

One of the truths that the doctrine of Original Sin teaches us is that our world, this nexus of social and political relationships, is not (as the frothy optimism of secularizing theologians would have us believe) free. It is a world that needs conversion and redemption. By the fact that they are squeezed out to live on or outside the fringes of our society and culture, degraded and rejected by that culture, the poor are a sign of our society's unredeemed condition. By being the casualties of our society they articulate that society's failure to create genuinely free human community, and hence, if they are taken notice of, they offer our society the possibility of its own transformation, renewal and growth. That is why they are a special possession of God in the Old Testament: that is why they are called blessed by Jesus: that is perhaps why Jesus told his disciples 'the poor you always have with you'. The poor are a constant reminder to the Church of her mission to be the sign and instrument in our world of the genuinely free human community of the kingdom of God. We lose credibility if we fail to be the instrument, while at the same time trying to be the sign. By working for the poor the Christian is working for the salvation of man, he is preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup>*Sacramentum Mundi* edited by Karl Rahner and Cornelius Ernst, vol. 5. Burnes and Oates, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>*Philosophical Investigations* E.T. 2nd edition, Blackwell, Oxford, 11xi p.219e.

<sup>3</sup>For a more thorough discussion of this theme see *The Body as Language* Terry Eagleton, Sheed and Ward, 1970, or *Law Love and Language* Herbert McCabe OP, Sheed and Ward, 1968.

# Glaucou's Question reconsidered: A reply to Mr. Hugo Meynell

by William P. Frerking

In a recent article in *New Blackfriars* ['Glaucou's Question', Vol. 53, No. 621 (February 1972), pp. 73-82.] Hugo Meynell raises again the famous question posed to Socrates by Glaucou and Adeimantus in Plato's *Republic*: What is the use, to oneself, of being good? What is the benefit, not to others, or to society, but to oneself, of being virtuous? Is the good man, just in virtue of being good, and regardless of any considerations, somehow more fortunate, better off, more blessed, happier, than any bad man? ' "Let us take a stark and extreme case," ' says Meynell's Glaucou, ' "the contrast between a bad man, with all

possible worldly goods, honoured among men as though he were good; and a good man, regarded as bad and, in consequence, poor and persecuted, hated, mocked, and finally enduring an agonizing death by being impaled. Who is going to say that the good man in this case is more fortunate than the bad?"' (p. 74). No one can truly say this, Meynell argues, unless some type of eschatological doctrine is true, according to which in another life the good will be unequivocally vindicated and rewarded and the bad duly punished. As regards this life, he thinks that nothing is more certain than that the good are often worse off, less fortunate, blessed and happy than the morally mediocre, and that indeed 'the oppressors and the deceivers'—even those who are extremely wicked—'are often greatly the better off for their practice of oppression and deception.' (p. 79).

I shall not be able to rise to Glaucon's and Meynell's challenge with the simple—but as it appears to me, too simple—forcefulness of the Stoic doctrine that human good just is virtue, and nothing else. so that we can say that even Glaucon's suffering just man, just in virtue of being just, is happy, and more happy than any wicked man, no matter how prosperous. I think with Aristotle that 'possession of virtue seems actually compatible with . . . the greatest sufferings and misfortunes; but a man who was living so no one would call happy, unless he were maintaining a thesis at all costs.' (*N.E.*, I, 5). Nevertheless, I am very far from agreeing with Hugo Meynell that, short of eschatology, there's no good—for me—in being good. I propose to investigate some aspects of the relationship between virtue and happiness, and then see if it is not possible to give a more welcome, if more differentiated, answer to Glaucon's question.

It will be useful to begin with a brief analysis of Meynell's own paper. His argument suffers considerably from a failure to discuss explicitly just what happiness is, and what it consists in. As a result, a certain view on these matters manages to insinuate itself into the article while largely escaping examination. This view, though perhaps rather widely held, is false, and it makes it impossible to grasp the true relationship between virtue and happiness. It will therefore be useful to isolate this view so that a more adequate theory can be developed by way of contrast.

In a paper entitled 'Glaucon's Question' it is odd how little attention that question in fact receives. Of course, after his forceful statement of the question at the beginning of the article, Meynell can hardly avoid making a few remarks about Plato's own answer to the question. He says that Plato tends to give two sorts of answer to the question, typified, e.g., by 'the argument of Socrates in the *Gorgias* . . . (which) may not unfairly be summed up as follows. "Any decent man will find that good behaviour suits him better than bad; and if you are not a decent man, but someone depraved like Callicles, there are always Rhadmanthus and the rest in the next life to make you wish

you had behaved better in this one" (p. 74). Meynell's comment on this is two-fold: 'The weight that Plato's Socrates places on his eschatological tales suggests that he had lost his case so far as the present life is concerned, and that he knew he had lost it' (p. 75). And secondly, speaking of the version of the argument in the *Republic*, he remarks that 'It has been rightly said that Socrates in the *Republic* completely fails to prove his case, that the good are more fortunate than the bad, the just than the unjust (sc. even in respect of the present life)', and in a footnote he refers us without further comment to an article by David Sachs ['A Fallacy in Plato's *Republic*', in *Philosophical Review* LXXII (1963), pp. 141-158].

As to the first point: It can be argued that Plato did not intend his myths to have any other-worldly reference at all, but used them to articulate this-worldly experiences of the soul too complex and profound to be expressed analytically. (See, e.g., Eric Veegelin, *Order and History*, vol. III, *Plato and Aristotle*, pp. 40-45 on the *Gorgias* Myth of the Judgment, and in general the index of that volume under 'myth'). But even if the myth of the judgment is to be interpreted as Meynell suggests, one might argue that it was Plato's view that such doctrines are to be relied upon not so much for showing that the good are more fortunate than the bad—we can see that anyway, even in respect of this life—but rather for asserting—what is a different matter—the final fulfilment of the order of justice by the vindication of the good and the punishment of the bad. They might also be useful for providing a motive for all men, but most especially for the bad, to become more just. But it is only through confusing the notion of an *effective motive* with that of an *adequate explanation of why the good are fortunate* that Meynell can suppose that relying on these doctrines to supply the former is a tacit confession of one's lack of the latter.

As for the second point: Sachs claims that Plato's main argument is vitiated by a fallacy of equivocation. Plato, he says, operates with two conceptions of justice: the ordinary conception, and the 'Platonic' conception; according to the latter, a man is 'Platonically just' when his soul is disposed in a certain way. Plato argues—whether successfully or not, Sachs does not consider—that a Platonically just man will be happy just in proportion to his justice, regardless of his circumstances. But his declaration of 'Q.E.D.' to Glaucon will not do until he provides a proof that a Platonically just man will also be just in the ordinary sense, and vice versa—and this he fails to do. I cannot discuss Sachs' paper in detail here. However, the heart of his argument in his assertion that the ordering of the soul's parts in which Platonic justice consists 'constitutes wisdom or intelligence, courage, and self-control . . . (but) neither as usually understood nor as Plato characterizes them are those virtues inconsistent with performing any of the

acts Thrasymachus and Glaucon mention as examples of injustice' (pp. 154-5).

It would seem that Sachs has simply failed to grasp what Plato means by *sophia*, or *phronesis*. He means not mere *cleverness*, but at least what Aristotle means by *phronesis* in the *N.E.*, and what we mean by 'wisdom', the wisdom of the 'wise man', the 'sage'. And I should say that, both as usually understood and as Plato characterizes it, this wisdom is incompatible with injustice, in the ordinary sense. In any case, Sach's criticism is a purely formal one; even if it is successful it does not tell against the thesis that virtue is the greatest of goods, but only against Plato's attempt to show this.

I should say, then, that the remarks Meynell makes in his treatment of Plato do not add up to much of a case against the thesis that virtue, or virtuous activity, is an intrinsic good, or the greatest of intrinsic goods, and that it constitutes a large part, or an essential part, or even the whole, of happiness. And in an article on Glaucon's question, on the question, as Meynell himself puts it, whether 'there is any indication that the good man is somehow, *just by virtue of being good*, more fortunate than the bad.' (p. 74, emphasis added), one might well have expected a fairly full examination of these theses. But as a matter of fact, they are not so much as mentioned in the rest of the article.<sup>1</sup> Instead, a certain preconception as to the nature of happiness, and as to what it consists in, is allowed to dominate the rest of the argument without further examination. What this preconception is can be seen quite clearly in, e.g., Meynell's marks on Aristotle. He writes:

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is perhaps the world's greatest essay in moral philosophy. But its conception of the moral ideal for man has frequently and not implausibly been held to be inadequate; Aristotelian virtue suits a man very well for social and political life, one feels, just because Aristotelian virtue is very different from heroic virtue, the virtue displayed by the just and persecuted man of Glaucon's example. Glaucon's just man was willing to abjure friendship and wealth for the sake of being good; Aristotle knows that one needs friends and goods in order to be happy, and hence does not envisage the kind of virtue which is apt to lose a man wealth and friends (*Nicomachean Ethics*, I 8). It is also worth noting that Aristotelian virtue seems to presuppose a particular kind of social and political context, that is, one either in which there is not much conflict between those actions and dispositions which really tend to promote social justice, and those which gain their agents friends and material benefits; or in which people fail to advert to that class of actions which tend to be the former end while being incompatible with the latter. A man who lives in a society which shares high ideals of benevolence will be likely to tend to find happiness by being, or at least seeming to be, fairly benevolent. But where gross social evils exist, which are greatly to the *prima facie*

benefit of one class of a society at the expense of another, the man who has it in mind to right them will, particularly if he is a member of the favoured classes, have to decide whether he would rather be virtuous or happy. A man could gain favour with the Athenian public by financing a trireme or the production of a play by Sophocles, he would not have done so by working towards the fundamental amelioration of the condition of women—who Aristotle says are of less value than men—or of slaves, who he says have no intrinsic value at all. (VIII, 11) (p. 75).

As far as one can see from these remarks, Meynell thinks that happiness consists in some sort of social and political life, viz., one in which a man possesses such things as 'friends', 'wealth' ('material benefits'), 'favour . . . with the public'. Apparently it is not the actions themselves of social and political living which constitute happiness, but rather their *consequences or effects*, the goods which they 'gain' their agent, either directly, or as a kind of regard from his social group.

Aristotle himself would have called the possession of such external and bodily goods not *happiness (eudaimonia)* but *prosperity (euemeria)*, and would have held that such prosperity was not the same thing as happiness, nor a sufficient condition for it. And in this he was surely right: it is a commonplace that the man who 'has everything' can still not be happy, and may even be desperately miserable. Moreover, Aristotle's idea of what makes up prosperity is not quite the same as Meynell's picture of 'happiness'. Superficially, it is true they seem to be identical: As we have just seen, Meynell would include such things as 'friends', 'wealth' ('material benefits') 'favour with the . . . public' as parts of 'happiness'; later he mentions such 'negative' goods as the avoidance of exile, imprisonment, torture—and, at least in some cases, of 'self-awareness' ('the acknowledgment of oneself as one is is always more or less unendurable') (all p. 80). And similarly (as it would appear), Aristotle in *N.E.* I, 8 mentions as aspects of prosperity: friends, riches, political power, good birth, goodly children, beauty, and avoidance of ugliness, low birth, solitariness, childlessness, bad children or friends, the loss of good children or friends by death. (Cf. also the external and bodily goods Aristotle lists as parts of happiness as popularly conceived in *Rhet.* I.5).

Nevertheless, there is a very important difference between Aristotle's lists and Meynell's, and again Aristotle seems to have got to the truth of the matter. For Aristotle clearly thinks that prosperity consists in those external and bodily goods which a *good* man can enjoy. While *some* (but not all) of the goods he mentions can also be enjoyed by a bad man, none can be enjoyed *only* by a bad man. Meynell, on the other hand, seems to picture 'happiness' as consisting in the sorts of external and bodily 'goods' which a man who is, at best, morally mediocre, might enjoy; and some of the things he mentions are not true goods at all, and could be enjoyed only by a bad man. To mention

only a few examples: Take 'friends', listed by both Aristotle and Meynell. While it would be going too far to say that Aristotle completely excludes friendships for utility and pleasure from happiness, especially as popularly conceived, nevertheless it is *good* friends, i.e. friends for the sake of virtue, which he has principally in mind. (See *N.E.*, IX, 9). But it seems doubtful that this is what Meynell can have in mind, since his friendships are apparently the types of association which men can have with one another who are the sort who *pretend* to be benevolent, or who change their attitude to colour prejudice as is expedient (pp. 75, 76). Men like this, however, would be precisely the sort who are *bad* friends, according to Aristotle, and as we have seen in *N.E.* I, 8, he says that the possession of *such* friends, far from being part of true prosperity, is part of its opposite. Again, at several points in Meynell's article we hear of a man who is faced with a situation in which he must choose between virtue and 'happiness'. In each case the situation involves a choice whether or not to co-operate in some way or another in an injustice which is in the interest of that man's social class. Apparently the man who chooses to go the way of injustice is choosing 'happiness' insofar as he can thereby 'gain favour with the . . . public' (p. 75); or 'get good marks from his social group' (p. 76), or 'curry favour with [his] group' (p. 80). It thus seems that it makes no difference for Meynell's 'happiness' whether the honour or good repute which helps to constitute it is true or false, justified or unjustified: what is needed for 'happiness' is that the group think well of me: no matter *why* they think well of me, nor whether I really am or have that for which they think well of me. Aristotle, too, lists honour as one of the external goods in which a happy man may prosper. But for him, the question whether the honour was true or false, deserved or undeserved, would have made all the difference as to whether it was part of true prosperity, or not. (Cf. *Rhet.* I.5, 1361a 27ff). Finally, it is perhaps too obvious to mention that avoidance of self-awareness could be 'good' only from the bad man's point of view; for Aristotle, friends are the greatest of external goods, hence the pinnacle of prosperity; and according to him the whole basis of the goodness and joy of friendship is that the good man sees, and delights in, himself as reflected in his friends.

It seems clear, then, that Meynell tends to think of happiness as a kind of prosperity in external 'goods'—i.e., the sorts of things morally mediocre and even bad men are after, some of which are not true goods at all. I say 'tends to think' advisedly. For it is part of my point precisely that he does not give us a considered view of what happiness is, or of what it consists in, but is content to make use of a vague and unexamined preconception whose general 'spirit' is nevertheless readily apparent, and characterizable as I have suggested. Moreover, this preconception leads without any warning and, as far as one can see, without any awareness on Meynell's part, to a transformation of

Glaucon's question into the question 'Is doing the actions the rule of virtue prescribes the most effective way of gaining those "goods" in which "happiness" consists?'—a very different question from Glaucon's and the very one from which he explicitly distinguishes his own. This transformation of Glaucon's question can also be seen in the passage we have quoted in criticism of Aristotle: The criticism appears to be that Aristotle evades 'Glaucon's question' by failing to conceive virtue sufficiently deeply, and slipping in as a background to his discussion a particular social and political context. But clearly the question Aristotle is thought to be evading can only be 'Is doing the actions the rule of virtue prescribes the most effective way of gaining things like wealth, friends, favour with the public? . . .?'—which is *not* Glaucon's question. This *is* the question, however, which Meynell discusses in the rest of his article. Not surprisingly, he has little difficulty in showing that none of the philosophers he considers is able to answer *his* question with a convincing 'Yes'. Granted that crass, short-sighted egoism is no road to 'happiness', even as Meynell conceives it, nevertheless as between an intelligent, reflective, but unscrupulous egoism, and real virtue, practically every consideration in respect of one's own 'happiness' clearly favours the former. And quite possibly, for virtue to prove to be the royal road to 'happiness' on Meynell's terms, some sort of eschatological doctrine is required. Though that of Christianity hardly seems to fit the bill. For what Meynell wants is a doctrine according to which a man will be rewarded with happiness who obeys the moral law not out of the love of justice, or of God, but with the avoidance of divine punishment and the attainment of divine reward as his sole or principal aim. But if he thinks that this is what Christianity teaches, he is quite wrong. Such a man, on the contrary, will be lost—see Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 19, aa. 2, 4, 6. (And of course, insofar as Christianity's eschatological doctrine does not meet Meynell's specifications it can hardly have been produced as an instrument of social control in the way he suggests.)

I have already indicated that I consider Meynell's preconception about what happiness is, and what it consists in, to be wrong. Can we offer a more adequate picture of human happiness, and so obtain a truer view of its connection with virtue? Let us begin by setting aside for the moment the notion of happiness, and asking rather what *human good* consists in. What are the fundamental elements of human flourishing? As we have already suggested, prospering in certain sorts of external and bodily goods is in some ways a necessary element or condition of human good, in other ways an enrichment and embellishment of it—but it is certainly not the whole of human good, nor even the central part of it. If we begin with Meynell's notion of prosperity, eliminating those things which are not true goods, adding other goods, some of which are neither external nor bodily, and reformulating here

and there, we may come up with a sketch of human good not unlike that proposed recently by J. M. Finnis in his article 'Natural Law and Unnatural Acts'.<sup>2</sup> :

living, in health and some security; the acquisition of arts and skills to be cultivated for their own sake; the relishing of beauty; the seeking of knowledge and understanding; the cultivation of friendships, immediate, communal and political; effective and intelligent freedom; a right relation in this passing life to the lasting principles of reality, 'the gods'; the procreation of children and their education so that they can attain for themselves, and in their own mode, the foregoing values. . . .

Of course, some people might wish to make some additions to this list; others, some subtractions from it. And it is clear that within limits various formulations and descriptions of the basic elements of human flourishing are acceptable. But it is also clear that there are limits which reasonable men everywhere can recognize, and that the possibility of various formulations of these goods does not in the least imply 'relativism'. For in fact all these goods are self-evidently good and attractive; their goodness needs no demonstration or 'proof' or justification. On the contrary, it is in terms of these goods that we understand and judge human behaviour and other secondary goods. For these basic goods are not reducible one to the other, nor are any of them means to the others. (They may nevertheless be connected insofar as the possession of one may contribute to the realization of others.) Instead, they provide the natural objects of human motivation, the natural starting-points of trains of practical reasoning. Of course, this self-evidence of their goodness does not preclude looking for the ground of their attractiveness in their suitability to basic aspects, and corresponding inclinations, of human nature. But such theoretical speculation plays no practical role, is not required for any 'justification' of these goods, and is not a part of ethics, but rather of philosophical psychology or anthropology, of some prolegomenon to ethics.

Now a man who is flourishing in these basic goods is in a state of well-being, and if his flourishing has been of some duration, is secure, and is without distressing memories or anticipations, he will be happy—happy, that is, insofar as man can be happy in this life.<sup>3</sup>

Having got a more adequate idea of what human good is, the enjoyment of which makes a man truly happy, we may now try to make clear what is the connection between virtue and this good. Let us begin by noticing that so far we have been speaking of the fundamental goods in which happiness consists as *universals*. Their realization, however, always occurs in the concrete, in the here-and-now, in *this* action, in *that* possession, in *this* particular life. Now there are too many basic forms of human good, and they are too diverse, perhaps even in some ways incompatible, to be realized concretely in any one



action. Moreover, each particular good or value can be realized in an infinite number of different ways and forms. Yet again, while none is reducible to any of the others, there appears nevertheless to be an ordering among them: some seem to determine what is the way and form and degree to which others should be realized. And finally, my particular situation and talents may dispose me for the realization of some goods more than others. What, then, is the thing to do, what should I aim for, in the concrete here-and-now?—Thus arises the problem of how to lead one's life, of finding a rule of action.

Now I should hold that the virtues are precisely those qualities of mind and states of character whereby we think, feel, choose, and act, in a concrete situation, in a way which reasonably promotes and respects whatever part of human good, both my own and that of others, may be in question in that situation. But what is built into the expression 'reasonably promotes and respects'? First, we must say 'promotes *and respects*', not just 'promotes', since although a virtuous man will be serving *some* fundamental good, or some realization of some fundamental good, in a given choice or action, he is not bound to be actively promoting *all* the goods which may be in question in his concrete situation. But the ones he is not actively promoting he must at least *respect*—i.e., he must not act *against* any of these goods by positively attacking one, or failing to hold his action open to the realization of a good, should this occur were he to take no steps to prevent it. In saying so much, we have already explained part of what is involved in *reasonably* promoting and respecting human good. Among the conditions which are also required for a man's action to be reasonable, we may note the following:

- 1) His choice which of the goods in question in his situation to pursue, which to respect, and how to pursue and respect them, must be suitable and appropriate. The choice must reflect a correct understanding of what are the fundamental values of human life, what are the priorities among them, and what is the nature of the particular situation in which he finds himself.
- 2) His choice must reflect the fact that human good can be realized as well in another man as in himself, that its realization in that other man is as lovable as its realization in himself, and that while its realization in his own life can have a reasonable prior claim on his action insofar as he is better situated than anyone else to pursue that realization, this fact can provide no reason why he should not respect and under certain circumstances pursue its realization in the other.

Let us consider an example. Many of the virtues are specified by reference to the general subject matter, or area of life, with which they deal; others by reference to some particular emotion, or feeling, or attitude with which they are particularly concerned. An example of the latter sort would be the virtue (or virtues) which deal with *anger*. Doubtless there are different ways of schematizing and describing the

state or states of character relevant to this emotion. One way would be to speak of a virtue which might be called *good-temper*. In what does this virtue consist? We can begin by noting that the emotion or feeling, or sometimes passion, of anger is neither good nor bad in itself; that is, in itself it is indifferent to human good. On the other hand, any concrete occurrence of anger is *not* indifferent to human good; it can be harmful of human good (e.g., when it destroys a man's judgment, and leads him to injure himself or others), or it can serve human good (e.g., when it assumes the form of 'righteous indignation'). Finally, the feeling of anger is to some extent and in certain ways subject to voluntary control: it is easier to control the intensity, duration, etc., of anger than the occasion of it; through the voluntary cultivation of states of character and patterns of emotional response, it can be subjected to greater voluntary control than would otherwise be possible. Anger is thus a typical object or subject-matter for a virtue or virtues. Now the virtue of good temper, as we are calling it, establishes on a first level a *voluntary control* of anger, insofar as that is possible. Clearly this is a necessary condition for ensuring that the feeling of anger reasonably serves or respects human good: if a man could not control his anger, he would be chronically subject to episodes of partial or complete loss of rational control of his behaviour, during which he would be incapable of serving human good, and liable to injure it, both in himself and others. On the other hand, the establishment of voluntary control over anger is not a *sufficient* condition for insuring that it serves or respects human good. Thus a man might, with perfect self-control, allow himself to feel anger in an unjust and unreasonable way (e.g., too deeply, too long, over the wrong sort of thing, etc.); though self-controlled, he can hardly be a man of good temper. On the other hand, he might err on the side of deficiency: he might, again with great self-control, not feel anger when he was being done down, made a fool of, taken advantage of, in an unjust way in a situation in which he could put a stop to this if he wanted to. Such a man would be no more good-tempered than the first, but merely spiritless, detestably submissive. Clearly, then, the virtue of good-temper must not only establish voluntary control over anger, but must also see to it that anger is felt only on certain occasions, only for certain reasons, only in a certain way, so that, in short, it can be put into service in the promotion and respect of human good: and human good not just in the agent, but in others as well. For the assessment of these circumstances and reasons, the virtue of good temper must operate in conjunction with a cognitive virtue which we might call prudence, or good or right judgment, or wisdom. Only when this further level of control over anger is established will it be reliably controlled so as regularly to serve human good, or at least respect it. And then and only then will the *virtue* of good-temper be present.

Let us return, now, to Glaucon's question, and see how we are

progressing with it: Have we yet any reason for thinking that the good man is better off, happier, than the bad man, just in virtue of being good? The answer still seems to be, No. For we have not yet shown that virtue *is* human good, or the essential part of human good, or even an intrinsic good at all. So far, we have only suggested that virtue ensures that a man will reasonably promote and respect human good—but that is not the same thing as ensuring that he will in fact *realize* human good. Moreover, the good in question is not just his own, but that of others as well. There is an important distinction among the virtues between self-regarding and other-regarding virtues, depending on whether they have the good of the agent or of others principally in view. Now it may be true that a man who lacks the self-regarding virtues can never come to enjoy human good. But will not the man who lacks only the other-regarding virtues be *more* likely to realize his good than the virtuous man—it being assumed, as Glaucon requires us to do, that he can manage to evade punishment?

I think part of the solution to the latter problem—and a very substantial part—is had by recalling that one of the fundamental goods is *friendship* (cf. our list p. 400). Without any doubt, my life is impoverished, and in severe cases becomes inhuman, insofar as it is devoid of personal friendship. And yet, although having another as my friend is necessary for my flourishing, I cannot have the other as my friend if I love him for the sake of my own flourishing—on the contrary, I must love him for his own sake, and must will his own flourishing. This fact about friendship means that, in order for friendship even to exist, I must show justice, and in general the other-regarding virtues, toward my friend—yet in so practising these virtues, I myself flourish.

It is equally clear that a man needs communal friendship, i.e., participation in groups, the relatively smaller and the relatively larger, for the protection, support, and services they can afford him, and in order to carry on the many human activities that require co-operation. For this kind of friendship justice will also be necessary, as well as a kind of benevolence, though not the sort of love required for personal friendship.

Nevertheless, the appeal to friendship does not seem able to take us the whole way we wish to go. For justice, and in general acts of all the other-regarding virtues, are owed not just to our friends, personal and communal, but to all men. In showing justice to a total stranger, perhaps even having to die for him, I am surely not serving my own good. Why isn't a man who dispenses with *this* sort of justice better off than the virtuous man?

As we have seen, acting virtuously just is acting reasonably for the promotion and respect of human good. Hence, in giving up acting virtuously a man is giving up acting reasonably. In particular, in giving up justice or the other-regarding virtues, a man gives up acting

in accordance with the second condition for reasonable action mentioned on page 401. But acting reasonably just is a human good; indeed, the most essential human good. For it is the sort of action which suits the highest and most essential part of man: his reason, or intellect, or mind. The desire to know truth is a natural and spontaneous desire in man; it does not need to be taught, but makes all teaching possible. Similarly the desire to act in accordance with the truth that is known is natural and spontaneous: the proof of this comes out, e.g., in the *deliberate* shamelessness needed to say 'So what?' to the consideration that such-and-such a proposed course of action is contrary to what is truly good, as that is seen by the agent. It will be far more common for rationalizations to be produced whereby one makes it out that after all one is not making an arbitrary exception, that after all the situation is relevantly different from the others. But now one is playing fast and loose with the desire for truth—from deliberate shamelessness one moves to willful self-deception. In either case, the consequence is an inner conflict at the deepest level of one's being: one seeks to deny and even to destroy one's most basic desires as a rational being, at the cost of the loss of the deepest sort of peace.

We must add, then, to our list of basic human goods the good of reasonable action. Or rather, we must mention it as the kind of prolegomenon to that list. For it is only in case they are realized by and through reasonable action that we may be sure that the other basic goods will actually be good for *this* particular man in *this* particular situation. Though *potentially* good when considered in the abstract, they are not necessarily *actually* good for this particular man in this particular situation. If they are pursued inordinately, they may actually prove to be harmful to him. 'Before now,' says Aristotle in one place, 'men have been undone by reason of their wealth' (*N.E.* I, 2). In this sense, reasonable action is the essence of human good: for it is, as it were, the 'form' of human good, while the basic types of human flourishing are only its 'matter'. Reasonable action ensures (as much as man may) that the goods that are obtained through it do not clash in self-destructive conflict, but fit together into a harmonious whole in a man's whole life, and in the whole lives of many men joined together in a society.

Now at last we are in a position to answer Glaucon's question. The one good which Glaucon's suffering just man possesses (as long as he is able to act at all), and which the bad man, no matter what other goods he enjoys, can never possess, is the good of reasonable action, of virtuous action. Such a suffering good man certainly is not enjoying the fulness and consummation of human good; *it seems that we cannot call him happy or blessed in an unqualified sense*. Even if he is a Stoic, and has somehow persuaded himself that human good just is virtue, and nothing else, and that under the blows of the torturers he possesses

it in its fulness—even if he has persuaded himself of this, and can manage to take some sort of pleasure or delight in his situation, it seems that there is no reason why we should not regard this conviction of his, and the corresponding delight, as false, as perhaps even somehow vicious in its pride, or at least inhuman in its insensitivity to the 'flesh'. We shall still not call such a man happy 'unless', as Aristotle says, 'we are defending a thesis at all costs' (*N.E.* I. 5).—So much *against* Plato, as far as I understand his views.

But on the other hand: As we have seen, reasonable action is the essential element in human good. To the considerations we have already advanced in support of this claim, we may now add the following: Whether or not a man actually realizes the fundamental goods listed by J. M. Finnis is not fully in his control: external and fortuitous factors will play their role. What is in his control, however, is whether he will act rationally in the situation in which he finds himself—whether, that is, he will act so as reasonably to promote and respect human good; whether he will, as it were, *dispose himself to receive it*. Without a doubt, the end of human life is the full, perfect, and consummate realization of human good. The suffering good man does not attain this end. Yet he does *in a sense* attain it: he attains the end, insofar as a man can do anything towards it by his own efforts. In this way too the good of reasonable action stands apart from the fundamental forms of human flourishing, and is in a sense the essence of human good.

Now a good man will know all this. He will know that he has done what he could in human life, and that he has been true to his most essential self, to his deepest desires. Knowing this, he will be at peace. And his sorrow at his present misfortune, like all his other feelings, will be moderated according to what is reasonable. Hence *he will never fall into misery*, even in the worst of his misfortunes.

But now, how is it with the prospering wicked man? As we have already indicated, his soul will be twisted against itself in inner conflict. As Aristotle remarks: 'Bad men are full of regrets'. (*N.E.* IX, 4). He may conceal the pain of this more or less successfully, for a greater or lesser period of time, by self-deception, through adventitious pleasures, etc. But *he will never be a man of peace*—indeed, what wicked man ever claimed to be?—and peace is the heart of the deep happiness which is in question here. *And should he lose the prosperity which enables him more or less to hide from himself, he will fall into unmitigated misery*.—All this being so, we may say, finally, that the good man's life no matter how great his suffering, is more worthwhile than the bad man's life, no matter how great his prosperity—and hence more to be chosen.

Such is the theoretical answer to Glaucon's question. But there exists also a kind of 'practical' answer, which consists in a vision of the consummate loveliness, the pre-eminent excellence of action in

accordance with the reasonable and the true. Let us recall once again what Aristotle says about the good man who falls into many great misfortunes: 'Yet even in these (sc. great events which turn out ill) *to kalon* shines through, when a man bears many great misfortunes, not through insensibility, but through nobility and greatness of soul.' What is this *kalon*, this beauty, that shines out from the good man's action even in the depths of his misfortune, and is grounded in his nobility and greatness of soul?

Here one senses very much the poverty of our modern languages in having no word capable of capturing the full richness of *kalon*, with its suggestions at once of the fine, the noble, the beautiful, and the pre-eminently worthwhile. Even in his misfortune, Aristotle tells us, the good man's action shines out with the noble beauty of a goodness pre-eminently worthwhile, pre-eminently choice-worthy. What is this goodness? It is grounded, he tells us, in nobility and *megalopsuchia*, greatness of soul. Now *megalopsuchia*, in the Aristotelian ethic, is the virtue whereby a man remains unmoved in the face of misfortune, owing to his grasp of the true value of his own virtue: He sees that the value of his own reasonable action so surpasses that of external goods, that the latter can even be despised. And seeing this, he is able to bear their loss with equanimity: through the goodness of his own virtuous action, and through a just appreciation of it, he is able not to be overcome by the world and its changes.<sup>4</sup> By *megalopsuchia*, then, a man is able to act virtuously, to remain loyal to the reasonable and the true in all his actions, even in the midst of the greatest misfortunes. Hence *to kalon* must be the fineness, the nobility, the pre-eminent worthwhileness which attaches to action conformed to the reasonable and the true—and it shines with beauty. It can be seen in all the actions and life of a good man, in whatever circumstances he may be in, great or small, prosperous or unfortunate—but if in an especially splendid way when fate smiles on him, then perhaps in an especially beautiful way in his sufferings.

Can a good man, then, ever benefit himself by turning to injustice, even to save himself from the greatest misfortunes? He cannot. For to do so would be to deny his very essence, his reasonableness, to turn his back on the 'formal' element of human good and of the end of human life for what is, without that element, not even good, except potentially. And it would be to turn from *to kalon*, from what is supremely worthwhile, from what shines with nobility and fineness and beauty, to what is less than human, to something which does not become a man, to something which, as unreasonable and untrue, is arbitrary, unintelligible, ugly, dark—something, indeed, less than real.

Surely what Aristotle calls *to kalon* is part of what Plato's guardians saw in the vision of the Good. Did they see anything else? We should dearly love to know, but I do not think Plato ever quite tells us. Let us, in any case, complete our answer to Glaucon briefly from a theological

plane. For what the good man possesses, in his virtue and justice, whatever his circumstances, is, in the last analysis, the disposition to see God. For his virtue and justice, in opening his mind to the truth of reasonable order, and in firing his love toward the goodness and beauty of that truth, thereby dispose him to know the ground of that order, which is Truth itself, and to possess in love the source of that goodness and beauty, which is the Good which is at once Beauty and Truth. Perhaps philosophy can go so far, but certainly no further. For it cannot be any part of our merely natural knowledge of the world that the disposition to see God will actually be rewarded, purely through God's grace, by the Vision of God itself—much less that in some way a knowledge and love of God worthy of the name friendship can ever be ours in this life. Yet it is this good news which the gospel brings us, and so we above all can say with the Psalmist, even of the just who suffer :

‘Happy the people . . . who walk, O Lord, in the  
light of Your face,  
Who make Your justice the source of their bliss.’  
(Ps. 88)

<sup>1</sup>Possibly there is an allusion to the notion of the intrinsic goodness of justice in a sentence on p. 79: ‘I admit that there are persons in every society who have a passionate interest in justice, but are without hope for themselves in pursuing it.’ [i.e., are not pursuing it for the sake of any *consequences*.] But for all that is said here, this ‘passionate interest’ might be like a ‘passionate interest’ in butterflies, merely a personal taste or inclination, a quirk, not a love of what is, above all else, worthwhile in human life.

<sup>2</sup>*The Heythrop Journal* (Oct. 1970), pp. 365–387, esp. p. 367. I am very much indebted to this and other papers by Dr. Finnis, as well as to private conversation, for much of the argument of this paper, especially in the following pages.

<sup>3</sup>We are not speaking of divine beatitude here, nor of the possibility that any human happiness must be somewhat imperfect in this life.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Gauthier & Jolif, *Commentary on N.E.*, at IV. 3.

# The Eyes of Beatrice

## by Richard Pearce

### *The Meeting*

The details that Dante gives us of his meetings with the earthly Beatrice are so sketchy and the circumstances so ephemeral—they encounter each other as children once, she begins to greet him in the street some nine years later and then shortly after passes him by—that one can reasonably say that Dante never fully meets Beatrice until Canto XXX of the *Purgatorio*.<sup>1</sup> And it is neither the style of meeting nor the woman that Dante quite expected. He had gazed at a distance