

Part II

The *Tablet of Cebes*

The journey to happiness

Introduction to the *Tablet of Cebes*

Overview

Probably written some time in the first or early second centuries AD, the *Tablet of Cebes* is a moralising allegory of human life depicted by a fictitious tablet or plaque (*pinax*) chanced upon in the Temple of Cronus by the narrator and his friends. Despite the wording of the title identifying the author as Cebes, we do not know who this person was. It was not the Cebes of Socrates' circle (see 'Authorship and Date' below), and it is doubtful that he was the Cebes of Cyzicus mentioned by Athenaeus. The work must have already been attributed to someone with the name Cebes by Lucian's time, because he clearly refers to this work as having been written by a Cebes. We simply do not know whether the work was falsely ascribed to Socrates' Cebes, innocently or through a deliberate act of misattribution, or whether it was correctly assigned to a different Cebes. But obviously the work had an author, so we have to conclude either that (1) this was another Cebes who – apart from bequeathing us his *Tablet* – has left no other trace (as far as we know) in the historical record, or (2) Cebes was a pseudonym, or (3) his true name has been lost (FW 5–7). We will therefore refer to Cebes as the author of the *Tablet*, meaning to accord him no other attribute.

The *Tablet's* device of describing an object (in this case a work of art) places it in the genre of *ekphrasis*, meaning 'description', a type of literature (that can be either fiction or non-fiction) that describes some object, actually existing or fictitious. Other examples include, for instance, Homer's *Iliad* (end of Book 18) where Hephaestus makes Achilles' shield, forging into it cities, fields, vineyards, herds of cattle, armies in battle, and people going about their business in a riotous panorama, and in the manner that Cebes will adopt centuries later, Homer includes figures that personify Strife, Havoc, and Death. The genre remained popular right through to Cebes' time and beyond (see

Elsner 1995 and Bartsch 1989, especially the first chapters of both books), and was employed, for instance, by the satirist Lucian, who lived in the generation that followed Cebes, and whom we will meet again in ‘Authorship and Date’, below.

Cebes portrays a strange world in which the landscape is divided into enclosures in which may be found personifications of the Virtues and Vices, along with others, including Punishment, Repentance, and Fortune. Across this landscape wander all those who have come to be alive in the world, not knowing how best to proceed towards Happiness who sits enthroned before the citadel of the highest enclosure. We are invited to consider that the fate of those who wander the enclosures is our own fate in the real world, simplified and cut down to the key essentials. Beguiled by Fortune, the people come to be enamoured of her gifts that are dispensed and reassigned at random, and they come to believe that their happiness depends upon being in receipt of these gifts. Some find their way to False Education, where we find poets, orators, academics and professionals of all kinds who have mistaken False Education for True Education, thinking that in remaining here they possess happiness, when they do not. But it is from within False Education’s enclosure that some small number of people will find the steep and stony path to True Education, where abide Happiness and the Virtues, and where the successful traveller is crowned with a power through which they become immune to the Vices, and are thenceforth able to roam freely about the enclosures in complete safety.

The *Tablet* concludes with a discussion on why it is that the things people receive from Fortune are neither good nor bad (which Stoics, of course, class as ‘indifferent’ things, comprising ‘preferred’ things and ‘dispreferred’ things – though these Stoic terms are not used in the text). True knowledge is thus defined as knowledge of what is truly advantageous, and the person who is welcomed by Happiness knows that only the Virtues are truly advantageous. And although the text does not identify itself as Stoic, and although it does not use the range of Stoic terminology familiar to us from Stoic writings, the *Tablet of Cebes* appears nevertheless to be fundamentally Stoic in outlook.

Authorship and date

Diogenes Laertius (probably writing in the early third century AD) includes Cebes in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (2.125), recording just four facts about him – that he was a citizen of Thebes, and that three of his dialogues are extant, *The Tablet*, *The Seventh Day*, and *Phrynichus*. From the company in which he places Cebes, alongside Phaedo, Crito,

Glaucon and Simmias, this is obviously the Cebes of Socrates' circle who was present at the death of Socrates, who appears with Simmias in Plato's *Phaedo*, and who is reported in the *Crito* as being ready to provide money for Socrates' escape from prison. But we can be confident that this Cebes is not the author of the *Tablet* for a variety of reasons. First, the text refers to Peripatetics (13.2), so cannot have been written earlier than the founding of Aristotle's school, a generation after Plato's Cebes. Also, the language of the text uses late words, and classical words with later meanings, placing it much later than the time of Socrates and Plato, and this accounts for why there are no early citations to the *Tablet* in ancient literature. Indeed, the earliest certain citation occurs in the writings of Lucian of Samosata (born c. AD 120), of whom more in a moment. Furthermore, if the *Tablet* really is a Stoic text, as appears to be the case, then obviously the Cebes of Socrates' circle is by this fact alone out of the running, since there would not be a Stoic school with a body of literature to disseminate its doctrines until possibly a century after this Cebes' time (see FW 1–8).

In addition to the references in Diogenes Laertius and Lucian, there is another reference to a Cebes in *The Deipnosophists* by Athenaeus (c. AD 170–c. 230) where he mentions a Cebes of Cyzicus who hosts a dinner-party attended by a group of Cynics (4.156d). The courses of their meal are all dishes made from lentils, relieved only by the arrival of a smelly sea-perch which no one wants to eat (157a). Later, it is pointed out that if the only person who can do anything properly is the Stoic wise person, then only the Stoic wise person can make lentil soup properly (158a). But there are no further details about this Cebes. If he is a contemporary of the author (which is what the text suggests) then he is unlikely to be the author the *Tablet*, because Lucian, born c. AD 120, a generation earlier, clearly refers to a Cebes as an author in the *ekphrasis* genre, and what he writes suggests to the point of certainty that he was familiar with the text of our *Tablet*. So if our Cebes, the author of the *Tablet*, was known in Lucian's time, and sufficiently well-known as a writer of *ekphrasis* for Lucian to remark that in utilising the genre himself he is imitating Cebes, then Cebes of Cyzicus must be another, somewhat later, Cebes, and not the author of the *Tablet*. If our Cebes was an older contemporary of Lucian, or if he lived slightly earlier, that places him in the late first century or the early decades of the second century.

The way in which Lucian demonstrates his knowledge of the Cebes text is worth offering in summary. Lucian mentions Cebes' name twice in his surviving corpus. At the very end of *On Salaried Posts in Great Houses*, in which Lucian advises his young friend Timocles against taking a salaried position, he states that 'in imitation of Cebes' (42) he

will paint a picture of the career he has just been discussing. In a short text of only one paragraph, Lucian asks Timocles to imagine a high, golden gateway, way up on a hill, approached by a long, steep and slippery path from which many before have slipped and fallen to their deaths. Within the gateway sits Wealth, and to him the traveller struggles to climb, led on by Hope. But the traveller is received by Deceit and Servitude, who pass him on to Toil, who in turn breaks him with hard labour and passes him ill and worn out to Old Age. Finally, the traveller is taken hold of by Insolence and Despair, at which point Hope flees and abandons him, and instead of reaching the heights of the golden gateway, the traveller is thrust out through a remote and secret door, old and pale, hiding his nakedness with his left hand and throttling himself with his right hand. At the very last, weeping Repentance can be of no aid except to help him end it all.

There is little doubt that this is a satirical inversion of the *Tablet* fable, with which Lucian must have been acquainted. No less reminiscent of the *Tablet* is Lucian's second reference to Cebes in *A Professor of Public Speaking*, in which Lucian paints a picture in words (6) for a young man who aspires to become a great public speaker. There are two roads that lead to Lady Rhetoric, whom the young man desires to marry (allegorically representing his mastery of public speaking), who sits in a high place holding the Horn of Plenty (symbolising the wealth that will accrue to a sought-after speaker), and with her are Wealth, Fame, Power, and a swarm of Compliments flying round like tiny Cupids (6–7). The first path to Lady Rhetoric is narrow and rough, the travelling upon which promises thirst and sweat; further description of this road is not required because, as Lucian points out, Hesiod has already provided us with an adequate account (in *Works and Days*, 286–92) – and this is the path that Lucian boasts he has climbed himself, successfully travelled a long time ago by only a few (8). But the second path, which Lucian had seen quite clearly from the vantage point of the first, more arduous path, is level and pleasant, having no twists and turns at all.

The young man is unsure which path is best, and at this point Lucian brings into his narrative a hardy old man, quite obviously a parallel to the old man in the *Tablet* who explains the allegory in that text, to provide the same function here. This old man will guide the young man on the first, rough path, and Lucian warns that he will talk a lot of nonsense: their journey will be demanding and difficult, taking many years to complete, requiring hard work and sacrifices of all sorts, on top of which the old man will demand a substantial fee for his services (9).

But upon the easy road, the young man will find another guide, a handsome fellow with a mincing gait and honeyed voice who styles his

hair and uses perfumes (11). Go with this man upon the easy road, Lucian urges the young man, and in no time at all you will become a successful public speaker, 'king of the platform, driving the horses of eloquence four-in-hand' (trans. Harmon, 11). What the young man must take with him for the journey are ignorance, recklessness, effrontery, and shamelessness, and what he must leave behind are modesty, respectability, and self-restraint, for the latter are useless hindrances. He will also need a very loud voice, and a gait like that of his guide (15). The account continues in similar vein, detailing how the young man must make his outward appearance of primary importance, that he must learn about 15 (certainly no more than 20) Attic words with which to garnish his speeches (16); and unfamiliar words should be kept ready to toss out at the audience, who will be amazed and think the speaker's education must be far superior to their own (17). Rhetoric will heap rewards upon the person who does all this (24).

This, again, is clearly an inversion of the allegory of the *Tablet*, and the fact that Lucian mentions Cebes by name establishes beyond doubt that the text he knew is one and the same as the text we have before us now. This means that Cebes' *Tablet* must have been in circulation by about AD 150, before Lucian's satires were written.

(We may note in passing that Lucian employs *ekphrasis* elsewhere, describing in his *Heracles* a picture of Heracles; in his *Slander* (4–5) he describes a painting by Apelles of Ephesus, who depicts Slander, Ignorance, Suspicion, Envy, Treachery, Deceit, Repentance, and Truth; and in his *Toxaris* (6), Toxaris tells his interlocutor Mnesippus of a series of paintings in a temple that describe the story of Orestes and Pylades.)

On the basis of a passage in the work of Dio Chrysostom (c. AD 40/50–after 110), we may wonder whether we can be certain that the *Tablet* was in circulation perhaps 70 or 80 years earlier, in the latter half of the first century. Dio Chrysostom, rhetorician, admirer and student of Musonius Rufus (the teacher of Epictetus), endured banishment, and wandered for many years across Greece, the Balkans, and Asia Minor as an itinerant teacher of Stoic–Cynic philosophy (nearly 80 of his discourses survive). At *Discourse* 1.50–84, Dio recounts that, lost in the woods one day, he met a woman who told him the tale of Heracles (58ff) who was taken by Hermes to a fantastical landscape (66ff) in which stand two mountains, Peak Royal and Peak Tyrannous. Upon Peak Royal, the highest peak, dwelt Lady Royalty, a daughter of Zeus. With her were three others as beautiful as she, Justice, Civic Order, and Peace, accompanied by Law, a grey-haired man (73–5). Hermes then took Heracles to the lower peak, Peak Tyrannous, to Tyranny, the place to which most people come (76). Tyranny was sitting upon a throne higher

and more splendid than that of Lady Royalty, but as she moved, it rocked and swayed on shaky foundations (78). With her were Cruelty, Insolence, Lawlessness, Faction, and Flattery (82). When Heracles told Hermes that he liked Royalty the best, Hermes took this news to Zeus who entrusted Heracles with kingship over all humankind (83–4). Now, there is hardly a strong parallel between Dio's story and that of Cebes, though there is something of a similarity, especially in the resemblance between Tyranny's rocking throne and the round stone upon which Fortune stands in the *Tablet* (7). But to the extent that we are encouraged by this to wonder if Dio was acquainted with the Cebes text, we are no less entitled to wonder if it wasn't Cebes who was acquainted with Dio's text.

(At *Memorabilia* 2.20–34, Xenophon offers another version of the Heracles story, paraphrasing Prodicus' 'Choice of Heracles', which otherwise does not survive. After quoting Hesiod, *Works and Days* 287–94, about the road to wickedness being smooth and the road to virtue being long and steep, he recounts how Heracles was pondering which road to take in life, whether to take the path to virtue or the path to vice. He is approached by two women, Virtue and Vice, and each tries to persuade him to go with her. They each describe the character of the life he will lead if he is to accompany them; the path to virtue will require toil and effort, whereas the path to vice is short and easy.)

Outline of the *Tablet*

The allegory of the *Tablet* is not told directly, but is embedded within a simple framing story told by the narrator who recounts what happened when he and his friends paid a visit to a temple of Cronus where they found many votive offerings. Amongst them was a tablet (*pinax*) on which was painted a fabulous scene showing neither a walled city nor a military camp, but depicting an enclosure surrounding two further enclosures.

They could see a crowd of people, being instructed by an old man, waiting to go through a gate into the outer enclosure, and inside they could see a large number of women. But what this all meant, they could not fathom (1).

An old man came up and offered to explain the meaning of the *Tablet*, for he had been schooled in its secrets by the philosopher who donated it to the temple many years before (2).

The old man warns them, however, that being shown the meaning of the *Tablet* is attended by a certain risk. For those who fail to understand

it properly will be doomed to folly and misery, to be compared with those who fail to answer the Sphinx's riddle and get eaten by her (3).

The outer enclosure is Life, and the old man instructing the people about to enter is called Daimon. He tells them which path to take in Life (4). (But the content of his instructions is not explained until later, in sections 30–2.)

Deceit gives to all who enter, her potion of error and ignorance which causes them to forget the Daimon's instructions (5). Upon entering Life, the people are accosted by Opinions, Desires and Pleasures who lead them off in all directions, some to their doom, and some to their salvation (6). Standing close by on a round stone that symbolises her fickleness is Fortune, who dispenses, then takes back, such things as reputation, children, thrones and kingdoms (7–8). (The discussion as to whether such things are truly good is left for sections 36–43.)

Some people are tempted by Intemperance, Profligacy, Insatiability, and Flattery to enter another enclosure, that of Luxury, where for a time things will be pleasant enough. But after they have become slaves to these women, indulging in every kind of vice, they are handed over to Punishment (9). With her are Grief and Distress, along with Lamentation (the only male personification within Life) and his sister Despondency. Those who are not chosen by Repentance to escape this place are thrown into the House of Punishment to live out the rest of their days in total misery (10).

The lucky few are taken by Repentance to different Opinions and Desires, who take them either to True Education or False Education via yet further enclosures (11). The only path to True Education is to be found in False Education's enclosure, and in this enclosure are all those who are deluded into thinking that they have found True Education (12–13). But here, as outside the enclosure, Intemperance and the other Vices attempt to sway the people (14).

The path to True Education is found through a little gate that leads to a steep, rough and stony path that ascends a hill atop of which is a great rock with sheer sides (15). On the rock wait Self-Control and Endurance, and they pull up all those who have made it up the hill, and give them strength and courage before setting them upon a more easy path (16).

This is the path that leads to True Education, who sits with her daughters Truth and Persuasion outside the highest and final enclosure. They give to those whom they receive Courage and Fearlessness, which constitute the knowledge that one need never suffer anything bad in the course of one's life (17–18).

True Education gives to those she receives a purifying and curative draught that undoes the work of Deceit's potion, then takes them inside to Happiness and her daughters, the Virtues (19–21). Happiness crowns the successful travellers with flowers, bestowing a power that subdues all Vices (22–3). The Virtues then lead them back to the other enclosures where they now understand fully the plight from which they have escaped (24–6). Some people are rejected by True Education, and they also return to the other enclosures, accompanied by Distress, Pain, Despondency, Disgrace and Ignorance, eventually ending up in Luxury. Here they do not blame themselves for their failure, but True Education herself, saying bad things about her and about those who seek her (27–8).

At this point the story as portrayed in the tablet is concluded, and the rest of the text is devoted to a dialogue between the narrator and the old man concerning firstly the instructions that the Daimon gives to the people who enter Life – namely, that they should put no confidence in Fortune, that they should be impartial to her gifts, and not be surprised at anything she does, but take what she gives and depart immediately to 'the gift that is secure and safe, never to be regretted' (31). And this is the gift of True Education, knowledge of what is truly advantageous, to be granted after their journey through False Education (where they may stay to acquire what they will need for their journey), and on to True Education (32). The things they take from False Education do not in themselves make them better people, but they can help to shorten the journey (33).

The *Tablet* concludes with a somewhat laboured discussion of what Stoics regard as indifferent things (though Stoic terminology is not used in the text). Since life is enjoyed by good and bad people alike, life itself cannot be good or bad (36–8), and the same argument is applied to being healthy and being sick. Wealth is not good, because it does not help those who possess it become better people. The true advantage is possessed by those who understand how to use their wealth properly (39). The error that people make is to esteem things good and bad, thinking that things esteemed good will bring happiness, and to acquire them they will stoop to the most profane and disgraceful acts (40–1).

The final sections of the *Tablet* reiterate the points just made, and conclude with the old man instructing the narrator and his friends to practise to the point of making habitual the teaching he has just imparted (42–3).

Is the *Tablet* Stoic?

There are a number of rather striking features in the *Tablet* that somewhat undermine its Stoic credentials. The text mentions no Stoic philosopher, for one thing, but does mention Plato in passing (33.3), and right at the beginning we learn that the stranger who donated the plaque to the temple ‘emulated in words and deeds the Pythagorean and Parmenidean way of life’ (2.2), suggesting to the reader new to the text that they are about to enter upon an exposition of Pythagorean thought. Further, the *Tablet* does not employ the Stoic terminology with which we are familiar (see Glossary A) beyond just a few essential terms: ‘happiness’, ‘happy’, ‘virtue’, ‘vice’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’, a scattering of specific virtues, and a few others. There are no echoes in Stoic writings of the opening part of the fable, where the people queue up to enter Life, first to receive instructions from the Daimon, then to be made to forget those instructions through the effects of Deceit’s potion. More than anything, this section of the *Tablet* is likely to remind us of Plato’s Story of Er in the *Republic* (see Appendix 1).

However, if we put these anomalies aside, I am convinced that we have in the *Tablet* a fundamentally Stoic work. Most striking of all is the presence of Happiness, for happiness is the end (*telos*) to which the Stoic *prokoptôn* (trainee) endeavours to make progress. The role that happiness plays in Stoic ethics is symbolised in the allegory of the *Tablet* by the figure of Happiness herself, who dwells within the highest enclosure (which symbolises both the effort required to reach her, as well as the value of the gift she bestows), the destination to which all travellers aim if they are not led astray by the Vices and the appeal of Fortune’s gifts, and if they can remember the instructions given to them by the Daimon before they enter into Life. However, the *Tablet* does not describe the attaining of happiness in terms of living in accordance with nature, and this is yet another puzzling omission, but instead makes it clear that the virtues are necessary and sufficient for happiness, and this of course is central to Stoic doctrine. Also firmly located in Stoic thought is the point that the *Tablet* makes clear, that one suffers harm through indulging in vice, and that the person possessed of happiness is immune to the effects of vice and the whims of fortune.

The concept of indifferent things, those that are preferred and those that are dispreferred, is captured by the *Tablet* in its portrayal of Fortune, and expounded further in its account of how devotion to these preferred things propels people into the misery of Luxury. Holding to such devotion can only be achieved by maintaining a vicious outlook that keeps one permanently from happiness. This, surely, characterises

the ‘uneducated’ person whose influence Epictetus warns us against. The story of Fortune also offers a very clear image of a key Stoic teaching that Epictetus returns to with some frequency – that of the transient nature of external things, though the *Tablet* does not extend the discussion to the length that Epictetus goes in his account of such things being on loan from God. If anything, the *Tablet* seems to be saying that material things are on temporary loan from Fortune herself. But the general thrust of the story on this point accords with Stoic doctrine, and certainly does not directly contradict it. The doctrine of indifferent things is again expounded in straightforward Stoic terms at the end of the *Tablet* (36ff), exemplified by its assertion that what is good is not wealth, but knowing how to use wealth wisely (39), and so, by implication, for all other external preferred indifferent things that people take to be advantageous.

The emphasis made by the *Tablet* that the gift one receives from Happiness is knowledge of what is truly advantageous (32) parallels Epictetus’ special emphasis that happiness and a ‘good flow of life’ are enjoyed by people who know how to use impressions properly, which requires maintaining an awareness that nothing that happens is correctly evaluated as good or bad, but only as preferred or dispreferred with respect to furthering one’s undertakings.

In the same way that we can regard Epictetus’ *Handbook* as a distillation of his Stoic teaching, focusing on the key principles (and leaving out, for instance, the doctrine of the three topics), we can perhaps regard Cebes’ *Tablet* as a distillation of the essential elements of Stoic ethics, cutting out everything but the most crucial parts – and doing so, at that, in a wonderfully graphic fashion which was surely intended by the author to make the account not just easy to remember, but memorable in the sense of worth remembering. Each of us may take, so to speak, a ‘You are Here’ sticker and place it on the *Tablet* at the spot we currently occupy, and in doing so honestly, we will perhaps have a better insight into why we have not yet found the well-being and fulfilment we hope for, and appreciate why we are going wrong, what is causing our distress, and what we must do to complete our personal journeys to Happiness.

The *Tablet of Cebes*

1. [1] We happened to be strolling around the temple of Cronus, looking at the many votive offerings dedicated there, when we saw set up in front of the shrine a tablet upon which was painted a strange scene. It depicted peculiar fables whose nature we were not able to fathom; [2] for the painting appeared to show neither a walled city nor a military camp, but presented a circular enclosure, within which were two other circular enclosures, one larger than the other. The first enclosure had a gate, and it seemed to us that a large crowd was standing near to this gate, [3] whilst within the enclosure we could see a large number of women. Beside this entrance to the first enclosure stood an old man who appeared to be giving instructions of some sort to the crowd that entered.

2. [1] We had been debating the meaning of this fable for some time when an old man, who had been standing close by, said, 'Do not be astonished, my friends, that you find yourselves baffled by this painting, for even many of those native to this place do not know the meaning of the story. [2] It was not dedicated [to the temple] by a local citizen, but by a stranger who came here long ago, someone of understanding and great wisdom, who emulated in words and deeds the Pythagorean and Parmenidean way of life. It was he who dedicated both this temple and the painting to Cronus.'

[3] 'Did you know this man personally?' I asked.

'Yes, indeed I did,' he replied. 'I was a young man, then, and I greatly admired him, for he would discuss many weighty matters. It was at that time that I also heard him often explaining the meaning of the fable.'

3. [1] 'By Zeus!' I said. 'If you have nothing else to which you must attend, please explain it to us, for we are very eager to know what the story means.'

'I will be happy to explain it, my friends,' he said, 'but first I must tell you that the explanation brings with it a certain amount of risk.'

'What sort of risk?' I asked.

'If you listen carefully,' he replied, 'and understand what I say, you will become wise and happy; but otherwise, if you fail to understand, you will become foolish, wretched, miserable and ignorant – and you will not fare well in life. [2] For the explanation is somewhat like that of the riddle by which the Sphinx used to challenge people: those who understood the riddle were spared, whilst those who failed to understand were eaten up by the Sphinx! And so it is with the explanation of the painting, because Folly, for people, is the Sphinx. [3] For these are the things wrapped in riddles: what is good, what is bad, and what in life is neither good nor bad. Thus it is that those who do not understand these things are destroyed by Folly, but not all at once in a moment like those who are eaten by the Sphinx, but rather they are brought to ruin little by little in the course of life, just like those handed over for punishment. [4] But for those who do understand these things, it is Folly who is destroyed, whilst they are saved to live their whole lives blessed and happy. Therefore listen carefully and give heed.'

4. [1] 'By Heracles! What a state of eagerness you have instilled in us, if all this is as you say!'

'Well,' he said, 'so indeed it is.'

'Be quick and explain it to us, for we will listen carefully, and will not slacken our attention when the penalty is so large.'

[2] He took his staff and pointed to the picture, saying, 'Do you see this enclosure?'

'Yes,' we said.

'Know first, then, that this place is named Life. And these people here, standing at the gate, comprise the great crowd of those about to enter into Life. [3] The old man standing above, who holds a scroll in one hand and who appears to be pointing out something with the other, is called Daimôn. To those who are going in, he is giving instructions as to what they ought to do when they have entered into Life; and he points out the path they ought to take if they are to be saved in Life.'

5. [1] 'Which path does he tell them to take, and how does he urge them to go?' I asked.

'Do you see here,' he said, 'positioned by the gate where the crowd enters, a throne on which sits a woman artificial in manner, but appearing persuasive, holding a cup in her hand?'

[2] 'Yes,' I said. 'But who is she?'

'She is named Deceit,' he replied, 'and she is the one who leads all mankind astray.'

'How does she do that?'

'She makes all those who enter Life drink of her power.'

[3] 'What is this drink?'

'It is error,' he said, 'and ignorance.'

'What then?'

'Having drunk, they enter into Life.'

'Do all of them drink of error, or not?'

6. [1] 'They all drink,' he said, 'but some drink more, some less. And do you see here, inside the gate, a crowd of women having every kind of appearance?'

'I see them.'

[2] 'They are called Opinions, Desires and Pleasures. As soon as the crowd enters, they jump up and cling to each person, and lead them off.'

'To where do they lead them?'

'Some to their salvation, but others, by deception, are led to their destruction.'

'How cruel is this drink of which you speak!'

[3] 'Indeed, all these women,' he said, 'promise that they will lead them to the best things, and to a happy and profitable life. But because of the ignorance and error of which they drank from Deceit, they do not find out which is the true way in Life; but instead they wander about aimlessly, just like those – you can see them, here – who went in first are being led astray, wherever these women direct them.'

7. [1] 'I see them,' I said. 'But who is that woman there? She appears to be blind and mad, standing on a round stone.'

'Her name,' he said, 'is Fortune. Not only is she blind and mad, but also deaf.'

[2] 'And what is her task?'

'She goes about everywhere,' he said, 'snatching from those the things they happen to have, and giving them to other people; and then immediately she takes away what she has just given them and gives it to yet others, entirely at random. Thus you might say that her symbol rightly declares her nature.'

[3] 'What symbol is that?' I asked.

'That she is standing on a round stone.'

'What does that signify?'

'That any gift from her is neither safe nor certain. For severely bitter and harsh are the disappointments that follow for those who put their trust in her.'

8. [1] 'But this huge crowd that throngs around her, what do they want and what are they called?'

'These are the people who take no thought for the morrow, and each is begging for what she throws them.'

'Why is it, then, that these people do not appear similar in appearance? Some seem to rejoice, whilst others despair, stretching out their hands to her.'

[2] 'These people here,' he said, 'rejoicing and laughing, are the ones who have received something from her. They call her Good Fortune. But those who look as though they are crying and stretching out their hands to her are the ones from whom she has taken back the things that earlier she had given them. These others call her Bad Fortune.'

[3] 'What,' I asked, 'are the things that she gives which make those who receive them so happy, whilst those who lose them weep?'

'Just those things,' he answered, 'which most people consider good.'

'But what are these things?'

[4] 'Why, wealth and reputation, high birth, children, thrones and kingdoms, and things such as these.'

'But surely these *are* good things?'

'We can discuss that another time,' he said. 'But for now let us concern ourselves with explaining the fable.'

'Very well.'

9. [1] 'Now, having passed through this gate, do you see that there is another enclosure higher up, outside which stand women dressed as courtesans usually are?'

'Certainly.'

'They are called Intemperance, Profligacy, Insatiability and Flattery.'

[2] 'Why are they standing here?'

'They watch,' he said, 'for those who receive anything from Fortune.'

'What then?'

'They jump up and embrace them, and flatter and urge them to stay with them, promising a life that will be sweet and easy and entirely free from troubles. [3] And if someone is persuaded by them to enter Luxury, for a time this will be pleasant enough, for the time, that is, he is sufficiently stimulated, but not for longer. For when he comes to his senses, he will realise that it was not he himself who has been doing the eating, but rather it was him who was being devoured and violated by her. [4] Thus, when he has squandered all those things that he was given by Fortune, he is compelled to be a slave to these women, to endure everything, acting disgracefully, and for their sakes indulging in every kind of harmful act, such as fraud, sacrilege, perjury, treason, theft and such like. After he has done all these things he is handed over to Punishment.'

10. [1] 'What is she like?'

'Do you see a bit behind them,' he asked, 'higher up, what looks like a small door, and a narrow, dark place?'

'Yes.'

'And do you see gathered together there, ugly and dirty women wearing rags?'

[2] 'Certainly.'

'This one with the whip,' he said, 'is called Punishment; that one with her head on her knees is called Grief; this one tearing out her own hair is called Distress.'

[3] 'But who is this other figure standing with them – a deformed, thin and naked man, who has with him a woman like him, ugly and thin?'

'He is Lamentation,' he said, 'and she is Despondency. She is his sister. [4] See, he is being handed over to them, and must live with them whilst being punished. After that he is thrown yet again into another place, the house of Unhappiness – here he lives out the rest of his life in total misery, unless Repentance should deliberately choose to meet with him face to face.'

11. [1] 'What happens if Repentance meets with him?'

'She releases him from his misery and introduces him to another Opinion and Desire, who lead him to True Education, but at the same time also introduces him to yet others who lead to False Education.'

[2] 'What happens then?'

'If he accepts this Opinion, who will lead him to True Education,' he said, 'then, once he is purified by her, he is saved and becomes blessed and happy his whole life long; but if not, he wanders away lost under the sway of False Opinion.'

12. [1] 'By Heracles! What another great danger there is here! But who is this False Education?' I asked.

'Do you see this other enclosure, here?'

[2] 'Certainly,' I said.

'Do you also see that standing outside the enclosure by the entrance is a woman appearing wholly pure and smartly dressed?'

'Certainly.'

[3] 'Well, most impetuous people call her Education, but she is not. She is False Education,' he said. 'But those who seek salvation by way of True Education must come here first.'

'Is there then no path that leads directly to True Education?'

'No, there is not,' he said.

13. [1] 'Who are these people walking back and forth inside this enclosure?'

'They are the devotees of False Education,' he said, 'and they are deluded into thinking that they are associating with True Education.'

'What are their names?'

[2] 'They are poets,' he said, 'orators, dialecticians, musicians, arithmeticians, geometers, astronomers, critics, hedonists, Peripatetics, and many others of the same sort.'

14. [1] 'But these women, here, who seem to be running about like the first ones, amongst whom you said was Intemperance and the others also with them – who are they?'

'They are just the same,' he said.

[2] 'Do they also enter in here?'

'Yes, by Zeus, they enter in here also, but not as often as they enter the first enclosure.'

'And the Opinions as well?' I queried.

[3] 'Yes, they too enter, for the drink the people received from Deceit is still effective in them, and those who are ignorant, by Zeus, are bound also to be foolish. For neither will opinion nor the rest of their wickedness leave them until they renounce False Education and enter upon the true path to drink of its restorative powers. [4] Thus, when they are restored and have thrown off all their wickedness – such as opinion, ignorance, and all the other bad things – then they will be saved. But the doctrines that False Education teaches to those who stay here with her will never set them free, and so they will never be able to leave these bad things behind them.'

15. [1] 'Show me the path that leads to True Education.'

'Do you see, here,' he said, 'this place higher up, inhabited by no one, appearing quite deserted?'

'I see it.'

[2] 'And do you see a little gate in front of which is a path with very few people on it? Very few pass this way, for the path is almost impassable, and appears to be rough and stony.'

'I see it,' I said.

[3] 'And there seems to be a high hill approached by a very narrow ascent having a sheer precipice on either side.'

'I see.'

'This is the path,' he said, 'that leads to True Education.'

[4] 'It certainly looks difficult.'

'And do you see high on the hill a great rock with steep cliffs on all sides?'

'I see it,' I said.

16. [1] 'Do you also see two fair and healthy women standing on the rock, eagerly stretching out their hands?'

'I see them. But what are they called?' I asked.

[2] 'One is called Self-Control,' he said, 'and the other is Endurance. They are sisters.'

'Why are they stretching out their hands so eagerly?'

[3] 'They are encouraging those who come to this place to have courage and

not flinch, telling them that they must endure a little while more, and then they will emerge upon a favourable path.'

[4] 'But when they arrive at the rock, how will they climb up? I see no path leading up.'

'The women descend the steep cliffs and pull them up to the top. And then they bid them rest. [5] Then after a while they give them strength and courage, and promise to take them to True Education. They show them that the path is agreeable, even easy, and free from evil, just as you can see.'

'So it appears, by Zeus.'

17. [1] 'Do you see,' he asked, 'in front of this grove, a place that appears to be a beautiful meadow, bathed in bright sunlight?'

'Indeed I do.'

[2] 'And can you see in the middle of the meadow another enclosure and another gate?'

'There they are: but what is this place called?'

[3] 'This is where those who are happy live,' he said. 'For here is where all the Virtues and Happiness spend their time.'

'Please continue,' I said, 'for this place is indeed as beautiful as you describe it.'

18. [1] 'Now then, do you see beside the gate,' he asked, 'a beautiful woman with a calm expression? She is mature in both years and judgement, wearing plain, unadorned clothes. She stands not upon a round stone, but upon a square one, firmly set. [2] And with her are two others who appear to be her daughters.'

'Yes, so it appears.'

'The one in the middle is Education, and the others are Truth and Persuasion.'

[3] 'But why is she standing on a square stone?'

'This is a sign,' he said, 'for those arriving here that the path leading to her is safe and secure, and that the gifts that she offers are safe for those who take them.'

[4] 'And what are these gifts?'

'Courage and fearlessness,' he said.

'What are they?'

'They are knowledge,' he said, 'that in the course of life one need never suffer anything terrible.'

19. [1] 'By Heracles! What wonderful gifts!' I said. 'But why is she standing outside the enclosure like this?'

'So that she may heal those who arrive here,' he said, 'by having them drink of her purifying powers. And thus, having purified them, she leads them to the Virtues.'

[2] 'How is this possible?' I said. 'I don't understand.'

'Ah, but you shall understand,' he said. 'Consider the case of someone who falls seriously ill. Obviously, in the first instance, they would go to a doctor, who would purge the causes of the disease, and in this way lead them back to recovery and health. [3] But if they do not obey the doctor's instructions they would no doubt deserve to suffer a relapse and succumb to the illness.'

'I understand that,' I said.

[4] 'It is just the same for those arriving here at Education,' he said. 'She takes care of them and gives them her own power to drink, so that first she may purify them and eliminate all the evils with which they came.'

'And what are they?'

[5] 'The error and ignorance of which they drank from Deceit, but also pretentiousness, desire, intemperance, anger, love of money, and all the others with which they were infected in the first enclosure.'

20. [1] 'So when they have been purified, where does she send them?'

'Inside,' he said, 'to Knowledge and the other Virtues.'

'Of what kind are they?'

[2] 'Do you not see,' he asked, 'inside the gate there is a group of women who appear attractive and modest, in plain, simple garments? They are free from affectation, in no way dressed up like the others.'

[3] 'Yes, I see,' I said. 'What are they called?'

'The first is Knowledge,' he said. 'And the others are her sisters: Courage, Justice, Goodness, Moderation, Orderliness, Freedom, Self-Control and Kindness.'

[4] 'Splendid!' I said. 'How great is our hope!'

'Indeed, if you understand,' he said, 'and if you also put into practice what you hear.'

'In that case, we will listen most carefully,' I said.

'Accordingly, you will be saved,' he said.

21. [1] 'When they are received by these women, to where are they led?'

'To their mother,' he said.

'Who is she?'

'Happiness,' he said.

'And what is she like?'

[2] 'Do you see the path there that leads to the citadel of all the enclosures, here, on this soaring height?'

'Yes.'

[3] 'Is there not seated on a high throne before the entrance, an attractive woman, nobly and simply attired, wearing a crown of exceedingly beautiful flowers?'

'So it appears.'

'She is Happiness,' he said.

22. [1] 'When someone arrives here, what does she do?'

'Happiness crowns them with her power,' he said, 'along with all the other Virtues, just like those who have won victories in the greatest contests.'

'But what kind of contests have they won?' I asked.

[2] 'The very greatest,' he said, 'for they have overcome the savage beasts that previously devoured, abused and enslaved them – they have been victorious over all of them, casting them away and winning possession of themselves, for now the beasts are *their* slaves, as they were previously slaves of the beasts.'

23. [1] 'What are these wild beasts of which you speak? I would very much like to hear.'

'To begin with,' he said, 'Ignorance and Error. Or don't you consider them to be wild beasts?'

'Indeed, wicked ones to be sure,' I said.

[2] 'Next there are Grief, Lamentation, Greed, Intemperance, and every other Vice. Over all these they are now master, no longer the slaves they were before.'

[3] 'What splendid deeds!' I said. 'And what a glorious victory! But tell me this – what is the power of the crown with which, you say, they are crowned?'

[4] 'It is the power that brings happiness, young man! For those who are crowned with this power become happy and blessed, and they place their hope for happiness not in others, but in themselves.'

24. [1] 'How noble the victory of which you speak! But once they are crowned, what do they do, and where do they go?'

[2] 'Taking them by the hand, the Virtues lead them to the place from which they first came, where they are shown those who dwell there leading wicked and wretched lives, how they are shipwrecked in life, wandering aimlessly, led captive like prisoners, some by Intemperance, some by Pretentiousness, Greed, Vanity, or the other Vices. [3] They are not capable of freeing themselves from these terrors to which they are fettered, to come here to be saved; instead, they are troubled their whole lives long. They suffer this way all because they are unable to find the path here, for they have forgotten the instructions they had from the Daimôn.'

25. [1] 'What you say seems true. But I am puzzled as to why the Virtues show them the place from where they first came.'

[2] 'This is because they did not have accurate knowledge of it,' he said, 'and did not understand what happens there. Because of their ignorance and error of which, we know, they had already drunk, they were confused, thinking that things not good are good, and that things not evil are evil. [3] Consequently, they also lived wickedly, just like the others who dwell there. But now that they possess the

knowledge of what is advantageous, they now live nobly and can see how badly the others fare.'

26. [1] 'After they have seen all this, what do they do, and where do they go next?'

'Anywhere they like,' he said. 'For all places are safe for them, just as the Corycian cave is safe for those finding sanctuary there. Wherever they come to, they will live nobly and securely. For everyone will welcome them gladly, just as sick people welcome a doctor.'

[2] 'Do they no longer fear that they can be harmed by those women you described as wild beasts?'

'No. They will not be troubled either by Distress or Grief, nor by Intemperance, Greed [3] or Poverty – nor by any other Vice. For they are master of them all, superior to everything that previously caused distress, like those who survive being bitten by a snake. For these snakes, whose venom kills everyone else, cannot harm those who possess the antidote. In the same way, nothing can cause distress to them, because they now possess the antidote.'

27. [1] 'I think what you say is true, but tell me this: who are those people who appear to be arriving here from that hill, there? Some of them are wearing crowns and appear cheerful, whilst others, without crowns, appear grief-stricken and confused, and appear to have been beaten about the legs and head, [2] and are being ordered about by certain women.'

'Those wearing crowns are the ones who have come safely to Education, and they are delighted at finding her. [3] Some without crowns, having been rejected by Education, are turning back in a miserable and wretched state; whilst others, through cowardice, fail to ascend to Endurance, and also turn back and wander where there are no paths.'

[4] 'And the women who accompany them – who are they?'

'Grief,' he said, 'Distress, Despondency, Disgrace and Ignorance.'

28. [1] 'Are you saying that all evils accompany them?'

'Yes, by Zeus!' he said. 'They all go with them. And when they arrive at the first enclosure, there to find Luxury and Intemperance, [2] they do not blame themselves, but straightaway they say bad things about Education and those who seek her out, calling them wretched, miserable and unhappy, inasmuch as having forsaken living with them, they live wickedly, they say, and do not enjoy the good things which they have themselves.'

[3] 'What things do they say are good?'

'Profligacy and intemperance, to quickly summarise. For they think that feasting like fatted beasts is the way to enjoy the greatest good.'

29. [1] 'Now, these other women, coming from over there, cheerful and laughing, what are they called?'

[2] 'Opinions,' he said. 'Having led to Education those who enter the company of the Virtues, they return to lead up others; and they bring back tidings that those they have led away are happy.'

[3] 'Do they not enter the company of the Virtues?' I asked.

'No,' he answered, 'for it is not right that Opinion enter the company of Knowledge, so they hand over their wards to Education. [4] And when Education has received them, they return again to bring others, just like ships that have unloaded their cargoes return again to be loaded anew.'

30. [1] 'You seem to explain all this very well,' I said. 'But there is one thing you have not made clear to us: namely, what are the instructions that the Daimôn gives to everyone entering into Life?'

[2] 'To be of good courage,' he said. 'Therefore you also be of good courage, for I will explain everything and leave out nothing.'

'That is well said,' I declared.

[3] Then stretching out his hand again, he said, 'Do you see that woman there, who seems to be blind, standing on a round stone, whom I told you before is called Fortune?'

'We see her.'

31. [1] 'He tells them,' he said, 'to put no confidence in her, not to regard as secure or safe anything she gives them, nor to consider it their own property. [2] For there is nothing to prevent her from taking away what she has given so as to bestow it on someone else – for this is her habit, and she does it often. For this reason he urges that they learn to be impartial towards her gifts, neither rejoicing when she gives them nor despairing when she takes them away, neither blaming her nor praising her. [3] For she does nothing rationally, but brings about everything at random and without reason, just as I told you before. Consequently, the Daimôn urges them not to be surprised at anything she may do, and not to be like bad bankers [4] who having received money from people rejoice as if it were their own, such that when it is taken back they are upset and think they have suffered something terrible, forgetting that it was on this very condition that they received the deposit, namely that nothing should prevent its repayment. [5] This is how the Daimôn bids them to regard the gifts of Fortune, and to remember that her nature is such that she takes back what she gives, only to quickly bestow it again, then again and again. Not only does she take away what she has given, but also those things that they possessed before. [6] Thus he urges them to take what she gives and at once depart towards the gift that is secure and safe.'

32. [1] 'And what is that?' I asked.

'The one that they will receive from Education, if they reach her safely.'

'And what is it?'

[2] 'True knowledge of what is advantageous,' he said, 'a gift safe and secure, never to be regretted. [3] Thus he urges them to flee immediately to her, and when they come to those women I told you about earlier – Intemperance and Luxury – he urges them never ever to trust them, but to quickly depart in order that they may come to False Education. [4] Here he bids them stay for a while and take from her whatever they will need to support their journey, and then set off immediately for True Education. [5] These are the Daimôn's instructions. Whenever anyone does anything contrary to these, or ignores them, they will perish in utter wretchedness.

33. [1] 'This is the story, my friends, that the tablet shows us. If you want to know anything more about any of these things, please ask, and I will tell you.'

[2] 'Fine words indeed!' I said. 'But what is it that the Daimôn instructs them to take from False Education?'

'Anything that appears useful.'

'And what might that be?'

[3] 'Literature,' he said, 'and all the other studies that Plato says act like bridles for the young, preventing them from being distracted by other things.'

[4] 'Must one really take these things, or not, if one's intention is to arrive at True Education?'

'Well, none of these things is actually required,' he said. 'However, they are useful for shortening the journey, though they do not help people become better.'

[5] 'Are you saying that these things are of no use at all for helping people to become better?'

'It is quite possible to become better without them – however, they are not actually useless. [6] Just as we sometimes understand what is being said through an interpreter, this does not mean that it would be pointless for us to know the language ourselves, for then we would have understood what was being said with greater accuracy. Similarly, nothing prevents one from becoming better even without such learning.'

34. [1] 'Are such scholars, then, no further advanced than anyone else with respect to being better?'

[2] 'How can we consider them further advanced, when clearly they are just as mistaken about what is good and what is bad, and remain subject to every vice?'

[3] 'For nothing prevents someone from knowing literature and mastering all the other academic studies, whilst at the same time being drunk, intemperate, greedy, unjust, treacherous, and ultimately, foolish.'

[4] 'Of course, one often sees such people.'

'In what way, then,' he asked, 'can the pursuit of academic studies promote progress towards becoming better people?'

35. [1] 'In no way, so it seems from this argument. But why do these people stay in this second enclosure,' I asked, 'as if they were drawing closer to True Education?'

[2] 'How can we think that staying here can be to their advantage,' he said, 'when we can often see people – who have arrived at True Education in the third enclosure by avoiding Intemperance and the other Vices in the first enclosure – surpass these scholars? How then can they be superior, being so stubborn and dull-witted?'

[3] 'How is that?' I queried.

'Because in the second enclosure, if nothing else, the people there claim to understand what they do not know. But as long as they have this opinion they will of necessity be unable to make progress on their journey to True Education. [4] Further, do you not also see that the Opinions from the first enclosure still have access to them? So they are no better off than those [in the first enclosure] unless they also take with them Repentance, who can persuade them that they have not found Education, but False Education, by whom they are deceived. [5] Because they have this disposition they can never be saved. You too, my friends,' he said, 'must do the same, until having pondered these words you put them into practice. You must reflect upon these things over and over, never to neglect them, and deem all the rest as secondary. Otherwise, what you now hear will be of no advantage to you.'

36. [1] 'This we will do. But explain this to us: why are the things that people receive from Fortune not good – namely, life, health, wealth, good reputation, children, success, and all the others like these? [2] Or their opposites – why are they not evil? For what you say about this seems altogether strange and unbelievable!'

'Come then,' he said, 'and try to state what appears to be the case with respect to whatever I ask you.'

[3] 'Indeed I shall,' I said.

'Tell me this,' he said. 'If someone lives wickedly, is living for this person something good?'

'I would think not; rather it seems to be something bad,' I said.

'How then can living be something good,' he said, 'if for this person it is something bad?'

[4] 'Well, it appears that for those who live wickedly it is something bad, whilst for those who live nobly it is something good.'

'Are you saying, then, that living is both good and bad?'

'I am.'

37. [1] 'But that is absurd! It is impossible for the same thing to be both bad and good! You could similarly say that something can be both beneficial and harmful, or both sought after and avoided.'

[2] 'Yes – quite absurd. But how can it be that living is not really bad, when it really *is* bad for them? And if it really is bad for them, then living itself is bad.'

'But they are not the same,' he said, 'living and living wickedly. Or do you not see that?'

'Of course I don't think they're the same!'

[3] 'So living wickedly is bad, whilst living is not bad. For if it were bad, it would also be bad for those who live nobly – because their being alive would have to be bad for them as well.'

'What you say seems true.'

38. [1] 'Since life is enjoyed by both groups, by those who live nobly and by those who live wickedly, then life itself is neither good nor bad. It is just the same for those who are sick: it is not the surgery and cauterising that make you worse or make you better, but the way the surgery is done. So it is regarding the question of living: it is not living itself that is bad, but bad living.'

[2] 'Quite so.'

'This being the case, consider whether you would prefer to live wickedly or to die nobly and bravely.'

'I would prefer to die nobly.'

[3] 'Accordingly, not even dying is bad, if dying is often preferred to living.'

'That is so.'

[4] 'Indeed, the same argument applies to being healthy and being sick. For often health is not advantageous, but the opposite, depending upon the circumstances.'

'True, indeed.'

39. [1] 'Come then, let us also look into the question of wealth from the same point of view. Consider how often we can find people possessed of wealth, but living wicked and wretched lives.'

'By Zeus, there are many such people.'

[2] 'So wealth is of no help to them for living nobly?'

'Apparently not, for they themselves are bad.'

[3] 'So what makes them good is not wealth, but Education.'

'Most probably.'

'So on this view, then, wealth is not good because it does not help those who possess it to become better.'

'Apparently.'

[4] 'Being wealthy, then, is of no advantage for those who do not understand how to use their wealth.'

'So it seems.'

'How can anyone judge that something is good if there is often no advantage in possessing it?'

[5] 'Impossible!'

'Therefore, if someone understands how to use their wealth properly and skilfully, they will live well – if not, they will live wickedly.'

'What you say seems entirely true.'

40. [1] 'So this is what we have: we can esteem some things as good and reject others as bad. This is what disturbs and hurts people, that in esteeming these things and supposing that they alone bring happiness, they will undertake anything to get them, not avoiding even the most profane and disgraceful acts. [2] They are reduced to this by ignorance of what is good – for in their ignorance they fail to see that nothing good comes from evil. [3] We can see many people who have acquired their wealth through evil and shameful deeds, that is to say, through treachery, theft, murder, slander, fraud, and through many other depravities.'

'So it is.'

41. [1] 'If, as seems likely, nothing good comes from evil, and wealth comes from evil deeds, then necessarily wealth is not something good.'

'This is the conclusion to be drawn from the argument.'

[2] 'Neither wisdom nor honesty can be acquired through evil deeds, any more than dishonesty and folly can be acquired through good deeds – neither can they be found together in the same person. [3] Nothing prevents someone enjoying wealth, reputation, success, and such like, whilst at the same time being hugely wicked. Therefore, these things are neither good nor bad, since wisdom alone is good, whilst folly is bad.'

[4] 'Most adequately explained, I think!' was my reply.

[The Greek text breaks off at this point. Although the narrative does seem to have reached a satisfactory conclusion, it is possible that there was once a longer ending in the original Greek to account for the existence of an Arabic paraphrase that extends the work. The standard text of the *Tablet*, therefore, concludes with the following brief section, translated from J. Elichmann's Latin rendering of the Arabic, first published posthumously in 1640, printed by Karl Praechter in his 1893 edition, and included in the 1983 edition by Fitzgerald and White. See FW 27–8, 167 n. 120.]

'And thus we reject that opinion that these things [wealth, reputation, success, and so forth] result only from evil deeds.'

42. [1] The old man continued, saying, 'Now, this is a very important point, the same one that we arrived at before, that such things are neither good nor bad; indeed, if these things only ever resulted from evil deeds they would be altogether bad. [2] But all such things result from both types of action, and that is why we said that they are neither good nor bad, just as being asleep or being awake are neither good nor bad. [3] And it seems to me that this applies similarly to other things, such as walking, sitting, and such like, since these things are done by everyone, by educated and ignorant people alike. However, there are some things that are appropriate for one type or the other, because some things are good whilst others are bad – such as tyranny and justice, which belong only to one type, and the other to the other type. This is the case because justice always manifests in those possessed of understanding, whereas tyranny is found in those who are ignorant. [4] For, as we have said, it is not possible at any one time for such contrary qualities to be found in the same person – just as it is not possible for any one person at any one moment of time to be both asleep and awake, wise and ignorant, and so forth with respect to other qualities that we pair with their opposites.

'Well,' I said, 'I think this whole discussion has reached a most satisfactory conclusion.'

43. [1] 'Furthermore,' he said, 'I hold that all these things proceed from a divine principle.'

'Which principle do you mean?' I asked.

[2] He replied, 'Life and death, health and sickness, wealth and poverty, and all the other things which you held to be both good and bad, happen to most people through nothing evil.'

'Well, I must say that our discussion urges the conclusion that such things are indeed neither good nor bad; even so, I am not at all confident that my judgement of these things is sound.'

'This is so,' he said to us, 'because none of you possess that habit through which you may acquire this way of thinking. Therefore, throughout the whole course of your lives hold to the practice of those things I have just now explained to you, such that those things of which I have spoken will become imprinted in your minds and become a habit for you. But if you are still uncertain about anything, come back to me so that my explanations may dispel your doubts.'