

# PEAK 2022



WYOMING CATHOLIC COLLEGE



Philosophy and Morality



# EUTHYPHRO

The scene is the agora or central marketplace of Athens, before the offices of the magistrate who registers and makes preliminary inquiries into charges brought under the laws protecting the city from the gods' displeasure. There Socrates meets Euthyphro—Socrates is on his way in to answer the charges of 'impiety' brought against him by three younger fellow citizens, on which he is going to be condemned to death, as we learn in the Apology. Euthyphro has just deposed murder charges against his own father for the death of a servant. Murder was a religious offense, since it entailed 'pollution' which if not ritually purified was displeasing to the gods; but equally, a son's taking such action against his father might well itself be regarded as 'impious'. Euthyphro professes to be acting on esoteric knowledge about the gods and their wishes, and so about the general topic of 'piety'. Socrates seizes the opportunity to acquire from Euthyphro this knowledge of piety so that he can rebut the accusations against himself. However, like all his other interlocutors in Plato's 'Socratic' dialogues, Euthyphro cannot answer Socrates' questions to Socrates' satisfaction, or ultimately to his own. So he cannot make it clear what piety is—though he continues to think that he does know it. Thus, predictably, Socrates' hopes are disappointed: just when he is ready to press further to help Euthyphro express his knowledge, if indeed he does possess it, Euthyphro begs off on the excuse of business elsewhere.

Though Socrates does not succeed in his quest, we readers learn a good deal about the sort of thing Socrates is looking for in asking his question 'What is piety?' and the other 'What is . . . ?' questions he pursues in other dialogues. He wants a single 'model' or 'standard' he can look to in order to determine which acts and persons are pious, one that gives clear, unconflicting, and unambiguous answers. He wants something that can provide such a standard all on its own—as one of Euthyphro's proposals, that being pious is simply being loved by the gods, cannot do, since one needs to know first what the gods do love. Pious acts and people may indeed be loved by the gods, but that is a secondary quality, not the 'essence' of piety—it is not that which serves as the standard being sought.

There seems no reason to doubt the character Socrates' sincerity in probing Euthyphro's statements so as to work out an adequate answer—he has in advance no answer of his own to test out or to advocate. But does the dialogue itself suggest to the attentive reader an answer of its own? Euthyphro frustrates Socrates by his inability to develop adequately his final suggestion, that piety is justice in relation to the gods, in serving and assisting them in some purpose

or enterprise of their own. Socrates seems to find that an enticing idea. Does Plato mean to suggest that piety may be shown simply in doing one's best to become as morally good as possible—something Socrates claims in the *Apology* the gods want more than anything else? If so, can piety remain an independent virtue at all, with its own separate standard for action? These are among the questions this dialogue leaves us to ponder.

J.M.C.

2 EUTHYPHRO: What's new, Socrates, to make you leave your usual haunts in the Lyceum and spend your time here by the king-archon's court? Surely you are not prosecuting anyone before the king-archon, as I am?

SOCRATES: The Athenians do not call this a prosecution but an indictment, Euthyphro.

b EUTHYPHRO: What is this you say? Someone must have indicted you, for you are not going to tell me that you have indicted someone else.

SOCRATES: No indeed.

EUTHYPHRO: But someone else has indicted you?

SOCRATES: Quite so.

EUTHYPHRO: Who is he?

SOCRATES: I do not really know him myself, Euthyphro. He is apparently young and unknown. They call him Meletus, I believe. He belongs to the Pitthean deme, if you know anyone from that deme called Meletus, with long hair, not much of a beard, and a rather aquiline nose.

EUTHYPHRO: I don't know him, Socrates. What charge does he bring against you?

c SOCRATES: What charge? A not ignoble one I think, for it is no small thing for a young man to have knowledge of such an important subject. He says he knows how our young men are corrupted and who corrupts them. He is likely to be wise, and when he sees my ignorance corrupting his contemporaries, he proceeds to accuse me to the city as to their mother. d I think he is the only one of our public men to start out the right way, for it is right to care first that the young should be as good as possible, just as a good farmer is likely to take care of the young plants first, and of the others later. So, too, Meletus first gets rid of us who corrupt the young e shoots, as he says, and then afterwards he will obviously take care of the older ones and become a source of great blessings for the city, as seems likely to happen to one who started out this way.

EUTHYPHRO: I could wish this were true, Socrates, but I fear the opposite may happen. He seems to me to start out by harming the very heart of

Translated by G.M.A. Grube.

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the city by attempting to wrong you. Tell me, what does he say you do to corrupt the young?

SOCRATES: Strange things, to hear him tell it, for he says that I am a maker of gods, and on the ground that I create new gods while not believing in the old gods, he has indicted me for their sake, as he puts it.

EUTHYPHO: I understand, Socrates. This is because you say that the divine sign keeps coming to you.<sup>1</sup> So he has written this indictment against you as one who makes innovations in religious matters, and he comes to court to slander you, knowing that such things are easily misrepresented to the crowd. The same is true in my case. Whenever I speak of divine matters in the assembly and foretell the future, they laugh me down as if I were crazy; and yet I have foretold nothing that did not happen. Nevertheless, they envy all of us who do this. One need not worry about them, but meet them head-on.

SOCRATES: My dear Euthyphro, to be laughed at does not matter perhaps, for the Athenians do not mind anyone they think clever, as long as he does not teach his own wisdom, but if they think that he makes others to be like himself they get angry, whether through envy, as you say, or for some other reason.

EUTHYPHO: I have certainly no desire to test their feelings towards me in this matter.

SOCRATES: Perhaps you seem to make yourself but rarely available, and not be willing to teach your own wisdom, but I'm afraid that my liking for people makes them think that I pour out to anybody anything I have to say, not only without charging a fee but even glad to reward anyone who is willing to listen. If then they were intending to laugh at me, as you say they laugh at you, there would be nothing unpleasant in their spending their time in court laughing and jesting, but if they are going to be serious, the outcome is not clear except to you prophets.

EUTHYPHO: Perhaps it will come to nothing, Socrates, and you will fight your case as you think best, as I think I will mine.

SOCRATES: What is your case, Euthyphro? Are you the defendant or the prosecutor?

EUTHYPHO: The prosecutor.

SOCRATES: Whom do you prosecute?

EUTHYPHO: One whom I am thought crazy to prosecute.

SOCRATES: Are you pursuing someone who will easily escape you?

EUTHYPHO: Far from it, for he is quite old.

SOCRATES: Who is it?

EUTHYPHO: My father.

SOCRATES: My dear sir! Your own father?

EUTHYPHO: Certainly.

1. See *Apology* 31d.

SOCRATES: What is the charge? What is the case about?

EUTHYPHRO: Murder, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Good heavens! Certainly, Euthyphro, most men would not know how they could do this and be right. It is not the part of anyone to do this, but of one who is far advanced in wisdom.

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, that is so.

SOCRATES: Is then the man your father killed one of your relatives? Or is that obvious, for you would not prosecute your father for the murder of a stranger.

EUTHYPHRO: It is ridiculous, Socrates, for you to think that it makes any difference whether the victim is a stranger or a relative. One should only watch whether the killer acted justly or not; if he acted justly, let him go, but if not, one should prosecute, if, that is to say, the killer shares your hearth and table. The pollution is the same if you knowingly keep company with such a man and do not cleanse yourself and him by bringing him to justice. The victim was a dependent of mine, and when we were farming in Naxos he was a servant of ours. He killed one of our household slaves in drunken anger, so my father bound him hand and foot and threw him in a ditch, then sent a man here to inquire from the priest what should be done. During that time he gave no thought or care to the bound man, as being a killer, and it was no matter if he died, which he did. Hunger and cold and his bonds caused his death before the messenger came back from the seer. Both my father and my other relatives are angry that I am prosecuting my father for murder on behalf of a murderer when he hadn't even killed him, they say, and even if he had, the dead man does not deserve a thought, since he was a killer. For, they say, it is impious for a son to prosecute his father for murder. But their ideas of the divine attitude to piety and impiety are wrong, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Whereas, by Zeus, Euthyphro, you think that your knowledge of the divine, and of piety and impiety, is so accurate that, when those things happened as you say, you have no fear of having acted impiously in bringing your father to trial?

EUTHYPHRO: I should be of no use, Socrates, and Euthyphro would not be superior to the majority of men, if I did not have accurate knowledge of all such things.

SOCRATES: It is indeed most important, my admirable Euthyphro, that I should become your pupil, and as regards this indictment challenge Meletus about these very things and say to him: that in the past too I considered knowledge about the divine to be most important, and that now that he says that I am guilty of improvising and innovating about the gods I have become your pupil. I would say to him: "If, Meletus, you agree that Euthyphro is wise in these matters, consider me, too, to have the right beliefs and do not bring me to trial. If you do not think so, then prosecute that teacher of mine, not me, for corrupting the older men, me and his own father, by teaching me and by exhorting and punishing him." If he

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is not convinced, and does not discharge me or indict you instead of me,  
I shall repeat the same challenge in court.

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, and, if he should try to indict me, I  
think I would find his weak spots and the talk in court would be about  
him rather than about me.

SOCRATES: It is because I realize this that I am eager to become your  
pupil, my dear friend. I know that other people as well as this Meletus  
do not even seem to notice you, whereas he sees me so sharply and clearly  
that he indicts me for ungodliness. So tell me now, by Zeus, what you  
just now maintained you clearly knew: what kind of thing do you say that  
godliness and ungodliness are, both as regards murder and other things;  
or is the pious not the same and alike in every action, and the impious  
the opposite of all that is pious and like itself, and everything that is  
to be impious presents us with one form or appearance in so far as it  
is impious?

EUTHYPHRO: Most certainly, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Tell me then, what is the pious, and what the impious, do  
you say?

EUTHYPHRO: I say that the pious is to do what I am doing now, to  
prosecute the wrongdoer, be it about murder or temple robbery or anything  
else, whether the wrongdoer is your father or your mother or anyone else;  
not to prosecute is impious. And observe, Socrates, that I can cite powerful  
evidence that the law is so. I have already said to others that such actions are  
right, not to favor the ungodly, whoever they are. These people themselves  
believe that Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, yet they agree that  
he bound his father because he unjustly swallowed his sons, and that he  
in turn castrated his father for similar reasons. But they are angry with  
me because I am prosecuting my father for his wrongdoing. They contradict  
themselves in what they say about the gods and about me.

SOCRATES: Indeed, Euthyphro, this is the reason why I am a defendant  
in the case, because I find it hard to accept things like that being said about  
the gods, and it is likely to be the reason why I shall be told I do wrong.  
Now, however, if you, who have full knowledge of such things, share  
their opinions, then we must agree with them, too, it would seem. For  
what are we to say, we who agree that we ourselves have no knowledge  
of them? Tell me, by the god of friendship, do you really believe these  
things are true?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, Socrates, and so are even more surprising things, of  
which the majority has no knowledge.

SOCRATES: And do you believe that there really is war among the gods,  
and terrible enmities and battles, and other such things as are told by the  
poets, and other sacred stories such as are embroidered by good writers  
and by representations of which the robe of the goddess is adorned when  
it is carried up to the Acropolis? Are we to say these things are true, Eur-  
thyphro?

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EUTHYPHRO: Not only these, Socrates, but, as I was saying just now, I will, if you wish, relate many other things about the gods which I know will amaze you.

SOCRATES: I should not be surprised, but you will tell me these at leisure some other time. For now, try to tell me more clearly what I was asking just now, for, my friend, you did not teach me adequately when I asked you what the pious was, but you told me that what you are doing now, in prosecuting your father for murder, is pious.

EUTHYPHRO: And I told the truth, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Perhaps. You agree, however, that there are many other pious actions.

EUTHYPHRO: There are.

SOCRATES: Bear in mind then that I did not bid you tell me one or two of the many pious actions but that form itself that makes all pious actions pious, for you agreed that all impious actions are impious and all pious actions pious through one form, or don't you remember?

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EUTHYPHRO: I do.

SOCRATES: Tell me then what this form itself is, so that I may look upon it, and using it as a model, say that any action of yours or another's that is of that kind is pious, and if it is not that it is not.

EUTHYPHRO: If that is how you want it, Socrates, that is how I will tell you. Socrates: That is what I want.

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EUTHYPHRO: Well then, what is dear to the gods is pious, what is not is impious.

SOCRATES: Splendid, Euthyphro! You have now answered in the way I wanted. Whether your answer is true I do not know yet, but you will obviously show me that what you say is true.

EUTHYPHRO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Come then, let us examine what we mean. An action or a man dear to the gods is pious, but an action or a man hated by the gods is impious. They are not the same, but quite opposite, the pious and the impious. Is that not so?

EUTHYPHRO: It is indeed.

SOCRATES: And that seems to be a good statement?

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EUTHYPHRO: I think so, Socrates.

SOCRATES: We have also stated that the gods are in a state of discord, that they are at odds with each other, Euthyphro, and that they are at enmity with each other. Has that, too, been said?

EUTHYPHRO: It has.

SOCRATES: What are the subjects of difference that cause hatred and anger? Let us look at it this way. If you and I were to differ about numbers as to which is the greater, would this difference make us enemies and angry with each other, or would we proceed to count and soon resolve our difference about this?

EUTHYPHRO: We would certainly do so.

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SOCRATES: Again, if we differed about the larger and the smaller, we would turn to measurement and soon cease to differ.

EUTHYPHRO: That is so.

SOCRATES: And about the heavier and the lighter, we would resort to weighing and be reconciled.

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: What subject of difference would make us angry and hostile to each other if we were unable to come to a decision? Perhaps you do not have an answer ready, but examine as I tell you whether these subjects are the just and the unjust, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad. Are these not the subjects of difference about which, when we are unable to come to a satisfactory decision, you and I and other men become hostile to each other whenever we do?

EUTHYPHRO: That is the difference, Socrates, about those subjects.

SOCRATES: What about the gods, Euthyphro? If indeed they have differences, will it not be about these same subjects?

EUTHYPHRO: It certainly must be so.

SOCRATES: Then according to your argument, my good Euthyphro, different gods consider different things to be just, beautiful, ugly, good, and bad, for they would not be at odds with one another unless they differed about these subjects, would they?

EUTHYPHRO: You are right.

SOCRATES: And they like what each of them considers beautiful, good, and just, and hate the opposites of these?

EUTHYPHRO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: But you say that the same things are considered just by some gods and unjust by others, and as they dispute about these things they are at odds and at war with each other. Is that not so?

EUTHYPHRO: It is.

SOCRATES: The same things then are loved by the gods and hated by the gods, and would be both god-loved and god-hated.

EUTHYPHRO: It seems likely.

SOCRATES: And the same things would be both pious and impious, according to this argument?

EUTHYPHRO: I'm afraid so.

SOCRATES: So you did not answer my question, you surprising man. I did not ask you what same thing is both pious and impious, and it appears that what is loved by the gods is also hated by them. So it is in no way surprising if your present action, namely punishing your father, may be pleasing to Zeus but displeasing to Cronus and Uranus, pleasing to Hephaestus but displeasing to Hera, and so with any other gods who differ from each other on this subject.

EUTHYPHRO: I think, Socrates, that on this subject no gods would differ from one another, that whoever has killed anyone unjustly should pay the penalty.

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SOCRATES: Well now, Euthyphro, have you ever heard any man maintaining that one who has killed or done anything else unjustly should not pay the penalty?

EUTHYPHRO: They never cease to dispute on this subject, both elsewhere and in the courts, for when they have committed many wrongs they do and say anything to avoid the penalty.

SOCRATES: Do they agree they have done wrong, Euthyphro, and in spite of so agreeing do they nevertheless say they should not be punished?

EUTHYPHRO: No, they do not say or do just anything. For they do not venture to say this, or dispute that they must not pay the penalty if they have done wrong, but I think they deny doing wrong. Is that not so?

SOCRATES: So they do not say or do just anything. For they do not venture to say this, or dispute that they deny doing wrong. Is that not so?

EUTHYPHRO: That is true.

SOCRATES: Then they do not dispute that the wrongdoer must be punished, but they may disagree as to who the wrongdoer is, what he did and when.

EUTHYPHRO: You are right.

SOCRATES: Do not the gods have the same experience, if indeed they are at odds with each other about the just and the unjust, as you argue deny maintains? Some assert that they wrong one another, while others deny it, but no one among gods or men ventures to say that the wrongdoer must not be punished.

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, that is true, Socrates, as to the main point, others must not be punished.

SOCRATES: And those who disagree, whether men or gods, dispute about each action, if indeed the gods disagree. Some say it is done justly, others unjustly. Is that not so?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, indeed.

SOCRATES: Come now, my dear Euthyphro, tell me, too, that I may become wiser, what proof you have that all the gods consider that man to have been killed unjustly who became a murderer while in your service, was bound by the master of his victim, and died in his bonds before the one who bound him found out from the seers what was to be done with him, and that it is right for a son to denounce and to prosecute his father on behalf of such a man. Come, try to show me a clear sign that all the gods definitely believe this action to be right. If you can give me adequate proof of this, I shall never cease to extol your wisdom.

EUTHYPHRO: This is perhaps no light task, Socrates, though I could show you very clearly.

SOCRATES: I understand that you think me more dull-witted than the jury, as you will obviously show them that these actions were unjust and that all the gods hate such actions.

EUTHYPHRO: I will show it to them clearly, Socrates, if only they will listen to me.

SOCRATES: They will listen if they think you show them well. But this thought came to me as you were speaking, and I am examining it, saying to myself: "If Euthyphro shows me conclusively that all the gods consider

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such a death unjust, to what greater extent have I learned from him the nature of piety and impiety? This action would then, it seems, be hated by the gods, but the pious and the impious were not thereby now defined, for what is hated by the gods has also been shown to be loved by them." So I will not insist on this point; let us assume, if you wish, that all the gods consider this unjust and that they all hate it. However, is this the correction we are making in our discussion, that what all the gods hate is impious, and what they all love is pious, and that what some gods love and others hate is neither or both? Is that how you now wish us to define piety and impiety?

EUTHYPHRO: What prevents us from doing so, Socrates?

SOCRATES: For my part nothing, Euthyphro, but you look whether on your part this proposal will enable you to teach me most easily what you promised.

EUTHYPHRO: I would certainly say that the pious is what all the gods love, and the opposite, what all the gods hate, is the impious.

SOCRATES: Then let us again examine whether that is a sound statement, or do we let it pass, and if one of us, or someone else, merely says that something is so, do we accept that it is so? Or should we examine what the speaker means?

EUTHYPHRO: We must examine it, but I certainly think that this is now a fine statement.

SOCRATES: We shall soon know better whether it is. Consider this: Is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?

EUTHYPHRO: I don't know what you mean, Socrates.

SOCRATES: I shall try to explain more clearly: we speak of something carried and something carrying, of something led and something leading, of something seen and something seeing, and you understand that these things are all different from one another and how they differ?

EUTHYPHRO: I think I do.

SOCRATES: So there is also something loved and—a different thing—something loving.

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: Tell me then whether the thing carried is a carried thing because it is being carried, or for some other reason?

EUTHYPHRO: No, that is the reason.

SOCRATES: And the thing led is so because it is being led, and the thing seen because it is being seen?

EUTHYPHRO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: It is not being seen because it is a thing seen but on the contrary it is a thing seen because it is being seen; nor is it because it is something led that it is being led but because it is being led that it is something led; nor is something being carried because it is something carried, but it is something carried because it is being carried. Is what I want to say clear, Euthyphro? I want to say this, namely, that if anything is being changed

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or is being affected in any way, it is not being changed because it is something changed, but rather it is something changed because it is being changed; nor is it being affected because it is something affected, but it is something affected because it is being affected.<sup>2</sup> Or do you not agree?

EUTHYPHRO: I do.

SOCRATES: Is something loved either something changed or something affected by something?

EUTHYPHRO: Certainly.

SOCRATES: So it is in the same case as the things just mentioned; it is not being loved by those who love it because it is something loved, but it is something loved because it is being loved by them?

EUTHYPHRO: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: What then do we say about the pious, Euthyphro? Surely that it is being loved by all the gods, according to what you say?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Is it being loved because it is pious, or for some other reason?

EUTHYPHRO: For no other reason.

SOCRATES: It is being loved then because it is pious, but it is not pious because it is being loved?

EUTHYPHRO: Apparently.

SOCRATES: And yet it is something loved and god-loved because it is being loved by the gods?

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: Then the god-loved is not the same as the pious, Euthyphro, nor the pious the same as the god-loved, as you say it is, but one differs from the other.

EUTHYPHRO: How so, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Because we agree that the pious is being loved for this reason, that it is pious, but it is not pious because it is being loved. Is that not so?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And that the god-loved, on the other hand, is so because it is being loved by the gods, by the very fact of being loved, but it is not being loved because it is god-loved.

EUTHYPHRO: True.

SOCRATES: But if the god-loved and the pious were the same, my dear Euthyphro, then if the pious was being loved because it was pious, the god-loved would also be being loved because it was god-loved; and if the god-loved was god-loved because it was being loved by the gods, then

2. Here Socrates gives the general principle under which, he says, the specific cases already examined—those of leading, carrying, and seeing—all fall. It is by being changed by something that changes it (e.g. by carrying it somewhere) that anything is a changed thing—not vice versa: it is not by something's being a changed thing that something else then changes it so that it comes to be being changed (e.g. by carrying it somewhere).

Likewise for "affections" such as being seen by someone: it is by being "affected" by something that "affects" it that anything is an "affected" thing, not vice versa. It is not by being an "affected" thing (e.g., a thing seen) that something else then "affects" it.

Euthyphro

11

the pious would also be pious because it was being loved by the gods. But now you see that they are in opposite cases as being altogether different from each other: the one is such as to be loved because it is being loved, the other is being loved because it is such as to be loved. I'm afraid, Euthyphro, that when you were asked what piety is, you did not wish to make its nature clear to me, but you told me an affect or quality of it, that the pious has the quality of being loved by all the gods, but you have not yet told me what the pious is. Now, if you will, do not hide things from me but tell me again from the beginning what piety is, whether being loved by the gods or having some other quality—we shall not quarrel about that—but be keen to tell me what the pious and the impious are.

EUTHYPHRO: But Socrates, I have no way of telling you what I have in mind, for whatever proposition we put forward goes around and refuses to stay put where we establish it.

SOCRATES: Your statements, Euthyphro, seem to belong to my ancestor, Daedalus. If I were stating them and putting them forward, you would perhaps be making fun of me and say that because of my kinship with him my conclusions in discussion run away and will not stay where one puts them. As these propositions are yours, however, we need some other jest, for they will not stay put for you, as you say yourself.

EUTHYPHRO: I think the same jest will do for our discussion, Socrates, for I am not the one who makes them go round and not remain in the same place; it is you who are the Daedalus; for as far as I am concerned they would remain as they were.

SOCRATES: It looks as if I was cleverer than Daedalus in using my skill, my friend, in so far as he could only cause to move the things he made himself, but I can make other people's move as well as my own. And the smartest part of my skill is that I am clever without wanting to be, for I would rather have your statements to me remain unmoved than possess the wealth of Tantalus as well as the cleverness of Daedalus. But enough of this. Since I think you are making unnecessary difficulties, I am as eager as you are to find a way to teach me about piety, and do not give up before you do. See whether you think all that is pious is of necessity just.

EUTHYPHRO: I think so.

SOCRATES: And is then all that is just pious? Or is all that is pious just, but not all that is just pious, but some of it is and some is not?

EUTHYPHRO: I do not follow what you are saying, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Yet you are younger than I by as much as you are wiser. As I say, you are making difficulties because of your wealth of wisdom. Pull yourself together, my dear sir, what I am saying is not difficult to grasp. I am saying the opposite of what the poet said who wrote:

*You do not wish to name Zeus, who had done it, and who made  
all things grow, for where there is fear there is also shame.<sup>3</sup>*

3. Author unknown.

I disagree with the poet. Shall I tell you why?

EUTHYPHO: Please do.

SOCRATES: I do not think that "where there is fear there is also shame," for I think that many people who fear disease and poverty and many other such things feel fear, but are not ashamed of the things they fear. Do you not think so?

EUTHYPHO: I do indeed.

SOCRATES: But where there is shame there is also fear. For is there anyone who, in feeling shame and embarrassment at anything, does not also at the same time fear and dread a reputation for wickedness?

EUTHYPHO: He is certainly afraid.

SOCRATES: It is then not right to say "where there is fear there is also shame," but that where there is shame there is also fear, for fear covers a larger area than shame. Shame is a part of fear just as odd is a part of number, with the result that it is not true that where there is number there is also oddness, but that where there is oddness there is also number. Do you follow me now?

EUTHYPHO: Surely.

SOCRATES: This is the kind of thing I was asking before, whether where there is piety there is also justice, but where there is justice there is not always piety, for the pious is a part of justice. Shall we say that, or do you think otherwise?

EUTHYPHO: No, but like that, for what you say appears to be right.

SOCRATES: See what comes next: if the pious is a part of the just, we must, it seems, find out what part of the just it is. Now if you asked me something of what we mentioned just now, such as what part of number is the even, and what number that is, I would say it is the number that is divisible into two equal, not unequal, parts. Or do you not think so?

EUTHYPHO: I do.

SOCRATES: Try in this way to tell me what part of the just the pious is, in order to tell Meletus not to wrong us any more and not to indict me for ungodliness, since I have learned from you sufficiently what is godly and pious and what is not.

EUTHYPHO: I think, Socrates, that the godly and pious is the part of the just that is concerned with the care of the gods, while that concerned with the care of men is the remaining part of justice.

SOCRATES: You seem to me to put that very well, but I still need a bit of information. I do not know yet what you mean by care, for you do not mean the care of the gods in the same sense as the care of other things, as, for example, we say, don't we, that not everyone knows how to care for horses, but the horse breeder does.

EUTHYPHO: Yes, I do mean it that way.

SOCRATES: So horse breeding is the care of horses.

EUTHYPHO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Nor does everyone know how to care for dogs, but the hunter does.

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EUTHYPHRO: That is so.  
SOCRATES: So hunting is the care of dogs.

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: And cattle raising is the care of cattle.

EUTHYPHRO: Quite so.

SOCRATES: While piety and godliness is the care of the gods, Euthyphro.

Is that what you mean?

EUTHYPHRO: It is.

SOCRATES: Now care in each case has the same effect; it aims at the good and the benefit of the object cared for, as you can see that horses cared for by horse breeders are benefited and become better. Or do you not think so?

EUTHYPHRO: I do.

SOCRATES: So dogs are benefited by dog breeding, cattle by cattle raising, and so with all the others. Or do you think that care aims to harm the object of its care?

EUTHYPHRO: By Zeus, no.

SOCRATES: It aims to benefit the object of its care?

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: Is piety then, which is the care of the gods, also to benefit the gods and make them better? Would you agree that when you do something pious you make some one of the gods better?

EUTHYPHRO: By Zeus, no.

SOCRATES: Nor do I think that this is what you mean—far from it—but that is why I asked you what you meant by the care of gods, because I did not believe you meant this kind of care.

EUTHYPHRO: Quite right, Socrates, that is not the kind of care I mean.

SOCRATES: Very well, but what kind of care of the gods would piety be?

EUTHYPHRO: The kind of care, Socrates, that slaves take of their masters.

SOCRATES: I understand. It is likely to be a kind of service of the gods.

EUTHYPHRO: Quite so.

SOCRATES: Could you tell me to the achievement of what goal service to doctors tends? Is it not, do you think, to achieving health?

EUTHYPHRO: I think so.

SOCRATES: What about service to shipbuilders? To what achievement is it directed?

EUTHYPHRO: Clearly, Socrates, to the building of a ship.

SOCRATES: And service to housebuilders to the building of a house?

EUTHYPHRO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Tell me then, my good sir, to the achievement of what aim does service to the gods tend? You obviously know since you say that you, of all men, have the best knowledge of the divine.

EUTHYPHRO: And I am telling the truth, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Tell me then, by Zeus, what is that excellent aim that the gods achieve, using us as their servants?

EUTHYPHRO: Many fine things, Socrates.

14 SOCRATES: So do generals, my friend. Nevertheless you could easily tell me their main concern, which is to achieve victory in war, is it not?

EUTHYPHRO: Of course.

SOCRATES: The farmers too, I think, achieve many fine things, but the main point of their efforts is to produce food from the earth.

EUTHYPHRO: Quite so.

SOCRATES: Well then, how would you sum up the many fine things that the gods achieve?

b EUTHYPHRO: I told you a short while ago, Socrates, that it is a considerable task to acquire any precise knowledge of these things, but, to put it simply, I say that if a man knows how to say and do what is pleasing to the gods at prayer and sacrifice, those are pious actions such as preserve both private houses and public affairs of state. The opposite of these pleasing actions are impious and overturn and destroy everything.

c SOCRATES: You could tell me in far fewer words, if you were willing, the sum of what I asked, Euthyphro, but you are not keen to teach me, that is clear. You were on the point of doing so, but you turned away. If you had given that answer, I should now have acquired from you sufficient knowledge of the nature of piety. As it is, the lover of inquiry must follow his beloved wherever it may lead him. Once more then, what do you say that piety and the pious are? Are they a knowledge of how to sacrifice and pray?

EUTHYPHRO: They are.

SOCRATES: To sacrifice is to make a gift to the gods, whereas to pray is to beg from the gods?

EUTHYPHRO: Definitely, Socrates.

d SOCRATES: It would follow from this statement that piety would be a knowledge of how to give to, and beg from, the gods.

EUTHYPHRO: You understood what I said very well, Socrates.

SOCRATES: That is because I am so desirous of your wisdom, and I concentrate my mind on it, so that no word of yours may fall to the ground. But tell me, what is this service to the gods? You say it is to beg from them and to give to them?

EUTHYPHRO: I do.

SOCRATES: And to beg correctly would be to ask from them things that we need?

EUTHYPHRO: What else?

e SOCRATES: And to give correctly is to give them what they need from us, for it would not be skillful to bring gifts to anyone that are in no way needed.

EUTHYPHRO: True, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Piety would then be a sort of trading skill between gods and men?

EUTHYPHRO: Trading, yes, if you prefer to call it that.

SOCRATES: I prefer nothing, unless it is true. But tell me, what benefit do the gods derive from the gifts they receive from us? What they give us is

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obvious to all. There is for us no good that we do not receive from them,  
but how are they benefited by what they receive from us? Or do we have  
such an advantage over them in the trade that we receive all our blessings  
from them and they receive nothing from us?

EUTHYPHRO: Do you suppose, Socrates, that the gods are benefited by  
what they receive from us?

SOCRATES: What could those gifts from us to the gods be, Euthyphro?

EUTHYPHRO: What else, do you think, than honor, reverence, and what  
I mentioned just now, gratitude?

SOCRATES: The pious is then, Euthyphro, pleasing to the gods, but not  
beneficial or dear to them?

EUTHYPHRO: I think it is of all things most dear to them.

SOCRATES: So the pious is once again what is dear to the gods.

EUTHYPHRO: Most certainly.

SOCRATES: When you say this, will you be surprised if your arguments  
seem to move about instead of staying put? And will you accuse me of  
being Daedalus who makes them move, though you are yourself much  
more skillful than Daedalus and make them go round in a circle? Or do  
you not realize that our argument has moved around and come again to  
the same place? You surely remember that earlier the pious and the god-  
loved were shown not to be the same but different from each other. Or  
do you not remember?

EUTHYPHRO: I do.

SOCRATES: Do you then not realize now that you are saying that what  
is dear to the gods is the pious? Is this not the same as the god-loved? Or  
is it not?

EUTHYPHRO: It certainly is.

SOCRATES: Either we were wrong when we agreed before, or, if we were  
right then, we are wrong now.

EUTHYPHRO: That seems to be so.

SOCRATES: So we must investigate again from the beginning what piety  
is, as I shall not willingly give up before I learn this. Do not think me  
unworthily, but concentrate your attention and tell the truth. For you know  
it, if any man does, and I must not let you go, like Proteus,<sup>4</sup> before you  
tell me. If you had no clear knowledge of piety and impiety you would  
never have ventured to prosecute your old father for murder on behalf of  
a servant. For fear of the gods you would have been afraid to take the  
risk lest you should not be acting rightly, and would have been ashamed  
before men, but now I know well that you believe you have clear knowledge  
of piety and impiety. So tell me, my good Euthyphro, and do not hide  
what you think it is.

EUTHYPHRO: Some other time, Socrates, for I am in a hurry now, and it  
is time for me to go.

4. See *Odyssey* iv.382 ff.

16  
 SOCRATES: What a thing to do, my friend! By going you have cast me down from a great hope I had, that I would learn from you the nature of the pious and the impious and so escape Meletus' indictment by showing him that I had acquired wisdom in divine matters from Euthyphro, and my ignorance would no longer cause me to be careless and inventive about such things, and that I would be better for the rest of my life.

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## CRITO

As the beginning of the Phaedo relates, Socrates did not die until a month after his trial, which followed by a day the sailing of the Athenian state galley on an annual religious mission to the island of Delos; no executions were permitted during its absence. Crito comes to tell Socrates of its anticipated arrival later that day and to make one last effort to persuade him to allow his friends to save him by bribing his jailers and bundling him off somewhere beyond the reach of Athenian law. Crito indicates that most people expect his friends to do this—unless (dishonorably) they value their money more than their friend. Socrates, however, refuses. Even if people do expect it, to do that would be grossly unjust.

Both Crito's arguments in favor of his plan and Socrates' in rejecting it are rather jumbled—as perhaps befits the pressure and excitement of the moment. Crito cites the damage to his and Socrates' other friends' reputations and delicately minimizes any financial loss he might suffer, in case Socrates might be unwilling to accept any great sacrifice from a friend. Socrates wittingly dismisses the first consideration and ignores the second. But Crito also claims that it would actually be unjust of Socrates to stay. That would allow his enemies to triumph over him and his friends, including his young sons, whom he will abandon by going docilely to his death: a person ought not to take lying down an attack on the things he holds most dear, including philosophy itself and the philosophical life to which he and (presumably) his friends are devoted. Here we hear strains of the time-honored Greek idea that justice is helping one's friends and harming one's enemies, cited by Polemarchus in Republic I. (But Crito does not propose harming their enemies—only preventing them from having their way.) As to his children, Socrates responds that they will be as well or better cared for after his death than if he resisted it and went into exile. But ironically, considering his own subsequent arguments for accepting his death, he seems not to hear the larger claim of injustice that Crito lodges. Crito's jumbled presentation of his case facilitates this.

Unmoved by the claims of justice grounded in his private relationships to friends and family, Socrates appeals to the standards of civic justice imbedded in his relations as a citizen to the Athenian people and to the Athenian system of law. He claims that a citizen is necessarily, given the benefits he has enjoyed under the laws of the city, their slave, justly required to do whatever they ask, and more forbidden to attack them than to violate his own parents. That would be retaliation—rendering a wrong for the wrong received in his unjust condemnation—and retaliation is never just. But what if he chose to depart not in an

unjust spirit of retaliation, but only in order to evade the ill consequences of the unjust condemnation for himself and his friends and family? As if recognizing that loophole, Socrates also develops a celebrated early version of the social contract—a 'contract' between the *law* or the city and each citizen, not among the citizens themselves—with the argument that now, after he is condemned by an Athenian court and has exhausted all legal appeals, he must, in justice to his implicit promise, abide by the *law's* final judgment and accept his death sentence.

It is clear where Socrates stands; he is committed, as a public figure known for pleading the preeminent value of the civic virtues, to honoring them in his personal life—and death. But the dialogue itself, through Crito's ignored appeal to justice in the private sphere, invites the reader to reflect on a wider range of issues about justice than Socrates himself addresses. Did justice really require that Socrates stay to accept his death?

J.M.C.

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SOCRATES: Why have you come so early, Crito? Or is it not still early?

CRITO: It certainly is.

SOCRATES: How early?

CRITO: Early dawn.

SOCRATES: I am surprised that the warder was willing to listen to you.

CRITO: He is quite friendly to me by now, Socrates. I have been here often and I have given him something.

SOCRATES: Have you just come, or have you been here for some time?

CRITO: A fair time.

b SOCRATES: Then why did you not wake me right away but sit there in silence?

CRITO: By Zeus no, Socrates. I would not myself want to be in distress and awake so long. I have been surprised to see you so peacefully asleep. It was on purpose that I did not wake you, so that you should spend your time most agreeably. Often in the past throughout my life, I have considered the way you live happy, and especially so now that you bear your present misfortune so easily and lightly.

SOCRATES: It would not be fitting at my age to resent the fact that I must die now.

c CRITO: Other men of your age are caught in such misfortunes, but their age does not prevent them resenting their fate.

SOCRATES: That is so. Why have you come so early?

CRITO: I bring bad news, Socrates, not for you, apparently, but for me and all your friends the news is bad and hard to bear. Indeed, I would count it among the hardest.

Translated by G.M.A. Grube.

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SOCRATES: What is it? Or has the ship arrived from Delos, at the arrival  
of which I must die? d

CRITO: It has not arrived yet, but it will, I believe, arrive today, according  
to a message some men brought from Sunium, where they left it. This makes  
it obvious that it will come today, and that your life must end tomorrow.

SOCRATES: May it be for the best. If it so please the gods, so be it. However,  
I do not think it will arrive today.

CRITO: What indication have you of this?

SOCRATES: I will tell you. I must die the day after the ship arrives.

CRITO: That is what those in authority say.

SOCRATES: Then I do not think it will arrive on this coming day, but on  
the next. I take to witness of this a dream I had a little earlier during this  
night. It looks as if it was the right time for you not to wake me.

CRITO: What was your dream?

SOCRATES: I thought that a beautiful and comely woman dressed in white  
approached me. She called me and said: "Socrates, may you arrive at fertile  
Phthia' on the third day." b

CRITO: A strange dream, Socrates.

SOCRATES: But it seems clear enough to me, Crito.

CRITO: Too clear it seems, my dear Socrates, but listen to me even now  
and be saved. If you die, it will not be a single misfortune for me. Not  
only will I be deprived of a friend, the like of whom I shall never find  
again, but many people who do not know you or me very well will think  
that I could have saved you if I were willing to spend money, but that I  
did not care to do so. Surely there can be no worse reputation than to be  
thought to value money more highly than one's friends, for the majority  
will not believe that you yourself were not willing to leave prison while  
we were eager for you to do so.

SOCRATES: My good Crito, why should we care so much for what the  
majority think? The most reasonable people, to whom one should pay  
more attention, will believe that things were done as they were done.

CRITO: You see, Socrates, that one must also pay attention to the opinion  
of the majority. Your present situation makes clear that the majority can  
inflict not the least but pretty well the greatest evils if one is slandered  
among them. d

SOCRATES: Would that the majority could inflict the greatest evils, for  
they would then be capable of the greatest good, and that would be fine,  
but now they cannot do either. They cannot make a man either wise or  
foolish, but they inflict things haphazardly.

1. A quotation from *Iliad* ix.363. Achilles has rejected all the presents Agamemnon  
offered him to get him to return to the battle, and threatens to go home. He says his  
ships will sail in the morning, and with good weather he might arrive on the third day  
"in fertile Phthia" (which is his home). The dream means that Socrates' soul, after death,  
will find its home on the third day (counting, as usual among the Greeks, both the first  
and the last member of the series).

e CRITO: That may be so. But tell me this, Socrates, are you anticipating  
that I and your other friends would have trouble with the informers if  
you escape from here, as having stolen you away, and that we should be  
compelled to lose all our property or pay heavy fines and suffer other  
punishment besides? If you have any such fear, forget it. We would be  
45 justified in running this risk to save you, and worse, if necessary. Do follow  
my advice, and do not act differently.

b SOCRATES: I do have these things in mind, Crito, and also many others.  
CRITO: Have no such fear. It is not much money that some people require  
to save you and get you out of here. Further, do you not see that those  
informers are cheap, and that not much money would be needed to deal  
with them? My money is available and is, I think, sufficient. If, because  
c of your affection for me, you feel you should not spend any of mine, there  
are those strangers here ready to spend money. One of them, Simmias the  
Theban, has brought enough for this very purpose. Cebes, too, and a good  
many others. So, as I say, do not let this fear make you hesitate to save  
yourself, nor let what you said in court trouble you, that you would not  
know what to do with yourself if you left Athens, for you would be  
welcomed in many places to which you might go. If you want to go to  
Thessaly, I have friends there who will greatly appreciate you and keep  
you safe, so that no one in Thessaly will harm you.

d Besides, Socrates, I do not think that what you are doing is just, to give  
up your life when you can save it, and to hasten your fate as your enemies  
would hasten it, and indeed have hastened it in their wish to destroy you.  
Moreover, I think you are betraying your sons by going away and leaving  
them, when you could bring them up and educate them. You thus show  
no concern for what their fate may be. They will probably have the usual  
fate of orphans. Either one should not have children, or one should share  
with them to the end the toil of upbringing and education. You seem to  
me to choose the easiest path, whereas one should choose the path a  
good and courageous man would choose, particularly when one claims  
throughout one's life to care for virtue.

e I feel ashamed on your behalf and on behalf of us, your friends, lest all  
that has happened to you be thought due to cowardice on our part: the  
fact that your trial came to court when it need not have done so, the  
handling of the trial itself, and now this absurd ending which will be  
thought to have got beyond our control through some cowardice and  
46 unmanliness on our part, since we did not save you, or you save yourself,  
when it was possible and could be done if we had been of the slightest  
use. Consider, Socrates, whether this is not only evil, but shameful, both  
for you and for us. Take counsel with yourself, or rather the time for  
counsel is past and the decision should have been taken, and there is no  
further opportunity, for this whole business must be ended tonight. If we  
delay now, then it will no longer be possible, it will be too late. Let me  
persuade you on every count, Socrates, and do not act otherwise.

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SOCRATES: My dear Crito, your eagerness is worth much if it should have some right aim; if not, then the greater your keenness the more difficult it is to deal with. We must therefore examine whether we should act in this way or not, as not only now but at all times I am the kind of man who listens only to the argument that on reflection seems best to me. I cannot, now that this fate has come upon me, discard the arguments I used; they seem to me much the same. I value and respect the same principles as before, and if we have no better arguments to bring up at this moment, be sure that I shall not agree with you, not even if the power of the majority were to frighten us with more bogeys, as if we were children, with threats of incarcerations and executions and confiscation of property. How should we examine this matter most reasonably? Would it be by taking up first your argument about the opinions of men, whether it is sound in every case that one should pay attention to some opinions, but not to others? Or was that well-spoken before the necessity to die came upon me, but now it is clear that this was said in vain for the sake of argument, that it was in truth play and nonsense? I am eager to examine together with you, Crito, whether this argument will appear in any way different to me in my present circumstances, or whether it remains the same, whether we are to abandon it or believe it. It was said on every occasion by those who thought they were speaking sensibly, as I have just now been speaking, that one should greatly value some people's opinions, but not others. Does that seem to you a sound statement?

You, as far as a human being can tell, are exempt from the likelihood of dying tomorrow, so the present misfortune is not likely to lead you astray. Consider then, do you not think it a sound statement that one must not value all the opinions of men, but some and not others, nor the opinions of all men, but those of some and not of others? What do you say? Is this not well said?

CRITO: It is.

SOCRATES: One should value the good opinions, and not the bad ones?

CRITO: Yes.

SOCRATES: The good opinions are those of wise men, the bad ones those of foolish men?

CRITO: Of course.

SOCRATES: Come then, what of statements such as this: Should a man professionally engaged in physical training pay attention to the praise and blame and opinion of any man, or to those of one man only, namely a doctor or trainer?

CRITO: To those of one only.

SOCRATES: He should therefore fear the blame and welcome the praise of that one man, and not those of the many?

CRITO: Obviously.

SOCRATES: He must then act and exercise, eat and drink in the way the one, the trainer and the one who knows, thinks right, not all the others?

Crito: That is so.

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SOCRATES: Very well. And if he disobeys the one, disregards his opinion and his praises while valuing those of the many who have no knowledge, will he not suffer harm?

Crito: Of course.

SOCRATES: What is that harm, where does it tend, and what part of the man who disobeys does it affect?

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Crito: Obviously the harm is to his body, which it ruins.  
SOCRATES: Well said. So with other matters, not to enumerate them all, and certainly with actions just and unjust, shameful and beautiful, good and bad, about which we are now deliberating, should we follow the opinion of the many and fear it, or that of the one, if there is one who has knowledge of these things and before whom we feel fear and shame more than before all the others. If we do not follow his directions, we shall harm and corrupt that part of ourselves that is improved by just actions and destroyed by unjust actions. Or is there nothing in this?

Crito: I think there certainly is, Socrates.

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SOCRATES: Come now, if we ruin that which is improved by health and corrupted by disease by not following the opinions of those who know, is life worth living for us when that is ruined? And that is the body, is it not?

Crito: Yes.

SOCRATES: And is life worth living with a body that is corrupted and in bad condition?

Crito: In no way.

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SOCRATES: And is life worth living for us with that part of us corrupted that unjust action harms and just action benefits? Or do we think that part of us, whatever it is, that is concerned with justice and injustice, is inferior to the body?

Crito: Not at all.

SOCRATES: It is more valuable?

Crito: Much more.

SOCRATES: We should not then think so much of what the majority will say about us, but what he will say who understands justice and injustice, the one, that is, and the truth itself. So that, in the first place, you were wrong to believe that we should care for the opinion of the many about what is just, beautiful, good, and their opposites. "But," someone might say "the many are able to put us to death."

b  
Crito: That too is obvious, Socrates, and someone might well say so.

SOCRATES: And, my admirable friend, that argument that we have gone through remains, I think, as before. Examine the following statement in turn as to whether it stays the same or not, that the most important thing is not life, but the good life.

Crito: It stays the same.

SOCRATES: And that the good life, the beautiful life, and the just life are the same; does that still hold, or not?

Crito: It does hold.

SOCRATES: is just for me. If it the idea of upholding people if they ever, since we are money helping; all this need a here a Crito should Soc you care to you now I the way act, as is admitted think Crito Soc or in never form at once we used must gentle and C Socrates say

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SOCRATES: As we have agreed so far, we must examine next whether it is just for me to try to get out of here when the Athenians have not acquitted me. If it is seen to be just, we will try to do so; if it is not, we will abandon the idea. As for those questions you raise about money, reputation, the upbringing of children, Crito, those considerations in truth belong to those people who easily put men to death and would bring them to life again if they could, without thinking; I mean the majority of men. For us, however, since our argument leads to this, the only valid consideration, as we were saying just now, is whether we should be acting rightly in giving money and gratitude to those who will lead me out of here, and ourselves helping with the escape, or whether in truth we shall do wrong in doing all this. If it appears that we shall be acting unjustly, then we have no need at all to take into account whether we shall have to die if we stay here and keep quiet, or suffer in another way, rather than do wrong.

CRITO: I think you put that beautifully, Socrates, but see what we should do.

SOCRATES: Let us examine the question together, my dear friend, and if you can make any objection while I am speaking, make it and I will listen to you, but if you have no objection to make, my dear Crito, then stop now from saying the same thing so often, that I must leave here against the will of the Athenians. I think it important to persuade you before I act, and not to act against your wishes. See whether the start of our inquiry is adequately stated, and try to answer what I ask you in the way you think best.

CRITO: I shall try.

SOCRATES: Do we say that one must never in any way do wrong willingly, or must one do wrong in one way and not in another? Is to do wrong never good or admirable, as we have agreed in the past, or have all these former agreements been washed out during the last few days? Have we at our age failed to notice for some time that in our serious discussions we were no different from children? Above all, is the truth such as we used to say it was, whether the majority agree or not, and whether we must still suffer worse things than we do now, or will be treated more gently, that nonetheless, wrongdoing or injustice is in every way harmful and shameful to the wrongdoer? Do we say so or not?

CRITO: We do.

SOCRATES: So one must never do wrong.

CRITO: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: Nor must one, when wronged, inflict wrong in return, as the majority believe, since one must never do wrong.

CRITO: That seems to be the case.

SOCRATES: Come now, should one mistreat anyone or not, Crito?

CRITO: One must never do so.

SOCRATES: Well then, if one is oneself mistreated, is it right, as the majority say, to mistreat in return, or is it not?

CRITO: It is never right.

SOCRATES: Mistreating people is no different from wrongdoing.

CRITO: That is true.

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SOCRATES: One should never do wrong in return, nor mistreat any man, no matter how one has been mistreated by him. And Crito, see that you do not agree to this, contrary to your belief. For I know that only a few people hold this view or will hold it, and there is no common ground between those who hold this view and those who do not, but they inevitably despise each other's views. So then consider very carefully whether we have this view in common, and whether you agree, and let this be the basis of our deliberation, that neither to do wrong nor to return a wrong is ever right, nor is bad treatment in return for bad treatment. Or do you disagree and do not share this view as a basis for discussion? I have held it for a long time and still hold it now, but if you think otherwise, tell me now. If, however, you stick to our former opinion, then listen to the next point.

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CRITO: I stick to it and agree with you. So say on.

SOCRATES: Then I state the next point, or rather I ask you: when one has come to an agreement that is just with someone, should one fulfill it or cheat on it?

CRITO: One should fulfill it.

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SOCRATES: See what follows from this: if we leave here without the city's permission, are we mistreating people whom we should least mistreat? And are we sticking to a just agreement, or not?

CRITO: I cannot answer your question, Socrates. I do not know.

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SOCRATES: Look at it this way. If, as we were planning to run away from here, or whatever one should call it, the laws and the state came and confronted us and asked: "Tell me, Socrates, what are you intending to do? Do you not by this action you are attempting intend to destroy us, the laws, and indeed the whole city, as far as you are concerned? Or do you think it possible for a city not to be destroyed if the verdicts of its courts have no force but are nullified and set at naught by private individuals?" What shall we answer to this and other such arguments? For many things could be said, especially by an orator on behalf of this law we are destroying, which orders that the judgments of the courts shall be carried out. Shall we say in answer, "The city wronged me, and its decision was not right." Shall we say that, or what?

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CRITO: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, that is our answer.

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SOCRATES: Then what if the laws said: "Was that the agreement between us, Socrates, or was it to respect the judgments that the city came to?" And if we wondered at their words, they would perhaps add: "Socrates, do not wonder at what we say but answer, since you are accustomed to proceed by question and answer. Come now, what accusation do you bring against us and the city, that you should try to destroy us? Did we not, first, bring you to birth, and was it not through us that your father married your mother and begat you? Tell you, do you find anything to criticize in those of us who are concerned with marriage?" And I would say that I do not criticize them. "Or in those of us concerned with the

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nurture of babies and the education that you too received? Were those assigned to that subject not right to instruct your father to educate you in the arts and in physical culture?" And I would say that they were right. "Very well," they would continue, "and after you were born and nurtured and educated, could you, in the first place, deny that you are our offspring and servant, both you and your forefathers? If that is so, do you think that we are on an equal footing as regards the right, and that whatever we do to you it is right for you to do to us? You were not on an equal footing with your father as regards the right, nor with your master if you had one, so as to retaliate for anything they did to you, to revile them if they reviled you, to beat them if they beat you, and so with many other things. Do you think you have this right to retaliation against your country and its laws? That if we undertake to destroy you and think it right to do so, you can undertake to destroy us, as far as you can, in return? And will you say that you are right to do so, you who truly care for virtue? Is your wisdom such as not to realize that your country is to be honored more than your mother, your father and all your ancestors, that it is more to be revered and more sacred, and that it counts for more among the gods and sensible men, that you must worship it, yield to it and placate its anger more than your father's? You must either persuade it or obey its orders, and endure in silence whatever it instructs you to endure, whether blows or bonds, and if it leads you into war to be wounded or killed, you must obey. To do so is right, and one must not give way or retreat or leave one's post, but both in war and in courts and everywhere else, one must obey the commands of one's city and country, or persuade it as to the nature of justice. It is impious to bring violence to bear against your mother or father, it is much more so to use it against your country." What shall we say in reply, Crito, that the laws speak the truth, or not?

Crito: I think they do.

SOCRATES: "Reflect now, Socrates," the laws might say "that if what we say is true, you are not treating us rightly by planning to do what you are planning. We have given you birth, nurtured you, educated you, we have given you and all other citizens a share of all the good things we could. Even so, by giving every Athenian the opportunity, once arrived at voting age and having observed the affairs of the city and us the laws, we proclaim that if we do not please him, he can take his possessions and go wherever he pleases. Not one of our laws raises any obstacle or forbids him, if he is not satisfied with us or the city, if one of you wants to go and live in a colony or wants to go anywhere else, and keep his property. We say, however, that whoever of you remains, when he sees how we conduct our trials and manage the city in other ways, has in fact come to an agreement with us to obey our instructions. We say that the one who disobeys does wrong in three ways, first because in us he disobeys his parents, also those who brought him up, and because, in spite of his agreement, he neither obeys us nor, if we do something wrong, does he try to persuade us to do better. Yet we only propose things, we do not

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issue savage commands to do whatever we order; we give two alternatives, either to persuade us or to do what we say. He does neither. We do say that you too, Socrates, are open to those charges if you do what you have in mind; you would be among, not the least, but the most guilty of the Athenians." And if I should say "Why so?" they might well be right to upbraid me and say that I am among the Athenians who most definitely came to that agreement with them. They might well say: "Socrates, we would not have dwelt here most consistently of all the Athenians if the city had not been exceedingly pleasing to you. You have never left the city, even to see a festival, nor for any other reason except military service; you have never gone to stay in any other city, as people do; you have had no desire to know another city or other laws; we and our city satisfied you."

"So decisively did you choose us and agree to be a citizen under us. Also, you have had children in this city, thus showing that it was congenial to you. Then at your trial you could have assessed your penalty at exile if you wished, and you are now attempting to do against the city's wishes what you could then have done with her consent. Then you prided yourself that you did not resent death, but you chose, as you said, death in preference to exile. Now, however, those words do not make you ashamed, and you pay no heed to us, the laws, as you plan to destroy us, and you act like the meanest type of slave by trying to run away, contrary to your commitments and your agreement to live as a citizen under us. First then, answer us on this very point, whether we speak the truth when we say that you agreed, not only in words but by your deeds, to live in accordance with us." What are we to say to that, Crito? Must we not agree?

Crito: We must, Socrates.

SOCRATES: "Surely," they might say, "you are breaking the commitments and agreements that you made with us without compulsion or deceit, and under no pressure of time for deliberation. You have had seventy years during which you could have gone away if you did not like us, and if you thought our agreements unjust. You did not choose to go to Sparta or to Crete, which you are always saying are well governed, nor to any other city, Greek or foreign. You have been away from Athens less than the lame or the blind or other handicapped people. It is clear that the city has been outstandingly more congenial to you than to other Athenians, and so have we, the laws, for what city can please without laws? Will you then not now stick to our agreements? You will, Socrates, if we can persuade you, and not make yourself a laughingstock by leaving the city."

"For consider what good you will do yourself or your friends by breaking our agreements and committing such a wrong? It is pretty obvious that your friends will themselves be in danger of exile, disfranchisement and loss of property. As for yourself, if you go to one of the nearby cities—Thebes or Megara, both are well governed—you will arrive as an enemy to their government; all who care for their city will look on you with suspicion, as a destroyer of the laws. You will also strengthen the conviction

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of the jury that they passed the right sentence on you, for anyone who  
 destroys the laws could easily be thought to corrupt the young and the  
 ignorant. Or will you avoid cities that are well governed and men who  
 are civilized? If you do this, will your life be worth living? Will you have  
 social intercourse with them and not be ashamed to talk to them? And  
 what will you say? The same as you did here, that virtue and justice are  
 man's most precious possession, along with lawful behavior and the laws?  
 Do you not think that Socrates would appear to be an unseemly kind of  
 person? One must think so. Or will you leave those places and go to Crito's  
 friends in Thessaly? There you will find the greatest license and disorder,  
 and they may enjoy hearing from you how absurdly you escaped from  
 prison in some disguise, in a leather jerkin or some other things in which  
 escapees wrap themselves, thus altering your appearance. Will there be  
 no one to say that you, likely to live but a short time more, were so greedy  
 for life that you transgressed the most important laws? Possibly, Socrates,  
 if you do not annoy anyone, but if you do, many disgraceful things will  
 be said about you.

"You will spend your time ingratiating yourself with all men, and be  
 at their beck and call. What will you do in Thessaly but feast, as if you  
 had gone to a banquet in Thessaly? As for those conversations of yours  
 about justice and the rest of virtue, where will they be? You say you want  
 to live for the sake of your children, that you may bring them up and  
 educate them. How so? Will you bring them up and educate them by  
 taking them to Thessaly and making strangers of them, that they may  
 enjoy that too? Or not so, but they will be better brought up and educated  
 here, while you are alive, though absent? Yes, your friends will look after  
 them. Will they look after them if you go and live in Thessaly, but not if  
 you go away to the underworld? If those who profess themselves your  
 friends are any good at all, one must assume that they will.

"Be persuaded by us who have brought you up, Socrates. Do not value  
 either your children or your life or anything else more than goodness, in  
 order that when you arrive in Hades you may have all this as your defense  
 before the rulers there. If you do this deed, you will not think it better or  
 more just or more pious here, nor will any one of your friends, nor will  
 it be better for you when you arrive yonder. As it is, you depart, if you  
 depart, after being wronged not by us, the laws, but by men; but if you  
 depart after shamefully returning wrong for wrong and mistreatment for  
 mistreatment, after breaking your agreements and commitments with us,  
 after mistreating those you should mistreat least—yourself, your friends,  
 your country and us—we shall be angry with you while you are still alive,  
 and our brothers, the laws of the underworld, will not receive you kindly,  
 knowing that you tried to destroy us as far as you could. Do not let Crito  
 persuade you, rather than us, to do what he says."

Crito, my dear friend, be assured that these are the words I seem to  
 hear, as the Corybants seem to hear the music of their flutes, and the echo  
 of these words resounds in me, and makes it impossible for me to hear

anything else. As far as my present beliefs go, if you speak in opposition to them, you will speak in vain. However, if you think you can accomplish anything, speak.

CRITO: I have nothing to say, Socrates.

54e SOCRATES: Let it be then, Crito, and let us act in this way, since this is the way the god is leading us.

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# A DEFENSE OF ABORTION

JUDITH JARVIS THOMSON

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MOST opposition to abortion relies on the premise that the fetus is a human being, a person, from the moment of conception. The premise is argued for, but, as I think, not well. Take, for example, the most common argument. We are asked to notice that the development of a human being from conception through birth into childhood is continuous; then it is said that to draw a line, to choose a point in this development and say “before this point the thing is not a person, after this point it is a person” is to make an arbitrary choice, a choice for which in the nature of things no good reason can be given. It is concluded that the fetus is, or anyway that we had better say it is, a person from the moment of conception. But this conclusion does not follow. Similar things might be said about the development of an acorn into an oak tree, and it does not follow that acorns are oak trees, or that we had better say they are. Arguments of this form are sometimes called “slippery slope arguments”—the phrase is perhaps self-explanatory—and it is dismaying that opponents of abortion rely on them so heavily and uncritically.

I am inclined to agree, however, that the prospects for “drawing a line” in the development of the fetus look dim. I am inclined to think also that we shall probably have to agree that the fetus has already become a human person well before birth. Indeed, it comes as a surprise when one first learns how early in its life it begins to acquire human characteristics. By the tenth week, for example, it already has a face, arms and legs, fingers and toes; it has internal organs, and brain activity is detectable. On the other hand, I think that the premise is false, that the fetus is not a person from the moment of conception. A newly fertilized ovum, a newly implanted clump of cells, is no more a person than an acorn is an oak tree. But I shall not discuss any of this. For it seems to me to be of great interest to ask what happens if, for the sake of argument, we allow the premise. How, precisely, are we supposed to get from there to the conclusion that abortion is morally impermissible? Opponents of abortion commonly spend most of their time establishing that the fetus is a person, and hardly any time explaining the step from there to the impermissibility of abortion. Perhaps they think the step too simple and obvious to require much comment. Or perhaps instead they are simply being economical in argument. Many of those who defend abortion rely on the premise that the fetus is not a person, but only a bit of

tissue that will become a person at birth; and why pay out more arguments than you have to? Whatever the explanation, I suggest that the step they take is neither easy nor obvious, that it calls for closer examination than it is commonly given, and that when we do give it this closer examination we shall feel inclined to reject it.

I propose, then, that we grant that the fetus is a person from the moment of conception. How does the argument go from here? Something like this, I take it. Every person has a right to life. So the fetus has a right to life. No doubt the mother has a right to decide what shall happen in and to her body; everyone would grant that. But surely a person's right to life is stronger and more stringent than the mother's right to decide what happens in and to her body, and so outweighs it. So the fetus may not be killed; an abortion may not be performed.

It sounds plausible. But now let me ask you to imagine this. You wake up in the morning and find yourself back to back in bed with an unconscious violinist. A famous unconscious violinist. He has been found to have a fatal kidney ailment, and the Society of Music Lovers has canvassed all the available medical records and found that you alone have the right blood type to help. They have therefore kidnaped you, and last night the violinist's circulatory system was plugged into yours, so that your kidneys can be used to extract poisons from his blood as well as your own. The director of the hospital now tells you, "Look, we're sorry the Society of Music Lovers did this to you—we would never have permitted it if we had known. But still, they did it, and the violinist is now plugged into you. To unplug you would be to kill him. But never mind, it's only for nine months. By then he will have recovered from his ailment, and can safely be unplugged from you." Is it morally incumbent on you to accede to this situation? No doubt it would be very nice of you if you did, a great kindness. But do you have to accede to it? What if it were not nine months, but nine years? Or longer still? What if the director of the hospital says, "Tough luck, I agree, but now you've got to stay in bed, with the violinist plugged into you, for the rest of your life. Because remember this. All persons have a right to life, and violinists are persons. Granted you have a right to decide what happens in and to your body, but a person's right to life outweighs your right to decide what happens in and to your body. So you cannot ever be unplugged from him." I imagine you would regard this as outrageous, which suggests that something really is wrong with that plausible-sounding argument I mentioned a moment ago.

In this case, of course, you were kidnaped, you didn't volunteer for the operation that plugged the violinist into your kidneys. Can those who oppose abortion on the ground I mentioned make an exception for a pregnancy due to rape? Certainly. They can say that persons have a right to life only if they didn't come into existence because of rape; or they can say that all persons have a right to life, but that some have less of a right to life than others, in particular, that those who came into existence because of rape have less. But these statements have a rather unpleasant sound. Surely the question of whether you have a right to life at all, or how much of it you have, shouldn't turn on the question of whether or not you are a product of a rape. And in fact the people who oppose abortion on the ground I mentioned do not make this distinction, and hence do not make an exception in case of rape.

Nor do they make an exception for a case in which the mother has to spend the nine months of her pregnancy in bed. They would agree that would be a great pity, and hard on the mother; but all the same, all persons have a right to life, the fetus is a person, and so on. I suspect, in fact, that they would not make an exception for a case in which, miraculously enough, the pregnancy went on for nine years, or even the rest of the mother's life.

Some won't even make an exception for a case in which continuation of the pregnancy is likely to shorten the mother's life; they regard abortion as impermissible even to save the mother's life. Such cases are nowadays very rare, and many opponents of abortion do not accept this extreme view. All the same, it is a good place to begin: a number of points of interest come out in respect to it.

1. Let us call the view that abortion is impermissible even to save the mother's life "the extreme view." I want to suggest first that it does not issue from the argument I mentioned earlier without the addition of some fairly powerful premises. Suppose a woman has become pregnant, and now learns that she has a cardiac condition such that she will die if she carries the baby to term. What may be done for her? The fetus, being a person, has a right to life, but as the mother is a person too, so has she a right to life. Presumably they have an equal right to life. How is it supposed to come out that an abortion may not be performed? If mother and child have an equal right to life, shouldn't we perhaps flip a coin? Or should we add to the mother's right to life her right to decide what happens in and to her body, which everybody seems to be ready to grant—the sum of her rights now outweighing the fetus's right to life?

The most familiar argument here is the following. We are told that performing the abortion would be directly killing the child, whereas doing nothing would not be killing the mother, but only letting her die. Moreover, in killing the child, one would be killing an innocent person, for the child has committed no crime, and is not aiming at his mother's death. And then there are a variety of ways in which this might be continued. (1) But as directly killing an innocent person is always and absolutely impermissible, an abortion may not be performed. Or, (2) as directly killing an innocent person is murder, and murder is always and absolutely impermissible, an abortion may not be performed. Or, (3) as one's duty to refrain from directly killing an innocent person is more stringent than one's duty to keep a person from dying, an abortion may not be performed. Or, (4) if one's only options are directly killing an innocent person or letting a person die, one must prefer letting the person die, and thus an abortion may not be performed.

Some people seem to have thought that these are not further premises which must be added if the conclusion is to be reached, but that they follow from the very fact that an innocent person has a right to life. But this seems to me to be a mistake, and perhaps the simplest way to show this is to bring out that while we must certainly grant that innocent persons have a right to life, the theses in (1) through (4) are all false. Take (2), for example. If directly killing an innocent person is murder, and thus is impermissible, then the mother's directly killing the innocent

person inside her is murder, and thus is impermissible. But it cannot seriously be thought to be murder if the mother performs an abortion on herself to save her life. It cannot seriously be said that she must refrain, that she must sit passively by and wait for her death. Let us look again at the case of you and the violinist. There you are, in bed with the violinist, and the director of the hospital says to you, "It's all most distressing, and I deeply sympathize, but you see this is putting an additional strain on your kidneys, and you'll be dead within the month. But you have to stay where you are all the same, because unplugging you would be directly killing an innocent violinist, and that's murder, and that's impermissible." If anything in the world is true, it is that you do not commit murder, you do not do what is impermissible, if you reach around to your back and unplug yourself from that violinist to save your life.

The main focus of attention in writings on abortion has been on what a third party may or may not do in answer to a request from a woman for an abortion. This is in a way understandable. Things being as they are, there isn't much a woman can safely do to abort herself. So the question asked is what a third party may do, and what the mother may do, if it is mentioned at all, is deduced, almost as an afterthought, from what it is concluded that third parties may do. But it seems to me that to treat the matter in this way is to refuse to grant to the mother that very status of person which is so firmly insisted on for the fetus. For we cannot simply read off what a person may do from what a third party may do. Suppose you find yourself trapped in a tiny house with a growing child. I mean a very tiny house, and a rapidly growing child—you are already up against the wall of the house and in a few minutes you'll be crushed to death. The child on the other hand won't be crushed to death; if nothing is done to stop him from growing he'll be hurt, but in the end he'll simply burst open the house and walk out a free man. Now I could well understand it if a bystander were to say, "There's nothing we can do for you. We cannot choose between your life and his, we cannot be the ones to decide who is to live, we cannot intervene." But it cannot be concluded that you too can do nothing, that you cannot attack it to save your life. However innocent the child may be, you do not have to wait passively while it crushes you to death. Perhaps a pregnant woman is vaguely felt to have the status of house, to which we don't allow the right of self-defense. But if the woman houses the child, it should be remembered that she is a person who houses it.

I should perhaps stop to say explicitly that I am not claiming that people have a right to do anything whatever to save their lives. I think, rather, that there are drastic limits to the right of self-defense. If someone threatens you with death unless you torture someone else to death, I think you have not the right, even to save your life, to do so. But the case under consideration here is very different. In our case there are only two people involved, one whose life is threatened, and one who threatens it. Both are innocent: the one who is threatened is not threatened because of any fault, the one who threatens does not threaten because of any fault. For this reason we may feel that we bystanders cannot interfere. But the person threatened can.

In sum, a woman surely can defend her life against the threat to it posed by the unborn child, even if doing so involves its death. And this shows not merely that

the theses in (1) through (4) are false; it shows also that the extreme view of abortion is false, and so we need not canvass any other possible ways of arriving at it from the argument I mentioned at the outset.

2. The extreme view could of course be weakened to say that while abortion is permissible to save the mother's life, it may not be performed by a third party, but only by the mother herself. But this cannot be right either. For what we have to keep in mind is that the mother and the unborn child are not like two tenants in a small house which has, by an unfortunate mistake, been rented to both: the mother owns the house. The fact that she does adds to the offensiveness of deducing that the mother can do nothing from the supposition that third parties can do nothing. But it does more than this: it casts a bright light on the supposition that third parties can do nothing. Certainly it lets us see that a third party who says "I cannot choose between you" is fooling himself if he thinks this is impartiality. If Jones has found and fastened on a certain coat, which he needs to keep him from freezing, but which Smith also needs to keep him from freezing, then it is not impartiality that says "I cannot choose between you" when Smith owns the coat. Women have said again and again "This body is my body!" and they have reason to feel angry, reason to feel that it has been like shouting into the wind. Smith, after all, is hardly likely to bless us if we say to him, "Of course it's your coat, anybody would grant that it is. But no one may choose between you and Jones who is to have it."

We should really ask what it is that says "no one may choose" in the face of the fact that the body that houses the child is the mother's body. It may be simply a failure to appreciate this fact. But it may be something more interesting, namely the sense that one has a right to refuse to lay hands on people, even where it would be just and fair to do so, even where justice seems to require that somebody do so. Thus justice might call for somebody to get Smith's coat back from Jones, and yet you have a right to refuse to be the one to lay hands on Jones, a right to refuse to do physical violence to him. This, I think, must be granted. But then what should be said is not "no one may choose," but only "I cannot choose," and indeed not even this, but "I will not act," leaving it open that somebody else can or should, and in particular that anyone in a position of authority, with the job of securing people's rights, both can and should. So this is no difficulty. I have not been arguing that any given third party must accede to the mother's request that he perform an abortion to save her life, but only that he may.

I suppose that in some views of human life the mother's body is only on loan to her, the loan not being one which gives her any prior claim to it. One who held this view might well think it impartiality to say "I cannot choose." But I shall simply ignore this possibility. My own view is that if a human being has any just, prior claim to anything at all, he has a just, prior claim to his own body. And perhaps this needn't be argued for here anyway, since, as I mentioned, the arguments against abortion we are looking at do grant that the woman has a right to decide what happens in and to her body. But although they do grant it, I have tried to show that they do not take seriously what is done in granting it. I suggest the same thing will

reappear even more clearly when we turn away from cases in which the mother's life is at stake, and attend, as I propose we now do, to the vastly more common cases in which a woman wants an abortion for some less weighty reason than preserving her own life.

3. Where the mother's life is not at stake, the argument I mentioned at the outset seems to have a much stronger pull. "Everyone has a right to life, so the unborn person has a right to life." And isn't the child's right to life weightier than anything other than the mother's own right to life, which she might put forward as ground for an abortion?

This argument treats the right to life as if it were unproblematic. It is not, and this seems to me to be precisely the source of the mistake.

For we should now, at long last, ask what it comes to, to have a right to life. In some views having a right to life includes having a right to be given at least the bare minimum one needs for continued life. But suppose that what in fact IS the bare minimum a man needs for continued life is something he has no right at all to be given? If I am sick unto death, and the only thing that will save my life is the touch of Henry Fonda's cool hand on my fevered brow, then all the same, I have no right to be given the touch of Henry Fonda's cool hand on my fevered brow. It would be frightfully nice of him to fly in from the West Coast to provide it. It would be less nice, though no doubt well meant, if my friends flew out to the West Coast and brought Henry Fonda back with them. But I have no right at all against anybody that he should do this for me. Or again, to return to the story I told earlier, the fact that for continued life the violinist needs the continued use of your kidneys does not establish that he has a right to be given the continued use of your kidneys. He certainly has no right against you that you should give him continued use of your kidneys. For nobody has any right to use your kidneys unless you give him this right—if you do allow him to go on using your kidneys, this is a kindness on your part, and not something he can claim from you as his due. Nor has he any right against anybody else that they should give him continued use of your kidneys. Certainly he had no right against the Society of Music Lovers that they should plug him into you in the first place. And if you now start to unplug yourself, having learned that you will otherwise have to spend nine years in bed with him, there is nobody in the world who must try to prevent you, in order to see to it that he is given some thing he has a right to be given.

Some people are rather stricter about the right to life. In their view, it does not include the right to be given anything, but amounts to, and only to, the right not to be killed by anybody. But here a related difficulty arises. If everybody is to refrain from killing that violinist, then everybody must refrain from doing a great many different sorts of things. Everybody must refrain from slitting his throat, everybody must refrain from shooting him—and everybody must refrain from unplugging you from him. But does he have a right against everybody that they shall refrain from unplugging you from him? To refrain from doing this is to allow him to continue to use your kidneys. It could be argued that he has a right against us that we should

allow him to continue to use your kidneys. That is, while he had no right against us that we should give him the use of your kidneys, it might be argued that he anyway has a right against us that we shall not now intervene and deprive him of the use of your kidneys. I shall come back to third-party interventions later. But certainly the violinist has no right against you that you shall allow him to continue to use your kidneys. As I said, if you do allow him to use them, it is a kindness on your part, and not something you owe him.

The difficulty I point to here is not peculiar to the right of life. It reappears in connection with all the other natural rights, and it is something which an adequate account of rights must deal with. For present purposes it is enough just to draw attention to it. But I would stress that I am not arguing that people do not have a right to life—quite to the contrary, it seems to me that the primary control we must place on the acceptability of an account of rights is that it should turn out in that account to be a truth that all persons have a right to life. I am arguing only that having a right to life does not guarantee having either a right to be given the use of or a right to be allowed continued use of another person's body—even if one needs it for life itself. So the right to life will not serve the opponents of abortion in the very simple and clear way in which they seem to have thought it would.

4. There is another way to bring out the difficulty. In the most ordinary sort of case, to deprive someone of what he has a right to is to treat him unjustly. Suppose a boy and his small brother are jointly given a box of chocolates for Christmas. If the older boy takes the box and refuses to give his brother any of the chocolates, he is unjust to him, for the brother has been given a right to half of them. But suppose that, having learned that otherwise it means nine years in bed with that violinist, you unplug yourself from him. You surely are not being unjust to him, for you gave him no right to use your kidneys, and no one else can have given him any such right. But we have to notice that in unplugging yourself, you are killing him; and violinists, like everybody else, have a right to life, and thus in the view we were considering just now, the right not to be killed. So here you do what he supposedly has a right you shall not do, but you do not act unjustly to him in doing it.

The emendation which may be made at this point is this: the right to life consists not in the right not to be killed, but rather in the right not to be killed unjustly. This runs a risk of circularity, but never mind: it would enable us to square the fact that the violinist has a right to life with the fact that you do not act unjustly toward him in unplugging yourself, thereby killing him. For if you do not kill him unjustly, you do not violate his right to life, and so it is no wonder you do him no injustice.

But if this emendation is accepted, the gap in the argument against abortion stares us plainly in the face: it is by no means enough to show that the fetus is a person, and to remind us that all persons have a right to life—we need to be shown also that killing the fetus violates its right to life, i.e., that abortion is unjust killing. And is it?

I suppose we may take it as a datum that in a case of pregnancy due to rape the mother has not given the unborn person a right to the use of her body for food and

shelter. Indeed, in what pregnancy could it be supposed that the mother has given the unborn person such a right? It is not as if there are unborn persons drifting about the world, to whom a woman who wants a child says “I invite you in.”

But it might be argued that there are other ways one can have acquired a right to the use of another person’s body than by having been invited to use it by that person. Suppose a woman voluntarily indulges in intercourse, knowing of the chance it will issue in pregnancy, and then she does become pregnant; is she not in part responsible for the presence, in fact the very existence, of the unborn person inside? No doubt she did not invite it in. But doesn’t her partial responsibility for its being there itself give it a right to the use of her body? If so, then her aborting it would be more like the boy’s taking away the chocolates, and less like your unplugging yourself from the violinist—doing so would be depriving it of what it does have a right to, and thus would be doing it an injustice.

And then, too, it might be asked whether or not she can kill it even to save her own life: If she voluntarily called it into existence, how can she now kill it, even in self-defense?

The first thing to be said about this is that it is something new. Opponents of abortion have been so concerned to make out the independence of the fetus, in order to establish that it has a right to life, just as its mother does, that they have tended to overlook the possible support they might gain from making out that the fetus is dependent on the mother, in order to establish that she has a special kind of responsibility for it, a responsibility that gives it rights against her which are not possessed by any independent person—such as an ailing violinist who is a stranger to her.

On the other hand, this argument would give the unborn person a right to its mother’s body only if her pregnancy resulted from a voluntary act, undertaken in full knowledge of the chance a pregnancy might result from it. It would leave out entirely the unborn person whose existence is due to rape. Pending the availability of some further argument, then, we would be left with the conclusion that unborn persons whose existence is due to rape have no right to the use of their mothers’ bodies, and thus that aborting them is not depriving them of anything they have a right to and hence is not unjust killing.

And we should also notice that it is not at all plain that this argument really does go even as far as it purports to. For there are cases and cases, and the details make a difference. If the room is stuffy, and I therefore open a window to air it, and a burglar climbs in, it would be absurd to say, “Ah, now he can stay, she’s given him a right to the use of her house—for she is partially responsible for his presence there, having voluntarily done what enabled him to get in, in full knowledge that there are such things as burglars, and that burglars burgle.” It would be still more absurd to say this if I had had bars installed outside my windows, precisely to prevent burglars from getting in, and a burglar got in only because of a defect in the bars. It remains equally absurd if we imagine it is not a burglar who climbs in, but an innocent person who blunders or falls in. Again, suppose it were like this: people-seeds drift about in the air like pollen, and if you open your windows, one may drift in and take root in your carpets or upholstery. You don’t want children, so you fix up your

windows with fine mesh screens, the very best you can buy. As can happen, however, and on very, very rare occasions does happen, one of the screens is defective, and a seed drifts in and takes root. Does the person-plant who now develops have a right to the use of your house? Surely not—despite the fact that you voluntarily opened your windows, you knowingly kept carpets and upholstered furniture, and you knew that screens were sometimes defective. Someone may argue that you are responsible for its rooting, that it does have a right to your house, because after all you could have lived out your life with bare floors and furniture, or with sealed windows and doors. But this won't do—for by the same token anyone can avoid a pregnancy due to rape by having a hysterectomy, or anyway by never leaving home without a (reliable!) army.

It seems to me that the argument we are looking at can establish at most that there are some cases in which the unborn person has a right to the use of its mother's body, and therefore some cases in which abortion is unjust killing. There is room for much discussion and argument as to precisely which, if any. But I think we should sidestep this issue and leave it open, for at any rate the argument certainly does not establish that all abortion is unjust killing.

5. There is room for yet another argument here, however. We surely must all grant that there may be cases in which it would be morally indecent to detach a person from your body at the cost of his life. Suppose you learn that what the violinist needs is not nine years of your life, but only one hour: all you need do to save his life is to spend one hour in that bed with him. Suppose also that letting him use your kidneys for that one hour would not affect your health in the slightest. Admittedly you were kidnapped. Admittedly you did not give anyone permission to plug him into you. Nevertheless it seems to me plain you ought to allow him to use your kidneys for that hour—it would be indecent to refuse.

Again, suppose pregnancy lasted only an hour, and constituted no threat to life or health. And suppose that a woman becomes pregnant as a result of rape. Admittedly she did not voluntarily do anything to bring about the existence of a child. Admittedly she did nothing at all which would give the unborn person a right to the use of her body. All the same it might well be said, as in the newly amended violinist story, that she ought to allow it to remain for that hour—that it would be indecent of her to refuse.

Now some people are inclined to use the term "right" in such a way that it follows from the fact that you ought to allow a person to use your body for the hour he needs, that he has a right to use your body for the hour he needs, even though he has not been given that right by any person or act. They may say that it follows also that if you refuse, you act unjustly toward him. This use of the term is perhaps so common that it cannot be called wrong; nevertheless it seems to me to be an unfortunate loosening of what we would do better to keep a tight rein on. Suppose that box of chocolates I mentioned earlier had not been given to both boys jointly, but was given only to the older boy. There he sits stolidly eating his way through the box, his small brother watching enviously. Here we are likely to say, "You ought not

to be so mean. You ought to give your brother some of those chocolates." My own view is that it just does not follow from the truth of this that the brother has any right to any of the chocolates. If the boy refuses to give his brother any he is greedy, stingy, callous—but not unjust. I suppose that the people I have in mind will say it does follow that the brother has a right to some of the chocolates, and thus that the boy does act unjustly if he refuses to give his brother any. But the effect of saying this is to obscure what we should keep distinct, namely the difference between the boy's refusal in this case and the boy's refusal in the earlier case, in which the box was given to both boys jointly, and in which the small brother thus had what was from any point of view clear title to half.

A further objection to so using the term "right" that from the fact that A ought to do a thing for B it follows that B has a right against A that A do it for him, is that it is going to make the question of whether or not a man has a right to a thing turn on how easy it is to provide him with it; and this seems not merely unfortunate, but morally unacceptable. Take the case of Henry Fonda again. I said earlier that I had no right to the touch of his cool hand on my fevered brow even though I needed it to save my life. I said it would be frightfully nice of him to fly in from the West Coast to provide me with it, but that I had no right against him that he should do so. But suppose he isn't on the West Coast. Suppose he has only to walk across the room, place a hand briefly on my brow—and lo, my life is saved. Then surely he ought to do it—it would be indecent to refuse. Is it to be said, "Ah, well, it follows that in this case she has a right to the touch of his hand on her brow, and so it would be an injustice in him to refuse"? So that I have a right to it when it is easy for him to provide it, though no right when it's hard? It's rather a shocking idea that anyone's rights should fade away and disappear as it gets harder and harder to accord them to him.

So my own view is that even though you ought to let the violinist use your kidneys for the one hour he needs, we should not conclude that he has a right to do so—we should say that if you refuse, you are, like the boy who owns all the chocolates and will give none away, self-centered and callous, indecent in fact, but not unjust. And similarly, that even supposing a case in which a woman pregnant due to rape ought to allow the unborn person to use her body for the hour he needs, we should not conclude that he has a right to do so; we should say that she is self-centered, callous, indecent, but not unjust, if she refuses. The complaints are no less grave; they are just different. However, there is no need to insist on this point. If anyone does wish to deduce "he has a right" from "you ought," then all the same he must surely grant that there are cases in which it is not morally required of you that you allow that violinist to use your kidneys, and in which he does not have a right to use them, and in which you do not do him an injustice if you refuse. And so also for mother and unborn child. Except in such cases as the unborn person has a right to demand it—and we were leaving open the possibility that there may be such cases—nobody is morally required to make large sacrifices, of health, of all other interests and concerns, of all other duties and commitments, for nine years, or even for nine months, in order to keep another person alive.

6. We have in fact to distinguish between two kinds of Samaritan: the Good Samaritan and what we might call the Minimally Decent Samaritan. The story of the Good Samaritan, you will remember, goes like this:

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him he had compassion on him.

And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." (Luke 10:30–35)

The Good Samaritan went out of his way, at some cost to himself, to help one in need of it. We are not told what the options were, that is, whether or not the priest and the Levite could have helped by doing less than the Good Samaritan did, but assuming they could have, then the fact they did nothing at all shows they were not even Minimally Decent Samaritans, not because they were not Samaritans, but because they were not even minimally decent.

These things are a matter of degree, of course, but there is a difference, and it comes out perhaps most clearly in the story of Kitty Genovese, who, as you will remember, was murdered while thirty-eight people watched or listened, and did nothing at all to help her. A Good Samaritan would have rushed out to give direct assistance against the murderer. Or perhaps we had better allow that it would have been a Splendid Samaritan who did this, on the ground that it would have involved a risk of death for himself. But the thirty-eight not only did not do this, they did not even trouble to pick up a phone to call the police. Minimally Decent Samaritanism would call for doing at least that, and their not having done it was monstrous.

After telling the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus said, "Go, and do thou likewise." Perhaps he meant that we are morally required to act as the Good Samaritan did. Perhaps he was urging people to do more than is morally required of them. At all events it seems plain that it was not morally required of any of the thirty-eight that he rush out to give direct assistance at the risk of his own life, and that it is not morally required of anyone that he give long stretches of his life—nine years or nine months—to sustaining the life of a person who has no special right (we were leaving open the possibility of this) to demand it.

Indeed, with one rather striking class of exceptions, no one in any country in the world is legally required to do anywhere near as much as this for anyone else. The class of exceptions is obvious. My main concern here is not the state of the law in respect to abortion, but it is worth drawing attention to the fact that in no state in this country is any man compelled by law to be even a Minimally Decent Samaritan to any person; there is no law under which charges could be brought against the thirty-eight who stood by while Kitty Genovese died. By contrast, in most states in this country women are compelled by law to be not merely Minimally Decent Samaritans, but Good Samaritans to unborn persons inside them. This doesn't by itself settle anything one way or the other, because it may well be argued that there should be laws in this country—as there are in many European countries—compelling at least Minimally Decent Samaritanism. But it does show that there is a gross injustice in the existing state of the law. And it shows also that the groups currently working against liberalization of abortion laws, in fact working toward having it declared unconstitutional for a state to permit abortion, had better start working for the adoption of Good Samaritan laws generally, or earn the charge that they are acting in bad faith.

I should think, myself, that Minimally Decent Samaritan laws would be one thing, Good Samaritan laws quite another, and in fact highly improper. But we are not here concerned with the law. What we should ask is not whether anybody should be compelled by law to be a Good Samaritan, but whether we must accede to a situation in which somebody is being compelled—by nature, perhaps—to be a Good Samaritan. We have, in other words, to look now at third-party interventions. I have been arguing that no person is morally required to make large sacrifices to sustain the life of another who has no right to demand them, and this even where the sacrifices do not include life itself; we are not morally required to be Good Samaritans or anyway Very Good Samaritans to one another. But what if a man cannot extricate himself from such a situation? What if he appeals to us to extricate him? It seems to me plain that there are cases in which we can, cases in which a Good Samaritan would extricate him. There you are, you were kidnapped, and nine years in bed with that violinist lie ahead of you. You have your own life to lead. You are sorry, but you simply cannot see giving up so much of your life to the sustaining of his. You cannot extricate yourself, and ask us to do so. I should have thought that—in light of his having no right to the use of your body—it was obvious that we do not have to accede to your being forced to give up so much. We can do what you ask. There is no injustice to the violinist in our doing so.

7. Following the lead of the opponents of abortion, I have throughout been speaking of the fetus merely as a person, and what I have been asking is whether or not the argument we began with, which proceeds only from the fetus's being a person, really does establish its conclusion. I have argued that it does not.

But of course there are arguments and arguments, and it may be said that I have simply fastened on the wrong one. It may be said that what is important is not merely the fact that the fetus is a person, but that it is a person for whom the woman

has a special kind of responsibility issuing from the fact that she is its mother. And it might be argued that all my analogies are therefore irrelevant—for you do not have that special kind of responsibility for that violinist; Henry Fonda does not have that special kind of responsibility for me. And our attention might be drawn to the fact that men and women both are compelled by law to provide support for their children.

I have in effect dealt (briefly) with this argument in section 4 above; but a (still briefer) recapitulation now may be in order. Surely we do not have any such “special responsibility” for a person unless we have assumed it, explicitly or implicitly. If a set of parents do not try to prevent pregnancy, do not obtain an abortion, but rather take it home with them, then they have assumed responsibility for it, they have given it rights, and they cannot now withdraw support from it at the cost of its life because they now find it difficult to go on providing for it. But if they have taken all reasonable precautions against having a child, they do not simply by virtue of their biological relationship to the child who comes into existence have a special responsibility for it. They may wish to assume responsibility for it, or they may not wish to. And I am suggesting that if assuming responsibility for it would require large sacrifices, then they may refuse. A Good Samaritan would not refuse—or anyway, a Splendid Samaritan, if the sacrifices that had to be made were enormous. But then so would a Good Samaritan assume responsibility for that violinist; so would Henry Fonda, if he is a Good Samaritan, fly in from the West Coast and assume responsibility for me.

8. My argument will be found unsatisfactory on two counts by many of those who want to regard abortion as morally permissible. First, while I do argue that abortion is not impermissible, I do not argue that it is always permissible. There may well be cases in which carrying the child to term requires only Minimally Decent Samaritanism of the mother, and this is a standard we must not fall below. I am inclined to think it a merit of my account precisely that it does not give a general yes or a general no. It allows for and supports our sense that, for example, a sick and desperately frightened fourteen-year-old schoolgirl, pregnant due to rape, may of course choose abortion, and that any law which rules this out is an insane law. And it also allows for and supports our sense that in other cases resort to abortion is even positively indecent. It would be indecent in the woman to request an abortion, and indecent in a doctor to perform it, if she is in her seventh month, and wants the abortion just to avoid the nuisance of postponing a trip abroad. The very fact that the arguments I have been drawing attention to treat all cases of abortion, or even all cases of abortion in which the mother's life is not at stake, as morally on a par ought to have made them suspect at the outset.

Second, while I am arguing for the permissibility of abortion in some cases, I am not arguing for the right to secure the death of the unborn child. It is easy to confuse these two things in that up to a certain point in the life of the fetus it is not able to survive outside the mother's body; hence removing it from her body guarantees its death. But they are importantly different. I have argued that you are not morally

required to spend nine months in bed, sustaining the life of that violinist, but to say this is by no means to say that if, when you unplug yourself, there is a miracle and he survives, you then have a right to turn round and slit his throat. You may detach yourself even if this costs him his life; you have no right to be guaranteed his death, by some other means, if unplugging yourself does not kill him. There are some people who will feel dissatisfied by this feature of my argument. A woman may be utterly devastated by the thought of a child, a bit of herself, put out for adoption and never seen or heard of again. She may therefore want not merely that the child be detached from her, but more, that it die. Some opponents of abortion are inclined to regard this as beneath contempt—thereby showing insensitivity to what is surely a powerful source of despair. All the same, I agree that the desire for the child's death is not one which anybody may gratify, should it turn out to be possible to detach the child alive.

At this place, however, it should be remembered that we have only been pretending throughout that the fetus is a human being from the moment of conception. A very early abortion is surely not the killing of a person, and so is not dealt with by anything I have said here.

# FRAGMENTS

## DEMOCRITUS OF ABDERA (C. 425 BC)

1. Nothing can come into being from that which is not; or pass away into that which is not.
2. The first principles of the universe are atoms [literally, 'indivisibles'] and space—the full and the empty; everything else is merely thought to exist.
3. The atoms are solid, existent, and eternal; the space in which they exist is empty, a nothingness.
4. It is impossible that one thing come from two, or two things from one.
5. If there were no empty space, movement would be impossible, and one thing would not be separate from another. Things are divisible because of the emptiness in them.
6. All differences result from differences among the atoms. And these are of three kinds: difference of shape, of arrangement, and of position. To illustrate: A differs from N in shape, AN differs from NA in arrangement, and Z differs from N in position.
7. The number of shapes of atoms is infinite; for there is no reason why an atom would be of one shape rather than another.
8. The atoms move in the infinite void, and, overtaking one another, they collide, and some are scattered, while others, intertwined where their shapes fit together, remain together and thus give rise to the compound bodies which we see. And they cling together until some stronger necessity comes from the outside and breaks them apart.
9. The atoms have always been moving, and always will move; and they move by bumping and knocking one another.
10. By convention, color exists, by convention, bitter, by convention, sweet; but in reality, only atoms and the void. Men think that there are such things as white, black, sweet, bitter, but in truth the universe is composed merely of thing and nothing. The atoms have no qualities, nor can they in any respect

undergo those changes of quality which men believe to happen because they trust their senses. Atoms cannot grow warm or cold, nor can they become moist or dry, and it is even more impossible that they become white or black; to speak generally, they cannot assume any other quality by any change whatsoever.

11. The appearance of the various qualities are produced by various combinations of the basic differences mentioned above—that is, by differences of shape, arrangement, and position among the atoms. For example, bitter taste is caused by small, smooth, rounded atoms, whose surfaces are actually sinuous; therefore, it is both sticky and viscous; salty taste is caused by large, unrounded atoms, but in some cases jagged ones.
12. One atom will be heavier than another only when it is bigger. In compound bodies, the lighter is that which contains more empty space, the heavier, that which contains less.

# THE TWO TABLES

SIR ARTHUR EDDINGTON

Delivered as the introduction to the 1927 Gifford Lectures

I HAVE SETTLED down to the task of writing these lectures and have drawn up my chairs to my two tables. Two tables! Yes; there are duplicates of every object about me—two tables, two chairs, two pens.

This is not a very profound beginning to a course which ought to reach transcendent levels of scientific philosophy. But we cannot touch bedrock immediately; we must scratch a bit at the surface of things first. And whenever I begin to scratch the first thing I strike is my two tables.

One of them has been familiar to me from earliest years. It is a commonplace object of that environment which I call the world. How shall I describe it? It has extension; it is comparatively permanent; it is coloured; above all it is substantial. By substantial I do not merely mean that it does not collapse when I lean upon it; I mean that it is constituted of “substance” and by that word I am trying to convey to you some conception of its intrinsic nature. It is a thing; not like space, which is a mere negation; nor like time, which is—Heaven knows what! But that will not help you to my meaning because it is the distinctive characteristic of a “thing” to have this substantiality, and I do not think substantiality can be described better than by saying that it is the kind of nature exemplified by an ordinary table. And so we go round in circles. After all, if you are a plain commonsense man, not too much worried with scientific scruples, you will be confident that you understand the nature of an ordinary table. I have even heard of plain men who had the idea that they could better understand the mystery of their own nature if scientists would discover a way of explaining it in terms of the easily comprehensible nature of a table.

Table No. 2 is my scientific table. It is a more recent acquaintance and I do not feel so familiar with it. It does not belong to the world previously mentioned, that world which spontaneously appears around me when I open my eyes, though how much of it is objective and how much subjective I do not here consider. It is part of a world which in more devious ways has forced itself on my attention. My scientific table is mostly emptiness. Sparsely scattered in that emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing about with great speed; but their combined bulk amounts to less than a billionth of the bulk of the table itself. Notwithstanding its

strange construction it turns out to be an entirely efficient table. It supports my writing paper as satisfactorily as table No. 1; for when I lay the paper on it the little electric particles with their headlong speed keep on hitting the underside, so that the paper is maintained in shuttlecock fashion at a nearly steady level. If I lean upon this table I shall not go through; or, to be strictly accurate, the chance of my scientific elbow going through my scientific table is so excessively small that it can be neglected in practical life. Reviewing their properties one by one, there seems to be nothing to choose between the two tables for ordinary purposes; but when abnormal circumstances befall, then my scientific table shows to advantage. If the house catches fire my scientific table will dissolve quite naturally into scientific smoke, whereas my familiar table undergoes a metamorphosis of its substantial nature which I can only regard as miraculous.

There is nothing substantial about my second table. It is nearly all empty space—space pervaded, it is true, by fields of force, but these are assigned to the category of “influences”, not of “things”. Even in the minute part which is not empty we must not transfer the old notion of substance. In dissecting matter into electric charges we have travelled far from that picture of it which first gave rise to the conception of substance, and the meaning of that conception—if it ever had any—has been lost by the way. The whole trend of modern scientific views is to break down the separate categories of “things”, “influences”, “forms”, etc., and to substitute a common background of all experience. Whether we are studying a material object, a magnetic field, a geometrical figure, or a duration of time, our scientific information is summed up in measures; neither the apparatus of measurement nor the mode of using it suggests that there is anything essentially different in these problems. The measures themselves afford no ground for a classification by categories. We feel it necessary to concede some background to the measures—an external world; but the attributes of this world, except in so far as they are reflected in the measures, are outside scientific scrutiny. Science has at last revolved against attaching the exact knowledge contained in these measurements to a traditional picture gallery of conceptions which convey no authentic information of the background and obtrude irrelevancies into the scheme of knowledge.

I will not here stress further the non-substantiality of electrons, since it is scarcely necessary to the present line of thought. Conceive them as substantially as you will, there is a vast difference between my scientific table with its substance (if any) thinly scattered in specks in a region mostly empty and the table of everyday conception which we regard as the type of solid reality—an incarnate protest against Berkleian subjectivism. It makes all the difference in the world whether the paper before me is poised as it were on a swarm of flies and sustained in shuttlecock fashion by a series of tiny blows from the swarm underneath, or whether it is supported because there is substance below it, it being the intrinsic nature of substance to occupy space to the exclusion of other substance; all the difference in conception at least, but no difference to my practical task of writing on the paper.

I need not tell you that modern physics has by delicate test and remorseless logic assured me that my second scientific table is the only one which is really there—wherever “there” may be. On the other hand I need not tell you that modern physics

will never succeed in exorcising that first table—strange compound of external nature, mental imagery and inherited prejudice—which lies visible to my eyes and tangible to my grasp. We must bid good-bye to it for the present for we are about to turn from the familiar world to the scientific world revealed by physics. This is, or is intended to be, a wholly external world.

“You speak paradoxically of two worlds. Are they not really two aspects or two interpretations of one and the same world?”

Yes, no doubt they are ultimately to be identified after some fashion. But the process by which the external world of physics is transformed into a world of familiar acquaintance in human consciousness is outside the scope of physics. And so the world studied according to the methods of physics remains detached from the world familiar to consciousness, until after the physicist has finished his labours upon it. Provisionally, therefore, we regard the table which is the subject of physical research as altogether separate from the familiar table, without prejudging the question of their ultimate identification. It is true that the whole scientific inquiry starts from the familiar world and in the end it must return to the familiar world; but the part of the journey over which the physicist has charge is in foreign territory.

Until recently there was a much closer linkage; the physicist used to borrow the raw material of his world from the familiar world, but he does so no longer. His raw materials are aether, electrons, quanta, potentials, Hamiltonian functions, etc., and he is nowadays scrupulously careful to guard these from contamination by conceptions borrowed from the other world. There is a familiar table parallel to the scientific table, but there is no familiar electron, quantum or potential parallel to the scientific electron, quantum or potential. We do not even desire to manufacture a familiar counterpart to these things or, as we should commonly say, to “explain” the electron. After the physicist has quite finished his world-building a linkage or identification is allowed; but premature attempts at linkage have been found to be entirely mischievous.

Science aims at constructing a world which shall be symbolic of the world of commonplace experience. It is not at all necessary that every individual symbol that is used should represent something in common experience or even something explicable in terms of common experience. The man in the street is always making this demand for concrete explanation of the things referred to in science; but of necessity he must be disappointed. It is like our experience in learning to read. That which is written in a book is symbolic of a story in real life. The whole intention of the book is that ultimately a reader will identify some symbol, say *BREAD*, with one of the conceptions of familiar life. But it is mischievous to attempt such identifications prematurely, before the letters are strung into words and the words into sentences. The symbol *A* is not the counterpart of anything in familiar life. To the child the letter *A* would seem horribly abstract; so we give him a familiar conception along with it. “*A* was an Archer who shot at a frog.” This tides over his immediate difficulty; but he cannot make serious progress with word-building so long as Archers, Butchers, Captains, dance round the letters. The letters are abstract, and sooner or later he has to realise it. In physics we have outgrown archer and apple-pie definitions of the fundamental symbols. To a request to explain what an

electron really is supposed to be we can only answer, "It is part of the A B C of physics."

The external world of physics has thus become a world of shadows. In removing our illusions we have removed the substance, for indeed we have seen that substance is one of the greatest of our illusions. Later perhaps we may inquire whether in our zeal to cut out all that is unreal we may not have used the knife too ruthlessly. Perhaps, indeed, reality is a child which cannot survive without its nurse illusion. But if so, that is of little concern to the scientist, who has good and sufficient reasons for pursuing his investigations in the world of shadows and is content to leave to the philosopher the determination of its exact status in regard to reality. In the world of physics we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper. It is all symbolic, and as a symbol the physicist leaves it. Then comes the alchemist Mind who transmutes the symbols. The sparsely spread nuclei of electric force become a tangible solid; their restless agitation becomes the warmth of summer; the octave of aetheral vibrations becomes a gorgeous rainbow. Nor does the alchemy stop here. In the transmuted world new significances arise which are scarcely to be traced in the world of symbols; so that it becomes a world of beauty and purpose—and, alas, suffering and evil.

The frank realisation that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant of recent advances. I do not mean that physicists are to any extent preoccupied with the philosophical implications of this. From their point of view it is not so much a withdrawal of untenable claims as an assertion of freedom for autonomous development. At the moment I am not insisting on the shadowy and symbolic character of the world of physics because of its bearing on philosophy, but because the aloofness from familiar conceptions will be apparent in the scientific theories I have to describe. If you are not prepared for this aloofness you are likely to be out of sympathy with modern scientific theories, and may even think them ridiculous—as, I daresay, many people do.

It is difficult to school ourselves to treat the physical world as purely symbolic. We are always relapsing and mixing with the symbols incongruous conceptions taken from the world of consciousness. Untaught by long experience we stretch a hand to grasp the shadow, instead of accepting its shadowy nature. Indeed, unless we confine ourselves altogether to mathematical symbolism it is hard to avoid dressing our symbols in deceitful clothing. When I think of an electron there rises to my mind a hard, red, tiny ball; the proton similarly is neutral grey. Of course the colour is absurd—perhaps not more absurd than the rest of the conception—but I am incorrigible. I can well understand that the younger minds are finding these pictures too concrete and are striving to construct the world out of Hamiltonian functions and symbols so far removed from human preconception that they do not even obey the laws of orthodox arithmetic. For myself I find some difficulty in rising to that plane of thought; but I am convinced that it has got to come.

In these lectures I propose to discuss some of the results of modern study of the physical world which give most food for philosophic thought. This will include new conceptions in science and also new knowledge. In both respects we are led

to think of the material universe in a way very different from that prevailing at the end of the last century. I shall not leave out of sight the ulterior object which must be in the mind of a Gifford Lecturer, the problem of relating these purely physical discoveries to the wider aspects and interests of our human nature. These relations cannot but have undergone change, since our whole conception of the physical world has radically changed. I am convinced that a just appreciation of the physical world as it is understood today carries with it a feeling of open-mindedness towards a wider significance transcending scientific measurement, which might have seemed illogical a generation ago; and in the later lectures I shall try to focus that feeling and make inexpert efforts to find where it leads. But I should be untrue to science if I did not insist that its study is an end in itself. The path of science must be pursued for its own sake, irrespective of the views it may afford of a wider landscape; in this spirit we must follow the path whether it leads to the hill of vision or the tunnel of obscurity. Therefore till the last stage of the course is reached you must be content to follow with me the beaten track of science, nor scold me too severely for loitering among its wayside flowers. That is to be the understanding between us. Shall we set forth?



## “Meditation in a Toolshed”

C. S. Lewis

I was standing today in the dark toolshed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch-black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it.

Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences.

But this is only a very simple example of the difference between looking at and looking along. A young man meets a girl. The whole world looks different when he sees her. Her voice reminds him of something he has been trying to remember all his life, and ten minutes casual chat with her is more precious than all the favours that all other women in the world could grant. He is, as they say, “in love”. Now comes a scientist and describes this young man’s experience from the outside. For him it is all an affair of the young man’s genes and a recognised biological stimulus. That is the difference between looking *along* the sexual impulse and looking at it.

When you have got into the habit of making this distinction you will find examples of it all day long. The mathematician sits thinking, and to him it seems that he is contemplating timeless and spaceless truths about quantity. But the cerebral physiologist, if he could look inside the mathematician’s head, would find nothing timeless and spaceless there – only tiny movements in the grey matter. The savage dances in ecstasy at midnight before Nyonga and feels with every muscle that his dance is helping to bring the new green crops and the spring rain and the babies. The anthropologist, observing that savage, records that he is performing a fertility ritual of the type so-and-so. The girl cries over her broken doll and feels that she has lost a real friend; the psychologist says that her nascent maternal instinct has been temporarily lavished on a bit of shaped and coloured wax.

As soon as you have grasped this simple distinction, it raises a question. You get one experience of a thing when you look along it and another when you look at it. Which is the “true” or “valid” experience? Which tells you most about the thing? And you can hardly ask that question without noticing that for the last fifty years or so everyone has been taking the answer for granted. It has been assumed without discussion that if you want the true account of religion you must go, not to religious people, but to anthropologists; that if you want the true account of

sexual love you must go, not to lovers, but to psychologists; that if you want to understand some “ideology” (such as medieval chivalry or the nineteenth-century idea of a “gentleman”), you must listen not to those who lived inside it, but to sociologists.

The people who look at things have had it all their own way; the people who look *along* things have simply been brow-beaten. It has even come to be taken for granted that the external account of a thing somehow refutes or “debunks” the account given from inside. “All these moral ideals which look so transcendental and beautiful from inside”, says the wisecrack, “are really only a mass of biological instincts and inherited taboos.” And no one plays the game the other way round by replying, “If you will only step inside, the things that look to you like instincts and taboos will suddenly reveal their real and transcendental nature.”

That, in fact, is the whole basis of the specifically “modern” type of thought. And is it not, you will ask, a very sensible basis? For, after all, we are often deceived by things from the inside. For example, the girl who looks so wonderful while we’re in love, may really be a very plain, stupid, and disagreeable person. The savage’s dance to Nyonga does not really cause the crops to grow. Having been so often deceived by looking along, are we not well advised to trust only to looking at? In fact to discount all these inside experiences?

Well, no. There are two fatal objections to discounting them *all*. And the first is this. You discount them in order to think more accurately. But you can’t think at all – and therefore, of course, can’t think accurately – if you have nothing to think *about*. A physiologist, for example, can study pain and find out that it “is” (whatever *is* means) such and such neural events. But the word *pain* would have no meaning for him unless he had “been inside” by actually suffering. If he had never looked *along* pain he simply wouldn’t know what he was looking at. The very subject for his inquiries from outside exists for him only because he has, at least once, been inside.

This case is not likely to occur, because every man has felt pain. But it is perfectly easy to go on all your life-giving explanations of religion, love, morality, honour, and the like, without having been inside any of them. And if you do that, you are simply playing with counters. You go on explaining a thing without knowing what it is. That is why a great deal of contemporary thought is, strictly speaking, thought about nothing – all the apparatus of thought busily working in a vacuum.

The other objection is this: let us go back to the toolshed. I might have discounted what I saw when looking along the beam (i.e., the leaves moving and the sun) on the ground that it was “really only a strip of dusty light in a dark shed”. That is, I might have set up as “true” my “side vision” of the beam. But then that side vision is itself an instance of the activity we call seeing. And this new instance could also be looked at from outside. I could allow a scientist to tell me that what seemed to be a beam of light in a shed was “really only an agitation

of my own optic nerves". And that would be just as good (or as bad) a bit of debunking as the previous one. The picture of the beam in the toolshed would now have to be discounted just as the previous picture of the trees and the sun had been discounted. And then, where are you?

In other words, you can step outside one experience only by stepping inside another. Therefore, if all inside experiences are misleading, we are always misled. The cerebral physiologist may say, if he chooses, that the mathematician's thought is "only" tiny physical movements of the grey matter. But then what about the cerebral physiologist's own thought at that very moment? A second physiologist, looking at it, could pronounce it also to be only tiny physical movements in the first physiologist's skull. Where is the rot to end?

The answer is that we must never allow the rot to begin. We must, on pain of idiocy, deny from the very outset the idea that looking *at* is, by its own nature, intrinsically truer or better than looking *along*. One must look both *along* and at everything. In particular cases we shall find reason for regarding the one or the other vision as inferior. Thus the inside vision of rational thinking must be truer than the outside vision which sees only movements of the grey matter; for if the outside vision were the correct one all thought (including this thought itself) would be valueless, and this is self-contradictory. You cannot have a proof that no proofs matter. On the other hand, the inside vision of the savage's dance to Nyonga may be found deceptive because we find reason to believe that crops and babies are not really affected by it. In fact, we must take each case on its merits. But we must start with no prejudice for or against either kind of looking. We do not know in advance whether the lover or the psychologist is giving the more correct account of love, or whether both accounts are equally correct in different ways, or whether both are equally wrong. We just have to find out. But the period of brow-beating has got to end.



# Book 1

## CHAPTER ONE *Πρώτη*

Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action as well as choice, <sup>1094a</sup> is held to aim at some good.<sup>1</sup> Hence people have nobly<sup>2</sup> declared that the good is that at which all things aim. But there appears to be a certain difference among the ends: some ends are activities, others are certain works apart from the activities themselves, and in those cases in which there are certain ends apart from the actions, the works are naturally better than the activities.<sup>3</sup> <sup>5</sup> *Πρῶτον*

1 · Aristotle introduces several central terms here: *technē*, a technical art or craft, such as shoemaking, and the knowledge that goes together with it; *praxis*, action, which issues from the parts of the soul characterized by longing and desiring; and *proairesis*, choice, closely tied to action. See the glossary for these and other key terms. The verb Aristotle uses here for “is held to” (*dokein*) is related to the noun translated as “opinion” (*doxa*); it may mean simply that something “seems” to be the case or that it is “held” to be so by opinion.

2 · *Kalōs*: the adverb related to a central term, *to kalon*, which has a range of meanings for which English requires at least three: “noble,” “beautiful,” and “fine.” It denotes (physical) beauty but also and above all, in the *Ethics*, what is admirable in a moral sense. It will be translated most frequently as “the noble” (“noble,” “nobly,” “in a noble manner”) and, in the rare cases in which it refers unambiguously to physical beauty, as “beautiful.” In the present instance, Aristotle may say that the declaration in question is a “noble” one because it expresses a noble sentiment—that all things aim at the good—but not necessarily a true one: the conclusion drawn does not in fact follow from the premises given in the first sentence.

3 · Another set of key terms is introduced here: *telē* (singular, *telos*), the “end” or goal of a thing; see also *teleios*, n. 37 below. *Energeiai* (singular, *energeia*), “activity,” means the state of being engaged in an act or the carrying out of a deed (*ergon*); it is thus related to the next term, *erga* (singular, *ergon*). *Ergon* cannot be captured by one English word; it may be translated as “work,” “product,” “task” or—especially when used in contrast to “speech” (*logos*)—“deed.”

Now, since there are many actions, arts, and sciences,<sup>4</sup> the ends too are many: of medicine, the end is health; of shipbuilding, a ship; of generalship, victory; of household management, wealth. And in all things of this sort that fall under some one capacity<sup>5</sup>—for just as bridle making and such other arts as concern equestrian gear fall under horsemanship, while this art and every action related to warfare fall under generalship, so in the same manner, some arts fall under one capacity, others under another—in *all* of them, the ends of the architectonic ones are more choice-worthy than all those that fall under them, for these latter are pursued for the sake of the former. And it makes no difference at all whether the ends of the actions are the activities themselves or something else apart from these, as in the sciences mentioned.

## CHAPTER TWO *Preamble Continued*

If, therefore, there is some end of our actions that we wish for on account of itself, the rest being things we wish for on account of this end, and if we do not choose all things on account of something else—for in this way the process will go on infinitely such that the longing<sup>6</sup> involved is empty and pointless—clearly this would be the good, that is, the best.<sup>7</sup> And with a view to our life, then, is not the knowledge of this good of great weight, and would we not, like archers in possession of a target, better hit on what is needed? If this is so, then one must try to grasp, in outline at least, whatever it is and to which of the sciences or capacities it belongs.

But it might be held to belong to the most authoritative and most architectonic one,<sup>8</sup> and such appears to be the political art.<sup>9</sup> For it or-

4 · Or, “knowledge” in the strict sense (*epistēmē*, here in the plural). We use “science” or “scientific knowledge” to distinguish *epistēmē* from the other term Aristotle uses for knowledge, *gnōsis*.

5 · Or, “power” (*dunamis*), here and throughout.

6 · This is the first instance of the term *orexis*, which we translate as “longing” and which refers in general to the appetency of the soul, of which *epithumia*, “desire,” is a species. The term is related to the verb *oregein*, which we translate as “to long for.”

7 · To *ariston*: the superlative of *to agathon*, “the good.” Although some translators render this term as the “highest” or “chief” good, we consistently translate it as “the best” to capture the sense that it is indeed a peak but may also be simply the best of the goods available to human beings.

8 · “One” might refer to “science” (*epistēmē*), “art” (*technē*), or “capacity” (*dunamis*).

9 · Aristotle here uses substantively the feminine singular adjective *politikē* (the political), without therefore specifying the noun it is meant to modify, as can be easily done

dains what sciences there must be in cities and what kinds each person in turn must learn and up to what point. We also see that even the most honored capacities—for example, generalship, household management, rhetoric—fall under the political art. Because it makes use of the remaining<sup>10</sup> sciences and, further, because it legislates what one ought to do and what to abstain from, its end would encompass those of the others, with the result that this would be the human good. For even if this is the same thing for an individual and a city, to secure and preserve the good of the city appears to be something greater and more complete: the good of the individual by himself is certainly desirable enough, but that of a nation and of cities is nobler and more divine.

The inquiry, then, aims at these things, since it is a sort of political inquiry.

## CHAPTER THREE *Preamble Continued*

The inquiry would be adequately made if it should attain the clarity that accords with the subject matter. For one should not seek out precision in *all* arguments alike, just as one should not do so in the products of craftsmanship either. The noble things and the just things, which the political art examines, admit of much dispute and variability, such that they are held to exist by law<sup>11</sup> alone and not by nature. And even the good things admit of some such variability on account of the harm that befalls many people as a result of them: it has happened that some have been destroyed on account of their wealth, others on account of their courage.

It would certainly be desirable enough, then, if one who speaks about and on the basis of such things demonstrate the truth roughly and in outline, and if, in speaking about and on the basis of things that are for the most part so, one draw conclusions of that sort as well. Indeed, in the same manner one must also accept each of the points being made. For it

in Greek. “Science,” “art,” or “capacity” are all grammatically possible. We will translate the word consistently by (the) “political art”; the ending *-ikē* generally indicates that an art (*technē*) is involved.

10 · The MSS add at this point the word *practical* (or sciences “related to action”: *praktikais*), but Bywater, followed by Stewart and Burnet, deletes it. One MS omits the word translated as “remaining.”

11 · Or, “convention,” “custom” (*nomos*); this is the first appearance of this important term.

belongs to an educated person to seek out precision in each genus to the extent that the nature of the matter allows: to accept persuasive speech from a skilled mathematician appears comparable to demanding demonstrations from a skilled rhetorician. Each person judges nobly the things he knows, and of these he is a good judge. He is a good judge of a particular thing, therefore, if he has been educated with a view to it, but is a good judge simply if he has been educated about everything. Hence of the political art, a young person is not an appropriate student,<sup>12</sup> for he is inexperienced in the actions pertaining to life, and the arguments<sup>13</sup> are based on these actions and concern them.

Further, because he is disposed to follow the passions, he will listen pointlessly and unprofitably, since the end involved is not knowledge but action. And it makes no difference at all whether he is young in age or immature in character:<sup>14</sup> the deficiency is not related to time but instead arises on account of living in accord with passion and pursuing each passion in turn. For to people of that sort, just as to those lacking self-restraint,<sup>15</sup> knowledge is without benefit. But to those who fashion their longings in accord with reason and act accordingly, knowing about these things would be of great profit.<sup>16</sup>

About the student, and how one ought to accept [what is being said], and what it is that we propose, let these things stand as a prelude.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

Now, let us pick up again and—since all knowledge and every choice have some good as the object of their longing—let us state what it is that we say the political art aims at and what the highest of all the goods related to action is. As for its name, then, it is pretty much agreed on by most people;

12 · *Akroatēs*, literally, “listener” or “auditor,” perhaps of spoken lectures, perhaps of such lessons as are conveyed by listening—to the poets or to one’s father, for example (consider 1.4, end and 1.13, end).

13 · *Logoi* (singular, *logos*). The term will be translated as “argument,” “reason,” “speech,” or “definition,” depending on the context; see also the glossary.

14 · The first appearance of this important term (*ēthos*), which appears, as a plural adjective, in the title of the work and is there translated as “ethics,” but is literally “things pertaining to character.”

15 · That is, those who are unable to do the correct thing, though in some sense they know what it is. Aristotle will analyze both “self-restraint” and “lack of self-restraint” (*enkrateia* and *akrasia*) at 7.1–10.

for both the many<sup>16</sup> and the refined say that it is happiness,<sup>17</sup> and they suppose that living well and acting well<sup>18</sup> are the same thing as being happy. But as for what happiness is, they disagree, and the many do not give a response similar to that of the wise. The former respond that it is something obvious and manifest, such as pleasure or wealth or honor, some saying it is one thing, others another. Often one and the same person responds differently, for when he is sick, it is health; when poor, wealth. And when they are aware of their own ignorance, they wonder at<sup>19</sup> those who say something that is great and beyond them. Certain others, in addition, used to suppose that the good is something else, by itself, apart from these many good things, which is also the cause of their all being good.

Now, to examine thoroughly all these opinions is perhaps rather pointless; those opinions that are especially prevalent or are held to have a certain reason to them will suffice. But let it not escape our notice that there is a difference between the arguments that proceed *from* the principles<sup>20</sup> and those that proceed *to* the principles. For Plato too used to raise this perplexity well and investigate it, whether the path is going from the principles or to the principles, just as on a racecourse one can proceed from the judges to the finish line or back again. One must begin from what is known, but this has a twofold meaning: there are things known to us, on the one hand, and things known simply, on the other. Perhaps it is necessary for us, at least, to begin from the things known to us. Hence he who will listen adequately to the noble things and the just things, and to the political things generally, must be brought up nobly by means of habituation.<sup>21</sup> For the “that” is a principle, and if this should be sufficiently ap-

16 · *Hoi polloi*: literally, “the many” or “the majority,” but in Greek as in English, the expression often carries a decidedly negative connotation.

17 · *Eudaimonia*, the first appearance of this central term; see the glossary and introduction.

18 · The expression Aristotle here uses (*eu prattein*) means in the first place “to act well,” but carries the extended meaning “to fare well,” with the implication that those who act well will indeed fare well: Aristotle’s investigation of happiness emphasizes the centrality of good action to happiness.

19 · Or, “admire” (*thaumazein*). *Plato, Meno*

20 · Or, more simply, “beginning points,” “origins” (*archai*, the plural of *archē*).

21 · Some MSS, and the ancient commentator Aspasius, read here “by means of customs (usages, [moral] characters)” (*ēthesin*) rather than the “habituation” (in the plural, *ēthesin*) of one MS; Burnet accepts the former on the grounds that “[w]e have not yet that *ēthos* comes from *ethos*” (alluding to the beginning of book 2); Stewart and Bywater accept the latter reading.

*Brathius*  
*Cons. III*  
*IV*

25 *Plato*  
*Meno*

*Plato*  
*Rep. II*

30

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parent, there will be no need of the “why” in addition, and a person of the sort indicated has or would easily get hold of principles. As for him to whom neither of these is available, let him listen to the words of Hesiod:

- 10 This one is altogether best who himself understands all things  
 . . . . .  
 But good in his turn too is he who obeys one who speaks well.  
 But he who neither himself understands nor, in listening to another,  
 Takes this to heart, he is a useless man.<sup>22</sup>

## CHAPTER FIVE

- 15 Let us speak from the point where we digressed. For on the basis of the lives they lead, the many and crudest seem to suppose, not unreasonably, that the good and happiness are pleasure. And thus they cherish the life of enjoyment. For the especially prominent ways of life are three: the one just mentioned, the political, and, third, the contemplative.

- 20 Now, in choosing a life of fatted cattle, the many appear altogether slavish; but they attain a hearing, because many people in positions of authority experience passions like those of Sardanapallus.<sup>23</sup> The refined and active, on the other hand, choose honor, for this is pretty much the end of the political life. But it appears to be more superficial than what is being sought, for honor seems to reside more with those who bestow it than  
 25 with him who receives it; and we divine that the good is something of one's own and a thing not easily taken away. Further, people seem to pursue honor so that they may be convinced that they themselves are good; at any rate, they seek to be honored by the prudent,<sup>24</sup> among those to whom they are known, and for their virtue.<sup>25</sup> It is clear, then, that in the case of  
 30 these people at least, virtue is superior.

22 · Hesiod, *Works and Days* 293, 295–97. The line Aristotle omits is: “Reflecting on what is better subsequently and in the end.” The term translated as “good” is not *agathos* but the more poetic *esthlos* (see also book 2, n. 18); “heart” is *thumos*, elsewhere rendered as “spiritedness” or “spirit.”

23 · An Assyrian king (ruled ca. 669–627) renowned for, and apparently boastful of, his extravagant way of life and sensual indulgences. Aristotle mentions him also in the *Eudemian Ethics* (1216a16).

24 · The first appearance of this adjective, related to the intellectual virtue of prudence (*phronēsis*).

25 · This is the first appearance of the term *aretē*, which refers to the excellence specific to a given thing or being. It will be translated throughout as “virtue,” but one should

And perhaps someone might in fact suppose that virtue is to a greater degree the end of the political life. Yet it too appears to be rather incomplete. For it seems to be possible for someone to possess virtue even while asleep or while being inactive throughout life and, in addition to these, while suffering badly and undergoing the greatest misfortunes. But no one would deem happy somebody living in this way, unless he were defending a thesis. But enough about these things: they have been spoken about adequately also in the circulated writings.<sup>26</sup>

Third is the contemplative life, about which we will make an investigation in what will follow.<sup>27</sup>

The moneymaking life is characterized by a certain constraint, and it is clear that wealth is not the good being sought, for it is a useful thing and for the sake of something else. Thus someone might suppose that the previously mentioned things are ends to a greater degree than is money, for at least they are cherished for their own sakes. But they do not appear to be ends either, and many arguments have been widely distributed in opposition to them.<sup>28</sup> So let these things be dismissed.

## CHAPTER SIX

As for the universal [good],<sup>29</sup> perhaps it is better to examine it and to go through the perplexities involved in the ways it is spoken of, although undertaking such an inquiry is arduous, because the men who introduced

keep in mind that it is possible to refer in Greek to the “virtue” not only of human beings but also of other animals and even of inanimate objects.

26 · It is unknown precisely what Aristotle here refers to; the extended meaning of the term may be “routine” or “everyday,” and the general sense is that these writings are not the most exacting.

27 · For Aristotle's explicit discussion, see 10.6–8.

28 · Reading, with Gauthier and Jolif, the *kai* (and) of some MSS, rather than the *kai-toi* (although) of others, and taking *pros* in its not uncommon sense of “against” or “in opposition to.” The other reading could be rendered: “although many arguments have been widely distributed relating to them.”

29 · Or, “general” (*kathalou*), here referring to the Platonic *idea* of the good as a self-subsisting whole separate from any particular good thing. The word order in Greek suggests at first blush that the subject of the chapter will be “the universal better” (*to de kathalou beltion*), and indeed Aristotle will argue that our experience of better and worse does not permit us access to a universal “good.”

definition of the good will need to manifest itself as the same in *all* cases, just as the definition of whiteness is the same in the case of snow and in that of white lead. But the definitions of honor, prudence, and pleasure are distinct and differ in the very respect in which they are goods. It is not the case, therefore, that the good is something common in reference to a single *idea*.

But how indeed are they spoken of [as good]? For they are not like things that share the same name by chance. Is it by dint of their stemming from one thing or because they *all* contribute to one thing? Or is it more that they are such by analogy? For as there is sight in the body, so there is intellect in the soul, and indeed one thing in one thing, another in another. But perhaps we ought to leave these considerations be for now: to be very precise about them would be more appropriate to another philosophy. The case is similar with the *idea* as well: even if there is some one good thing that is predicated [of things] in common, or there is some separate thing, itself by itself, it is clear that it would not be subject to action or capable of being possessed by a human being. But it is just some such thing that is now being sought.

Perhaps someone might be of the opinion that it is better to be familiar with it, with a view to those goods that *can* be possessed and *are* subject to action. By having this [universal good] as a sort of model, we will to a greater degree know also the things that are good for us; and if we know them, we will hit on them. Now, the argument has a certain persuasiveness, but it seems to be inconsistent with the sciences. For although all sciences aim at some good and seek out what is lacking, they pass over knowledge of the good itself. And yet it is not reasonable for *all* craftsmen to be ignorant of so great an aid and not even to seek it out.

A further perplexity too is what benefit the weaver or carpenter might gain, in relation to his own art, by knowing this same good, or how he who has contemplated the *idea* itself will be a more skilled physician or general. For it appears that the physician does not examine even health this way, but inquires rather into the health of a human being and even more, perhaps, into that of this particular human being. For he treats patients individually.

And let what pertains to these things be stated up to this point.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Let us go back again to the good being sought, whatever it might be. For it appears to be one thing in one action or art, another in another: it is a

different thing in medicine and in generalship, and so on with the rest. What, then, is the good in each of these? Or is it that for the sake of which everything else is done? In medicine, this is health; in generalship, victory; in house building, a house; and in another, it would be something else. But in *every* action and choice, it is the end involved, since it is for the sake of this that all people do everything else. As a result, if there is some end of *all* actions, this would be the good related to action; and if there are several, then it would be these. So as the argument proceeds, it arrives at the same point. But one ought to try to make this clearer still.

Since the ends appear to be several, and some of these we choose on account of something else—for example, wealth, an aulos,<sup>36</sup> and the instrumental things generally—it is clear that not all ends are complete,<sup>37</sup> but what is the best appears to be something complete. As a result, if there is some one thing that is complete in itself, this would be what is being sought, and if there are several, then the most complete of these. We say that what is sought out for itself is more complete than what is sought out on account of something else, and that what is never chosen on account of something else is more complete than those things chosen both for themselves and on account of this [further end]. The simply complete thing, then, is that which is always chosen for itself and never on account of something else.

Happiness above all seems to be of this character, for we always choose it on account of itself and never on account of something else. Yet honor, pleasure, intellect, and every virtue we choose on their own account—for even if nothing resulted from them, we would choose each of them—but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, because we suppose that, through them, we will be happy. But nobody chooses happiness for the sake of these things, or, more generally, on account of anything else.

The same thing appears to result also on the basis of self-sufficiency, for the complete good is held to be self-sufficient. We do not mean by *self-sufficient* what suffices for someone by himself, living a solitary life, but what is sufficient also with respect to parents, offspring, a wife, and, in general, one's friends and fellow citizens, since by nature a human being is political. But it is necessary to grasp a certain limit to these; for if one

36 - A double-reed instrument not unlike the modern oboe; the noun here is plural in the Greek.

37 - Or, "perfect" (*teleios*); the adjective is related to the noun *telos* and suggests that which reached or fulfilled the end or goal appropriate to a given thing (see also n. 3 above).

extends these to include the parents [of parents],<sup>38</sup> and descendants, and the friends of friends, it will go on infinitely. But this must be examined  
 15 further later on. As for the self-sufficient, we posit it as that which by itself makes life choiceworthy<sup>39</sup> and in need of nothing, and such is what we suppose happiness to be.

Further, happiness is the most choiceworthy of all things because it is not just one among them—and it is clear that, were it included as one among many things, it would be more choiceworthy with the least addition of the good things; for the good that is added to it results in a superabundance of goods, and the greater number of goods is always  
 20 more choiceworthy. So happiness appears to be something complete and self-sufficient, it being an end of our actions.

But perhaps saying that “happiness is best” is something manifestly agreed on, whereas what it is still needs to be said more distinctly. Now,  
 25 perhaps this would come to pass if the work<sup>40</sup> of the human being should be grasped. For just as in the case of an aulos player, sculptor, and every expert, and in general with those who have a certain work and action, the relevant good and the doing of something well seem to reside in the work, so too the same might be held to be the case with a human being, if in fact there is a certain work that is a human being’s. Are there, then, certain  
 30 works and actions of a carpenter and shoemaker, but none of a human being: would he, by contrast, be naturally “without a work”<sup>41</sup>? Or just as there appears to be a certain work of the eye, hand, and foot, and in fact of each of the parts in general, so also might one posit a certain work of a human being apart from all these?

So whatever, then, would this work be? For living appears to be something common even to plants, but what is peculiar [to human beings] is  
 35 being sought. One must set aside, then, the life characterized by nutrition as well as growth. A certain life characterized by sense perception would be next, but it too appears to be common to a horse and cow and in fact to every animal. So there remains a certain active life of that which possesses

38 · This additional phrase, not present in the MSS, seems necessary in order to make the text consistent with 1097b9–10; it is suggested by Rassow and accepted by both Burnet and Gauthier and Jolif.

39 · Some MSS add at this point the words “and sufficient” (*arkion*) (or, “sufficient and choiceworthy”).

40 · To *ergon*: see n. 3 as well as the glossary.

41 · *Argon*: literally, without an *ergon*, a work, task, or function, and so by extension idle.

reason; and what possesses reason includes what is obedient to reason, on the one hand, and what possesses it and thinks, on the other. But since  
 5 this [life of reason in the second sense] also is spoken of in a twofold way, one must posit the life [of that which possesses reason] in accord with an activity, for this seems to be its more authoritative meaning.<sup>42</sup> And if the work of a human being is an activity of soul in accord with reason, or not without reason, and we assert that the work of a given person is the same in kind as that of a serious<sup>43</sup> person, just as it would be in the case of a cithara<sup>44</sup> player and a serious cithara player, and this would be so in  
 10 all cases simply when the superiority in accord with the virtue is added to the work; for it belongs to a cithara player to play the cithara, but to a serious one to do so well. But if this is so<sup>45</sup>—and we posit the work of a human being as a certain life, and this is an activity of soul and actions accompanied by reason, the work of a serious man being to do these things well and nobly, and each thing is brought to completion well in accord  
 15 with the virtue proper to it—if this is so, then the human good becomes an activity of soul in accord with virtue, and if there are several virtues, then in accord with the best and most complete one.

But, in addition, in a complete life. For one swallow does not make a spring, nor does one day. And in this way, one day or a short time does not make someone blessed and happy either.

Let the good have been sketched in this way, then, for perhaps one  
 20

42 · The subject of the sentence is unclear, and we supply the immediately preceding referent, the life in accord with the part of the soul that possesses reason and thinks; of this part, there is both an activity and a characteristic (*hexis*); and, as Aristotle will argue in 1.8, happiness consists in the activity or use rather than the mere possession of a characteristic. Burnet recommends dropping the immediately preceding phrase, which distinguishes the two parts of the soul; he argues that the phrase “interrupts the argument and destroys the grammar.” On his reading, the referent would be simply the active life of that which possesses reason.

43 · The first appearance of the term *spoudaios*. The “serious” (*spoudaios*) human being is characterized by the correct devotion to and exercise of moral virtue, although Aristotle extends the term to anything that does its own “work” well, including horses and eyes: see 2.6.

44 · A plucked instrument with a tortoiseshell soundboard.

45 · Bywater brackets everything within the dashes on the grounds that it is both awkward and a repetition of points already raised. The grammar here is difficult; Burnet, who accepts the text, confesses that he “hardly [likes] to put a limit to the capacity of Aristotle for long and complicated protases even when they involve repetitions and grammatical awkwardnesses.”

ought to outline it first and then fill it in later. It might seem to belong to everyone to advance and fully articulate things whose sketch is in a noble condition, and time is a good discoverer of or contributor to such things: from this have arisen the advances in the arts too, for it belongs to every-  
 25 one to add what is lacking.

But one must remember the points mentioned previously as well, to the effect that one must not seek out precision in all matters alike but rather in each thing in turn as accords with the subject matter in question and insofar as is appropriate to the inquiry. For both carpenter and geom-  
 30 eter seek out the right angle but in different ways: the former seeks it insofar as it is useful to his work; the latter seeks out what it is or what sort of a thing it is, for he is one who contemplates<sup>46</sup> the truth. One ought to act in the same manner also in other cases, so that things extraneous to the  
 398b works involved not multiply. And one should not demand the cause in all things alike either; rather, it is enough in some cases to have nobly pointed out the “that”—such is the case in what concerns the principles—and the “that” is the first thing and a principle. Some principles are observed<sup>47</sup> by means of induction,<sup>48</sup> some by perception, some by a certain habituation,  
 5 and others in other ways. One ought to try to go in search of each in turn in the manner natural to them and to be serious about their being nobly defined. For they are of great weight in what follows from them: the beginning<sup>49</sup> seems to be more than half of the whole, and many of the points being sought seem to become manifest on account of it.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

10 One must examine what concerns it,<sup>50</sup> not only on the basis of the conclusion and the premises on which the argument rests, but also on the basis of things said about it. For with the truth, all the given facts harmonize; but with what is false, the truth soon hits a wrong note.

46 · Or, is an “observer,” “spectator” (*theatēs*); the term is related to the words translated as “contemplation” and “contemplative” (*theōretikē, theōretikos*).

47 · Again, “contemplated,” “beheld,” or “seen” (*theōrein*).

48 · A technical term of Aristotelian logic (*epagōgē*); see also 6.3.

49 · *Archē*: “principle” or “beginning point” (see n. 20).

50 · The nearest grammatical subject is “beginning” or “principle” (*archē*). Gauthier and Jolif (following Sussemlahl) object to this and suggest making a relatively small change in the reading of the MSS (from *autēs* to *autou*) such that the referent would be “the good” rather than “principle.”

Now, although the good things have been distributed in a threefold manner—both those goods said to be external, on the one hand, and those pertaining to soul and to body, on the other—we say that those  
 15 pertaining to soul are the most authoritative and especially good. And we posit as those “goods pertaining to soul,” the soul’s actions and activities. As a result, the argument<sup>51</sup> would be stated nobly, at least according to this opinion, which is ancient and agreed to by those who philosophize. It would be correct too to say that certain actions and activities are the end, for in this way the end belongs among the goods related to soul, not  
 20 among the external ones.

And that the happy person both lives well and acts well harmonizes with the argument, for [happiness] was pretty much said to be a certain kind of living well and good action.<sup>52</sup> It also appears that *all* the things being sought pertaining to happiness are included in what was said: in the opinion of some, happiness is virtue; of others, prudence; of others, a certain wisdom; in the opinion of still others, it is these or some of  
 25 these things, together with pleasure or not without pleasure. And others include alongside these the prosperity related to external goods as well. Many of the ancients say some of these things, a few men of high repute say others of them; and it is reasonable that neither of these two groups be wholly in error, but rather that they be correct in some one respect, at least, or even in most respects.

The argument, then, is in harmony with those who say that [happi-  
 30 ness] is virtue or a certain virtue, for the activity in accord with virtue belongs to virtue. But perhaps it makes no small difference whether one supposes the best thing to reside in possession or use, that is, in a characteristic<sup>53</sup> or an activity. For it is possible that, although the characteristic is present, it accomplishes nothing good—for example, in the case of some-  
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51 · The main verb is without an expressed subject; we follow the suggestion of Burnet and assume *logos*, here rendered as “argument,” although “definition” (of happiness) is another possibility.

52 · “Good action” or “faring well” (*eupraxia*): the abstract noun here used is related to the word translated as “action” throughout (*praxis*); and the previous terms in the sentence, “acts well” (*euprattein*), can also be translated as “fares well”; see n. 18.

53 · This is the first appearance of the important term *hexis*, which is related to a verb (*hexin*) that means to have, hold, or possess, and in conjunction with an adverb, to be in a given state. A *hexis* in the context of the *Ethics* is an ordered disposition or state of soul, produced by habituation, and active especially in the face of pleasures and pains; Aristotle notes at the end of book 1, the praiseworthy characteristics are the (moral)

