

unhealthy spot, until it will bear a sharper remedy.

Met. VI

'When the sign of the crab doth scorch the field, fraught with the sun's most grievous rays, the husbandman that has freely intrusted his seed to the fruitless furrow, is cheated by the faithless harvest-goddess; and he must turn him to the oak tree's fruit.

'When the field is scarred by the bleak north winds, wouldst thou seek the wood's dark carpet to gather violets? If thou wilt enjoy the grapes, wouldst thou seek with clutching hand to prune the vines in spring? 'Tis in autumn Bacchus brings his gifts. Thus God marks out the times and fits to them peculiar works: He has set out a course of change, and lets no confusion come. If aught betake itself to headlong ways, and leaves its sure design, ill will the outcome be thereto.

Prose VI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'But do you not somehow know whence all things have their source?'

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

'Is it possible that you, who know the beginning of all things, should not know their end? But such are the ways of these distractions, such is their power, that though they can move a man's position, they cannot pluck him from himself or wrench him from his roots. But this question would I have you answer: do you remember that you are a man?'

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'How can I but remember that?'

'Can you then say what is a man?'

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

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

'Naught,' said I.

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

Met. VII

'When the stars are hidden by black clouds, no light can they afford. When the boisterous south wind rolls along the sea and stirs the surge, the water, but now as clear as glass, bright as the fair sun's light, is dark, impenetrable to sight, with stirred and scattered sand. The stream, that wanders down the mountain's side, must often find a stumbling-block, a stone within its path torn from the hill's own rock. So too shalt thou: if thou wouldst see the truth in undimmed light, choose the straight road, the beaten path; away with passing joys! Away with fear! Put vain hopes to flight! And grant no place to grief! Where these distractions reign, the mind is clouded o'er, the soul is bound in chains.'

Prose III

Philosophy shews the vanity of riches

'And you too, creatures of the earth, do dream of your first state, though with a dim idea. With whatsoever thinking it may be, you look to that goal of happiness, though never so obscure your thoughts: thither, to true happiness, your natural course does guide you, and from the same your various errors lead you. For I would have you consider whether men can reach the end they have resolved upon, namely happiness, by these ways by which they think to attain thereto. If money and places of honour and such-like do bring anything of that sort to a man who seems to lack no good thing, then let us acknowledge with them that men do become happy by the possession of these things. But if they cannot perform their promises, and there is still lack of further good things, surely it is plain that a false appearance of happiness is there discovered. You, therefore, who had lately abundant riches, shall first answer me. With all that great wealth, was your mind never perturbed by torturing care arising from some sense of injustice?'

'Yes,' I said; 'I cannot remember that my mind was ever free from some such care.'

'Was it not because something was lacking, which you missed, or because something was present to you which you did not like to have?'

'Yes,' I answered.

'You desired, then, the presence of the one, and the absence of the other?'

'I acknowledge it.'

'Then,' said she, 'such a man lacks what he desires.'

'He does.'

'But while a man lacks anything, can he possibly satisfy himself?'

'No,' said I.

'Then, while you were bountifully supplied with wealth, you felt that you did not satisfy yourself?'

'I did indeed.'

'Then,' said she, 'wealth cannot prevent a man from lacking or make him satisfied. And this is what it apparently professed to do. And this point too I feel is

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most important: money has in itself, by its own nature, nothing which can prevent its being carried off from those, who possess it, against their will.'

'It has not,' I said.

'No, you cannot deny that any stronger man may any day snatch it from them. For how come about the quarrels of the law-courts? Is it not because people try to regain money that has been by force or by fraud taken from them?' 'Yes,' I answered.

'Then,' said she, 'a man will need to seek from the outside help to guard his own money.'

'That cannot be denied,' I said.

'And a man will not need that unless he possesses money which he can lose.'

'Undoubtedly he will not.'

'Then the argument turns round the other way,' she said. 'The riches which were thought to make a man all-sufficient for himself, do really put him in need of other people's help. Then how can need be separated from wealth? Do the rich never feel hunger nor thirst? Do the limbs of moneyed men never feel the cold of winter? You will say, "Yes, but the rich have the wherewithal to satisfy hunger and thirst, and drive away cold." But though riches may thus console wants, they cannot entirely take them away. For, though these ever crying wants, these continual requests, are satisfied, yet there must exist that which is to be satisfied. I need not say that nature is satisfied with little, greed is never satisfied. Wherefore, I ask you, if wealth cannot remove want, and even creates its own wants, what reason is there that you should think it affords satisfaction to a man?

Met. III

'Though the rich man with greed heap up from ever-flowing streams the wealth that cannot satisfy, though he deck himself with pearls from the Red Sea's shore, and plough his fertile field with oxen by the score, yet gnawing care will never in his lifetime leave him, and at his death his wealth will not go with him, but leave him faithlessly.'

Prose IV

The vanity of high places

Prose VIII

All these vanities are actually harmful

'There is then no doubt that these roads to happiness are no roads, and they cannot lead any man to any end whither they profess to take him. I would shew you shortly with what great evils they are bound up. Would you heap up money? You will need to tear it from its owner. Would you seem brilliant by the glory of great honours? You must kneel before their dispenser, and in your desire to surpass other men in honour, you must debase yourself by setting aside all pride. Do you long for power? You will be subject to the wiles of all over whom you have power, you will be at the mercy of many dangers. You seek fame? You will be drawn to and fro among rough paths, and lose all freedom from care. Would you spend a life of pleasure? Who would not despise and cast off such servitude to so vile and brittle a thing as your body? How petty are all the aims of those who put before themselves the pleasures of the body, how uncertain is the possession of such? In bodily size will you ever surpass the elephant? In strength will you ever lead the bull, or in speed the tiger? Look upon the expanse of heaven, the strength with which it stands, the rapidity with which it moves, and cease for a while to wonder at base things. This heaven is not more wonderful for those things than for the design which guides it. How sweeping is the brightness of outward form, how swift its movement, yet more fleeting than the passing of the flowers of spring. But if, as Aristotle says, many could use the eyes of lynxes to see through that which meets the eye, then if they saw into the organs within, would not that body, though it had the most fair outside of Alcibiades,[37] seem most vile within? Wherefore it is not your own nature, but the weakness of the eyes of them that see you, which makes you seem beautiful. But consider how in excess you desire the pleasures of the body, when you know that howsoever you admire it, it can be reduced to nothing by a three-days' fever. To put all these points then in a word: these things cannot grant the good which they promise; they are not made perfect by the union of all good things in them; they do not lead to happiness as a path thither; they do not make men blessed.[38]

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Met. VIII

'Ah! how wretched are they whom ignorance leads astray by her crooked path! Ye seek not gold upon green trees, nor gather precious stones from vines, nor set your nets on mountain tops to catch the fishes for your feast, nor hunt the Umbrian sea in search of goats. Man knows the depths of the sea themselves, hidden though they be beneath its waves; he knows which water best yields him pearls, and which the scarlet dye. But in their blindness men are content, and know not where lies hid the good which they desire. They sink in earthly things, and there they seek that which has soared above the star-lit heavens. What can I call down upon them worthy of their stubborn folly? They go about in search of wealth and honours; and only when they have by labours vast stored up deception for themselves, do they at last know what is their true good.

Prose IX

Philosophy begins to examine true happiness

'So far,' she continued, 'we have been content to set forth the form of false happiness. If you clearly understand that, my next duty is to shew what is true happiness.'

'I do see,' said I, 'that wealth cannot satisfy, that power comes not to kingdoms, nor veneration to high offices; that true renown cannot accompany ambition, nor true enjoyment wait upon the pleasures of the body.'

'Have you grasped the reasons why it is so?' she asked.

'I seem to look at them as through a narrow chink, but I would learn more clearly from you.'

'The reason is to hand,' said she; 'human error takes that which is simple and by nature impossible to divide, tries to divide it, and turns its truth and perfection into falsity and imperfection. Tell me, do you think that anything which lacks nothing, can be without power?'

'Of course not.'

'You are right; for if anything has any weakness in any part, it must lack the help of something else.'

'That is so,' I said.

'Then perfect satisfaction and power have the same nature?'

'Yes, it seems so.'

'And do you think such a thing contemptible, or the opposite, worthy of all veneration?'

'There can be no doubt that it is worthy.'

'Then let us add veneration to that satisfaction and power, and so consider these three as one.'

'Yes, we must add it if we wish to proclaim the truth.'

'Do you then think that this whole is dull and of no reputation, or renowned with all glory? For consider it thus: we have granted that it lacks nothing, that it has all power and is worthy of all veneration; it must not therefore lack the glory which it cannot supply for itself, and thereby seem to be in any direction contemptible.'

'No,' I said, 'I must allow that it has glory too.'

'Therefore we must rank this glory equally with the other three.'

'Yes, we must.'

'Then that which lacks nothing from outside itself, which is all-powerful by its own might, which has renown and veneration, must surely be allowed to be most happy too?'

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'I cannot imagine from what quarter unhappiness would creep into such a thing, wherefore we must grant that it is full of happiness if the other qualities remain existent.'

'Then it follows further, that though perfect satisfaction, power, glory, veneration, and happiness differ in name, they cannot differ at all in essence?'

'They cannot.'

'This then,' said she, 'is a simple, single thing by nature, only divided by the mistakes of base humanity; and while men try to gain a part of that which has no parts, they fail both to obtain a fraction, which cannot exist, and the whole too after which they do not strive.'

'Tell me how they fail thus,' I said.

'One seeks riches by fleeing from poverty, and takes no thought of power,' she answered, 'and so he prefers to be base and unknown, and even deprives himself of natural pleasures lest he should part with the riches which he has gathered. Thus not even that satisfaction reaches the man who loses all power, who is stabbed by sorrow, lowered by his meanness, hidden by his lack of fame. Another seeks power only: he scatters his wealth, he despises pleasures and honours which have no power, and sets no value upon glory. You see how many things such an one lacks. Sometimes he goes without necessities even, sometimes he feels the bite and torture of care; and as he cannot rid himself of these, he loses the power too which he sought above all things. The same argument may be applied to offices, glory, and pleasure. For since each one of these is the same as each other, any man who seeks one without the others, gains not even that one which he desires.'

'What then?' I asked.

'If any man desires to obtain all together, he will be seeking the sum of happiness. But will he ever find that in these things which we have shewn cannot supply what they promise?'

'No.'

'Then happiness is not to be sought for among these things which are separately believed to supply each thing so sought.'

'Nothing could be more plainly true,' I said.

'Then you have before you the form of false happiness, and its causes; now turn your attention in the opposite direction, and you will quickly see the true happiness which I have promised to shew you.'

'But surely this is clear even to the blindest, and you shewed it before when you were trying to make clear the causes of false happiness. For if I mistake not, true and perfect happiness is that which makes a man truly satisfied, powerful, venerated, renowned, and happy. And (for I would have you see that I have looked deeply into the matter) I realise without doubt that that which can truly yield any one of these, since they are all one, is perfect happiness.'

'Ah! my son,' said she, 'I do see that you are blessed in this opinion, but I would have you add one thing.'

'What is that?' I asked.

'Do you think that there is anything among mortals, and in our perishable lives, which could yield such a state?'

'I do not think that there is, and I think that you have shewn this beyond the need of further proof.'

'These then seem to yield to mortals certain appearances of the true good, or some such imperfections; but they cannot give true and perfect good.'

'No.'

BOETHIUS

knowledge. For you believe that to think aught other than it is, is the opposite of true knowledge. The cause of this error is that every man believes that all the subjects, that he knows, are known by their own force or nature alone, which are known; but it is quite the opposite. For every subject, that is known, is comprehended not according to its own force, but rather according to the nature of those who know it. Let me make this plain to you by a brief example: the roundness of a body may be known in one way by sight, in another way by touch. Sight can take in the whole body at once from a distance by judging its radii, while touch clings, as it were, to the outside of the sphere, and from close at hand perceives through the material parts the roundness of the body as it passes over the actual circumference. A man himself is differently comprehended by the senses, by imagination, by reason, and by intelligence. For the senses distinguish the form as set in the matter operated upon by the form; imagination distinguishes the appearance alone without the matter. Reason goes even further than imagination; by a general and universal contemplation it investigates the actual kind which is represented in individual specimens. Higher still is the view of the intelligence, which reaches above the sphere of the universal, and with the unsullied eye of the mind gazes upon that very form of the kind in its absolute simplicity. Herein the chief point for our consideration is this: the higher power of understanding includes the lower, but the lower never rises to the higher. For the senses are capable of understanding naught but the matter; imagination cannot look upon universal or natural kinds; reason cannot comprehend the absolute form; whereas the intelligence seems to look down from above and comprehend the form, and distinguishes all that lie below, but in such a way that it grasps the very form which could not be known to any other than itself. For it perceives and knows the general kind, as does reason; the appearance, as does the imagination; and the matter, as do the senses, but with one grasp of the mind it looks upon all with a clear conception of the whole. And reason too, as it views general kinds, does not make use of the imagination nor the senses, but yet does perceive the objects both of the imagination and of the senses. It is reason which thus defines a general kind according to its conception: Man, for instance, is an animal, biped and reasoning. This is a general notion of a natural kind, but no man denies that the subject can be approached by the imagination and by the senses, just because reason investigates it by a reasonable conception and not by the imagination or senses. Likewise, though imagination takes its beginning of seeing and forming appearances from the senses, yet without their aid it surveys each subject by an imaginative faculty of distinguishing, not by the distinguishing faculty of the senses.

Do you see then, how in knowledge of all things, the subject uses its own standard of capability, and not those of the objects known? And this is but reasonable, for every judgment formed is an act of the person who judges, and therefore each man must of necessity perform his own action from his own capability and not the capability of any other.

Met. IV

In days of old the Porch at Athens^[73] gave us men, seeing dimly as in old age, who could believe that the feelings of the senses and the imagination were but impressions on the mind from bodies without them, just as the old custom was to impress with swift-running pens letters upon the surface of a waxen tablet which bore no marks before. But if the mind with its own force can bring forth naught by its own exertions; if it does but lie passive and subject to the marks of other bodies; if it reflects, as does, forsooth, a mirror, the vain reflections of other things; whence thrives there in the soul an all-seeing power of knowledge? What is the force that sees

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we, who have our share in possession of reason, could go further and possess the judgment of the mind of God, we should then think it most just that human reason should yield itself to the mind of God, just as we have determined that the senses and imagination ought to yield to reason.

'Let us therefore raise ourselves, if so be that we can, to that height of the loftiest intelligence. For there reason will see what it cannot of itself perceive, and that is to know how even such things as have uncertain results are perceived definitely and for certain by foreknowledge; and such foreknowledge will not be mere opinion, but rather the single and direct form of the highest knowledge unlimited by any finite bounds.

Met. V

'In what different shapes do living beings move upon the earth! Some make flat their bodies, sweeping through the dust and using their strength to make therein a furrow without break; some flit here and there upon light wings which beat the breeze, and they float through vast tracks of air in their easy flight. 'Tis others' wont to plant their footsteps on the ground, and pass with their paces over green fields or under trees. Though all these thou seest move in different shapes, yet all have their faces downward along the ground, and this doth draw downward and dull their senses. Alone of all, the human race lifts up its head on high, and stands in easy balance with the body upright, and so looks down to spurn the earth. If thou art not too earthly by an evil folly, this pose is as a lesson. Thy glance is upward, and thou dost carry high thy head, and thus thy search is heavenward: then lead thy soul too upward, lest while the body is higher raised, the mind sink lower to the earth.

Prose VI

Philosophy explains that God's divine intelligence can view all things from its eternal mind, while human reason can only see them from a temporal point of view

'Since then all that is known is apprehended, as we just now shewed, not according to its nature but according to the nature of the knower, let us examine, so far as we lawfully may, the character of the divine nature, so that we may be able to learn what its knowledge is.

'The common opinion, according to all men living, is that God is eternal. Let us therefore consider what is eternity. For eternity will, I think, make clear to us at the same time the divine nature and knowledge.

'Eternity is the simultaneous and complete possession of infinite life. This will appear more clearly if we compare it with temporal things. All that lives under the conditions of time moves through the present from the past to the future; there is nothing set in time which can at one moment grasp the whole space of its lifetime. It cannot yet comprehend to-morrow; yesterday it has already lost. And in this life of to-day your life is no more than a changing, passing moment. And as Aristotle[74] said of the universe, so it is of all that is subject to time; though it never began to be, nor will ever cease, and its life is co-extensive with the infinity of time, yet it is not such as can be held to be eternal. For though it apprehends and grasps a space of infinite lifetime, it does not embrace the whole simultaneously; it has not yet experienced the future. What we should rightly call eternal is that which grasps and possesses wholly and simultaneously the fulness of unending life, which lacks naught of the future, and has lost naught of the fleeting past; and such an existence must be ever present in itself to control and aid itself, and also must keep present with itself the infinity of changing time. Therefore, people who hear that Plato thought that this universe had no beginning of time and will have no end, are not right in thinking that in this way the

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created world is co-eternal with its creator.[75] For to pass through unending life, the attribute which Plato ascribes to the universe is one thing; but it is another thing to grasp simultaneously the whole of unending life in the present; this is plainly a peculiar property of the mind of God.

'And further, God should not be regarded as older than His creations by any period of time, but rather by the peculiar property of His own single nature. For the infinite changing of temporal things tries to imitate the ever simultaneously present immutability of His life: it cannot succeed in imitating or equalling this, but sinks from immutability into change, and falls from the single directness of the present into an infinite space of future and past. And since this temporal state cannot possess its life completely and simultaneously, but it does in the same manner exist for ever without ceasing, it therefore seems to try in some degree to rival that which it cannot fulfil or represent, for it binds itself to some sort of present time out of this small and fleeting moment; but inasmuch as this temporal present bears a certain appearance of that abiding present, it somehow makes those, to whom it comes, seem to be in truth what they imitate. But since this imitation could not be abiding, the unending march of time has swept it away, and thus we find that it has bound together, as it passes, a chain of life, which it could not by abiding embrace in its fulness. And thus if we would apply proper epithets to those subjects, we can say, following Plato, that God is eternal, but the universe is continual.

'Since then all judgment apprehends the subjects of its thought according to its own nature, and God has a condition of ever-present eternity, His knowledge, which passes over every change of time, embracing infinite lengths of past and future, views in its own direct comprehension everything as though it were taking place in the present. If you would weigh the foreknowledge by which God distinguishes all things, you will more rightly hold it to be a knowledge of a never-failing constancy in the present, than a foreknowledge of the future. Whence Providence is more rightly to be understood as a looking forth than a looking forward, because it is set far from low matters and looks forth upon all things as from a lofty mountain-top above all. Why then do you demand that all things occur by necessity, if divine light rests upon them, while men do not render necessary such things as they can see? Because you can see things of the present, does your sight therefore put upon them any necessity? Surely not. If one may not unworthily compare this present time with the divine, just as you can see things in this your temporal present, so God sees all things in His eternal present. Wherefore this divine foreknowledge does not change the nature or individual qualities of things: it sees things present in its understanding just as they will result some time in the future. It makes no confusion in its distinctions, and with one view of its mind it discerns all that shall come to pass whether of necessity or not. For instance, when you see at the same time a man walking on the earth and the sun rising in the heavens, you see each sight simultaneously, yet you distinguish between them, and decide that one is moving voluntarily, the other of necessity. In like manner the perception of God looks down upon all things without disturbing at all their nature, though they are present to Him but future under the conditions of time. Wherefore this foreknowledge is not opinion but knowledge resting upon truth, since He knows that a future event is, though He knows too that it will not occur of necessity. If you answer here that what God sees about to happen, cannot but happen, and that what cannot but happen is bound by necessity, you fasten me down to the word necessity, I will grant that we have a matter of most firm truth, but it is one to which scarce any man can approach unless he be a contemplator of the divine. For I shall answer that such a thing will occur of necessity, when it is viewed from the point