**Robert J. Rabel**

**The Virtues of Achilles**

**Handout**

**I**

τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς:

μηκέτι νῦν μ' **ἐρέθιζε** γέρον: νοέω δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς 560

Ἕκτορά τοι λῦσαι….

**τὼ νῦν μή μοι μᾶλλον ἐν ἄλγεσι θυμὸν ὀρίνῃς,**

**μή σε γέρον οὐδ' αὐτὸν ἐνὶ κλισίῃσιν ἐάσω**

**καὶ ἱκέτην περ ἐόντα, Διὸς δ' ἀλίτωμαι ἐφετμάς**. 570

[Achilles answered him with an angry scow. “Don’t provoke me, old man. I have already decided to release Hector’s body to you…. **Therefore, don’t stir up my *thumos* in grief, lest I not leave you alone, old man that you are, and disobey the ordinances of Zeus.”]**

**II**

τὸν δ' **ἐπικερτομέων** προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς… (24.649)

[**Cutting him to the quick**, swift-footed Achilles said….]

**III**

ἤτοι γὰρ πατέρ' ἁμὸν ἀπέκτανε δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,

ἐκ δὲ πόλιν πέρσεν Κιλίκων εὖ ναιετάουσαν 415

Θήβην ὑψίπυλον: κατὰ δ' ἔκτανεν Ἠετίωνα,

οὐδέ μιν ἐξενάριξε, σεβάσσατο γὰρ τό γε θυμῷ,

ἀλλ' ἄρα μιν κατέκηε σὺν ἔντεσι δαιδαλέοισιν

ἠδ' ἐπὶ σῆμα. ἔχεεν.(6.414ff.)

[Godlike Achilles killed my father and sacked the well-peopled city of the Cilicians, Thebe of the lofty gates. He killed Eetion, but he did not strip off his armor, for he felt *sebas* in his *thumos*, but he burned him with his beautiful arms and heaped up a funeral mound.]

**IV**

Ἔοικε δὲ καὶ ἄλλη τις φύσις τῆς ψυχῆς ἄλογος εἶναι, μετέχουσα μέντοι πῃ λόγου. τοῦ γὰρ **ἐγκρατοῦς καὶ ἀκρατοῦς** τὸν (15) λόγον καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ λόγον ἔχον ἐπαινοῦμεν· ὀρθῶς γὰρ καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ βέλτιστα παρακαλεῖ· φαίνεται δ᾽ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἄλλο τι παρὰ τὸν λόγον πεφυκός, ὃ μάχεται καὶ ἀντιτείνει τῷ λόγῳ.. (1102b14ff.)

[There seems to be also another irrational element in the soul-one which in a sense, however, shares in a rational principle. For we praise the rational principle of the **self-controlled man** and of the incontinent, and the part of their soul that has such a principle, since it urges them aright and towards the best objects; but there is found in them also another element naturally opposed to the rational principle, which fights against and resists that principle.]

**V**

**οὐκ ἔστι δ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἡ ἐγκράτεια ἀρετή, ἀλλά τις μικτή·** (1128b34ff)

[**Self-control is not a virtue, but something mixed.**]

**VI**

ὁ δ**᾽ ἐγκρατὴς** εἰδὼς ὅτι φαῦλαι αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι οὐκ ἀκολουθεῖ διὰ τὸν λόγον. (1145b13-14)

[The **self-controlled man**, knowing that his desires are evil, does not follow them on account of reason.]

**VII**

φανερὸν δὴ ἐκ τούτων ὅτι ἣ μὲν (**ἐγκράτεια**) σπουδαία ἕξις…. (1151a28-290

[It is clear from these things that self-control is an excellent disposition.]

**VIII**

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[For resilience consists in holding out, but **self-control in conquering**. Holding out is one thing and conquering is another, just as not being defeated is different from conquering. For which reason **self-control is more to be chosen than resilience**.]

**IX**

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[The self-controlled man does not undergo change on account of passion and desire, since the self-controlled man will on occasion be amenable to persuasion.]

**X**

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[The self-controlled man and the moderate man are such as to do nothing contrary to reason, the one having and the other not having evil desires, and the one such as to take no pleasure contrary to reason, and the other such as to take pleasure but not be mastered [by it].]

**XI**

A man who, from a natural easy-going gentleness, would despise injuries done to him would do something very beautiful and praiseworthy, but a man who, stung to the quick and ravished by an injury could arm himself with the arms of reason against a frenzied yearning for vengeance, finally mastering it after a great

struggle, would undoubtedly be doing very much more. The former would have acted well; the latter virtuously. Goodness is the word for one of these actions; virtue for the other; **for it seems that virtue presupposes difficulty and opposition, and cannot be exercised without a struggle.** This is undoubtedly why we call God good, mighty, beautiful, and just, but we cannot call him virtuous; his works are his properties and cause him no struggle.

(Montaigne, “On Cruelty,” p. 472)

**XII**

When power becomes gracious and descends into the visible—such descent I call beauty. And there is no one from whom I want beauty as much as from you who are powerful. Let your kindness be your final **self-conquest.** Of all evil I deem you capable; therefore, I want the good from you.

(*Thus spoke Zarathustra*, Second Part, p. 230)

**XIII**

ἆ δείλ', ἦ δὴ πολλὰ κάκ' **ἄνσχεο** σὸν κατὰ θυμόν

[Poor man, you have **endured** many evils in your heart.]

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