

Hiero

Xenophon



HIERO

Simonides, the poet, once paid a visit to Hiero, the despot. When both found time to spare, Simonides said: "Hiero, will you please explain something to me that you probably know better than I?" "And pray what is it," said Hiero, "that I can know better than one so wise as yourself?"

"I know you were born a private citizen," he answered, "and are now a despot. Therefore, as you have experienced both fortunes, you probably know better than I how the lives of the despot and the citizen differ as regards the joys and sorrows that fall to man's lot."

"Surely," said Hiero, "seeing that you are still a private citizen, it is for you to remind me of what happens in a citizen's life; and then, I think, I could best show you the differences between the two."

"Well," said Simonides, taking the suggestion, "I think I have observed that sights affect private citizens with pleasure and pain through the eyes, sounds through the ears, smells through the nostrils, meat and drink through the mouth, carnal appetites — of course we all know how.

In the case of cold and heat, things hard and soft, light and heavy, our sensations of pleasure and pain depend on the whole body, I think. In good and evil we seem to feel pleasure or pain, as the case may be — sometimes through the instrumentality of the moral being only, at other times through that of the moral and the physical being together.

Sleep, it seems clear to me, affects us with pleasure; but how and by what means and when are puzzles that I feel less able to solve. And perhaps it is no matter for surprise if our sensations are clearer when we are awake than when we are asleep."

"For my part, Simonides," said Hiero in answer to this, "I cannot say how a despot could have any sensations apart from those you have mentioned. So far, therefore, I fail to see that the despot's life differs in any respect from the citizen's."

"In this respect it does differ," said Simonides: "the pleasures it experiences by means of these various organs are infinitely greater in number, and the pains it undergoes are far fewer." "It is not so, Simonides," retorted Hiero; "I

assure you far fewer pleasures fall to despots than to citizens of modest means, and many more and much greater pains.” “Incredible!” exclaimed Simonides.

“Were it so, how should a despot’s throne be an object of desire to many, even of those who are reputed to be men of ample means? And how should all the world envy despots?”

“For this reason of course,” said Hiero, “that they speculate on the subject without experience of both estates. But I will try to show you that I am speaking the truth, beginning with the sense of sight. That was your first point, if I am not mistaken.

“In the first place, then, taking the objects that we perceive by means of vision, I find by calculation that in regard to sight-seeing, despots are worse off. In every land there are things worth seeing; and in search of these private citizens visit any city they choose, and attend the national festivals, where all things reputed to be most worth seeing are assembled.

But despots are not at all concerned with missions to shows. For it is risky for them to go where they will be no stronger than the crowd, and their property at home is too insecure to be left in charge of others while they are abroad. For they fear to lose their throne, and at the same time to be unable to take vengeance on the authors of the wrong. Perhaps you may say:

‘But, after all, such spectacles come to them even if they stay at home.’ No, no, Simonides, only one in a hundred such; and what there are of them are offered to despots at a price so exorbitant that showmen who exhibit some trifle expect to leave the court in an hour with far more money than they get from all the rest of the world in a lifetime.”

“Ah,” said Simonides, “but if you are worse off in the matter of sight-seeing, the sense of hearing, you know, gives you the advantage. Praise, the sweetest of all sounds, is never lacking, for all your courtiers praise everything you do and every word you utter. Abuse, on the contrary, that most offensive of sounds, is never in your ears, for no one likes to speak evil of a despot in his presence.”

“And what pleasure,” asked Hiero, “comes, do you suppose, of this shrinking from evil words, when one knows well that all harbour evil thoughts against the despot, in spite of their silence? Or what pleasure comes of this praise, do you think, when the praises sound suspiciously like flattery?”

“Well yes,” replied Simonides, “in this of course I agree with you entirely, Hiero, that praise from the freest is sweetest. But this, now, you will not persuade anyone to believe, that the things which support human life do not yield you a far greater number of pleasures.”

“Yes, Simonides, and I know that the reason why most men judge that we have more enjoyment in eating and drinking than private citizens is this; they think that they themselves would find the dinner served at our table better eating than what they get. Anything, in fact, that is better than what they are accustomed to gives them pleasure.

This is why all men look forward to the festivals, except the despots. For their table is always laden with plenty, and admits of no extras on feast days. Here then is one pleasure in respect of which they are worse off than the private citizen, the pleasure of anticipation.

But further, your own experience tells you, I am sure, that the greater the number of superfluous dishes set before a man, the sooner a feeling of repletion comes over him; and so, as regards the duration of his pleasure too, the man who has many courses put before him is worse off than the moderate liver.”

“But surely,” said Simonides, “so long as the appetite holds out, the man who dines at the costlier banquet has far more pleasure than he who is served with the cheaper meal.”

“Don’t you think, Simonides, that the greater a man’s pleasure in any occupation the stronger is his devotion to it?” “Certainly.” “Then do you notice that despots fall to their meal with any more zest than private persons to theirs?” “No, no, of course not; I should rather say with more disgust, according to the common opinion.”

“Well now,” said Hiero, “have you observed all those pickles and sauces that are put before despots — acid, bitter, astringent and so forth?” “Yes, certainly; and very unnatural cates I think them for human beings.”

“Don’t you look on these condiments, then, as mere fads of a jaded and pampered appetite? I know well enough, and I expect you know too, that hearty eaters have no need of these concoctions.”

“Well, I certainly think that those costly unguents with which you anoint your bodies afford more satisfaction to those who are near you than to yourselves, just as the man who has eaten rank food is less conscious of the disagreeable smell than those who come near him.”

“Quite so, and we may add that he who has all sorts of food at all times has no stomach for any sort. Offer a man a dish that he seldom tastes, and he eats a bellyful with gusto.”

“It seems,” remarked Simonides, “as if the satisfaction of the sexual appetites were the only motive that produces in you the craving for despotism. For in this matter you are free to enjoy the fairest that meets your eye.”

“I assure you that we are worse off than private citizens in the matter to which you now refer. First take marriage. It is commonly held that a marriage into a family of greater wealth and influence is most honourable, and is a source of pride and pleasure to the bridegroom. Next to that comes a marriage with equals. A marriage with inferiors is considered positively degrading and useless.

Now unless a despot marries a foreign girl, he is bound to marry beneath him; and so the thing to be desired does not come his way. And whereas it is exceedingly pleasant to receive the attentions of the proudest of ladies, the attentions of slaves are quite unappreciated when shown, and any little shortcomings produce grievous outbursts of anger and annoyance.

“In his relations with young boys, again, even much more than in his relations with women, the despot is at a disadvantage. We all know, I suppose, that passion increases the sweets of sex beyond measure.

Passion, however, is very shy of entering the heart of a despot, for passion is fain to desire not the easy prize, but the hoped-for joy. Therefore, just as a man who is a stranger to thirst can get no satisfaction out of drinking, so he who is a stranger to passion is a stranger to the sweetest pleasures of sex.”

To this speech of Hiero’s Simonides replied, laughing: “How say you, Hiero? You deny that love for boys springs up in a despot’s heart? Then how about your passion for Dailochus, whom they call most fair?”

“Why, Simonides, the explanation, of course, is this: I desire to get from him not what I may have, apparently, for the asking, but that which a despot

should be the last to take.

The fact is, I desire of Dailochus just that which human nature, maybe, drives us to ask of the fair. But what I long to get, I very strongly desire to obtain by his goodwill, and with his consent; but I think I could sooner desire to do myself an injury than to take it from him by force.

For to take from an enemy against his will is, I think, the greatest of all pleasures, but favours from a loved one are very pleasant, I fancy, only when he consents.

For instance, if he is in sympathy with you, how pleasant are his looks, how pleasant his questions and his answers; how very pleasant and ravishing are the struggles and bickerings.

But to take advantage of a favourite against his will seems to me more like brigandage than love. Nay, your brigand finds some pleasure in his gain and in hurting his foe; but to feel pleasure in hurting one whom you love, to be hated for your affection, to disgust him by your touch, surely that is a mortifying experience and pitiful!

The fact is, a private citizen has instant proof that any act of compliance on the part of his beloved is prompted by affection, since he knows that the service rendered is due to no compulsion; but the despot can never feel sure that he is loved.

For we know that acts of service prompted by fear copy as closely as possible the ministrations of affection. Indeed, even plots against despots as often as not are the work of those who profess the deepest affection for them."

To this Simonides replied: "Well, the points that you raise seem to me mere trifles. For I notice that many respected men willingly go short in the matter of meat and drink and delicacies, and deliberately abstain from sexual indulgence.

But I will show you where you have a great advantage over private citizens. Your objects are vast, your attainment swift: you have luxuries in abundance: you own horses unequalled in excellence, arms unmatched in beauty, superb jewelry for women, stately houses full of costly furniture: moreover you have servants many in number and excellent in accomplishments and you are rich in power to harm enemies and reward friends." To this Hiero answered:

“Well, Simonides, that the multitude should be deceived by despotic power surprises me not at all, since the mob seems to guess wholly by appearances that one man is happy, another miserable.

Despotism flaunts its seeming precious treasures outspread before the gaze of the world: but its troubles it keeps concealed in the heart of the despot, in the place where human happiness and unhappiness are stored away.

That this escapes the observation of the multitude I say, I am not surprised. But what does seem surprising to me is that men like you, whose intelligence is supposed to give you a clearer view of most things than your eyes, should be equally blind to it.

But I know well enough by experience, Simonides, and I tell you that despots get the smallest share of the greatest blessings, and have most of the greatest evils.

Thus, for instance, if peace is held to be a greatest blessing to mankind, very little of it falls to the share of despots: if war is a great evil, of that despots receive the largest share.

To begin with, so long as their state is not engaged in a war in which all take part, private citizens are free to go wherever they choose without fear of being killed. But all despots move everywhere as in an enemy's country; at any rate they think they are bound to wear arms continually themselves, and to take an armed escort about with them at all times.

“Secondly, in the event of an expedition against an enemy's country, private citizens at least think themselves safe as soon as they have come home. But when despots reach their own city, they know that they are now among more enemies than ever.

Again, suppose that strangers invade their city in superior force; true, the weaker are conscious of danger while they are outside the walls; yet once they are inside the fortress, all feel themselves bestowed in safety. But the despot is not out of danger even when he passes within the palace gates; nay, it is just there that he thinks he must walk most warily.

Once again, to private citizens a truce or peace brings rest from war; but despots are never at peace with the people subject to their despotism, and no truce can ever make a despot confident.

“There are, of course, wars that are waged by states against one another, and wars waged by the despot against his oppressed subjects. Now the hardships incidental to these wars that fall on the citizen fall also on the despot.

For both must wear arms, be watchful, run risks; and the sting of a defeat is felt by both alike.

So far, then, both are equally affected by wars. But the joys that fall to the citizens of states at war are not experienced by despots.

For, you know, when states defeat their foes in a battle, words fail one to describe the joy they feel in the rout of the enemy, in the pursuit, in the slaughter of the enemy. What transports of triumphant pride! What a halo of glory about them! What comfort to think that they have exalted their city!

Everyone is crying: ‘I had a share in the plan, I killed most’; and it’s hard to find where they don’t revel in falsehood, claiming to have killed more than all that were really slain. So glorious it seems to them to have won a great victory!

But when a despot harbours suspicion, and, well aware that opposition is on foot, puts the conspirators to death, he knows that he does not exalt the city as a whole; he understands that the number of his subjects will be less; he cannot look cheerful; nor does he boast himself of his achievement; nay, he belittles the occurrence as much as possible, and explains, while he is at the work, that there is nothing wrong in what he has done, so far are his deeds from seeming honourable even to himself.

Even the death of those whom he feared does not restore him to confidence; he is yet more on his guard afterwards than before. And now I have shown you the kind of war that a despot wages continually.

“Turn next to friendship, and behold how despots share in it. First let us consider whether friendship is a great blessing to mankind.

When a man is loved by friends, I take it, they rejoice at his presence, delight to do him good, miss him when he is absent, greet him most joyfully on his return, rejoice with him in his good fortune, unite in aiding him when they see him tripping. Even states are not blind to the fact that friendship is a very great blessing, and very delightful to men. At any rate, many states have a law that adulterers only may be put to death with impunity, obviously for this

reason, because they believe them to be destroyers of the wife's friendship with her husband;

although, when a woman's lapse is the result of some accident, husbands do not honour their wives any less on that account, provided that wives seem to reserve their affection unblemished.

In my judgment, to be loved is a blessing so precious that I believe good things fall literally of themselves on him who is loved from gods and men alike.

"Such, then, is the nature of this possession — a possession wherein despots above all other men are stinted. If you want to know that I am speaking the truth, Simonides, consider the question in this way.

The firmest friendships, I take it, are supposed to be those that unite parents to children, children to parents, wives to husbands, comrades to comrades.

Now you will find, if you will but observe, that private citizens are, in fact, loved most deeply by these. But what of despots? Many have slain their own children; many have themselves been murdered by their children; many brothers, partners in despotism, have perished by each other's hand; many have been destroyed even by their own wives, aye, and by comrades whom they accounted their closest friends.

Seeing, then, that they are so hated by those who are bound by natural ties and constrained by custom to love them most, how are we to suppose that they are loved by any other being?

"Next take confidence. Surely he who has very little of that is stinted in a great blessing? What companionship is pleasant without mutual trust? What intercourse between husband and wife is delightful without confidence? What squire is pleasant if he is not trusted?

Now of this confidence in others despots enjoy the smallest share. They go in constant suspicion even of their meat and drink; they bid their servitors taste them first, before the libation is offered to the gods, because of their misgiving that they may sup poison in the dish or the bowl.

Again, to all other men their fatherland is very precious. For citizens ward one another without pay from their slaves and from evildoers, to the end that none of the citizens may perish by a violent death.

They have gone so far in measures of precaution that many have made a law whereby even the companion of the bloodguilty is deemed impure; and so — thanks to the fatherland — every citizen lives in security.

But for despots the position is the reverse in this case too. Instead of avenging them, the cities heap honours on the slayer of the despot; and, whereas they exclude the murderers of private persons from the temples, the cities, so far from treating assassins in the same manner, actually put up statues of them in the holy places.

“If you suppose that just because he has more possessions than the private citizen, the despot gets more enjoyment out of them, this is not so either, Simonides. Trained athletes feel no pleasure when they prove superior to amateurs, but they are cut to the quick when they are beaten by a rival athlete; in like manner the despot feels no pleasure when he is seen to possess more than private citizens, but is vexed when he has less than other despots; for he regards them as his rivals in wealth.

Nor even does the despot gain the object of his desire any quicker than the private citizen. For the private citizen desires a house or a farm or a servant; but the despot covets cities or wide territory or harbours or strong citadels, and these are far more difficult and perilous to acquire than the objects that attract the citizen.

And, moreover, you will find that even poverty is rarer among private citizens than among despots. For much and little are to be measured not by number, but in relation to the owner’s needs; so that what is more than enough is much, and what is less than enough is little.

Therefore, the despot with his abundance of wealth has less to meet his necessary expenses than the private citizen. For while private citizens can cut down the daily expenditure as they please, despots cannot, since the largest items in their expenses and the most essential are the sums they spend on the life-guards, and to curtail any of these means ruin.

Besides, when men can have all they need by honest means, why pity them as though they were poor? May not those who through want of money are driven to evil and unseemly expedients in order to live, more justly be accounted wretched and poverty-stricken?

Now, despots are not seldom forced into the crime of robbing temples and their fellow men through chronic want of cash to meet their necessary expenses. Living, as it were, in a perpetual state of war, they are forced to maintain an army, or they perish.

“Despots are oppressed by yet another trouble, Simonides, which I will tell you of. They recognize a stout-hearted, a wise or an upright man as easily as private citizens do. But instead of admiring such men, they fear them, — the brave lest they strike a bold stroke for freedom, the wise lest they hatch a plot, the upright lest the people desire them for leaders.

When they get rid of such men through fear, who are left for their use, save only the unrighteous, the vicious and the servile, — the unrighteous being trusted because, like the despots, they fear that the cities may some day shake off the yoke and prove their masters, the vicious on account of the licence they enjoy as things are, the servile because even they themselves have no desire for freedom? This too, then, is a heavy trouble, in my opinion, to see the good in some men, and yet perforce to employ others.

“Furthermore, even a despot must needs love his city, for without the city he can enjoy neither safety nor happiness. But despotism forces him to find fault even with his fatherland. For he has no pleasure in seeing that the citizens are stout-hearted and well armed; rather he delights to make the foreigners more formidable than the citizens, and these he employs as a body-guard.

Again, even when favourable seasons yield abundance of good things, the despot is a stranger to the general joy; for the needier the people, the humbler he thinks to find them.

“But now, Simonides,” he continued, “I want to show you all those delights that were mine when I was a private citizen, but which I now find are withheld from me since the day I became a despot.

I communed with my fellows then: they pleased me and I pleased them. I communed with myself whenever I desired rest. I passed the time in carousing, often till I forgot all the troubles of mortal life, often till my soul was absorbed in songs and revels and dances, often till the desire of sleep fell on me and all the company.

But now I am cut off from those who had pleasure in me, since slaves instead of friends are my comrades; I am cut off from my pleasant intercourse

with them, since I see in them no sign of good-will towards me. Drink and sleep I avoid as a snare.

To fear a crowd, and yet fear solitude, to fear to go unguarded, and yet fear the very men who guard you, to recoil from attendants unarmed and yet dislike to see them armed — surely that is a cruel predicament!

And then, to trust foreigners more than citizens, strangers more than Greeks, to long to keep free men slaves, and yet be forced to make slaves free — do you not think that all these are sure tokens of a soul that is crushed with fear?

Fear, you know, is not only painful in itself by reason of its presence in the soul, but by haunting us even in our pleasures it spoils them utterly.

“If, like me, you are acquainted with war, Simonides, and ever had the enemy’s battle-line close in front of you, call to mind what sort of food you ate at that time, and what sort of sleep you slept.

I tell you, the pains that despots suffer are such as you suffered then. Nay, they are still more terrible; for despots believe that they see enemies not in front alone, but all around them.” To this Simonides made answer:

“Excellent words in part, I grant! War is indeed a fearsome thing: nevertheless, Hiero, our way, when we are on active service, is this: we post sentries to guard us, and sup and sleep with a good courage.” Then Hiero answered:

“No doubt you do, Simonides! For your sentries have sentries in front of them — the laws, — and so they fear for their own skins and relieve you of fear. But despots hire their guards like harvesters.

Now the chief qualification required in the guards, I presume, is faithfulness. But it is far harder to find one faithful guard than hundreds of workmen for any kind of work, especially when money supplies the guards, and they have it in their power to get far more in a moment by assassinating the despot than they receive from him for years of service among his guards.

“You said that you envy us our unrivalled power to confer benefits on our friends, and our unrivalled success in crushing our enemies. But that is another delusion.

For how can you possibly feel that you benefit friends when you know well that he who receives most from you would be delighted to get out of your sight as quickly as possible? For, no matter what a man has received from a despot, nobody regards it as his own, until he is outside the giver's dominion.

Or again, how can you say that despots more than others are able to crush enemies, when they know well that all who are subject to their despotism are their enemies and that it is impossible to put them all to death or imprison them — else who will be left for the despot to rule over? — and, knowing them to be their enemies, they must beware of them, and, nevertheless, must needs make use of them?

And I can assure you of this, Simonides: when a despot fears any citizen, he is reluctant to see him alive, and yet reluctant to put him to death. To illustrate my point, suppose that a good horse makes his master afraid that he will do him some fatal mischief: the man will feel reluctant to slaughter him on account of his good qualities, and yet his anxiety lest the animal may work some fatal mischief in a moment of danger will make him reluctant to keep him alive and use him.

Yes, and this is equally true of all possessions that are troublesome as well as useful: it is painful to possess them, and painful to get rid of them.”

These statements drew from Simonides the following reply: “A great thing, surely, Hiero, is the honour for which men strive so earnestly that they undergo any toil and endure any danger to win it!

And what if despotism brings all those troubles that you tell of, yet such men as you, it seems, rush headlong into it that you may have honour, that all men may carry out your behests in all things without question, that the eyes of all may wait on you, that all may rise from their seats and make way for you, that all in your presence may glorify you by deed and word alike. (Such, in fact, is the behaviour of subjects to despots and to anyone else who happens to be their hero at the moment.)

For indeed it seems to me, Hiero, that in this man differs from other animals — I mean, in this craving for honour. In meat and drink and sleep and sex all creatures alike seem to take pleasure; but love of honour is rooted neither in the brute beasts nor in every human being. But they in whom is implanted a passion for honour and praise, these are they who differ most

from the beasts of the field, these are accounted men and not mere human beings.

And so, in my opinion, you have good reason for bearing all those burdens that despotism lays on you, in that you are honoured above all other men. For no human joy seems to be more nearly akin to that of heaven than the gladness which attends upon honours.” To this Hiero replied:

“Ah, Simonides, I think even the honours enjoyed by despots bear a close resemblance to their courtships, as I have described them to you.

The services of the indifferent seemed to us not acts of grace, and favours extorted appeared to give no pleasure. And so it is with the services proffered by men in fear: they are not honours.

For how can we say that men who are forced to rise from their seats rise to honour their oppressors, or that men who make way for their superiors desire to honour their oppressors?

And as for presents, most men offer them to one whom they hate, and that too at the moment when they have cause to fear some evil at his hands. These acts, I suppose, may not unfairly be taken for acts of servility; but honours, I should say, express the very opposite feelings.

For whenever men feel that some person is competent to be their benefactor, and come to regard him as the fountain of blessings, so that henceforward his praise is ever on their lips, everyone of them looks on him as his peculiar blessing, they make way for him spontaneously and rise from their seats, through love and not through fear, crown him for his generosity and beneficence, and bring him freewill offerings, these same men in my opinion, honour that person truly by such services, and he who is accounted worthy of them is honoured in very deed.

And, for myself, I count him a happy man who is honoured thus; for I perceive that, instead of being exposed to treason, he is an object of solicitude, lest harm befall him, and he lives his life unassailed by fear and malice and danger, and enjoys unbroken happiness. But what is the despot’s lot? I tell you, Simonides, he lives day and night like one condemned by the judgment of all men to die for his wickedness.”

When Simonides had listened to all this he asked: "Pray, how comes it, Hiero, if despotism is a thing so vile, and this is your verdict, that you do not rid yourself of so great an evil, and that none other, for that matter, who has once acquired it, ever yet surrendered despotic power?"

"Simonides," said he, "this is the crowning misery of despotic power, that it cannot even be got rid of. For how could any despot ever find means to repay in full all whom he has robbed, or himself serve all the terms of imprisonment that he has inflicted? Or how could he forfeit a life for every man whom he has put to death?

Ah, Simonides," he cried, "if it profits any man to hang himself, know what my finding is: a despot has most to gain by it, since he alone can neither keep nor lay down his troubles with profit."

"Well, Hiero," retorted Simonides, "I am not surprised that you are out of heart with despotism for the moment, since you hold that it cuts you off from gaining the affection of mankind, which you covet. Nevertheless, I think I can show you that rule so far from being a bar to popularity, actually has the advantage of a citizen's life.

In trying to discover whether this is so, let us for the time being pass over the question whether the ruler, because of his greater power, is able to confer more favours. Assume that the citizen and the despot act alike, and consider which of the two wins the greater measure of gratitude from the same actions. "You shall have the most trifling examples to begin with.

First, suppose that two men greet someone with a friendly remark on seeing him. One is a ruler, the other a citizen. In this case which greeting, do you think, is the more delightful to the hearer? Or again, both commend the same man. Which commendation, do you think, is the more welcome? Suppose that each does the honours when he offers sacrifice. Which invitation, think you, will be accepted with the more sincere thanks?

Suppose they are equally attentive to a sick man. Is it not obvious that the attentions of the mightiest bring most comfort to the patient? Suppose they give presents of equal value. Is it not clear in this case too that half the number of favours bestowed by the mightiest count for more than the whole of the plain citizen's gift?

Nay, to my way of thinking, even the gods cause a peculiar honour and favour to dance attendance on a great ruler. For not only does rule add dignity of presence to a man, but we find more pleasure in the sight of that man when he is a ruler than when he is a mere citizen, and we take more pride in the conversation of those who rank above us than in that of our equals.

And favourites, mark you, who were the subject of your bitterest complaint against despotism, are not offended by old age in a ruler, and take no account of ugliness in the patron with whom they happen to be associated. For high rank in itself is a most striking embellishment to the person: it casts a shade over anything repulsive in him and shows up his best features in a high light.

Moreover, inasmuch as equal services rendered by you rulers are rewarded with deeper gratitude, surely, when you have the power of doing far more for others by your activities, and can lavish far more gifts on them, it is natural that you should be much more deeply loved than private citizens.” Hiero instantly rejoined:

“Indeed it is not so, Simonides; for we are forced to engage far oftener than private citizens in transactions that make men hated.

Thus, we must extort money in order to find the cash to pay for what we want: we must compel men to guard whatever needs protection: we must punish wrongdoers; we must check those who would fain wax insolent; and when a crisis arises that calls for the immediate despatch of forces by land and sea, we must see that there is no dilly-dallying.

Further, a great despot must needs have mercenaries; and no burden presses more heavily on the citizens than that, since they believe that these troops are maintained not in the interests of equality, but for the despot’s personal ends.”

In answer to this Simonides said: “Well, Hiero, I do not deny that all these matters must receive attention. But I should divide a ruler’s activities into two classes, those that lead inevitably to unpopularity, and those that are greeted with thanks.

The duty of teaching the people what things are best, and of dispensing praise and honour to those who accomplish the same most efficiently, is a form of activity that is greeted with thanks. The duty of pronouncing censure,

using coercion, inflicting pains and penalties on those who come short in any respect, is one that must of necessity give rise to a certain amount of unpopularity.

Therefore my sentence is that a great ruler should delegate to others the task of punishing those who require to be coerced, and should reserve to himself the privilege of awarding the prizes. The excellence of this arrangement is established by daily experience.

Thus, when we want to have a choral competition, the ruler offers prizes, but the task of assembling the choirs is delegated to choir-masters, and others have the task of training them and coercing those who come short in any respect. Obviously, then, in this case, the pleasant part falls to the ruler, the disagreeables fall to others.

Why, then, should not all other public affairs be managed on this principle? For all communities are divided into parts — ‘tribes,’ ‘wards,’ ‘unions,’ as the case may be — and every one of these parts is subject to its appointed ruler.

If, then, the analogy of the choruses were followed and prizes were offered to these parts for excellence of equipment, good discipline, horsemanship, courage in the field and fair dealing in business, the natural outcome would be competition, and consequently an earnest endeavour to improve in all these respects too.

And as a matter of course, with the prospect of reward there would be more despatch in starting for the appointed place, and greater promptitude in the payment of war taxes, whenever occasion required. Nay, agriculture itself, most useful of all occupations, but just the one in which the spirit of competition is conspicuous by its absence, would make great progress if prizes were offered for the farm or the village that can show the best cultivation, and many good results would follow for those citizens who threw themselves vigorously into this occupation.

For apart from the consequent increase in the revenues, sobriety far more commonly goes with industry; and remember, vices rarely flourish among the fully employed.

If commerce also brings gain to a city, the award of honours for diligence in business would attract a larger number to a commercial career. And were it

made clear that the discovery of some way of raising revenue without hurting anyone will also be rewarded, this field of research too would not be unoccupied.

In a word, once it becomes clear in every department that any good suggestion will not go unrewarded, many will be encouraged by that knowledge to apply themselves to some promising form of investigation. And when there is a wide-spread interest in useful subjects, an increase of discovery and achievement is bound to come.

“In case you fear, Hiero, that the cost of offering prizes for many subjects may prove heavy, you should reflect that no commodities are cheaper than those that are bought for a prize. Think of the large sums that men are induced to spend on horse-races, gymnastic and choral competitions, and the long course of training and practice they undergo for the sake of a paltry prize.”

“Well, Simonides,” said Hiero, “I think you are right in saying that. But what about the mercenaries? Can you tell me how to employ them without incurring unpopularity? Or do you say that a ruler, once he becomes popular, will have no further need of a bodyguard?”

“No, no, he will need them, of course,” said Simonides. “For I know that some human beings are like horses — the more they get what they want, the more unruly they are apt to become.

The way to manage men like that is to put the fear of the bodyguard into them. And as for the gentlemen, you can probably confer greater benefits on them by employing mercenaries than by any other means.

For I presume that you maintain the force primarily to protect yourself. But masters have often been murdered by their slaves. If therefore the first duty enjoined on the mercenaries were to act as the bodyguard of the whole community and render help to all, in case they got wind of any such intention — there are black sheep in every fold, as we all know — I say, if they were under orders to guard the citizens as well as the depot, the citizens would know that this is one service rendered to them by the mercenaries.

Nor is this all: for naturally the mercenaries would also be able to give fearlessness and security in the fullest measure to the labourers and cattle in the country, and the benefit would not be confined to your own estates, but would be felt up and down the countryside.

Again, they are competent to afford the citizens leisure for attending to their private affairs by guarding the vital positions. Besides, should an enemy plan a secret and sudden attack, what handier agents can be found for detecting or preventing their design than a standing force, armed and organized? Or once more, when the citizens go campaigning, what is more useful to them than mercenaries? For these are, as a matter of course, the readiest to bear the brunt of toil and danger and watching.

And must not those who possess a standing force impose on border states a strong desire for peace? For nothing equals an organized body of men, whether for protecting the property of friends or for thwarting the plans of enemies.

Further, when the citizens get it into their heads that these troops do no harm to the innocent and hold the would-be malefactor in check, come to the rescue of the wronged, care for the citizens and shield them from danger, surely they are bound to pay the cost of them with a right good-will. At all events they keep guards in their homes for less important objects than these.

“Nor should you hesitate to draw on your private property, Hiero, for the common good. For in my opinion the sums that a great despot spends on the city are more truly necessary expenses than the money he spends on himself.

But let us go into details. First, which do you suppose is likely to bring you more credit, to own a palace adorned with priceless objects of art, or to have the whole city garnished with walls and temples and verandahs and market-places and harbours?

Which will make you look more terrible to the enemy, to dazzle all beholders with your own glittering panoply, or to present the whole of your people in goodly armour?

Which plan, think you, will yield revenues more abounding, to keep only your own capital employed, or to contrive to bring the capital of all the citizens into employment?

And what about the breeding of chariot horses, commonly considered the noblest and grandest business in the world? By which method do you think you will gain most credit for that, if you out-do all other Greeks in the number of teams you breed and send to the festivals, or if the greatest number of breeders and the greatest number of competitors are drawn from your city?

And how is the nobler victory gained, by the excellence of your team, or by the prosperity of the city of which you are the head?

Indeed my own opinion is that it is not even seemly for a great despot to compete with private citizens. For your victory would excite envy rather than admiration, on the ground that many estates supply the money that you spend, and no defeat would be greeted with so much ridicule as yours.

I tell you, Hiero, you have to compete with other heads of states, and if you cause your state to surpass theirs in prosperity, be well assured that you are the victor in the noblest and grandest competition in the world.

And in the first place you will forthwith have secured just what you really want, the affection of your subjects. Secondly, your victory will not be proclaimed by one herald's voice, but all the world will tell of your virtue.

The observed of all observers' eyes, you will be a hero, not only to private citizens, but to many states: you will be admired not only in your home, but in public among all men.

And you will be free to go wherever you choose, so far as safety is concerned, to see the sights, and equally free to enjoy them in your home; for you will have a throng of aspirants before you, some eager to display something wise or beautiful or good, others longing to serve you.

Everyone present will be an ally, everyone absent will long to see you. "Thus you will be not only the loved, but the adored of mankind. You will need not to court the fair, but to listen patiently to their suit. Anxiety for your welfare will fall not on yourself, but on others.

You will have the willing obedience of your subjects; you will mark their unsolicited care for you; and should any danger arise, you will find in them not merely allies, but champions and zealots. Accounted worthy of many gifts, and at no loss for some man of goodwill with whom to share them, you will find all rejoicing in your good fortune, all fighting for your interests, as though they were their own.

And all the riches in the houses of your friends will be yours in fee. "Take heart then, Hiero; enrich your friends, for so you will enrich yourself. Exalt the state, for so you will deck yourself with power.

Get her allies [for so you will win supporters for yourself]. Account the fatherland your estate, the citizens your comrades, friends your own children, your sons possessions dear as life. And try to surpass all these in deeds of kindness.

For if you out-do your friends in kindness, it is certain that your enemies will not be able to resist you. “And if you do all these things, rest assured that you will be possessed of the fairest and most blessed possession in the world; for none will be jealous of your happiness.”