The Consolation of Philosophy

Boethius*

i.1 · Poem

(...)
O'er my head untimely sprinkled
These white hairs my woes proclaim,
And the skin hangs loose and shrivelled
On this sorrow-shrunken frame.
Blest is death that intervenes not
In the sweet, sweet years of peace,

*These excerpts incorporate verse and prose from the translations by H. R. James and W. V. Cooper, with thanks to the University of Virginia Library. A good Latin original online text can be found at Augburg's Bibliotheca Augustana. [M. T. editors]

But unto the broken-hearted,
When they call him, brings release!
Yet Death passes by the wretched,
Shuts his ear and slumbers deep;
Will not heed the cry of anguish,
Will not close the eyes that weep.
For, while yet inconstant Fortune
Poured her gifts and all was bright,
Death's dark hour had all but whelmed me
In the gloom of endless night.
Now, because misfortune's shadow
Hath o'erclouded that false face,
Cruel Life still halts and lingers,
Though I loathe his weary race.
Friends, why did ye once so lightly
Vaunt me happy among men?
Surely he who so hath fallen
Was not firmly founded then.

i.1 · Prose

While I silently pondered these things, and set my pen to write down my wretched complaint, there

appeared standing above me a woman of majestic countenance whose flashing eyes seemed wise beyond ordinary human wisdom. Her complexion was lively, her vigour showed no trace of enfeeblement; and yet her years were right full, and she plainly seemed not of our age and time. Her height seemed to vary: sometimes she seemed to touch the top of the heavens. And when she raised herself to full height she penetrated heaven itself, beyond the vision of human eyes. Her clothing was made of the most delicate threads, and by the most exquisite workmanship; it had, as she afterwards told me, been woven by her own hands into an everlasting fabric. Her clothes had been darkened in color somewhat by neglect and the passage of time, as happens to pictures exposed to smoke. At the lower edge of her robe was woven a Greek Π, at the top the letter Θ,[1] and between them were seen clearly marked stages, like stairs, ascending from the lowest level to the highest. This robe had been torn, however, by the hands of violent men,

[1] Π (P) stands for the Political life, the life of action; Θ (Th) for the Theoretical or contemplative life.

who had ripped away what they could. In her right hand she carried a book, and in her left a sceptre.

When she saw the Muses of poetry standing beside my bed and consoling me with their words, she was momentarily upset and glared at them with burning eyes. 'Who let these whores from the theatre come to the bedside of this sick man?' she said. 'They cannot offer medicine for his sorrows; they will nourish him only with their sweet poison. They kill the fruitful harvest of reason with the sterile thorns of the passions; they do not liberate the minds of men from disease, but merely accustom them to it. I would find it easier to bear if your flattery had, as it usually does, seduced some ordinary dull-witted man; in that case, it would have been no concern of mine. But this man has been educated in the philosophical schools of the Eleatics and the Academy. Get out, you Sirens; your sweetness leads to death. Leave him to be cured and made strong by my Muses.'

And so the defeated Muses, shamefaced and with downcast eyes, went sadly away. My sigh was so

dimmed by tears that I could not tell who this women of imperious authority might be, and I lay there astonished, my eyes staring at the earth, silently waiting to see what she would do. She came nearer and sat at the foot of my bed. When she noticed my grief-stricken, downcast face, she bewailed in these words the disorder of my mind:

i.2 · Poem

Alas! in what abyss his mind
Is plunged, how wildly tossed!
Still, still towards the outer night
She sinks, her true light lost,
As oft as, lashed tumultuously
By earth-born blasts, care's waves rise high.
Yet once he ranged the open heavens,
The sun's bright pathway tracked;
Watched how the cold moon waxed and waned;
Nor rested, till there lacked
To his wide ken no star that steers
Amid the maze of circling spheres.
The causes why the blusterous winds

Vex ocean's tranquil face,
Whose hand doth turn the stable globe,
Or why his even race
From out the ruddy east the sun
Unto the western waves doth run:
What is it tempers cunningly
The placid hours of spring,
So that it blossoms with the rose
For earth's engarlanding:
Who loads the year's maturer prime
With clustered grapes in autumn time:
All this he knew—thus ever strove
Deep Nature's lore to guess.
Now, reft of reason's light, he lies,
And bonds his neck oppress;
While by the heavy load constrained,
His eyes to this dull earth are chained.

i.2 · Prose

'But now,' said she, 'is the time for cure rather than for complaint.' Then fixing her eyes wholly on me,

she said, 'Are you the man who was nourished upon the milk of my learning, brought up with my food until you had won your way to the power of a manly soul? Surely I had given you such weapons as would keep you safe, and your strength unconquered; if you had not thrown them away. Do you know me? Why do you keep silence? Are you dumb from shame or from dull amazement? I would it were from shame, but I see that amazement has overwhelmed you.'

When she saw that I was not only silent, but utterly tongue-tied and dumb, she put her hand gently upon my breast, and said, 'There is no danger: he is suffering from drowsiness, that disease which attacks so many minds which have been deceived. He has forgotten himself for a moment and will quickly remember, as soon as he recognises me. That he may do so, let me brush away from his eyes the darkening cloud of thoughts of matters perishable.' So saying, she gathered her robe into a fold and dried my swimming eyes.

'First then,' she continued, 'will you let me find out and make trial of the state of your mind by a few small questions, that so I may understand what should be the method of your treatment?'

'Ask,' said I, 'what your judgment would have you ask, and I will answer you.'

Then said she, 'Think you that this universe is guided only at random and by mere chance? or think you there is any rule of reason constituted in it?'

'No, never would I think it could be so, nor believe that such sure motions could be made at random or by chance. I know that God, the founder of the universe, does overlook His work; nor ever may that day come which shall drive me to abandon this belief as untrue.'

'So is it,' she said, 'and even so you cried just now, and only mourned that mankind alone has no part in this divine guardianship: you were fixed in your belief that all other things are ruled by reason. Yet, how strange! how much I wonder how it is that you

can be so sick though you are set in such a health-giving state of mind! But let us look deeper into it: I cannot but think there is something lacking. Since you are not in doubt that the universe is ruled by God, tell me by what method you think that government is guided?'

'I scarcely know the meaning of your question; much less can I answer it.'

'Was I wrong,' said she, 'to think that something was lacking, that there was some opening in your armour, some way by which this distracting disease has crept into your soul? But tell me, do you remember what is the aim and end of all things? what the object to which all nature tends?'

'I have heard indeed, but grief has blunted my memory.'

'But do you not some how know whence all things have their source?'

'Yes,' I said; 'that source is God.'

'Is it possible that you, who know the beginning of all things, should not know their end? But such are the ways of these distractions, such is their power,

that though they can move a man's position, they cannot pluck him from himself or wrench him from his roots. But this question would I have you answer: do you remember that you are a man?'

'How can I but remember that?'

'Can you then say what is a man?'

'Need you ask? I know that he is an animal, reasoning and mortal; that I know, and that I confess myself to be.'

'Know you naught else that you are?' asked Philosophy.

'Naught,' said I.

'Now,' said she, 'I know the cause, or the chief cause, of your sickness. You have forgotten what you are. So now I really understand why you are ill, and I know how to cure you. You are overwhelmed by this forgetfulness of yourself: hence you have been thus sorrowing that you are exiled and robbed of all your possessions. You do not know the aim and end of all things; hence you think that if men are worthless and wicked, they are powerful and fortunate. You have forgotten by what methods the universe is guided;

hence you think that the chances of good and bad fortune are tossed about with no ruling hand. These things may lead not to disease only, but even to death as well. But let us thank the Giver of all health, that your nature has not altogether left you. We have yet the chief spark for your health's fire, for you have a true knowledge of the hand that guides the universe: you do believe that its government is not subject to random chance, but to divine reason. Therefore have no fear. From this tiny spark the fire of life shall forthwith shine upon you. But it is not time to use severer remedies, and since we know that it is the way of all minds to clothe themselves ever in false opinions as they throw off the true, and these false ones breed a dark distraction which confuses the true insight, therefore will I try to lessen this darkness for a while with gentle applications of easy remedies, that so the shadows of deceiving passions may be dissipated, and you may have power to perceive the splendour of true light.'

i.7 · Song

Stars shed no light
Through the black night,
When the clouds hide;
And the lashed wave,
If the winds rave
O'er ocean's tide,—
Though once serene
As day's fair sheen,—
Soon fouled and spoiled
By the storm's spite,
Shows to the sight
Turbid and soiled.
Oft the fair rill,
Down the steep hill
Seaward that strays,
Some tumbled block
Of fallen rock
Hinders and stays.
Then art thou fain
Clear and most plain

Truth to discern,
In the right way
Firmly to stay,
Nor from it turn?
Joy, hope and fear
Suffer not near,
Drive grief away:
Shackled and blind
And lost is the mind
Where these have sway.

ii.7 · Song, "Love is Lord of all"

Why are Nature's changes bound
To a fixed and ordered round?
What to leaguèd peace hath bent
Every warring element?
Wherefore doth the rosy morn
Rise on Phœbus' car upborne?
Why should Phœbe rule the night,
Led by Hesper's guiding light?

What the power that doth restrain
In his place the restless main,
That within fixed bounds he keeps,
Nor o'er earth in deluge sweeps?
Love it is that holds the chains,
Love o'er sea and earth that reigns;
Love—whom else but sovereign Love?—
Love, high lord in heaven above!
Yet should he his care remit,
All that now so close is knit
In sweet love and holy peace,
Would no more from conflict cease,
But with strife's rude shock and jar
All the world's fair fabric mar.
Tribes and nations Love unites
By just treaty's sacred rites;
Wedlock's bonds he sanctifies
By affection's softest ties.
Love appointeth, as is due,
Faithful laws to comrades true—
Love, all-sovereign Love!—oh, then,
Ye are blest, ye sons of men,

If the love that rules the sky
In your hearts is throned on high!

iii.1 · Prose

When she finished her lay, its soothing tones left me spellbound with my ears alert in my eagerness to listen. So a while afterwards I said, 'Greatest comforter of weary minds, how have you cheered me with your deep thoughts and sweet singing too! No more shall I doubt my power to meet the blows of Fortune. So far am I from terror at the remedies which you did lately tell me were sharper, that I am longing to hear them, and eagerly I beg you for them.'

Then said she, 'I knew it when you laid hold upon my words in silent attention, and I was waiting for that frame of mind in you, or more truly, I brought it about in you. They that remain are indeed bitter to the tongue, but sweet to the inner man. But as you say you are eager to hear, how ardently you would be burning, if you knew whither I am attempting to lead you!'

‘Whither is that?’ I asked.

‘To the true happiness, of which your soul too dreams; but your sight is taken up in imaginary views thereof, so that you cannot look upon itself.’

Then said I, ‘I pray you show me what that truly is, and quickly.’

‘I will do so,’ she said, ‘for your sake willingly. But first I will try to picture in words and give you the form of the cause, which is already better known to you, that so, when that picture is perfect and you turn your eyes to the other side, you may recognise the form of true happiness.’

iii.1 · Song, “The Thorns of Error”

Who fain would sow the fallow field,
And see the growing corn,
Must first remove the useless weeds,
The bramble and the thorn.
After ill savour, honey’s taste
Is to the mouth more sweet;
After the storm, the twinkling stars
The eyes more cheerly greet.

When night hath past, the bright dawn comes
In car of rosy hue;
So drive the false bliss from thy mind,
And thou shall see the true.

iii.2 · Prose

Then she lowered her eyes for a little while, as though searching the innermost recesses of her mind; and then she continued: — 'The troubles of the many and various aims of mortal men bring them much care, and herein they go forward by different paths but strive to reach one end, which is happiness. And that good is that, to which if any man attain, he can desire nothing further. It is that highest of all good things, and it embraces in itself all good things: if any good is lacking, it cannot be the highest good, since then there is left outside it something which can be desired. Wherefore happiness is a state which is made perfect by the union of all good things. This end all men seek to reach, as I said, though by different paths. For there is implanted by nature in the minds

of men a desire for the true good; but error leads them astray towards false goods by wrong paths.

'Some men believe that the highest good is to lack nothing, and so they are at pains to possess abundant riches. Others consider the true good to be that which is most worthy of admiration, and so they strive to attain to places of honour, and to be held by their fellow-citizens in honour thereby. Some determine that the highest good lies in the highest power; and so they either desire to reign themselves, or try to cleave to those who do reign. Others think that renown is the greatest good, and they therefore hasten to make a famous name by the arts of peace or of war. More, however, measure their enjoyment of the good in terms of joy and gladness, and these think that the happiest man is abandoned to pleasure.

'Further, there are those who confuse the aims and the causes of these good things: as those who desire riches for the sake of power or of pleasure, or those who seek power for the sake of money or celebrity. In these, then, and other things like to them, lies

the aim of men's actions and prayers, such as renown and popularity, which seem to afford some fame, or wife and children, which are sought for the pleasure they give. On the other hand, the good of friends, which is the most honourable and holy of all, lies not in Fortune's but in Virtue's realm. All others are adopted for the sake of power or enjoyment.

'Again, it is plain that the good things of the body must be accounted to those false causes which we have mentioned; for bodily strength and stature seem to make men more able and strong; beauty and nimbleness seem to give renown; health seems to give pleasure. By all these happiness alone is plainly desired. For each man holds that to be the highest good, which he seeks before all others. But we have defined the highest good to be happiness. Wherefore what each man desires above all others, he holds to be a state of happiness.

'Wherefore you have each of these placed before you as the form of human happiness: wealth, honours, power, glory, and pleasure. Epicurus considered these forms alone, and accordingly determined upon

pleasure as the highest good, because all the others seemed but to join with it in bringing enjoyment to the mind.

'But to return to the aims of men: their minds seem to seek to regain the highest good, and their memories seem to dull their powers. It is as though a drunken man were seeking his home, but could not remember the way.

'Now, can those people be altogether wrong whose aim it is to lack nothing? Of course not, there is nothing which can make happiness so perfect as an abundant possession of good things, needing naught that belongs to others, but in all ways sufficing for itself. Surely those others too are not mistaken who think that what is best is also most worthy of reverence and respect. It cannot be any cheap or base thing, to attain which almost all men aim and strive. And is power not to be accounted a good thing? Surely it is: can that be a weak thing or forceless, which is allowed in all cases to excel? Is renown of no value? We cannot fail to see that whatever is most excellent has also great renown. It is hardly worth say-

ing that happiness has no torturing cares or gloom, and is not subject to grief and trouble; for even in small things, the aim is to find that which it is a delight to have and to enjoy. These, then, are the desires of men: they long for riches, places of honour, kingdoms, glory, and pleasure; and they long for them because they think that thereby they will find satisfaction, veneration, power, renown, and happiness. It is the good then which men seek by their different desires; and it is easy to show how great a force nature has put therein, since in spite of such varying and discordant opinions, they are all agreed in the goal they seek, that of the highest good.'

iv.1 · Prose

Thus gently sang the Lady Philosophy with dignified mien and grave countenance; and when she ceased, I, who had not thoroughly forgotten the grief with in me, interrupted her as she was about to speak further. 'Herald of true light,' I said, 'right clear have been the outpourings of your speech till now, seeming inspired as one contemplates them, and invincible

through your reasonings. And though through grief for the injustices I suffer, I had forgotten them, yet you have spoken to me of things which were not totally ignored by me in former times. But there is this one chief cause of my grief, namely that, when there exists a good governor of the world, evils should exist at all or, existing, should go unpunished. I would have you think how strange is this fact alone. But there is an even stranger attached thereto: ill-doing reigns and flourishes, while virtue not only lacks its reward, but is even trampled underfoot by wicked doers, and pays the penalties instead of crime. Who can wonder and complain enough that such things should happen under the rule of One who, while all-knowing and all-powerful, wills good alone?'

Then she answered: 'Yes, it would be most terrible, monstrous, and infinitely amazing if it were as you think. It would be as though in a well-ordered house of a good master, the vilest vessels were cared for while the precious were left defiled. But it is not so. If our former conclusions are unshaken, God Him-

self, of whose government we speak, will teach you that the good are always powerful, the evil are always the lowest and weakest; vice never goes unpunished; virtue never goes without its own reward; happiness comes to the good, misfortune to the wicked: and when your complaints are set at rest, many such things would most firmly strengthen you in this opinion. You have seen now from my teaching the form of true happiness; you know now its place: let us go quickly through all that must be lightly passed over, and let me show you the road which shall lead you to your home. I will give wings to your mind, by which it shall raise itself aloft: so shall disquiet be driven away, and you may return safe to your home by my guidance, by the path I shall show you, and even in my own carriage.

iv.1 · Song, "The Soul's Flight"

Wings are mine; above the pole
Far aloft I soar.
Clothed with these, my nimble soul
Scorns earth's hated shore,

Cleaves the skies upon the wind,
Sees the clouds left far behind.
Soon the glowing point she nears,
Where the heavens rotate,
Follows through the starry spheres
Phœbus' course, or straight
Takes for comrade 'mid the stars
Saturn cold or glittering Mars;
Thus each circling orb explores
Through Night's stole that peers;
Then, when all are numbered, soars
Far beyond the spheres,
Mounting heaven's supremest height
To the very Fount of light.
There the Sovereign of the world
His calm sway maintains;
As the globe is onward whirled
Guides the chariot reins,
And in splendour glittering
Reigns the universal King.
Hither if thy wandering feet
Find at last a way,

Here thy long-lost home thou'lt greet:
'Dear lost land,' thou'lt say,
'Though from thee I've wandered wide,
Hence I came, here will abide.'
Yet if ever thou art fain
Visitant to be
Of earth's gloomy night again,
Surely thou wilt see
Tyrants whom the nations fear
Dwell in hapless exile here.

iv.6 · Song, "The Universal Aim"

Wouldst thou with unclouded mind
View the laws by God designed,
Lift thy steadfast gaze on high
To the starry canopy;
See in rightful league of love
All the constellations move.
Fiery Sol, in full career,
Ne'er obstructs cold Phoebe's sphere;

When the Bear, at heaven's height,
Wheels his coursers' rapid flight,
Though he sees the starry train
Sinking in the western main,
He repines not, nor desires
In the flood to quench his fires.
In true sequence, as decreed,
Daily morn and eve succeed;
Vesper brings the shades of night,
Lucifer the morning light.
Love, in alternation due,
Still the cycle doth renew,
And discordant strife is driven
From the starry realm of heaven.
Thus, in wondrous amity,
Warring elements agree;
Hot and cold, and moist and dry,
Lay their ancient quarrel by;
High the flickering flame ascends,
Downward earth for ever tends.
So the year in spring's mild hours
Loads the air with scent of flowers;

Summer paints the golden grain;
Then, when autumn comes again,
Bright with fruit the orchards glow;
Winter brings the rain and snow.
Thus the seasons' fixed progression,
Tempered in a due succession,
Nourishes and brings to birth
All that lives and breathes on earth.
Then, soon run life's little day,
All it brought it takes away.
But One sits and guides the reins,
He who made and all sustains;
King and Lord and Fountain-head,
Judge most holy, Law most dread;
Now impels and now keeps back,
Holds each waverer in the track.
Else, were once the power withheld
That the circling spheres compelled
In their orbits to revolve,
This world's order would dissolve,
And th' harmonious whole would all
In one hideous ruin fall.

But through this connected frame
Runs one universal aim;
Towards the Good do all things tend,
Many paths, but one the end.
For naught lasts, unless it turns
Backward in its course, and yearns
To that Source to flow again
Whence its being first was ta'en.

v.6 · Prose

'Since all that is known is apprehended, as we just now showed, not according to its nature but according to the nature of the knower, let us examine, so far as we lawfully may, the character of the divine nature, so that we may be able to learn what its knowledge is.

'The common opinion, according to all men living, is that God is eternal. Let us therefore consider what is eternity. For eternity will, I think, make clear to us at the same time the divine nature and knowledge.

'Eternity is the simultaneous and complete possession of infinite life. This will appear more clearly if we compare it with temporal things. All that lives under the conditions of time moves through the present from the past to the future; there is nothing set in time which can at one moment grasp the whole space of its lifetime. It cannot yet comprehend tomorrow; yesterday it has already lost. And in this life of today your life is no more than a changing, passing moment. And as Aristotle said of the universe, so it is of all that is subject to time; though it never began to be, nor will ever cease, and its life is co-extensive with the infinity of time, yet it is not such as can be held to be eternal. For though it apprehends and grasps a space of infinite lifetime, it does not embrace the whole simultaneously; it has not yet experienced the future. What we should rightly call eternal is that which grasps and possesses wholly and simultaneously the fulness of unending life, which lacks naught of the future, and has lost naught of the fleeting past; and such an existence must be ever present in itself to control and aid itself, and also must keep present with

itself the infinity of changing time. Therefore, people who hear that Plato thought that this universe had no beginning of time and will have no end, are not right in thinking that in this way the created world is co-eternal with its creator. For to pass through unending life, the attribute which Plato ascribes to the universe is one thing; but it is another thing to grasp simultaneously the whole of unending life in the present; this is plainly a peculiar property of the mind of God.

'And further, God should not be regarded as older than His creations by any period of time, but rather by the peculiar property of His own single nature. For the infinite changing of temporal things tries to imitate the ever simultaneously present immutability of His life: it cannot succeed in imitating or equalling this, but sinks from immutability into change, and falls from the single directness of the present into an infinite space of future and past. And since this temporal state cannot possess its life completely and simultaneously, but it does in the same manner exist for ever without ceasing, it therefore seems to try in

some degree to rival that which it cannot fulfil or represent, for it binds itself to some sort of present time out of this small and fleeting moment; but inasmuch as this temporal present bears a certain appearance of that abiding present, it somehow makes those, to whom it comes, seem to be in truth what they imitate. But since this imitation could not be abiding, the unending march of time has swept it away, and thus we find that it has bound together, as it passes, a chain of life, which it could not by abiding embrace in its fulness. And thus if we would apply proper epithets to those subjects, we can say, following Plato, that God is eternal, but the universe is perpetual.

'And so, since every judgment apprehends the subjects of its thought according to its own nature, and God has a condition of ever-present eternity, His knowledge, which passes over every change of time, embracing infinite lengths of past and future, views in its own direct comprehension everything as though it were taking place in the present. If you would weigh the foreknowledge by which God distinguishes all things, you will more rightly hold it

to be a knowledge of a never-failing constancy in the present, than a foreknowledge of the future. And this is why it is called Providence (*providentia*), and not prevision (*praevidentia*), because it is set far from low matters and looks forth upon all things as from a lofty mountain-top above all. Why then do you demand that all things occur by necessity, if divine light rests upon them, while men do not render necessary such things as they can see? Surely, the fact that you see things present does not confer on them any kind of necessity, does it?'

'Surely not.'

'If one may not unworthily compare this present time with the divine, just as you can see things in this your temporal present, so God sees all things in His eternal present. Wherefore this divine foreknowledge does not change the nature or individual qualities of things: it sees things present in its understanding just as they will result some time in the future. It makes no confusion in its distinctions, and with one view of its mind it discerns all that shall come to pass whether of necessity or not. For instance, when you

see at the same time a man walking on the earth and the sun rising in the heavens, you see each sight simultaneously, yet you distinguish between them, and decide that one is moving voluntarily, the other of necessity. In like manner the perception of God looks down upon all things without disturbing at all their nature, though they are present to Him but future under the conditions of time. Wherefore this foreknowledge is not opinion but knowledge resting upon truth, since He knows that a future event is, though He knows too that it will not occur of necessity.

'If you answer here that what God sees about to happen, cannot but happen, and that what cannot but happen is bound by necessity, you thereby fasten me down to the word "necessity" and I shall grant that we have a matter of most firm truth, but it is one to which scarcely any man can approach unless he be a contemplator of the divine. For I shall answer that such a thing will occur of necessity, when viewed from the point of divine knowledge; but when it is examined in its own nature, it seems perfectly free

and unrestrained. For there are two kinds of necessities; one is simple: for instance, a necessary fact, "all men are mortal"; the other is conditional; for instance, if you know that a man is walking, he must be walking: for what each man knows cannot be otherwise than it is known to be; but the conditional one is by no means followed by this simple and direct necessity; for there is no necessity to compel a voluntary walker to move, though it is necessary that, if he walks, he should be moving. In the same way, if Providence sees an event in its present, that thing must be, though it has no necessity of its own nature. And God looks in His present upon those future things which come to pass through free will. Therefore if these things be looked at from the point of view of God's insight, they come to pass of necessity under the condition of divine knowledge; if, on the other hand, they are viewed by themselves, they do not lose the perfect freedom of their nature. Without doubt, then, all things that God foreknows do come to pass, but some of them proceed from free will; and though they result by coming into existence, yet

they do not lose their own nature, because before they came to pass they could also not have come to pass.

'"What then," you may ask, "is the difference in their not being bound by necessity, since they result under all circumstances as by necessity, on account of the condition of divine knowledge?" This is the difference, as I just now put forward: take the sun rising and a man walking; while these operations are occurring, they cannot but occur: but the one was bound to occur before it did; the other was not so bound. What God has in His present, does exist without doubt; but of such things some follow by necessity, others by their authors' wills. Wherefore I was justified in saying that if these things be regarded from the view of divine knowledge, they are necessary, but if they are viewed by themselves, they are perfectly free from all ties of necessity: just as everything which lies open to the senses, if you relate it to the reason, is universal, but if you look at it by itself, is particular. "But," you will say, "if it is in my power to change a purpose of mine, I will disreg-

ard Providence, since I may change what Providence foresees." To which I answer, "You can change your purpose, but since the truth of Providence knows in its present that you can do so, and whether you do so, and in what direction you may change it, therefore you cannot escape that divine foreknowledge: just as you cannot avoid the glance of a present eye, though you may by your free will turn yourself to all kinds of different actions."

'"What?" you will say, "can I by my own action change divine knowledge, so that if I choose now one thing, now another, Providence too will seem to change its knowledge?" No; divine insight precedes all future things, turning them back and recalling them to the present time of its own peculiar knowledge. It does not change, as you may think, between this and that alternation of foreknowledge. It is constant in preceding and embracing by one glance all your changes. And God does not receive this ever-present grasp of all things and vision of the present at the occurrence of future events, but from His own peculiar directness. Whence also is that difficulty

solved which you laid down a little while ago, that it was not worthy to say that our future events were the cause of God's knowledge. For this power of knowledge, ever in the present and embracing all things in its perception, does itself constrain all things, and owes naught to following events from which it has received naught. Thus, therefore, mortal men have their freedom of judgment intact. And since their wills are freed from all binding necessity, laws do not set rewards or punishments unjustly. God is ever the constant foreknowing overseer, and the ever-present eternity of His sight moves in harmony with the future nature of our actions, as it dispenses rewards to the good, and punishments to the bad. Hopes are not vainly put in God, nor prayers in vain offered: if these are right, they cannot but be answered. Turn therefore from vice: ensue virtue: raise your soul to upright hopes: send up on high your prayers from this earth. If you would be honest, great is the necessity enjoined upon your goodness, since all you do is done before the eyes of an all-seeing Judge.'

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