

Stoic Paradoxes

Paradoxa Stoicorum

Cicero

translated by C. R. Edmonds

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Stoic Paradoxes (Paradoxa Stoicorum)

Translated by C. R. Edmonds. Six short rhetorical essays defending the celebrated “paradoxes” of the Stoics — that virtue is the only good, that the wise man alone is free, and their kin.

Paradoxes Addressed to Marcus Brutus

I have often observed, O Brutus, that your uncle Cato, when he delivered his opinion in the senate, was accustomed to handle important points of philosophy, inconsistent with popular and forensic usage; but that yet, in speaking, he managed them so that even these seemed to the people worthy of approbation; which was so much the greater excellency in him, than either in you or in me, because we are more conversant in that philosophy which has produced a copiousness of expression, and in which those things are propounded which do not widely differ from the popular opinion. But Cato, in my opinion a complete Stoic, both holds those notions which certainly do not approve themselves to the common people; and belongs to that sect which aims at no embellishments, and does not spin out an argument. He therefore succeeds in what he has purposed, by certain pithy and, as it were, stimulating questions. There is, however, nothing so incredible that it may not be made plausible by eloquence; nothing so rough and uncultivated that it may not, in oratory, become brilliant and polished.

As I have been accustomed to think thus, I have made a bolder attempt than he himself did of whom I am speaking. For Cato is accustomed to treat stoically of magnanimity, of modesty, of death, and of all the glory of virtue, of the immortal gods, and of patriotism, with the addition of the ornaments of eloquence. But I have, for amusement, digested into common-places those topics which the Stoics scarcely prove in their retirement and in their schools. Such topics are termed, even by themselves, paradoxes, because they are remarkable, and contrary to the opinion of all men. I have been desirous of trying whether they might not come into publicity, that is before the forum, and be so expressed as to be approved; or whether learned expressions were one thing, and a popular mode of address another. I undertook this with the

more pleasure, because these very paradoxes, as they are termed, appear to me to be the most Socratic, and by far the most true. Accept therefore this little work, composed during these shorter nights, since that work of my longer watchings appeared in your name. You will have here a specimen of the manner I have been accustomed to adopt when I accommodate those things which in the schools are termed theses to our oratorical manner of speaking. I do not, however, expect that you will look upon yourself as indebted to me for this performance which is not such as to be placed, like the Minerva of Phidias, in a citadel, but still such as may appear to have issued from the same studio.

Paradox I. That Virtue is the Only Good

I am apprehensive that this position may seem to some among you to have been derived from the schools of the Stoics, and not from my own sentiments. Yet I will tell you my real opinion, and that too more briefly than so important a matter requires to be discussed. By Hercules, I never was one who reckoned among good and desirable things, treasures, magnificent mansions, interest, power, or those pleasures to which mankind are most chiefly addicted. For I have observed, that those to whom these things abounded, still desired them most: for the thirst of cupidity is never filled or satiated. They are tormented not only with the lust of increasing, but with the fear of losing what they have. I own that I often look in vain for the good sense of our ancestors, those most continent men, who affixed the appellation of good to those weak, fleeting, circumstances of wealth, when in truth and fact their sentiments were the very reverse. Can any bad man enjoy a good thing? Or, is it possible for a man not to be good, when he lives in the very abundance of good things? And yet we see all those things so distributed that wicked men possess them, and that they are inauspicious to the good. Now let any man indulge his raillery, if he please; but right reason will ever have more weight with me than the opinion of the multitude. Nor shall I ever account a man, when he has lost his stock of cattle, or furniture, to have lost his good things. Nor shall I seldom speak in praise of Bias, who, if I mistake not, is reckoned among the seven wise men, For when the enemy took possession of Priene, his native country, and when the rest so

managed their flight as to carry off with them their effects, on his being recommended by a certain person to do the same; “Why,” answered he, “I do so, for I carry with me all my possessions.” He did not so much as esteem those playthings of fortune, which we even term our blessings, to be his own. But some one will ask, ‘What then is a real good?’ Whatever is done uprightly, honestly, and virtuously, is truly said to be done well; and whatever is upright, honest, and agreeable to virtue, that alone, as I think, is a good thing.

But these matters, when they are more loosely discussed, appear somewhat obscure; but those things which seemed to be discussed with more subtlety than is necessary in words, may be illustrated by the lives and actions of the greatest of men. I ask then of you, whether the men who left to us this empire, founded upon so noble a system, seem ever to have thought of gratifying avarice by money; delight by delicacy; luxury by magnificence; or pleasure by feasting? Set before your eyes any one of our monarchs. Shall I begin with Romulus? Or, after the state was free, with those who liberated it? By what steps then did Romulus ascend to heaven? By those which these people term good things? Or by his exploits and his virtues? What are we to imagine, that the wooden or earthen dishes of Numa Pompilius were less acceptable to the immortal gods, than the embossed plate of others? I pass over our other kings, for all of them, excepting Tarquin the Proud, were equally excellent. Should any one ask, What did Brutus perform when he delivered his country? Or, as to those who were the participators of that design, what was their aim, and the object of their pursuit? Lives there the man who can regard as their object, riches, pleasure, or any thing else than acting the part of a great and gallant man? What motive impelled Caius Mucius, without the least hope of preservation, to attempt the death of Porsenna? What impulse kept Codes to the bridge, singly opposed to the whole force of the enemy? What power devoted the elder and the younger Decius, and impelled them against armed battalions of enemies? What was the object of the continence of Caius Fabricius, or of the frugality of life of Manius Curius? What were the motives of those two thunderbolts of the Punic war, Publius and Cneius Scipio, when they proposed with their own bodies to intercept the progress of the Carthaginians? What did the elder, what did the younger Africanus propose? What were the views of Cato, who lived between the times of both? What

shall I say of innumerable other instances; for we abound in examples drawn from our own history; can we think that they proposed any other object in life but what seemed glorious and noble?

Now let the deriders of this sentiment and principle come forward; let even them take their choice, whether they would rather resemble the man who is rich in marble palaces, adorned with ivory, and shining with gold, in statues, in pictures, in embossed gold and silver plate, in the workmanship of Corinthian brass, or if they will resemble Fabricius, who had, and who wished to have, none of these things. And yet they are readily prevailed upon to admit that those things which are transferred, now hither, now thither, are not to be ranked among good things, while at the same time they strongly maintain, and eagerly dispute, that pleasure is the highest good; a sentiment that to me seems to be that of a brute, rather than that of a man. Shall you, endowed as you are by God or by nature, whom we may term the mother of all things, with a soul (than which there exists nothing more excellent and more divine), so degrade and prostrate yourself as to think there is no difference between yourself and any quadruped? Is there any real good that, does not make him who possesses it a better man? For in proportion as every man has the greatest amount of excellence, he is also in that proportion most praiseworthy; nor is there any excellence on which the man who possesses it may not justly value himself. But what of these qualities resides in pleasure? Does it make a man better, or more praiseworthy? Does any man extol himself in boasting or self-recommendation for having enjoyed pleasures? Now if pleasure, which is defended by the advocacy of many, is not to be ranked among good things, and if the greater it is the more it dislodges the mind from its habitual and settled position; surely to live well and happily, is nothing else than to live virtuously and rightly.

Paradox II. A Man Who is Virtuous is Destitute of No Requisite of a Happy Life

Never, for my part, did I imagine Marcus Regulus to have been distressed, or unhappy, or wretched; because his magnanimity was not tortured by the

Carthaginians; nor was the weight of his authority; nor was his honor; nor was his resolution; nor was one of his virtues; nor, in short, did his soul suffer their torments, for a soul with the guard and retinue of so many virtues, never surely could be taken, though his body was made captive. We have seen Caius Marius; he, in my opinion, was in prosperity one of the happiest, and in adversity one of the greatest of men than which man can have no happier lot. Thou knowest not, foolish man, thou knowest not what power virtue possesses; thou only usurpest the name of virtue; thou art a stranger to her influence. No man who is wholly consistent within himself, and, who reposes all his interests in himself alone, can be otherwise than completely happy. But the man whose every hope, and scheme, and design depends upon fortune, such a man can have no certainty; — can possess nothing assured to him as destined to continue for a single day. If you have any such man in your power, you may terrify him by threats of death or exile; but whatever can happen to me in so ungrateful a country, will find me not only not opposing, but even not refusing it. To what purpose have I toiled? to what purpose have I acted? or on what have my cares and meditations been watchfully employed, if I have produced and arrived at no such results, as that neither the outrages of fortune nor the injuries of enemies can shatter me. Do you threaten me with death? which is separating me from mankind? Or with exile, which is removing me from the wicked? Death is dreadful to the man whose all is extinguished with his life; but not to him whose glory never can die. Exile is terrible to those who have, as it were, a circumscribed habitation; but not to those who look upon the whole globe, but as one city. Troubles and miseries oppress thee who thinkest thyself happy and prosperous. Thy lusts torment thee, day and night thou art upon the rack; for whom that which thou possessest is not sufficient, and who art ever trembling lest even that should not continue; the consciousness of thy misdeeds tortures thee; the terrors of the laws and the dread of justice appall thee; look where thou wilt, thy crimes, like so many furies, meet thy view and suffer thee not to breathe. Therefore, as no man can be happy if he is wicked, foolish, or indolent; so no man can be wretched, if he is virtuous, brave, and wise. Glorious is the life of that man whose virtues and practice are praiseworthy; nor indeed ought that life to be escaped from which is deserving of praise, though it might well be if it were a wretched one. We are

therefore to look upon whatever is worthy of praise as at once happy, prosperous, and desirable.

Paradox III. That All Misdeeds are in Themselves Equal, and Good Deeds the Same

The matter It may be said is a trifle, but the crime is enormous; for crimes are not to be measured by the issue of events, but from the bad intentions of men. The fact in which the sin consists may be greater in one instance and less in another, but guilt itself, in whatsoever light you behold it, is the same. A pilot oversets a ship laden with gold or one laden with straw: in value there is some difference, but in the ignorance of the pilot there is none. Your illicit desire has fallen upon an obscure female. The mortification affects fewer persons than if it had broken out in the case of some high-born and noble virgin; nevertheless it has been guilty, if it be guilty to overstep the mark. When you have done this, crime has been committed; nor does it matter in aggravation of the fault how far you run afterward; certainly it is not lawful for any one to commit sin, and that which is unlawful is limited by this sole condition, that it is shown to be wrong. If this guilt can neither be made greater nor less (because, if the thing was unlawful, therein sin was committed), then the vicious acts which spring out of that which is ever one and the same must necessarily be equal. Now if virtues are equal among themselves, it must necessarily follow that vices are so likewise; and it is most easy to be perceived that a man can not be better than good, more temperate than temperate, braver than brave, nor wiser than wise. Will any man call a person honest, who, having a deposit of ten pounds of gold made to him without any witness, so that he might take advantage of it with impunity, shall restore it, and yet should not do the same in the case of ten thousand pounds? Can a man be accounted temperate who checks one inordinate passion and gives a loose to another? Virtue is uniform, conformable to reason, and of unvarying consistency; nothing can be added to it that can make it more than virtue; nothing can be taken from it, and the name of virtue be left. If good offices are done with an upright intention, nothing can be more upright than upright is; and therefore it is impossible that any thing should be better than what is good. It therefore follows that all

vices are equal; for the obliquities of the mind are properly termed vices. Now we may infer, that as all virtues are equal, therefore all good actions, when they spring from virtues, ought to be equal likewise; and therefore it necessarily follows, that evil actions springing from vices, should be also equal.

You borrow, says one, these views from philosophers. I was afraid you would have told me that I borrowed it from panders. But Socrates reasoned in the manner you do. — By Hercules, you say well; for it is recorded that he was a learned and a wise person. Meanwhile as we are contending, not with blows, but with words, I ask you whether good men should inquire what was the opinion of porters and laborers, or that of the wisest of mankind? Especially too as no truer sentiment than this can be found, nor one more conducive to the interests of human life. For what influence is there which can more deter men from the commission of every kind of evil, than if they become sensible that there are no degrees in sin? That the crime is the same, whether they offer violence to private persons or to magistrates. That in whatever families they have gratified their illicit desire, the turpitude of their lust is the same.

But some one will say, what then? does it make no difference, whether a man murders his father or his slave? If you instance these acts abstractedly, it is difficult to decide what quality they are. If to deprive a parent of life is in itself a most heinous crime, the Saguntines were then parricides, because they chose that their parent should die as freemen rather than live as slaves. Thus a case may happen in which there may be no guilt in depriving a parent of life, and very often we can not without guilt put a slave to death. The circumstances therefore attending this case, and not the nature of the thing, occasion the distinction: these circumstances as they lean to either case, that case becomes the more favorable; but if they appertain alike to both, the acts are then equal. There is this difference — that in killing a slave, if wrong is done, it is a single sin that is committed; but many are involved in taking the life of a father. The object of violence is the man who begat you, the man who fed you, the man who brought you up, the man who gave your position in your home, your family, and the state. This offense is greater by reason of the number of sins (involved in it), and is deserving of a proportionately greater punishment. But in life we are not to consider what should be the punishment of each offense, but what is the rule of right to each individual. We are to consider every thing

that is not becoming as wicked, and every thing which is unlawful as heinous. What! even in the most trifling matters? To be sure; for if we are unable to regulate the course of events, yet we may place a bound to our passions. If a player dances ever so little out of time, if a verse is pronounced by him longer or shorter by a single syllable than it ought to be, he is hooted and hissed off the stage. And shall you, who ought to be better regulated than any gesture, and more regular than any verse shall you be found faulty even in a syllable of conduct? I overlook the trifling faults of a poet; but shall I approve my fellow-citizen's life while he is counting his misdeeds with his fingers? If some of these are trifling, how can it be regarded as more venial when whatever wrong is committed, is committed to the violation of reason and order? Now, if reason and order are violated, nothing can be added by which the offense can seem to be aggravated.

Paradox IV. That Every Fool is a Madman

I will now convict you, by infallible considerations, not as a fool, as I have often done, nor as a villain, as I always do, but as insane and mad. Could the mind of the wise man, fortified as with walls by depth of counsel, by patient endurance of human ills, by contempt of fortune; in short, by all the virtues — a mind that could not be expelled out of this community — shall such a mind be overpowered and taken by storm? For what do we call a community? Surely, not every assembly of thieves and ruffians? Is it then the entire rabble of outlaws and robbers assembled in one place? No; you will doubtless reply. Then this was no community when its laws had no force; when its courts of justice were prostrated; when the custom of the country had fallen into contempt; when, the magistrates having been driven away by the sword, there was not even the name of a senate in the State. Could that gang of ruffians, that assembly of villains which you head in the forum, could those remains of Catiline's frantic conspiracy, diverted to your mad and guilty schemes, be termed a community? I could not therefore be expelled from a community, because no such then existed. I was summoned back to a community when there was a consul in the state, which at the former time there was not; when there was a senate, which then had ceased to exist; when the voice of the

people was free; and when laws and equity, those bonds of a community, had been restored.

But see how much I despised the shafts of your villainy. That you aimed your villainous wrongs at me, I was always aware; but that they reached me I never thought. It is true, you might think that somewhat belonging to me was tumbling down or consuming, when you were demolishing my walls, and applying your detestable torches to the roofs of my houses. But neither I nor any man can call that our own which can be taken away, plundered, or lost. Could you have robbed me of my godlike constancy of mind, of my application, of my vigilance, and of those measures through which, to your confusion, the republic now exists; could you have abolished the eternal memory of this lasting service; far more, had you robbed me of that soul from which these designs emanated; then, indeed, I should have confessed that I had received an injury. But as you neither did nor could do this, your persecution rendered my return glorious, but not my departure miserable. I, therefore, was always a citizen of Rome, but especially at the time when the senate charged foreign nations with my preservation as the best of her citizens to you, you are at this time no citizen, unless the same person can be at once a citizen and an enemy. Can you distinguish a citizen from an enemy by the accidents of nature and place, and not by its affections and actions? You have perpetrated a massacre in the forum, and occupied the temples with bands of armed ruffians; you have set on fire the temples of the gods and the houses of private citizens. If you are a citizen, in what sense was Spartacus an enemy? Can you be a citizen, through whom, for a time, the state had no existence? And do you apply to me your own designation, when all mankind thought that on my departure Rome herself was gone into exile? Thou most frantic of all madmen, wilt thou never look around thee? Wilt thou never consider what thou sayest, or what thou doest? Dost thou not know that exile is the penalty of guilt: but that the journey I set out upon was undertaken by me in consequence of the most illustrious exploits performed by me? All the criminals, all the profligates, of whom you avow yourself the leader, and on whom our laws pronounce the sentence of banishment, are exiles, even though they have not changed their locality. At the time when all our laws doom thee to banishment, wilt thou not be an exile? Is not the man an enemy

who carries about him offensive weapons? A cut-throat belonging to you was taken near the senate-house. Who has murdered a man? You have murdered many. Who is an incendiary? You; for with your own hand you set fire to the temple of the nymphs. Who violated the temples? You pitched your camp in the forum. But what do I talk of well-known laws, all which doom you to exile; for your most intimate friend carried through a bill with reference to you, by which you were condemned to be banished, if it was found that you had presented yourself at the mysteries of the goddess Bona; and you are even accustomed to boast that you did so. As therefore you have by so many laws been doomed to banishment, how is it that you do not shrink from the designation of exile? You say you are still at Rome, and that you were present at the mysteries too: but a man will not be free of the place where he may be, if he can not be there with the sanction of the laws.

Paradox V. That the Wise Man Alone is Free, and That Every Fool is a Slave

Here Let a general be celebrated, or let him be honored with that title, or let him be thought worthy of it. But how or over what free man will he exercise control who can not command his own passions? Let him in the first place bridle his lusts, let him despise pleasures, let him subdue anger, let him get the better of avarice, let him expunge the other stains on his character, and then when he himself is no longer in subjection to disgrace and degradation, the most savage tyrants, let him then, I say, begin to command others. But while he is subservient to these, not only is he not to be regarded as a general, but he is by no means to be considered as even a free man. This is nobly laid down by the most learned men, whose authority I should not make use of were I now addressing myself to an assembly of rustics. But as I speak to the wisest men, to whom these things are not new, why should I falsely pretend that all the application I have bestowed upon this study has been lost? It has been said, then, by the most learned men, that none but the wise man is free. For what is liberty? The power of living as you please. Who, then, is he who lives as he pleases, but the man surely who follows righteousness, who rejoices in fulfilling his duty, and whose path of life has been well considered and

preconcerted; the man who obeys the laws of his country, not out of dread, but pays them respect and reverence, because he thinks that course the most salutary; who neither does nor thinks any thing otherwise than cheerfully and freely; the man, all whose designs and all the actions he performs arise from and are terminated in his proper self; the man who is swayed by nothing so much as by his own inclination and judgment; the man who is master of fortune herself, whose influence is said to be sovereign, agreeably to what the sage poet says, “the fortune of every man is molded by his character.” To the wise man alone it happens, that he does nothing against his will, nothing with pain, nothing by coercion. It would, it is true, require a large discourse to prove that this is so, but it is a briefly stated and admitted principle, that no man but he who is thus constituted can be free. All wicked men therefore are slaves, and this is not so surprising and incredible in fact as it is in words. For they are not slaves in the sense those bondmen are who are the properties of their masters by purchase, or by any law of the state; but if obedience to a disordered, abject mind, destitute of self-control be slavery (and such it is), who can deny that all the dishonest, all the covetous, in short, all the wicked, are slaves?

Can I call the men free whom a woman governs, to whom she gives laws, lays down directions, orders and forbids what to her seems fit; while he can deny and dare refuse nothing that she commands? Does she ask?

He must give. Does she call? He must come. Does she order him off? He must vanish. Does she threaten? He must tremble. For my part, I call such a fellow, though he may have been born in the noblest family, not only a slave, but a most abject slave. And as in a large household, some slaves look upon themselves as more genteel than others, such as porters or gardeners, yet still they are slaves; in like manner, they who are inordinately fond of statues, of pictures, of embossed plate, of works in Corinthian brass, or magnificent palaces, are equally fools with the others. “Nay, but (say they) we are the most eminent men of the state.” Nay! you are not superior to your fellow-slaves. But as in a household, they who handle the furniture, brush it, anoint their masters, who sweep, and water, do not occupy the highest rank of servitude; in like manner they who have abandoned themselves to their passions for these things, occupy nearly the lowest grade of slavery itself.

But you say, I have had the direction of important wars, I have presided over great empires and provinces. Then carry about you a soul worthy of praise. A painting of Echion, or some statue of Polycletus, holds you bereft of your senses: I shall not mention from whom you took it, or by what means you possess it: but when I see you staring, gaping, and uttering cries, I look upon you to be the slave of all these follies. You ask me, "Are not these, then, elegant amusements?" They are: for I too have a cultivated eye; but I beseech you, let these elegances be so regarded as the playthings of boys, and not as the shackles of men. What think you then? If Lucius Mummius, after he had expressed his contempt for all Corinth, had seen one of these men examining most eagerly a Corinthian vase, whether would he have looked upon him as an excellent citizen, or a busy appraiser? If Manius Curius, or some of those Romans who in their villas and their houses had nothing that was costly, nothing besides themselves that was ornamental, should come to life again, and see one who had received the highest honors from the people, taking out of his tank his mullets or his carp, then handling them, and boasting of the abundance of his lampreys, would not the old Roman think that such a man was so very a slave, that he was not even fit for a very high employment in a household? Is the slavery of those men doubtful, who from their greediness for wealth spurn no condition of the hardest servitude? To what meanness of slavery will not the hope of succeeding to an estate make a man stoop? What gesture of the childless rich old fellow does he not observe? He frames his words to his inclination; he does whatever is commanded him; he courts him, he sits by him, he makes him presents. What of these is the part of a free man? What, indeed, is not the mark of an abject slave?

Well! how hard a mistress is that passion which seems to be more characteristic of liberty, I mean that for public preferment, for empire, for provinces; how imperious! how irresistible! It forced the men who thought themselves the greatest men in Rome to be slaves to Cethegus, a person not the most respectable, to send him presents, to wait upon him at nights at his house, to turn suitors, nay, supplicants to him. If this is to be regarded as freedom, what is slavery? But what shall I say when the sway of the passions is over, and when fear, another tyrant, springs out of the consciousness of their misdeeds? What a hard, what a wretched servitude is that, when they must be slaves to

chattering boys; when all who seem to know any thing against them are feared as their masters. As to their judge, how powerful is his sway over them, with what terrors does he afflict the guilty. And is not all fear a slavery? What then is the meaning of that more eloquent than wise speech delivered by the accomplished orator Crassus? "Snatch us from slavery. " What slavery could happen to so illustrious and noble a man? Every terror of a weak, a mean, and a dastardly soul is slavery. He goes on—"Suffer us not to be the slaves of any (you perhaps imagine that he is now about to assert his liberty. Not at all, for what does he add?) — but of you all, to whom we are able and bound to be subservient." He desires not to be free, but to change his master. Now we whose souls are lofty, exalted, and intrenched in virtue, neither can, nor ought to be slaves. Say that you can be a slave, since indeed you can; but say not that you are bound to be one, for no man is bound to any service, unless it is disgraceful not to render it. But enough of this. Now let this man consider if he can be a general, when reason and truth must convince him that he is not so much as a freeman.

Paradox VI. That the Wise Man Alone is Rich

What means this unbecoming ostentation in making mention of your money? You are the only rich man! Immortal gods! ought I not to rejoice that I have heard and learned something? You the only rich man! What if you are not rich at all? What if you even are a beggar? For whom are we to understand to be a rich man? To what kind of a man do we apply the term? To the man as I suppose, whose possessions are such that he may be well contented to live liberally, who has no desire, no hankering after, no wish for more. It is your own mind, and not the talk of others, nor your possessions, that must pronounce you to be rich; for it ought to think that nothing is wanting to it, and care for nothing beyond. Is it satiated, or even contented with your money? I admit, that you are rich; but if for the greed of money you think no source of profit disgraceful (though your order can not make any honest profits), if you every day are cheating, deceiving, craving, jobbing, poaching and pilfering; if you rob the allies and plunder the treasury; if you are forever longing for the bequests of friends, or not even waiting for them, but forging

them yourself, are such practices the indications of a rich or a needy man? It is the mind, and not the coffers of a man, that is to be accounted rich. For though the latter be full, when I see yourself empty, I shall not think you rich; because men measure the amount of riches by that which is sufficient for each individual. Has a man a daughter? then he has need of money. But he has two, then he ought to have a greater fortune; he has more, then he ought to have more fortune still; and if, as we are told of Danaus, he has fifty daughters, so many fortunes require a great estate. For, as I said before, the degree of wealth is dependent on how much each individual has need of. He therefore who has not a great many daughters, but innumerable passions, which are enough to consume a very great estate in a very short time, how can I call such a man rich, when he himself is conscious that he is poor? Many have heard you say, that no man is rich who can not with his income maintain an army; a thing which the people of Rome some time ago, with their so great revenues, could scarcely do. Therefore, according to your maxim, you never can be rich, until so much is brought in to you from your estates, that out of it you can maintain six legions, and large auxiliaries of horse and foot. You therefore, in fact, confess yourself not to be rich, who are so far short of fulfilling what you desire; you, therefore, have never concealed your poverty, your neediness, and your beggary.

For as we see that they who make an honest livelihood by commerce, by industry, by farming the public revenue, have occasion for their earnings; so, whoever sees at your house the crowds of accusers and judges together; whoever sees rich and guilty criminals plotting the corruption of trials with you as their adviser, and your bargainings for pay for the distribution of patronage, your pecuniary interventions in the contests of candidates, your dispatching your freedmen to fleece and plunder the provinces; whoever calls to mind your dispossessing your neighbors, your depopulating the country by your oppressions, your confederacies with slaves, with freedmen, and with clients; the vacating of estates; the proscriptions of the wealthy; the corporations massacred, and the harvest of the times of Sylla; the wills you have forged, and the many men you have made away with; in short, that all things were venal with you in your levies, your decrees, your own votes, and the votes of others; the forum, your house, your speaking, and your silence;

who must not think that such a man confesses he has occasion for all he has acquired? But who can truly designate him as a rich man who needs all his earnings? For the advantage of riches consists in plenty, and this plenty declares the overflow and abundance of the means of life, which, as you can never attain, you can never be rich. I shall say nothing of myself, because as you (and that with reason) despise my fortune — for it is in the opinion of the generality middling, in yours next to nothing, and in mine sufficient — I shall speak to the subject. Now if facts are to be weighed and estimated by us, whether are we more to esteem — the money of Pyrrhus which he sent to Fabricius, or the continency of Fabricius for refusing that money? — the gold of the Samnites, or the answer of Manius Curius? — the inheritance of Lucius Paulus, or the generosity of Africanus, who gave to his brother Quintus his own part of that inheritance? Surely the latter evidences of consummate virtue are more to be esteemed than the former, which are the evidences of wealth. If, therefore, we are to rate every man rich only in proportion to the valuable things he possesses, who can doubt that riches consist in virtue, since no possession, no amount of gold and silver, is more to be valued than virtue?

Immortal gods! Men are not aware how great a revenue is parsimony; for I now proceed to speak of extravagant men, I take my leave of the money-hunter. The revenue one man receives from his estate is six hundred sestertia; I receive one hundred from mine. To that man who has gilded roofs and marble pavements in his villas, and who unboundedly covets statues, pictures, vestments, and furniture, his income is insufficient, not only for his expenditure, but even for the payment of his interest; while there will be some surplus even from my slender income, through cutting off the expenses of voluptuousness. Which, then, is the richer, he who has a deficit, or he who has a surplus? — he who is in need, or he who abounds? — the man whose estate, the greater it is, requires the more to sustain it, or whose estate maintains itself by its own resources?

But why do I talk of myself, who through the contagion of fashion and of the times, am perhaps a little infected with the fault of the age? In the memory of our fathers, Manius Manilius (not to mention continually the Curii and the Luscinii) at length became poor; for he had only a little house at Carani and a farm near Labicum. Now are we, because we have greater possessions, richer

men? I wish we were. But the amount of wealth is not defined by the valuation of the census, but by habit and mode of life; not to be greedy is wealth; not to be extravagant is revenue. Above all things, to be content with what we possess is the greatest and most secure of riches. If therefore they who are the most skilful valuers of property highly estimate fields and certain sites, because such estates are the least liable to injury, how much more valuable is virtue, which never can be wrested, never can be filched from us, which can not be lost by fire or by shipwreck, and which is not alienated by the convulsions of tempest or of time, with which those who are endowed alone are rich, for they alone possess resources which are profitable and eternal; and they are the only men who, being contented with what they possess, think it sufficient, which is the criterion of riches: they hanker after nothing, they are in need of nothing, they feel the want of nothing, and they require nothing. As to the unsatiable and avaricious part of mankind, as they have possessions liable to uncertainty, and at the mercy of chance, they who are forever thirsting after more, and of whom there never was a man for whom what he had sufficed; they are so far from being wealthy and rich, that they are to be regarded as necessitous and beggared.