

Plutarch, *Moralia*

p575 **Consolation to His Wife**

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Loeb Edition Introduction

The *Consolatio ad Uxorem* is the letter written by Plutarch to his wife on receiving news of the death of their daughter Timoxena (611D), who died at the age of two (610E). She was named after her mother, and her birth had been preceded by that of four boys (608C). Of Plutarch's children two had already died, the eldest and "fair Charon" (609D). It has been supposed that the four sons and Timoxena were Plutarch's only children. But this means that θυγατρίδῃ (608B) — literally "daughter's daughter" — and γαμβρός — literally "son-in-law" — must be taken in some other sense. The passage cited by R. Volkmann¹ (Dionysius, *Lysias*, 27) does not establish the sense of "niece" for θυγατρίδῃ, as the person in question was both niece (on her father's side) and granddaughter (on her mother's) of the same man. Three persons are mentioned in the *Moralia* as "sons-in-law,"² which would imply at least one other p576daughter. There has been some reluctance to admit the existence of such a daughter because of a passage that might be taken to indicate that Plutarch was married but once,³ and because the other known children of Plutarch — Soclarus, Autobulus, and Plutarchus — can all be accounted for among the four sons mentioned in the letter.⁴

Plutarch must have written the letter in the interval between receiving the news at Tanagra and rejoining his wife at Chaeroneia, which is somewhat •over forty miles distant as the crow flies — a journey of one or two days. Presumably the letter was written at Tanagra and sent on in advance. Several of Plutarch's writings are judged from their incomplete state to have been draughts found among his papers after his death; this letter, then, may not have been published by Plutarch himself, but given to the world by the piety of his literary heirs.⁵ Yet consolations in epistolary form were often, like other letters, written for publication.⁶

Traditional topics are common in all literary genres, and especially so in consolations, which must be produced within a limited time if they are to have p577their fullest effect. Consequently the writer has all the more reason to

avail himself of traditional arguments, modifying them to suit the particular circumstances. In this essay Plutarch's selection and adaptation of these topics is in part influenced by the particular circumstances (the death of their infant daughter) and in part by his Platonic philosophy.

A comparison with other ancient consolations, such as the *Consolatio ad Apollonium*, the Pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus*, Seneca's *Ad Polybium de Consolatione* and *Ad Marciam de Consolatione*, the first book of Cicero's *Tusculans*, and the third of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, reveals these constantly recurring themes. For example, some answer must be given to the question, What becomes of the soul after death? In the *Axiochus* and the *Tusculans* it is argued that whether the soul survives or perishes, death is in neither case an evil. Lucretius maintains that death is no evil because the soul perishes; Plutarch, because the soul survives.

The pattern for the philosophical consolations of the Hellenistic age was set by Crantor.⁷ Behind Crantor there was a long literary tradition, extending from Homer through tragedy and the public funeral orations at Athens. Plutarch treats traditional themes with great freedom. For example, it is a commonplace that the state of man after death is comparable to that before birth. Plutarch refers this topic, not to the child who died, but to the grieving p578mother, exhorting her to turn her mind back to the time before the child was born (610D). The conventional device of giving comfort by dwelling on the losses of others, equally or more grievous,⁸ here takes the form of reminding the mother of her earlier bereavements (609D). The warning against the irritation of grief by ill-timed consolations becomes in this essay a reproof to the person who "allows anyone who happens to pass by to meddle with his suffering as with a rheumatic sore" (610C). The calculation of the good and evil in life, which in most consolations leads to the reflection that life is mostly evil and death an escape,⁹ here results in a favourable balance, and Plutarch reminds his wife of the many blessings she still enjoys (610E ff.). Finally, the traditional topic that the manner of burying the body is of no importance to the soul¹⁰ gives place in this essay to the observation that the traditional manner of burying children indicates their freedom from earthly things and their departure to a better dispensation (612A).¹¹

The date of the essay cannot be fixed with precision, but the mention of a granddaughter indicates at least that Plutarch was no longer very young. If the identification of the deceased eldest child with Soclarus is correct, then this letter must have been p579composed after the essay *Quomodo Adolescens Poetas Audire Debeat*, in which Soclarus' education is discussed.

A few translations of the letter can be added to those listed earlier.¹²

The work is No. 112 in the catalogue of Lamprias, where two other consolations, now lost, are mentioned: *παραμυθητικός πρὸς Ασκληπιιάδην* (No. 111) and *πρὸς Φησίαν παραμυθητικός* (No. 157).

The text is based on **LCav**. **AETrn** are occasionally cited.

p581^{608B} *Plutarch to his wife, best wishes.*¹³

1 1 The messenger you sent to report the death of our little child seems to have missed me on the way as he travelled to Athens; but when I reached Tanagra I learned of it from my granddaughter. Now the funeral, I suppose, has already been held — and my desire is that it has been so held as to cause you

the least pain, both now and hereafter; but if you want something done that you are leaving undone while you await my decision, something that you believe will make your grief easier to bear, that too you shall have, so it be done without excess or superstition, faults to which you are not at all prone.

2₁ cOnly, my dear wife, in your emotion keep me as well as yourself within bounds. For I know and can set a measure to the magnitude of our loss, taken by itself; but if I find any extravagance of distress in you, this will be more grievous to me than what has happened. Yet neither was I born "from oak p583or rock";^a you know this yourself, you who have reared so many children in partnership with me, all of them brought up at home under our own care. And I know what great satisfaction lay in this that after four sons the longed-for daughter was born to you, and that she made it possible for me to call her by your name. Our affection for children so young has, furthermore, a poignancy all its own: the delight it gives is quite pure and free from all anger or reproach. ^bShe had herself, moreover, a surprising gift of mildness and good temper, and her way of responding to friendship and of bestowing favours gave us pleasure while it afforded an insight into her kindness. For she would invite the nurse to offer the breast and feed with it not only other infants, but even the inanimate objects and playthings she took pleasure in, as though serving them at her own table, dispensing in her kindness what bounty she had and sharing her greatest pleasures with whatever gave her delight.

3₁ But I do not see, my dear wife, why these things and the like, after delighting us while she lived, should now distress and dismay us as we take thought of p585them. Rather I fear on the contrary that while we banish painful thoughts we may banish memory as well,^a ^elike Clymenê, who said

I hate the crooked bow of cornel wood,
I hate the sports of youth: away with them!¹⁵

ever shunning and shrinking from what reminded her of her son,¹⁶ because it was attended with pain; for nature shuns everything unpleasant.¹⁷ But rather, just as she was herself the most delightful thing in the world to embrace, to see, to hear, so too must the thought of her live with us and be our

companion, bringing with it joy in greater measure, nay in many times greater measure, than it brings sorrow (if indeed it is reasonable that the arguments we have often used to others should be of seasonable aid to ourselves as well),¹⁸ and we must not sit idle and shut ourselves in, paying for those pleasures with sorrows many times as great.

4¹ This also those who were present report — with amazement — that you have not even put on mourning,¹⁹ that you did not subject yourself or your women p587to any uncomeliness or ill-usage, and that there was no sumptuous display, like that of a festival, at the burial, but that everything was done with decorum and in silence, in the company of our nearest kin. ⁶⁰⁹ But this was no surprise to me, that you, who have never decked yourself out²⁰ at theatre or procession, but have regarded extravagance as useless even for amusements, should have preserved in the hour of sadness the blameless simplicity of your ways; for not only "in Bacchic riot"²¹ must the virtuous woman remain uncorrupted; but she must hold that the tempest and tumult of her emotion in grief requires continence no less, a continence that does not resist maternal affection, as the multitude believe, but the licentiousness of the mind.²² For it is yielding to a parent's love to long for and honour and remember the departed; ^Bwhereas the never-sated passion for lamentation, a passion which incites us to transports of wailing and of beating the breast, is no less shameful than incontinence in pleasures, although it finds an excuse — more apparent than real — in the circumstance that its shamefulness is attended with pain and bitterness instead of delight. For what is more unreasonable than to do away with excess of laughter and jubilation, and yet allow free course to the torrents of weeping and wailing that burst forth from the same source? Or more p589unreasonable than for husbands to quarrel, as some do, with their wives about scented unguent for the hair and the wearing of purple, but to permit them to crop their heads in mourning, to dye their clothes black, to sit in an uncomely posture and lie in discomfort? ^cAnd worst of all, if they punish their manservants or maidservants excessively and unjustly, to resist and oppose them, but to pay no heed when they savagely and cruelly punish themselves in the midst of passions and misfortunes that require gentle and kindly treatment?

5¹ But we, my dear wife, in our relations with each other have had no occasion for the one quarrel, nor, I think, shall we have any for the other. For, on the one hand, your plainness of attire and sober style of living has without exception amazed every philosopher who has shared our society and intimacy, neither is there any townsman of ours to whom ^Dat religious ceremonies, sacrifices, and the theatre you do not offer another spectacle — your own simplicity. On the other hand, you have already shown great steadfastness in circumstances like the present, when you lost your eldest child and again when the fair Charon left us. For I remember that strangers accompanied me in my journey from the sea and gathered at our house with the rest at the news of the little child's death; and observing great composure and quiet, as they later recounted to others⁹ they thought that no tragedy had occurred, and that a false report had got abroad — ^Esuch was the self-possession with which you kept order in your household at a time that gave full scope to disorderly ^p591confusion, and yet you had nursed him at your own breast and had submitted to surgery when your nipple was bruised. For such conduct was noble, and it showed true mother love.²³

6¹ But we observe that most mothers, after others have cleansed and prettied up their children, receive them in their arms like pets; and then, at their death, give themselves up to an unwarranted and ungrateful²⁴ grief, not out of good will toward them — for good will is rational and right²⁵ — but because the combination with a little natural feeling ^Fof a great deal of vain opinion²⁶ makes their mourning wild, frenzied, and difficult to calm. And this appears not to have escaped Aesop,²⁷ who said that when Zeus was apportioning honours among the gods, Grief asked for a share, which Zeus accordingly granted, but only from such as should choose and so desire. At the outset indeed this is true; for each person takes grief in of his own accord. But once it has fixed itself with the passing of time and become his companion and household intimate, it will not quit him even at his earnest desire. We must, therefore, resist it at the door and must not let it in to be quartered on us by wearing mourning or cropping the hair or by any other manifestations of the kind that, ⁶¹⁰ confronting the mind daily and shaming it into submission, make it dispirited, cramped, shut in, ^p593deaf to all soothing influences, and a prey to vain terrors, in the feeling that it has no part in laughter or the light of

day or the friendly board, since it has adopted such habiliments and engages in such practices because of its grief. This unhappy state leads to widespread neglect of the body and aversion to ointment, the bath, and the other usages of our daily life. Quite the contrary should happen; in its own suffering the soul should be helped by a vigorous condition of the body. For its distress loses much of its keenness and intensity when dissipated in the calm of the body, as waves are dispersed in fair weather; ^Bwhereas if the body is in the interval allowed to become squalid and unkempt from a mean way of life, and if it sends up to the soul nothing benign or good, but only pains and sorrows, like acrid and noisome exhalations, the sufferings that take possession of the soul when it has undergone such ill-usage are so serious that an easy recovery is no longer possible even if desired.

7 ¹ On the other hand, what is most grave and to be dreaded in such a case holds no terrors for me: "the visits of pernicious women"²⁸ and their cries and their chiming in with lamentations, whereby they polish and whet the keen edge of pain, and do not allow our grief to subside ^Ceither from other influences or of itself;²⁹ for I know what struggles you recently sustained when you went to the aid of Theon's sister ^{p595}and fought off the assaults of the women who came from the world outside with wailing and screaming, as if they were in very truth adding "fire to fire."³⁰ For when people see the houses of their friends in flames, they put the fire out with all the speed or power at their command; but when those friends are themselves ablaze with fire in their hearts, they bring more fuel. And whereas men refuse to permit anyone who so desires to lay his hands on a sufferer from ophthalmia, and do not touch the inflammation, the person who mourns sits patiently and allows anyone who happens to pass by to meddle with his suffering ^Das with a rheumatic sore³¹ and to envenom it, a little tickling and scratching making it break out into a far-reaching and troublesome affliction. This thing, then, I know you will guard against.

8 ¹ Do, however, try to carry yourself back in your thoughts and return again and again to the time when this little child was not yet born and we had as yet no complaint against Fortune; next try to link this present time with that as though our circumstances had again become the same.³² For, my dear wife, we

shall appear to be sorry that our child was ever born³³ if our conduct leads us to regard the state p597of things before her birth as preferable to the present. Yet we must not obliterate the intervening two years from our memory; rather, since they afforded us delight and enjoyment of her, we should credit them to the account of pleasure; and we should not consider the small good a great evil, nor, because Fortune did not add what we hoped for, be ungrateful for what was given.³⁴ For reverent language toward the Deity and a serene and uncomplaining attitude toward Fortune never fail to yield an excellent and pleasant return; while in circumstances like these he who in greatest measure draws upon his memory of past blessings and turns his thought toward the bright and radiant part of his life, averting it from the dark and disturbing part, either extinguishes his pain entirely, or by thus combining it with its opposite, renders it slight and faint.³⁵ For just as perfume, while always a delight to the smell, serves on occasion to counteract foul odours, so the thought of our blessings has in time of trouble a further, necessary, use: it is an antidote in the hands of those who do not shun the remembrance of happiness and do not insist on reproaching Fortune in everything. It ill becomes us to fall into this state by cavilling at our own life for receiving, ⁶¹¹ like a book, a single stain, while all the rest is clean and unspoiled. ¶ 9 For you have often heard that felicity depends on correct reasoning resulting in a stable habit, and that the changes due to fortune p599occasion no serious departure from it and do not bring with them a falling away that destroys the character of our lives.³⁶

But if, like the multitude, we too are to be guided by external circumstances, to reckon up the dispensations of fortune, and to take any chance persons as our judges of felicity, you must not dwell upon the present tears and lamentations of your visitors, a performance dictated by a pernicious custom and rehearsed to every sufferer; you must rather bear in mind how enviable you still appear in their eyes for your children, home, and way of life. And it is unreasonable, when others would gladly choose your lot,³⁷ even with our present grief thrown in, for you, whose lot it actually is, to complain and be disconsolate; nor yet to be taught by the very bitterness of your grief how great is the delight for us in what is still left, but instead, like the critics who pick out the "headless" and "docked" lines of Homer,³⁸ overlooking the many

splendid passages of flawless execution, to keep a strict account of the shortcomings of your life and cavil at them, and by noting the advantages without particularity or discrimination, cto resemble in your attitude the illiberal and miserly, who make no use of the great wealth they accumulate when it is in their possession, but lament and are disconsolate when it is lost. If you pity her for p601departing unmarried and childless,³⁹ you can find comfort for yourself in another consideration, that you have lacked fulfilment of and participation in neither of these satisfactions; for these are not great blessings for those deprived of them, but small for their possessors.⁴⁰ That she has passed to a state where there is no pain⁴¹ need not be painful to us; for what sorrow can come to us through her, if nothing now can make her grieve? For even great deprivations lose their power to cause pain dwhen they reach the point where the want is no longer felt; and your Timoxena has been deprived of little, for what she knew was little, and her pleasure was in little things; and as for those things of which she had acquired no perception, which she had never conceived, and to which she had never given thought, how could she be said to be deprived of them?

10 ¹ Furthermore, I know that you are kept from believing the statements of that other set,⁴² who win many to their way of thinking when they say that nothing is in any way evil or painful to "what has undergone dissolution,"⁴³ by the teaching of our fathers⁴⁴ and by the mystic formulas of Dionysiac rites,⁴⁵ the knowledge of which we who are participants share with each other. Consider then that the soul, which is imperishable, eis affected like a captive bird: if it has long been reared in the body and has become p603tamed to this life by many activities and long familiarity, it alights again and re-enters the body, and does not leave off or cease from becoming entangled in the passions and fortunes of this world through repeated births. For do not fancy that old age is vilified and ill spoken of because of the wrinkles, the grey hairs, and the debility of the body; no, its most grievous fault is fto render the soul stale in its memories of the other world and make it cling tenaciously to this one, and to warp and cramp it, since it retains in this strong attachment the shape imposed upon it by the body. Whereas the soul that tarries after its capture but a brief space in the body before it is set free by higher powers⁴⁶ proceeds to its natural state as though released from a bent position with flexibility and

resilience unimpaired.⁴⁷ For just as a fire flares up again and quickly recovers, if a person who has extinguished it immediately lights it again, but is harder to rekindle if it remains extinguished for some time, so too those souls fare best whose lot it is, according to the poet,⁴⁸

p605Soon as they may pass through Hades' gates⁴⁹

before much love of the business of our life here has been engendered in them, and before they have been adapted to the body by becoming softened and fused with it as by reagents.

11 ¹ ₆₁₂It is rather in our ancestral and ancient usages and laws that the truth of these matters is to be seen; for our people do not bring libations to those of their children who die in infancy, nor do they observe in their case any of the other rites that the living are expected to perform for the dead, as such children have no part in earth or earthly things; nor yet do they tarry where the burial is celebrated, at the graves, or at the laying out of the dead, and sit by the bodies. For the laws forbid us to mourn for infants, holding it impiety to mourn for those who have departed to a dispensation and a region too⁵⁰ that is better and more divine.⁵¹ And since this is harder to disbelieve than to believe, ^Blet us keep our outward conduct as the laws command, and keep ourselves within yet freer from pollution and purer and more temperate.⁵²

The Loeb Editor's Notes:

¹ *Leben, Schriften, und Philosophie des Plutarch von Chaeronea* (Berlin, 1869), I, p29.



² Craton (*Mor.* 620A); Firmus (*Mor.* 636A); and Patrocleas (*Mor.* 642C). R. Volkmann, *op. cit.* I, pp57 f., Wilamowitz, *Commentariolum Grammaticum*, III, pp23 f., and W. Christ, *Gesch. d. gr. Litt.*⁵, II.1, p368, suppose that γαμβρός, as

applied to these three, does not mean "son-in-law." Volkmann thinks it may mean "brother-in-law," while Wilamowitz takes it to mean "nieces's husband" and asks what other name Plutarch could have given to such a relation.



³ *Life of Cato the Younger*, chap. vii.3 (762E); cf. K. Ziegler in Pauly-Wissowa, vol. XXI 1 (1951), coll. 648 f.



⁴ For Soclarus cf. *Mor.* 15A; for Autobulus and Plutarchus, *Mor.* 1012A. It is conjectured that the eldest child who had died (609D) was Soclarus, and as his name does not appear with those of Autobulus and Plutarchus in the dedication of the *De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo* (1012A).



⁵ The title varies in the MSS. It is not unlikely, then, that it does not come from Plutarch. In spite of the haste in which the letter was probably written, it contains only one serious hiatus, ἐχέτω ὡς (608B) — and here the text is doubtless corrupt.



⁶ The epistolary form is frequent in consolations; it is the natural form for conveying a message of comfort at a distance.



⁷ Cf. C. Buresch, "Consolationum a Graecis Romanisque Scriptarum Historia Critica," in *Leipziger Studien*, IX (1886); J. van Wageningen, "Bijdrage tot de kennis der 'Consolatio mortis' bij Grieken en Romeinen," in *Verlagen en Mededeelingen der koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde* (Amsterdam, 1918), pp175-197.



⁹ Cf. Pseudo-Plutarch, *Mor.* 118D ff.; Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 2.3; *Consolatio ad Liviam*, 429 ff.



⁹ E.g. *Axiochus*, 366D ff.; Pseudo-Plutarch, *Mor.* 113E, 115E, 117E; Cicero, *Tusc. Disput.* 1.34 (83); 1.36 (87); Seneca, *Ad Polyb.* 4.2 f.; 9.4; *Ad Marc.* 22.



¹⁰ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disput.* 1.43 (104).



¹¹ In making this interpretation of the burial customs Plutarch substitutes for the notion of ritual purity that of purity or freedom from error.



¹² *La Mesnagerie de Xenophon; les Règles de mariage de Plutarque; Lettre de consolation de Plutarque à sa femme; le tout traduit de grec en françois par M. Estienne de La Boétie . . .* (Paris, 1571-1572).

"A Consolatory Epistle from Plutarch to his Wife, on the Death of their Daughter, translated into English by E. Goodwin," *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. LIV, no. 6 (June 1785), pp425-428.

B. Snell, *Plutarch Von der Ruhe des Gemütes und andere philosophische Schriften* (Zürich, 1948), pp1-8.

M. Hadas, *On Love, the Family, and the Good Life. Selected Essays of Plutarch* (New York, 1957), pp93-100.



¹³ Literally "do well" or "prosper." Plutarch uses no other form of salutation: cf. *Mor.* 138A, 464E, and 1012A. For his motives cf. the third Epistle ascribed to Plato, 315A-C, and the remarks of L. A. Post, *Thirteen Epistles of Plato* (Oxford, 1925), p145, and F. Novotný, *Platonis Epistulae* (Brno, 1930), pp98-101.



¹⁴ Homer, *Il.* xxii.126; *Od.* xix.163.



¹⁵ From the *Phaëthon* of Euripides: Nauck, *Trag. Graec. Frag.*, Eur. 785. Cf. the contrasted cases of Octavia and Livia in Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 2-3; cf. also *Ad Polyb.* 18.7.



¹⁶ Phaëthon.



¹⁷ Cf. Epicurus, Frag. 398 (ed. Usener); Seneca, *Ad Polyb.* 18.7: ". . . naturale est enim ut semper animus ab eo refugiat ad quod cum tristitia revertitur."



¹⁸ Cf. Pseudo-Plutarch, *Mor.* 118B-C, and the letter of Servius Sulpicius to Cicero (*Fam.* iv.5.5): "sed potius quae aliis tute praecipere soles ea tute tibi subiace atque apud animum propone."



¹⁹ Cf. *Mor.* 356D.



²⁰ Cf. Seneca, *Ad Helv.* 16.3 f.



²¹ Cf. Euripides, *Bacchae*, 317 f.:

καὶ γὰρ ἐν
βακχεύμασιν
οὔσ' ἢ γε σώφρων οὐ διαφθαρήσεται
"For even in Bacchic

riot
The virtuous woman will not be corrupted."



²² Cf. Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 3.4: "Quam in omni vita servasti morum probitatem et verecundiam, in hac quoque re praestabis; est enim quaedam et dolendi modestia."



²³ Cf. *Life of Demosthenes*, chap. xxii.3 (855F).



²⁴ Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* xcix.4.



²⁵ Cf. *Life of Solon*, chap. vii.5 (82A); Diogenes Laert. vii.116; and Arius Didymus in Stobaeus, vol. II, p73.19 (ed. Wachsmuth).



²⁶ Cf. *Mor.* 102C-D and Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 7.1; 19.1; *Ad Polyb.* 18.4.



²⁷ Cf. *Mor.* 112A, where the story is ascribed to an "ancient philosopher" who used it to comfort Queen Arsinoê. Sotion (Stobaeus, III, p872.7 Hense) ascribes a shortened version to an unnamed woman.



²⁸ Euripides, *Andromachê*, 930; quoted more fully in *Mor.* 143E.



²⁹ Cf. *Mor.* 599A ff.



³⁰ A favourite proverb: cf. *Mor.* 61A, 123E, 143F, 919D, *Life of Artaxerxes*, chap. xxviii.1 (1025E); cf. also Plato, *Laws*, 666A.



³¹ Cf. *Mor.* 102A, where a delay in consoling a bereaved person is justified by a comparison with a treatment of a rheumatic sore or "fluxion." Cf. also Chrysippus, quoted by Cicero, *Tusc. Disput.* iv.29 (63), with Pohlenz's remarks in *Hermes*, vol. xli (1906), p336; *Letter of Theano*, v.7 (*Epist. Gr.* p605 Hercher); *Seneca, Ad Helv.* 1.2 f. Plutarch has modified the topic.



³² Cf. Teles, p61.2-4 (ed. Hense₂).



³³ Cf. *Seneca, Ad Helv.* 19.7: ". . . id agas ne quis te putet partus sui paenitere."



³⁴ Cf. *Seneca, Ad Marc.* 12.1: ". . . oportet te non de eo quod detractum est queri, sed de eo gratias agere quod contigit"; *Ad Polyb.* 10.2: ". . . avidus, quo non lucri loco habet quod accepit, sed damni quod reddidit."



³⁵ Cf. *Mor.* 469A, 600D.



³⁶ Cf. *Mor.* 499A-D; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, i.10 (1101 A6-8); *Seneca, Ad Helv.* 5.1: ". . . unusquisque facere se beatum potest. Leve momentum in adventiciis rebus est et quod in neutram partem magnas vires habeat; . . ."



³⁷ Cf. *Mor.* 600A and Boëthius, *Philos. Cons.* II.4.17.



³⁸ Cf. Athenaeus, 632D ff.; Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Metris*, chap. ii (vol. VII, p468 Bern.); K. Meister, *Die homerische Kunstsprache*, p43; W. Schulze, *Quaestiones Epicae*, pp374 ff.



³⁹ This remark usually introduces the consideration that the dead person has escaped all the miseries connected with marriage and children: cf. *Mor.* 115E-F.



⁴⁰ Cf. *Mor.* 469F.



⁴¹ Cf. Pseudo-Plato, *Axiochus*, 327A: ψυχὴ ἅπασα ἀθάνατος, ἢ δὲ ἐκ τοῦδε τοῦ χωρίου μετασταθεῖσα καὶ ἄλυπος.



⁴² The Epicureans. The first set were the "pernicious women" who added "fire to fire"; cf. chap. 7, *supra*.



⁴³ Cf. Epicurus, *Ad Menoeceum*, 124, and *Κύριαὶ δόξαι*, II (quoted in *Mor.* 1103D and 1105A): Ὁ θάνατος οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς· τὸ γὰρ διαλυθὲν ἀναισθητεῖ· τὸ δ' ἀναισθητοῦν οὐδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς. "Death is nothing to us; for what has suffered dissolution has no perception, and what has no perception has nothing to do with us."



⁴⁴ Cf. *Mor.* 756B.



⁴⁵ Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disput.* 1.13 (29): "reminiscere, quoniam es initiatus, quae tradantur mysteriis: . . ."



⁴⁶ The supplement and translation of this passage are uncertain.



⁴⁷ Cf. *Mor.* 591B and *De Anima*, Frag. 6 (vol. VII, p22.5 Bern.): λόγον ἔχει καθάπερ ἐκ καμπῆς (Dübner: εἰ κάμπης) τινος ἀνείσης οἶον ἐξάπτειν (Koenius: ἐξάπτειν) καὶ ἀναθεῖν (Gesner: ἀναθεῖναι) τὴν ψυχὴν ἀποπνέοντος τοῦ σώματος ἀναπνέουσιν αὐτὴν καὶ ἀναψύχουσιν. For the general idea cf. Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 23.1: "... facillimum ad superos iter est animis cito ab humana conversatione dimissis; minimum enim faecis, ponderis traxerunt. Ante quam obdurescent et altius terrena conciperent liberati leviores ad originem suam revolant et facilius quicquid est illud obsoleti inlitiue eluunt" cf. Menander, *περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν* (vol. III, p414.21-23 Spengel; p122 Bursian): καὶ τὰχα που καὶ μέμφεται τοῖς θρηνοῦσιν· συγγενῆς γὰρ οὔσα τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ ψυχὴ κάκειθεν κατιοῦσα σπεύδει πάλιν ἄνω πρὸς τὸ συγγενές· . . .



⁴⁸ There is a long lacuna in the MSS. here, but the general sense is clear.



⁴⁹ Theognis, 427.



⁵⁰ Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 904C-D, where the region tenanted by a soul is associated with the lot it obtains.



⁵¹ The text in one MS. is illegible here; in the rest there is a lacuna. The supplement and translation are uncertain.



⁵² Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disput.* I.45 (108 f.).

Thayer's Note:

• That this was written nearly two thousand years ago makes it no less real, and no less wise if difficult advice: if any demonstration of the relevance of this passage were needed, this close reading of it in 2011 by a woman grieving for the loss of her own daughter hits it on the nail.