, I could put your nose back if I wanted to. But I give you my word of honour, if you know what's good for you, it would be far worse if I tried. Let nature take its course. Wash the area as much as you can with cold water and believe me you'll feel just as good as when you had a nose. Now, as far as the nose is concerned, put it in a jar of alcohol; better still, soak it in two tablespoonsful of sour vodka and warmed-up vinegar, and

you'll get good money for it. I'll take it myself if you don't want it.'

'No! I wouldn't sell it for anything,' Kovalyov cried desperately. 'I'd rather lose it again.'

'Then I'm sorry,' replied the doctor, bowing himself out. 'I wanted to help you...at least I've tried hard enough.'

With these words the doctor made a very dignified exit. Kovalyov did not even look at his face, and felt so dazed that all he could make out were the doctor's snowy-white cuffs sticking out from the sleeves of his black dress-coat.

The very next day he decided – before going to the police – to write to the staff officer's wife to ask her to put back in its proper place what belonged to him without further ado. The letter read as follows:

Dear Mrs Alexandra Grigoryevna,

I cannot understand this strange behaviour on your part. You can be sure, though, that it won't get you anywhere and you certainly won't force me to marry your daughter. Moreover, you can rest assured that, regarding my nose, I am familiar with the whole history of this affair from the very beginning, and I also know that you, and no one else, are the prime instigator. Its sudden detachment from its rightful place, its subsequent flight, its masquerading as a civil servant and then its re-appearance in its natural state, are nothing else than the result of black magic carried out by yourself or by those practicing the same very honourable art. I consider it my duty to warn you that if the above-mentioned nose is not back in its proper place by today, then I shall be compelled to ask for the law's protection.

I remain, dear Madam,

Your very faithful servant,
Platon Kovalyov

Dear Mr Kovalyov!

I was simply staggered by your letter. To be honest, I never expected anything of this kind from you, particularly those remarks which are quite uncalled-for. I would have you know I have never received that civil servant mentioned by you in my house, whether disguised or not. True, Philip Ivanovich Potahchikov used to call. Although he wanted to ask for my daughter's hand, and despite the fact that he was a very sober, respectable and learned gentleman, I never gave him any cause for hope. And then you go on to mention your nose. If by this you mean to say I wanted to make you look foolish,⁹ that is, to put you off with a formal refusal, then all I can say is that I am very surprised that you can talk like this, as you know well enough my feelings on the matter are quite different. And if you care to make an official proposal to my daughter, I will gladly give my consent, for this has always been my dearest wish, and in this hope I remain at your disposal.

Yours sincerely,
Alexandra Podtochin

'No' said Kovalyov when he had read the letter. 'She's not to blame. Impossible! A guilty person could never write a letter like that.' The collegiate assessor knew what he was talking about in this case as he had been sent to the Caucasus several times to carry out legal inquiries. 'How on earth did this happen then? It's impossible to make head or tail of it!' he said, letting his arms drop to his side.

Meanwhile rumours about the strange occurrence had spread throughout the capital, not, need we say, without a few embellishments. As the time

⁹ Russian is rich in idioms referring to the nose, most of which have a derogatory meaning, e.g. to make a fool of, etc.

everyone seemed very preoccupied with the supernatural: only a short time before, some experiments in magnetism had been all the rage. Besides, the story of the dancing chairs in Konushenny Street¹⁰ was still fresh in people's minds, so no one was particularly surprised to hear about Collegiate Assessor Kovalyov's nose taking a regular stroll along the Nevsky Avenue at exactly three o'clock every afternoon. Every day crowds of inquisitive people flocked there. Someone said they had seen the nose in Junker's Store and this produced such a crush outside that the police had to be called.

One fairly respectable-looking, bewhiskered character, who sold stale cakes outside the theatre, knocked together some solid-looking wooden benches, and hired them out at eighty kopecks a time for people to stand on.

One retired colonel left home especially early one morning and after a great struggle managed to barge his way through to the front. But to his great annoyance, instead of a nose in the shop window, all he could see was an ordinary woolen jersey and a lithograph showing a girl adjusting her stocking while a dandy with a small beard and cutaway waistcoat peered out at her from behind a tree – a picture which had hung there in that identical spot for more than ten years. He left feeling very cross and was heard to say: 'Misleading the public with such ridiculous and far-fetched stories shouldn't be allowed.'

Afterwards it was rumoured that Major Kovalyov's nose was no longer to be seen strolling along the Nevsky Avenue but was in the habit of

¹⁰ An entry in Pushkin's diary for 17 December 1833 mentions furniture jumping about in one of the houses attached to the Royal Stables. In 1832 a certain lady called Tatarinova was exiled from St. Petersburg for deceiving people into thinking she could will the objects to move.

walking in Tavrichesky Park, and that it had been doing this for a long time. When Khozrov-Mirza¹¹ lived there, he was astonished at this freak of nature. Some of the students from the College of Surgeons went to have a look. One well-known very respectable lady wrote specially to the head park-keeper, asking him to show her children this very rare phenomenon and, if possible, give them an instructive and edifying commentary at the same time.

These events came as a blessing to those socialites (indispensable for any successful party) who loved amusing the ladies and whose stock of stories was completely exhausted at the time.

A few respectable and high-minded citizens were very upset. One indignant gentleman said that he was at a loss to understand how such absurd cock-and-bull stories could gain currency in the present enlightened century, and that the complete indifference shown by the authorities was past comprehension. Clearly this gentleman was the type who likes to make the government responsible for everything, even their daily quarrels with their wives. And afterwards...but here again the whole incident becomes enveloped in mist and what happened later remains a complete mystery.

3

This world is full of the most outrageous nonsense. Sometimes things happen which you would hardly think possible: that very same nose, which had paraded itself as a state councilor and created such an uproar in the city, suddenly turned up, as if nothing had happened, plonk where

¹¹ A Persian prince who had come with official apologies for the murder of the famous playwright A. S. Griboyedov in Tehran in 1829. (Griboyedov had gone to Tehran to negotiate with the Shah regarding the Peace of Turkmenchai.)

it had been before, i.e. right between Major Kovalyov's two cheeks. This was on 7 April. He woke up and happened to glance at the mirror – there was his nose! He grabbed it with his hand to make sure – but there was no doubt this time. 'Aha!' cried Kovalyov, and if Ivan hadn't come in at that very moment, he would have joyfully danced a trepak round the room in his bare feet.

He ordered some soap and water, and as he washed himself looked into the mirror again; the nose was there. He had another look as he dried himself – yes, the nose was still there!

'Look, Ivan, I think I've got a pimple on my nose'.

Kovalyov thought: 'God, supposing he replies: 'Not only is there no pimple, but no nose either!' But Ivan answered: 'Your nose is quite all right, sir, I can't see any pimple.'

'Thank God for that,' the Major said to himself and clicked his fingers. At this moment Ivan Yakovlevich the barber poked his head round the corner, but timidly this time, like a cat which had just been beaten for stealing fat.

'Before you start, are your hands clean?' Kovalyov shouted from the other side of the room.

'Perfectly clean.'

'You're lying.'

'On my life, sir, they're clean!'

'Hm, let's have a look then!'

Kovalyov sat down. Ivan Yakovlevich covered him with a towel and in a twinkling had transformed his whole beard and part of his cheeks into the kind of cream served up at merchants' birthday parties.

'Well, I'll be damned,' Ivan Yakovlevich muttered to himself, staring at the nose. He bent Kovalyov's head to one side and looked at him from a

different angle. ‘That’s *it* all right! You’d never credit it...’ he continued and contemplated the nose for a long time. Finally, ever so gently, with a delicacy that the reader can best imagine, he lifted two fingers to hold the nose by its tip. This was how Ivan Yakovlevich normally shaved his customers.

‘Come on now, and mind my nose!’ shouted Kovalyov. Ivan Yakovlevich let his arms fall to his side and stood there more frightened and embarrassed than he had ever been in his life. At last he started tickling Kovalyov carefully under the chin with his razor. And although with only his olfactory organ to hold on to without any other means of support made shaving very awkward, by planting his rough, wrinkled thumb on his cheek and lower gum (in this way gaining some sort of leverage) he managed to shave him.

When everything was ready, Kovalyov rushed to get dressed and took a cab straight to the café. He had hardly got inside before he shouted, ‘Waiter, a cup of chocolate,’ and went straight up to the mirror. Yes, his nose was there! Gaily he turned round, screwed up his eyes and looked superciliously at two soldiers, one of whom had a nose no bigger than a *waistcoat* button. Then he went off to the ministerial department where he was petitioning for a vice-governorship. (Failing this he was going to try for an administrative post.) As he crossed the entrance hall he had another look in the mirror: his nose was still there!

Then he went to see another collegiate assessor (or Major), a great wag whose sly digs Kovalyov used to counter by saying: ‘I’m used to your quips by now, you old niggler!’

On the way he thought: ‘If the Major doesn’t split his sides when he sees me, that’s a sure sign everything is in its proper place.’ But the collegiate assessor did not pass any remarks. ‘That’s all right then, dammit!’

thought Kovalyov. In the street he met Mrs Podtochin, the staff officer’s wife, who was with her daughter, and they replied to his bow with delighted exclamations: clearly, he had suffered no lasting injury. He had a long chat with them, made a point of taking out of his snuff-box, and stood there for ages ostentatiously stuffing both nostrils as he murmured to himself: ‘That’ll teach you, you old hens! And I’m not going to marry your daughter, simply *par amour*, as they say! If you *don’t* mind!’ And from that time onwards Major Kovalyov was able to stroll along the Nevsky Avenue, visit the theatre, in fact go everywhere as though absolutely nothing had happened. And, as though absolutely nothing *had* happened, his nose stayed in the middle of his face and showed no signs of wandering off. After that he was in perpetual high spirits, always smiling, chasing all the pretty girls, and on one occasion even stopping at a small shop in the Gostiny Dvor¹² to buy ribbon for some medal, no one knows why, as he did not belong to any order of knighthood.

And all this took place in the northern capital of our vast empire! Only now, after much reflection can we see that there is a great deal that is very far-fetched in this story. Apart from the fact that it’s *highly* unlikely for a nose to disappear in such a fantastic way and then reappear in various parts of the town dressed as a state councilor, it is hard to believe that Kovalyov was so ignorant as to think newspapers would accept advertisements about noses. I’m not saying I consider such an advertisement too expensive and a waste of money: that’s nonsense, and what’s more, I don’t think I’m a mercenary person. But it’s all very nasty, not quite the thing at all, and it makes me feel very awkward! And,

¹² The same shopping arcade substituted by the censorship for Kazan Cathedral in the original version. It was built in the eighteenth-century and opened off the Nevsky Avenue.

come to think of it, how *did* the nose manage to turn up in a loaf of bread, and how *did* Ivan Yakovlevich...? No, I don't understand it, not one bit! But the strangest, most incredible thing of all is that authors should write about such things. That, I confess, is beyond my comprehension. It's just...no, no, I don't understand it at all! Firstly, it's no use to the country whatsoever; secondly, it's no use...I simply don't know *what* one can make of it...However, when all is said and done, one can concede this point or the other and perhaps you can even find...well then you won't find much that *isn't* on the absurd side, will you? And yet, if you stop to think for a moment, there's a grain of truth in it. Whatever you may say, these things do happen—rarely, I admit, but they do happen.

From Nikolay Gogol, *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, tr. Ronald Wilks (London: Penguin, 1987)

POETRY SUPPLEMENT

Allegory Of The Cave

by Stephen Dunn

He climbed toward the blinding light
and when his eyes adjusted
he looked down and could see

his fellow prisoners captivated
by shadows; everything he had believed
was false. And he was suddenly

in the 20th century, in the sunlight
and violence of history, encumbered
by knowledge. Only a hero

would dare return with the truth.
So from the cave's upper reaches,
removed from harm, he called out

the disturbing news.
What lovely echoes, the prisoners said,
what a fine musical place to live.

He spelled it out, then, in clear prose
on paper scraps, which he floated down.

But in the semi-dark they read his words

with the indulgence of those who seldom read:

It's about my father's death, one of them said.

No, said the others, it's a joke.

By this time he no longer was sure

of what he'd seen. Wasn't sunlight a shadow too?

Wasn't there always a source

behind a source? He just stood there,

confused, a man who had moved

to larger errors, without a prayer.

Landscape at the End of the Century

by Stephen Dunn

The sky in the trees, the trees mixed up

with what's left of heaven, nearby a patch

of daffodils rooted down

where dirt and stones comprise a kind

of night, unmetaphysical, cool as a skeptic's

final sentence. What this scene needs

is a nude absentmindedly sunning herself

on a large rock, thinks the man fed up

with nature, or perhaps a lost tiger,

the maximum amount of wildness a landscape

can bear, but the man knows and fears

his history of tampering with everything,

and besides to anyone who might see him

he's just a figure in a clearing

in a forest in a universe

that is as random as desire itself,

his desire in particular, so much going on

with and without him, moles humping up

the ground near the daffodils, a mockingbird

publishing its cacophonous anthology,

and those little Calvinists, the ants,

making it all the more difficult

for a person in America

to close his office, skip to the beach.

But what this scene needs are wisteria

and persimmons, thinks the woman

sunning herself absentmindedly on the rock,

a few magnificent words that one

might want to eat if one were a lover

of words, the hell with first principles,

the noon sun on my body, tempered

by a breeze that cannot be doubted.

And as she thinks, she who exists

only in the man's mind, a deer grazes

beyond their knowing, a deer tick riding

its back, and in the gifted air

mosquitos, dragonflies, and tattered
mute angels no one has called upon in years.

Stephen Dunn (born 1939) has been a professional basketball player, an advertising copywriter, an editor as well as a professor of writing. He is the author of over 11 books, including *What Goes On: Selected and New Poems 1995-2009*; *Everything Else in the World* (2006); *Local Visitations* (2003); *Different Hours* (2000). He is the 2001 Pulitzer Prize winner for poetry.

The Myth of Icarus

Daedalus was a highly respected and talented Athenian artisan descendent from the royal family of Cecrops, the mythical first king of Athens. He was known for his skill as an architect, sculpture, and inventor, and he produced many famous works. Despite his self-confidence, Daedalus once committed a crime of envy against Talus, his nephew and apprentice. Talus, who seemed destined to become as great an artisan as his uncle Daedalus, was inspired one day to invent the saw after having seen the way a snake used its jaws. Daedalus, momentarily stricken with jealousy, threw Talus off of the Acropolis. For this crime, Daedalus was exiled to Crete and placed in the service of King Minos, where he eventually had a son, Icarus, with the beautiful Naucraste, a mistress-slave of the King.

Daedalus conceived to escape with Icarus from Crete by constructing wings and then flying to safety. He built the wings from feathers and

wax, and before the two set off he warned Icarus not to fly too low lest his wings touch the waves and get wet, and not too high lest the sun melt the wax. But the young Icarus, overwhelmed by the thrill of flying and freedom, did not heed his father's warning, and flew too close to the sun whereupon the wax in his wings melted and he fell into the sea. Daedalus escaped to Sicily and Icarus' body was carried ashore by the current to an island then without a name. Heracles came across the body and recognized it, giving it burial where today there still stands a small rock promontory jutting out into the Aegean Sea, and naming the island and the sea around it after the fallen Icarus.

Musée de Beaux Arts

by W. H. Auden

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully
along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot

Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Brueghel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the plowman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

From *Another Time*, W.H. Auden, 1940

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

by William Carlos Williams

According to Brueghel
when Icarus fell
it was spring
a farmer was ploughing
his field
the whole pageantry

of the year was
awake tingling
near

the edge of the sea
concerned
with itself

sweating in the sun
that melted
the wings' wax

unsignificantly
off the coast
there was

a splash quite unnoticed

it was
Icarus drowning.

From *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems*, 1962

Waiting for Icarus

by Muriel Rukeyser

He said he would be back and we'd drink wine together
He said that everything would be better than before
He said we were on the edge of a new relation
He said he would never again cringe before his father
He said that he was going to invent full-time
He said he loved me that going into me
He said he was going into the world and the sky
He said all the buckles were very firm

He said the wax was the best wax
 He said Wait for me here on the beach
 He said Just don't cry

I remember the gulls and the waves
 I remember the islands going dark on the sea
 I remember the girls laughing,
 I remember they said he only wanted to get away from me
 I remember mother saying: Inventors are like poets, a trashy lot
 I remember she told me those who try out inventions are worse
 I remember she added: Women who love such are the worst of all

I have been waiting all day, or perhaps longer.
 I would have liked to try those wings myself.
 It would have been better than this.

From *Breaking Open*, 1973

Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973) was born in York, England, in 1907. He moved to Birmingham during childhood and was educated at Christ Church, Oxford. As a young man, he was influenced by the poetry of Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost as well as William Blake, Emily Dickinson, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Old English verse. In 1928, his collection *Poems* was privately printed, but it was not until 1930, when another collection titled *Poems* (though its contents was different) was published, that Auden was established as the leading voice of a new generation.

William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, the son of an English father and Puerto Rican mother. He entered the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1902, where he became close friends with poets Ezra Pound and Hilda Doolittle (H.D.). He is associated with the Imagiste movement, although Williams differed from Pound and H.D. in his dedication to expressing a uniquely American Idiom. His prose piece *In the American Grain* was highly influential in this regard, and

had an immense impact on the Beats and the Black Mountain poets, in particular. Although Williams worked as a doctor for most of his life, he remained a prolific writer and was highly respected among the literary circles of his day. "No ideas but in things" placed the root of his poetics in the objective world, as opposed to the subjectivity of imagination or memory.

Muriel Rukeyser was born in New York City in 1913. She attended Columbia University and was heavily involved in political action throughout her life. This informed her poetical life. She participated in many civil rights causes and wrote for the *Daily Worker*, and went to Spain to cover the People's Olympiad. She was also a vocal opponent to the Vietnam War and active in the feminist movement.

Daedalus and Icarus

by Zbigniew Herbert

DAEDALUS SAYS:

Go on my son and remember you are walking not flying
 wings are only an ornament and you tread on a meadow
 that warm gust is the balmy earth of summer
 and that colder one is just the running stream
 the sky is filled with leaves and little animals

ICARUS SAYS:

My eyes like two stones fall straight back to earth
 and they see a farmer turning over thick clumps

a worm squirming in a furrow

an evil worm severing the plant's ties to the earth

DAEDALUS SAYS:

My son that's not true The universe is sheer light

and earth a dish of shadow Look colors play here

dust flies up from the sea mist rises into the skies

a rainbow is now being made from noblest atoms

ICARUS SAYS:

My arms hurt father from this beating in a void

my numb legs yearn for pine needles hard stones

I cannot look into the sun the way you can father

I am who immersed in the dark rays of the earth

DESCRIPTION OF THE CATASTROPHE:

Now Icarus plunges down headlong

his last image the sight of a child's heel

being consumed by the gluttonous sea

Up above his father cries out a name

belonging not to a neck nor to a head

but to a recollection

COMMENTARY:

He was so young he didn't understand wings are just a metaphor

a little wax and feathers and contempt for the laws of gravitation

they can't sustain the body at a height of many feet

The crucial thing is that our hearts

powered by heavy blood

should be filled with air

and that is what Icarus would not accept

let us pray

From Zbigniew Herbert, *The Collected Poems 1956-1998*, tr. Alissa Valles (London: Atlantic, 2014)

Mrs Icarus

by Carol Ann Duffy

I'm not the first or the last

to stand on a hillock,

watching the man she married

prove to the world

he's a total, utter, absolute, Grade A pillock.

From Carol Ann Duffy, *The World's Wife* (London: Picador, 1999).

To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Triumph

by Anne Sexton

Consider Icarus, pasting those sticky wings on,
testing that strange little tug at his shoulder blade,
and think of that first flawless moment over the lawn
of the labyrinth. Think of the difference it made!
There below are the trees, as awkward as camels;
and here are the shocked starlings pumping past
and think of innocent Icarus who is doing quite well:
larger than a sail, over the fog and the blast
of the plushy ocean, he goes. Admire his wings!
Feel the fire at his neck and see how casually
he glances up and is caught, wondrously tunneling
into that hot eye. Who cares that he fell back to the sea?
See him acclaiming the sun and come plunging down
while his sensible daddy goes straight into town.

From Anne Sexton, *Selected Poems* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

Icarus

by Edward Field

Only the feathers floating around the hat
Showed that anything more spectacular had occurred
Than the usual drowning. The police preferred to ignore
The confusing aspects of the case,
And the witnesses ran off to a gang war.
So the report filed and forgotten in the archives read simply
“Drowned,” but it was wrong: Icarus
Had swum away, coming at last to the city
Where he rented a house and tended the garden.

“That nice Mr. Hicks” the neighbors called,
Never dreaming that the gray, respectable suit
Concealed arms that had controlled huge wings
Nor that those sad, defeated eyes had once
Compelled the sun. And had he told them
They would have answered with a shocked,
uncomprehending stare.
No, he could not disturb their neat front yards;
Yet all his books insisted that this was a horrible mistake:
What was he doing aging in a suburb?
Can the genius of the hero fall
To the middling stature of the merely talented?

And nightly Icarus probes his wound
And daily in his workshop, curtains carefully drawn,
Constructs small wings and tries to fly
To the lighting fixture on the ceiling:
Fails every time and hates himself for trying.

He had thought himself a hero, had acted heroically,
 And dreamt of his fall, the tragic fall of the hero;
 But now rides commuter trains,

Serves on various committees,
 And wishes he had drowned.

From Edward Field, *Stand Up, Friend, with Me* (New York: Grove, 1963)

Zbigniew Herbert was born in Lwów in 1924. Though he started writing poetry at seventeen, owing to the Nazi and Stalinist occupations of Poland, he did not publish until 1956. Along with Czesław Miłosz and Wisława Szymborska, he was one of the leading post-war Polish poets. Feted in Poland and abroad, he died in 1998.

Carol Ann Duffy was born in Glasgow in 1955, and studied philosophy at the University of Liverpool. Her poetry, often in the form of an ironic monologue, has been published in several collections including *Standing Female Nude* (1985), *Mean Time* (1993), and *The World's Wife* (1999). She was appointed Britain's Poet Laureate in 2009.

Anne Sexton was born in Newton, Massachusetts, in 1928. Her collection, *Live or Die*, won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1967 and is a landmark of Confessional poetry. She died in 1974.

Edward Field, born in Brooklyn in 1924, began writing poetry while serving as a navigator in the Second World War. In addition to his own poetry, he has published anthologies (including Eskimo songs collected by Knud Rasmussen). His memoirs were published in 2007.

Consciousness

by Joanie Mackowski

How it is fickle, leaving one alone to wander
 the halls of the skull with the fluorescents
 softly flickering. It rests on the head
 like a bird nest, woven of twigs and tinsel
 and awkward as soon as one stops to look.
 That pile of fallen leaves drifting from
 the brain to the fingertip burned on the stove,
 to the grooves in that man's voice
 as he coos to his dog, blowing into the leaves
 of books with moonlit opossums
 and Chevrolets easing down the roads
 of one's bones. And now it plucks a single
 tulip from the pixelated blizzard: yet
 itself is a swarm, a pulse with no
 indigenous form, the brain's lunar halo.
 Our compacted galaxy, its constellations
 trembling like flies caught in a spider web,
 until we die, and then the flies
 buzz away—while another accidental
 coherence counts to three to pass the time
 or notes the berries on the bittersweet vine
 strewn in the spruces, red pebbles dropped
 in the brain's gray pool. How it folds itself
 like a map to fit in a pocket, how it unfolds
 a fraying map from the pocket of the day.

From *Poetry* (February 2012).

Эне Тили

by Алыкул Осмонов (Alykul Osmonov)

Тил уйронуу

Жакшы кормок - суймоктон,

Энем тилин жакшы коруп уйроткон,

Ойротто жок, оной тил бейм, биздин тил,

Бир жашымда:

Ата, апа,

ат, эт дегенди суйлоткон.

Тил кадырлоо

Чын конулдон суймоктон,

Атам тилин суйгондуктон уйроткон.

Эрдик, онор, билим менен суйлошуп -

Бир журсун деп бир жашымда уйроткон.

Бирге журом, эне тилин кадырлайм,

Бул тил менен: иштейм, суйлойм, ыр ырдайм.

Башка тилди жандай жакшы корсом да

Эне тилин суйгонумдон жанылбайм.

(1948)

From Alykul Osmonov, *Waves of the Lake*, 1995.**Native Tongue**

by Alykul Osmonov

To learn a language -

You learn from love, from love.

My mother, loving the language, thus taught me.

Incomparable and easy, my native tongue,

In one short year what did I learn, let's see:

Well, "papa", "mama",

"Cat", and "dog", and of course,

And "bread", and "meat", and papa's favourite - "horse".

Respect your tongue,

And love it with pure soul.

My father, too, with love taught me our tongue:

To boldly speak, and know our language whole,

He taught me when I still was very young.

Like him, my native language I respect,

And in this tongue I write, and speak, and sing.

Though other tongues I love, as one would expect,

My native tongue I love more than anything.

[Tr. by Walter May]

Адамга

by Алыкул Осмонов (Alykul Osmonov)

Адамды адам меймандап,
Сыйлайт экенсин,
Жакын жолдош - жорону
Жыйнайт экенсин,
Жакшы тилек, ак ишти
Кыйбайт экенсин.
Ак дасторкон устундо
Чын ниет менен досунду
Жегин муну, ичкин муну деп,
Кыйнайт экенсин,
Кара жердин тубуно
Биринди бирин жашырып,
Бйлайт экенсин.

(1945)

From Alykul Osmonov, *Waves of the Lake*, 1995.

Man

by Alykul Osmonov

Man, when making man your guest,
Every honour lend him.
Dear comrade, one of the best -
All attention lend him.
Very best wishes for success
And no others lend him.

Sitting at the well-spread feast,
Show your heart and soul at least:
“Eat and drink!” — he must be pressed,
All encouragement lend him.
Though this time may be your last,
All assistance lend him.
When the final die is cast,
And beneath the sod he’s passed...
All your tears then lend him.

[Tr. by Walter May]

Der Panther

by R. M. Rilke

IM JARDIN DES PLANTES, PARIS

Sein Blick ist vom Vorübergehn der Stäbe
so müd geworden, daß er nichts mehr hält.
Ihm ist, als ob es tausend Stäbe gäbe
und hinter tausend Stäben keine Welt.

Der weiche Gang geschmeidig starker Schritte,
der sich im allerkleinsten Kreise dreht,
ist wie ein Tanz von Kraft um eine Mitte,
in der betäube ein großer Wille steht.

Nur manchmal schiebt der Vorhang der Pupille
sich lautlos auf –. Dann geht ein Bild hinein
geht durch der Glieder angespannte Stille –
und hört im Herzen auf zu sein.

The Panther*Jardin des Plantes, Paris*

His gaze has been so worn by the procession
 Of bars that it no longer makes a bond.
 Around, a thousand bars seem to be flashing,
 And in their flashing show no world beyond.

The lissom steps which round out and re-enter
 The tightest circuit of their turning drill
 Are like a dance of strength about a center
 Wherein there stands benumbed a mighty will.

Only from time to time the pupil's shutter
 Will draw apart: an image enters then,
 To travel through the tautened body's utter
 Stillness – and in the heart to end.

[Tr. Ardnt]

The Panther*In the Jardin des Plantes, Paris*

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,
 has grown so weary that it cannot hold
 anything else. it seems to him there are
 a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.

As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,
 the movement of his powerful soft strides

is like a ritual dance around a center
 in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.

Only at times, the curtain of the pupils
 lifts, quietly –. An image enters in,
 rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,
 plunges into the heart and is gone.

[Tr. Mitchell]

The Panther*Jardin des Plantes, Paris*

The bars which pass and strike across his gaze
 have stunned his sight; the eyes have lost their hold.
 To him it seems there are a thousand bars,
 a thousand bars and nothing else. No World.

And pacing out that mean, constricted ground,
 so quiet, supple, powerful, his stride
 is like a ritual dance performed around
 the centre where his baffled will survives.

The silent shutter of his eye sometimes
 slides open to admit some thing outside;
 an image runs through each expectant limb
 and penetrates his heart, and dies.

[Tr. Cohn]

The Panther

In the Jardin des Plantes, Paris

His eyes have grown so tired with the passing
of bars that their reservoirs can hold
no more. There seem a thousand bars, and in
the drowse beyond a thousand bars no world.

The supple, powerful footfall paces softly
in ever-tinier circles, tight-described,
a danced strength, as though about a centre
where a great will stays, stupefied.

Sometimes the curtain in his eye lifts
inaudibly. An image enters dully,
travels the tautened quiet of the limbs –
and in the heart ceases to be.

[Tr. Ranson]

Joanie V. Mackowski (born 1963 Illinois) is an American poet. She grew up in Connecticut. She graduated from Wesleyan University, the University of Washington, was a Stegner Fellow in Poetry at Stanford University, and from University of Missouri with a Ph.D. She taught at University of Cincinnati. She was an editor at Reconfigurations. Her work has appeared in *Prairie schooner*, *Antioch Review*, and *Best American Poetry 2007*.

Alykul Osmonov (Kyrgyz: Алыкул Осмонов, 21 March 1915 – 12 December 1950) was a Kyrgyz poet, significant for his efforts to modernizing poetry in Kyrgyzstan. His main accomplishments were transforming poetry from an oral to a literary tradition, focusing upon secular themes with an emphasis on inner emotion, daily life, and nationalism, and translating numerous European authors into the Kyrgyz language, including William Shakespeare, Sándor Petőfi, and Alexander Pushkin.

Rainer Maria Rilke is generally considered the German language's greatest 20th century poet. Rilke was born in Prague, the only child of an unhappy marriage. His parents placed him in a military school with the desire that he become an officer. With the help of his uncle, who realized that Rilke was a highly gifted child, Rilke left the military academy and entered a German preparatory school. By the time he enrolled in the Charles University in Prague in 1895, he knew that he would pursue a literary career: he had already published his first volume of poetry, *Leben und Liederr*. In 1897, Rilke went to Russia, a trip that would prove to be a milestone in Rilke's life. There he met Tolstoy, whose influence is seen in *Das Buch vom lieben Gott und anderes (Stories of God)*, and Leonid Pasternak, the nine-year-old Boris's father. Rilke wrote over 20 books of poetry and prose, most translated into multiple languages.

Sophocles
Antigone
 442 BC

Translation by Johnston

Translator's Note

Note that in this translation the numbers in square brackets refer to the Greek text, and the numbers with no brackets refer to this text. The asterisks in the text are links to explanatory notes at the end.

Background Note to the Story

Antigone was actually the earliest of the plays Sophocles devoted to the Theban cycle of myths. It was first produced about 442 BCE, when the playwright was in his fifties. *Oedipus the King* was produced about 429 BCE, and *Oedipus at Colonus* was written in the extreme old age of Sophocles and produced sometime after his death near the end of the fifth century.

Story of Oedipus and his family: Cadmus, founder of the city of Thebes, was an ancestor of Oedipus. When Laius, one of the Theban kings, asked Apollo, through his oracle at Delphi, whether he and his wife Jocasta would have a son, the oracle replied that they would, but that this son was destined to kill his father. After the child was born, Laius pierced his ankles, bound them together with a leather thong, and gave the baby to a herdsman to expose. Pitying the infant, the herdsman instead gave the baby to another

shepherd, who took the child back to his native city, Corinth, and gave him to the Polybus and Merope, the childless rulers of that city. The royal couple named him Oedipus (“swollen foot”) and raised him as their own son.

When Oedipus was grown, some companions taunted him, saying he was a bastard, not the legitimate son of Polybus. Troubled, Oedipus traveled to Delphi to consult the oracle, which prophesied that he was destined to kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus left Delphi swearing never to return to Corinth, seeking in that way to avoid the awful fate predicted by the oracle. However, at a crossroads where three roads came together, he met an entourage led by a haughty aristocrat who refused to make way for him. Enraged, he killed the older man and all his servants except for a lowly herdsman. Oedipus soon arrived at Thebes, which was suffering terribly from a Sphinx, a monstrous winged lion with the head of a woman who posed a riddle to all travelers and devoured them when they failed to solve it. When the Sphinx confronted Oedipus with her riddle— “What animal goes on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?”—he solved it with the answer “Man, who crawls as a baby, walks on two legs in his prime, and walks with the aid of a stick when old.” Defeated, the Sphinx cast herself from the cliff. Having saved the city, Oedipus was proclaimed king to replace the slain Laius and married the queen, Jocasta. When the Theban herdsman finally made his way back to the city, he saw that the man who had killed his master was now king, so he asked to be assigned to an outlying pasture far from the city.

After many prosperous years during which four children were born to Oedipus and Jocasta, a terrible plague ravaged the population of

Thebes (the plague in *Oedipus the King* may allude to the devastating plague that swept through Athens in 429 BCE, killing many, including the statesman Pericles; some modern scientists claim that the symptoms described for this plague resemble those caused by the Ebola virus). The Delphic oracle proclaimed that Thebes was harboring pollution, the murderer of Laius, and the sickness would not leave until this pollution was cast from the land. Oedipus' efforts to discover who this murderer was ultimately reveal that *he* was the land's pollution; seeking to avoid his fate, he had unknowingly killed his real father, married his mother, and produced four children who were also his siblings. When the truth is revealed, Jocasta hangs herself and Oedipus takes her brooch and stabs his eyes until he can no longer see. A rare vase painting depicts masked actors enacting the scene when the Herdsman discloses the truth to Oedipus as Jocasta silently listens.

Oedipus' two daughters, Antigone and Ismene, accompanied him into exile, while his two sons, Eteocles and Polyneices remained in Thebes, where Jocasta's brother Creon was ruling as regent. When the boys were grown, they agreed to rule Thebes alternately. Eteocles ruled first, but when his year was up he refused to relinquish the throne to Polyneices. Polyneices, who had married the daughter of the king of Argos, led the Argives and six other cities in an assault on Thebes (*The Seven Against Thebes*). Thebes drove off the attackers, but in the course of the battle the two brothers killed each other. Their Uncle Creon assumed the throne and decreed that Eteocles was to be buried with honors but his brother Polyneices was to be left unburied, to rot in the sun and be eaten by scavengers.

Antigone

Dramatis Personae

ANTIGONE: daughter of Oedipus.
 ISMENE: daughter of Oedipus, sister of Antigone
 CREON: king of Thebes
 EURYDICE: wife of Creon
 HAEMON: son of Creon and EURYDICE: engaged to Antigone.
 TEIRESIAS: an old blind prophet
 BOY: a young lad guiding Teiresias
 GUARD: a soldier serving Creon.
 MESSENGER
 CHORUS: Theban Elders
 ATTENDANTS

[In Thebes, directly in front of the royal palace, which stands in the background, its main doors facing the audience. Enter Antigone leading Ismene away from the palace]

ANTIGONE: Now, dear Ismene, my own blood sister,
 do you have any sense of all the troubles
 Zeus keeps bringing on the two of us,
 as long as we're alive? All that misery
 which stems from Oedipus? There's no suffering,
 no shame, no ruin—not one dishonor—
 which I have not seen in all the troubles
 you and I go through. What's this they're saying now,
 something our general has had proclaimed
 throughout the city? Do you know of it?
 Have you heard? Or have you just missed the news—

<p>dishonors which better fit our enemies are now being piled up on the ones we love?</p>	<p>[10]</p>	<p>and now he's coming to proclaim the fact, to state it clearly to those who have not heard. For Creon this matter's really serious. Anyone who acts against the order will be stoned to death before the city. Now you know, and you'll quickly demonstrate whether you are nobly born, or else a girl unworthy of her splendid ancestors.</p>	<p>40</p>
<p>ISMENE: I've had no word at all, Antigone, nothing good or bad about our family, not since we two lost both our brothers, killed on the same day by a double blow. And since the Argive army, just last night, has gone away, I don't know any more if I've been lucky or face total ruin.</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>ISMENE: Oh my poor sister, if that's what's happening, what can I say that would be any help to ease the situation or resolve it?</p>	<p>50 [40]</p>
<p>ANTIGONE: I know that. That's why I brought you here, outside the gates, so only you can hear.</p>	<p>[20]</p>	<p>ANTIGONE: Think whether you will work with me in this and act together.</p>	
<p>ISMENE: What is it? The way you look makes it seem you're thinking of some dark and gloomy news.</p>	<p>[20]</p>	<p>ISMENE: In what kind of work? What do you mean?</p>	
<p>ANTIGONE: Look—what's Creon doing with our two brothers? He's honoring one with a full funeral and treating the other one disgracefully! Eteocles, they say, has had his burial according to our customary rites, to win him honor with the dead below. But as for Polyneices, who perished so miserably, an order has gone out throughout the city—that's what people say. He's to have no funeral or lament, but to be left unburied and unwept, a sweet treasure for the birds to look at, for them to feed on to their heart's content. That's what people say the noble Creon has announced to you and me—I mean to me—</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>ANTIGONE: Will you help these hands take up Polyneices' corpse and bury it?</p> <p>ISMENE: What? You're going to bury Polyneices, when that's been made a crime for all in Thebes?</p> <p>ANTIGONE: Yes. I'll do my duty to my brother— and yours as well, if you're not prepared to. I won't be caught betraying him.</p>	
<p></p>	<p>[30]</p>	<p>ISMENE: You're too rash. Has Creon not expressly banned that act?</p>	<p>60</p>

ANTIGONE: Yes. But he's got no right to keep me from what's mine.

ISMENE: O dear. Think, Antigone. Consider
 how our father died, hated and disgraced, [50]
 when those mistakes which his own search revealed
 forced him to turn his hand against himself
 and stab out both his eyes. Then that woman,
 his mother and his wife—her double role—
 destroyed her own life in a twisted noose.
 Then there's our own two brothers, both butchered
 in a single day—that ill-fated pair 70
 with their own hands slaughtered one another
 and brought about their common doom.
 Now, the two of us are left here quite alone.
 Think how we'll die far worse than all the rest,
 if we defy the law and move against [60]
 the king's decree, against his royal power.
 We must remember that by birth we're women,
 and, as such, we shouldn't fight with men.

Since those who rule are much more powerful,
 we must obey in this and in events 80
 which bring us even harsher agonies.
 So I'll ask those underground for pardon—
 since I'm being compelled, I will obey
 those in control. That's what I'm forced to do.
 It makes no sense to try to do too much.

ANTIGONE: I wouldn't urge you to. No. Not even
 if you were keen to act. Doing this with you
 would bring me no joy. So be what you want. [70]

I'll still bury him. It would be fine to die
 while doing that. I'll lie there with him, 90
 with a man I love, pure and innocent,
 for all my crime. My honors for the dead
 must last much longer than for those up here.
 I'll lie down there forever. As for you,
 well, if you wish, you can show your contempt
 for those laws the gods all hold in honor.

ISMENE: I'm not disrespecting them. But I can't act
 against the state. That's not in my nature.

ANTIGONE: Let that be your excuse. I'm going now [80]
 to make a burial mound for my dear brother. 100

ISMENE: Oh poor Antigone, I'm so afraid for you.

ANTIGONE: Don't fear for me. Set your own fate in order.

ISMENE: Make sure you don't reveal to anyone
 what you intend. Keep it closely hidden.
 I'll do the same.

ANTIGONE: No, no. Announce the fact—
 if you don't let everybody know,
 I'll despise your silence even more.

ISMENE: Your heart is hot to do cold deeds.

ANTIGONE: But I know
 I'll please the ones I'm duty bound to please.

ISMENE: Yes, if you can. But you're after something
which you're incapable of carrying out. 110 [90]

ANTIGONE: Well, when my strength is gone, then I'll give up.

ISMENE: A vain attempt should not be made at all.

ANTIGONE: I'll hate you if you're going to talk that way.
And you'll rightly earn the loathing of the dead.
So leave me and my foolishness alone—
we'll get through this fearful thing. I won't suffer
anything as bad as a disgraceful death.

ISMENE: All right then, go, if that's what you think right.
But remember this—even though your mission
makes no sense, your friends do truly love you. 120

*[Exit Antigone away from the palace. Ismene watches her go and then
returns slowly into the palace. Enter the Chorus of Theban elders]*

CHORUS: O ray of sunlight, [100]
most beautiful that ever shone
on Thebes, city of the seven gates,
you've appeared at last,
you glowing eye of golden day,
moving above the streams of Dirce,*
driving into headlong flight
the white-shield warrior from Argos,
who marched here fully armed, 130
now forced back by your sharper power.

CHORUS LEADER: Against our land he marched, [110]
sent here by the warring claims
of Polyneices, with piercing screams,
an eagle flying above our land,
covered wings as white as snow,
and hordes of warriors in arms,
helmets topped with horsehair crests.

CHORUS: Standing above our homes,
he ranged around our seven gates, 140
with threats to swallow us
and spears thirsting to kill.
Before his jaws had had their fill [120]
and gorged themselves on Theban blood,
before Hephaestus' pine-torch flames
had seized our towers, our fortress crown,*
he went back, driven in retreat.
Behind him rings the din of war—
his enemy, the Theban dragon-snake,
too difficult for him to overcome. 150

CHORUS LEADER: Zeus hates an arrogant boasting tongue.
Seeing them march here in a mighty stream,
in all their clanging golden pride, [130]
he hurled his fire and struck the man,
up there, on our battlements, as he began
to scream aloud his victory.

CHORUS: The man swing down, torch still in hand,
and smashed into unyielding earth—
the one who not so long ago attacked,
who launched his furious, enraged assault, 160

to blast us, breathing raging storms.
 But things turned out not as he'd hoped.
 Great war god Ares assisted us—
 he smashed them down and doomed them all [140]
 to a very different fate.

CHORUS LEADER: Seven captains at seven gates
 matched against seven equal warriors
 paid Zeus their full bronze tribute,
 the god who turns the battle tide,
 all but that pair of wretched men, 170
 born of one father and one mother, too—
 who set their conquering spears against each other
 and then both shared a common death.

CHORUS: Now victory with her glorious name
 has come, bringing joy to well-armed Thebes.
 The battle's done—let's strive now to forget [150]
 with songs and dancing all night long,
 with Bacchus leading us to make Thebes shake.

[The palace doors are thrown open and guards appear at the doors]

CHORUS LEADER: But here comes Creon, new king of our land,
 son of Menoikeos. Thanks to the gods, 180
 who've brought about our new good fortune.
 What plan of action does he have in mind?
 What's made him hold this special meeting, [160]
 with elders summoned by a general call?

[Enter Creon from the palace. He addresses the assembled elders]

CREON: Men, after much tossing of our ship of state,
 the gods have safely set things right again.
 Of all the citizens I've summoned you,
 because I know how well you showed respect
 for the eternal power of the throne,
 first with Laius and again with Oedipus, 190
 once he restored our city.* When he died,
 you stood by his children, firm in loyalty.
 Now his sons have perished in a single day,
 killing each other with their own two hands,
 a double slaughter, stained with brother's blood. [170]
 And so I have the throne, all royal power,
 for I'm the one most closely linked by blood
 to those who have been killed. It's impossible
 to really know a man, to know his soul,
 his mind and will, before one witnesses 200
 his skill in governing and making laws.
 For me, a man who rules the entire state
 and does not take the best advice there is,
 but through fear keeps his mouth forever shut, [180]
 such a man is the very worst of men—
 and always will be. And a man who thinks
 more highly of a friend than of his country,
 well, he means nothing to me. Let Zeus know,
 the god who always watches everything,
 I would not stay silent if I saw disaster 210
 moving here against the citizens,
 a threat to their security. For anyone
 who acts against the state, its enemy,
 I'd never make my friend. For I know well
 our country is a ship which keeps us safe,
 and only when it sails its proper course [190]

do we make friends. These are the principles
 I'll use in order to protect our state.
 That's why I've announced to all citizens
 my orders for the sons of Oedipus— 220
 Eteocles, who perished in the fight
 to save our city, the best and bravest
 of our spearmen, will have his burial,
 with all those purifying rituals
 which accompany the noblest corpses,
 as they move below. As for his brother—
 that Polyneices, who returned from exile,
 eager to wipe out in all-consuming fire 230
 his ancestral city and its native gods,
 keen to seize upon his family's blood
 and lead men into slavery—for him,
 the proclamation in the state declares
 he'll have no burial mound, no funeral rites,
 and no lament. He'll be left unburied,
 his body there for birds and dogs to eat,
 a clear reminder of his shameful fate.
 That's my decision. For I'll never act
 to respect an evil man with honors
 in preference to a man who's acted well.
 Anyone who's well disposed towards our state, 240
 alive or dead, that man I will respect. [210]

CHORUS LEADER: Son of Menoikeos, if that's your will
 for this city's friends and enemies,
 it seems to me you now control all laws
 concerning those who've died and us as well—
 the ones who are still living.

CREON: See to it then,
 and act as guardians of what's been proclaimed.

CHORUS: Give that task to younger men to deal with.

CREON: There are men assigned to oversee the corpse.

CHORUS LEADER:

Then what remains that you would have us do? 250

CREON: Don't yield to those who contravene my orders.

CHORUS LEADER: No one is such a fool that he loves death. [220]

CREON: Yes, that will be his full reward, indeed.
 And yet men have often been destroyed
 because they hoped to profit in some way.

[Enter a guard, coming towards the palace]

GUARD: My lord, I can't say I've come out of breath
 by running here, making my feet move fast.
 Many times I stopped to think things over—
 and then I'd turn around, retrace my steps.
 My mind was saying many things to me, 260
 "You fool, why go to where you know for sure
 your punishment awaits?"—"And now, poor man,
 why are you hesitating yet again?
 If Creon finds this out from someone else, [230]
 how will you escape being hurt?" Such matters
 kept my mind preoccupied. And so I went,

<p>slowly and reluctantly, and thus made a short road turn into a lengthy one. But then the view that I should come to you won out. If what I have to say is nothing, I'll say it nonetheless. For I've come here clinging to the hope that I'll not suffer anything that's not part of my destiny.</p>	<p>270</p>	<p>without a wheel track. Whoever did it left no trace. When the first man on day watch revealed it to us, we were all amazed. The corpse was hidden, but not in a tomb. It was lightly covered up with dirt, as if someone wanted to avert a curse. There was no trace of a wild animal or dogs who'd come to rip the corpse apart. Then the words flew round among us all, with every guard accusing someone else. We were about to fight, to come to blows— no one was there to put a stop to it. Every one of us was responsible, but none of us was clearly in the wrong. In our defense we pleaded ignorance. Then we each stated we were quite prepared to pick up red-hot iron, walk through flames, or swear by all the gods that we'd not done it, we'd no idea how the act was planned, or how it had been carried out. At last, when all our searching had proved useless, one man spoke up, and his words forced us all to drop our faces to the ground in fear. We couldn't see things working out for us, whether we agreed or disagreed with him. He said we must report this act to you— we must not hide it. And his view prevailed. I was the unlucky man who won the prize, the luck of the draw. That's why I'm now here, not of my own free will or by your choice. I know that—for no one likes a messenger who comes bearing unwelcome news with him.</p>	<p>290</p> <p>[260]</p> <p>300</p> <p>310</p> <p>[270]</p> <p>320</p>
<p>CREON: What's happening that's made you so upset?</p>			
<p>GUARD: I want to tell you first about myself. I did not do it. And I didn't see the one who did. So it would be unjust if I should come to grief.</p>	<p>[240]</p>		
<p>CREON: You hedge so much. Clearly you have news of something ominous.</p>			
<p>GUARD: Yes. Strange things that make me pause a lot.</p>	<p>280</p>		
<p>CREON: Why not say it and then go—just leave.</p>			
<p>GUARD: All right, I'll tell you. It's about the corpse. Someone has buried it and disappeared, after spreading thirsty dust onto the flesh and undertaking all appropriate rites.</p>			
<p>CREON: What are you saying? What man would dare this?</p>			
<p>GUARD: I don't know. There was no sign of digging, no marks of any pick axe or a mattock. The ground was dry and hard and very smooth,</p>	<p>[250]</p>		

CHORUS LEADER: My lord, I've been wondering for some time now—

could this act not be something from the gods?

CREON: Stop now—before what you're about to say [280]

enrages me completely and reveals
that you're not only old but stupid, too.
No one can tolerate what you've just said,
when you claim gods might care about this corpse.

Would they pay extraordinary honors
and bury as a man who'd served them well
someone who came to burn their offerings, [330]

their pillared temples, to torch their lands
and scatter all its laws? Or do you see
gods paying respect to evil men? No, no.

For quite a while some people in the town
have secretly been muttering against me. [290]

They don't agree with what I have decreed.
They shake their heads and have not kept their necks
under my yoke, as they are duty bound to do

if they were men who are content with me. [340]

I well know that these guards were led astray—
such men urged them to carry out this act
for money. To foster evil actions,

to make them commonplace among all men,
nothing is as powerful as money.

It destroys cities, driving men from home.
Money trains and twists the minds in worthy men,
so they then undertake disgraceful acts.

Money teaches men to live as scoundrels, [300]
familiar with every profane enterprise. [350]

But those who carry out such acts for cash

sooner or later see how for their crimes
they pay the penalty. For if great Zeus
still has my respect, then understand this—

I swear to you on oath—unless you find
the one whose hands really buried him,
unless you bring him here before my eyes,
then death for you will never be enough.

No, not before you're hung up still alive
and you confess to this gross, violent act. [360]

That way you'll understand in future days, [310]
when there's a profit to be gained from theft,

you'll learn that it's not good to be in love
with every kind of monetary gain.

You'll know more men are ruined than are saved
when they earn profits from dishonest schemes.

GUARD: Do I have your permission to speak now,
or do I just turn around and go away?

CREON: But I find your voice so irritating—
don't you realize that?

GUARD: Where does it hurt? [370]
Is it in your ears or in your mind?

CREON: Why try to question where I feel my pain?

GUARD: The man who did it—he upsets your mind.
I offend your ears.

CREON: My, my, it's clear to see [320]
that it's natural for you to chatter on.

CHORUS LEADER: What this? I fear some omen from the gods.

I can't deny what I see here so clearly—
that young girl there—it's Antigone.

Oh you poor girl, daughter of Oedipus,
child of a such a father, so unfortunate,
what's going on? Surely they've not brought you here
because you've disobeyed the royal laws, 430
because they've caught you acting foolishly? [380]

GUARD: This here's the one who carried out the act.
We caught her as she was burying the corpse.
Where's Creon?

[The palace doors open. Enter Creon with attendants]

CHORUS LEADER: He's coming from the house—
and just in time.

CREON: Why have I come "just in time"?
What's happening? What is it?

GUARD: My lord,
human beings should never take an oath
there's something they'll not do—for later thoughts
contradict what they first meant. I'd have sworn [390]
I'd not soon venture here again. Back then,
the threats you made brought me a lot of grief.
But there's no joy as great as what we pray for
against all hope. And so I have come back,
breaking that oath I swore. I bring this girl,
captured while she was honoring the grave.
This time we did not draw lots. No. This time

I was the lucky man, not someone else.
And now, my lord, take her for questioning.
Convict her. Do as you wish. As for me,
by rights I'm free and clear of all this trouble. 440 [400]

CREON: This girl here—how did you catch her? And where?

GUARD: She was burying that man. Now you know
all there is to know.

CREON: Do you understand
just what you're saying? Are your words the truth?

GUARD: We saw this girl giving that dead man's corpse
full burial rites—an act you'd made illegal.
Is what I say simple and clear enough?

CREON: How did you see her, catch her in the act?

GUARD: It happened this way. When we got there,
after hearing those awful threats from you, 450
we swept off all the dust covering the corpse,
so the damp body was completely bare. [410]
Then we sat down on rising ground up wind,
to escape the body's putrid rotting stench.
We traded insults just to stay awake,
in case someone was careless on the job.
That's how we spent the time right up 'til noon,
when the sun's bright circle in the sky
had moved half way and it was burning hot.
Then suddenly a swirling windstorm came, 460
whipping clouds of dust up from the ground,

how can she fail to find a benefit
 in death? And so for me meeting this fate
 won't bring any pain. But if I'd allowed
 my own mother's dead son to just lie there,
 an unburied corpse, then I'd feel distress. 520
 What going on here does not hurt me at all.
 If you think what I'm doing now is stupid, [470]
 perhaps I'm being charged with foolishness
 by someone who's a fool.

CHORUS LEADER: It's clear enough
 the spirit in this girl is passionate—
 her father was the same. She has no sense
 of compromise in times of trouble.

CREON: *[to the Chorus Leader]*
 But you should know the most obdurate wills
 are those most prone to break. The strongest iron
 tempered in the fire to make it really hard— 530
 that's the kind you see most often shatter.
 I'm well aware the most tempestuous horses
 are tamed by one small bit. Pride has no place
 in anyone who is his neighbor's slave.
 This girl here was already very insolent [480]
 in contravening laws we had proclaimed.
 Here she again displays her proud contempt—
 having done the act, she now boasts of it.
 She laughs at what she's done. Well, in this case,
 if she gets her way and goes unpunished,
 then she's the man here, not me. No. She may be 540
 my sister's child, closer to me by blood

than anyone belonging to my house
 who worships Zeus Herkeios in my home,*
 but she'll not escape my harshest punishment—
 her sister, too, whom I accuse as well.
 She had an equal part in all their plans [490]
 to do this burial. Go summon her here.
 I saw her just now inside the palace,
 her mind out of control, some kind of fit.

[Exit attendants into the palace to fetch Ismene]

When people hatch their mischief in the dark 550
 their minds often convict them in advance,
 betraying their treachery. How I despise
 a person caught committing evil acts
 who then desires to glorify the crime.

ANTIGONE: Take me and kill me—what more do you want?

CREON: Me? Nothing. With that I have everything.

ANTIGONE: Then why delay? There's nothing in your words
 that I enjoy—may that always be the case! [500]
 And what I say displeases you as much.
 But where could I gain greater glory 560
 than setting my own brother in his grave?
 All those here would confirm this pleases them
 if their lips weren't sealed by fear—being king,
 which offers all sorts of various benefits,
 means you can talk and act just as you wish.

CREON: In all of Thebes, you're the only one
who looks at things that way

ANTIGONE: They share my views,
but they keep their mouths shut just for you.

CREON: These views of yours—so different from the rest—
don't they bring you any sense of shame? 570 [510]

ANTIGONE: No—there's nothing shameful in honoring
my mother's children.

CREON: You had a brother killed fighting for the other side.

ANTIGONE: Yes—from the same mother and father, too.

CREON: Why then give tributes which insult his name?

ANTIGONE: But his dead corpse won't back up what you say.

CREON: Yes, he will, if you give equal honors
to a wicked man.

ANTIGONE: But the one who died
was not some slave—it was his own brother.

CREON: Who was destroying this country—the other one 580
went to his death defending it.

ANTIGONE: That may be, but Hades still desires equal rites for both.

CREON: A good man does not wish what we give him [520]
to be the same an evil man receives.

ANTIGONE: Who knows? In the world below perhaps
such actions are no crime.

CREON: An enemy can never be a friend, not even in death.

ANTIGONE: But my nature is to love. I cannot hate.

CREON: Then go down to the dead. If you must love,
love them. No woman's going to govern me— 590
no, no—not while I'm still alive.

[Enter two attendants from the house bringing Ismene to Creon]

CHORUS LEADER: Ismene's coming. There—right by the door.
She's crying. How she must love her sister!
From her forehead a cloud casts its shadow
down across her darkly flushing face—
and drops its rain onto her lovely cheeks. [530]

CREON: You there—you snake lurking in my house,
sucking out my life's blood so secretly.
I'd no idea I was nurturing two pests,
who aimed to rise against my throne. Come here. 600
Tell me this—do you admit you played your part
in this burial, or will you swear an oath
you had no knowledge of it?

ISMENE: I did it—
I admit it, and she'll back me up.
So I bear the guilt as well.

ANTIGONE: No, no—
justice will not allow you to say that.
You didn't want to. I didn't work with you.

ISMENE: But now you're in trouble, I'm not ashamed [540]
of suffering, too, as your companion.

ANTIGONE: Hades and the dead can say who did it— 610
I don't love a friend whose love is only words.

ISMENE: You're my sister. Don't dishonor me.
Let me respect the dead and die with you.

ANTIGONE: Don't try to share my death or make a claim
to actions which you did not do. I'll die—
and that will be enough.

ISMENE: But if you're gone, what is there in life for me to love?

ANTIGONE: Ask Creon. He's the one you care about.

ISMENE: Why hurt me like this? It doesn't help you. [550]

ANTIGONE: If I am mocking you, it pains me, too. 620

ISMENE: Even now is there some way I can help?

ANTIGONE: Save yourself. I won't envy your escape.

ISMENE: I feel so wretched leaving you to die.

ANTIGONE: But you chose life—it was my choice to die.

ISMENE: But not before I'd said those words just now.

ANTIGONE: Some people may approve of how you think—
others will believe my judgment's good.

ISMENE: But the mistake's the same for both of us.

ANTIGONE: Be brave. You're alive. But my spirit died
some time ago so I might help the dead 630 [560]

CREON: I'd say one of these girls has just revealed
how mad she is—the other's been that way
since she was born.

ISMENE: My lord, whatever good sense
people have by birth no longer stays with them
once their lives go wrong—it abandons them.

CREON: In your case, that's true, once you made your choice
to act in evil ways with wicked people.

ISMENE: How could I live alone, without her here?

CREON: Don't speak of her being here. Her life is over.

ISMENE: You're going to kill your own son's bride? 640

CREON: Why not? There are other fields for him to plough.

ISMENE: No one will make him a more loving wife
than she will.

CREON: I have no desire my son should have an evil wife.

ANTIGONE: Dearest Haemon, how your father wrongs you.

CREON: I've had enough of this— you and your marriage.

ISMENE: You really want that?
You're going to take her from him?

CREON: No, not me. Hades is the one who'll stop the marriage.

CHORUS LEADER: So she must die—that seems decided on.

CREON: Yes—for you and me the matter's closed. 650

[Creon turns to address his attendants]

No more delay. You slaves, take them inside.
From this point on they must act like women
and have no liberty to wander off.
Even bold men run when they see Hades 580
coming close to them to snatch their lives.

*[The attendants take Antigone and Ismene into the palace,
leaving Creon and the Chorus on stage]*

CHORUS: Those who live without tasting evil
have happy lives—for when the gods
shake a house to its foundations,

then inevitable disasters strike,
falling upon whole families, 660
just as a surging ocean swell
running before cruel Thracian winds
across the dark trench of the sea
churns up the deep black sand [590]
and crashes headlong on the cliffs,
which scream in pain against the wind.

I see this house's age-old sorrows,
the house of Labdakos' children,*
sorrows falling on the sorrows of the dead, 670
one generation bringing no relief
to generations after it—some god
strikes at them—on and on without an end.
For now the light which has been shining
over the last roots of Oedipus' house [600]
is being cut down with a bloody knife
belonging to the gods below—
for foolish talk and frenzy in the soul.

Oh Zeus, what human trespasses
can check your power? Even Sleep,
who casts his nets on everything, 680
cannot master that—nor can the months,
the tireless months the gods control.
A sovereign who cannot grow old,
you hold Olympus as your own,*
in all its glittering magnificence. [610]
From now on into all future time,
as in the past, your law holds firm.

It never enters lives of human beings
in its full force without disaster.

Hope ranging far and wide brings comfort 690
to many men—but then hope can deceive,
delusions born of volatile desire.
It comes upon the man who's ignorant
until his foot is seared in burning fire.
Someone's wisdom has revealed to us [620]
this famous saying—sometimes the gods
lure a man's mind forward to disaster,
and he thinks evil's something good.
But then he lives only the briefest time
free of catastrophe.

[The palace doors open]

CHORUS LEADER Here comes Haemon, 700
your only living son. Is he grieving
the fate of Antigone, his bride,
bitter that his marriage hopes are gone? [630]

CREON: We'll soon find out—more accurately
than any prophet here could indicate.

[Enter Haemon from the palace]

My son, have you heard the sentence that's been passed
upon your bride? And have you now come here
angry at your father? Or are you loyal to me,
on my side no matter what I do?

HAEMON: Father, I'm yours. For me your judgments 710
and the ways you act on them are good—
I shall follow them. I'll not consider any marriage a greater benefit
than your fine leadership.
CREON: Indeed, my son,
that's how your heart should always be resolved,
to stand behind your father's judgment [640]
on every issue. That's what men pray for—
obedient children growing up at home
who will pay back their father's enemies,
evil to them for evil done to him, 720
while honoring his friends as much as he does.
A man who fathers useless children—
what can one say of him except he's bred
troubles for himself, and much to laugh at
for those who fight against him? So, my son,
don't ever throw good sense aside for pleasure,
for some woman's sake. You understand [650]
how such embraces can turn freezing cold
when an evil woman shares your life at home.
What greater wound is there than a false friend? 730
So spit this girl out—she's your enemy.
Let her marry someone else in Hades.
Since I caught her clearly disobeying,
the only culprit in the whole city,
I won't perjure myself before the state.
No—I'll kill her. And so let her appeal
to Zeus, the god of blood relationships.
If I foster any lack of full respect
in my own family, I surely do the same
with those who are not linked to me by blood. 740 [660]
The man who acts well with his household

will be found a just man in the city.*
 I'd trust such a man to govern wisely
 or to be content with someone ruling him.
 And in the thick of battle at his post [670]
 he'll stand firm beside his fellow soldier,
 a loyal, brave man. But anyone who's proud
 and violates our laws or thinks he'll tell
 our leaders what to do, a man like that
 wins no praise from me. No. We must obey 750
 whatever man the city puts in charge,
 no matter what the issue—great or small,
 just or unjust. For there's no greater evil
 than a lack of leadership. That destroys
 whole cities, turns households into ruins,
 and in war makes soldiers break and run away.
 When men succeed, what keeps their lives secure
 in almost every case is their obedience.
 That's why they must support those in control,
 and never let some woman beat us down. 760
 If we must fall from power, let that come
 at some man's hand—at least, we won't be called
 inferior to any woman. [680]

CHORUS LEADER: Unless we're being deceived by our old
 age, what you've just said seems reasonable to us.

HAEMON: Father, the gods instill good sense in men—
 the greatest of all the things which we possess.
 I could not find your words somehow not right—
 I hope that's something I never learn to do.
 But other words might be good, as well. 770
 Because of who you are, you can't perceive

all the things men say or do—or their complaints.
 Your gaze makes citizens afraid—they can't [690]
 say anything you would not like to hear.
 But in the darkness I can hear them talk—
 the city is upset about the girl.
 They say of all women here she's least deserves
 the worst of deaths for her most glorious act.
 When her own brother died in that slaughter,
 she did not just leave him there unburied, 780
 to be ripped apart by carrion dogs or birds.
 Surely she deserves some golden honor?
 That's the dark secret rumor people speak. [700]
 For me, father, nothing is more valuable
 than your well being. For any children,
 what could be a greater honor to them
 than their father's thriving reputation?
 A father feels the same about his sons.
 So don't let your mind dwell on just one thought,
 that what you say is right and nothing else. 790
 A man who thinks that only he is wise,
 that he can speak and think like no one else,
 when such men are exposed, then all can see
 their emptiness inside. For any man, [710]
 even if he's wise, there's nothing shameful
 in learning many things, staying flexible.
 You notice how in winter floods the trees
 which bend before the storm preserve their twigs.
 The ones who stand against it are destroyed,
 root and branch. In the same way, those sailors 800
 who keep their sails stretched tight, never easing off,
 makes their ship capsize—and from that point on
 sail with their rowing benches all submerged.

- So end your anger. Permit yourself to change.
For if I, as a younger man, may state
my views, I'd say it would be for the best [720]
if men by nature understood all things—
if not, and that is usually the case,
when men speak well, it good to learn from them.
- CHORUS LEADER: My lord, if what he's said is relevant, 810
it seems appropriate to learn from him,
and you too, Haemon, listen to the king.
The things which you both said were excellent.
- CREON: And men my age—are we then going to school
to learn what's wise from men as young as him?
- HAEMON: There's nothing wrong in that. And if I'm young,
don't think about my age—look at what I do.
- CREON: And what you do—does that include this, [730]
honoring those who act against our laws?
- HAEMON: I would not encourage anyone 820
to show respect to evil men.
- CREON: And her — is she not suffering from the same disease?
- HAEMON: The people here in Thebes all say the same—
they deny she is.
- CREON: So the city now
will instruct me how I am to govern?
- HAEMON: Now you're talking like someone far too young.
Don't you see that?
- CREON: Am I to rule this land
at someone else's whim or by myself?
- HAEMON: A city which belongs to just one man
is no true city.
- CREON: According to our laws, 830
does not the ruler own the city?
- HAEMON: By yourself you'd make an excellent king
but in a desert.
- CREON: It seems as if this boy [740]
is fighting on the woman's side.
- HAEMON: That's true — if you're the woman.
I'm concerned for you.
- CREON: You're the worst there is—you set your judgment
up against your father.
- HAEMON: No, not when I see you making a mistake and being unjust.
- CREON: Is it a mistake to honor my own rule?
- HAEMON: You're not honoring that by trampling on 840
the gods' prerogatives.
- CREON: You foul creature — you're worse than any woman.

HAEMON: You'll not catch me giving way to some disgrace.

CREON: But your words all speak on her behalf.
all speak on her behalf.

HAEMON: And yours and mine — and for the gods below.

CREON: You woman's slave — don't try to win me over.

HAEMON: What do you want—
to speak and never hear someone reply?*

CREON: You'll never marry her while she's alive. [750]

HAEMON: Then she'll die—and in her death kill someone else.

CREON: Are you so insolent you threaten me? 850

HAEMON: Where's the threat in challenging a bad decree?

CREON: You'll regret parading what you think like this—
you—a person with an empty brain!

HAEMON: If you were not my father, I might say
you were not thinking straight.

CREON: Would you, indeed? Well, then, by Olympus, I'll have you
know you'll be sorry for demeaning me with all these insults.

[Creon turns to his attendants]

Go bring her out— [760]
that hateful creature, so she can die right here,
with him present, before her bridegroom's eyes. 860

HAEMON: No. Don't ever hope for that. She'll not die
with me just standing there. And as for you—
your eyes will never see my face again.
So let your rage charge on among your friends
who want to stand by you in this.

[Exit Haemon, running back into the palace]

CHORUS LEADER: My lord, Haemon left in such a hurry.
He's angry—in a young man at his age
the mind turns bitter when he's feeling hurt.

CREON: Let him dream up or carry out great deeds
beyond the power of man, he'll not save these girls— 870
their fate is sealed.

CHORUS LEADER: Are you going to kill them both? [770]

CREON: No—not the one whose hands are clean. You're right.

CHORUS LEADER: How do you plan to kill Antigone?

CREON: I'll take her on a path no people use,
and hide her in a cavern in the rocks,
while still alive. I'll set out provisions,
as much as piety requires, to make sure
the city is not totally corrupted.*

Then she can speak her prayers to Hades,
 the only god she worships, for success
 avoiding death—or else, at least, she'll learn,
 although too late, how it's a waste of time
 to work to honor those whom Hades holds.

880
[780]

CHORUS: O Eros, the conqueror in every fight,*
 Eros, who squanders all men's wealth,
 who sleeps at night on girls' soft cheeks,
 and roams across the ocean seas
 and through the shepherd's hut—
 no immortal god escapes from you,
 nor any man, who lives but for a day.
 And the one whom you possess goes mad.
 Even in good men you twist their minds,
 perverting them to their own ruin.
 You provoke these men to family strife.
 The bride's desire seen glittering in her eyes—
 that conquers everything, its power
 enthroned beside eternal laws, for there
 the goddess Aphrodite works her will,
 whose ways are irresistible.*

890
[790]

[800]

*[Antigone enters from the palace with attendants who are
 taking her away to her execution]*

CHORAL LEADER: When I look at her I forget my place.
 I lose restraint and can't hold back my tears—
 Antigone going to her bridal room
 where all are laid to rest in death.

900

ANTIGONE: Look at me, my native citizens,
 as I go on my final journey,
 as I gaze upon the sunlight one last time,
 which I'll never see again—for Hades,
 who brings all people to their final sleep,
 leads me on, while I'm still living,
 down to the shores of Acheron.*
 I've not yet had my bridal chant,
 nor has any wedding song been sung—
 for my marriage is to Acheron.

[810]
910

CHORUS: Surely you carry fame with you and praise,
 as you move to the deep home of the dead.
 You were not stricken by lethal disease
 or paid your wages with a sword.
 No. You were in charge of your own fate.
 So of all living human beings, you alone
 make your way down to Hades still alive.

[820]

920

ANTIGONE: I've heard about a guest of ours,
 daughter of Tantalus, from Phrygia—
 she went to an excruciating death
 in Sipylus, right on the mountain peak.
 The stone there, just like clinging ivy,
 wore her down, and now, so people say,
 the snow and rain never leave her there,
 as she laments. Below her weeping eyes
 her neck is wet with tears. God brings me
 to a final rest which most resembles hers.

[830]

930

CHORUS: But Niobe was a goddess, born divine—
 and we are human beings, a race which dies.

But still, it's a fine thing for a woman,
once she's dead, to have it said she shared,
in life and death, the fate of demi-gods.*

ANTIGONE: Oh, you are mocking me! Why me—
by our fathers' gods—why do you all,
my own city and the richest men of Thebes,
insult me now right to my face,
without waiting for my death? 940
Well at least I have Dirce's springs,
the holy grounds of Thebes,
a city full of splendid chariots,
to witness how no friends lament for me
as I move on—you see the laws
which lead me to my rock-bound prison,
a tomb made just for me. Alas!
In my wretchedness I have no home, [850]
not with human beings or corpses,
not with the living or the dead. 950

CHORUS: You pushed your daring to the limit, my child,
and tripped against Justice's high altar—
perhaps your agonies are paying back
some compensation for your father.*

ANTIGONE: Now there you touch on my most painful thought—
my father's destiny—always on my mind,
along with that whole fate which sticks to us, [860]
the splendid house of Labdakos—the curse
arising from a mother's marriage bed,
when she had sex with her own son, my father. 960
From what kind of parents was I born,

their wretched daughter? I go to them,
unmarried and accursed, an outcast.
Alas, too, for my brother Polyneices,
who made a fatal marriage and then died— [870]
and with that death killed me while still alive.*

CHORUS: To be piously devout shows reverence,
but powerful men, who in their persons
incorporate authority, cannot bear
anyone to break their rules. Hence, you die 970
because of your own selfish will.

ANTIGONE: Without lament, without a friend,
and with no marriage song, I'm being led
in this miserable state, along my final road.
So wretched that I no longer have the right [880]
to look upon the sun, that sacred eye.
But my fate prompts no tears, and no friend mourns.

CREON: Don't you know that no one faced with death
would ever stop the singing and the groans,
if that would help? Take her and shut her up, 980
as I have ordered, in her tomb's embrace.
And get it done as quickly as you can.
Then leave her there alone, all by herself—
she can sort out whether she wants suicide
or remains alive, buried in a place like that.
As far as she's concerned, we bear no guilt.
But she's lost her place living here with us.* [890]

ANTIGONE: Oh my tomb and bridal chamber—
my eternal hollow dwelling place,

where I go to join my people. Most of them
 have perished—Persephone has welcomed them
 among the dead.* I'm the last one, dying here
 the most evil death by far, as I move down
 before the time allotted for my life is done.
 But I go nourishing the vital hope
 my father will be pleased to see me come,
 and you, too, my mother, will welcome me,
 as well as you, my own dear brother.
 When you died, with my own hands I washed you. [900]
 I arranged your corpse and at the grave mound 1000
 poured out libations. But now, Polyneices,
 this is my reward for covering your corpse.*
 However, for wise people I was right
 to honor you. I'd never have done it
 for children of my own, not as their mother,
 nor for a dead husband lying in decay—
 no, not in defiance of the citizens.
 What law do I appeal to, claiming this?
 If my husband died, there'd be another one,
 and if I were to lose a child of mine 1010
 I'd have another with some other man. [910]
 But since my father and my mother, too,
 are hidden away in Hades' house,
 I'll never have another living brother.
 That was the law I used to honor you.
 But Creon thought that I was in the wrong
 and acting recklessly for you, my brother.
 Now he seizes me by force and leads me here—
 no wedding and no bridal song, no share
 in married life or raising children. 1020
 Instead I go in sorrow to my grave,

without my friends, to die while still alive. [920]
 What holy justice have I violated?
 In my wretchedness, why should I still look
 up to the gods? Which one can I invoke
 to bring me help, when for my reverence
 they charge me with impiety? Well, then,
 if this is something fine among the gods,
 I'll come to recognize that I've done wrong.
 But if these people here are being unjust 1030
 may they endure no greater punishment
 than the injustices they're doing to me.

CHORUS LEADER: The same storm blasts continue to attack
 the mind in this young girl. [930]

CREON: Then those escorting her will be sorry they're so slow.

ANTIGONE: Alas, then, those words mean death is very near at hand.

CREON: I won't encourage you or cheer you up,
 by saying the sentence won't be carried out.

ANTIGONE: O city of my fathers
 in this land of Thebes— 1040
 and my ancestral gods,
 I am being led away.
 No more delaying for me.
 Look on me, you lords of Thebes, [940]
 the last survivor of your royal house,
 see what I have to undergo,
 the kind of men who do this to me,
 for paying reverence to true piety.

[Antigone is led away under escort]

CHORUS: In her brass-bound room fair Danae as well
 endured her separation from the heaven's light,
 a prisoner hidden in a chamber like a tomb,
 although she, too, came from a noble line.*
 And she, my child, had in her care
 the liquid streaming golden seed of Zeus.
 But the power of fate is full of mystery.
 There's no evading it, no, not with wealth,
 or war, or walls, or black sea-beaten ships.

1050

[950]

And the hot-tempered child of Dryas,
 king of the Edonians, was put in prison,
 closed up in the rocks by Dionysus,
 for his angry mocking of the god.*
 There the dreadful flower of his rage
 slowly withered, and he came to know
 the god who in his frenzy he had mocked
 with his own tongue. For he had tried
 to hold in check women in that frenzy
 inspired by the god, the Bacchanalian fire.
 More than that—he'd made the Muses angry,
 challenging the gods who love the flute.*

1060

[960]

Beside the black rocks where the twin seas meet,
 by Thracian Salmydessos at the Bosphorus,*
 close to the place where Ares dwells,
 the war god witnessed the unholy wounds
 which blinded the two sons of Phineus,
 inflicted by his savage wife—the sightless holes

1070

[970]

cried out for someone to avenge those blows
 made with her sharpened comb in blood-stained hands.*

In their misery they wept, lamenting
 their wretched suffering, sons of a mother
 whose marriage had gone wrong. And yet,
 she was an offspring of an ancient family,
 the race of Erechtheus, raised far away,
 in caves surrounded by her father's winds,
 Boreas' child, a girl who raced with horses
 across steep hills—child of the gods.
 But she, too, my child, suffered much
 from the immortal Fates.*

1080

[980]

[Enter Teiresias, led by a young boy]

TEIRESIAS: Lords of Thebes, we two have walked a common path, one
 person's vision serving both of us.
 The blind require a guide to find their way.

1090 [990]

CREON: What news do you have, old Teiresias?

TEIRESIAS: I'll tell you—and you obey the prophet.

CREON: I've not rejected your advice before.

TEIRESIAS: That's the reason why you've steered the city
 on its proper course.

CREON: From my experience I can confirm the help you give.

TEIRESIAS: Then know this—
your luck is once more on fate's razor edge.

CREON: What? What you've just said makes me nervous.

TEIRESIAS:

You'll know—once you hear the tokens of my art.
As I was sitting in my ancient place 1100
receiving omens from the flights of birds
who all come there where I can hear them, [1000]
I hear among those birds an unknown cry—
evil, unintelligible, angry screaming.
I knew that they were tearing at each other
with murderous claws. The noisy wings
revealed that all too well. I was afraid.
So right away up on the blazing altar
I set up burnt offerings. But Hephaestus
failed to shine out from the sacrifice— 1110
dark slime poured out onto the embers,
oozing from the thighs, which smoked and spat,
bile was sprayed high up into the air, [1010]
and the melting thighs lost all the fat
which they'd been wrapped in. The rites had failed—
there was no prophecy revealed in them.
I learned that from this boy, who is my guide,
as I guide other men.* Our state is sick—
your policies have done this. In the city
our altars and our hearths have been defiled, 1120
all of them, with rotting flesh brought there
by birds and dogs from Oedipus' son,
who lies there miserably dead. The gods
no longer will accept our sacrifice,

our prayers, our thigh bones burned in fire. [1020]

No bird will shriek out a clear sign to us,
for they have gorged themselves on fat and blood
from a man who's dead. Consider this, my son.
All men make mistakes—that's not uncommon.
But when they do, they're no longer foolish 1130

or subject to bad luck if they try to fix
the evil into which they've fallen,
once they give up their intransigence.

Men who put their stubbornness on show
invite accusations of stupidity.
Make concessions to the dead—don't ever stab
a man who's just been killed. What's the glory
in killing a dead person one more time? [1030]

I've been concerned for you. It's good advice.
Learning can be pleasant when a man speaks well, 1140
especially when he seeks your benefit.

CREON:

Old man, you're all like archers shooting at me—
For you all I've now become your target—
even prophets have been aiming at me.
I've long been bought and sold as merchandise
among that tribe. Well, go make your profits.
If it's what you want, then trade with Sardis
for their golden-silver alloy—or for gold
from India, but you'll never hide that corpse
in any grave. Even if Zeus' eagles 1150 [1040]
should choose to seize his festering body
and take it up, right to the throne Zeus,
not even then would I, in trembling fear
of some defilement, permit that corpse

a burial. For I know well that no man
has the power to pollute the gods.
But, old Teiresias, among human beings
the wisest suffer a disgraceful fall
when, to promote themselves, they use fine words
to spread around abusive insults. 1160

TEIRESIAS: Alas, does any man know or think about . . .

CREON: [*interrupting*] Think what? What sort of pithy
common thought are you about to utter?

TEIRESIAS: [*ignoring the interruption*] . . . how good advice is
valuable—worth more than all possessions. [1050]

CREON: I think that's true, as much as foolishness
is what harms us most.

TEIRESIAS: Yet that's the sickness
now infecting you.

CREON: I have no desire
to denigrate a prophet when I speak.

TEIRESIAS: But that's what you are doing, when you claim
my oracles are false.

CREON: The tribe of prophets— 1170
all of them—are fond of money

TEIRESIAS: And kings?
Their tribe loves to benefit dishonestly.

CREON: You know you're speaking of the man who rules
you.

TEIRESIAS: I know—thanks to me you saved the city
and now are in control.*

CREON: You're a wise prophet, but you love doing wrong.

TEIRESIAS: You'll force me
to speak of secrets locked inside my heart. [1060]

CREON: Do it—just don't speak to benefit yourself.

TEIRESIAS: I don't think that I'll be doing that—
not as far as you're concerned.

CREON: You can be sure 1180
you won't change my mind to make yourself more rich.

TEIRESIAS: Then understand this well—you will not see
the sun race through its cycle many times
before you lose a child of your own loins,
a corpse in payment for these corpses.
You've thrown down to those below someone
from up above—in your arrogance
you've moved a living soul into a grave,
leaving here a body owned by gods below— [1070]
unburied, dispossessed, unsanctified. 1190
That's no concern of yours or gods above.
In this you violate the ones below.
And so destroying avengers wait for you,
Furies of Hades and the gods, who'll see

you caught up in this very wickedness.
 Now see if I speak as someone who's been bribed.
 It won't be long before in your own house
 the men and women all cry out in sorrow,
 and cities rise in hate against you—all those [1080]
 whose mangled soldiers have had burial rites 1200
 from dogs, wild animals, or flying birds
 who carry the unholy stench back home,
 to every city hearth.* Like an archer,
 I shoot these arrows now into your heart
 because you have provoked me. I'm angry—
 so my aim is good. You'll not escape their pain.
 Boy, lead us home so he can vent his rage
 on younger men and keep a quieter tongue
 and a more temperate mind than he has now. [1090]

[Exit Teiresias, led by the young boy]

CHORUS LEADER: My lord, my lord, such dreadful
 prophecies — and now he's gone. 1210
 Since my hair changed color
 from black to white, I know here in the city
 he's never uttered a false prophecy.

CREON: I know that, too—and it disturbs my mind.
 It's dreadful to give way, but to resist
 and let destruction hammer down my spirit—
 that's a fearful option, too.

CHORUS LEADER: Son of Menoikeos,
 you need to listen to some good advice.

CREON: Tell me what to do. Speak up. I'll do it.

CHORUS LEADER:
 Go and release the girl from her rock tomb. 1220[1100]
 Then prepare a grave for that unburied corpse.

CREON: This is your advice? You think I should concede?

CHORUS LEADER: Yes, my lord, as fast as possible.
 Swift footed injuries sent from the gods
 hack down those who act imprudently.

CREON: Alas—it's difficult. But I'll give up.
 I'll not do what I'd set my heart upon.
 It's not right to fight against necessity.

CHORUS LEADER: Go now and get this done. Don't give
 the work to other men to do.

CREON: I'll go just as I am. 1230
 Come, you servants, each and every one of you.
 Come on. Bring axes with you. Go there quickly—
 up to the higher ground. I've changed my mind. [1110]
 Since I'm the one who tied her up, I'll go
 and set her free myself. Now I'm afraid.
 Until one dies the best thing well may be
 to follow our established laws.

[Creon and his attendants hurry off stage]

CHORUS: Oh you with many names,
 you glory of that Theban bride,

and child of thundering Zeus, 1240
 you who cherish famous Italy,
 and rule the welcoming valley lands
 of Eleusinian Deo—
 O Bacchus—you who dwell
 in the bacchant's mother city Thebes,
 beside Ismenus' flowing streams,
 on land sown with the teeth
 of that fierce dragon.*

Above the double mountain peaks,
 the torches flashing through the murky smoke 1250
 have seen you where Corcyian nymphs
 move on as they worship you
 by the Kastalian stream. [1130]
 And from the ivy-covered slopes
 of Nysa's hills, from the green shore
 so rich in vines, you come to us,
 visiting our Theban ways,
 while deathless voices all cry out
 in honor of your name, "Evooe."*

You honor our city Thebes, 1260
 above all others, you and your mother
 blasted by that lightning strike.*
 And now when all our people here [1140]
 are captive to a foul disease,
 on your healing feet you come
 across the moaning strait
 or over the Parnassian hill.

You who lead the dance,
 among the fire-breathing stars,
 who guard the voices in the night, 1270
 child born of Zeus, oh my lord, [1150]
 appear with your attendant Thyiads,
 who dance in frenzy all night long,
 for you their patron, Iacchus.*

[Enter a Messenger]

MESSENGER: All you here who live beside the home
 of Amphion and Cadmus—in human life
 there's no set place which I would praise or blame.*
 The lucky and unlucky rise or fall
 by chance day after day—and how these things
 are fixed for men no one can prophesy. 1280 [1160]
 For Creon, in my view, was once a man
 we all looked up to. For he saved the state,
 this land of Cadmus, from its enemies.
 He took control and reigned as its sole king—
 and prospered with the birth of noble children.
 Now all is gone. For when a man has lost
 what gives him pleasure, I don't include him
 among the living—he's a breathing corpse.
 Pile up a massive fortune in your home,
 if that's what you want—live like a king. 1290
 If there's no pleasure in it, I'd not give
 to any man a vapor's shadow for it, [1170]
 not compared to human joy.

CHORUS LEADER: Have you come with news of some fresh trouble
 in our house of kings?

MESSENGER: They're dead—
and those alive bear the responsibility
for those who've died.

CHORUS LEADER: Who did the killing?
Who's lying dead? Tell us.

MESSENGER: Haemon has been killed.
No stranger shed his blood.

CHORUS LEADER: At his father's hand?
Or did he kill himself?

MESSENGER: By his own hand—
angry at his father for the murder. 1300

CHORUS LEADER: Teiresias, how your words have proven
true!

MESSENGER: That's how things stand. Consider what
comes next.

CHORUS LEADER: I see Creon's wife, poor Eurydice— [1180]
she's coming from the house—either by chance,
or else she's heard there's news about her son.

[Enter Eurydice from the palace with some attendants]

EURYDICE: Citizens of Thebes, I heard you talking,
as I was walking out, going off to pray,
to ask for help from goddess Pallas.
While I was unfastening the gate,

I heard someone speaking of bad news 1310
about my family. I was terrified.
I collapsed, fainting back into the arms
of my attendants. So tell the news again— [1190]
I'll listen. I'm no stranger to misfortune.

MESSENGER: Dear lady, I'll speak of what I saw,
omitting not one detail of the truth.
Why should I ease your mind with a report
which turns out later to be incorrect?
The truth is always best. I went to the plain,
accompanying your husband as his guide. 1320
Polyneices' corpse, still unlamented,
was lying there, the greatest distance off,
torn apart by dogs. We prayed to Pluto

and to Hecate, goddess of the road,
for their good will and to restrain their rage. [1200]
We gave the corpse a ritual wash, and burned
what was left of it on fresh-cut branches.
We piled up a high tomb of his native earth.
Then we moved to the young girl's rocky cave,
the hollow cavern of that bride of death. 1330
From far away one man heard a voice

coming from the chamber where we'd put her

without a funeral—a piercing cry.
He went to tell our master Creon,
who, as he came near the place, heard the sound,
an unintelligible scream of sorrow.
He groaned and then spoke out these bitter words, [1210]

"Has misery made me a prophet now?
 And am I traveling along a road
 that takes me to the worst of all disasters? 1340
 I've just heard the voice of my own son.
 You servants, go ahead—get up there fast.
 Remove the stones piled in the entrance way,
 then stand beside the tomb and look in there
 to see if that was Haemon's voice I heard,
 of if the gods have been deceiving me."
 Following what our desperate master asked,
 we looked. In the furthest corner of the tomb [1220]
 we saw Antigone hanging by the neck,
 held up in a noose—fine woven linen. 1350
 Haemon had his arms around her waist—
 he was embracing her and crying out
 in sorrow for the loss of his own bride,
 now among the dead, his father's work,
 and for his horrific marriage bed.
 Creon saw him, let out a fearful groan,
 then went inside and called out anxiously,
 "You unhappy boy, what have you done?
 What are you thinking? Have you lost your mind?
 Come out, my child—I'm begging you—please come." 1360 [1230]
 But the boy just stared at him with savage eyes,
 spat in his face, and without saying a word,
 drew his two-edged sword. Creon moved away,
 so the boy's blow failed to strike his father.
 Angry at himself, the ill-fated lad
 right then and there leaned into his own sword,
 driving half the blade between his ribs.
 While still conscious he embraced the girl
 in his weak arms, and, as he breathed his last,

he coughed up streams of blood on her fair cheek. 1370
 Now he lies there, corpse on corpse, his marriage [1240]
 has been fulfilled in chambers of the dead.
 The unfortunate boy has shown all men
 how, of all the evils which afflict mankind,
 the most disastrous one is thoughtlessness.

[Eurydice turns and slowly returns into the palace]

CHORUS LEADER: What do you make of that? The queen's
 gone back. She left without a word, good or bad.

MESSENGER: I'm surprised myself. It's about her son—
 she heard that terrible report. I hope
 she's gone because she doesn't think it right 1380
 to mourn for him in public. In the home,
 surrounded by her servants, she'll arrange
 a period of mourning for the house.
 She's discreet and has experience—
 she won't make mistakes. [1250]

CHORUS LEADER: I'm not sure of that.
 to me her staying silent was extreme—
 it seems to point to something ominous,
 just like a vain excess of grief.

MESSENGER: I'll go in.
 We'll find out if she's hiding something secret,
 deep within her passionate heart. You're right— 1390
 excessive silence can be dangerous.

[The Messenger goes up the stairs into the palace. Enter Creon from the side, with attendants. Creon is holding the body of Haemon]

CHORUS LEADER: Here comes the king in person—carrying
in his arms, if it's right to speak of this,
a clear reminder that this evil comes
not from some stranger, but his own mistakes. [1260]

CREON: Aaiii—mistakes made by a foolish mind,
cruel mistakes that bring on death.
You see us here, all in one family—
the killer and the killed.

Oh the profanity of what I planned. 1400
Alas, my son, you died so young—
a death before your time.
Aaiii . . . aaiii . . . you're dead . . . gone—
not your own foolishness but mine.

CHORUS LEADER: Alas, it seems you've learned to see what's right—
but far too late. [1270]

CREON: Aaiiii . . . I've learned it in my pain.
Some god clutching a great weight struck my head,
then hurled me onto paths in wilderness,
throwing down and casting underfoot
what brought me joy. 1410
So sad . . . so sad . . .
the wretched agony of human life.

[The Messenger reappears from the palace]

MESSENGER: My lord, you come like one who stores up evil,
what you hold in your arms and what you'll see
before too long inside the house. [1280]

CREON: What's that?
Is there something still more evil than all this?

MESSENGER: Your wife is dead—blood mother of that
corpse—slaughtered with a sword—her wounds are very
new, poor lady.

CREON: Aaiiii . . . a gathering place for death . . . 1420
no sacrifice can bring this to an end.
Why are you destroying me? You there—
you bringer of this dreadful news, this agony,
what are you saying now? Aaiii . . .
You kill a man then kill him once again.
What are you saying, boy? What news?
A slaughter heaped on slaughter— [1290]
my wife, alas . . . she's dead?

MESSENGER: *[opening the palace doors, revealing the
body of Eurydice]*
Look here. No longer is she hidden inside.

CREON: Alas, how miserable I feel—to look upon
this second horror. What remains for me,
what's fate still got in store? I've just held 1430
my own son in my arms, and now I see
right here in front of me another corpse.

Alas for this suffering mother. [1300]
Alas, my son.

MESSENGER: Stabbed with a sharp sword at the altar,
she let her darkening eyesight fail,
once she had cried out in sorrow
for the glorious fate of Megareos,
who died some time ago, and then again
for Haemon, and then, with her last breath, 1440
she called out evil things against you,
the killer of your sons.*

CREON: Aaaii . . . My fear now makes me tremble.
Why won't someone now strike out at me,
pierce my heart with a double bladed sword?
How miserable I am . . . aaiii . . . [1310]
how full of misery and pain . . .

MESSENGER: By this woman who lies dead you stand charged
with the deaths of both your sons.

CREON: What about her?
How did she die so violently?

MESSENGER: She killed herself, 1450
with her own hands she stabbed her belly,
once she heard her son's most sorry fate.

CREON: Alas for me . . . the guilt for all of this is mine—
it can never be removed from me or passed
to any other mortal man. I, and I alone . . .
I murdered you . . . I speak the truth.

Servants—hurry and lead me off, [1320]
get me away from here, for now
what I am in life is nothing.

CHORUS LEADER: What you advise is good—if good can come 1460
with all these evils. When we face such things
the less we say the better.

CREON: Let that day come, oh let it come,
the fairest of all destinies for me,
the one which brings on my last day. [1330]
Oh, let it come, so that I never see another dawn.

CHORUS LEADER: That's something for the times ahead.
We need now to deal with what confronts us here.
What's yet to come is the concern of those 1470
whose task it is to deal with it.

CREON: In that prayer
I included everything I most desire.

CHORUS: Pray for nothing.
There's no release for mortal human beings,
not from events which destiny has set.

CREON: Then take this foolish man away from here.
I killed you, my son, without intending to, [1340]
and you, as well, my wife. How useless I am now.
I don't know where to look or find support.
Everything I touch goes wrong, and on my head
fate climbs up with its overwhelming load. 1480

[The Attendants help Creon move up the stairs into the palace, taking Haemon's body with them]

CHORUS: The most important part of true success
is wisdom—not to act impiously
towards the gods, for boasts of arrogant men [1350]
bring on great blows of punishment—
so in old age men can discover wisdom.

Notes

*Dirce: one of the rivers beside Thebes.

*Hephaestus: god of fire.

*Laius: king of Thebes and father of Oedipus. Oedipus killed him (not knowing who he was) and became the next king of Thebes by saving the city from the devastation of the Sphinx.

*Zeus Herkeios: Zeus of the Courtyard, a patron god of worship within the home.

*Hades: god of the underworld, lord of the dead.

*Labdakos: father of Laius and hence grandfather of Oedipus and great-grandfather of Antigone and Ismene.

*Olympus: a mountain in northern Greece where, according to tradition, the major gods live.

*Following common editorial practice, the lines of the Greek have been rearranged here, so that 663-7 come after 671, hence the apparently odd numbering of the lines.

*Following the suggestion of Andrew Brown and others, I have moved lines 756-7 in the Greek text so that they come right after line 750.

**corrupted*: the killing of a family member could bring on divine punishment in the form of a pollution involving the entire city (as in the case of Oedipus). Creon is, one assumes, taking refuge in the notion that he will not be executing Antigone directly. [

**Eros*: the god of erotic sexual passion.

**Aphrodite*: goddess of sexual desire.

**Acheron*: one of the major rivers of the underworld.

*The last two speeches refer to Niobe, daughter of Tantalus (a son of Zeus). Niobe had seven sons and daughters and boasted that she had more children than the goddess Leto. As punishment Artemis and Apollo, Leto's two children, destroyed all Niobe's children. Niobe turned to stone in grief and was reportedly visible on Mount Sipylus (in Asia Minor). The Chorus' claim that Niobe was a goddess or semi-divine is very odd here, since her story is almost always a tale of human presumption and divine punishment for human arrogance. [

**father*: The Chorus here is offering the traditional suggestion that present afflictions can arise from a family curse originating in previous generations.

**still alive*: Polyneices married the daughter of Adrastus, an action which enabled him to acquire the army to attack Thebes. [

**here with us*: Creon's logic seems to suggest that because he is not executing Antigone directly and is leaving her a choice between committing suicide and slowly starving to death in the cave, he has no moral responsibility for what happens.

**Persephone* is the wife of Hades and thus goddess of the underworld.

*In these lines Antigone seems to be talking about both her brothers, first claiming she washed and dressed the body of Eteocles and then covered Polyneices. However, the pronoun references in the Greek are confusing. Lines 904 to 920 (in the Greek text have prompted a great deal of critical debate, since they seem incompatible with Antigone's earlier motivation and do not make much sense in context (in addition most of them appear closely derived from Herodotus 3.119). Hence, some editors insist that the lines (or most of them) be removed. Brown provides a useful short summary of the arguments and some editorial options (199-200). [

**Danae*: daughter of Acrisus, King of Argos. Because of a prophecy that he would be killed by a son born to Danae, Acrisus imprisoned her. But Zeus made love to her in the

form of a golden shower, and she gave birth to Perseus, who, once grown, killed Acrisus accidentally.

**mocking of the god*: a reference to Lycurgus son of Dryas, a Thracian king. He attacked the god Dionysus and was punished with blinding or with being torn apart.

**flute*: the anger of the Muses at a Thracian who boasted of his flute playing is not normally a part of the Lycurgus story but refers to another Thracian, Thamyras.

**dark rocks . . . Bosphorus*: the dark rocks were a famous hazard to shipping. They moved together to smash any ship moving between them. The Bosphorus is the strait between the Black Sea and the Propontis (near the Hellespont).

**blood-stained hands*: this verse and the next refer to the Thracian king Phineas, whose second wife blinded her two step sons (from Phineas' first wife Cleopatra) by stabbing out their eyes.

**immortal Fates*: Cleopatra was the grand-daughter of Erechtheus, king of Athens. Boreas, father of Erechtheus, was god of the North Wind.

**other men*: Teiresias' offering failed to catch fire. His interpretation is that it has been rejected by the gods, a very unfavorable omen.

**in control*: This is the second reference to the fact that at some point earlier Teiresias has given important political help to Creon. It is not at all clear what this refers to.

*Teiresias here is apparently accusing Creon of refusing burial to the dead allied soldiers Polyneices brought with him from other cities. There is no mention of this anywhere else in the play, although the detail is present in other versions of the story.

**fierce dragon*: In these lines the Chorus celebrates Dionysus, the god born in Thebes to Semele, daughter of King Cadmus. The bacchantes are those who worship Dionysus. Eleusis, a region on the coast near Athens, was famous for its Eleusinian Mysteries, a secret ritual of worship. Deo is a reference to the goddess Demeter, who was worshipped at Eleusis. The Theban race sprang up from dragon's teeth sown in a field by Cadmus, founder of the city.

**Evoe*: a cry of celebration made by worshippers of Bacchus.

**lightning strike*: Semele, Dionysus human mother, was destroyed by Zeus lightning bolt, because of the jealousy of Hera, Zeus' wife.

**Iacchus*: Thyiads are worshippers of Dionysus, Iacchus a divinity associated with Dionysus.

**Amphion*: legendary king of Thebes, husband of Niobe.

**Megareos*: Haemon's brother, who, we are to understand on the basis of this reference, died nobly some time before the play begins. It is not clear how Creon might have been responsible for his death. In another version of the story, Creon has a son Menoeceus, who kills himself in order to save the city.

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