

# CARDINAL POINTS



VINCENT ORION ALÉMAN



Copyright © 2020

Vincent Orion Aléman

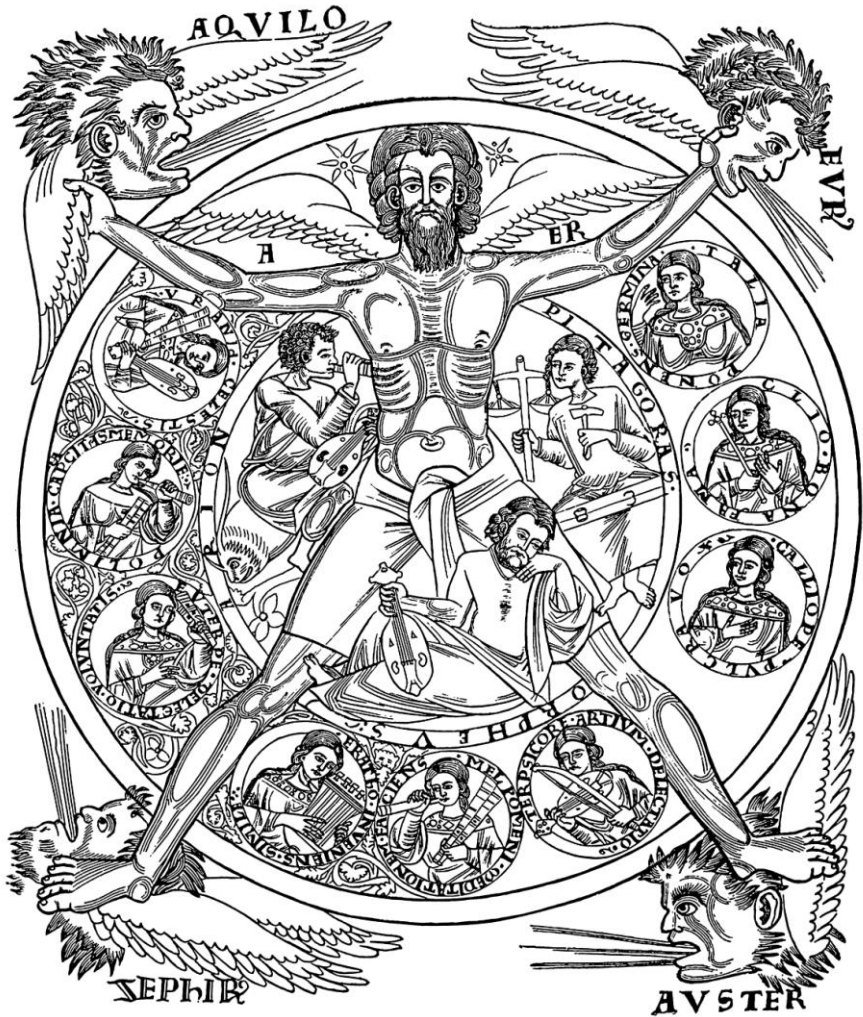
Cardinal Points

[www.athenapress.com](http://www.athenapress.com)

ISBN: 978-0-578-80902-1

All rights reserved.

"Good sense, the fountain of the Muse's art,  
Let the strong page of Socrates impart."  
—HORACE



Thirteenth century art piece depicting the Nine Muses inspiring Pythagoras, Orpheus, and Arion by means of the Four Winds—the *Cardinal Points*—source of all Harmony.

TO  
MY WIFE

"Quos amor verus tenuit, tenebit."  
[Those whom true love has held, it will go on holding.]  
—SENECA

You were the first one to get me asking questions,  
And with each researched response you always kept steppin'.  
My Pythian Priestess aloft thy tripod—  
Intuitive antenna receiving from my God.  
With a taste more sublime than that of Monét—  
You say the word and the finest line is thrown away;  
And a Mother's heart—you know what's best for all of us,  
Loving the good, when all of the world would make a fuss.  
In the end, after I've done all that I can do,  
I find the Cardinal Directions point me back to you.  
A man with a beautiful woman will make a way,  
Through this dark and crazy maze to a brighter day.  
If I've shaped myself up, who was it for but you?  
If I've sought my whole life, it was but for you too.  
My anchor and mainstay, if I know one thing  
It's that centuries hence I'll still have on my wedding ring.

## TO THE READER:

I write this book for an unknown young man who is like I was when I was sixteen years old. It was at that time in my life that I was heading down a path to death, and it was also then that I changed my life.

I am a Cuban-American—born and raised in Miami Florida. Without a father in the home, I was what you would call a *street-kid*. After enough drugs and wildness, a *do-or-die* mentality had taken root in me, and my number was soon to be up. But one thing led to another, and one night I found myself saying a prayer. I was strung out on cocaine and afraid that I would overdose, and I said: "God, please keep me and my family healthy, and help us live long." I thought the prayer was so catchy that I memorized it and recited it almost every night before bed. Three months after I started doing this I met a preacher, gave my life to God, and moved to a neighboring city. With a fresh start and no reputation to live up to, I gave my all to serving God.

I am thirty-two years old as I write this now—twice my age when I started this spiritual journey. Literally *everything* that I gave up when I was sixteen in order to walk this new path has been redoubled to me multiplied times over. I am married to a beautiful, God-fearing woman. We have four beautiful children together. We own a nice house next to the Appalachian Mountains. I am free from drugs. My prayer for health and a longer life has been answered. And I am happy. What's more, I have learned so much since I was sixteen! and much esoteric lore. Now I want to share the *Cardinal Points* which I think are necessary for living *fully*.

As I've stated, my heart goes out to that young man who is down and out like I was. He is the measure of my book. In writing it I have kept the question ever before my mind: Had I never met that one preacher when I was younger, but instead I had received *this book*, would the book have been enough to change my life? Or would it have been thrown into a pile of dirty laundry and forgotten about? I've done my best here to save a soul.

In the end, however, this is not *only* for troubled youth. I have even intended it as an instructional manual for my own small children when they get older; especially should anything happen to me, preventing me from raising them myself. Almost every line contains deep wisdom from the sages which all can learn from.

I come from the gutter. I started with nothing. Now I am my book. And this is the type of change that *anybody* can see in a relatively short time with God as a Father. I am an example of what He can do with just one prayer made from the heart, and with a yielded vessel.

Vincent Orion Aléman

East Tennessee  
October 2020

## CARDINAL POINTS

1. There Are but Two Ways: Love, and No Love.
2. Be a Real Person.
3. Pray to God.
4. Follow God.
5. Congregate.
6. Treat Yourself Like a Stranger.
7. Nothing in Excess.
8. Cleanliness Is Next to Godliness.
9. Fifty Push-Ups in the Morning, Fifty Push-Ups in the Night.
10. Don't Listen to Bad Music.
11. Have a Best Friend.
12. People Tend to Become What They Pretend to Be.
13. Be a Gentleman.
14. Be a Scholar.
15. Speak Well.
16. Preach Repentance in the Street.
17. Every Day Face a Fear and You'll See It Disappear.
18. As Relates to Sleep, Observe These Rules:  
Six Hours for Men; Seven for Women; Eight Hours for *Fools*.
19. Do Homage to the Sun.
20. There's Nothing Better for a Man to Do in His Life  
Than to Work at What He Loves and Drink Wine With His Wife.
21. Wait for God to Send Your Spouse.
22. Confuse Work With Play.
23. A Morning Walk Is a Blessing for the Whole Day.
24. Have Kids.
25. Be a Family Man.

## CARDINAL POINTS

26. Keep Your Girls From Common Eyes.
27. The Life Is in the Blood.
28. Perspire Profusely Every Day.
29. Fast for Your Blessing.
30. Love Is Blind: Out of Sight, Out of Mind.
31. Be the Greatest.
32. Love Life, but Embrace Death.
33. A Different Set of Mothers Would Prove a Different World.
34. Never Admit to Yourself Mental Illness.
35. The Greatest Remedy for Anger Is Delay.
36. Chatter Is Silver and Silence Is Gold.
37. A Sweet Husband Is the Answer to a Sweeter Wife.
38. In Dealing With a Bully, the Best Pair of Fists  
Are Prevention and Preparedness.
39. Don't Act Like a Buffoon.
40. Do Not Become Unglued.
41. Prefer Freedom Before Money.
42. Live Just as Though You Were Poor to Keep From Being So.
43. Think Like a Caveman.
44. Forget the Phone, Grab a Beer.
45. There's Nothing More Vulgar Than to Be in a Hurry.
46. Repair to the Country.
47. Leave Yourself Some Venial Little Fault.
48. Do Not Be Discouraged at the Lord's Reproof.
49. Almost Anything Is Better Than Committing Suicide.
50. Stay Strong.



Read this as fast as you can read  
To fill the gaps in what you know.  
Then read again, but grab a pen  
To take some notes, and take it slow.



**1. *There Are but Two Ways: Love, and No Love—***

And the opposite of love is not hate, but *greed*.

So then, *love is justice*, in the semblance of  
Distributing fairly, according to the need.

Work versus plunder;  
The way of the humbler  
Versus arrogance;  
Duty to negligence;  
Patience to fits of wrath;  
True love to a mismatch;  
Cleanliness versus filth—  
What can *love* be compared with?

And if love is justice, then *justice is reason—*  
A triple-beam balance, weighing with wisdom seasoned.  
Now, if you follow those who on this way trod—  
Of *justice, reason—love* to man and God—  
You will see an outcome that nobody was expecting:  
The last become first, and the first miss the blessing.  
Confronted, like Hercules, by Virtue and Vice  
On the road of life, know that it pays to play nice.



The Choice of Hercules



The ancient Mediterranean was a philosophical melting pot boiling over with concepts about the Divine and the nature of the universe. From Zoroaster to Pythagoras to Socrates to the Hermeticists, and then to Plotinus, the Gnostics and the Christians, the idea was developed that "*God Is Love*" (1 John 4:8). This love relates to goodness, and goodness simply means *the way things should be*; (e.g., one cup of tea is *good*, another is *bad*; it is *good* to eat bread instead of pebbles; etc.). God's love or goodness in nature entails each thing's own fruition. (Assuming that the possibility for error exists (as is seen in mathematics)), to fall away from love by our own freewill decisions means to fall away from goodness and into decay. *Darkness* is nothing—*light* is an actual thing. All the darkness in the world cannot put out a single flame, but the flame easily banishes the dark. Neither does *cold* exist; it is merely the absence of heat. *Strength* is a thing; weakness is the lack thereof. *Life* is something; *death* the absence thereof. Goodness, love, the light of God—these are all first principles and actual things; whereas evil, darkness, and coldness are all secondary *flaws*, non-entities, only identifiable in relation to their virtuous sources which they have fallen away from—they are simply goodness gone rotten. To choose goodness or love is to choose the substantial, the concrete, the flower in its bloom. It is to choose the beautiful, which is the best God invents. To choose otherwise is to choose death, decay, the unsubstantial, insufficiency, and the deplorable.

"Virtue is its own reward; Vice is its own punishment."

Aristotle's *Ethics* are twofold: moral and intellectual, comprising *justice* and *reason*. Those who would be happy should seek to be both as beneficent as they can be and as smart as they can be. Furthermore, since *God is love*, those who absorb themselves in His presence naturally become ethical. Ultimately, man is only truly good in the hands of his Maker.



ΜΗΔΕΝ  
ΑΓΑΝ

7. *"Nothing in Excess"—*

That was the Grecian motto:  
Heroes should be self-possessed,  
Slaves to none but Apollo.  
With enjoyments infernal  
We should not even toy.  
Others gain more by intervals:  
So *abstain and enjoy*.

The above Greek inscription for "Nothing in Excess" was carved at the entrance to the ancient Temple of Apollo at Delphi.



## 8. "*Cleanliness Is Next to Godliness*"—

The Babylonian Talmud says.

The first seat of our civilization\*

Conceived of no such separation

As righteousness versus wickedness—

But of orderliness versus *a mess*.

There exists an Ethics of neatness

Neglecting which none come off guiltless.

Though it take up much of the day,

Clean the environment before you play.

Manliness is the fulfillment of duty;

Nothing so conducive to it as living duly.

Set the precedent: Do you truly

Want your daughters to marry men unruly?

Start the day off right making your bed;

Brush your teeth, wash your face, anoint your head.

Hair kept (at a length your gender will allow),

Clip the fingernails, pluck the unibrow.

Beauty is a trait unique to a maiden:

Draw upon it, by remaining clean-shaven—

As beauty is natural superiority,

A temporary tyrant freely gaining entry.

But leave shaving the legs to the effeminate:

Male features are mostly the better for neglect.

Never leave the bedchamber dressed in your nightclothes.

Keep a wardrobe of polished shoes and overcoats.

Keep the home clean, the car, and the workspace.

Wash the dirty linen before it's all over the place.

Never lay down to sleep with dishes in the sink.

If you don't respect yourself, what will others think?

If we live in trash, we will feel like trash;

If we live with class, then we are first-class.

---

\* Babylon, which held the eternal struggle of morality to be between *order* and the primeval *chaos*, and civilization as descending from Heaven.



11. *Have a Best Friend—*

Life's a desert island  
None would choose to live on  
Without a fellow Robinson.\*  
So many dash and scramble  
At the first sight of cannibals,  
They're so desperate for a bond—  
Don't be so quick to respond.  
If you have just one compádre—  
Who loves you like a mádre—  
During threescore years and ten,  
Count yourself blessed among men.  
For such a boon is rarely given,  
Being the crown jewel of Heaven,  
Bestowed upon the righteous.  
For what friendship can be vicious  
That does not shortly self-destruct  
In envy, pride, distrust and lust?  
Nor can intimate relations  
Center upon reformation:  
Our lifeblood and ventilation  
Require reciprocation.  
Only deep can call unto deep.  
To be worthy of such a keep  
You must first be your own best friend,  
Shunning the opinions of men;  
A lover of sweet solitude—  
That does not mean we should be rude,  
But keep a tight-knit inner ring,  
To whom we can give everything,  
And whom we can trust with our life.  
There's no best friend like a good wife.

"Nothing shall I, while sane, compare with a dear friend."  
—HORACE

---

\* Robinson Crusoe.



## 12. *People Tend to Become What They Pretend to Be—*

Here we get into the topic of identity.  
Sure we have natural inclinations and propensities;  
But without a husbandman nature will grow a bended tree.  
We have a mark to hit and a responsibility.  
It is neither too easy nor an impossibility;  
But a perfect state of affairs to test our fidelity:  
Are we friends of the Creator or friends of the Enemy?  
The weak can become strong, the timid soul bold as a lion.  
Masculine and feminine are gradient as we apply them.  
The loveless soul can come to love by persistently tryin'.  
There's nothing stopping us marching a road worthy of Zion.  
It costs some tears: to fight oneself is harder than a diamond.  
No! here is the noblest spectacle *God* can cast an eye on.  
But to chisel out His image trapped inside the ore of iron  
Is the only way to be oneself, safe from the singing Siren.



Odysseus and the Sirens



14. *Be a Scholar*—Do you dare?  
All that you need is an armchair.  
A glass of brandy and a tome  
Will do you more than a classroom.  
*Young men should read five hours per day.*  
I think I hear some of you say,  
"How differ the educated  
From those not?" *As life from the dead.*  
Old books do invariably  
Lead a boy to maturity.  
"What's wrong with new ones?" Some will scold:  
Only they keep us from the old.  
We have all been here before,  
Seen the same sun, the same seashore;  
The azure sky; the dread mountain—  
The modern man was the Roman.  
The same thoughts that swell in my chest,  
Were expressed by Lucretius best,  
Or Martial, Ovid, or Plautus,  
Juvenal, Terence, Tacitus,  
Marcus Aurelius, Horace—  
'Tis well known Roman blood's warmest.  
But if for perspicuity you seek  
You need look to the *Greeks*.  
The first poem is first in class—  
It very well might be the last;  
If left only one book to read  
*Homer* is all the books you need.  
Herodotus, you must maintain,  
Nothing modern has touched his mane.  
Plutarch tried his hand with the *Morals*,  
Landing among the Immortals.  
Epictetus—*that's my friend!*  
Faithful until the very end.  
But if you want something more playful  
There's the *Republic* of Plato.





All these men knew to perceive,  
Did much of the leg-work for me.  
These are my fathers, in the main,  
With Robert Burton and Montaigne.  
I see further on giants' shoulders.  
Read so when your life is over  
You might declare that you knew  
Whatsoever there was to do,  
And that you chose the very best—  
Only then may you in peace rest!  
And yet nobody can live long  
Without *some* goodness and wisdom:  
Life is likened to a sports car—  
A crazy driver can't go far.  
Both solitude and innocence  
Mix only without ignorance,  
And only when with just your brain  
You know how to be entertained.  
A world of thoughts, from history,  
Fantasy, and philosophy,  
Swirling around within your skull—  
The opposite of that is dull,  
Which leads to lewd and perverse ways.  
But honestly I am amazed  
As I hold Genghis Khan's treasure.  
There is no possession better  
Than that which belongs to another  
That I get my hands to smother.  
The same pleasure of the hand  
Is the pleasure of the eye-ball:  
You cannot soak anything in  
But through the mind must absorb all.  
So when I read of mounds of gold  
And envision faraway lands,  
I'm swimming in riches untold  
Without dirtying up my hands.



Invest in what you cannot lose  
Like the ancient philosopher  
Whose town was burned by raiding crews  
And yet his soul did still prosper.\*  
Machiavelli would doff his muddy  
Garments, and then don the regal,  
Spending hours in his study  
Conversating with dead people—  
Like a great necromancer!  
Have your best friends among the dead.  
Freemasonry is a cancer—  
Join this brotherhood lodge instead.  
If only you had eyes to see  
The true secret society  
Of ages, as we ping each other!  
(But this may be for another).  
No one with the gift to read  
Will ever for company plead.  
How do you start on this vocation?  
Read *Bartlett's* book of quotations.  
There can be no man of letters  
Unproficient in the Bible,  
Untrained in Seneca's *Letters*  
And *Ethics* by Aristotle.  
These should be required reading  
Of every last human being.  
Scholarship is our salvation  
When it becomes recreation.  
But until we see the day  
When all the mindless programming  
On television loses sway  
Man will ever be self-damning.

---

\*Stilpo of Megara. After Demetrius had leveled that city to the ground and made all the citizens slaves, he asked Stilpo whether he had lost anything. Nothing, said Stilpo, for war cannot plunder virtue and learning.



"When evening comes, I return home and enter my study;  
on the threshold I take off my workday clothes, covered  
with mud and dirt, and put on the garments of court and  
palace. Fitted out appropriately, I step inside the venerable  
courts of the ancients, where, solicitously received by them,  
I nourish myself on that food that alone is mine and for  
which I was born; where I am unashamed to converse with  
them and to question them about the motives for their  
actions, and they, out of their human kindness, answer me.  
And for four hours at a time I feel no boredom,  
I forget all my troubles, I do not dread poverty,  
and I am not terrified by death.  
I absorb myself into them completely."  
—NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

Letter to Francesco Vettori (10 December 1513), as translated by James  
Atkinson, in *Prince Machiavelli* (1976), p. 19.



15. *Speak Well*—or at least know how to—  
Conforming to the lowly, and the well-to-do.  
There is poetry in many forms of common slang;  
But avoid the lowest, or you'll garner a bad name.  
And yet, much of it springs from a poverty  
Of sophistication and vocabulary.  
And we ought to be zealous to preserve our language,  
Shunning poor words, and keeping old ones from damage.  
The voice is a barometer by which men are known—  
Whether educated or ignorant, weak or strong.  
Speak succinctly, articulately, and orderly;  
And never be thought of as vulgar in higher company.  
Always think before you talk; put some bass in your voice;  
A plethora of books will give the best word choice.  
Though, to speak as one writes, is reprehensible;  
(And to write as one speaks is just as insensible).

"He that thinks with more extent than another  
will want words of larger meaning."  
—SAMUEL JOHNSON



19. *Do Homage to the Sun—*

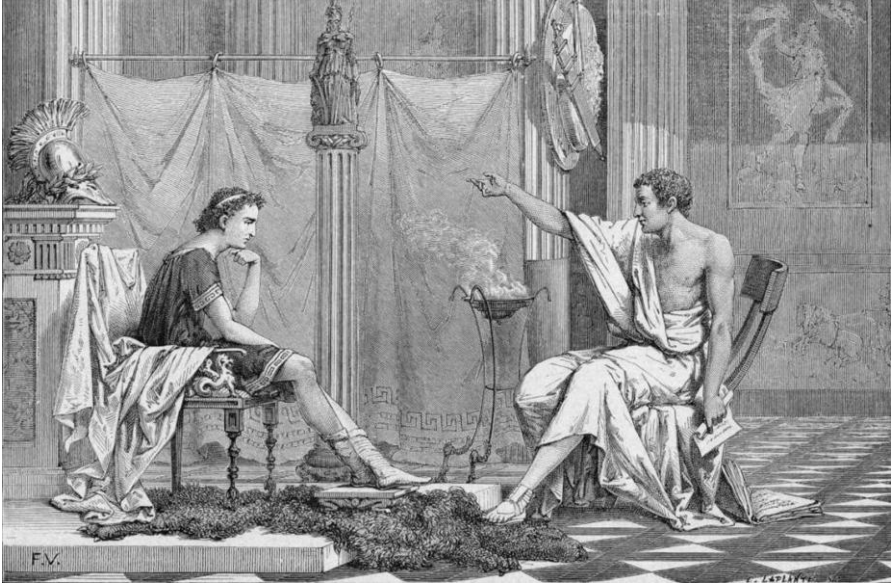
The harbinger of fun.  
Once the day has begun,  
*We're off!* our course to run.  
The starting pistol drawn  
Never fail to see blaze;  
And may Rosy-Fingered Dawn  
Inspire your heart with her lays.  
From Ra to Apollo  
Much of the world has followed  
Some type of Sun-worship  
Not too hard to swallow.  
Even the Old Testament  
Tabernacle entrance  
Faced the Orient  
To show the Sun its due reverence.  
One African tribe  
Awaits the dawn in submittal,  
And as it betides  
They bedew their palms with spittle  
And reach for the rays;  
And when asked *What for?*  
They cannot say  
Except that it's quite natural.  
And we are like the flowers,  
Needing rain and sunshine;  
Many of our waking hours  
Should be dallied outside.  
Choose an olive complexion  
Before a pale one.  
*May you live every day of your life—*  
In the sun.

"Truly the light is sweet,  
and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."  
—ECCLESIASTES 11:7



## 25. *Be a Family Man*—

It's one thing you won't regret.  
Fear and tremble as you grant  
Childhood its due respect.  
Oh! to hold the little hand,  
And be entrusted with the world—  
Giving flight to Peter Pan  
And sipping tea with fairy girls.  
If true happiness is praise,  
Who can glorify God more?  
With glowing smiles on their face,  
And unpretentious laughter roar;  
Soaking up the summer rays—  
Just like you and I did before.  
We tried our hand, and had our days,  
It's time to make space and move o'er.  
Give them the best possible,  
Starting with being ever near.  
A gift can be an obstacle  
If it means you must disappear.  
Who else will make them disciples  
And teach by example to share?  
The Father and Mother couple  
Produce a balanced atmosphere.  
This is the first time they have seen  
The blazing chariot in the sky.  
Mother Earth's body-hair is green;  
The sounding wind must be her sigh.  
Every waddling adult seems  
A giant in a child's eyes.  
With whom can they share this strange scene?  
The lot falls to both you and I.  
'Tis said Alexander the Great  
Was tutored by Aristotle.



Aristotle Tutoring Young Alexander

"I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teacher for living well."  
—ALEXANDER THE GREAT

The youth would sit up until late  
Learning in the palace grotto.  
His praise of King Phillip was slight,  
Who made his mother's belly swell;  
He praised much more the Stagirite\*  
For the sweet boon of living well.  
Fun and games, shields and swords,  
Hide and Seek, and Duck, Duck, Goose,  
Should be as constant as deep words  
Of philosophy put to use.  
Every child in the household  
Needs to be a history buff.  
Only then will they break the mold  
When the world would stuff them with fluff.

---

\* Aristotle of Stagira.



Who does not teach his son a trade  
Teaches him how to be a thief:  
The pangs of parenthood delayed  
Rebound with a more cutting grief.  
Much greater than inheritances  
Is a heritage in love,  
Zest for life, sharpest senses,  
Knowledge of the Lord above.  
Who would imbibe life's elixir  
Need only visit the playroom.  
If you're just not that quick, sir,  
They will be fast asleep quite soon.  
But not until you've paid your dues  
Of a fairytale before bed—  
Maybe one from the Hindus,  
Or the Brothers Grimm instead.

“Show me a family of readers,  
and I will show you the people who move the world.”  
—NAPOLEON BONAPARTE





### 32. *Love Life, but Embrace Death—*

What is man, but a breath?  
No one is of yet mature—  
*Dirt* is the great equalizer.  
How many Great have come and gone?  
And should we not go with the throng?  
The ripened corn longs to be reaped:  
A full life needs eternal sleep.  
If we have seen but one mountain,  
A grassy glade, or rushing glen,  
The vast expanse of an ocean,  
Then we have beheld all of them—  
From day-to-day life is the same.  
We should not give the Giver blame,  
For packing away the board game.  
To what right can we lay a claim?  
Some bugs live but twenty-four hours,  
With days not much different from ours:  
We rise, go to work, then retire—  
What matter if we too expire?  
Familiar pleasures soon grow old,  
And searching for a pot of gold  
Is vanity of vanities!  
And even Ecclesiastes  
Will tell you that we do not know  
Whithersoever we shall go.  
Better to side with what we see:  
There will be no more you or me.  
We do not need the fear of Hell  
To goad us into living well.  
Life has its share of penalties;  
Without goodness there is no ease.  
Nor can we thrive in constant fear  
At the thought of not being here:  
What we shall be forevermore



We were prior to being born.  
Never shall we cross paths with Death,  
For where we are he is not yet  
But remains knocking at the door;  
When he has come we are no more.  
But hold life the *most* precious thing!  
Pay heed to what the poets sing.  
Of all mankind they are the best—  
Who fling away time and success  
For cherry blossoms and sunsets.  
Legend makes Homer mendicant.  
Keats dropped out of residency  
For a career in poetry.  
The mighty G.K. Chesterton  
And Robert Louis Stevenson  
Loved life intensely, yet we see  
From love of money they were free.  
Horace declined an imperial post,  
Preferring toasting wine as host.  
So did Li-Po, the Chinese bard—  
But following him is too hard:  
Nearby an oarsman he reclined  
Watching the Yellow River wind  
With singing girls and his wine jug—  
*He tried to give the moon a hug.*  
It was only a reflection  
On the water, and he fell in!  
That's how this man took his last breath—  
Loving life and embracing death.



"When the gods created mankind,  
They appointed death for mankind,  
Kept eternal life in their own hands.  
So let your stomach be full,  
Day and night enjoy yourself in every way,  
Every day arrange for pleasures.  
Day and night, dance and play,  
Wear fresh clothes.  
Keep your head washed, bathe in water,  
Appreciate the child who holds your hand,  
Let your wife enjoy herself in your lap."  
—THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and others* (2000), p. 150.



### 35. *The Greatest Remedy for Anger Is Delay—*

And detecting the rage before you're carried away,  
And putting a muzzle on it. Once speak when upset  
And you'll give the best speech that you'll ever regret.  
The tongue as a sword leaves indelible wounds  
Often much worse than what provoked the feud.  
Muddy water stirred up, it is vain to touch more:  
Leave it alone to settle of its own accord.  
Says Horace, "*Ira furor brevis est*":  
[Anger is a momentary madness.]  
To be *frustrated* is synonymous  
With being *dominated* by the anonymous.  
None should hold such power to command your very soul:  
Like a child's toy, to wind you up and watch you go.  
Many think this is strength, and so they replicate it:  
Their whole life is full of hate, and so they hate it.  
What they mean to resemble is true manliness—  
*Righteous indignation* with more fury than the rest.  
Only the good can be mad right. And if we're not to sin  
Then we cannot get mad at anything *but* sin.  
The flares of the righteous are few and far between,  
They mostly live perpetually blithe and serene.  
But of course, nobody has a perfect temperament,  
And that's why we should shut our mouths when we want to vent.  
The advisor to Caesar laid down this apothegm:  
*When you're angry don't speak till you recite the alphabet.*  
Plutarch said to runaway until the fit pass.  
Another said to go on a walk as long as it lasts.  
But never let the sun go down on your anger:  
It's a weed; hate is a tree—therein lies the danger.  
If after some time, you still feel a need to speak,  
Share your concerns, calmly, and break the Devil's neck.



**45. *There's Nothing More Vulgar Than to Be in a Hurry—***

We're so busy there's no time for common courtesy.  
But *time* is an invented thing: to say you don't have it  
Is to confess you don't know how your time to manage;  
Or that you're little, since you care for many little things;  
Or you're ambitious, ready to flee when the phone rings.  
Time flies! But use *method* to clip the bird's wings  
—For *punctuality is the politeness of kings*.  
Return things to their proper place after they're used;  
This will save time rummaging through piles of refuse.  
Learn when to say *No*. And if it's true, *Time Is Money*,  
You can't blow your whole wallet on everybody.  
There is something to be learned in every interaction.  
Life should never become a pattern that we're trapped in.  
So cross the legs, and stay a while for some chit-chat.  
*Make haste slowly*—or resemble the riff-raff.

"Festina lente."  
[Make haste slowly.]  
—LATIN PROVERB



#### 49. *Almost Anything Is Better Than Committing Suicide—*

Sometimes you must do the unpardonable to survive.  
Melancholy's generally not a fault of the small,  
But of those who contemplate and feel the weight of it all—  
A humbling element, an injury that rewards,  
Bringing forth the best prophets, philosophers and bards.  
But if left unchecked, it could lead to self-destruction:  
*And none living won't be tempted in the same direction.*  
As with everything, when nature is not nice,  
We must smooth out the difficulties with Artifice;  
The Artificial; Artistry—  
*Art, Art, Art* is the key:  
Music, Paintings, and Poetry!  
Cookery and a movie to disengage.  
There's no trouble that an hour's reading won't assuage.  
A hot bath, good sleep, and a glass of wine  
Can break up the clouds and help you see the sunshine.  
But sometimes, when our hearts are thoroughly sunk,  
It is wisdom to get downright drunk.  
Smoke a cigar, some hemp, or marijuana:  
Before you see the realm of shades you should see nirvana!  
Ask some friends to spend a day with you at the mall;  
Have a night on the town, party in a dance hall.  
As princes had court jesters for their diversion,  
We can't yield ground to nihilism's subversion.  
There are two views of our terrestrial globe:  
Through the microscope, or else through the telescope.  
The former pays attention to the little things in life,  
And is content with the moment and the everlasting strife.  
It sees God, sees man, sees a world of purpose.  
But to the telescopic view everything is *worthless!*  
We're just a ball of mass amidst infinite galaxies:  
*Learn of the children*—the Kingdom belongs to such as these.  
Go visit a cemetery, or a library:



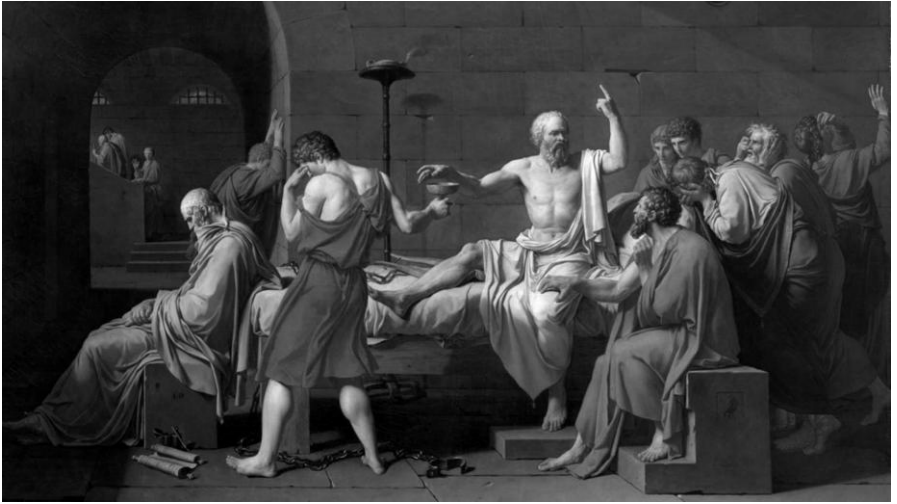
Do whatever's necessary to remain merry.  
More times than not that means staying occupied.  
*Weight training* is a cure-all for suicide.  
Don't eat your heart out—instead *feast your eyes*:  
Make full use of your matrimonial ties.  
Learn something new, and before the noose is hung,  
Read *The Basic Writings of Carl Gustav Jung*.  
Metaphysical properties are food for the mind,  
Always wanting something new; and wonder can be defined  
As the prospect of knowledge; and life is wonderful  
When it's full of newness—routine becomes dull.  
*Adventure* is *change*, no matter in which way:  
Life's big enough to try something new each day.  
A vigorous five-mile walk will do more  
Than all of the anti-depressants in a drugstore.  
But for the best apothecaries, reach for your quills—  
*Ink* is the great cure for all human ills.  
Maybe it's your gut that's causing you to be psychotic—  
Then you need a new diet and a probiotic.  
A life spent viewing all of the variety  
And majesty of *Nature* cannot succumb to ennui.  
Take a break from your studies for a couple days—  
Kick back and pour up a glass with Rabelais.  
Halfway 'round the world, under yonder Tiki-hut,  
Is the happiness you crave, the remedy for your rut.  
Commit some little sin—not the worst sin of all,  
Of telling God to His face that His world is too small.  
Put it off till tomorrow with whatever you can do,  
Then tomorrow see if you can put it off too.  
Remember there are many far worse off than we,  
And remember those who are happy just 'cause you be.  
Now there are some exceptions when it's best to choose death:  
Forced to immoral slavery, yield up the breath.  
One Spartan, when captured and sold as a slave,



Climbed the roof of his master and dove to his grave.  
One sultan, when the enemy breeched his gate,  
Hewed down his family before leaping to his fate.  
And who can forget Lucretia? While her husband was away,  
For the prince on an errand she furnished a place to stay.  
By stealth he stole into her chamber with this ultimatum:  
Either perish on the spot, or for the night become his maiden:  
He would slay her with her house-slave for the crime of fornication.  
She obliged him, but only to retain her reputation.  
When her husband returned, to prove true to her word,  
She kissed him goodbye, and ran herself through with a sword.  
When the city of Athens was ruled by Thirty Tyrants,  
As a sheep led to the slaughter is silent,  
Socrates, wrongfully convicted of a crime  
Quaffed down the hemlock as tho it were a draft of wine.  
So did Seneca, but not before slitting both of his wrists  
And his ankles, at the psychopath Nero's behest.  
The same Nero who had proven so deadly already  
To his own pregnant wife with a kick to the belly;  
Whose navy floundered a ship carrying his own mother;  
Who fiddled while Rome burned, and slew his own brother.  
Paranoid, now Caesar implicates his own advisor.  
But nothing unsettles the Stoic philosopher.  
He does the deed with stone-cold face, and bleeds the water,  
Splashing drink-offerings "to Jupiter, the Deliverer!"  
It is cowardice to hide from life under a tombstone.  
Prisoners should not escape, but wait until they're summoned home.

"My friend, care for your psyche.  
Know Thyself.  
For once we know ourselves,  
we may learn how to care for ourselves."  
—SOCRATES





Socrates Taking the Poison