

you to employ punishments? Love virtue, and the people will be virtuous. The virtues of a superior man are like the wind; the virtues of a common man are like the grass; the grass, when the wind passes over it, bends.

Thoreau, *Walden: The Village*

- 115 Our whole life is startlingly moral. There is never an instant's truce between virtue and vice. Goodness is the only investment that never fails.

Thoreau, *Walden: Higher Laws*

- 116 The first element of good government . . . being the virtue and intelligence of the human beings composing the community, the most important point of excellence which any form of government can possess is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves.

Mill, *Representative Government*, II

- 117 Bulstrode shrank from a direct lie with an intensity disproportionate to the number of his more indirect misdeeds. But many of these misdeeds were like the subtle muscular movements which are not taken account of in the consciousness, though they bring about the end that we fix our mind on and desire. And it is only what we are vividly con-

scious of that we can vividly imagine to be seen by Omniscience.

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, VII, 68

- 118 It seems not to be true that there is a power in the universe, which watches over the well-being of every individual with parental care and brings all his concerns to a happy ending. On the contrary, the destinies of man are incompatible with a universal principle of benevolence or with—what is to some degree contradictory—a universal principle of justice. Earthquakes, floods, and fires do not differentiate between the good and devout man, and the sinner and unbeliever. And, even if we leave inanimate nature out of account and consider the destinies of individual men in so far as they depend on their relations with others of their own kind, it is by no means the rule that virtue is rewarded and wickedness punished, but it happens often enough that the violent, the crafty, and the unprincipled seize the desirable goods of the earth for themselves, while the pious go empty away. Dark, unfeeling, and unloving powers determine human destiny; the system of rewards and punishments, which, according to religion, governs the world, seems to have no existence.

Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, XXXV

## 9.11 | *Courage and Cowardice*

Of all the virtues, the one most frequently extolled by the poets is courage. Many of the memorable characters of the great epics and tragedies of antiquity, of the plays of Shakespeare, and of modern fiction are depicted as lionhearted men, men who have the fortitude to withstand the onslaughts of misfortune, or the valor to attempt what the timid or craven would never dare. The historians and the biographers, too, give us portraits of bold and daring leaders, of men whose strength of character enables them to remain steady on their course, overcoming what appear to be insuperable obstacles. Courage is the stuff out of which heroes are

made and the heroic temper is moulded. Relevant, therefore, to the consideration of courage are quotations that will be found in Section 1.6 on HUMAN GREATNESS: THE HERO.

The reader will have noted the vocabulary of epithets applicable to this virtue and its associated vice: for courageous, brave, bold, daring, valorous, fearless; for cowardly, timid, craven, pusillanimous, effeminate. The name given the virtue itself is frequently fortitude rather than courage, the one word in its etymology implying strength—strength of moral character, not of physique; the other suggesting robustness of spirit.

The analysis given by the philosophers instructs us that courage is not fearlessness. He who, by reason of a certain inborn temperamental disposition, lacks fear is not a courageous man and will never become one. Rather it is he who, suffering the impulses of fear or the disinclination to suffer pain, overcomes them for the sake of a good deed to be done or a right objective to be gained. Furthermore, the courageous man is not one who appears to act courageously or even does so in one circumstance or two, but rather the man who has the firmly established habitual disposition to suffer pains and overcome fears for a good purpose. When the threatening pains are bodily and the fears recoil from bodily attack that may cause death or injury, the virtue is often called "physical courage," to distinguish it from the moral fortitude exhibited by the man who risks disapprobation, contumely, or even dishonor for a good cause. However, in both cases, the strength lies in the man's

moral character, not in his physique.

Cowardice is not the only vice that philosophers have opposed to courage. If the coward is one who gives in too readily to his fears, fears the wrong things, or fails to overcome his fears when he ought to, the foolhardy man at the other extreme is one who dismisses his fears too readily, and lacks sufficient respect for the dangers involved. In between these two extremes, the courageous man is seen as one who exercises a reasonable or prudent judgment concerning how to manage his fears, how to moderate or control them. Hence some of the writers about courage introduce the notion of prudence or of sound judgment into their discussion. For the consideration of this related virtue, the reader is referred to Section 9.13 on PRUDENCE; and for treatment of the emotion that is chiefly involved in courage and cowardice, the reader is referred to Section 4.2 on FEAR.

- 1 If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

*Proverbs 24:10*

- 2 *Idomeneus*. The skin of the coward changes colour one way and another, and the heart inside him has no control to make him sit steady, but he shifts his weight from one foot to another, then settles firmly on both feet, and the heart inside his chest pounds violent as he thinks of the death spirits, and his teeth chatter together: but the brave man's skin will not change colour, nor is he too much frightened, once he has taken his place in the hidden position, but his prayer is to close as soon as may be in bitter division.

Homer, *Iliad*, XIII, 279

- 3 *Artabanus*. It is best for men, when they take counsel, to be timorous, and imagine all possible calamities, but when the time for action comes, then to deal boldly.

Herodotus, *History*, VII, 49

- 4 *Pericles*. The palm of courage will surely be adjudged most justly to those, who best know the difference between hardship and pleasure and yet are never tempted to shrink from danger.

Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, II, 40

- 5 *Pericles*. They whose minds are least sensitive to calamity, and whose hands are most quick to meet it, are the greatest men and the greatest communities.

Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, II, 64

- 6 *Socrates*. Is not courage, Simmias, a quality which is specially characteristic of the philosopher?

*Simmias*. Certainly.

There is temperance again, which even by the vulgar is supposed to consist in the control and regulation of the passions, and in the sense of superiority to them—is not temperance a virtue belonging to those only who despise the body, and who pass their lives in philosophy?

Most assuredly.

For the courage and temperance of other men, if you will consider them, are really a contradiction.

How so?

Well, he said, you are aware that death is regarded by men in general as a great evil.

Very true, he said.

And do not courageous men face death because they are afraid of yet greater evils?

That is quite true.

Then all but the philosophers are courageous only from fear, and because they are afraid; and yet that a man should be courageous from fear, and because he is a coward, is surely a strange thing.

Plato, *Phaedo*, 68A

7 With what sort of terrible things . . . is the brave man concerned? Surely with the greatest; for no one is more likely than he to stand his ground against what is awe-inspiring. Now death is the most terrible of all things; for it is the end, and nothing is thought to be any longer either good or bad for the dead. But the brave man would not seem to be concerned even with death in *all* circumstances, e.g. at sea or in disease. In what circumstances, then? Surely in the noblest. Now such deaths are those in battle; for these take place in the greatest and noblest danger. . . . Properly, then, he will be called brave who is fearless in face of a noble death, and of all emergencies that involve death; and the emergencies of war are in the highest degree of this kind.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1115<sup>a</sup>24

8 What is terrible is not the same for all men; but we say there are things terrible even beyond human strength. These, then, are terrible to every one—at least to every sensible man; but the terrible things that are *not* beyond human strength differ in magnitude and degree, and so too do the things that inspire confidence. Now the brave man is as dauntless as man may be. Therefore, while he will fear even the things that are not beyond human strength, he will face them as he ought and as the rule directs, for honour's sake; for this is the end of virtue. But it is possible to fear these more, or less, and again to fear things that are not terrible as if they were. Of the faults that are committed one consists in fearing what one should not, another in fearing as we should not, another in fearing when we should not, and so on; and so too with respect to the things that inspire confidence. The man, then, who faces and who fears the right things and from the right motive, in the right way and at the right time, and who feels confidence under the corresponding conditions, is brave; for the brave man feels and acts according to the merits of the case and in whatever way the rule directs.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1115<sup>b</sup>7

9 Of those who go to excess he who exceeds in fearlessness has no name . . . but he would be a sort of madman or insensible person if he feared nothing,

neither earthquakes nor the waves, as they say the Celts do not; while the man who exceeds in confidence about what really is terrible is rash. The rash man, however, is also thought to be boastful and only a pretender to courage; at all events, as the brave man *is* with regard to what is terrible, so the rash man wishes to *appear*; and so he imitates him in situations where he can. Hence also most of them are a mixture of rashness and cowardice; for, while in these situations they display confidence, they do not hold their ground against what is really terrible. The man who exceeds in fear is a coward; for he fears both what he ought not and as he ought not, and all the similar characterizations attach to him. He is lacking also in confidence; but he is more conspicuous for his excess of fear in painful situations. The coward . . . is a despairing sort of person; for he fears everything. The brave man, on the other hand, has the opposite disposition; for confidence is the mark of a hopeful disposition. The coward, the rash man, and the brave man, then, are concerned with the same objects but are differently disposed towards them; for the first two exceed and fall short, while the third holds the middle, which is the right, position; and rash men are precipitate, and wish for dangers beforehand but draw back when they are in them, while brave men are keen in the moment of action, but quiet beforehand.

As we have said, then, courage is a mean with respect to things that inspire confidence or fear.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1115<sup>b</sup>24

10 Experience with regard to particular facts is . . . thought to be courage; this is indeed the reason why Socrates thought courage was knowledge. Other people exhibit this quality in other dangers, and professional soldiers exhibit it in the dangers of war; for there seem to be many empty alarms in war, of which these have had the most comprehensive experience; therefore they seem brave, because the others do not know the nature of the facts. Again, their experience makes them most capable in attack and in defence, since they can use their arms and have the kind that are likely to be best both for attack and for defence; therefore they fight like armed men against unarmed or like trained athletes against amateurs; for in such contests too it is not the bravest men that fight best, but those who are strongest and have their bodies in the best condition. Professional soldiers turn cowards, however, when the danger puts too great a strain on them and they are inferior in numbers and equipment; for they are the first to fly, while citizen-forces die at their posts, as in fact happened at the temple of Hermes. For to the latter flight is disgraceful and death is preferable to safety on those terms; while the former from the very beginning faced the danger on the assumption that they were stronger, and when they know the

- facts they fly, fearing death more than disgrace; but the brave man is not that sort of person.  
Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1116<sup>b</sup>3
- 11 Though courage is concerned with feelings of confidence and of fear, it is not concerned with both alike, but more with the things that inspire fear; for he who is undisturbed in face of these and bears himself as he should towards these is more truly brave than the man who does so towards the things that inspire confidence. It is for facing what is painful, then . . . that men are called brave. Hence also courage involves pain, and is justly praised; for it is harder to face what is painful than to abstain from what is pleasant.  
Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1117<sup>a</sup>29
- 12 It is generally agreed by the learned and the untaught alike that men who are brave, high-spirited, patient, and superior to human vicissitudes, will endure pain with patience. Nor would anyone disagree that a man who so suffers merits praise. When such endurance is both expected of brave men and praised when it is found, is it not ignoble to shy away from the onset of pain or be unable to bear it? But perhaps, even if all right-minded states are called virtuous, the term may not cover all virtues. All may have received the name from the one single virtue that was considered as outshining all the others, because the word "virtue" comes from the word for man. And man's special virtue is courage. Of courage there are two principle types, the scorn of death and the scorn of pain.  
Cicero, *Disputations*, II, 18
- 13 *Turnus*. Fortune befriends the bold.  
Virgil, *Aeneid*, X
- 14 Then with a close embrace he [Aeneas] strain'd his son,  
And, kissing thro' his helmet, thus begun:  
"My son, from my example learn the war,  
In camps to suffer, and in fields to dare;  
But happier chance than mine attend thy care!  
This day my hand thy tender age shall shield,  
And crown with honors of the conquer'd field:  
Thou, when thy riper years shall send thee forth  
To toils of war, be mindful of my worth;  
Assert thy birthright, and in arms be known,  
For Hector's nephew, and Æneas' son."  
Virgil, *Aeneid*, XII
- 15 It is truly very commendable to abhor and shun the doing any base action; but to stand in fear of every kind of censure or disrepute may argue a gentle and openhearted, but not an heroic temper.  
Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus and Timoleon Compared*
- 16 Cato Major, hearing some commend one that was rash, and inconsiderately daring in a battle, said: There is a difference between a man's prizing valour at a great rate, and valuing life at little.  
Plutarch, *Pelopidas*
- 17 To do a wrong thing is base, and to do well where there is no danger, common; the good man's characteristic is to do so where there is danger.  
Plutarch, *Caius Marius*
- 18 The ancients, I think, did not imagine bravery to be plain fearlessness, but a cautious fear of blame and disgrace.  
Plutarch, *Cleomenes*
- 19 Be like the promontory against which the waves continually break, but it stands firm and tames the fury of the water around it.  
Unhappy am I, because this has happened to me.—Not so, but happy am I, though this has happened to me, because I continue free from pain, neither crushed by the present nor fearing the future. For such a thing as this might have happened to every man; but every man would not have continued free from pain on such an occasion. Why then is that rather a misfortune than this a good fortune? And dost thou in all cases call that a man's misfortune, which is not a deviation from man's nature? And does a thing seem to thee to be a deviation from man's nature, when it is not contrary to the will of man's nature? Well thou knowest the will of nature. Will then this which has happened prevent thee from being just, magnanimous, temperate, prudent, secure against inconsiderate opinions and falsehood; will it prevent thee from having modesty, freedom, and everything else, by the presence of which man's nature obtains all that is its own? Remember too on every occasion which leads thee to vexation to apply this principle: not that this is a misfortune, but that to bear it nobly is good fortune.  
Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, IV, 4
- 20 Here sighs, complaints, and deep wailings resounded through the starless air: it made me weep at first.  
Strange tongues, horrible outcries, words of painful tones of anger, voices deep and hoarse, and sounds of hands amongst them, made a tumult, which turns itself unceasing in that air for ever dyed, as sand when [it eddies in a whirlwind].  
And I, my head begirt with horror, said: "Master, what is this that I hear? and who are these that seem so overcome with pain?"  
And he to me: "This miserable mode the drear souls of those sustain, who lived without blame and without praise."

- They are mixed with the caitiff choir of the angels, who were not rebellious, nor were faithful to God; but were for themselves.  
Heaven chased them forth to keep its beauty from impair; and the deep Hell receives them not, for the wicked would have some glory over them.”
- And I: “Master what is so grievous to them, that makes them lament thus bitterly?” He answered: “I will tell it to thee very briefly.  
These have no hope of death; and their blind life is so mean, that they are envious of every other lot.  
Report of them the world permits not to exist; Mercy and [Justice] disdains them: let us not speak of them; but look, and pass.”
- And I, who looked, saw an ensign, which whirling ran so quickly that it seemed to scorn all pause; and behind it came so long a train of people, that I should never have believed death had undone so many.  
After I had recognised some amongst them, I [saw and knew] the shadow of him who from cowardice made the great refusal.  
Forthwith I understood and felt assured, that this was the crew of caitiffs, hateful to God and to his enemies.  
Dante, *Inferno*, III, 22
- 21 *Pandar*. Remember, too, it is no idle boast  
That fortune helps the brave in his emprise,  
But from the coward wretch she ever flies.  
Chaucer, *Troilus and Cressida*, IV, 86
- 22 The precepts of resoluteness and constancy do not state that we must not protect ourselves as much as it lies in our power from the evils and troubles that threaten us; nor consequently that we should not fear being taken by surprise. On the contrary, all honorable means of safeguarding ourselves from evils are not only permitted but laudable. And constancy's part is played principally in bearing troubles patiently where there is no remedy.  
Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 12, Of Constancy
- 23 Valor has its limits like the other virtues, and these limits once transgressed, we find ourselves on the path of vice; so that we may pass through valor to temerity, obstinacy, and madness, unless we know its limits well—and they are truly hard to discern near the borderlines.  
Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 15, One Is Punished
- 24 The worth and value of a man is in his heart and his will; there lies his real honor. Valor is the strength, not of legs and arms, but of heart and soul; it consists not in the worth of our horse or our weapons, but in our own. . . . He who relaxes none of his assurance, no matter how great the danger of imminent death; who, giving up his soul, still looks firmly and scornfully at his enemy—he is beaten not by us, but by fortune; he is killed, not conquered.  
Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 31, Of Cannibals
- 25 Cowardice is the mother of cruelty.  
Montaigne, *Essays*, II, 27, Cowardice, Mother of Cruelty
- 26 *Hotspur*. Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety.  
Shakespeare, *I Henry IV*, II, iii, 10
- 27 *Falstaff*. To die, is to be a counterfeit; for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man: but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. The better part of valour is discretion.  
Shakespeare, *I Henry IV*, V, iv, 116
- 28 *Benedick*. In a false quarrel there is no true valour.  
Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, V, i, 120
- 29 *Caesar*. Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, II, ii, 32
- 30 *King*. That we would do,  
We should do when we would; for this “would” changes  
And hath abatements and delays as many  
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;  
And then this “should” is like a spendthrift sigh,  
That hurts by easing.  
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, IV, vii, 119
- 31 *Nestor*. The sea being smooth,  
How many shallow bauble boats dare sail  
Upon her patient breast, making their way  
With those of nobler bulk!  
But let the ruffian Boreas once enrage  
The gentle Thetis, and anon behold  
The strong-ribb'd bark through liquid mountains  
cut,  
Bounding between the two moist elements,  
Like Perseus' horse; where's then the saucy boat  
Whose weak untimber'd sides but even now  
Co-rivall'd greatness? Either to harbour fled,  
Or made a toast for Neptune. Even so  
Doth valour's show and valour's worth divide  
In storms of fortune; for in her ray and brightness  
The herd hath more annoyance by the breeze  
Than by the tiger; but when the splitting wind  
Makes flexible the knees of knotted oaks,  
And flies fled under shade, why, then the thing of  
courage  
As roused with rage, with rage doth sympathize,  
And with an accent tuned in selfsame key

- Retorts to chiding fortune.  
Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, I, iii, 34
- 32 *Troilus*. Manhood and honour  
Should have hare-hearts, would they but fat their  
thoughts  
With this cramm'd reason, Reason and respect  
Make livers pale and lustihood deject.  
Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, II, ii, 47
- 33 *Lucio*. Our doubts are traitors  
And make us lose the good we oft might win  
By fearing to attempt.  
Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, I, iv, 77
- 34 *Kent*. None of these rogues and cowards  
But Ajax is their fool.  
Shakespeare, *Lear*, II, ii, 132
- 35 *Lady Macbeth*. Art thou afeard  
To be the same in thine own act and valour  
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that  
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
And live a coward in thine own esteem,  
Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"  
Like the poor cat i' the adage?  
Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, I, vii, 39
- 36 *Lady Macbeth*. I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums  
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
Have done to this.  
*Macbeth*. If we should fail?  
*Lady M*. We fail!  
But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we'll not fail.  
Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, I, vii, 54
- 37 After they had gone a pretty way under a pleasing  
Covert of Chestnut-Trees, they came into a  
Meadow adjoining to certain Rocks, from whose  
Top there was a great Fall of Waters. At the Foot  
of those Rocks they discover'd certain old ill-  
contriv'd Buildings, that rather look'd like Ruins  
than inhabited Houses; and they perceiv'd that  
the terrifying Noise of the Blows, which yet con-  
tinued, issu'd out of that Place. When they came  
nearer, even patient *Rozinante* himself started at  
the dreadful Sound; but being hearten'd and  
pacify'd by his Master, he was at last prevail'd  
with to draw nearer and nearer with wary Steps;  
the Knight recommending himself all the way  
most devoutly to his *Dulcinea*, and now and then  
also to Heaven, in short Ejaculations. As for *San-  
cho*, he stuck close to his Master, peeping all the  
way through *Rozinante's* Legs, to see if he could  
perceive what he dreaded to find out. When a  
little farther, at the doubling of the Point of a  
Rock, they plainly discover'd (kind Reader, do

not take it amiss) Six huge Fulling-Mill Ham-  
mers, which interchangeably thumping several  
Pieces of Cloth, made the terrible Noise that  
caus'd all Don *Quixote's* Anxieties and *Sancho's*  
Tribulation that Night.

Don *Quixote* was struck dumb at this unexpected  
Sight, and was ready to drop from his Horse with  
Shame and Confusion. *Sancho* star'd upon him,  
and saw him down his Head, with a desponding  
dejected Countenance, like a Man quite dispirited  
with this cursed Disappointment. At the same  
Time he look'd upon *Sancho*, and seeing by his  
Eyes, and his Cheeks swell'd with Laughter, that  
he was ready to burst, he could not forbear laugh-  
ing himself in spight of all his Vexation; so that  
*Sancho* seeing his Master begin, immediately gave  
a Loose to his Mirth, and broke out into such a  
Fit of Laughing, that he was forc'd to hold his  
Sides with both his Knuckles, for fear of bursting  
his aking Paunch. Four times he ceas'd, and four  
times renew'd his obstreperous Laughing; which  
Sauciness Don *Quixote* began to resent with great  
Indignation; and the more when *Sancho*, in a jeer-  
ing Tone, presum'd to ridicule him with his own  
Words, repeating part of the vain Speech he made  
when first they heard the Noise; *Know*, *Sancho*, *I*  
*was born in this Iron Age to restore the Age of Gold. I am*  
*the Man for whom Heaven has reserv'd the most danger-  
ous and glorious Adventures*, &c. Thus he went on, till  
his Master, dreadfully inrag'd at his Insolence, hit  
him two such Blows on the Shoulders with his  
Lance, that had they fallen upon his Head they  
had sav'd Don *Quixote* the trouble of paying him  
his Wages, whatever he must have done to his  
Heirs. Thereupon *Sancho*, finding his Jest turn'd to  
Earnest, begg'd Pardon with all Submission: Mer-  
cy, good your Worship, cry'd he, spare my Bones I  
beseech you! I meant no harm, I did but joke a  
little. And because You joke, I do not, cry'd Don  
*Quixote*. Come hither, good Mr Jester, you who  
pretend to rally, tell me, had this been a danger-  
ous Adventure, as well as it proves only a false  
Alarm, have I not shewn Resolution enough to  
undertake and finish it? Am I, who am a Knight,  
bound to know the Meaning of every Mechanick  
Noise, and distinguish between Sound and  
Sound? Besides, it might happen, as really it is,  
that I had never seen a Fulling-Mill before, tho'  
thou, like a base Scoundrel as thou art, wert born  
and brought up among such mean Implements of  
Drudgery. But let the six Fulling-Hammers be  
transform'd into so many Giants, and then set  
them at me one by one, or all together; and if I do  
not lay 'em at my Feet with their Heels upwards,  
then I'll give thee Leave to exercise thy ill-bred  
Railery as much as thou pleasest.

Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, I, 20

- 38 The Keeper observing the Posture Don *Quixote*  
had put himself in, and that it was not possible for  
him to prevent letting out the Lions, without in-

curring the Resentment of the desperate Knight, set the Door of the foremost Cage wide open; where, as I have said, the Male Lion lay, who appeared of a monstrous Bigness, and of a hideous frightful Aspect. The first thing he did was to roll and turn himself round in his Cage; in the next Place he stretch'd out one of his Paws, put forth his Claws, and rous'd himself. After that he gap'd and yawn'd for a good while, and shew'd his dreadful Fangs, and then thrust out half a Yard of Broad Tongue, and with it lick'd the Dust out of his Eyes and Face. Having done this, he thrust his Head quite out of the Cage, and star'd about with his Eyes that look'd like two live Coals of Fire; a Sight and Motion, enough to have struck Terror into Temerity itself. But Don *Quixote* only regarded it with Attention, wishing his grim Adversary would leap out of his Hold, and come within his reach, that he might exercise his Valour, and cut the Monster piece-meal. To his Height of Extravagance had his Folly transported him; but the generous Lion, more gentle than arrogant, taking no notice of his Vapouring and Bravadoos, after he had look'd about him a while, turn'd his Tail, and having shew'd Don *Quixote* his Posteriors, very contentedly lay down again in his Apartment. Don *Quixote* seeing this, commanded the Keeper to rouse him with his Pole, and force him out whether he would or no. Not I, indeed, Sir, answer'd the Keeper; I dare not do it for my Life; for if I provoke him, I'm sure to be the first he'll tear to Pieces. Let me advise you, Sir, to be satisfy'd with your Day's Work. 'Tis as much as the bravest He that wears a Head can pretend to do. Then pray go no farther, I beseech you: The Door stands open, the Lion is at his Choice, whether he will come out or no. You have waited for him, you see he does not care to look you in the Face, and since he did not come out at the first, I dare engage he will not stir out this Day. You have shewn enough the Greatness of your Courage. No man is obliged to do more than challenge his Enemy, and wait for him in the Field. If he comes not, that's his own Fault, and the Scandal is his, as the Honour the Challenger's. 'Tis true, reply'd Don *Quixote*. Come, shut the Cage-Door, Honest Friend, and give me a Certificate under thy Hand in the amplest Form thou can'st devise, of what thou hast seen me perform; how thou did'st open the Cage for the Lion; how I expected his coming, and he did not come out. How, upon his not coming out then, I stay'd his own Time, and instead of meeting me, he turned Tail and lay down. I am oblig'd to do no more. So, Inchantments avant; and Heaven prosper Truth, Justice, and Knight-Errantry! Shut the Door, as I bid thee, while I make Signs to those that ran away from us, and get 'em to come back, that they may have an Account of this Exploit from thy own Mouth.

Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, II, 17

39 Every Knight has his particular Employment. Let the Courtier wait on the Ladies; let him with splendid Equipage adorn his Prince's Court, and with a magnificent Table support poor Gentlemen. Let him give Birth to Feasts and Tournaments, and shew his Grandeur, Liberality, and Munificence, and especially his Piety; in all these things he fulfils the Duties of his Station. But as for the Knight-Errant, let him search into all the Corners of the World, enter into the most intricate Labyrinths, and every Hour be ready to attempt Impossibility itself. Let him in desolate Wilds baffle the Rigor of the Weather, the scorching Heat of the Sun's fiercest Beams, and the Inclemency of Winds and Snow: Let Lions never fright him, Dragons daunt him, not evil Spirits deter him. To go in Quest of these, to meet, to dare, to conflict, and to overcome 'em all, is his principal and proper Office. Since then my Stars have decreed me to be one of those Adventurous Knights, I think my self obliged to attempt every thing that seems to come within the Verge of my Profession. This, Sir, engag'd me to encounter those Lions just now, judging it to be my immediate Business, tho' I was sensible of the extreme Rashness of the Undertaking. For well I know, that Valour is a Virtue situate between the two vicious Extremes of Cowardice and Temerity. But certainly 'tis not so ill for a Valiant Man to rise to a Degree of Rashness, as 'tis to fall short and border upon Cowardice. For as 'tis easier for a Prodigal to become Liberal, than a Miser; so 'tis easier for the hardy and rash Person to be reduced to true Bravery, than for the Coward ever to rise to that Virtue: And therefore in thus attempting Adventures, believe me, Signor Don *Diego*, 'tis better to exceed the Bounds a little, and over-do, rather than underdo the thing; because it sounds better in People's Ears to hear it said, how that such a Knight is Rash and Hardy, than such a Knight is Dastardly and Timorous.

Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, II, 17

40 *Courage* (by which I mean the contempt of wounds and violent death) inclineth men to private revenges, and sometimes to endeavour the unsettling of the public peace: and *timorousness* many times disposeth to the desertion of the public defence. Both these, they say, cannot stand together in the same person.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, IV, Review and Conclusion

41 *Satan*. What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield.

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I, 105

42 *Raphael*. Servant of God, well done, well hast thou fought

The better fight, who single hast maintaind  
Against revolted multitudes the Cause  
Of Truth, in word mightier then they in Armes;  
And for the testimonie of Truth hast born  
Universal reproach, far worse to beare  
Then violence.

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, VI, 29

- 43 *Raphael*. No thought of flight,  
None of retreat, no unbecoming deed  
That argu'd fear; each on himself reli'd,  
As onely in his arm the moment lay  
Of victorie.

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, VI, 236

- 44 Flight at the proper time, just as well as fighting,  
is to be reckoned, therefore, as showing strength of  
mind in a man who is free; that is to say, a free  
man chooses flight by the same strength or pres-  
ence of mind as that by which he chooses battle.

Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV, Prop. 69, Corol.

- 45 None but the brave deserves the fair.

Dryden, *Alexander's Feast*, 15

- 46 Fortitude is the guard and support of the other  
virtues; and without courage a man will scarce  
keep steady to his duty, and fill up the character  
of a truly worthy man.

Locke, *Some Thoughts  
Concerning Education*, 115

- 47 'Tis unwise to punish Cowards with Ignominy; for  
if they had regarded that, they would not have  
been Cowards: Death is their proper Punishment,  
because they fear it most.

Swift, *Thoughts on Various Subjects*

- 48 We have already observed that great heat ener-  
vates the strength and courage of men, and that in  
cold climates they have a certain vigour of body  
and mind, which renders them patient and in-  
trepid, and qualifies them for arduous enterprises.  
This remark holds good, not only between differ-  
ent nations, but even in the different parts of the  
same country. In the north of China people are  
more courageous than those in the south; and  
those in the south of Korea have less bravery than  
those in the north.

We ought not, then, to be astonished that the  
effeminacy of the people in hot climates has al-  
most always rendered them slaves; and that the  
bravery of those in cold climates has enabled  
them to maintain their liberties. This is an effect  
which springs from a natural cause.

This has also been found true in America; the  
despotic empires of Mexico and Peru were near  
the Line, and almost all the little free nations  
were, and are still, near the Poles.

Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, XVII, 2

- 49 In a military nation, cowardice supposes other  
vices; it is an argument of a person's having devi-  
ated from the principles of his education, of his  
being insensible of honour, and of having refused  
to be directed by those maxims which govern  
other men; it shows that he neither fears their  
contempt, nor sets any value upon their esteem.  
Men of any tolerable extraction seldom want  
either the dexterity requisite to co-operate with  
strength, or the strength necessary to concur with  
courage; for as they set a value upon honour, they  
are practised in matters without which this hon-  
our cannot be obtained. Beside, in a military na-  
tion, where strength, courage and prowess are es-  
teemed, crimes really odious are those which arise  
from fraud, artifice, and cunning, that is, from  
cowardice.

Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, XXVIII, 17

- 50 *Johnson*. Courage is a quality so necessary for  
maintaining virtue, that it is always respected,  
even when it is associated with vice.

Boswell, *Life of Johnson (June 11, 1784)*

- 51 A coward, a man incapable either of defending or  
of revenging himself, evidently wants one of the  
most essential parts of the character of a man. He  
is as much mutilated and deformed in his mind as  
another is in his body, who is either deprived of  
some of its most essential members, or has lost the  
use of them. He is evidently the more wretched  
and miserable of the two; because happiness and  
misery, which reside altogether in the mind, must  
necessarily depend more upon the healthful or  
unhealthful, the mutilated or entire state of the  
mind, than upon that of the body. Even though  
the martial spirit of the people were of no use  
towards the defence of the society, yet to prevent  
that sort of mental mutilation, deformity, and  
wretchedness, which cowardice necessarily in-  
volves in it, from spreading themselves through  
the great body of the people, would still deserve  
the most serious attention of government, in the  
same manner as it would deserve its most serious  
attention to prevent a leprosy or any other loath-  
some and offensive disease, though neither mortal  
nor dangerous, from spreading itself among them,  
though perhaps no other public good might result  
from such attention besides the prevention of so  
great a public evil.

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, V, 1

- 52 Female courage, however it may be raised by fa-  
naticism, or confirmed by habit, can be only a  
faint and imperfect imitation of the manly valour  
that distinguishes the age or country in which it  
may be found.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall  
of the Roman Empire*, IX

- 53 Experience has proved the distinction of active

- and passive courage; the fanatic who endures without a groan the torture of the rack or the stake, would tremble and fly before the face of an armed enemy.
- Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, XLVII
- 54 The weak in courage is strong in cunning.  
Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 9
- 55 The intrinsic worth of courage as a disposition of mind is to be found in the genuine, absolute, final end, the sovereignty of the state. The work of courage is to actualize this final end, and the means to this end is the sacrifice of personal actuality. This form of experience thus contains the harshness of extreme contradictions: a self-sacrifice which yet is the real existence of one's freedom; the maximum self-subsistence of individuality, yet only as a cog playing its part in the mechanism of an external organization; absolute obedience, renunciation of personal opinions and reasonings, in fact complete *absence* of mind, coupled with the most intense and comprehensive *presence* of mind and decision in the moment of acting; the most hostile and so most personal action against individuals, coupled with an attitude of complete indifference or even liking towards them as individuals.
- Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 328
- 56 To risk one's life is better than merely fearing death, but is still purely negative and so indeterminate and without value in itself. It is the positive aspect, the end and content, which first gives significance to this spiritedness. Robbers and murderers bent on crime as their end, adventurers pursuing ends planned to suit their own whims, etc., these too have spirit enough to risk their lives.
- The principle of the modern world—thought and the universal—has given courage a higher form, because its display now seems to be more mechanical, the act not of this particular person, but of a member of a whole. Moreover, it seems to be turned not against single persons, but against a hostile group, and hence personal bravery appears impersonal. It is for this reason that thought has invented the gun, and the invention of this weapon, which has changed the purely personal form of bravery into a more abstract one, is no accident.
- Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 328
- 57 Personal courage is really a very subordinate virtue,—merely the distinguishing mark of a subaltern,—a virtue, indeed, in which we are surpassed by the lower animals; or else you would not hear people say, *as brave as a lion*.
- Schopenhauer, *Position*, IV
- 58 An utterly fearless man is a far more dangerous comrade than a coward.
- Melville, *Moby Dick*, XXVI
- 59 Few men's courage is proof against protracted meditation unrelieved by action.
- Melville, *Moby Dick*, XLVI
- 60 I am less affected by their heroism who stood up for half an hour in the front line at Buena Vista, than by the steady and cheerful valor of the men who inhabit the snowplow for their winter quarters; who have not merely the three-o'clock-in-the-morning courage, which Bonaparte thought was the rarest, but whose courage does not go to rest so early, who go to sleep only when the storm sleeps or the sinews of their iron steed are frozen.
- Thoreau, *Walden: Sounds*
- 61 It is . . . impossible to decide in many cases whether certain social instincts have been acquired through natural selection, or are the indirect result of other instincts and faculties, such as sympathy, reason, experience, and a tendency to imitation; or again, whether they are simply the result of long-continued habit. So remarkable an instinct as the placing sentinels to warn the community of danger, can hardly have been the indirect result of any of these faculties; it must, therefore, have been directly acquired. On the other hand, the habit followed by the males of some social animals of defending the community, and of attacking their enemies or their prey in concert, may perhaps have originated from mutual sympathy; but courage, and in most cases strength, must have been previously acquired, probably through natural selection.
- Darwin, *Descent of Man*, I, 4
- 62 *Dólokhov*. If you are going to fight a duel, and you make a will and write affectionate letters to your parents, and if you think you may be killed, you are a fool and are lost for certain. But go with the firm intention of killing your man as quickly and surely as possible, and then all will be right. . . . Everyone fears a bear . . . but when you see one your fear's all gone, and your only thought is not to let him get away!
- Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, IV, 4
- 63 At the approach of danger there are always two voices that speak with equal power in the human soul: one very reasonably tells a man to consider the nature of the danger and the means of escaping it; the other, still more reasonably, says that it is too depressing and painful to think of the danger, since it is not in man's power to foresee everything and avert the general course of events, and it is therefore better to disregard what is painful till it comes, and to think about what is pleasant.
- Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, X, 17

64 Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear. Except a creature be part coward it is not a compliment to say it is brave; it is mere-

ly a loose misapplication of the word. Consider the flea!—incomparably the bravest of all the creatures of God, if ignorance of fear were courage. Whether you are asleep or awake he will attack you, caring nothing for the fact that in bulk and strength you are to him as are the massed armies of the earth to a sucking child; he lives both day and night and all days and nights in the very lap of peril and the immediate presence of death, and yet is no more afraid than is the man who walks the streets of a city that was threatened by an earthquake ten centuries before. When we speak of Clive, Nelson, and Putnam as men who ‘didn’t know what fear was’, we ought always to add the flea—and put him at the head of the procession.

Mark Twain, *Pudd’nhead Wilson’s Calendar*, XII

65 There are several good protections against temptations, but the surest is cowardice.

Mark Twain, *Pudd’nhead Wilson’s New Calendar*, XXXVI

66 Now all the truth is out,  
Be secret and take defeat  
From any brazen throat,  
For how can you compete,  
Being honor bred, with one  
Who, were it proved he lies  
Were neither shamed in his own  
Nor in his neighbors’ eyes?  
Bred to a harder thing  
Than Triumph, turn away  
And like a laughing string

Whereon mad fingers play  
Amid a place of stone,  
Be secret and exult,

Because of all things known  
That is most difficult.

Yeats, *To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing*

67 If people throw up to us our works of fiction in which we write about people who are soft, weak, cowardly, and sometimes even downright bad, it’s not because these people are soft, weak, cowardly, or bad; because if we were to say, as Zola did, that they are that way because of heredity, the workings of environment, society, because of biological or psychological determinism, people would be reassured. They would say, “Well, that’s what we’re like, no one can do anything about it.” But when the existentialist writes about a coward, he says that this coward is responsible for his cowardice. He’s not like that because he has a cowardly heart or lung or brain; he’s not like that on account of his physiological makeup; but he’s like that because he has made himself a coward by his acts. There’s no such thing as a cowardly constitution; there are nervous constitutions; there is poor blood, as the common people say, or strong constitutions. But the man whose blood is poor is not a coward on that account, for what makes cowardice is the act of renouncing or yielding. A constitution is not an act; the coward is defined on the basis of the acts he performs. People feel, in a vague sort of way, that this coward we’re talking about is guilty of being a coward, and the thought frightens them. What people would like is that a coward or a hero be born that way.

Sartre, *Existentialism*

## 9.12 | *Temperance and Intemperance*

The quality of moderation that is sometimes identified with virtue itself is more often identified with one particular virtue or one aspect of virtue—temperance. When the latter is the case, the moderation involved represents a control over the desires or appe-

tites. The maxim of temperance “Nothing overmuch” calls not for total abstinence, but rather an avoidance of excess.

In the case of courage, as the reader will find in Section 9.11, the obvious examples of fortitude exhibit the overcoming of excessive