

PRIMARY SOURCES SUPPLEMENT TO

WORLD HISTORY

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WEST PUBLISHING COMPANY

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL NEW YORK LOS ANGELES SAN FRANCISCO

I

Law Code: The Code of the Babylonian King Hammurabi as a Source for Civilization in Mesopotamia

Civilizations are characterized by distinct social strata. Each stratum is marked by a different degree of privileges and access to the resources of the community. The French historian Roland Mousnier has identified three types of societies according to the way social status is determined within those societies.¹ No society is completely one type or the other. Societies of privilege were the most prominent ones before the French Revolution of 1789. In such societies in which status was set according to legal distinctions one's rank was usually determined by the stratum of society that one was born into, whether slave, peasant, merchant, or noble. Since birth and legal status were closely linked, and since high legal status gave access to privilege, these societies have been called "societies of privilege." In these societies, there were inherent inequalities before the law. Those higher in social status generally received lighter punishments for committing the same crimes as those lower in society did.

Social stratification according to religious function is most often associated with the caste system in India, where one's status was religious based. As in societies in which one's status was determined by law, those higher in society had more privileges and access to the resources of that society. But, in contrast, those higher in Hindu hierarchical structure were to receive harsher punishments for the same crimes as those lower in society. This is because those higher up were to act as examples, role-models, for those lower down.

Societies in which status is determined primarily by wealth include most societies in the world today. This means that the wealthy have replaced the privileged nobility as the social elite. Like the privileged nobility of law-oriented status societies, the modern wealthy elite have access to certain privileges that those lower in society do not have access to. But this access is the result of the amount of money they can pay, not their birth or legal status. We can find the characteristics of social stratification in the law code of Hammurabi.

Select Statutes of Hammurabi's Law Code

Sometime during December 1901 or January 1902, the archaeologist V. Scheil discovered the stele on which the Code of Hammurabi is inscribed. It is about eight feet high and on the upper part is a relief that shows the god Shamash giving Hammurabi the sceptre and ring of authority. Below that, written from top to bottom is the code, seven columns of which have been

¹ Roland Mousnier, *Social Hierarchies: 1450 to the Present*, London, 1973 (originally published as *Les hiérarchies sociales de 1450 à nos jours*, Paris, 1969).

*deleted.*² *The language of the law code is Akkadian, a Semitic language, and it is written in the Cuneiform alphabet. At present, it is housed in the Louvre Museum in Paris. The law code defines at least three strata of society: lords, commoners, and slaves.*

200: If a lord has knocked out a tooth of a lord of his own rank, they shall knock out his tooth.

201: If he has knocked out a commoner's tooth, he shall pay one-third mina of silver.

202: If a lord has struck the cheek of a lord who is superior to him, he shall be beaten sixty [times] with an oxtail whip in the assembly.

203: If a member of the aristocracy has struck the cheek of a member of the aristocracy who is of the same rank as himself, he shall pay one mina of silver.

204: If a commoner has struck the cheek of a commoner, he shall pay ten shekels of silver.

205: If a lord's slave has struck the cheek of a member of the aristocracy, they shall cut off his ear. . . .

1. What evidence do these passages provide of the hierarchy among the three ranks? If we did not already know that a lord was higher than a commoner and a commoner was higher than a slave, how would we determine this relative ranking from the respective punishments?

2. If we accept that paying one-third mina of silver is less severe punishment than having one's tooth knocked out, then can we conclude that a lord is punished less for knocking out the tooth of a commoner than for knocking out the tooth of another lord?

3. What does the punishment for a lord's striking the cheek of a lord who was superior to him tell us?

4. What does the punishment for a lord who struck another lord of the same rank? What does that tell us in the context of the previous punishment?

In societies that can be classed under the rubric of "civilization," we also tend to find political and religious hierarchies that complement each other in the administration of organized states. Another characteristic of civilization is division of labor between, on the one hand, full-time craftsmen, servants, soldiers, and governmental officials and, on the other, food producers, such as farmers and peasants. The two groups live in a symbiotic relationship (or at least are supposed to) in which the food producers send surplus food to urban centers for the craftsmen, merchants, officials, and so forth. In return the craftsmen make manufactured products for the farmer. Merchants act as go-betweens, soldiers defend the society from outside interference,

² W. J. Martin, "The Law Code of Hammurabi," in *Documents from Old Testament Times*, New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1958, p. 27.

while the government officials make sure the soldiers get paid and taxes are collected. We can also find evidence of division of labor within Babylonian society. In the code are mentions of such occupations as merchants, physicians, builders, and boatmen. For example, here are some of the statutes regarding merchants.

- 88: If a merchant [lent] grain at interest, he shall receive sixty *qu* of grain per *kur* as interest. If he lent money at interest, he shall receive one-sixth (shekel) six *se* [i.e., one-fifth shekel) per shekel of silver as interest.
- 89: If a lord, who [incurred] a debt, does not have the money to pay [it] back, but has the grain, [the merchant] shall take grain for his money [with its interest] in accordance with the ratio fixed by the king.
- 90: If the merchant increased the interest beyond [sixty *qu*] per *kur* [of grain] [or] one-sixth [shekel] six *se* [per shekel of money] and has collected [it], they shall forfeit whatever they lent.
- 91: If a merchant [lent] grain at interest and has collected money [for the full interest] on the grain, the grain along with the money may not [be charged to the account].
- 92: [not preserved]
- 93: [If the merchant] ... or he has not had the full amount of grain [which they received] deducted and did not write a new contract, or they have added the interest to the principal, that merchant shall pay back double the full amount of grain that they received.
- 94: If a merchant lent grain or money at interest and when he lent [it] at interest he paid out the money by the small weight and the grain by the small measure, but when he got [it] back he got the money by the [large] weight [and] the grain by the large measure, [that merchant shall forfeit] whatever he lent.

1. *What would you say was the Babylonian concept of contract law? of just interest rates?*
2. *The last statute also indicates to us that they had a problem with two different systems of weights and measures. What was it?*
3. *Do we have a similar problem today?*

Doctors then, as now, had to watch out for malpractice cases.

- 218: If a physician performed a major operation on a lord with a bronze lancet and has caused the lord's death, or he opened up the eye-socket of a lord and has destroyed the lord's eye, they shall cut off his hand.

219: If a physician performed a major operation on a commoner's slave with a bronze lancet and has caused [the slave's] death, he shall make good slave for slave.

220: If he opened up his eye-socket with a bronze lancet and has destroyed his eye, he shall pay one-half [the slave's] value in silver.

1. *What are the gradations of punishments for the different social ranks in society?*
2. *Do you think cutting off a physician's hand for destroying the lord's eye is a just punishment?*
3. *Do you think having the physician pay one-half of the slave's value in silver for the same offense to a slave is a just punishment?*

A few features of the code of Hammurabi, we might find a little strange. We have already seen statutes that decree mutilation (the cutting off of a hand or ear) as punishment. Perhaps the most unusual type of statutes, from our point of view, are the equivalency punishments.

209: If a man has struck a free woman with child, and has caused her to miscarry, he shall pay ten shekels for her miscarriage.

210: If that woman die, his daughter shall be killed.

229: If a builder has built a house for a commoner, and has not made his work sound, and the house he built has fallen, and caused the death of its owner, that builder shall be put to death.

230: If it is the owner's son who is killed the builder's son shall be put to death.

231: If it is the slave of the owner who is killed, the builder shall give slave for slave to the owner of the house.

1. *What reason can you imagine the Babylonians had for punishing the son or daughter of a man when what the man has done has resulted in the death of someone else? Why would they not put that man to death instead of his son or daughter?*
2. *Do you think these are just forms of punishments? Why?*
3. *What do you think the punishment was if the man had no children?*

One also had to refrain from making false accusations or at least accusations that one could not prove.

1: If a man has accused another of laying a *nertu* [death spell?] upon him, but has not proved it, he shall be put to death.

2: If a man has accused another of laying a *kispu* [spell] upon him, but has not proved it, the

accused shall go to the sacred river, he shall plunge into the sacred river, and if the sacred river shall conquer him, he that accused him shall take possession of his house. If the sacred river shall show his innocence and he is saved, his accuser shall be put to death. He that plunged into the sacred river shall appropriate the house of him that accused him.

1. *How would one go about proving that someone had put a death spell on one?*
2. *What does the Babylonian concept of the sacred river and having it decide whether an accused person is guilty or not tell us about Babylonian religious beliefs?*

A number of these unusual (from our point of view) practices come together in cases involving marital disputes. Most of the statutes are more favorable to men than to women, but some statutes are clearly meant to protect the rights of the wife vis-a-vis her husband.

- 129: If the wife of a lord has been caught while lying with another man, they shall bind them and throw them into the water. If the husband of the woman wishes to spare his wife, then the king in turn may spare his subject.
- 130: If a lord bound the [betrothed] wife of a lord, who had no intercourse with a male and was still living in her father's house, and he has lain in her bosom and they have caught him, that lord shall be put to death, while that woman shall go free.
- 131: If a lord's wife was accused by her husband, but she was not caught while lying with another man, she shall make affirmation by a god and return to her house.
- 132: If the finger was pointed at the wife of a lord because of another man, but she has not been caught while lying with the other man, she shall throw herself into the river for the sake of her husband.
- 134: If the lord was taken captive and there was not sufficient to live on in his house, his wife may enter the house of another, with that woman incurring no blame at all.
- 141: If a man's wife, living in her husband's house, has persisted in going out, has acted the fool, has wasted her house, has belittled her husband, he shall prosecute her. If her husband has said, "I divorce her," she shall go her way; he shall give her nothing as her price of divorce. If her husband has said, "I will not divorce her," he may take another woman to wife; the wife shall live as a slave in her husband's house.
- 142: If a woman has hated her husband and has said, "You shall not possess me," her past shall be inquired into, as to what she lacks. If she has been discreet, and has no vice, and her husband has gone out, and has greatly belittled her, that woman has no blame, she shall take her marriage-portion and go off to her father's house.

143: If she has not been discreet, has gone out, ruined her house, belittled her husband, she shall be drowned.³

1. *How does the punishment in article 132, where the accused wife throws herself into the river presumably to allow river justice to decide her guilt or innocence differ from the punishment in article 129, where the guilty parties are thrown into the river to die of drowning after being bound?*

2. *Notice also that a wife can “file for divorce” by merely announcing, “You shall not have me.” If her husband is found to be at fault, then the divorce proceeds normally. If the wife is found to be at fault, she is put to death. What does that tell us about the patriarchal nature of Babylonian society?*

³ “The Code of Hammurabi,” trans. Theophile J. Meek, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 166, 169, 171–172, 175–176.

II

Hymns: Polytheism, Henotheism, and Monotheism in Ancient Egypt and the Hebrew Connection

Ancient Egyptian religion was polytheistic in that it had numerous gods, all responsible for their own sphere of natural and human activities. When new dynasties came to power, they often promoted their own patron deity to be the chief god. So for a time, Amon was the head god, but then Re replaced him. At other times, other gods took their turns as the head god. The retired head god would not be eliminated but would be given an appropriate place along with the other gods lower down in the hierarchy or even combined with the new head god, such as occurred with the deity Amon-Re.

When Amenophis IV (or Amenhotep IV) became pharaoh in the fourteenth century B.C.E., he decided not only to change the head god from Amon-Re to Aton, but also, it has been argued, to eliminate all the other gods as well. He even changed his own name to Akhnaton (Servant of Aton), and designated the sun as the symbol of Aton. A number of scholars have attempted to find a connection between Akhnaton's religious beliefs and those of the Hebrews who had not yet left Egypt. If the Hebrews were monotheists when they went into Egypt, as the Bible indicates, then perhaps they influenced Akhnaton to adopt monotheism. Other scholars have argued that the Hebrews became monotheists later and were perhaps influenced by the cult of Aton to do so. Both groups of scholars have cited the similarities between the Hymn to Aton and Psalm 104 of the Old Testament to support their contention of influence between the religious beliefs of an Egyptian pharaoh and those of the Hebrews.

The Aton Hymn

When thou settest in the western
horizon,
The land is in darkness in the
manner of death . . .
Every lion is come forth from
his den;

All creeping things, they sting.

At daybreak, when thou arisest on
the horizon . . .
Thou drivest away the darkness . . .
Awake and standing upon (their)

Psalm 104

Thou makest darkness and it is
night,
Wherein all the beasts of the forest
creep forth.
The young lions roar after their
prey.

The sun ariseth, they get them
away . . .

Man goeth forth unto his work,

feet . . .	
All the world, they do their work.	And to his labor until the evening.
How manifold are thy works!	O Yahweh, how manifold are thy
They are hidden from man's sight.	works!
O sole god, like whom there is no	In wisdom has thou made them all;
other!	
Thou didst create the world	The earth is full of thy riches.
according to thy desire.	

Now, of course, all these views that I have just described about Akhnaton and the Hebrews have been challenged by other scholars. They have argued that Akhnaton was a henotheist, not a monotheist. That is, Akhnaton believed that Aton was superior to all the other gods but was not the only god. Such an argument would seem to contradict the source evidence we have, especially from the Hymn to Aton. Nothing could seem clearer than that Aton was the creator of all things and would seem, therefore, to be the one and only god. But, as these other scholars have pointed out, the same kind of statements are made in prayers to other chief gods of Egypt. For example, in this excerpt from a hymn to Amon-Re, we can see not only statements about his being the creator of everything but also explicit statements about his being the only one.

Hymn to Amon-Re

The sweetness of thee is in the northern sky.
 The beauty of thee carries away hearts;
 The love of thee makes arms languid;
 Thy beautiful form relaxes the hands;
 And hearts are forgetful at the sight of thee.
 Thou art the sole one, who made what is,
 The solitary sole [one], who made what exists,
 From whose eyes mankind came forth,
 And upon whose mouth the gods came into being
 He who made herbage [for] the cattle,
 And the fruit tree for mankind,
 Who made that (on which) the fish in the river may live,
 And the birds soaring in the sky.
 He who gives breath to that which is in the egg,

Gives life to the son of the slug,
And makes that on which gnats may live,
And worms and flies in like manner;
Who supplies the needs of the mice in their holes,
And gives life to flying things in every tree.
Hail to thee, who did all this!
Solitary sole one, with many hands. . . .⁴

1. *The only difference in the two hymns would seem to be that the Hymn to Amon-Ra explicitly mentions that he made other gods, whereas the Hymn to Aton does not. Is that enough to see evidence of monotheism in the Aton cult?*
2. *Was Akhnaton merely a henotheist who carried his worship of Aton too far in terms of Aton's superiority over the other gods?*
3. *Since the Hebrews were in Egypt as slaves at the time of Akhnaton's reign, do you think there could have been influence of the religious beliefs of one on the other? If so, which way do you think the influence may have been? If not, why do you think that such influence was unlikely?*

⁴ Reprinted from *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard, trans. John A. Wilson, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 370, 366.

III

Religious Instruction: The *Upanishads* as a Source for Understanding Hinduism

The Upanishads is a collection of short works that, along with the Vedas and the Brahmanas make up the sruti (“understanding”) part of the sacred literature of Hinduism. The other part of the sacred literature is smṛti (“memory”) and includes such texts as the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Puranas, etc. In Sanskrit the word for “lesson” is upanishad, which implies the intent of passing on the religious traditions of the culture to the next generation. The Upanishads are thought to have been written down in the sixth century B.C.E. and are part of the Brahmanic religious tradition that has had such a tremendous influence on the development of Hinduism. “The Education of Svetaketu” is one of the lessons in the Upanishads. The form of the essay, in this case, is a personal instruction by a father of his son after the son has received formal instruction at school. In other lessons in the Upanishads, the father’s place is taken by an elder and the son’s by a novice. As part of being born of the Brahmin estate, both father (elder) and son (novice) have the obligation and responsibility to study and thoroughly understand the spiritual truths of their religion. The novice goes through a lengthy apprenticeship that is limited to the aristocratic Brahmins. This helps to keep the Brahmins an exclusive estate. One’s status in Hindu society was determined by the function of one’s estate (varna) and then one’s caste (jati) within the estate. Thus, the Brahmins, who were the priests, had the highest social status. Next in line were the Kshatriyas or warrior nobles, then Vaishyas, or commoners, followed by Shudras, the servants, who had no function except to carry out the orders of the other estates and thus were the lowest. A fifth group, the Untouchables, were excluded from the system. Part of the duty of the Brahmins was, and still is, to serve as a role models for the members of all other estates in Hindu society.

Underlying all Vedic literature is the theme of the relationship between Ātman, the realization of the self, and Brahman, the unchanging, universal One, the power that pervades the universe. The father of Svetaketu imparts the lesson concerning that relationship through a series of illustrations:

The Education of Svetaketu

Hari, Om. There lived once Svetaketu Aruneya, the grandson of Aruna. To him his father, Uddalaka, the son of Aruna, said: “Svetaketu, go to school; for there is none belonging to our kind, darling, who, not having studied the Veda, is, as it were, a Brahmin by birth only.”

Having begun his apprenticeship with a teacher when he was twelve years of age, Svetaketu returned to his father when he was twenty-four, having then studied all the Vedas—conceited, considering himself well-read, and stern.

His father said to him: “Svetaketu, as you are so conceited, considering yourself so well-read, and so stern, my dear, have you ever asked for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known?”

“What is that instruction, Sir?” he asked.

1 The father replied: “My dear, as by one clod of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is clay; and as, my dear, by one nugget of gold all that is made of gold is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is gold; and as, my dear, by one pair of nail-scissors all that is made of iron is known, the difference being only a name, arising from speech, but the truth being that all is iron—thus, my dear, is that instruction.”

The son said: “Surely those venerable men, my teachers, did not know that. For if they had known it, why should they not have told it me? Do you, Sir, therefore tell me that.”

“Be it so,” said the father.

2 “In the beginning, my dear, there was that only which is, one only, without a second. It thought, May I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth fire. That fire thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth water. And therefore whenever anybody anywhere is hot and perspires, water is produced on him from fire alone.

Water thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth earth (food). Therefore whenever it rains anywhere, most food is then produced. From water alone is eatable food produced.

3 As the bees, my son, make honey by collecting the juices of distant trees, and reduce the juice into one form, and as these juices have no discrimination, so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or that, in the same manner, my son, all these creatures, when they have become merged in the True (either in deep sleep or in death), know not that they are merged in the True. Whatever these creatures are here, whether a lion, or a wolf, or a boar, or a worm, or a midge, or a gnat, or a mosquito, that they become again and again. Now that which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.”

“Please, Sir, inform me still more,” said the son.

“Be it so, my child,” the father replied.

4 “These rivers, my son, run, the eastern like the Ganges, towards the east, the western like the Sindhu, towards the west. They go from sea to sea (that is, the clouds lift up the water from the sea to the sky, and send it back as rain to the sea). They become indeed sea. And as those rivers, when they are in the sea, do not know, I am this or that river, in the same manner, my son, all these creatures, when they have come back from the True, know not that they have come back from the True. Whatever these creatures are here, whether a lion, or a wolf, or a boar, or a worm, or a midge, or a gnat, or a mosquito, that they become again and again.

That which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.”

“Please, Sir, inform me still more,” said the son.

“Be it so, my child,” the father replied.

5 If someone were to strike at the root of this large tree here, it would bleed, but live. If he were to strike at its stem, it would bleed, but live. If he were to strike at its top, it would bleed, but live. Pervaded by the living Self that tree stands firm, drinking in its nourishment and rejoicing. But if the life (the living Self) leaves one of its branches, that branch withers, if it leaves a second, that branch withers; if it leaves a third, that branch wither. If it leaves the whole tree, the whole tree withers.

In exactly the same manner, my son, know this. This body indeed withers and dies when the living Self has left it; the living Self dies not.

That which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.”⁵

1. *What do you think the father is referring to when he asks the paradoxical question about the instruction that “cannot be heard,” the perception that “cannot be perceived”, and the knowledge that “cannot be known”?*

2. *In the first illustration (1), the father uses geologic imagery of clay, gold, and iron to illustrate a point about the fundamental substance of things. What is that point?*

3. *The second illustration (2) is a creation story involving the One (Brahman). In what way does it relate to the first illustration?*

4. *In the third illustration (3), how does realization of the self (Āman) relate to honey-making?*

⁵ *The Portable World Bible*, ed. Robert O. Ballou, New York, Penguin, 1976, pp. 54–56.

to honey? to Brahman?

5. How does the fourth illustration (4), concerning rivers and the sea, relate to the main point of the previous illustration?

6. In the final illustration (5), how does the father uses use the metaphor of the living Self and the tree to demonstrate the relationship between Āman and Brahman?

IV

Sermons: How Do We Know What Buddha Taught?

Buddhism can be grouped into two basic types: Theravada, which focuses renunciation, and Mahayana, which can focus mantras, charms, and zen. A consensus of scholarship agrees that the first type, Theravada Buddhism, was the type most closely associated with Buddha (Gautama Siddhartha) himself. The problem is to determine what Buddha's actual views and real words were, since everything that has been attributed to him has been written down later by other people.

What we can say with some certainty is that Buddhism involved a partial rejection and partial acceptance of three well-established traditions in first millennium B.C.E. India. One of these was the extreme asceticism manifested in such religious groups as the Jains. Founded by Mahavira, the Jains preached extreme acts of ascetical devotion, such as fasting and inflicting discomfort on themselves. Some Jains wore no clothing. All Jains believed in the sanctity of life, all life, to the extent that they refused to kill even insects or invisible microbes found in the soil or in the air. The reason for this is the second tradition of India—the Brahmanic, which gave rise to the so-called caste system. This system was religious based and established a hierarchy of life forms from Brahmins at the top to inanimate forms below. Accordingly, everyone's soul experiences suffering (dukkha) in this life and a cycle of reincarnations (samsara) whereby each self (ātman) is rewarded or punished by being reborn into this world either higher or lower in the hierarchy. The Jains believed that, since insects and microbes are part of samsara, even though they were at the lowest incarnation, they should not be harmed. Eventually, one could break the endless cycle of rebirths and suffering by experiencing each stage of rebirth and, thus, reaching the top, the Brahmin level. By leading an exemplary life at this level, the self could achieve escape from the system and complete reunion with the eternal. The third tradition that had a paradoxical influence on Buddha was Yoga. The yogic tradition emphasized introspection and meditation to achieve various levels of awareness.

In the following sermon, Buddha drew attention to the perceptions that the individual has of this world. Buddha believed perceptions to be an illusion. Here he methodically analyzed the very sources of unhappiness.

The Fire Sermon

Thus have I heard. The Blessed One was once living at Gayāsīsa in Gayā with a thousand bhikkhus. There he addressed the bhikkhus:

“Bhikkhus, all is burning. And what is the all that is burning?

Bhikkhus, the eye is burning, visible forms are burning, visual consciousness is burning, visual impression is burning, also whatever sensation, pleasant or painful or neither-painful-

nor-pleasant, arises on account of the visual impression, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion; I say it is burning with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with griefs, with despairs.

The ear is burning, sounds are burning, auditory consciousness is burning, auditory impression is burning, also whatever sensation, pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, arises on account of the auditory impression, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust. . . .

The nose is burning, odors are burning, olfactory consciousness is burning, olfactory impression is burning, also whatever sensation, pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, arises on account of the olfactory impression, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust. . . .

The tongue is burning, flavors are burning, gustative consciousness is burning, gustative impression is burning, also whatever sensation, pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, arises on account of the gustative impression, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust. . . .

The body is burning, tangible things are burning, tactile consciousness is burning, tactile impression is burning, also whatever sensation, pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, arises on account of the tactile sensation, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust. . . .

The mind is burning, mental objects (ideas, etc.) are burning mental consciousness is burning, mental impression is burning, also whatever sensation, pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, arises on account of the mental impression, that too is burning. Burning with what? Burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of hate, with the fire of delusion; I say it is burning with birth, aging, and death, with sorrows, with lamentations, with pains, with griefs, with despairs.

Bhikkhus, a learned and noble disciple, who sees (things) thus, becomes dispassionate with regard to the eye, becomes dispassionate with regard to visible forms, becomes dispassionate with regard to the visual consciousness, becomes dispassionate with regard to the visual impression, also whatever sensation, pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, arises on account of the visual impression, with regard to that too he becomes dispassionate. He becomes dispassionate with regard to the ear, with regard to sounds. . . . He becomes dispassionate with regard to the nose . . . with regard to odors. . . . He becomes dispassionate with regard to the tongue . . . with regard to flavors. . . . He becomes dispassionate with

regard to the body . . . with regard to tangible things. . . . He becomes dispassionate with regard to the mind, becomes dispassionate with regard to mental objects (ideas, etc.), becomes dispassionate with regard to mental consciousness, also whatever sensation, pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant, arises on account of mental impression, with regard to that too he becomes dispassionate.

Being dispassionate he becomes detached; through detachment he is liberated. When liberated there is knowledge that he is liberated. And he knows: Birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived, what has to be done is done, there is no more left to be done on this account.”

This the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were glad, and they rejoiced at this words.

While this exposition was being delivered, the minds of those thousand bhikkhus were liberated from impurities, without attachment.

1. *The sermon focuses on the senses—taste, touch, sight, hearing, and smell—as sources of suffering. What else does the sermon indicate as sources of suffering?*
2. *What do you think Buddha means by “being dispassionate”? How does one become detached through being dispassionate? How does one become liberated through being detached?*
3. *Some people say that nothing in the world is accomplished without passion. This would seem to contradict what Buddha is saying here. Which do you think is better? Can one be a passionate Buddhist?*

Buddha not only rejected the extreme asceticism of such groups as the Jains, but he also rejected the need for individual self to go through every stage of reincarnation before achieving union with the eternal. Indeed, Buddha even rejected the concept of the self (ātman). Buddha taught that any the cycle of reincarnations through enlightenment could be escaped at any time. As soon as we fully and completely realize that we are made up entirely of desires and that desires are the source of suffering, then we can get rid of them and thus extinguish the self (since there is no self without desire) and our suffering. For Buddha, the middle way of practicing moderation and of realizing that life was suffering would lead to rejection of attachment to this world. Through following the eightfold path, the individual could obliterate the self and become united with the eternal in the blissful state or non-state called Nirvana.

India in the first millennium B.C.E. was a thriving and prosperous trading area. Buddha came from a wealthy kshatriya family and the many practicing ascetics of the time are an indication of the affluence of that society. In other societies, however, where resources were scarce relative to the size of the population, reducing desires was a strategy for coping with the reduced possibilities of gratification. Another strategy, followed by Western societies has been to focus the efforts of the individuals within society to produce more and to increase desire through

competition. Buddhism focused on the need to reduce one's desires to the absolute minimum until one had none. That way, not only was the individual less of a burden on the resources of society but also he or she was not caught up in the competition to produce more and more. Even today in many places Buddhist monks live entirely or almost entirely off the charity of others. Of course, in those societies a certain surplus must be created in order to allow the existence of non-producers, but the producers who give to a monastery at least have the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping others attain ultimate peace (Nirvana). In the following sermon, described as his first sermon, Buddha lays out in specific detail the way to Nirvana to a group of five bhikkhus (Buddhist monks). Note how the repetitions tend to create a hypnotic effect in the listener and draw the listener into an acceptance of the points being made. The ellipses (. . .) represent places where further repetitions were eliminated in the text presented here.

Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth

Thus have I heard. The Blessed One was once living in the Deer Park at Isipatana (the Resort of Seers) near Bārānasi (Benares [Varanasi]). There he addressed a group of five bhikkhus [monks, disciples]:

“Bhikkhus, these two extremes ought not to be practised by one who has gone forth from the household life. What are the two? There is devotion to the indulgence of sense-pleasures, which is low, common, the way of ordinary people, unworthy, and unprofitable; and there is devotion to self-mortification, which is painful, unworthy, and unprofitable.

Avoiding both these extremes, the Tathāgata has realized the Middle Path: it gives vision, it gives knowledge, and it leads to calm, to insight, to enlightenment, to Nirvana. And what is that Middle Path. . . ? It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the Middle Path realized by the Tathāgata, which gives vision, which gives knowledge, and which leads to calm, to insight, to enlightenment, to Nirvana.

The Noble Truth of suffering (*dukkha*) is this: Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering; association with the unpleasant is suffering; dissociation from the pleasant is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering—in brief, the five aggregates of attachment are suffering.

The Noble Truth of the origin of suffering is this: It is this thirst (craving) that produces re-existence and re-becoming, bound up with passionate greed. It finds fresh delight now here and now there, namely, thirst for sense-pleasures; thirst for existence and becoming; and thirst for non-existence (self-annihilation).

The Noble Truth of the Cessation of suffering is this: It is the complete cessation of that very thirst, giving it up, renouncing it, emancipating oneself from it, detaching oneself from it.

The Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of suffering is this: It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path, namely right view; right thought; right speech, right action, right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness, right concentration.

‘This is the Noble Truth of Suffering’: such was the vision, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light, that arose in me with regard to things not heard before. ‘This suffering, as a noble truth, should be fully understood’: such was the vision, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light that arose in me with regard to things not heard before. ‘This suffering, as a noble truth, has been fully understood’: such was the vision, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light, that arose in me with regard to things not heard before.

‘This is the Noble Truth of the Origin of suffering’: such was the vision. . . . ‘This Origin of suffering, as a noble truth, should be abandoned’: such was the vision, . . . ‘This origin of suffering as a noble truth, has been abandoned’: such was the vision, . . . with regard to things not heard before.

‘This is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of suffering’: such was the vision. . . . ‘This Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, should be realized’: such was the vision, . . . ‘This Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, has been realized’: such was the vision, . . . with regard to things not heard before.

‘This is the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of suffering’: such was the vision, . . . ‘This Path leading to the Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, should be followed (cultivated)’: such was the vision, . . . ‘This Path leading to the Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, has been followed (cultivated)’: such was the vision, the knowledge, the wisdom, the science, the light, that arose in me with regard to things not heard before.

As long as my vision of true knowledge was not fully clear in these three aspects, in these twelve ways, regarding the Four Noble Truths, I did not claim to have realized the perfect Enlightenment that is supreme in the world with its gods, with its Māras and Brahmas, in this world with its recluses and brāhmaṇas, with its princes and men. But when my vision of true knowledge was fully clear in these three aspects, in these twelve ways, regarding the Four Noble Truths, then I claimed to have realized the perfect Enlightenment that is supreme in the world with its gods, its Māras and Brahmas, in this world with its recluses and brāhmaṇas, with it princes and men. And a vision of true knowledge arose in me thus: My heart’s deliverance is unassailable. This is the last birth. Now there is no more re-becoming (rebirth).”

This the Blessed One said. The group of five bhikkhus was glad, and they rejoiced at his words.⁶

1. *Identify the Four Noble Truths as described by Buddha in this sermon.*
2. *There are three aspects to knowledge of each of these Four Noble Truths. How would you describe them in your own words?*
3. *What do you think Buddha meant by each of the items in the Noble Eightfold Path: right view? right thought? right speech? right action? right livelihood? right effort? right mindfulness? right concentration?*

⁶ From Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 2nd ed., New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1974, pp. 95–97.

V

Bureaucratic Manual: Confucius on Proper Behavior for the Scholar-Administrator

Confucius (K'ung Fu-tzu, or Master K'ung) (551–479 B.C.E.) for most of his life was an out-of-work public official. He had alienated powerful interests and found himself virtually blacklisted among the various states of China of the time. His inability to obtain gainful employment in his chosen profession must have been a deep blow to his pride and confidence. Yet, he managed to turn that failure around by becoming a teacher and by passing his thoughts about proper behavior for the scholar-administrator on to his students. He may have become a great sage in part due to the adversity he endured. A number of the maxims in the Analects speak exactly to the proper way for a gentleman to react to disappointment.

As with Buddha, Socrates, and Jesus, Master K'ung did not write down any of his own teachings. Instead they were gathered after his death and added to by his disciples. This is clear from such statements in the Analects as “The Master’s manner was affable yet firm, commanding but not harsh, polite but easy.” It does not seem likely that Confucius would have attributed these characteristics to himself when he was otherwise teaching humility. Clearly his disciples were interspersing their own remembrances of him with his own teachings. It is also possible that Confucianists who did not know him may have added teachings and “remembrances” according to what they thought would be appropriate to a great teacher. Most of the ideas of Confucius have been preserved as maxims, but it is difficult to tell which were his ideas and which were maxims that his disciples and their disciples considered to be in the spirit of the master.

The Analects (Lun-yu) is one of the Confucian classics. In it, we find importance placed on moral force and on goodness (jen). Confucius thought it important for the scholar-administrator to approach his position with the proper demeanor and attitude, that is one of respect and humility. The following excerpts are taken from various parts of the Analects with the idea of providing the flavor of the work and a sampling of the ideas expressed therein rather than trying to be comprehensive or systematic.

Confucius on the Scholar-Administrator

Tzu-Ch'in said to Tzu-kung, When our Master arrives in a fresh country he always manages to find out about its policy. Does he do this by asking questions or do people tell him of their own accord? Tzu-king said, Our Master get things by being cordial, frank, courteous, temperate, deferential. That is our Master's way of enquiring—a very different matter, certainly, from the way in which enquiries are generally made.

The Master said, (the good man) does not grieve that other people do not recognize his merits. His only anxiety is lest he should fail to recognize theirs.

The Master said, If out of the three hundred *Songs* I had to take one phrase to cover all my teaching, I would say 'Let there be no evil in your thoughts.'

The Master said, Govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by chastisements, and they will flee from you, and lose all self-respect. Govern them by moral force, keep order among them by ritual and they will keep their self-respect and come to you of their own accord.

Meng Wu Po asked about the treatment of parents. The Master said, Behave in such a way that your father and mother have no anxiety about you, except concerning your health.

The Master said, A gentleman can see a question from all sides without bias. The small man is biased and can see a question only from one side.

The Master said, 'He who learns but does not think, is lost.' He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger.

The Master said, Yu, shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to recognize that you know it, and when you do not know a thing, to recognize that you do not know it. That is knowledge.

The Master said, Without Goodness a man

Cannot for long endure adversity,

Cannot for long enjoy prosperity.

The Good Man rests content with Goodness; he that is merely wise pursues Goodness in the belief that it pays to do so.

Of the adage 'Only a Good Man knows how to like people, knows how to dislike them,' the Master said, He whose heart is in the smallest degree set upon Goodness will dislike no one.

Wealth and rank are what every man desires; but if they can only be retained to the detriment of the Way he professes, he must relinquish them. Poverty and obscurity are what every man detests; but if they can only be avoided to the detriment of the Way he professes, he must accept them. The gentleman who ever parts company with Goodness does not fulfill that name. Never for a moment does a gentleman quit the way of Goodness. He is never so harried but that he cleaves to this; never so tottering but that he cleaves to this.

The Master said, Those whose measures are dictated by mere expediency will arouse continual discontent.

The Master said, In serving his father and mother a man may gently remonstrate with them. But if he sees that he has failed to change their opinion, he should resume an attitude of deference and not thwart them; may feel discouraged, but not resentful.

The Master said, As far as taking trouble goes, I do not think I compare badly with other people. But as regards carrying out the duties of a gentleman in actual life, I have never yet had a change to show what I could do.

Chi K'ang-tzu asked Master K'ung about government, saying, Suppose I were to slay those who have not the Way in order to help on those who have the Way, what would you think of it? Master K'ung replied saying, You are there to rule, not to slay. If you desire what is good, the people will at once be good. The essence of the gentleman is that of wind; the essence of small people is that of grass. And when a wind passes over the grass, it cannot choose but bend.

The Master said, (A gentleman) does not grieve that people do not recognize his merits; he grieves at his own incapacities.

Master K'ung said, There are three things that a gentleman fears: he fears the will of Heaven, he fears great men, he fears the words of the Divine Sages. The small man does not know the will of Heaven and so does not fear it. He treats great men with contempt, and scoffs at the words of the Divine Sages.⁷

1. *How would you describe Confucius' notion of the gentleman?*
2. *How well do you think Confucius' ideas would work in today's bureaucracy?*
3. *To which other writers and philosophers are Confucius' ideas similar?*

⁷ Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Arthur Waley, New York, Vintage, 1989, pp. 85–86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 102–103, 104, 105, 130, 168, 188, 206.

VI

Satire: The Image of Socrates in Aristophanes' Play *The Clouds*

Determining the philosophy of Socrates presents a particularly acute problem for us. While the writings of many of the ancient Greek philosophers have not survived to our time, such as that of Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, and so forth, we have what we think are relatively accurate descriptions of their views from later writers, such as Aristotle who were not particularly hostile or favorable to them. With Socrates, the problem is that the main source for our information about Socrates' philosophy comes from Plato, his student and defender. We can hardly consider Plato to be an unbiased or even reliable source for Socrates' views. In addition, much of what Plato attributes to Socrates may be Plato's own philosophy that he felt would have more weight if put in the mouth of Socrates than if he, Plato, advanced it himself. Besides, in an Athens that would try and execute his teacher Socrates, Plato could not be too careful in expressing his own views.

*We do have another account of Socrates, in Aristophanes' play *The Clouds*, which until fairly recently has been dismissed as a mean-spirited and grotesque distortion of Socrates' philosophy. It was considered so for two reasons: first, Plato's image of Socrates had already established itself as the standard and true view, and second, Aristophanes was a comedy writer whose devotion to the truth could be questioned at every turn.*

*Recently, historians have been taking another look at the Socrates of *The Clouds*, and have tried to use it to gain perspective on what may be a very one-sided interpretation of Plato. Historians have not found it so easy to strike a balance between the Aristophanic Socrates and the Platonic Socrates.*

*What we find in *The Clouds* is a Socrates who tries to solve problems of the causes of phenomena by recourse to this-worldly explanations. Instead of looking for the answers in terms of supernatural beings, the Aristophanic Socrates shares with Thales and the Milesians the search for solutions and values in this world. Note below how Aristophanes turns this attempt to find answers to comic advantage. In the following scene, Strepsiades, who is trying to get his son enrolled at "The Thinkery," is regaled with a tale of Socrates' intellectual ability.*

Aristophanes' Image of Socrates

STUDENT. Just a minute ago Sokrates was questioning Chairephon about the number of fleafeet a flea could broadjump. You see, a flea happened to bite Chairephon on the eyebrow and then vaulted across and landed on Sokrates' head.

STREPSIADES. How did he measure it?

STUDENT. A stroke of absolute genius. First he melted some wax. Then he caught the flea, dipped its tiny feet into the melted wax, let it cool, and lo! little Persian bootees. He

slipped the boottees off and measured the distance.

STREPSIADES. Lord Zeus, what exquisite finesse of mind!

While Aristophanes makes the most of the comic image of Socrates' measuring distance by using a flea's bootee (and note as well the implication that the Thinkery is flea infested), what lies behind this tale is the implication that Socrates is asking questions about this world, and trying to find the answers to those questions in this world without resort to supernatural phenomena, like gods, as an explanation.

The student tells Strepsiades of another intellectual achievement of Socrates.

STUDENT. Well, it seems that Chairephon was asking Sokrates which of two theories he held: that gnats tootled through their mouths or, in reverse, through their tails.

STREPSIADES. Gosh. Go on. What was his theory about the gnat?

STUDENT. Attend. According to him, the intestinal tract of the gnat is of puny proportions, and through this diminutive duct the gastric gas of the gnat is forced under pressure down to the rump. At that point the compressed gases, as through a narrow valve, escape with a whoosh, thereby causing the characteristic tootle or cry of the flatulent gnat.

STREPSIADES. So the gnat has a bugle up its ass! O thrice-blessed mortals! What bowel wisdom! Why, the man who has mastered the ass of the gnat could win an acquittal from any court!

As before, the humorous (and ridiculous) explanation is a thin disguise for Socrates' attempts to answer questions of natural phenomena (in this case, the humming of the gnat) with explanation by natural causes.

Strepsiades then meets Socrates, who is sitting in a basket high above the floor of the "Thinkery" in order to benefit from the rarefied atmosphere as an aid to thinking.

STREPSIADES. O Sokrates! (No answer from the basket.) Yoohoo Sokrates!

SOKRATES. From a vast philosophical height.

Well, creature of a day?

STREPSIADES. What in the world are you doing up there?

SOKRATES. Ah, sir, I walk upon the air and look down upon the sun from a superior standpoint.

STREPSIADES. Well, I suppose it's better that you sneer at the gods from a basket up in the air than do it down here on the ground.

SOKRATES. Precisely, You see, only by being suspended aloft, by dangling my mind in the heavens and mingling my rare thought with the ethereal air, could I ever achieve strict scientific accuracy in my survey of the vast empyrean. Had I pursued my inquires from down there on the ground, my data would be worthless. The earth, you see, pulls down the delicate essence of thought to its own gross level. (*As an afterthought.*) Much the same thing happens with watercress.

STREPSIADES. (*Ecstatically bewildered.*) You don't say? Thought draws down . . . delicate essence . . . into watercress. O dear little Sokrates, please come down. Lower away, and teach me what I need to know!

Sokrates is slowly lowered earthwards.

SOKRATES. What subject?

STREPSIADES. Your course on public speaking and debating techniques. You see, my creditors have become absolutely ferocious. You should see how they're hounding me. What's more, Sokrates, they're about to seize my belongings.

SOKRATES. How in the world could you fall so deeply in debt without realizing it?

STREPSIADES. How? A great, greedy horse-pox ate me up, that's how. But that's why I want instruction in your second Logic, you know the one—the get-away-without-paying argument. I'll pay you *any* price you ask. I swear it. By the gods.

SOKRATES. By the gods? The gods, my dear simple fellow, are a mere expression coined by vulgar superstition. We frown upon such coinage here.

Here Aristophanes makes an allusion to the charge that Socrates was a Sophist, since the Sophists were known for their rhetorical skills, especially involving court cases. Strepsiades hopes that Socrates can teach him how to argue his way out of having to pay his debts. Another point of note here is the fact that Socrates seems uninterested in payment. Instead, he seems more interested in disabusing Strepsiades of his belief in the gods. According to Plato's Apology, among the formal charges that brought Socrates to trial was his not believing in the gods of the city. Furthermore, he tells Strepsiades that the only gods he and his fellows believe in are the clouds of heaven, "goddesses of men of leisure and philosophers. To them we owe our repertoire of verbal talents: our eloquence, intellect, fustian, casuistry, force, wit, prodigious vocabulary, circumlocutory skill." Clearly, the Aristophanic Socrates is playing into the idea of being a Sophist. What follows is further confirmation of Socrates' way of thinking, one that apparently began with the philosopher Thales in Ionia in the seventh century B.C.E.

SOKRATES. These are the only gods there are. The rest are but figments.

STREPSIADES. Holy name of Earth! Olympian Zeus is a figment?

SOKRATES. Zeus? What Zeus? Nonsense. There is no Zeus.

STREPSIADES. No Zeus? Then *who* makes it rain? Answer me that.

SOKRATES. Why, the clouds, of course. What's more, the proof is incontrovertible. For instance, have you ever yet seen rain when you didn't see a cloud? But if your hypothesis were correct, Zeus could drizzle from an empty sky while the clouds were on vacation.

STREPSIADES. By Apollo, you're right. A pretty proof. And to think I always used to believe the rain was just Zeus pissing through a sieve. All right, *who* makes it thunder? Brrr. I get goosebumps just saying it.

SOKRATES. The clouds again, of course. A simple process of convection.

STREPSIADES. I admire you, but I don't follow you.

SOKRATES. Listen. The clouds are a saturate water-solution. Tumescence in motion, of necessity, produces precipitation. When these distended masses collide—*boom!* Fulmination.

STREPSIADES. But who makes them move before they collide? Isn't that Zeus?

SOKRATES. Not Zeus, idiot. The convection-principle!

STREPSIADES. Convection? That's a new one. Just think. So Zeus is out and Convection-Principle is in.⁸

Here Strepsiades, used to thinking in terms of divine causes for mundane phenomena, merely replaces the god Zeus with the god Convection-Principle.

1. *When Socrates was brought to trial for corrupting the morals of the young of Athens, he was also accused of not believing in the gods. Do you think those who accused him may have been as simple minded as Strepsiades? Or do you think they were craftily using Socrates' reputation for finding natural causes for natural phenomena against him?*

2. *Can you think of any other cases either in history or your own experience where someone was condemned or punished for the views they expressed?*

⁸ Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, trans. William Arrowsmith, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1962, pp. 19–20, 25–26, 34–35.

VII

Political Tracts: Rome's Transition from Republic to Empire

Winners write history and Augustus Caesar (ruled 27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) can be said to be one of the winners in history, since he managed to turn Rome from a republic into an empire with himself as the first emperor. Augustus did so all the while claiming that he was defending the republic. How did he get away with it? Before his death Augustus had drawn up a list of his achievements, the Res gestae divi Augusti or “The Achievements of the Divine Augustus.” In it, he portrays himself as a righteous individual who accepted his duty unwillingly, and who protected the republic’s traditions. Augustus’ “father” is Julius Caesar, who adopted him shortly before he was assassinated. Notice how he describes his enemies as those who “made war on the republic.” Thus, Augustus implicitly portrays himself as the defender of that republic.

Augustus Lists His Accomplishments

I drove into exile the murderers of my father, avenging their crime through courts lawfully established, and afterwards, when they waged war on the republic, I twice defeated them in battle. . . . In the consulship of M. Marcellus and L. Arruntinus, the dictatorship was offered to me by both senate and people in my absence and when I was at Rome but I refused to accept it. I did not decline in the great scarcity of grain to undertake the charge of the grain supply, which I so administered with such effect that within a few days I delivered the whole city from panic and immediate danger by the money I expended.

What this passage is saying is that Augustus, while refusing the outward trappings of power, the offer of the dictatorship, could not refuse to exert his power when Rome was in trouble. And then he did so at great personal expense but saved Rome through his own efforts. Augustus goes on to describe how he assisted the state treasury four times with his own money, how he restored the temple of Jupiter and the theater of Pompey at his own expense. All the while, he was defending the republic.

I made the sea peaceful and freed it of pirates. In that war I captured about 30,000 slaves who had escaped from their masters and taken up arms against the republic, and I handed them over to their masters for punishment.

I extended the territory of all those provinces of the Roman people on whose borders lay peoples not subject to our government. I brought peace to the Fallic and Spanish provinces as well as to Germany, throughout the area bordering on the [Atlantic] Ocean from Cadiz to the mouth of the Elbe. I secured the pacification of the Alps. . . .

Furthermore, Augustus does restore the prestige of the Senate, but even in his own description, it is clear in whose hands the real power lay.

In my sixth and seventh consulships, after I had extinguished civil wars, and at a time when with universal consent I was in complete control of affairs, I transferred the republic from my power to the dominion of the senate and people of Rome. For this service of mine I was named Augustus by decree of the senate, and the door-posts of my house were publicly wreathed with bay leaves and a civic crown was fixed over my door and a golden shield was set in the Curia Julia,* which, as attested by the inscription thereon, was given me by the senate and people of Rome on account of my courage, clemency, justice, and piety. . . . After this time I excelled all in influence, although I possessed no more official power than others who were my colleagues in the several magistracies.⁹

One wonders whether many present-day historians' evaluation of other historical figures would have been better had they lived to leave such a list of their achievements. Augustus' self-evaluation was not the only evaluation of him to come down to us from the time of the empire. The Roman historian Tacitus (ca. 55–ca. 120) wrote cynically of Augustus' success.

Tacitus Critiques the Reign of Augustus

[Augustus] won over the army with gifts, the populace with cheap grain, and all men with the sweetness of peace. Then he gradually grew greater and absorbed in himself the functions of the Senate, the officials, and the laws. Opposition did not exist. All men of spirit had fallen in battle or been disposed of through the proscription. The more ready the remaining nobles were to be enslaved the higher they were raised, both politically and financially. They had profited by revolution, and they now preferred the security of the present arrangement to the dangerous uncertainties of the past.¹⁰

Peace and prosperity may have seemed like a good inducement for giving up one's freedoms by those who had suffered through years of civil war and upheaval. Yet, Tacitus argues that for most of those living at the time of Augustus, there was no trade off to be made, since they were not aware of the freedoms they were giving up.

* The court house.

⁹ *The Monumentum Ancyranum*, ed. E. G. Hardy, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1923, pp. 31, 43, 44.

¹⁰ *The Annals of Tacitus*, ed. Geo. O. Holbrook, London, Macmillan, 1832, p. 3 (I.2).

Everything was peaceful at home. . . . The younger generation had sprung up after Actium had been won. Even many of the older generation had been born into a world of civil war. How few were left who had seen truly Republican government. The country had been revolutionized, and there was nothing left of the fine old morality. Political equality was a thing of the past; all eyes looked to the sovereign for commands without any anxiety concerning the present.¹¹

Note that Tacitus refers to the Romans' loss of "the fine old morality" that they supposedly had during the Republic. Such references were commonplace during this time, but it was most likely a myth. There is no way to tell whether the character of the Romans was better under the early Republic than under the later Republic and early Empire. Nor can we even say that the Romans were more successful during the early Republic although their gains seemed more spectacular. Rome continued to expand and, in fact, conducted its greatest expansion at the time when the national character was being questioned most.

Augustus was not alone in justifying his usurping the Roman Republic in order to save it. Dio Cassius (ca. 150–235 C.E.) has provided us with a spirited defense of monarchy as a desirable form of government in his evaluation and defense of Julius Caesar.

Living his entire life during the time of imperial rule, Dio Cassius fits Tacitus' complaint of those who have no experience with democracy. Indeed, if Dio Cassius had argued in favor of the Republic in the third century C.E., such an argument could have been seen at that time as undermining the rule of the emperor. So, Dio Cassius' views are not unexpected for the time when he wrote them. Similarly, Western historians today praise democracy and denigrate outright monarchy. It would be rather unusual in our own age with democracy ascendent to find a Dio Cassius defending monarchy.

Dio Cassius Argues in Favor of Monarchy

[A] baleful frenzy, which fell upon certain men through jealousy of his advancement and hatred of his preferment to themselves caused his death unlawfully, while it added a new name to the annals of infamy; it scattered the decrees to the winds and brought upon the Romans seditions and civil wars once more after a state of harmony. His slayers, to be sure, declared that they had shown themselves at once destroyers of Caesar and liberators of the people: but in reality they impiously plotted against him, and they threw the city into disorder when at last it possessed a stable government. Democracy, indeed, has a fair-appearing name

¹¹ *Annals of Tacitus*, p. 4 (I.3–4).

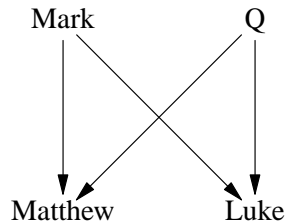
and conveys the impression of bringing equal rights to all through equal laws, but its results are seen not to agree at all with its title. Monarchy, on the contrary, has an unpleasant sound, but is a most practical form of government to live under. For it is easier to find a single excellent man than many of them, and if even this seems to some a difficult feat, it is quite inevitable that the other alternative should be acknowledged to be impossible; for it does not belong to the majority of men to acquire virtue. And again, even though a base man should obtain supreme power, yet he is preferable to the masses of like character, as the history of the Greeks and barbarians and of the Romans themselves proves. For successes have always been greater and more frequent in the case both of cities and of individuals under kings than under popular rule, and disasters do [not] happen [so frequently] under monarchies as under mob-rule. Indeed, if ever there has been a prosperous democracy, it has in any case been at its best for only a brief period, so long, that is, as the people had neither the numbers nor the strength sufficient to cause insolence to spring up among them as the result of good fortune or jealousy as the result of ambition.¹²

¹² From Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, trans. Earnest Cary, 9 vols., Loeb Classics Series, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1914–1927.

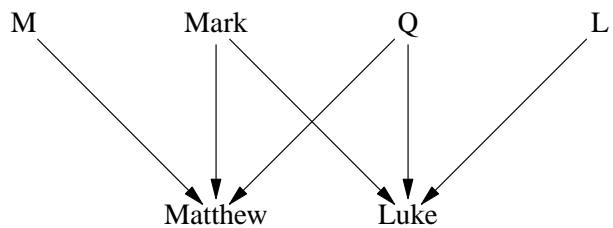
VIII

Narratives: The Gospels on the Message of Jesus and on the Empty Tomb

One of the difficulties in using the Gospels as a historical source is the so-called Synoptic Problem. What has come to be called the Synoptic Problem is the relationship of the Gospels to each other. By comparing the number of passages that they have in common, and by trying to determine which borrowed from which, scholars have tried to solve this problem. They note that Matthew contains 600 of the 661 verses of Mark. Luke, on the other hand, contains only 350 of the 661 verses of Mark, which would seem to indicate, first of all, that Matthew and Mark have more in common than Luke and Mark. Matthew and Luke contain 200 verses in common that are not found in Mark. The conclusion is that both Matthew and Luke have independent sources other than Mark. They get some of their information from Mark, while they get extraneous information from these other sources. One representation has Matthew deriving from Mark, and Luke deriving from Mark. John, which according to this schema is the youngest of the Gospels, derives some of its information from Matthew and some of its information from Luke. But one has to explain where Matthew and Luke get their additional information. That hypothetical source is called Q (from the German word for source: Quelle). Q is thought by some scholars to be the oral or written tradition of the sayings of Jesus, those that begin in the King James version, "Verily, I say unto you. . . ." Here is one scheme for the relationship of the Gospels and Q.



Another approach attempts to delineate from Q proto-Matthew material (M) and proto-Luke material (L), that is early traditions, either oral or written that the compilers of Matthew and Luke drew upon. Thus, in this approach, both Matthew and Luke have three sources: Mark, Q, and M in the case of Matthew and Mark, Q, and L in the case of Luke.



A variant of this scheme suggests that proto-Matthew (M) existed before Mark, and influenced the author of Mark. And there have even been attempts to identify Q more specifically, that is, what these sayings are and what the original form of Q was, if it was a written form. There have even been attempts to reconstruct Q.¹³ The following similar passages occur only in Matthew and Luke. It is this type of exclusive similarity between the two that has led to the Q hypothesis. It happens that these two passages contain what may be the most significant contributions of Jesus' teaching.

Mt. 5:38–48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you. Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good,

Lk. 6:27–36

“But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak do not withhold your coat as well. Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods, do not ask them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what

¹³ For the most recent attempt, see Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins*, New York, HarperCollins, 1993.

and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

1. *Try to reconstruct Q from a comparison of these two passages. The principle is that, where they are identical, that passage must have appeared that way in Q. The difficulty comes in when the two passages differ, as in the last sentence in both. Then you have to choose which passage, or maybe a third version, was in Q, the common source.*

2. *Discuss the meaning of these passages. How original in terms of religious and philosophical thought would you say the idea of loving your enemies was?*

Other recent interpretations have focused on the attempt to get beyond the Gospels, to get beyond the written evidence and try to get back to the real person of Jesus. These interpretations have tried to figure out what Jesus taught and what events might have happened that would lead to the Gospels as we now have them. In 1974, the Flemish Catholic theologian Edward Schillebeeckx published a book about Jesus, which he subtitled An Experiment in Christology. “Christology” is defined as an attempt to see Jesus as a living, breathing human being, not as an individual who realizes he is divine, but as someone who is a person like anybody else. Many of the arguments that Schillebeeckx used are later used by Thomas Sheehan, a professor of philosophy at Loyola University in Chicago, who in 1986 published his The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity. What both Schillebeeckx and Sheehan focus on is the concept of the empty tomb as the starting point of Christianity as a religion. Sheehan argues that Jesus’ direct connection with the founding of Christianity stops with the empty tomb. The descriptions in the Gospels of the events that Sunday morning and of what happened at the tomb differ.

Matthew 28:1–7

Now after the sabbath toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you.”

Mark 16:1–8

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices so that they might come and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb where the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.” And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.

Luke 24:1–12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man must be delivered unto the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise.” And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

John 20:1–13

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the line cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

1. *After Jesus was crucified, the body was taken away and apparently placed into a cave. A large stone was rolled in front of the opening. Then, depending on which Gospel, either one woman, two women, three women, or more than three women came to anoint the body with oil on the Sunday after the crucifixion. Why do the Gospels vary on how many women came to anoint Jesus?*
2. *If the women knew, as the Gospels seems to indicate they did, that the tomb was covered up with a big stone, how did they think they were going to anoint Jesus with the oil? Were they going to ask somebody to move the stone? Was such a thing allowed?*
3. *Why do the Gospels differ on whether these are angels or men in white? Do you think their description of a man or men in white was later interpreted as meaning an angel or angels?*
4. *Sheehan concludes that the differences in the Gospel accounts do not matter to true Christian believers because from their point of view what is important is the fact that Jesus lived and the fact that now he is in heaven, with the promise of the kingdom of God to come. What do you think of that conclusion? Do the differences in the Gospels matter only to non-Christians?*

IX

Travel Account: Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and the *Dar al-Islam*

Islam is a religion that was founded in the early seventh century C.E. by the prophet Muḥammed (570–632). The message of Muḥammed was directed at the Arabs of the area around Mecca and Medina, but it has universal application. Muḥammed was a monotheist in that he believed in only one god, Allah. This belief was in contrast to the religion of the nomads in the desert and to many of the merchants of Mecca and Medina who were polytheists. Each Arab clan or tribe had its own gods. Muḥammed accepted the Jewish Old Testament and the Christian New Testament of the Bible. He taught that Abraham, Moses, and Jesus were all prophets of God, and that he, Muḥammed, was the last and the greatest of these prophets. According to Muḥammed, man must submit to, praise, and glorify Allah. The word “Islam” has the connotation of “I surrender, or submit” to God. In addition, Muslims must observe the following religious duties, called the “five pillars” of Islam. They must believe in the shahada, which says “There is no god by Allah.” They must pray five times a day. They must fast, that is they are not allowed to eat during daylight hours, during the month of Ramaḍān. During their lifetime, they should make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca. And each Muslim must follow a code of behavior, which includes giving alms to the poor and excludes alcoholic beverages and gambling. In addition, they must revere their parents and treat all Muslims as brothers. If the Muslims do this, they believe that when they die, they will be rewarded with a blissful eternal life.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (1304–1368) was a qāḍī, or Muslim judge, from the area presently known as Morocco. He traveled from one end of the Dar al-Islam (the abode of Islam) to the other in the early fourteenth century. The Dar al-Islam, those lands that were predominantly Islamic, stretched from the Atlantic shores of northern Africa in the west to the islands off the coast of southeast Asia in the east. As a qadi, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was able to make his way by a combination of the hospitality of local officials and by fulfilling the function of judge in particular places. When he returned to Tangier, his place of birth, he recounted his travels to Ibn Juzayy who wrote them down for posterity in a work called the Rihla (or Travels).

The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa

In the following excerpt, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa describes two pillars of Islam in regard to what he observed in Damascus: fasting during the month of Ramaḍān and treating a co-religionist as though he were your brother:

(1)

It is one of the laudable customs of the people of Damascus that not a man of them breaks his fast during the nights of Ramaḍān entirely alone. Those of the standing of amīrs, qāḍīs and notables invite their friends and [a number of] faqīrs to breakfast at their houses.

Merchants and substantial traders follow the same practice; the poor and the country folk for their part assemble each night in the house of one of their own number or in a mosque, each brings what he has, and they all breakfast together.

When I first came to Damascus, a friendship grew up between the Mālikite professor Nūr al-Dīn as-Sakhāwī and me, and he urged me to breakfast at his house during the nights of Ramaḍān. After I had visited him for four nights I had a stroke of fever and absented myself. He sent out in search of me, and although I excused myself on the ground of illness he would accept no excuse from me, so I went back to his house and spent the night there. When I wished to take leave the next morning, he would not hear of it but said to me, “Consider my house as your own, or as the house of your father or brother,” and gave orders to send for a doctor and to have prepared for my use in his own house everything that the doctor should prescribe in the way of medicine or diet. I remained in his house in this condition until the day of the Feast [of the Fast-breaking], when I joined in the festival prayers at the muṣallā and God Most High healed me of what had befallen me. Meanwhile all the money I had for my expenses was exhausted. Nūr al-Dīn, learning this, hired camels for me and gave me traveling provisions, etc., and money in addition, saying to me, “It will come in useful for anything of importance that you may be in need of”—may God reward him well!”

In this excerpt, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa describes briefly his hajj, or religious pilgrimage, to Mecca. He goes into greater detail subsequently about each of the places he mentions here, but in this brief overview, one can get a sense of the importance he attributes to his experience.

(2)

We presented ourselves forthwith at the Sanctuary of God Most High within her, the place of abode of His Friend Ibrāhīm and scene of mission of His Chosen One, Muḥammad (God bless and give him peace). We entered the illustrious Holy House, wherein “he who enters is secure,” by the gate of the Banū Shaiba and saw before our eyes the illustrious Ka‘ba (God increase it in veneration), like a bride who is displayed upon the bridalchair of majesty, and walks with proud step in the mantles of beauty, surrounded by the companies that had come to pay homage to the God of Mercy, and being conducted to the Garden of Eternal Bliss. We made around it the [seven-fold] circuit of arrival and kissed the holy Stone; we performed a prayer of two bowings at the Maqām Ibrāhīm and clung to the curtains of the Ka‘ba at the Multazam between the door and the Black Stone, where prayer is answered; we drank of the water of Zamzam, which, being drunk of, possesses the qualities that are related in the Tradition handed down from the Prophet (God bless and give him peace); then, having run between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa, we took up our lodging there in a house near the Gate of

Ibrāhīm. Praise be to God, Who hath honored us by visitation to this holy House, and hath caused us to be numbered amongst those of al-Khalīl (blessing and peace upon him), and hath rejoiced our eyes by the vision of the illustrious Ka‘ba and the honorable House, of the holy Stone, of Zamzam and the Ḥaṭīm.

The desert around Mecca with its stark extremes of hot and cold, light and shade, had a significant impact on the development of Islam. In such an uncompromising environment, the individual realizes a number of truths: the closeness of death; the need to cooperate with others for survival; and how human differences fade into insignificance in face of the eternal, which inspired the Muslim principle that only God is great. In the following passage, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa describes a story that indicates a number of these concepts.

(3)

The following incident happened on this mountain [Jabal Thawr] to two of my associates, one of them the esteemed jurist Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Farḥān of Tūzar in Ifrīqiya, the other Abu’l-‘Abbās Aḥmad of Wādī Ash [Guadix] in Andalusia. They proposed [to visit the cave where the Prophet meditated] during the period of their residence in Mecca (God Most High ennoble her), in the year seven hundred and twenty-eight, and went off alone, without getting some guide who knew the way to it to accompany them. They lost themselves in consequence, missed the way to the cave, and followed another track, which came to a sudden end. This was at the time when the heat grows violent and summer is at its most ardent. When the water they had with them was exhausted and they had not yet reached the cave, they began to make their way back to Mecca (God Most High ennoble her). They found a track and followed it up, but it led to another mountain. The heat beat down upon them, thirst tormented them, and they came face to face with death. The jurist Abū Muḥammad ibn Farḥān was finally unable to walk any further, and threw himself upon the ground. The Andalusian managed to save himself, for he had some remnant of strength left, and he continued to follow the paths on those hills until the road led him to Ajyād. He then came into Mecca (God Most High ennoble her), sought me out, and told me the whole story and about ‘Abdallāh al-Tūzari and his breakdown on the mountain. It was then about the close of day. This ‘Abdallāh had a cousin named Hasan, who lived in Wād Nakhla but was at that moment in Mecca. I informed him what had happened to his cousin, and then sought out the pious shaikh, the imām Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān known as Khalīl, the imām of the Mālikites (God profit us by him) and reported his case to him also. He sent out in search of him a company of Meccans who were familiar with those hills and rock-paths. To advert to ‘Abdallāh al-Tūzari, he had betaken himself, when his companion left him, to a large rock, seeking the shelter of its shade, and he remained in this state of

exhaustion and thirst, with the carrion-crows flying over his head and waiting for his death. When the daylight was gone and darkness fell, he recovered some strength, and refreshed by the cool of the night he rose at dawn to his feet and descended from the hillside to the bottom of a wādī, which was sheltered by the mountains from the rays of the sun. He kept on walking until an ass appeared within his view, and making in its direction he found a bedouin tent. When he saw it, he fell to the ground and was unable to rise. He was seen by the woman of the tent, and as her husband had gone to fetch water, she gave him what water she had with her. It did not quench his thirst, and when her husband came back he gave him a whole skin of water without quenching his thirst either. The man set him on an ass, which he had, and brought him to Mecca, where he arrived at length at the time for the afternoon prayer on the following day, as emaciated as if he had risen from a grave.¹⁴

1. *Have you ever been the recipient of unexpected generosity? Have you ever been the giver of it? If so, describe these cases and what resulted.*
2. *Have you made a trip to a Holy Shrine? Have you been someplace where you felt closer to the divine? How would you describe it?*
3. *What kind of paradise would people who are raised in a desert environment have? What is the Muslim concept of paradise? How does that compare with your theoretical concept?*

¹⁴ *The Travels of Ibn Battūta A.D. 1325–1354*, trans. H. A. R. Gibb, 3 vols., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958–1971, vol. 1, pp. 150–151, 188–189, 213–214.

X

Diary: A Court Lady in Heian Japan

In tenth- and eleventh-century Japan, the height of the Heian period, a common genre for women writers was the diary. Such works as The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon, the Diary of Murasaki Shikibu, and The Gossamer Years were intimate accounts of the feelings and reactions, surprises and disappointments, of court ladies of Japan. The court itself was ruled by strict rules of etiquette and proper behavior. Women were relegated to passive roles in relation to men. The diaries these women kept are indicative of their authors' almost invisible presence at the court. We often do not even know the names of the women who wrote these diaries. The author of the excerpts below was known only as the daughter of Takasue. And she gave no title to the diary itself. Ivan Morris, its translator into English, has proposed we call the author Lady Sarashina, after a district alluded to in one of the poems in the work. He also suggests the title As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams because dreams appear frequently in the book and a bridge provides the idea of fragility that permeates the work. It is clear that Lady Sarashina's work is not a diary in the sense that we might be used to thinking of a diary, that is a day-record. Yet, the nature and characteristics of what she chooses to put in and what she chooses to leave out indicate that the author is thinking of this work in the same sense that someone would who was keeping a day-to-day record of personal thoughts and feelings.

The first excerpt is from the beginning of the diary and shows the influence that Murasaki Shikibu's The Tale of Genji had on people even in remote provinces. Much of Sarashina's diary is taken up with references to the stories within the Tale to the extent that one gets the impression that for Lady Sarashina the stories have more reality than the reality around her. The capital that Lady Sarashina is referring to is the old capital of Kyoto, called Heian-kyo ("the capital of peace and tranquility").

Lady Sarashina Moves to the Capital Kyoto

I was brought up in a part of the country so remote that it lies beyond the end of the Great East Road. What an uncouth creature I must have been in those days! Yet even shut away in the provinces I somehow came to hear that the world contained things known as Tales, and from that moment my greatest desire was to read them for myself. To idle away the time, my sister, my stepmother, and others in the household would tell me stories from the Tales, including episodes about Genji, the Shining Prince; but, since they had to depend on their memories, they could not possibly tell me all I wanted to know and their stories only made me more curious than ever. In my impatience I got a statue of the Healing Buddha built in my own size. When no one was watching, I would perform my ablutions and, stealing into the altar room, would prostrate myself and pray fervently, "Oh, please arrange things so that we may soon go to the Capital, where there are so many Tales, and please let me read them

all.”

The second excerpt is also from the beginning of the diary when Lady Sarashina must leave her country home to go to the capital where her father is a state official. Notice her attachment to the Buddha figure. This would seem to contradict the teaching of Buddha (see above) who warned against all attachments, but it does not controvert the teachings of Mahayana (“Greater Wheel”) Buddhism, especially the type that places great store in charms and physical objects. For Lady Sarashina, the Buddha figure was her charm that protected her from harm.

On the third day of the Ninth Month, when I was twelve years old, we left our house and moved to a place called Imatachi in preparation for our journey to the Capital. The house where I had played for so many years was dismantled and one could see into the rooms from outside. Everything was in great disorder. As I stepped into the carriage to leave for the last time, the sun had just set and the sky was shrouded with mist. Looking into the house, I caught sight of the Healing Buddha standing there alone—that Buddha before whom I had prayed so often in secret. At the thought of abandoning him I began weeping quietly.

The third excerpt from Sarashina’s diary takes place in the capital where she is a lady-in-waiting. Because she is from the provinces, she has a relatively low rank even among that group. One can get a sense of the strictness of the rules of etiquette and the qualities that were valued within the court when Sarashina encounters a courtier. The exchange of poems that occurred was considered a high form of conversation. The poems themselves were to contain allusions to other famous poems that everyone in the court had memorized. Both the structure and the topics of the poems were severely restricted by convention. The creative part was to compose a poem on the spot that met all the criteria for poetry writing at the court and was appropriate for the occasion. The gentleman’s reference to China (“Even in China. . . .”) is indicative of the high regard that Chinese culture was held in Japan at the time and for many centuries afterward. The conversation itself was a typical one for gentlemen and ladies-in-waiting and accorded with the rules of such interactions.

When distinguished visitors like High Court Nobles and Senior Courtiers came to the Palace, there were fixed rules about which ladies-in-waiting would receive them. An inexperienced outsider like me would certainly not be chosen; in fact I was so unimportant that such visitors would not even be aware of my existence. On a very dark night in the early part of the Tenth Month, while some priests were chanting the Perpetual Sacred Readings in the most beautiful voices, I and another lady-in-waiting stayed near the door of the chapel. As we lay there, chatting and listening to the priests, a gentleman approached. “We could run and fetch one of the ladies from the inner apartments,” said my companion, “but it would make a bad

impression. Never mind! We must adapt ourselves to circumstances. Let's just stay and see how things turn out!" While she got up and spoke to the gentleman, I lay where I was and listened to their conversation. He talked in a quiet, gentle way and I could tell that he was a man of perfect qualities. "And who may your companion be?" I heard him say; but there was none of the crude, lecherous tone in his voice that one would expect from most men who asked this sort of question. Then he started speaking about the sadness of the world and other such matters, and there was something so sensitive about his manner that, for all my usual shyness, I found it hard to remain stiff and aloof. I therefore joined my companion and the gentleman. "So there is still a young lady in this Palace whom I do not know!" he said, surprised to hear my voice, and he gave no sign of wanting to leave.

It was a dark, starless night and the rain made a delightful patter on the leaves. "There is a special elegance and charm," he said, "about dark nights like this. Do you ladies not agree? If everything were lit up by the moon, the brightness would only embarrass one."

He spoke about the different beauties of Spring and Autumn. "Each has its own delight," he said. "On Spring nights the sky is beautifully shrouded with mist. The moon then is not too bright and its light seems to be floating away in the distance. How delightful it is at such a time to hear someone plucking gently at the strings of a lute that have been set in the key of the Fragrant Breeze! When Autumn comes the sky is still misty, but the lucent moon shines through so clearly that one feels one could pick it up in one's hands. The sighing of the wind and the hum of the insects blend in such a way that all the savors of Nature seem to have come together. At such moments the strumming of the great zither accompanied by the clear notes of a flute makes one wonder how one could ever have admired Spring. But then there is a Winter night when the sky is chill, the air bitter cold, and the piles of snow reflect the moonlight. Then the tremulous sound of the flageolet makes one forget about both Spring and Autumn." So he continued for a while before asking us which season we liked best. My companion named Autumn as her favorite, but I decided to answer with a poem,

The hazy Springtime moon—
That is the one I love,
When light green sky and fragrant blooms
Are all alike enwrapped in mist.

He repeated my lines several times, "So you turn down the Autumn nights!" he said and added his own poem,

Should I be spared to live beyond tonight,

Spring evenings will remain within my heart
 In memory of how we met.

My companion, who had declared her preference for Autumn, composed the verse,

It seems your hearts have all been drawn to Spring.
 Am I alone to gaze at Autumn moons?

The gentleman seemed greatly interested in our conversation.

“Even in China,” he said, “people have always found it hard to choose between Spring and Autumn. Surely there must be some special reason that you ladies have made up your minds so clearly. At times when I am deeply moved by something, whether it be sad or happy, the particular aspect of nature at that moment, the look of the sky or the moon or the blossoms, sinks deeply into my heart. I wonder what made you two decide as you did about your seasons. Since ancient times the moon on Winter nights has been considered a depressing thing. Most people have found it too cold to be worth admiring, but I recall that my own feelings on one such night were very different.

“I had gone to Ise as an Imperial Envoy to attend the coming-of-age ceremony of the High Priestess. Intending to return to the capital at dawn, I got up very early and saw the moonlight brightly reflected in the snow, which had been piling up for days. So it would be under such a sky that I should have to make my journey I thought gloomily, as I went to take leave of Her Holiness. Her apartment was unlike anything I had ever seen, and I was overcome with awe at the thought that this was where the High Priestess actually lived. She summoned me to one of her rooms, which was splendidly arranged in a manner befitting the occasion. Among the attendants were people who had been in Ise ever since the reign of Emperor Enyū. There was something remarkably impressive and elegant about their old-fashioned appearance as they sat there tearfully recounting stories from the ancient past. Then a beautifully tuned lute was brought out and one of the attendants played for us. It all seemed to belong to another world.

“As dawn approached I regretted having to return to the capital and decided not to set out until later. Ever since, snowy winter nights have moved me deeply. Though I may be huddled by a brazier, I will leave it in the bitterest cold to go out on the veranda and gaze at the snow. No doubt you ladies also have some personal reason for feeling as you do about your seasons. In the future I too shall probably be deeply moved by dark rainy nights like this. I confess that they now seem just as charming as that snowy night in the apartment of the High Priestess.”

After he had finished speaking and had left us, it occurred to me that he still had no idea who I was.¹⁵

1. *At first, Lady Sarashina and her friend discuss the possibility of running to get other ladies-in-waiting to greet the gentleman when they see him approach. Why do they consider this possibility? Why do they reject it?*
2. *Lady Sarashina mentions the gentleman as being “a man of perfect qualities.” Based on her description of him and his conversation, what qualities do you think she is referring to?*
3. *If you were suddenly placed in the court of eleventh-century Heian Japan, and all you had to base your conversation on was this reading (and knowing eleventh-century Japanese), what topics would you say were appropriate to discuss in such a situation?*
4. *Compose a short poem that you think might be appropriate for a particular situation in the Heian court.*

¹⁵ Lady Sarashina, *As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams*, trans. Ivan Morris, London, Penguin, 1971, pp. 31–33, 83–86.

XI

Allegory: Christine de Pizan's Reaction to the Denigration of Women in Medieval Europe

Christine de Pizan (ca. 1363–1431) lived in France and was among the few literate women of her times. In the introduction to her allegorical treatise on the equality of women with men, Book of the City of Ladies, she describes how she came to write the book. In patriarchal societies, which almost all societies have been since the beginning of civilization, the subservience of women becomes accepted without question, even by women within that society. What de Pizan describes here is a remarkable realization on her part that almost everything she has read written by men about women has been derogatory. And many of these men were the accepted authorities of the age, men such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. As remarkable as that realization is, de Pizan comes to an even more remarkable conclusion: they were all wrong! This challenge to the authority of patriarchy was as bold as it was sensible. Yet, it was, of course, greeted with the same condescending attitude by most men as they greeted any attempts by women to assert their humanity, that is until very recent times.

Christine de Pizan's City of Ladies

One day as I was sitting alone in my study surrounded by books on all kinds of subjects, devoting myself to literary studies, my usual habit, my mind dwelt at length on the weighty opinions of various authors whom I had studied for a long time. I looked up from my book, having decided to leave such subtle questions in peace and to relax by reading some light poetry. With this in mind, I searched for some small book. By chance a strange volume came into my hands, not one of my own, but one that had been given to me along with some others. When I held it open and saw from its title page that it was by Matheolus, I smiled, for though I had never seen it before, I had often heard that like other books it discussed respect for women. I thought I would browse through it to amuse myself. I had not been reading for very long when my good mother called me to refresh myself with supper, for it was evening. Intending to look at it the next day, I put it down. The next morning, again seated in my study as was my habit, I remembered wanting to examine this book by Matheolus. I started to read it and went on for a little while. Because the subject seemed to me not very pleasant for people who do not enjoy lies, and of no use in developing virtue or manners, given its lack of integrity in diction and theme, and after browsing here and there and reading the end, I put it down in order to turn my attention to more elevated and useful study. But just the sight of this book, even though it was of no authority, made me wonder how it happened that so many different men—and learned men among them—have been and are so inclined to express both in speaking and in their treatises and writing so many wicked insults about women and their

behavior. Not only one or two and not even just this Matheolus (for this book had a bad name anyway and was intended as a satire) but, more generally, judging from the treatises of all philosophers and poets and from all the orators—it would take too long to mention their names—it seems that they all speak from one and the same mouth. They all concur in one conclusion: that the behavior of women is inclined to and full of every vice. Thinking deeply about these matters, I began to examine my character and conduct as a natural woman and, similarly, I considered other women whose company I frequently kept, princesses, great ladies, women of the middle and lower classes, who had graciously told me of their most private and intimate thoughts, hoping that I could judge impartially and in good conscience whether the testimony of so many notable men could be true. To the best of my knowledge, no matter how long I confronted or dissected the problem, I could not see or realize how their claims could be true when compared to the natural behavior and character of women. Yet I still argued vehemently against women, saying that it would be impossible that so many famous men—such solemn scholars, possessed of such deep and great understanding, so clear-sighted in all things, as it seemed—could have spoken falsely on so many occasions that I could hardly find a book on morals where, even before I had read it in its entirety, I did not find several chapters or certain sections attacking women, no matter who the author was. This reason alone, in short, made me conclude that although my intellect did not perceive my own great faults and, likewise, those of other women because of its simpleness and ignorance, it was however truly fitting that such was the case. And so I relied more on the judgment of others than on what I myself felt and knew. I was so transfixed in this line of thinking for such a long time that it seemed as if I were in a stupor. Like a gushing fountain, a series of authorities, whom I recalled one after another, came to mind, along with their opinions on this topic. And I finally decided that God formed a vile creature when He made woman, and I wondered how such a worthy artisan could have designed to make such an abominable work that, from what they say, is the vessel as well as the refuge and abode of every evil and vice. As I was thinking this, a great unhappiness and sadness welled up in my heart, for I detested myself and the entire feminine sex, as though we were monstrosities in nature. And in my lament I spoke these words:

“Oh, God, how can this be? For unless I stray from my faith, I must never doubt that Your infinite wisdom and most perfect goodness ever created anything that was not good. Did You yourself not create woman in a very special way and since that time did You not give her all those inclinations that it pleased You for her to have? And how could it be that You could go wrong in anything? Yet look at all these accusations that have been judged, decided, and concluded against women. I do not know how to understand this repugnance. If it is so, fair Lord God, that in fact so many abominations abound in the female sex, for You Yourself say

that the testimony of two or three witnesses lends credence, why shall I doubt that this is true? Alas, God, why did You not let me be born in the world as a man, so that all my inclinations would be to serve You better, and so that I would not stray in anything and would be as perfect as a man is said to be? But since Your kindness has not been extended to me, then forgive my negligence in Your service, most fair Lord God, and may it not displease You, for the servant who receives fewer gifts from his lord is less obliged in his service.” I spoke these words to God in my lament and a great deal more for a very long time in sad reflection, and in my folly I considered myself most fortunate because God had made me inhabit a female body in this world. . . .

At this point in the narrative, three ladies, who represent Reason, Rectitude, and Justice appear to de Pizan. While we can accept the preceding narrative as autobiographical in content—it is likely de Pizan read Mateolus under the circumstances and had the reaction described—the following section is the beginning of the allegorical part of the work. An allegory uses human or animal characters to represent different principles. Each one acts, speaks, and thinks according to the main principle that imbues them. Notice the use of rational argument by the lady who represents Reason to convince de Pizan that what she read in these books is wrong about women. Notice also her resort to de Pizan’s own experience to counter the book teaching of the philosophers.

So occupied with these painful thoughts, my head bowed in shame, my eyes filled with tears, leaning on the pommel of my chair’s armrest, I suddenly saw a ray of light fall on my lap, as though it were the sun. I shuddered then, as if wakened from sleep, for I was sitting in a shadow where the sun could not have shone at that hour. And as I lifted my head to see where this light was coming from, I saw three crowned ladies standing before me, and the splendor of their bright faces shone on me and throughout the entire room. Now no one would ask whether I was surprised, for my doors were shut and they had still entered. Fearing that some phantom had come to tempt me and filled with great fright, I made the Sign of the Cross on my forehead.

Then she who was the first of the three smiled and began to speak, “Dear daughter, do not be afraid, for we have not come here to harm or trouble you but to console you, for we have taken pity on your distress, and we have come to bring you out of the ignorance that so blinds your own intellect that you shun what you know for a certainty and believe what you do not know or see or recognize except by virtue of many strange opinions. . . . Fair daughter, have you lost all sense? Have you forgotten that when fine gold is tested in the furnace, it does not change or vary in strength but becomes purer the more it is hammered and handled in different ways? Do you not know that the best things are the most debated and the most

discussed? If you wish to consider the question of the highest form of reality, which consists in ideas or celestial substances, consider whether the greatest philosophers who have lived and whom you support against your own sex have ever resolved whether ideas are false and contrary to the truth. Notice how these same philosophers contradict and criticize one another, just as you have seen in the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle takes their opinions to task and speaks similarly of Plato and other philosophers. And note, moreover, how even Saint Augustine and the Doctors of the Church have criticized Aristotle in certain passages, although he is known as the prince of philosophers in whom both natural and moral philosophy attained their highest level. It also seems that you think that all the words of the philosophers are articles of faith, that they could never be wrong. As far as the poets of whom you speak are concerned, do you not know that they spoke on many subjects in a fictional way and that often they mean the contrary of what their words openly say? One can interpret them according to the grammatical figure of *antiphrasis*, which means, as you know, that if you call something bad, in fact, it is good, and also vice versa.¹⁶

1. *Why have so many men written attacks on women?*
2. *Why did de Pizan rely more on what the authorities said about women than on what she herself “felt and knew”?*
3. *Have you ever had an experience where everyone was telling you one thing, but you “felt and knew” that what they were saying was not right?*
4. *Are Reason’s arguments good ones? Can you think of refutations of her arguments or of better arguments to support her position?*

¹⁶ Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards, New York, Persea Books, pp. 3–6.