

EXHORTATION TO THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY

The soul, duly prepared by exhortation to the study of true philosophy, finds herself in gradually advancing to the greater from the less. She passes through all beautiful things and noble actions of life, finally reaching the most perfect of goods, a knowledge of eternal natures.

According to our ancient predecessor Pythagoras, a disciplinary training best precedes the study and acquisition of philosophy. In so doing, the soul chooses her own destiny and career and is her own luck and good fortune. She procures her own happiness by alone pursuing things beautiful and worthy for their own sake. In this, she assuredly receives the assistance of Providence.

Unhappy are those who, overwhelmed by passions and defeated by the impresses of the sensual, are relentlessly self-bound in vice and treacherously injured by their own genesiurgic natures. Abandoning the essential life within, they embrace inordinate external contention and strife, which clings to them like an alien being, dragging them down to ruin.

Happy is the soul who changes her human nature into the purity of deity and, by acting rightly and valuing above all the insights of mind, restores herself to the divine order. The knowledge of wisdom is learned first by the soul in apprehending what is right through the discursive energy of reason. Then, judging good things *per se* with a sight most acute, subtle, and excellent, she perfects them in herself. Through the attainment of wisdom (insight), the soul apprehends the most remote things as present and comprehends within herself the forms of all true being.

If the sun is the eye and soul of natural things—for through it all things become visible, are governed, and are nourished, increased, and excited by it in conjunction with sense— analogously, divine wisdom (insight) is the eye and life of intelligible things, and supplies perception of intelligibles and being to all beings, and is the primary cause of every fabrication in the world and of the first generation and order. Such is the dignity and supremacy of wisdom, which devolves to the nature of the true man who pursues insight before all things.

Our ancient predecessor Archytas taught that Man was generated by far the wisest of all terrestrial animals, for he is able to contemplate

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all things which exist and to obtain science and wisdom thereby. Divinity has engraved and exhibited in him the system of universal reason, in which the forms of things in existence are distributed, and the signification of nouns and verbs. For a place, said Archytas, is assigned for the sounds of the voice, *viz.*, the pharynx, the mouth, and the nostrils. But as Man was generated the instrument of sounds, through which nouns and verbs are signified, so likewise of the conceptions which are expressed or represented by visible things. This appeared to Archytas to be the work for the accomplishment of which Man was generated and constituted, and received organs and powers from divinity.

On account of these divine gifts, it is right that Man, who is a spectator not only of those things which are signified by words but also of the thoughts expressed in them, should apprehend the whole science of Logic, and in all the species of things to learn scientifically the principles and criteria of all knowledge. For his reason is a part of universal Reason and of the intellectual nature of the universe. Thus the science of Logic alone is not based on mere hypotheses, because it discovers the principles of all beings and is able to give the reasons of its own characteristic principles.

The Logician, therefore, who is able to reduce all the genera under one and the same principle, and again to gather up and co-numerate them, appeared to Archytas to be the wisest of men, and to possess the most perfect veracity. Moreover, he will have discovered a beautiful place of survey, from which he will be able to behold divinity, and all things which are in coordination with and successive to Him, subsisting separately or distinct from each other. Having likewise entered this most ample road, being impelled in a right direction by intellect, and having arrived at the end of his course, the master of Logic will have conjoined beginnings with ends, and will know that God is the beginning, middle, and end of all things which are accomplished according to justice and right reason.

If ignorance inspires and dictates the use of things otherwise good (such as bodily health and strength, power, money, and quick wit), they will become greater evils than their contraries, because they have more power to serve an evil leader. On the other hand, prudence and wisdom, the greater goods, are not *per se* of value to anyone, for one must know *how* to use and *use* them. Perfect justice and insight (wisdom) alone show the equitable use of everything, and subordinate this use to intellect alone as the leader. Wisdom or insight

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contains in itself the necessary contemplative and judicial power, and also the principles of the right use of goods; which gaining, we will pass through the remaining part of life nobly and felicitously. It is requisite, therefore, that those wishing to become happy, should love and acquire true knowledge through philosophy.

In short, to fly from evil, and in addition, to seek for and choose that which is best of all, and to constantly associate with it during life, is to philosophize rightly. The body should be cared for in such a way that the attention to it may contribute to the service of the soul, which is that part of us divine and good and most peculiar to and characteristic of us. The body is otherwise, being attached to the soul or self in the capacity of a servant or instrument.

They do nothing of what is right who concentrate all their energies on the acquisition of wealth but neglect justice, through which we may learn how to use wealth rightly; carefully attend to the life and health of the body, but neglect to *use rightly* such life and health; and, finally, cultivate another form of discipline through which they cannot in any respect secure a harmonious relation of the conflicting elements of human nature, but ignore the science which is especially productive of harmony or unity and which comes best through

philosophy alone; in short, they attempt to do things, but in what *way* any particular thing should be done, they neither know nor care.

Securing this harmony among the disciplined and undisciplined alike is plainly the intention of the law, which is a common friend to all the members of a state, and also of the government of children, which consists in withholding their freedom, until the time when we have formed a *constitution* in them, as we would in a polity, and until, by cultivating the noblest principles of their nature, we have established in their hearts a guardian and a sovereign, the very counterpart of our own—then we allow them to be free.

Therefore, the man who has intellect will direct all his energies through life to high objects, in the first place, honoring those studies which will impress the highest character upon his innermost self, while at the same time he despises all other employments. As for bodily habit and support, in the second place—far from living devoted to indulgence and brute pleasure—he will show that even health is not primarily an object with him, and that he does not attach preeminent importance to the acquisition of health or strength or beauty unless they are likely to make him temperate. Similarly with wealth and honors, the lover of wisdom will avoid increasing them to an indefinite extent—

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which would bring him endless troubles and cares—but, looking instead to a careful balance within, and a concentration of all energies on the acquisition of insight, aspires to do all things subject to the guidance and supremacy of the intellect. This is nothing else than to philosophize.

A man deprived of sense and intellect together is reduced to the condition of a plant; deprived of intellect alone he becomes a brute; deprived of immortality but yet remaining in the possession of intellect, he becomes similar to God. We must, therefore, exterminate to the extent of our power the passions and affections of the irrational elements, but use the pure energies or functions of intellect with reference to itself and the divine, and practice diligently to live in accordance with the intuitive ways of intellect, using and applying to the attainment of this end the whole attention of our intellectual eye, and of love.

Therefore, we must philosophize if we wish to become a good citizen and to pass through life usefully. If that science which alone has the power of rightly judging, and using reason and contemplating the universal good, which is philosophy, is able to use all things and rule them according to nature, we certainly should philosophize in every possible way.

The toil necessary to possess the philosophic power as a universal form of truth is less than the magnitude of its utility. For of what is definite and determinate there is more knowledge than of contraries, more of causes than of effects. Goods are more defined and orderly than evils, as an upright man is more controlled than one depraved. Though no reward is offered by men to those who devote themselves to the study of philosophy, whence it is usual for such students to devote much time to other arts and work, nevertheless, accuracy in philosophic reasoning is comparatively easy to acquire, for it is attended with ever-renewed pleasure.

Whether, indeed, the felicity of life consists in pleasure, or in the possession of virtue, or in wisdom (insight), it must be *procured by* means of philosophy, for these absolutely and above all come to us through philosophizing. Vision is the most excellent of senses, but more than that and above all other senses and life itself is wisdom (insight) to be desired, because it is more receptive of truth, so that all rational men specially strive to acquire wisdom. For if they love life it is in order that they may gain insight and knowledge.

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All specially flee from ignorance and naturally seek to know, just as we flee from disease and seek health. For if one should possess all other things but yet should be afflicted with a malady in that element of him which has wisdom (or insight), life would not be desirable; for all the other goods by and of themselves would be of no use to him. For this reason, no one of us could endure to remain asleep, or intoxicated, or as a child during the whole of life.

That many flee from death shows after a manner their love of knowledge, for they naturally fly from the obscure and pursue the perspicuous and knowable. And this is chiefly the reason why to those, through whose physical instrumentality we see the sun and behold the light, our father and mother, we owe exceeding honor and reverence, as the authors of the greatest goods. But they are the causes to us, as it seems, of wisdom and sight. And through this same cause we delight in customs and things and men, and call those whom we know intimately and favorably our friends.

Among the multitude, due to ignorance, it is not apparent that there is not the same reason for merely living and living *well*. For they desire felicity, indeed, but are content with a mere animal life. But whoever is not satisfied with merely living or vegetating will be ridiculous

unless he undergoes every species of labor, and incurs trouble and vexation of every kind, to acquire the wisdom (insight) that enables him to know the truth. All else is mere shadow; all other activities but silly trifling.

It is precisely on account of the end that all things that become are generated; that for the sake of which anything becomes is better and the best of all. Of the psychical powers, wisdom is perfected last; wherefore, old age seeks this alone of all goods. Wisdom, therefore, according to nature, is to us an end, and the ultimate end or object for the sake of which we came into the world, *i.e.*, that we may know. Rightly, therefore, for this reason did Pythagoras affirm that for the sake of knowing and contemplating was every man made by God.

It is utterly ridiculous, therefore, to require of this special power a utility besides the thing itself; on the contrary, we should give attention to all other things on account of the goods which are in wisdom, for this is pursued like the love and worship of God, even though without utilitarian consequences. The contemplation of the universe divine must be preferred to all things which seem to be useful, and although wisdom is necessary to orderly life, it is not in itself useful but *good*, chosen and sought not on

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account of anything else, but for its own sake alone.

Those who choose the life according to intellect attain the most pleasant form of life. He lives more or gets the most out of life who thinks rightly and, above all, who in the highest degree apprehends the truth. This is he who wisely thinks and contemplates, according to the most accurate science. In a perfect and free energy itself there is pleasure, so that theoretic activity or contemplation in accordance with Logic is the most pleasant and delightful of all. For the energy of the profoundest intellections drawn from true beings, and always steadily looking to the proposed perfection, is the most effective above all other things to the production of genuine pleasure. Those who have intellect must philosophize if they wish to acquire and enjoy true and pure pleasures.

All should philosophize to the extent of their capacity, for philosophy, indeed, is the science of living perfectly, and is above all things, to speak briefly, the cause to souls of this perfect life. The multitude, however, owing to a certain mental sluggishness and unnatural way of life, abandon the pursuit of things which are truly good, and devote all their time to things termed "necessary" or "practical," and indeed claim to find the greatest happiness in these.

But if we pursue the heavenly way and live in our kindred star, then we will philosophize, living truly, busied with the most profound and marvelous speculations, beholding the beauty in the soul immutably related to truth, viewing the rule of God with joy, gaining perpetual delight and additional insight from contemplating, and experiencing pure pleasure absolutely unmingled with any pain or sorrow. Pursuing this way, therefore, we will find that philosophy leads us to total felicity; and hence, since philosophy is in its nature most excellent, it is full worthy of our most ardent study.

The fact that men neither hear nor see, blinded and deadened by their own senses, until they are aroused from their fatal lethargy, marvelously incites us to the intellectual life, since the intellect alone sees and hears all things. The liberation from native strife, which few know how to effect, exhorts us to the life of the innermost self, independent of bodily life as much as possible. And death indeed is nothing else than the release and separation of the self from the body.

In truth, the study and business of those who pursue wisdom is not concerned with the body. So far as they can, they depart from it and apply themselves to the culture of the mind. It is in

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the process of *thinking*, if at all, that any real truth becomes manifest to the searching soul. She thinks and reasons best, most deeply and perfectly, when none of the senses annoys by its intrusion—neither hearing, nor sight, nor pain, or any pleasure—but, when she is as much as possible alone *per se*, bidding farewell to the body, and as far as possible, becoming free from communication and contact with it, reaches after true being.

The actual "separation" of the self from the body is, of course, impossible until we are liberated from the corporeal bonds by the will of Providence. Pure thought is only habituation of the innermost self to collect and concentrate itself by itself from all parts of the physical frame, practicing her release from the body as from a prison, working out her ultimate deliverance, as it were, from the shackles of the body.

The studied attainment of wisdom with its attendant virtues of temperance, justice, and fortitude thus forms a prelude, as it were, to this purification and release, allowing the innermost self or soul to contemplate real things through the bonds of bodily life, or as it were through the bars of her dungeon. What she sees through intellect alone belongs to the intelligible and invisible.

Visible things, in fact, while vivid, are not true, but are only adumbrations or shadows of truth. This is the chief maxim of true philosophy and the greatest perception of Mankind. The wise, therefore, moderate their fears of pain and death and their love of pleasure and life through this insight. If death were a total annihilation, great would be the gain of the wicked, since they would be liberated by death at once from the body and from their depravity, together with the soul. But now, since the soul proves to be immortal, there is for her no escape from evils, nor salvation, other than by becoming as good and wise as possible. For the soul departs with nothing but her earthly education and culture at the outset of her journey back to God.

On account of these things, therefore, the true lovers of wisdom are temperate and firm—not through fear or shame, like the multitude, but, having virtuously followed their reasons and contemplations to the summit of reality far beyond the sphere of mere opinion, have the certainty of a better allotment.

From this course of reasoning, philosophy brings to us a release from human or corporeal chains and a deliverance from the incidents of temporal birth (generation), and leads to that which truly *is*, and to a knowledge of Truth

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itself and the purification of souls. But if in this above all things there is true felicity, we must cultivate philosophy most zealously, if we wish to be truly happy.

The multitude amuse themselves by making absent-minded philosophers and their speculations a fruitful subject for merriment. The same taunts are good for all students of philosophy. These indeed are entirely ignorant of what their nearest neighbor is about, and almost whether or not he is a human being; *but what Man is, and what it becomes him, as distinguished from every other creature, to do or suffer, into all this they make diligent inquiry.* The transactions of the worldly city are strange to the philosopher, and only his body dwells on earth, it seems, while his reasoning mind, deeming all these things trifling and of no value, despises them and soars all abroad, "measuring," as the poet Pindar says, "the regions below the earth and upon it, stargazing into heaven's heights."

Fixing their eyes on the whole of time, in which petty concerns melt away, they can hardly pack a trunk or flavor a sauce or make a fawning speech. Men bred in freedom and leisure for thought, however, know how to don their cloaks gracefully and, by acquiring harmony of language, sing well the true life of God and

blessed men, becoming like to divinity as much as possible, through the earthly acquirement and cultivation of justice, grace, and wisdom.

The truth is that nothing can be more like God than the perfectly just man. By this means we distinguish genuine worth from worthlessness and puerility; for to know the nature of God is wisdom and true virtue, and not to know it is sheer ignorance and vice. All other wisdom (so-called) or ability, whether in politics or in the arts, is vulgar and ignoble. Whosoever would act wisely, either in public or private, must set this idea before his eyes; this is the content of a true education (*paideia*). This reasoning shows that divine knowledge is nothing but self-knowledge, whose dazzling light is perceived only by gradually accustoming the soul to use her reason, the sight within (inherent insight) as the instrument of the highest learning, in order to perceive the nature of what is eternally true. This is only a conversion (or return) to an idea already inherent in virtue.

The other powers of the soul resemble those of the body and are formed in it by habit and exercise. This is *education for time*. The virtue of wisdom (insight) is absolutely different than these. Intellect is in fact the divine element within us, inherent in our nature as reasoning beings made in the divine image. The teacher of

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wisdom is like Phidias, cutting away the encumbering marble, and revealing the statue that lay within from eternity. Philosophy reveals what is truly there by means of a long-practiced art, removing what is unnatural in the soul by interrogation and directed self-questionings.

In the end, the whole soul is brought into the light, and right conduct as well as insightful reason emerges. This is *education for eternity*. Without this, the soul is perhaps talented but lives in darkness, a skillful but vicious servant of wickedness. Released from sensual snares, her skills are employed quite differently. For to cleanse the soul of every taint of generation, and to purify that energy of it to which the power of reason belongs, is the chief function of philosophy.

Purified, says Olympiodorus, the soul is a circle because it seeks itself and is itself sought; finds itself and is itself found. The irrational (or ungodly) soul imitates the measureless line, which does not return, and cannot make conversion to its true nature until *bounded*—cleansed of its unnatural sensual excrescences and the incrustations of insatiable desire.

Just as our bodies work well when they have order and harmony within and without, so with

the soul, which needs for its health a lawfulness called justice and temperance, and requires punishment and restraint (or self-restraint) of the measureless if it is to recover from vicious employments, for injustice is the disease of the soul. We must leave nothing untried in our endeavors to win her back to health and true felicity, for her goods excel by far those of the body, and in the end are of infinite value to her Creator. Hence, everyone who wishes to be happy must seek bravely after and practice self-control, fleeing from licentiousness, and so act that he will not need punishment. For if punishment is requisite, it must be applied in order for the psyche to regain her health.

For nothing good is good, nor anything bad actually bad, to those who live unjustly and unpunished. To live at all without justice and virtue is the greater evil the longer the life. Even knowledge, when separated from justice and the other virtues, is not wisdom (insight) but mere cunning. Things that are truly good and joyful accompany philosophy alone, which has for its sole occupation the discernment and apprehension of the good.

From these things, it is evident that to speak the truth, both in reference to God in divine things and in reference to Man in human things, leads us to all goods both human and divine. But

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truth of such a character comes through philosophy alone. For it teaches that we must assimilate ourselves to divinity by investigating and discovering what is fitting or right in all actions, and bravely doing what duty commands therein. It practices diligently the endurance and contempt of death; cultivates through the whole of life self-control; bears and meets labors and difficulties nobly; and wholly despises pleasures.

Whatever one may wish to do in life, to reach the greatest perfection will require wisdom, fortitude, eloquence, and virtue. Those desirous of things beautiful and good likewise must labor and apply themselves diligently and with the greatest ardor, for the road is long and distractions are many. Characteristically, the world is untrusting and grudging in its praise of anything superior to itself.

Many seek wealth not for its own sake but to indemnify themselves against losses unforeseen and worldly calamities such as are unavoidable. Others desire the power that money commands and the influence it can buy. But the man who is truly good does not seek fame clothed in an alien garment, but with his own virtue and worth. Philosophy calls us from passions, preoccupations, and the fear of death, to love

not of goods but of the good itself, not of life natural and fleeting but life eternal in God.

Men are so constituted by nature that they cannot live alone, but associate by necessity through the government of law, for the absence of law would bring to them far greater disadvantages and penalty than a solitary life. Hence does philosophy truly teach that the rule of law is the best both privately and publicly, and the reign of anarchy the worst. For crimes and injuries forthwith arise from anarchy.

From the rule of law, indeed, faith in our fellow men first arises, and though intangible, ranks among the greatest of goods. For by reason of it material goods become common, and even though they may be few, they suffice when they are evenly distributed. Without this faith they would not suffice, even though they were many. Hence, the study and practice of equity or justice, by forestalling endless and destructive disputes, is the source of leisure itself and eventually of the free time necessary for good works, public and private, and hence for the study of philosophy itself. Rightly did Socrates declare that free time is the most beautiful of our possessions.

Freedom itself rests on the cultivation of justice and equity, for men are deprived of liberty

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ultimately by themselves alone, for when anarchy and greed reign lawless, a dictator must arise. For it is not possible for men to live without law, justice, and equity. All happiness is barred to those who fail to constitute law and equity as the whole guide of life. But this is Right Reason perceiving and directing what is to be done and prohibiting things that should not be done, both in the universe and in states and in private houses and in every individual in reference to his own conduct. *If therefore this reason dealing with goods and evils, with beautiful and base things, it is not possible otherwise to learn, and knowing to follow it except by philosophizing perfectly, for the sake of these philosophy must be cultivated and practiced above all other human pursuits or studies.*

THE END

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