

CARDINAL POINTS



VINCENT ORION ALEMÁN



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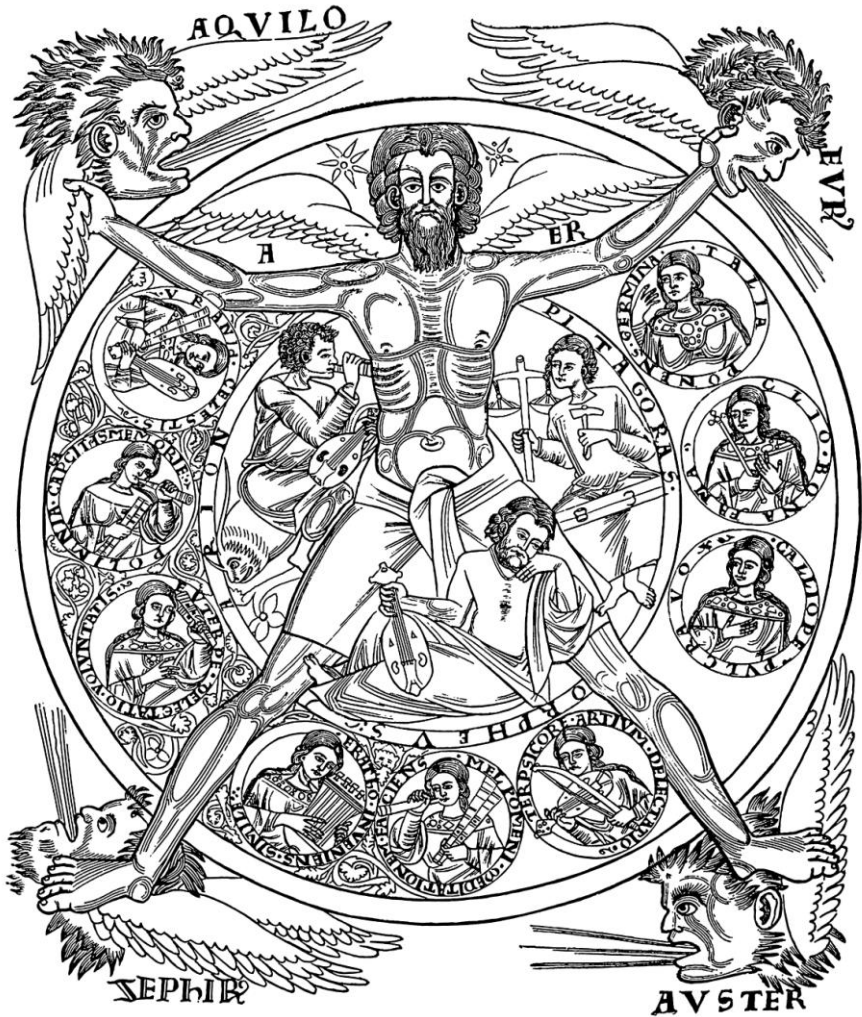
Cardinal Points

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"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.

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 for an Angry 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.



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 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.
See, 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 Juvenal, Ovid, Plautus,
Catullus, 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 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 daily 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



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—*

Each one has a duty, if he will not be a slave,
To find the best philosophy of life and ride it like a wave.
And this one of Ecclesiastes is the best—
Wine, Work, & Woman's Breast—the rest is unrest.
Those who would go in search of kingdoms to conquer
Should conquer their own hearts and search no farther.

Find your purpose and work at it with all your might;
From the sweat produced you'll derive the highest delight—
The used key is always bright. Better is it to wear out,
Than rust out—obese with kidney stones and gout.
If you want to make your life easier, make it harder;
None live sprightlier or longer than a farmer.
Man is made for labor, and the more rigorous
The more his body and his mind are vigorous.
Put yourself to the test—nothing beats a good challenge.
God won't ever give you more than you can manage—
But just enough strain, to see if you complain:
How much weight can you lift? No pain, no gain.

And yet what profit can all the world contain
Without *woman*? All would be useless and vain.
Wherefore poetry, fashion, discovery,
Houses, hygiene, nature, technology,
Even wisdom itself—all of life's caravan!
Without a woman, man is only half of a man.
An Eskimo inhabiting an arctic igloo
Can know the purpose of life when snuggling with his boo.
Few are the Great admired by their familiars—
'Tis far easier in trifles to be crowned winners.
But love's first responsibility is to the home.
In saving the world, first be sure to save your own.



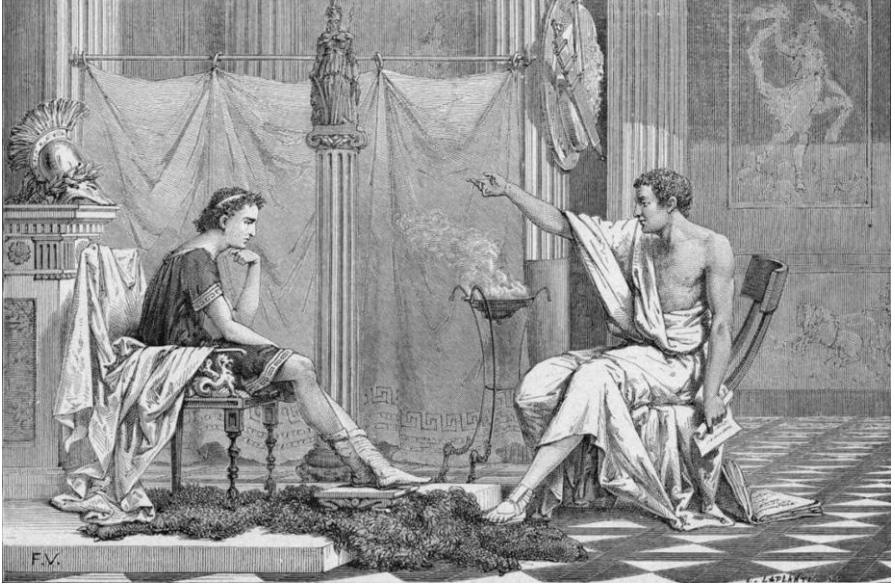
There's no good living where there's no good wine—
Like the incarnation, both human and divine—
A proof that God loves us, and loves to see us happy—
Holistic anesthetic that should always be handy.
Mix in some music, with the one that you love;
Settle by the hearthstone the pair of turtledoves,
To conflagrate the same—consummate the flame
With the activity at which all things aim.
Then do the selfsame things the very next day:
Every day is a Friday—this is the best way!
Whoever loves casually, has loved never.
Nothing's worse than an old man who's a lover;
And those who, in their youth, depreciate marriage,
Enter upon an intolerable old age.
A man has everything he needs in his home,
If only he will suppress the urge to roam.

"Persarum vigui rege beatior."
[You make me happier than a Persian king.]
—HORACE



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.

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